ON THE COVER

Success under 40

Olivia Pelton | Amun Cosme | Carlee Schulte
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## about the cover

Olivia Pelton was nominated as one of Milledgeville’s Success under 40. Read her story on page 40.
Established 2007 • Volume 13 No. 1

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Milledgeville Scene magazine is published by The Union-Recorder bimonthly at 165 Garrett Way, Milledgeville GA 31061. For more information on submitting story ideas or advertising in Milledgeville Scene, call (478) 453-1462.
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Whenever I’m at a loss for words I turn to the words of others to allow myself to reflect on what the words mean to me and how I can apply them to my own life.

To say that a lot has changed in my life in the past few months is a tremendous understatement. Looking back at the start of 2019 and where I am now is, quite honestly, overwhelming.

But, here I am.

I’m not sure where you’re starting 2020 but, as I’m reminded daily, sometimes even hourly, it is all fleeting and this too shall pass.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Milledgeville Scene as we highlight some of the community’s up and comers and their achievements thus far.

And while your flipping through these pages, here’s hoping that we all find a reason to remain hopeful this year.

“In this short Life that only lasts an hour
How much — how little — is within our power.”

-Emily Dickinson
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A “very” contemporary concert, “Gworek Speaks,” involving percussion and speech, will be at 7:30 p.m. in Max Noah Recital Hall. Nathaniel Gworek, percussion instructor at Georgia College, will merge spoken word poetry with musical performances with six world-premiere works. This concert will be a celebration of these works commissioned by Dr. Gworek for publication. A $5 donation is encouraged. All proceeds benefit music scholarships or the GC Department of Music through GCSU Foundation, Inc. For more information email music@gcsu.edu or call 478-445-8289.

“Auditate,” an exhibit of stained glass works by artist Bev Eaton. John Marlor Arts Center, 201 N. Wayne St., Milledgeville. Admission is free. Call 478-452-3950 or email alliedarts@milledgevillealliedarts.com for more information.

“Judy Bales, Unhindered Spirit: Embracing Imperfection.” The work of artist Judy Bales at Leland Gallery, Ennis Hall 320 W. Hancock St., Milledgeville, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Bales works with recycled and salvaged materials, exploring different ways to give them new life by modifying their intended purpose. The artworks at first glance do not appear to be inherently industrial, and their contrasting textures allude to their ambiguity. Using improvisational techniques as she works, Bales creates unique environments and elicits the imperfections or little surprises that can also be seen in the natural world. This exhibition is curated by Georgia College senior art majors Grace Callaway and Sophie Daniel in fulfillment of their Museum Studies Capstone thesis project. Free and open to the public.

“Spring Voice Honors Recital: Voice Studio” at Max Noah Recital Hall. 7:30 p.m. Featuring 11 Georgia College music students. Faculty pianists Dr. Lev Ryabinin and Dr. Hue Jang will accompany Turner Howell, Sophia Clark, Erin Lamb, Avery Garrett, Megan Ostrat, Allison Crane, Tori Palazzo, Kendall Proffitt, Kelly Monahan, Julia Huf- ford and Madison Golden. For more information email music@gcsu.edu or call 478-445-8289.

Feb. 15

“Valentine’s Day Rendezvous Concert” at 7:30 p.m. in Magnolia Ballroom. Dr. Jennifer Flory is the director. A $5 donation is encouraged. All proceeds benefit music scholarships or the GC Department of Music through GCSU Foundation, Inc. For more information email music@gcsu.edu or call 478-445-8289.

Feb. 20

“Duo Levante: Guest Artist Guitar Recital” at 7:30 p.m. in Max Noah Recital Hall. A $10 donation is encouraged. All proceeds benefit music scholarships or the GC Department of Music through GCSU Foundation, Inc. For more information email music@gcsu.edu or call 478-445-8289.

The Learning in Retirement Book Club meets to discuss its February selection, “Red at the Bone” by Jacqueline Woodson. The LIR Book Club and Writers’ Group meet at First Presbyterian church, 210 S. Wayne St., Milledgeville, the third Thursday of each month at 2 and 3 p.m., respectively. Everyone is invited to attend. Moving forward and backward in time, Jacqueline Woodson’s taut and powerful new novel uncovers the role that history and community have played in the experiences, decisions, and relationships of these families, and in the life of the new child. As the book opens in 2001, it is the evening of 16-year-old Melody’s coming of age ceremony in her grandparents’ Brooklyn brownstone. Watched lovingly by her relatives and friends, making her entrance to the music of Prince, she wears a special custom-made dress. But the event is not without poignancy. Sixteen years earlier that very dress was measured and sewn for a different wearer: Melody’s mother, for her own ceremony — a celebration that ultimately never took place. Unfurling the history of Melody’s parents and grandparents to show how they all arrived at this moment, Woodson considers not just their ambitions and successes but also the costs, the tolls they’ve paid for striving to overcome expectations and escape the pull of history. As it explores sexual desire and identity, ambition, gentrification, education, class and status, and the life-altering facts of parenthood, Red at the Bone most strikingly looks at the ways in which young people must so often make long-lasting decisions about their lives — even before they have begun to figure out who they are and what they want to be.

- Amazon

Feb. 21

Public Observatory Night, 7 to 8:30 p.m. Observe the astronomical sights of winter and spring through the 24-inch telescope at the PohI Observatory in Herty Hall. All public nights are preceded by an opportunity to visit the planetarium an hour before opening. The planetarium is on the first floor of Herty at the Natural History Museum location.

Feb. 24

“Guest Artist Voice and Piano Recital: Callahan/Sekino” at 7:30 p.m. Featuring Marc Callahan, voice, and Keiko Sekino, piano, in Max Noah Recital Hall. A $10 donation is encouraged. All proceeds benefit music scholarships or the GC Department of Music through GCSU Foundation, Inc. For more information email music@gcsu.edu or call 478-445-8289.
**Flannery O’Connor’s Farm**

Flannery O’Connor’s Farm, North Columbia Street, 478-454-4029, www.andalusiafarm.org. Open to the public Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

In 1794, Native Americans inhabited the Bartram Forest. Today, educational hiking trails allow visitors to see centuries of abundant wildlife, natural wetlands, and an erosion ravine with soil that is a remnant of the ancient shallow seas that covered Georgia 50 to 100 million years ago. Three looping trails cover this natural wonder. 2892 Highway 441 South.

**GCSU Natural History Museum**

Dillard Russell Library, GCSU campus, University session. On display are manuscripts from O’Connor’s personal collection of more than 700 books and journals. The room is furnished in the Victorian style of the 1870s. Most of these items were brought from Andalusia, the farm where O’Connor lived and wrote the major portion of her fiction. For information 478-445-0988.

**Georgia War Veteran’s Memorial Cemetery**


**Lake Sinclair**

Lake Sinclair, U.S. Highway 441 North, encompasses 15,300 acres for fishing, skiing and fishing tournaments, swimming, boating, camping and has several marinas for the convenience of visitors. Recently declared the “Cleanest Lake in the State,” Lake Sinclair boasts more than 500 miles of shoreline. Campgrounds, picnic areas and unsupervised beaches add to the enjoyment of Lake Sinclair.

**John Marlor Art Center**

201 N. Wayne St., 478-452-3950, www.milledgevillearts.com. This facility is one of three historic building that make up the Allied Arts Center. It is a beautiful Milledgeville-Federal/early Greek Revival, built in 1830. Originally a two-over-two clapboard with shed rooms and an open dogtrot porch, it now houses arts offices and the Marlor Art Gallery. The Allen’s Market building, across from the John Marlor Art Center, is a 1911 building that has been adapted into theatre, meeting, and studio space. Allied Arts is open Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 478-452-3950.

**New Year Issue**
Meet Stacey Milner, a mother to all students

Stacey Milner has been through many changes in recent years. At Georgia College, she worked as a secretary in the Registrar’s Office, recruiter in Admissions, co-director of Fraternity and Sorority Life and director of the Cultural Center. Now, she’s back as sole director of Fraternity and Sorority Life. With the recent death of her husband, and her son attending college in South Carolina, the past year has not been easy. Yet — with an energetic 10-year-old at home and a demanding job — Milner stills finds time, and a doling of motherly wisdom, for every student she meets.

Born and raised in Milledgeville, Milner’s always had “very deep ties” to Georgia College. Her mother works in dining services and her aunt did as well. Her husband’s mother was a faculty member in the School of Nursing for 30 years. Milner got her undergraduate degree in politics and her master’s in instructional technology at Georgia College.

As if she’s not busy enough, Milner’s also finishing her Ed.D. in student affairs leadership at the University of Georgia.

Growing up, she had a diverse circle of friends. Looking at the world, she was not happy with the “status quo.” She didn’t like being stereotyped. Nor did she like the way people fixated on racial identities. She knew she had to do better as a mom and teach her kids differently. Giving them the best meant showing them value in everyone, regardless of what they look like.

And Milner means it. She doesn’t leave anybody out. While supporting underrepresented students with one arm, she’s got the other arm wrapped around the shoulders of white students. In order for things to progress and get better, she said, “everybody has to be at the table.”

Whether at the Cultural Center or Fraternity and Sorority Life, Milner’s student staff members are a diverse “rainbow coalition” of underrepresented and majority students. Her mission is to provide “a sense of belonging” for everyone.

The Cultural Center got so popular under Milner’s reign, the little office at Blackbridge Hall became cramped. Students would drag chairs to the open door and sit in the hall to participate.

“It’s very wonderful, because that means I did what I set out to do,” Milner said, “which was to provide an environment where they feel comfortable, they feel supported, they feel empowered and they always want to be here.”

“When you have students staring at the walls, trying to figure a way to create more space,” she said, “then I’ve done my job.”

In Fall 2014, Milner became co-director of Fraternity and Sorority Life with Tiffany Bayne. It was a perfect fit for Milner, who’s an enthusiastic member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. She was hired to support African-American students in Greek Life and help revitalize Divine 9 organizations on campus.

“Sometimes it’s nice to bash the stereotype of being a woman of color,” she said. “I wasn’t afraid to put myself out there and say, ‘I’m willing.’”

Under Milner’s tutelage, the fraternity restructured its recruitment practices by adding a service project. Members took recruits to a horse farm to clear trails and wipe down stalls. It showed them which recruits were willing to work hard, while reinforcing the value of community service. Those projects were a “game changer” for the fraternity, she said, and allowed members to get to know new recruits better.

While co-director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, Milner also started Tunnel of Oppression at Georgia College. Students chose themes of marginalization and oppression and acted out scenes for audiences. It was held on the third floor of Atkinson Hall. Dark lights, black drops and video made it feel like people were moving through a tunnel, participating in the action.

One year, performances were about police brutality with a bar altercation and gunshots. Others were about racism, LGBTQ+ harassment, bipolar disorders and date abuse. Students wrote their own scripts and designed stages. There were four acts, four scenes and three nights. Actors performed 64 times, and the results were often emotional. Rawness of scenes required counseling services be available afterwards.

“I’ve heard students gasp,” Milner said. “It’s transformational. It’s such a small space. It’s so intimate, you have no choice but to be affected by it, as if you’re living it.”

What makes Milner successful and popular is her willingness to step back and let students decide for themselves. Programs at the Cultural Center were designed by students. They wanted real-world discussions about sex, gender and politics. One discussion group talked about being LGBTQ+ in a black community. Milner gave students the tools to facilitate discussions, keep them moving and communicate without “heat, animosity and tension.”

A new mentor/mentee program, called LIFE, started recently at the Cultural Center. Faculty, staff and upperclassmen befrend new students. Student workers came up with the acronym LIFE (Leaders Igniting the Fundamentals of Excellence). They also decided on four cornerstones for the program: student involvement, self-care, time management and campus resources.

“And if they have that sense of belonging,” she said. “you will see them thrive.”

Helping students to thrive is what Milner’s all about. College is the first time young adults figure things out on their own. And that can be scary. Like a good mother, she wants to help them along. But she also gives them room to spread their wings.

“We talk a lot in my office about you can’t have success without failure. Students today are afraid to fail. That’s our fault as parents. We’ve always been there to catch them. And, because we’ve always been there, they’ve never fallen and had to get back up on their own,” Milner said.

“I believe in the mission of this institution,” she added. “Georgia College is a place where everyone can learn to get back up on their own. It allows us the chance to explore.”

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The idea of living in your hometown for the rest of your life can seem like a sign of failure for some, but for Amun Cosme, it’s been the biggest blessing of his life.

Cosme has trained as an MMA fighter at the Milledgeville Academy for Mixed Martial Arts, or MAMMA, since 2011, slowly becoming a beacon of hope and determination for the Milledgeville community.

“Milledgeville has so much opportunity and you would never know until you come and spend some time in the actual community. There is so much to provide here. If everyone just invested a little time, patience and money to the community, this can be a very special place,” Cosme says.

When he’s not training for his next MMA fight, Cosme spends his days as an instructor in various forms of martial arts, including his specialty, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

“Amun is highly self-motivated, extremely confident, and very technical in his knowledge,” Frank Mullis, owner of the Milledgeville Academy for Mixed Martial Arts, says.

Cosme began training in jiu-jitsu after a brief stint as a college football player at Citrus College in California. Though plagued by injuries, his athletic endeavors and fighting spirit have persisted since a young age as his smaller stature made it a necessity for him to learn the art of self-defense.

It wouldn’t be long before Cosme took jiu-jitsu seriously, beginning his journey toward his first amateur title in MMA, a moment that transformed his outlook on his future.

“That was a special moment for me because after I got it, I cried like a baby just because of all the hard work I put in and I just kept remembering I wasn’t supposed to be here,” Cosme says.

Fate had a tricky way of working its way into Cosme’s life plan, as his life would be forever changed by two car accidents that threatened to end his athletic career. The first came shortly after returning home from California and the other just after he won his first amateur title.

“I’ve always been an athlete my whole entire life and that’s how I learned a lot about myself and about life, and if I can’t do that again what am I going to do? And that is when I had to make the decision whether I should listen to a medical professional who spent their whole life going to school to tell me I couldn’t have the opportunity to be as active as I once was or even play a sport, and I made the decision to be hard-headed,” Cosme says.

After a lengthy process that involved physical therapy, understanding the various pain in his body, and a surgery that saved his lower disc, Cosme was finally able to fully pursue a professional MMA career and most importantly,
share his gifts in martial arts with the greater Milledgeville community.

The variety of classes Cosme teaches provides options to students to gain both mental strength and hands-on experience with a seasoned martial artist.

“He’s an expert in his field and that genuineness about him is real and even if you don’t understand something, which he will go to great lengths to explain, you can trust him. He is a good shepherd to his flock,” Brandon Wharton, a jiu-jitsu student at MAMMA, says.

Martial arts is so much more than just fighting in Cosme’s eyes, it’s a work of art. Not every class is physical fighting; there needs to be mental training to create a mindset that pushes the fighter through the pain and hardships of a fight.

“Where you see fighting, I see art. Where you see a guy getting punched in the face and bleeding from his eye, I saw everything leading up to that moment where the guy stepped a foot of an inch inside his other foot to create an angle,” Cosme says. “It’s like if you’re a painter and I give you a canvas and told you to freestyle paint, we are literally fighting on canvas.”

There is an art to his fighting style, but most importantly there is an art to sharing that art with the community. Milledgeville locals, GC students, GMC students, professors, and so many more types of people come to Cosme’s classes every week to be a part of the community that the academy has created.

“People ask me how many hours I work a week and I tell them I don’t even calculate that because I love what I do and it doesn’t feel like I’m working. I feel blessed that a little place in Milledgeville that gave me my start in training is now giving me a chance to have a professional career as an athlete and provide value to other people’s lives.”

“It’s a good day to be alive, but it’s an even better day to be great, so get up and get to the grind whatever that may be to you.”
No two days in the life of a funeral director are the same.
The job includes responsibilities beyond planning funerals. Funeral home staff coordinate times and dates for wakes, memorials and funeral services. They offer grief counseling. They embalm and prepare bodies of the deceased. They do all the paperwork. And they do it out of service to others, lifting the burden off grieving families as much as they can.

There may be need for funeral services on holidays or late into the evening. People in this line of work have to be prepared for the possibility of being called in at odd hours, or possibly during holiday get-togethers with their families.

James A. Williams, founder of Williams Funeral Home & Crematory, referred to his line of work as “his calling.” Grandson Cameron Williams describes the calling as a “want and need to help others,” and serve selflessly, a quality that’s instilled in the Williams family.

Williams, a third-generation funeral home owner and director, selflessly serves the community with a kind smile and friendly demeanor, while also being a loving, involved husband and father.

Williams places high value on family both in the workplace and outside it.

“Cameron is very caring to other people and he always puts other people’s needs above his own,” Holly Williams, Cameron’s wife of nearly 15 years says. “He’s always very selfless and puts family first, and always takes care of everybody like they were his family.”

At work, he prioritizes the needs of other families and offers a helping hand during a difficult time. The funeral home staff is considered “work family,” and he views the business as a partnership with his father, Rick Williams. At home, Williams spends as much time as possible with his two children. Every morning he drops the oldest off at school and every night he reads with both kids.

Williams Funeral Home & Crematory was family-owned and operated for two generations before Cameron, but despite being a family business, he was never pressured to work in funeral services.

“I’m sure that I’d be mistaken if I didn’t say that I think my dad is proud I’m in this service with him and doing what he does,” Williams says. “But my dad always encouraged me to find my own path and told me to never feel like I had to do this job.”

At 18, Williams wasn’t certain what he wanted to do. He attended Valdosta State University and earned a bachelor’s of business administration. After moving home, he attended Georgia College with plans to pursue for pre-med, but ultimately decided not to go to medical school.
In December 2006, Williams’ grandfather was killed in a car accident. At the funeral, the thought of going into funeral service and continuing his family’s legacy was prevalent in his mind as he spoke with other directors in attendance.

“I wanted to make a difference and I wanted to help,” Williams says. “I wanted to be involved. It was a number of things that led me back to it, [and] I felt like this is where I needed to be.”

Along with working beside his father to grow and maintain the business, Cameron has added to the family. He married Holly Williams in April 2005, and the two had their first child, a girl named Kennedy, four years ago. Their second, a boy named Connor, is 1 years old.

“He was very natural at being a parent,” Holly says. “Family has always been important, and working with family, we have a lot of nieces and nephews, so we’ve been around kids together for a long time as a family. Seeing him become a dad was just amazing.”

Holly says Cameron has a hands-on approach to parenthood and that “he’s a kid with the kids.”

“When he’s home, he’s always down on the floor playing with them and doing everything he can with them,” Holly says. “Work is sometimes very serious, and he’s playful with [the kids] when he gets home. He’s ready to spend as much time as he can with [them] and us as a family.”

When their daughter was a baby, they started a bedtime routine that ended with Cameron rocking her and singing to her before putting her to bed.

“Then it evolved into reading books, and to this day, every night he still reads her stories before she goes to bed,” Holly says. “And now that Connor is little, he’s started reading to him, too, and it’s just a sweet moment with the kids, every night.”

Holly says that no matter how busy work is, or how late he has to stay, Cameron always comes home and reads a story with them before bed.

Cameron said that regardless of how difficult his day may have been, the most rewarding thing is arriving home and spending time with the kids.

“When I walk in the door they’re excited to see me and I’m excited to see them,” he says. “So you don’t come home and kick your feet up and watch TV, you come home and maybe have a tea party or something. That’s probably the most rewarding [and] the most fun.

“Family is important. I don’t know what could bring anybody any greater joy.”

It extends beyond Cameron’s wife and kids into the rest of his family, and he has a deep respect for his father.

“There’s not a person I know of that has cared more for people,” Cameron says of his dad, state Rep. Rick Williams. “He’s humble, he’s ethical — just a great person — and if I could live my life like anybody, of course it would be him.”

Cameron hasn’t “taken over” the business so much as he serves alongside his father in a partnership, though he has gradually taken on more responsibility. The community responded well when Cameron took on his role as a funeral director, and seems to trust him to provide the same quality service as his predecessors.

“My goal and my plans are to continue offering the same service and level of respect for our community that I can,” Cameron says. “It’s big footsteps to follow, but I intend to walk upright and do that."
As you stroll through the streets of downtown on a cool, October day just hours before the annual Deep Roots festival that brings friends from near and far, you can’t help but feel a sense of comfort and belonging.

I got this same feeling the minute I walked into Carlee Schulte’s office downtown as she worked diligently as the Milledgeville Main Street Director while also chatting with her fellow coworker and close friend, Deana Thornton.

With her office surrounded by pictures of family, her two sons, various awards, and Milledgeville memorabilia, you can instantly tell Carlee has a heart for the town she works for and calls home.

An Atlanta native, Carlee moved to Milledgeville in 2002 to attend Georgia College and study Marketing and immediately fell in love with the small town life. After graduation and working for three years with Ramstad and having her first child in 2009, Carlee began her career with Milledgeville Main Street in July of 2010 as an Administrative assistant.

“When I started the Administrative assistant job, the previous director told me she would be happy to guide me down the path to Main Street Director,” Schulte said.

Schulte was then hired as the Interm Director for six months, became the Main Street Executive Director, hired coworker Deana Thornton, and the rest is what downtown Milledgeville is today.

When asked about her day-to-day routine, Schulte said that none of her days look exactly the same.

“My work days really vary. Sometimes it consists of planning for upcoming events or filling out an application for a development project loan for the state and sometimes its communicating with businesses downtown as well as maintaining our social media presence,” Schulte said.

When talking with Schulte, I can quickly tell just how passionate she is about the development of the city of Milledgeville.

“My favorite part of my job is the people that I have met. The people in the community and the people I get to be in communication with along with the opportunities this job has given me as well as the bond I have with my coworker Deana really make all the difference in the world,” Schulte said.

“We want to make sure that we’re doing enough to make sure that downtown Milledgeville is vibrant and thriving,” Schulte said.

It’s no surprise that Schulte is continuing that tradition of making sure Milledgeville is vibrant and thriving when the program under her discretion won the Award of Excellence in Downtown Development as Program of the Year in 2013.

“We want to make sure that downtown Milledgeville is vibrant and thriving,” Schulte said.

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It’s no surprise that Schulte is continuing that tradition of making sure Milledgeville is vibrant and thriving when the program under her discretion won the Award of Excellence in Downtown Development as Program of the Year in 2013.

“We want to make sure that downtown Milledgeville is vibrant and thriving,” Schulte said.
ing is acknowledge and appreciated, for me personally it’s more about the community pride that that the award brings about. I’m raising a family here and want good things for the community so having a downtown that’s proud of where they are and wanting my kids to be able to have that feeling and remember that is something special,” Schulte said.

While Schulte has been putting in the hard work to make downtown Milledgeville what it is today, it didn’t happen this way over night.

“I’ve been working here for nine years and there was plenty of work done prior to my arrival which really set the stage for us to be able to shine. I’ve been able to see Milledgeville grow through less vacancies downtown and overall increased business which has shined a light in the heart of downtown,” Schulte said.

Along with all the work she has put into making Milledgeville Main Street, Schulte is also an active member of the Milledgeville/ Baldwin County community.

She served as the 2018 President of the Georgia Downtown Association on the Rotary Board Directors as well as Community in Schools Board and supporting the Chamber in their various activities.

When she isn’t working, Schulte tends to life at home with her husband and two boys, Ethan and Barrett.

“It’s really just being a Mom. My boys are in the 5th grade and pre-kindergarten and my husband works a lot so most of the time it’s just me, but I love to be a part of my kids activities,” Schulte said.

Along with spending her time off work with family and friends, Schulte mentioned her favorite parts about living in Milledgeville.

“Being in a small town you know people everywhere you go so I like that it’s less fast-paced than living in the Atlanta area and getting a sense of that that small-town feel,” Schulte said.

Along with the public’s favorite annual event Deep Roots, Schulte mentioned that her favorite event is the June First Friday Event known as the Beach Bash.

Nominated for the honor by her coworker and friend, Deana Thornton, I quickly picked up on how close Schulte is with her coworker.

“We’re like sisters,” Schulte said.

“We have worked together for almost nine years and I love working with her. We went through this process together and she’s a big reason why I have stayed in Milledgeville,” Thornton said.

Thornton believes it’s important to be happy in the workspace and working every day with Schulte brings that happiness.

“It’s been amazing to watch Carlee grow and make decisions for the downtown community as a leader,” Thornton said.
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Sometimes we just need a little help. And that is what is happening with babies all the way up to 90-year-old people who are dealing with orthopedics, surgeries, strokes, and more. In Milledgeville, Georgia, this means it is time for a trip to Navicent Health Baldwin where there is one outpatient 30-year-old Doctor of Physical Therapy (PT) waiting to help.

Dr. Christopher (Chris) Anderson is employed with his dream job, but this was not always what he wanted to go into. Starting out as an undergraduate at Georgia College & State University (GCSU) in Milledgeville as a chemistry major, Dr. Anderson thought he wanted to be a pharmacist. He discovered he did not enjoy that enough.

An exercise science student and friend of Dr. Anderson got Dr. Anderson interested into going to physical therapy school. Dr. Anderson is most proud of getting through school earning an education, getting married, and having a family.

“It’s important to us that our kids see their parents playing an active role in the community we live in,” Tricia Anderson, wife of Dr. Anderson says. “A big part of our decision to move back to Milledgeville a year and a half ago was so our family could be a part of a small community. Our 2-year-old, Ellie Kate, understands that her dad leaves in the morning to go help people feel better at the hospital, and she even has her own set of scrubs so she can be “like Dada.”

Dr. Anderson has spent most of his life in Georgia. He was born in Cumming, Georgia, before his mother got a job teaching at the junior college at Georgia Military College that moved Dr. Anderson and his family to Milledgeville. Dr. Anderson has a high school diploma from Georgia Military College graduating in the Class of 2007. He later graduated with a Bachelors in Exercise Science from GCSU in the Class of 2011.

After graduating from GCSU, Dr. Anderson married Tricia Anderson in 2012 and they moved north to Virginia so Dr. Anderson could attend Physical Therapy school at Old Dominion University. After graduating with his Physical Therapy Degree in 2016, the couple moved to Atlanta. Once their first daughter was born, they wanted to move back to a small town, so they returned to Milledgeville.

“Chris always gives 100% in everything he does, whether it’s at work or at home with his family,” Tricia says. “He loves his job at Navicent Health Baldwin because he is able to help all members of the community, from infants to the elderly. He loves meeting new people and facing new challenges every day. Chris is always willing to go in early or stay late if a patient needs it. He spends a lot of his free time staying up to date on the most current research to help his
patients.”

Dr. Anderson is the youngest of three siblings, having one older brother and one older sister who are eight and nine years older than him. His mother has a Master’s Degree in Wildlife Biology and his father paints houses in the painting business. Dr. Anderson’s biggest influence in his life are his parents because they set the example from Dr. Anderson’s early age. Others who have influenced Dr. Anderson include a GCSU professor who pushed Dr. Anderson to do what he needed to do for PT school and the real profession. Dr. Anderson’s wife Tricia is also a good influence because she is such a hard worker striving Dr. Anderson to be better and push himself.

A typical day for Dr. Anderson at Navicent Health Baldwin starts around 8 a.m. seeing patients until 5 p.m. He is the only outpatient physical therapist at Navicent Health Baldwin, so he does all the evaluations.

Dr. Anderson said, “helping people get back to their hobbies or helping their loved ones is a cool position to be in.”

Navicent keeps their physical therapist one-on-one with patients, whereas many other outpatient sites have one therapist working with two or three patients at a time. Dr. Anderson gets to see everything here whereas he did not when he previously worked at Emory in Atlanta.

At Emory, Dr. Anderson was more specialized seeing only orthopedic people with a lot of low back pain and a few surgeries here and there. More of a variety at Navicent Health Baldwin helps Dr. Anderson keep on pace for things he should know. When there is no one on the outpatient side, Dr. Anderson can go over to the inpatient side to help over there where they mainly deal with things like nursing.

“Chris lights up the gym with his unique style of teaching,” Vicktoria McDonald, patient of Dr. Anderson says. “He uses his knowledge along with a creative approach to help encourage his patients to push themselves to go above and beyond their limits to improve. His work ethic is unparalleled by today’s standards. Chris’ confidence, passion, and personal warmth demonstrates his expertise beyond question. I visited him with a broken knee and a case of juvenile arthritis. I have seen a great deal of PT’s but none of them has measured even close to the quality and method of care and kindness he abundantly administers.”

Dr. Anderson also makes time for himself and his family as he enjoys being outdoors and being active, which is one thing that drove him toward PT. He used to be a sponsored skateboarder and has skateboarded for the last 20 years. Dr. Anderson enjoys any kind of board sport including surfing, skateboarding, and snowboarding. Skateboarding is his favorite boarding sport because he must travel to North Carolina or Virginia to surf or snowboard, but skateboarding is a board sport he can do anywhere.

Dr. Anderson mainly skateboards on the weekends now, but he also enjoys working out and spending time with family. His daughters take up a lot of that wonderful family time with a two-year-old and a recent born who entered the world in November 2019.

For today’s students considering the medical field, Dr. Anderson suggests thinking of why you are doing it. The medical field provides a unique position to really help people such as moms, dads, grandparents, and siblings. It is helpful to have a passion to what you want to accomplish because many people are known to burn out because the job requires a lot of documentation, but it is all about helping people.

“It seems like everywhere we go Chris has previous patients come up to him and say how well they have been doing since their time with him,” Tricia says. “It makes me really proud to see all the people he’s helped.”

After making such a meaningful impact on so many lives, Dr. Anderson wants more. He would like to earn his clinical specialist certification within the next five years. Dr. Anderson feels that he can help many individuals in Milledgeville with that small town feel and being the only outpatient physical therapist at Navicent Health Baldwin. He likes that everyone knows each other in Milledgeville.
To many middle school and high school students in Milledgeville, the end of the day school bell signals them to go home, study, and do it all again, but to some students, the final school bell signifies their journey to the Hancock branch of the Mary Vinson memorial library, where every weekday a unique program is available to them whether it be “Maker Monday” or “Teen movie Thursday”, and they are given a free public space to study, feel safe, have fun, and feed their creative minds. Young adults across Milledgeville are given this wonderful opportunity thanks to Dabney Kinser, the Young Adult Librarian for the Twin Lakes Library System who stands out from the rest, and tirelessly works towards the good of the Young Adults in this community.

“Dabney has a quality of being very... committed and passionate about their work without wanting to be in the forefront all the time,” said Stephen Houser, library director. “They deserve a lot of credit for what they do, people that are diligent and work not for glory but for the benefit of others to get their time in the spotlight.”

With the rapid growth of technology usage amongst teens, it’s hard to maintain the wonder that libraries once had to their community, but Kinser profits off of the importance of technology today, and seamlessly integrates it into their daily programs they put on, such as Teen movie Thursday, which takes the many Young Adult books that can be found on the shelves of the library, to the big screen with the movie adaptation, sparking the interest of teens. On Fridays, like other days, Dabney consults with the Young Adults and asks them what they would like to do as a program, ensuring that they have a say. Most Fridays after school, you can walk into the Hancock branch and find joyous teens playing virtual reality games, which is a testament to Dabney’s forward-thinking mind, “They love it! And we have a T.V set up so other people can watch and see what the person is doing, and they’ll just sit there and watch forever.” Says Dabney.

The daily Young Adult programs put on by Kinser are unique when you look across Georgia at most libraries who tend to put on programs once a week, or even a few times a month. Fellow librarians are amazed at the length Kinser goes to provide an enriching space for our communities Teens, “usually when I’ve gone to different gatherings of librarians who will share ideas and I have shared and told them that I do stuff every day everyone’s like ‘what?! That’s like, your main job? You get to do that?’ and I’m like ‘yes, I do!’” The position of Young Adult librarian was a position that was built up by Kinser themselves, who originally started as a reference supervisor with a different children’s librarian at the time who Dabney shared their ideas with.
and one day was struck with the question “Well what could you do for the Teens.” To which the response was, “well... Do you want to do it?” and of course Dabney’s answer was yes.

Over the course of eight years, Dabney transformed what the Young Adult section meant to the library and pushed programs from a measly once a month, to every single weekday. With the overall frequency of Teen programs, it’s no surprise that Dabney makes connections with the Young adults and keeps in touch with the now adults who have moved on to honorable endeavors from being involved with the Coast Guard to even a fellow employee of the library system. Dabney attempts to reach out to all of the Young Adults of the community and let them know they have a resource such as the Hancock Branch. “They have done a fantastic job doing outreach trying to reach all the middle schools and high schools... They make an effort to try and include everybody in the programming that they can.” Says Stephen Houser, Library Director. “Dabney has a quality of being very... committed and passionate about their work without wanting to be in the forefront all the time. They deserve a lot of credit for what they do, people that are diligent and work not for glory but for the benefit of others to get their time in the spotlight.” Says Houser.

Dabney Kinser’s passion for libraries, literature and inspiring Young Adults makes them an extremely valuable asset to the community of Milledgeville, “I think that it is amazing that they how they created the YA programming and how much the programs have grown over the years thanks to Dabney and all their hard work. I think they have created a wonderful environment for these kids.” Says Abigail Giordano, the young adult assistant to Kinser. The Young Adults of Milledgeville all have the privilege of knowing they have a safe space to go to after school to study, and feed their minds to become the best version of themselves that they can be, and have a unique after school program to look forward to every weekday, all thanks to one individual who works not for themselves, but for the community.
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In her moderate-sized office, she sits at her desk with her arms crossed like she is Wonderwoman just waiting for the call to settle the days dispute. Her passion for health and fitness is noticeable as she sports leggings and a workout top. With one look it can be presumed that she spends her whole day at the gym, but in reality, there is much more to an average day for Hoganne Harisson-Walton.

On a normal day, Hoganne works as an attorney at her self made law firm while also being a public defender for the city of Milledgeville. While her role in the community is already substantial, she also has her own fitness company, GoHard, LLC and is involved in other countless ways.

Hoganne’s spark for fitness came after battling cancer three times and acts as a stress reliever from practicing law. “She has had a very challenging and courageous career,” said Floyd Griffin, former mayor of Milledgeville.

Born and raised in Milledgeville, Hoganne’s passion for helping her community goes farther than a love for community service. The small city in Baldwin County is also where her mother, Dr. Janet Harrison, and much of her family grew up.

Her mother who also has a similar philosophy when it comes to serving her community inspired Hoganne when she was beginning her career in law.

“I remember a time where my mom would come in and do work for people who didn’t have the money and would exchange services for watermelon or a pumpkin pie,” said Walton.

Hoganne’s interest in social justice stemmed from a trip to South Africa when she was in college. An instance where a young woman was being sexually assaulted in public followed by a nonchalant cop threw her into a spiral of thoughts.

From that moment she knew she wanted to help women and children but the question was how. After running through a list of professions Walton said her mom suggested, “why don’t you just go to law school.” The decision from there was an easy one, Hoganne became determined to change the laws that were missing that day in South Africa.

Law school is what she did, after graduating from Spelman College and receiving her MBA at the Keller graduate school at Devry she went on to Thomas M. Cooley school of law in Lansing, Mich.

Before her move back to Milledgeville, Hoganne spent some time in Atlanta after law school where she attempted to find a job during the recession in 2009. When she was on the job hunt during the day, she spent her evenings working at Carrabba’s.

January 2010, with little luck, she decided to open up her

Hoganne Harisson-Walton

By Lilia Starnes

‘Showing them teamwork is important … the team aspect keeps them motivated and accountable.’
own firm in Atlanta. With the help of a friend, she was able to have a small rent-free office space. During this period, Hoganne was still working crazy hours starting up her firm and working at a restaurant.

When that proved to be a competitive market, Hoganne called up her mom seeking advice on what her next move should be. “My mom said why don’t you just come back to Milledgeville people know you here,” said Walton.

And that’s what she did, Hoganne followed her mother’s advice and came back to her home town and began to build her law firm. Hoganne and her mom share an office space, while one side practices dental care the other practices social justice.

It is clear that sharing is something Hoganne has no problem doing, within her busy work schedule she manages to juggle multiple roles. “When she is into it I mean both feet in,” said Dr. Janet Harrison, Hoganne’s mother.

Other than law, Hoganne’s passion for fitness is not limited to the gym. Her company, GoHard, LLC. Hoganne’s company is dedicated to educating people and assisting people in making healthy lifestyle decisions.

“The company brings together people from the health and wellness industries to help educate the community through interactive activities that are guaranteed to keep a person motivated, staying active, and healthy,” said Walton.

Her role in the community extends all the way to Central Georgia Technical College where she is an assistant cross-country coach and also teaches. Hoganne’s main goal when coaching is the ways you can integrate teamwork into daily life.

“Showing them teamwork is important because they are young and they are at this point in their lives where they are figuring out where they want to be and where they want to go with their careers the team aspect keeps them motivated and accountable,” said Walton.

She explains that while she does teach and coach on the side, young people teach her more in the aspect of societal standards. “They have different struggles and society puts different standards on them and they help keep me grounded with my expectations,” said Walton.
‘You don’t think you’re making a difference, but you are’

Jemeria Cummings

By Adrienne Gardner

To be oblivious is to be “unknowing” or “unaware”
That feeling you get when everyone around you knows something that you don’t.
Not everyone understands what it’s like to sit in a classroom and not understand a word that’s being said.
The deep shame that fills your body and doesn’t stop until it reaches your cheeks.
The little prayer that is prayed after a teacher asks a question and you don’t know the answer.
And the smirking and giggling filling the room after you’re asked to answer it.
Jemeria Cummings knows what it’s like to feel that way, and she’s helping other kids that have felt that feeling.
She is the creator and CEO of Building Readers First, a tutoring company located in Milledgeville, Ga.
Cummings’ goal is to help children grades K-7 to read confidently and increase the overall literacy rate in the schools. She wants students to develop an interest in reading and literacy that will follow them for the rest of their lives.
“They didn’t think my son could do it,” says Stephanie Wright, a parent and supporter of the program. “His teachers were worried that my youngest would have to be held back.”
Wright’s son was having challenges in school. He was behind on his sight words, and his teachers told Wright that he was going to have trouble catching up. By the end of three months with Cummings, Wright’s youngest son had learned more than 300 sight words and had been promoted to the first grade.
Cummings, however, never thought she’d even be working with kids.
“I actually tried to avoid it at all costs,” she says. “But my husband convinced me to at least volunteer to see if I would like it.”
Despite her initial resistance, Cummings got into teaching.
She first went into the board of education to see how she could become a volunteer. After Cummings told the woman who assisted her that she received a degree in chemistry she was offered a teaching job.
“I actually became a teacher that same day,” says Cummings. “Then I found myself teaching at a high school.”
She enjoyed working with the kids and helped them enjoy learning.
“She was full of energy and had a great work ethic,” says her former co-worker, Amy Jackson. “I didn’t work
with her for very long but she was a joy to have.”

Cummings says she has always worked with the youth, but the hardest thing about teaching them is getting them to engage in something that they aren’t interested in.

“Kids think just because we’re adults we can just pick up things easily,” says Cummings. “But if it’s not interesting to us then we’re not going to engage, either.”

When meeting each student, Cummings first takes the time to ask the student questions about them. She believes that if she asks the students questions about their interests first, then she can find out how to apply it to what they need to know.

Cummings’ connection with the student is genuine, to say the least, but the journey to becoming an entrepreneur wasn’t easy.

“It’s been hard,” says her husband, Quechyan. “But she has definitely come a long way and I’m proud.”

He says that his wife does her own thing and he’s always there to support her. Before Cummings became a teacher she was an employee at CVS and a photographer.

“I asked her before she started Building Readers First if she was sure,” he recalls. “She was always doing something new and some things fell through in the past.”

But with her latest venture, Cummings felt a pull from another source.

“My relationship with God ties in entirely with my program,” she says. “I tried to do tutoring in the past, but God said it wasn’t the time.”

Cummings grew up in the church with her mother and father.

“When tutoring came back in my mind I asked God to show me the way,” she says. “Everything just started falling into place just the way He intended.”

Cummings says that when starting the company it was financially strenuous. But she was determined to follow through on God’s plan. She took her time starting her company and made something she can be proud of.

Cummings has plans to start a non-profit for families that can’t afford educational services such as tutoring.

“You don’t think you’re making a difference, but you are,” she says of her work. “Every obstacle that came in my way I prayed over.”

Cummings is a great inspiration to her students and her family. She has prevailed through her obstacles to entrepreneurship. Although it took Cummings a while to make her dream a reality she’s proud of the process.

“If you look at life and your failures as a lesson then you know God will provide each and every time.”
If you ask Jeremiah Bennett when he knew what he wanted to be when he grew up, he’d tell you he’s known pretty much his whole life.

At only 35, Jeremiah Bennett boasts more than 25 film credits on IMDb, which includes but isn’t limited to producer, production manager and cinematographer. He’s the executive producer of Glass Door Studios, manages two sound studios of Creative Sound Concepts, is a member of the Television Academy and is the vice chairman of Georgia’s chapter of the Producers Guild of America.

His passion for producing, however, began much earlier. Bennett began working with his church at 13, helping with music and sound during church services and events.

For the next two years, he continued with the same responsibilities until he was offered a part-time job as the church’s media director. He had the responsibilities of filming and editing videos for his church’s mission trips, summer camps, Christmas plays and other events.

It was at that point that Bennett knew what he wanted to do with his life; he’d found a love for media production.

After college, he worked on various independent films and odd jobs but had to rely on jobs that weren’t his passion like car salesmanship.

Good luck started coming his way and Bennett was able to work as a production assistant (PA) on shows on the Food Network, TLC and Discovery Channel.

A gust of opportunity in the form of a job promotion to production manager working on “Here Comes Honey Boo Boo” carried Bennett to Milledgeville. While working on the show, he lived in a small apartment for two years and grew to like the city.

However, he felt like there was a gap that needed to be filled.

Bennett saw a lot of similarities between his hometown and Milledgeville. Both are beautiful college towns with great histories, and he wanted to help the community in whatever way he could.

“I wanted to bring jobs and people into the city of Milledgeville. Maybe I couldn’t do something like start a business or build a factory, but I could do this,” Bennett says.

So, in 2013, Bennett introduced the idea of bringing a film festival to Milledgeville to director BJ Golnick, who was working with him at the time on “Here Comes Honey Boo Boo.”

Bennett set out gathering support and sponsorship to make the festival happen. With help from Georgia College, local businesses and city government, the first Milledgeville Film Festival launched in 2013.

The festival faced its set of challenges in the beginning.

“I was actually surprised there was no sort of film festi-
val [in Milledgeville],” Bennett says. “I think that during the first one we had only about five people in attendance who had never been to a film festival before.”

The festival has grown immensely since then, thanks to Bennett’s hard work and dedication. In 2017, it spread out to Eatonton and was renamed the Milledgeville-Eatonton Film Festival, or ME Film Festival for short.

Last year, the film festival included more than 120 filmmakers participate and more than 1,000 attendees as well as executives from major film companies like Netflix and Disney.

Now back working in Atlanta, Bennett still comes back to Milledgeville for projects.

One of Bennett’s favorite projects “Mayflower,” was shot in Milledgeville. The short follows Richard Mayflower Sr. who, in less than a year, loses his wife to breast cancer and his son to an ISIS attack in Afghanistan. Mayflower, the title character, seeks to avenge his son’s death but events make him re-evaluate his actions.

Bennett was the producer of the film and says that he felt as though it tells a sensitive story that needs to be heard.

“I like to feel like my projects made a change in something when I’m finished with them. I like for my work to make a difference. I felt like this one was a heavy-hitter,” Bennett says.

Bennett likes creating and doing things that have an impact. Whether it’s helping share the stories of those who are less fortunate, bringing aspiring and seasoned filmmakers together to share their work from around the world, or creating a brand-new experience for the residents of a small college town to enjoy, he has no intention of stopping anytime soon.
Ontario Williams

By Mary Waldmann

That’s really what is most important to me, just bringing some sort of positive image to Milledgeville.

Ontario Williams walks into Blackbird Coffee shop on a Sunday afternoon wearing a neatly pressed blue suit with a red bow tie.

With a vivid smile, he easily stands out in the cozy atmosphere of the Milledgeville coffee shop.

But to him, he’s home.

Williams, a music education major at Augusta University, is a classically trained opera singer. A senior in college, Williams is an accredited vocalist.

“Honestly, if you ask me, I don’t think I can sing,” says Williams, throwing back his head in laughter.

Ten years of extensive vocal training, theater performances, daily practices and an endless list of musical performance decorations — if Williams recorded a best-selling album, he would refuse to put himself on the cover.

Truly, no matter where his singing career takes him, Williams will never forget where he came from — humanity and humility.

“I think it’s important to not forget where you come from,” says Williams. “Music has taken me everywhere, but if it wasn’t for the city of Milledgeville, I wouldn’t have started music in general.”

Williams began singing for his middle school chorus in seventh grade after being inspired by his older brother.

One day, while watching his brother rehearse for the high school’s performance of “Beauty and The Beast,” he realized that he was missing out on something.

“I remember seeing him on stage and I was like ‘dang, this looks fun!’” Says Williams. “He was having so much fun on stage and I was like, ‘wow, I want to try that’.”

His close relationship with his brother and family pushed him through the beginning stages of his vocal performances, as they supported him in times where he lacked confidence.

“I remember in eighth grade I had my first solo. I thought I did horrible, but I remember my brother in the audience screaming, ‘that’s my brother!’” Says Williams. “I actually re-sang that song in my college days and it was amazing to hear the progress.”

Williams continued with chorus into high school, where he met Kathy Carroll, his chorus teacher. Carroll, Williams says, was the first teacher to show him the privileges that come with music.

A talkative student in the classroom, he often got into trouble with teachers, he says. Carroll went out of her way to make sure he was staying on track, by taking away his singing privileges and checking in with his other teachers to see how he was doing in class.

“That’s how I really earned my singing privileges,” says Williams. “It was because of that, that made me really want
to pursue my music. One person can have this much effect on another person’s life and I wanted to be that person.”

He moved through his high school career with a newfound determination to push his love for singing and ended up placing first in the men’s state solo vocal competition.

“That’s when I realized, ‘oh maybe I can do this,’” says Williams. “And so, it was because of this opportunity that I pursued it in college.”

When looking for colleges to attend, Williams was adamant on basing his decision on which school’s would carry the lowest financial burden for himself and his family. But his vocal teacher, Bill Hobbins, helped him understand the bigger picture when it came to achieving his personal goals.

“He showed me it’s not all about the money, it’s what you gain from the experience and what the professors are willing to offer you, so I think that’s what really won me over to Augusta University,” says Williams. “The professors won me over.”

Believing in his mentors throughout his career, Williams placed his trust in those who were willing to help him. Hobbins, Williams vocal teacher for four years, saw the potential in him and knew that his willingness to be mentored was important for his success.

“Ontario was always a gifted singer, but he had to grow a good bit in order to become what he needed to become,” says Hobbins. “Ontario came to me about the changes that needed to be made and really created some value for himself.”

With the necessary changes made, Williams gained a new sense of confidence in his college career, opening the door for an opportunity to sing in the opera ensemble.

“When I was a sophomore in college, one of my former professors used to bring people in her opera ensemble just for fun, so she was like ‘you should sing in the opera ensemble,’” says Williams. “And I was like ‘me? No!’ so I really just gave it a try.”

Coming from a musical theater background, Williams never thought that he could potentially help him to be a successful teacher.

“He gave me a new avenue to pursue my music. One person can have this much effect on another person’s life and I wanted to be that person.”

“His experience in music was based on a personal relationship with his previous teachers and that’s what drove him,” says Hall. “He knew the impact that teaching had on himself by his teachers and he has always wanted to do the same for his future students.”

Though Williams has marked himself to be successful in maintaining important relationships with his mentors, the most valuable mentors in his life live 80 miles away in Milledgeville.

Whenever Williams has a performance, no matter how big or small, his family goes out of their way to make sure they attend.

“My family is very supportive, especially my mom. If I tell her about an event, she will take the day off of work and drive down to Augusta to come see it,” says Williams. “If I don’t tell her about it, she gets mad and tells me, ‘you better send me all your events.’”

Williams’ family supports him not only with his music, but with his personal challenges as well, especially after losing his grandparents in 2017.

“That was a time in my life where I wanted to stop everything,” says Williams. “That year was my challenge year, and I think what got me through was just family.”

Whenever challenges in William’s life arise, his selfless nature triumphs over the negativity.

“Every now and then you would see him down on the mountain a little bit,” says Hobbins. “But it seemed that every time that happened it was about struggles in the lives of the people he cared about rather than himself.”

Family-oriented person, Williams holds true to his hometown roots, never underestimating the value of community.

He strives to give back.

“I think with me being a classically-trained singer from Milledgeville and also being a black male, you don’t really see a lot of black classical or opera singers these days, especially from the south,” says Williams. “I think that it’s important to me that I show my community and also other young black males that it’s possible to be what you want to be.”

Williams life-long best friend, Michaela Schmitz, recognizes the value he has on his community.

“He is the person everyone can depend on,” says Schmitz. “So many people turn to him for the support they need to get something done. He is everyone’s go-to-guy.”

And though Williams is now placed at a crossroad in his life with approaching graduation, he will never strive to place himself above the world that has created his love for music.

“I really don’t want to see myself go big out in the nation,” says Williams. “I mean, if it happens it happens, but I prefer really just singing in my community and offering my gift to people.”

Williams stands as an exemplary member of his two worlds, music and community, bridging the gaps of talent and success with humanity and humility.

“That’s really what is most important to me, just bringing some sort of positive image to Milledgeville.”
Jobie Shields

By Sarah Geise

‘I love being able to tell the stories of the students, faculty and staff’

Jobie Shields is no stranger to hard work. Since graduating Georgia College in 2015 with a bachelor of arts degree in mass communications, Shields is a familiar face within the community of Georgia Military College as the public affairs coordinator and the face of GMC media.

“Not only is she a hard worker, she is also the kind of person to inspire a group to get things done,” says Dr. James Schiffman, Shields former professor at Georgia College.

Public affairs was not a career Shields initially pictured herself pursuing. As a student, Shields strived to become a TV news anchor. She made her dream a reality, first interning as a senior in college at 13WMAZ News in Macon and then took a job with them as a news reporter after graduating from Georgia College in 2015.

Through hard work and dedication, she made her way up from a news reporter to become a weekend evening anchor for WMAZ News. With her goal achieved, Shields found herself wanting to try other careers.

“After working there for two years, I realized I wanted to try something different in the communications field,” says Shields. “Then the opportunity came about at Georgia Military College for me to be the public affairs coordinator and I decided to take it.”

However, making the switch from broadcast news to public relations was not an easy one for Shields. Her job as public affairs coordinator requires her to have the skills to write press releases, edit videos, create media advisories, conduct interviews, and take photographs, a considerable contrast to the duties of her previous broadcasting job.

“At first, I was very scared and nervous because it was completely different from my job at WMAZ and I had to learn many new skills during my transition to public affairs coordinator,” recalls Shields.

Despite her initial fears going into the job, Shields adapted to the change. “I was able to ease into it and have been working at GMC for almost 2 years now and loved it ever since,” said Shields.

“She is a rock star for GMC as the public affairs coordinator and face of GMC media, everyone loves Jobie,” says Jay Bentley, GMC director of communications.

As the public affairs coordinator and face of GMC media, Shields runs the social media accounts for all 15 GMC campuses.

“Even though I don’t work as a recruiter for GMC, what I do is basically recruiting itself because anyone
who is interested in going to GMC is going to look at our social media, so I have to ensure the message I put out reflects what our college wants,” says Shields.

One of the challenges she encounters is learning to adapt to stay relevant in the industry. “Since the communications industry is ever-changing, I have to make it a priority to learn what’s new, what are the trends, and what I can be doing differently to ensure we are still attracting the students we need to and hitting those numbers,” says Shields.

In addition to running the social media accounts for all 15 GMC campuses, Shields sends out press releases, conducts interviews, takes on-campus photos or videos, and any coordination with media goes through her.

“Every day is different, some days I spend sitting in meetings, or other times I will spend the whole day shooting video, I just never know,” says Shields.

The aspect of her job she finds most rewarding, however, is how it allows her to meet and interact with various people in the GMC community all over the state. “I love being able to tell the stories of the students, faculty and staff,” says Shields. “GMC is so unique in that we have a prep school, a junior college, and a core of cadets, which allows me to work with a variety of students, from third-grade students to 40-year-old students.”

Despite her busy schedule, Shields prioritizes keeping a good work-life balance. “If I had to choose a life motto, it would be work hard, play hard,” says Shields with a laugh. “Just because I take a lot of pride in doing my best in my job and my career, but I also take a lot of pride in my family life. I really value my relationships with my friends and family, which makes work life balance really important to me.”

One of her hobbies outside of work is fitness. She works at BodyPlex as a fitness instructor and teaches the martial arts-inspired workout class, Body Combat.

Shields’ work in the GMC community gives the students a real-life work perspective. “When the students see me out with my camera, they are seeing the different opportunities that you can do with photography, video and writing.”
For Olivia Pelton, there is never a dull moment. Over the past two semesters, Olivia reached an impressive goal: playing one of her dream roles as Sally Bowles in Gainesville Theatre Alliance’s production of Cabaret. She competed against many talented upperclassmen vying for the part. For a college sophomore, playing this character in a major production would normally be unfathomable, but Olivia Pelton is not just any theatre student.

Olivia describes Cabaret as a story about paying attention, taking a stand for what is right and preparing for what is coming ahead. That is exactly what she did to earn her role. Olivia prepared for months, tirelessly memorizing the script and learning music by heart. She also tailored her British accent for the role, and walked in to her audition in hair, makeup and costume with confidence. All this before the role was even hers.

Some might describe her work ethic as exhausting, but that’s just the way she likes it.

“I never stop working, but that’s also just how I’ve lived my entire life. It’s a good kind of stressful. It keeps me motivated and determined and focused and excited about the work,” says Olivia.

Not many people would describe their own stress to be satisfying, but Olivia is no stranger to the demands of the theatre, where stress is normality. The theatre is a high-stakes environment; fast-paced, laborious and simultaneously thrilling. To pursue a career in the theatre is rarely easy, and Olivia handles every challenge with a natural grace and a poise uncommon for her age. Olivia’s 21-year timeline is not marked, but filled, by countless roles and performances.

“Olivia is not only talented, but she has cultivated her talent in classes and in a very dedicated way with private music lessons—everything that she can get her hands on to learn more about her craft,” says Karen Berman, who is Chair of the Georgia College Department of Theatre and Dance, and one of Olivia’s teachers and mentors.

Olivia does not consider her childhood to be normal, because she spent so much of her time focusing on her artistry. Some of her earliest memories take place in the Miller Dance Studio at Georgia College where her mother, Amelia Pelton, has directed the Georgia College Dance Department for 25 years.

“I think I had a very wonderful, dreamlike childhood growing up in Milledgeville,” says Olivia, “because there were a lot of artistic opportunities for me. I think the very artistic culture that Milledgeville has and the amount of rich history inspired me to keep performing.”

At first, Olivia was set on becoming a ballerina and a dance teacher like her mom, but her interests fluctuated be-
cause of the different activities she got to participate in.

At age three, Olivia had her first voice lesson with her grandmother; a singer who helped found the Mobile Opera in Alabama.

“Olivia had a gorgeous singing voice the minute she could speak,” says her mom, Amelia. Olivia continued vocal training all through grade school, starting at Eagle Ridge Elementary, then Oak Hill Middle School before attending Baldwin County High School and dual-enrolling at Georgia College for two years. She graduated with a 4.0 GPA.

“My mom always tells me that I need to slow down and stop trying to be a perfectionist and to take a breath and to live,” says Olivia, “but to me, I can’t live without the work that I’m doing so if I am going do it, I want to do the best that I can.”

Olivia remembers warmly a time around the 6th grade when she was very busy, simultaneously taking lessons in dance, voice, art, piano and trumpet. Later, her interests led to the Braves Marching Band, Jazz Band, and roles with the Milledgeville Players during high school.

“I thought that was totally unfair to only get to pursue one thing, when I loved all of the things that I was being trained in,” says Olivia, “So I said, I’m going to find a career that allows me to do everything!”

Musical Theatre is a major pathway through which Olivia is able to incorporate all of her talents. Because of all the academic and theatre scholarships she has received, her college savings account has not been touched. She hopes to use her savings to afford to move to New York once she graduates. There, she hopes to sign with an Opera and Musical Theatre Agent.

“I don’t want to be performing solely in New York for the first few years. I’d like to take a national tour or to travel and perform in different opera companies around the world while I’m still young and then settle down and focus on a career in New York City. I want to see the world while I still can, before I set up shop somewhere,” Olivia describes.

With her opera voice, Olivia constantly strives for perfection. This winter, she will audition for opera apprenticeships and internships all over the country and in Europe.

For now, she is keeping herself occupied with 19 hours of coursework and a full schedule of performances with the Gainesville Theatre Alliance, which is a collaboration between Brenau University and the University of North Georgia, and one of the top theatre programs in the state. She calls her ability to perform there an honor and a privilege.

Olivia is the kind of artist who will utilize her talents to change lives. But regardless of her accomplishments, she remains true to herself; extremely humble. She combines her unparalleled effort in her field with born talent and kindness, and that is why she will continue to be successful.

“She is pursuing a theatre career with a passion like no other,” says Berman, “She wants to be on Broadway, and I think she’ll make it.”
I wanted to do something different and it felt natural to come back to the shop

Down on Swint Avenue, the old cabinet shop stood. It was small and very dusty, like most cabinet shops are, but this one was special. It was the start of a humble beginning and a family legacy.

Logan Register was born in Milledgeville, Ga. and is the co-owner of Register and Son Cabinets. He is a fourth-generation carpenter.

“It’s nice being a part of a small local business, and family business has always been important to me,” Register says.

Growing up, Register spent a lot of time at the shop with his dad, Randy. Every day after school and during school breaks, he was working at the shop. Ever since he was younger his passion was building things.

“He has been working in the shops since he was old enough to run around in here and shoot himself with a nail gun,” Randy said.

As a kid, Register built all kinds of little toys with whatever supplies he could get his hands on. He made cars and one time he built his own fishing pole.

Even though he grew up working in the shop with his dad, Register wanted to do something different. When he graduated high school in 2010, he took night classes in Sandersville to learn to weld.

While he was working other jobs, Register’s love and passion never changed. He still built little projects at home because he enjoyed it. He worked in forestry in Sparta for a few years, and then he got a job working at Atlanta Gas Light in Macon.

The legacy of the family weighed heavily on Register’s mind and he wanted to follow his heart.

“It was one of those things, where I felt like I was running from it the whole time because I just wanted to do something different,” Register says.

After months of talking about it with his wife, Blair, and a lot of prayers, Register decided to come back to the cabinet shop. He wanted to follow his heart.

“I had been at the gas company for a long time and I had retirement and insurance,” Logan says. “I took a big pay cut, but I just wasn’t happy. I got burned out workin’ for the big company feel. I wanted to do something different and it felt natural to come back to the shop.”

Register says he enjoys the mental challenge of creating something out of nothing.

He shows up to the dusty shop 30 minutes before everyone else and he is the last one to leave. He uses his extra time and money from materials to work on other projects to make other people happy. He goes above and
beyond for his family and others in the community.

Register built a shelf for his daughter’s teacher in one night. He went to the school Friday afternoon and measured everything. Then built the shelf on a Saturday.

“My shelf is way more than what I wanted, and he went out of his way to make it special,” says Lisa McCrickard, a teacher at John Milledge Academy. “He might not be done with me yet.”

When Register is not at work or building a project, he spends time with his family. He has a 6-year-old daughter, Brenleigh, and a 1-year-old son, Reed. Logan loves fishing, hunting and anything outdoors. He enjoys having the kids out on the river or on the lake.

“He enjoys family time, and his dad is his best friend,” wife Blair says.

Logan and his dad have always done carpenter work. They built their own houses, barns and porches.

“What can make a father more happy than being able to spend the afternoon working with your kid,” Randy says. “It’s as good as it gets.”
Waynesia Sherman

‘Find something you love or find something that is relevant to you’

Waynesia Sherman is a prime example of hard work and leadership within her community. Her love and appreciation for those around her, whether it’s her coworkers or people from her community, sets her apart.

“She is one of the hardest working people I know and has the best heart for others,” says Amy Raburn about her friend. It’s clear to see the truth in Rayburn’s words by taking a glance into Sherman’s everyday life.

Born and raised in Milledgeville, Sherman has dedicated herself to being a part of the community. Some of her history regarding volunteering includes working with adults with special needs from the Life Enrichment Center, serving on the production team for Northridge Christian Church, as well as organizing fundraisers supporting local schools and her church through Tidal Wave.

Sherman says the fundraisers are often met with tremendous response.

“Serving is something I just do,” said Sherman. Her heart has always regarded volunteering as something that each and every person should do because they want to. Sherman and Raburn have both been involved with events like Night to Shine and Charity Day at Northridge Church and have built their friendship through those experiences.

“Serving can make one humble,” says Sherman, and she urges everyone in her community to find something to get involved with.

Creating an impact in her community doesn’t end with just volunteer work. Sherman also pours herself into her full-time job.

Beginning in 2012, Sherman began her career at Tidal Wave.

“I didn’t think I would be here for more than two years,” says Sherman. It was her team and former managers that made her love her job. Sherman especially remembers her former boss, Gerald Andrews, taking time to teach her what a wrench was and what it meant to be a Tidal Wave employee.

Starting as a regular attendant at the local Tidal Wave car wash service, Sherman dedicated herself to working as hard as she could and eventually became a manager there. She believes it’s important to do her job to the best of her abilities.

“If you have a team that follows you, that does their job without you having to watch them 24/7, that’s successful to me,” Sherman says.

Sherman’s biggest motivation is her team. About five years ago, Sherman and her team washed 114 cars in one hour, beating their previous record. The team later celebrated their achievement with a pizza dinner.

Sherman likes to promote a fun environment at work.
“She loves energy and she’s just very patient with everyone,” says Bryce Raburn. Raburn is a Tidal Wave employee and has fond memories of working alongside Sherman.

Another reason Sherman stayed is because the business lives by the key three: Create a smile, speak enthusiastically and make eye contact. Sherman’s main goal at Tidal Wave is “to be friends with each and every customer.”

The team of employees at Tidal Wave look up to Sherman each and every day.

“She always acknowledges you and encourages everyone every single day,” said Bryce Raburn. He adds, “as far as leadership goes, she’s a great boss and she lets us know what needs to be done but she also knows how to let us enjoy our job.”

Raburn’s favorite memory is coming into work one morning because Sherman was understaffed. The two worked side by side for the entire shift and were able to encourage each other for the entire duration.

Before Tidal Wave, Sherman worked for a local BP gas station. After eight years of working there, the store shut down and a friend invited her to apply to Tidal Wave. In 2012, Sherman began what would be a long-term investment in Tidal Wave.

Sherman urges people in the community to “find something you love or find something that is relevant to you.”

“It can be stressful sometimes but at the end of the day I’m not leaving,” she says. She likes to look at the positive things in her life and keep persevering.

Sherman’s involvement at Tidal Wave and in her community is not even close to being finished.

“Tomorrow is never promised,” says Sherman.

She wants to take things day by day and focus on what’s in front of her.

For Sherman, it’s important that she appreciate the things and people in her life while she has them.

For now, Sherman is dedicated to lifting up her team and serving those around her for as long as she can.
Sarah Tanner

By Erin Giuliano

‘This job is about the kids and they are the only reason any of us show up’

Sarah Tanner started coaching tennis when she was around 12 or 13 years old. One could say her teaching runs in her veins.

Her dad was a tennis coach at Mercer. As she got older she began teaching private tennis lessons to younger kids.

She went off to college with a heart set for a chemistry degree and teaching out of her mind, until one day she retired the thought of chemistry and rekindled her love for teaching.

“I was surprised. At the time, I was only in my 11th year of teaching and we have a lot of very good teachers at this school, even some who mentored me,” recalls Tanner of receiving the 2018-2019 Baldwin High School Teacher of the Year recognition.

Tanner says that to even be nominated was hard for her to wrap her head around and to keep progressing through the process was unbelievable for her.

“To have so many people here at Baldwin County High School who do such great things and to be picked out of that is a really humbling experience,” Tanner says.

Tanner, who grew up with a coaching background and a family full of teachers, loved what she did, but went to Georgia College with a different plan for future.

While progressing through her fourth year at Georgia College, Tanner decided that a future that included more school and a chemistry degree was not in the cards for her anymore. She followed her heart and completed the master of arts in teaching program at GC.

Tanner’s schedule differs from year to year, but her realm of classes she teaches includes mostly science courses. She says she teaches almost every science class excluding biology.

Currently she teaches two physical science classes and a chemistry class to high school level students.

“Kathy Grimes, who passed away a few years ago, she was a staple here. Her and I worked hard to develop the forensics program together,” Tanner says proudly.

Tanner is extremely passionate about her work and her focus is helping better the students and provide a stable teaching environment for them.

“The kids motivate me to come to work every day. This job is about the kids and they are the only reason any of us show up,” Tanner says.

She says that her main advice for aspiring teachers today is to not give up. Her experience has allowed her to get to know these kids and help each and every kid strive toward the future.

“I think her ability to teach each student differently is one of her best qualities, she understands that everyone learns differently and she works hard to adapt to each student,”
student Catherine Mullis, says. Mullis says that Tanner’s teaching style is like no other and that she cares for her students and works hard to make sure the learning environment is comfortable for every student.

“I was a quiet student who just sat back and was there. So I started as the quiet kid and now I am here, an outgoing teacher,” Tanner says.

Not only do her students appreciate Tanner, but her co-workers do also.

“The best part of working with Mrs. Tanner is that we both have an understanding of how to handle and deliver the curriculum to the students. Her method of teaching makes the learning environment fun, rigorous and excepting,” co-worker TeeShea Hall says.

The once-quiet student in the classroom is now a leader and wonderful example for her own students.

A mother of two kids, who works hard every day for both the community and her family. She plans to continue teaching for the next 19 years to provide a stable environment for her family and get her two kids through school.
LongHorn Steakhouse
2470 N. Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 414-7700

Los Magueyes
3052 N. Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 453-0271

Marco’s Pizza
2910 Heritage Pl.
Milledgeville  
(478) 295-3570

The Market Basket, LLC
370 Allen Memorial Dr.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-5914

McDonald’s
2490 N. Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-1312

McDonald’s
611 S. Wayne St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-9611

McDonald’s
Wal-Mart, Milledgeville  
(478) 453-9499

Metropolis Cafe
138 N. Wayne St.
Milledgeville  
478-452-0247

Ms. Stella’s
960 N. Wilkinson St.
Milledgeville  
478-453-7311

Octagon Cafe
2400 N. Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-0588

Old Clinton Barbecue
2645 N. Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 454-0080

Old Tyme Dogs
451 W. Montgomery St.
Milledgeville

Original Crockett’s Family Cafeteria and Catering
1850 N. Columbia St., Ste 10
Milledgeville  
(478) 804-0009

Papa John’s Pizza
1306 N Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 453-8686

Pickle Barrel Cafe
& Sports Pub
1892 N Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-1960

Puebla’s Mexican Restaurant
2400 N Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 453-9547

Real Deal Grill & More
185 W. Andrews St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 804-0144

Ruby Tuesday
2440 N Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-5050

Shark’s Fish & Chicken
196 Roberson Mill Rd.
Milledgeville  
(478) 295-3306

Shrimp Boat
911 S Elbert St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-0559

Smoothie King
119 N Wayne St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 295-1234

Soul To Go
(478) 456-5153

Stacked Sandwiches & More
1827 N. Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 414-4348

Subway
1692 N Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 453-2604

Subway
1829A N. Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 453-2604

Subway
650 South Wayne St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 451-0102

Super China Buffet
1811 N. Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 451-2888

SweeTreats
104 W Hancock St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 288-1249

Taco Bell
2495 N Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-2405

Velvet Elvis
118 W Hancock St.  Milledgeville
(478) 453-8226

Waffle House-Milledgeville
1683 N Columbia St.
(478) 452-9507

Waffle House-Milledgeville
3059 N Columbia St.
(478) 451-2914

Wendy’s
2341 N Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 453-9216

Zaxby’s
1700 N Columbia St.
Milledgeville  
(478) 452-1027
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## Worship Directory

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<td>Mount Nebo Baptist Church</td>
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### ROBERTS & SONS PROPANE
- Located at: 149 Garrett Way
- Phone: 478-452-0514
- Services offered:
  - We service all makes and models
  - We offer annual maintenance

### Charcoal Heating & Cooling, Inc.
- Located at: 452-9554
- Phone: 478-452-9554
- Services offered:
  - We service all makes and models
  - We offer annual maintenance
A ceremony was held in early January honoring the lives of three local men who died serving in World War I. The monument outside Shiloh Baptist Church on Harrisburg Road was originally unveiled Jan. 1, 1920. It was erected to memorialize three local African American men — Augustus Austin, Alex Threat and Willie Warren — who died while serving in the Army during World War I.
Celebrating 200 years
1820 2020

The Union-Recorder
the original social media

www.unionrecorder.com
BCSD Teacher of the Year

Above: BOE member Wes Cummings speaks to the honorees during the Baldwin County School District Teacher of the Year banquet held at Magnolia Ballroom.

Left: Dr. Sharon Hunt-Simmons, director of Curriculum & Instruction for BCSD, speaks to the honorees.

Above left: Antonio Ingram, principal of Midway Hills Academy, poses for a photograph with MHA Teacher of the Year Anna Dunn.

Above right: Ryan Maraziti, the Baldwin County School District's 2019-20 Teacher of the Year looks on during the ceremony. The Lakeview Academy fifth-grade teacher will go on to represent Baldwin County at the state level later this school year.

Below: The BCSD honorees each received flowers and other gifts as part of the recognition ceremony.
Local soup kitchen, Cafe Central, feed more than 700 free meals to area residents as part of a special Christmas meal held Dec. 16 from its weekly location inside Freedom Church. Each week the nonprofit organization feeds between 400 and 500 on average, but that number sees a sharp uptick around the holidays. In addition to enjoying a free hot meal and taking home some groceries to help make it through the holidays, attendees were also greeted by the smiling faces of many volunteers who chose to spend their time serving, cooking and cleaning up after the crowd.
The Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Drug Accountability Court is helping mold and reshape the lives of both men and women one life at a time. Take the eight recent graduates of that particular program for example. Instead of a life of dependency on illegal drugs and never knowing when law enforcement authorities are going to stop them driving or arrest them in a drug raid, etc., those eight people are now living lives with much brighter futures. The reason: They are now living lives without drugs.
Exchange Club Christmas Parade

Photos by Gil Pound
People lined the streets of downtown Milledgeville to see Santa and Mrs. Claus and many others ride through in the 2019 Milledgeville Exchange Club Christmas parade. Local businesses and organizations decked out floats and vehicles of all shapes and sizes for the annual march down Hancock Street that also featured musical and dance performances.
New Year, New Goals
Time to get started!

Spring Term
Registration is open NOW
Classes begin March 2nd

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