

AGING IN ATLANTA

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JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY BEYOND 55



Aunt/nephew team Annette Hughes and Kyle Brown own Bookstore Gallery, which they describe as a modern-day apothecary.

BABY BOOM BUSINESSES

Bookstore creates community, open minds

Castleberry apothecary builds health community

By Elizabeth Crumbly for the AJC

Kyle Brown was in his first year at Emory University's Goizueta Business School when he and his aunt, Annette Hughes, began dreaming of a business concept that would allow them to put their knowledge to work and reach their community.

Hughes, 65, was completing studies in the University of Georgia's Master Gardener program in March of 2019 when she and Brown began initial talks surrounding the idea that would birth Bookstore Gallery, the business they've branded as a modern-day apothecary.

"He's been really instrumental in my life as I've begun to age in sharing with me his dreams and desires," Hughes said of Brown. "He has wanted to be an entrepreneur for a long time, and he found the courage to do it and shared this story with me and asked if I would participate, and I said, 'Yes. Why not?'"

Starting out
The pair dipped their toes into the venture with three hemp-based teas they sold at a pop-up event on the Emory campus.

"It was just a smash hit," Brown, 32, recalled to The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "We knew that we were on to something, and we wanted to create a business – or more like a community center – that focused on health and wellness."

For Hughes, teas were a natural way to begin. She'd had an interest in them since her grandfather introduced her to medicinal properties of herbs in her teenage years. And the venture made business sense to both of them in light of the Agriculture Act of 2018, which removed hemp and hemp seeds from the Drug Enforcement Administration's controlled substances schedule. Brown already

Business continued on S2



Kathy Bradley, who is retired from a career practicing law, resides on a farm in Bulloch County, Georgia.

BOOKS NATIONAL NOVEL WRITING MONTH

Notable Georgia authors give glimpses of writing process and

publishing journeys

By Elizabeth Crumbly for the AJC

November is National Novel Writing Month, and Georgians are no strangers to the presses. In their own words, here are some of the inspirations and accomplishments that keep notable, locally based authors clacking away at the keys, pitching to publishing houses and connecting with readers.



Tayari Jones serves as Director of Creative Writing Program at Emory University and lives in East Atlanta.

Tayari Jones
AJC recommended work: "An American Marriage"

Tayari Jones serves as director of the creative writing program at Emory University and lives in East Atlanta. Her most recent novel, "An American Marriage," released in 2018, is the story of a young, Black, upwardly mobile husband and wife who come to Atlanta to pursue a promising future. The couple visits a small town in Louisiana, and the

Novels continued on S2

LIFESTYLE

96-year-old woman sets pace for Meals on Wheels

Marion Thompson's son moved to set up fundraising effort

By Arielle Robinson for the AJC

What started as a way for Nick Thompson to keep his 96-year-old mother moving has turned into a campaign to raise funds for Meals on Wheels America.

"Hey Mom, we're gonna do a lap around the ole high school track here. You ready to go?" he asks his mother, Marion Thompson, in a YouTube video

for the channel 100 Laps. "No," his mother replies succinctly.

Nick Thompson, from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, started the "100 Laps at 96 for Meals on Wheels" campaign with his mother this month. The idea is for each lap you take, you donate that amount.

You can do the laps anywhere – around your dining table, around the neighborhood, or at a track. You can also simply donate. All funds will go to Meals on Wheels America, which combats hunger and food insecurity among

older adults.

Participants can log their laps on the campaign website at go.rallyup.com/100lapsfall2023 once they make a profile.

There are also prizes for people who raise the most money and complete the most laps. First-prize winners receive a turtle trophy while the runner-up gets a rabbit trophy. The fundraiser ends on Thanksgiving Day.

The idea of the turtle and rabbit came from the YouTube video. A young woman can be seen running past Marion Thompson

on the track as the latter walks at a steady pace with her rollator, which is similar to a walker but has wheels on all legs.

"Unless people do it, then my mom will end up winning both the turtle and the (rabbit), and she doesn't want either one... But yeah, it's all about getting people excited," Nick Thompson told the AJC.

"What I've learned is that if I don't keep walking, I won't be able to," the elder Thompson, a former high school history teacher, told the AJC. "I'll be in a wheelchair. So it's

the incentive: If you keep walking, you can walk."

According to a study published in Frontiers in Physiology, limitations in mobility are becoming increasingly common in older adults, impacting about 35% of 70-year-old people and most people over 85.

Furthermore, scientists from the National Institute on Aging state that it can be likelier a person will lose some of their mobility as they get older if they do not participate in phys-

Thompson continued on S2



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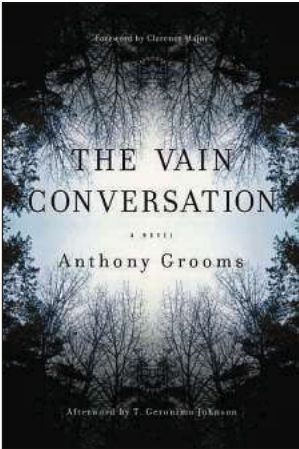
AGING IN ATLANTA

Novels

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young man is arrested for a crime he did not commit. In 2018, the novel was an Oprah’s Book Club selection and a pick for former President Barack Obama’s Summer Reading List. Jones’ first novel, “Leaving Atlanta,” just had its 20th-anniversary reissue.

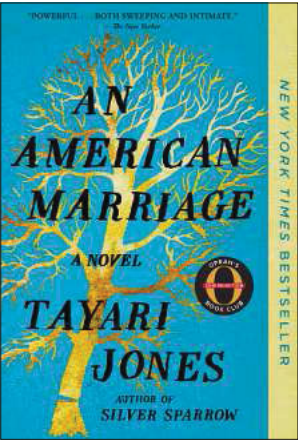
Q: What are some notable things you can share about your writing career?
A: All my life, I loved to read, and I loved to write, but I will say that – in my generation; I was born in 1970 – when girls like to read and they like to write, people don’t necessarily think that it means



“The Vain Conversation,” published in 2017, portrays the 1946 Moore’s Ford Bridge lynchings in Georgia.



Anthony Grooms retired from a 40-year teaching career in creative writing and American literature. He lives with his wife in Inman Park.



“An American Marriage” is the story of a young, Black, upwardly mobile husband and wife who come to Atlanta searching for a promising future.

you’re a writer. I did not know that writing could be my life’s work until I went to Spelman College, and I met a writer, and she was my teacher. Her name was Pearl Cleage. She said to me, “You know, you can be a writer...” I wrote books about Atlanta, and they meant a lot to me, but I wasn’t a best-seller or anything, and then, one day, I was driving in my car, and the phone rang, and it was a blocked call. I answered it, and the person on the other end said, ‘Hi, this is Oprah.’” At first I was very intimidated by this idea that Oprah Winfrey was putting her literal good name on my book, but then I thought about it that all my life, people have lent their good names to me. ... And it occurred to me

that when other people lent their good names, I wasn’t intimidated by it. I felt protected by it. I felt loved by it. And so that’s how I came to look at the Oprah Seal.”

Q: What else would you like your audience to know?
A: I’m really trying to encourage everyone to write from home. It’s like as writers, we’re losing our accent. I really want to encourage people to write from where it is that your heart lives because our American literature needs to reflect our American experience in all of its many ways. The other thing... All the things that you think make it hard for you to write, like your age or the fact that you work or you take care of kids or you take care of elders... Understand that your responsibilities and all the things you do – these are your superpower, and they’re what are going to make your work meaningful, and it is exactly the reason that someone else needs to hear your story.

Kathy Bradley

AJC recommended work: “Sifting Artifacts”

“Sifting Artifacts,” published by Mercer University Press in 2022, is a book of essays that provides a new lens for Bradley’s examinations of community, humanity and stewardship. Bradley resides on a farm in Bull-och County. She’s retired from a career practicing law with about half that time spent as an assistant district attorney. She instructed at Georgia Southern University as an adjunct professor, and spent 21 years as a newspaper columnist.

Q: Talk about your writing in its various capacities.
A: I’ve been writing for as long as I can remember but only began writing “professionally” in 1996 when the editor of

our local paper asked me to become a columnist. My first book was published in 2012. The small press was a very good match for me for a number of reasons, including the fact that I have always, until my retirement, maintained a very stressful professional career while writing. The staff is very attentive to each of its authors and has always been understanding of issues with deadlines.

Q: How does the public respond to you?
A: My readers often tell me that they feel as though they know me. It is the nature of the personal essay, of course, and I am grateful to know that the readers feel they have established a connection with me. The main aim of my writing is to draw the reader into a greater awareness of the world and his/her own life.

Anthony Grooms

AJC recommended work: “The Vain Conversation”

Grooms’ novel, “The Vain Conversation,” published in 2017, recently released in paperback. The story portrays the 1946 Moore’s Ford Bridge lynchings in Georgia. Grooms also authored the novel “Bombingham.” Recognitions include two Lillian Smith Prizes and awards from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. Grooms is retired from a 40-year teaching career in creative writing and American literature. He lives with his wife in Inman Park.

Q: What are some things we should know about you as a writer?
A: I have been writing since I was a child and was lucky to have parents who encouraged it. As a college student, I tried to turn to the sciences, but found myself coming back to writing classes again and again. Eventually, I was invited to study writ-

ing as a graduate student, and I’ve never looked back. My published stories mostly have been historical fiction set in the Civil Rights Movement period. This was the period of my coming of age and it still strongly incites my fears and hopes.

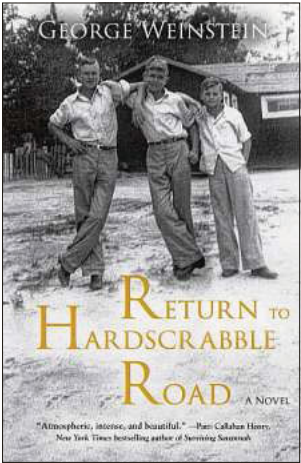
Q: What would you like to say about how your writing connects you with others?
A: Readers raise complex questions as they explore my characters and the history in which I set them. Many of my readers tell me that they learn something new about history and themselves from my stories. I have also been told by students, usually young men, that my book was the first they had read from cover to cover.

George Weinstein

AJC recommended work: “Return to Hardscrabble Road”

“Return to Hardscrabble Road,” a historical novel, was released in late 2022 as the sequel to Weinstein’s “Hardscrabble Road.” The book portrays brothers returning to their childhood home on emergency military leave after their father’s murder. The inspiration behind both books are stories that came from Weinstein’s former father-in-law, who grew up in the Great Depression. Weinstein lives in Marietta and works for the Academy for Advancing Leadership as vice president for business development. He’s also director of the Atlanta Writers Conference and executive director of the Atlanta Writers Club.

Q: Can you describe your journey as a writer?
A: After dabbling for years with short stories, essays and articles, I embarked on book-length writing in 2000 and have produced eight novels to date, ranging from his-



“Return to Hardscrabble Road,” by George Weinstein, portrays brothers returning to their childhood home on emergency military leave after their father’s murder.



George Weinstein works for the Academy for Advancing Leadership as vice president for business development, and he’s director of the Atlanta Writers Conference and executive director of the Atlanta Writers Club.

torical fiction to mystery, thriller, domestic drama and even a sci-fi comedy. My novels have been traditionally published by two small presses in Georgia, and I have also self-published a novel.

Q: What impressions do your books typically leave people with?
A: Both books have offered a source of inspiration to readers about getting through tough times with heart, hope and humor. They have enabled readers to understand parents or grandparents who survived the deprivations of the Great Depression.

Business

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had an online business selling CBD products, so he was able to bring a lot of knowledge to the eventual addition of those types of items as medications in the physical store the duo would go on to open.

Leading with education
But first, they needed to find a brick-and-mortar home for their dream. They spent two years looking at more than 16 locations across the city. The right candidate turned out to be an old theological bookstore that had stood empty for about six years. Its past turned out to be the perfect inspiration for the name of Brown and Hughes’ new effort.
“We finally found our home right here in the Castleberry area. We’re about a block away from the Mercedes Benz stadium,” Brown said. “We wanted to pretty much build upon the energy of community in the neighborhood and bring some life into this old building.”
The Bookstore Gallery doors officially opened on Sept. 26, 2022, and the duo began offering hemp-based teas, topicals for inflammation, massage oils, and edibles like cookies, gummies and brownies. Brown and Hughes, who goes by the persona “Auntea” in the shop, took the apothecary concept further with an aim to function as a community wellness hub.
The question in their minds was, “What does the community want us to do that we can do?” Hughes explained.
They began hosting discussion groups featuring health practitioners on



Bookstore Gallery in Castleberry Hill is a modern-day apothecary offering an array of wellness products and services. CONTRIBUTED



Annette Hughes and Kyle Brown took two years looking at more than 16 locations across the city. CONTRIBUTED

topics like the benefits of hemp and CBD for women and education on autism. Comedy and jazz nights also became part of the offerings.
And there’s another important offshoot to being a community wellness presence.
“We’re both African American, and we see this business as a way to remove the stigma from hemp and cannabis,” Hughes said. “For so long, our communities have been incarcerated and arrested for the simple use or sale of cannabis products. And this is an opportunity to change the narrative.”
Leading with education

is a key part of that effort, Brown said.
“We have actually have medical practitioners who come in who basically let folks know that, ‘Hey, we all have an endocannabinoid system, so we were made to process hemp and CBD and cannabis products,’” he said. “It really and truly is medicine and not a negative drug if used properly.”
The reception
Bookstore Gallery, Hughes has found, is a natural fit for the “emerging Castleberry ethos.”
The neighborhood, she said, is “artsy, it’s eclectic, and its offerings of food

and art – we just fit in really well as Castleberry begins to evolve.”
The feel of the store is geared toward relaxation and community with a tea bar and dab bar and tables and chairs where customers can settle in.
“Typically, what you see is the stores that you go into, you buy your product and you leave ... Kyle likes to call it modeled after a Starbucks, if you will,” Hughes said.
Community reception, the two feel, has been overwhelmingly positive.
“All in all, there’s just a lot of great support from all of our stakeholders, not just from the politicians and our council folks but actual residents who live in Castleberry,” Brown said. “There are folks coming here on a daily basis who work remotely in our space.”
The next step for the Bookstore Gallery brand is a second location in the city of Atlanta, which will carry the same name. And delivery within a 15-mile radius of the businesses will eventually be a reality, Brown said. Products are already available online at bookstoregallery.com.

Thompson

continued from S1

ical activities or exercise. The institute states that some studies have shown positive results connecting physical activities and exercise to prolonged mobility.
Nick Thompson said he has worked for years to get rollators to Americans. Now, he helps take care of his mother.
“The whole point ... is to encourage my mom to do what she wants to do herself, which is keep moving. Everybody, every doctor tells you you’re supposed to keep moving, but they don’t seem to realize that’s good advice until it gets hard, and that’s what we’re trying to tackle – when it gets hard,” Nick Thompson said.
Exercise is important for people of all age groups, Nick Thompson pointed out, but he said the difference for some older people may be motivation.
This is where the Meals on Wheels campaign comes in. Nick Thompson said that by donating to a good cause, his mother can stay motivated.
“When I say we’re going to go walk on the track, she’s not natu-

rally inclined to say, ‘That sounds great.’ She’s just as likely to say ‘I don’t want to’ because it’s not easy, so the Meals on Wheels is something she likes,” Nick Thompson said.
Nick Thompson found his inspiration for his campaign when he learned about the story of 100-year-old British World War II veteran Tom Moore.
Moore raised \$40 million for Britain’s National Health Service workers by completing 100 laps around his garden, a feat for which he was knighted by the late Queen Elizabeth II. At that time, the world had been several months into the COVID-19 pandemic, which overwhelmed the NHS.
As of this writing, the younger Thompson and his mother are at eight laps. They typically walk around intersections, his house, or the nearby park. They would like to eventually walk around The Home Depot. Marion has never been inside.
“The chance of getting to be like Capt. Tom seems – I don’t want to say that’s a crazy dream – but it’s not likely, so we’re just trying to have fun,” Nick Thompson said.

“The whole point... is to encourage my mom to do what she wants to do herself, which is keep moving. Everybody, every doctor tells you you’re supposed to keep moving, but they don’t seem to realize that’s good advice until it gets hard, and that’s what we’re trying to tackle – when it gets hard.”

Nick Thompson

AGING IN ATLANTA

ASK THE EXPERT DEBRA TYLER HORTON

Protect yourself now from the rush of holiday scams

Sponsored by AARP

As we enter the holiday season, AARP would like to remind you to stay vigilant during this time. Though many of us will be focused on preparing for travel or prepping for visitors, it is imperative of us all to keep an eye out for holiday scams.

Because you may find yourself making holiday purchases for friends and loved ones, being conscious about legitimate shopping ads is important. An AARP survey found that over 35% of U.S. adults have experienced fraud when buying a product through an online ad, and according to a recent Federal Trade Commission (FTC) study, over \$8.8 billion was lost to scams in 2022, which is an increase in losses of more than 30 percent compared to 2021.

What are the most common types of fraud?

The top five frauds include imposters, online shopping, sweepstakes, investments, and business and job opportunities. During the holidays, scammers are more aware of consumers' vulnerabilities, so it is important that you learn how to recognize the many calling cards of a scam.

What can I do to protect myself?

Here are some tips that

can help keep you safe:

- Protect your personal information by not sharing logins and passwords. If you must share, be sure to change your password later.
- Shred sensitive records and any documents that contain your personal information. Shredding your documents can help keep your private information secure and prevent your records from getting into the wrong hands.
- Monitor your bills and financial statements for any irregularities or unfamiliar transactions. This is a simple and quick way to identify any issues.
- Sign up for credit alerts to monitor all activities on your credit reports. Your credit worthiness is important, and any negative impacts could impact your finances for years.
- Change your passwords on a regular basis and have original passwords for all online logins. Not repeating or reusing old passwords can keep you safe from hackers who are trying to infiltrate your accounts and access your personal information.

These are just a few tips that can help protect you from scams. All this information can be found at aarp.org/fraud. There, you can learn about common frauds related to romance, gift cards, pets, charities, cryptocurrency



OUR EXPERT

Debra Tyler Horton brings a wealth of experience to her role as State Director for AARP Georgia. She leads the AARP Georgia staff, hundreds of volunteers from throughout the state and more than one million members.

Tyler Horton works to strengthen AARP's presence in Georgia communities through strategic advocacy efforts, education opportunities and other innovative offerings to enhance the quality of life for Georgians.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that empowers people to choose how they live as they age.

and much more.

You can also sign up to get free Fraud Watchdog Alerts as well as updates about fraud in your area by visiting the website or by texting "FWN" to 50757.

As our world becomes increasingly interconnected through advanced technology, it is increasingly important that we all take the necessary steps to protect ourselves. Remember, AARP is here to help.

AARP is ready to help

Call the AARP Fraud Helpline if you suspect a scam at 877-908-3360. Toll-free service is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

RETIREMENT

Five steps to take today for a comfortable retirement

These techniques boost your 401k savings' potential

By Karon Warren
for the AJC

As you enter your 50s and beyond, retirement becomes a looming reality instead of a distant goal. But it also can bring a bit of panic, wondering if you have saved enough for a comfortable lifestyle. Thankfully, you can boost your retirement savings fairly quickly by taking advantage of these five saving techniques.

1 Catch up on your savings. "Just for turning 50, IRAs (Individual Retirement Accounts) let you shelter an extra \$1,000, and 401(k)s let you shelter an extra \$7,500 each year," said Herman "Tommy" Thompson Jr., CFP, ChSNC, ChFC, a certified financial planner with Innovative Financial Group in Alpharetta. Another option for big savings could be paying off "your mortgage while you still have a regular paycheck. Consult with a financial advisor to find out the advantages of paying off your mortgage early versus continuing to make payments as agreed. Remember that you could have extra cash each month when paying off the mortgage, but you also will lose your annual tax deduction for mortgage interest. Therefore, it's important to discuss the pros and cons before

making such a move.

2 Combine your 401(k) accounts. "Consider consolidating your old 401(k)s for benefits such as diversification, investment selection, cost, and consolidation of investments," said Mike Sehringer, financial advisor at COUNTRY Trust Bank in Marietta. "At this point in your career, you may have changed jobs a few different times. What happened to those old 401(k)s you invested in? A financial advisor can help track down and consolidate those old plans to an IRA and make sure you are invested in the right funds for your goals."

3 Examine your assets, and make changes to maximize retirement savings. For example, Stephen B. Dunbar III, financial advisor with Equitable Advisors in Atlanta, recommends shifting a portion of after-tax assets such as cash or investment accounts that generate an annual 1099 into corporate-owned life insurance (COLI). "This approach allows these assets to continue to grow with no annual taxation and will be distributed through retirement on a tax-advantaged basis," he said.

4 Stash money straight from your paycheck into savings. "Have your

paycheck sent to two separate accounts, one for checking and one for saving," Thompson said. "Money that sits in a checking account will find a way to get spent." If you're unable to direct your paycheck to two separate accounts, set up an automatic deposit from your checking account to your savings account once your paycheck is deposited.

5 Plan ahead for your long-term health and care needs. "If you have a high-deductible health plan, open and max out on a health savings account (HSA) to build additional tax-advantaged assets for health expenses or general retirement expenses once you reach age 65 or older," Dunbar said. This is also the best time to search for and get long-term care insurance for expenses not covered by health insurance. "Put together a fully funded long-term care plan so you can handle this expense on your terms as opposed to reacting to the occurrence of a long-term event at the time," Dunbar said. "Waiting to react will mean less flexibility and much more expenses to address a long-term care need."

Talking with a financial advisor could provide additional insights to help you save enough for retirement. Even though you may be 50 or older, there's still time to build up your retirement funds.

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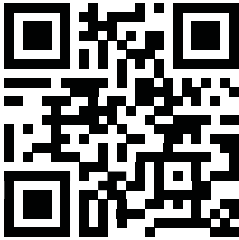
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AGING IN ATLANTA



Tammy Sprayberry recently turned 51 and just completed a Savage Race, a muddy and challenging obstacle race. She started by jogging to the mailbox and walking back to her door. Now she rides, runs and joined a CrossFit gym. CONTRIBUTED

HEALTH

Keys to thriving in your 50s: Cardio, weights, healthy diet

By Severo Avila
for the AJC

Keep moving.

Do you want to stay healthier as you push past 50? Ward off arthritis and other conditions that come with age? Then get up and get active.

That’s what Dr. Nicholas Van Der Ahe, a primary care physician with Atrium Health Floyd, said would be of great benefit to folks over 50.

“Try to get at least two-and-a-half hours of exercise a week,” he said. “That’s about 150 minutes of exercise throughout the week. It’s shown to have great benefits for people over 50.”

That includes a balance of cardio and weightlifting. “Keep moving,” he said. “When you slow down, your body does the same. You want to keep things like arthritis at bay? Stay active. Do as much as you can comfortably do. I’m not saying you have to go out and run a marathon. But get some pool work in, or get on a bicycle or the elliptical. Do some yoga.”

Tammy Sprayberry recently turned 51 and said she’s made an effort to eat healthier. She only started exercising regularly about five or 6 years ago. She hired a personal trainer.

“It’s the best thing I’ve ever done,” she said. “If you’re just trying to get started on sort of a fitness journey and you have the means, I would recommend hiring a personal trainer.

Sprayberry started with 5 lb. arm weights. Now she’s up to 30 lb. weights.

“Start where you can,” she said. “When I started jogging I went to my driveway and jogged to my mailbox and walked back. That’s all I could do. Gradually I added a little more distance. Don’t be afraid to start as slowly as you need to and gradually increase. But start.”

Sprayberry made a little chart to track her exercises. And she kept charting her progress which came in little increments

at first. But it didn’t stay that way.

Just recently, she completed the Savage Race, an obstacle race in which participants have to complete a number of unusual obstacles before reaching the finish line.

Since beginning a fitness journey, Tammy has lost over 100 lbs.

“I still eat some things that probably aren’t great for me and I still have a beer on a Friday night,” she said. “But I also do CrossFit. The gym I go to is so encouraging. Every victory I have is a victory for them too.”

Matt Christiansen is 52 and said he comes from “low and sturdy Irish stock.” He didn’t like how he looked at an early age and proceeded to over-exercise and he didn’t eat well.

At 48, he started doing yoga which he said completely transformed his body.

“It’s one of those things you don’t think is hard but it’s incredibly hard,” he said. “It’s hard but it had so many benefits for me. It completely transformed my body. I’d been working out (in a gym) for years but never saw more impact on my core and my stability than when I started doing yoga. It just gave me a better awareness of how I’m standing and sitting.”

“When you go to yoga it’s probably the most rewarding as far as results you can see and the mental side of it as well,” Matt said.

Van Der Ahe also said your diet is more important to your health as you age.

“Eat a lot of fruits, vegetables and whole grains,” he said. “If I had pick one of the diets that I’d really recommend for people over 50 it would be the Mediterranean Diet. It includes fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts, whole grains and healthy fats such as avocados and olive oil as opposed to saturated fats.

“And remember to stay active,” he added. “That’s the key.”

OPINION

Why we should celebrate menopause

Lack of education on menopause adds to misinformation

By Patricia Neligan Barley
for the AJC

We have made a silent pact in our society only to discuss women’s bodies when carrying babies; after that, menopausal women are put out to pasture. What makes this experience so taboo to discuss when it affects half the population for anywhere between seven and fourteen years of adulthood? We have severe gaps in menopause knowledge, as referenced in this National Institute of Health article. Middle age women undergo physical and emotional changes as complex as adolescents undergoing puberty. We need a lot more information about women undergoing pre and post-menopause.

Menopause occurs when menstruation stops due in part to a drop in circulating blood oxygen levels, according to the World Health Organization. Most women experience menopause around their mid-40s to mid-50s. It is marked by not having a period for twelve months and confirmed with a simple blood test.

During my childbearing years, I had access to books on pregnancy, conception, miscarriages, and more. I felt well-equipped to make informed choices about my reproductive health primarily because a medical area of study is dedicated to this period of woman’s lives.

But, what happens next?

Once I hit menopause, that same level of knowledge, information, and resources stopped. Thankfully, the minuscule information you can get from an outdated trifold pamphlet in your OB/GYN’s office is finally seeping into podcasts and onto bookshelves. Listening to a few podcasts is how I first realized I should be having this conversation about the changes I was experiencing with a healthcare provider. At my annual visit to my gynecologist’s office, I asked questions, such as “Is hormone replacement therapy an option for me?” My physician had nothing to offer me. I knew more about menopause from listening to podcasts.

How could such an educated woman work in an OB/GYN office without being able to share basic menopausal information? Why isn’t this part of the basic training in medical school, especially if you choose to go into the field of woman’s health – seeing as women of child-bearing age are not the



The author is thankful that the minuscule information you can get from an outdated trifold pamphlet in an OB/GYN’s office is finally seeping into podcasts and onto bookshelves. CONTRIBUTED

only women walking this earth?

Studies show different factors contribute to the length and symptoms of menopause, from lifestyle choices such as drinking or smoking to biological characteristics including race, age of first period, number of pregnancies, and physical activity levels.

When I became frustrated at my doctor’s inability to offer minor details, I asked if anyone could. I was referred to Dr. Holly L. Thacker at the Cleveland Clinic. Thacker and her resident emphatically agreed with my frustration about the lack of knowledge in this critical stage of a woman’s life. We discussed at length the PR problem that hormone replacement therapy has, and I told Dr. Thacker about my mom’s history of uterine cancer that she suspected was from taking hormones.

Not only was the HRT different 30 years ago, but many of them didn’t do a combination of estrogen and progesterone. There have been so many con-

flicting results from different research that has been presented to the public, according to a 2019 study published in the peer-reviewed journal, *Medicina*. If you don’t have data and funding to back up your findings, people hear a story and are too frightened to try HRT. We need woman’s health monetarily supported.

From my independent studies, if you are interested in pursuing your education on menopause, I would recommend the “Body Stuff with Dr. Jen Gunther” podcast episode, “Is menopause the beginning of the end?” Dr. Gunther addresses the stigma around menopause. She talks about not needing to suffer in silence and that menopause is a normal biological event. The fear isn’t innate. I also found her book “The Menopause Manifesto” resourceful.

The decrease in estrogen that comes with menopause doesn’t just affect things we commonly associate with getting older, such as hot flashes and vaginal dry-

ness. It also regulates critical skeletal and cardiovascular health, including blood flow circulation and central nervous system processes, studies show.

I chose to start HRT when I learned how necessary estrogen is to such vital functions in our bodies, and how starting this intervention sooner can help alleviate some risk factors as I grow older. I did not start HRT because I had unbearable hot flashes or stereotypical menopausal symptoms.

I am not advocating for anyone to start taking HRT without speaking to a knowledgeable healthcare provider; I am advocating for this subject to garner more of the medical community’s attention, resources, and support. I also advocate for women to make choices about their bodies that they think would better serve them physically and emotionally. HRT isn’t for everyone, but white-knuckling it through menopause isn’t your only option.

Menopausal women are an undervalued demographic. This age group often has already raised children. They are experienced and can sometimes offer valuable life lessons at work, in our communities, and in homes. To be able to pass this vital information and experience on, we need to be able to understand our bodies.

This healthcare segment needs to be funded and staffed, and more frequently included in reproductive rights and accessibility discourse. Dr. Jen Gunther says, “Menopause shouldn’t be viewed as the end of the race, but rather a victory lap.”



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AGING IN ATLANTA

LIFESTYLE

Creating a community of support and well-being

55+ communities provide a safe, supportive home.

By Lesly Gregory
for the AJC

Communities focused on seniors are found all over, but there's a particularly dense stretch in Woodstock along Highway 92.

Communities for those 55 and older often offer opportunities for residents to come together and pursue common interests. These can provide a safe place to connect with others who have similar experiences.

"As a person ages, they're trying ferociously to live independently, if you can marry that with the right resources, you can maintain that independence in a healthy way," Kelly Morgan, a licensed clinical social worker and co-owner of Revere Counseling and Care Management, told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

As we age, one of the most significant things we experience, according to Morgan, is loneliness. This can lead to anxiety and depression caused by a sense of isolation.

"Self-esteem and a sense of self-worth can go down, and entering a room with people can be difficult, but the more they can get pulled in and welcomed, the better," Morgan said.

Having a safe space to connect can do wonders for a hesitant person, helping them see they aren't "the only one," regardless of what they're going through.

Residents of Heron

Pond, a senior community in Woodstock, experience this firsthand. The communal bonds they share are a key reason why residents say they love living here.

Valinda Voight moved into Heron Pond as her husband's long-term illness was getting worse.

"We moved in and everyone was so nice to us, very warm and friendly. You immediately knew you weren't the only one who had issues," Voight told the AJC.

Although her husband died six years ago, she's remained a part of the community. Voight said she appreciates that neighbors keep an eye out, and when they notice something is "going down," mobilize right away, even if it's just to pray.

Don Crain, a Roswell resident for more than 35 years, and his wife were looking to downsize when they found Heron Pond. Driving through, they met a few residents and had a "good feeling" about the community. Crain appreciates that he's gained so many new friends living here.

"As a community, we always try to be of assistance to anyone that needs help," he told the AJC.

The mixture of people living in Heron Pond also attracted Adair Sisk, who moved with her husband from a family farm.

"None of us had any idea what this community would turn out to be, but the people just gel," Sisk told the AJC.

One way the residents stay active and connected is through a long list of activities and



Committee members set up a display at the clubhouse to host a wine tasting event.
PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Heron Pond dog owners celebrate Halloween with a twist by dressing up their furry friends for a fun gathering.

social groups. There's almost always something, whether it's a physical activity or group outing.

Voight does Zumba twice a week and attends

a social hour on Friday nights. She also walks around the pond, where it's common to run into others, and joins groups of neighbors for nights out.

everything from a men's biking club to a wine-tasting group, a progressive dinner group to bridge club.

Various committees offer residents support. Buddy Cards provides neighbors with emergency resources, while Caring Thoughts keeps the whole neighborhood in the loop when a resident wants to share any significant health-related news.

Then, there are the holidays. You'll often find the clubhouse fully decorated, with music pumping and a lot of food and drinks. The Fourth of July, Labor Day and Memorial Day are just a few holidays that get this special treatment.

"The social committee is really good at planning things for all of us to do," Sisk said.

Even with all the activities, Voight believes that what keeps residents active and engaged with each other is the "caring factor."

"It's the way people care and are concerned for each other, making the community such a strong and good place, supporting each other and loving each other," she said.

Not having a community like Heron Pond to call home doesn't mean you can't access the benefits of being a social and active senior.

"Imagine how your contribution can help others, how getting out daily and moving around improves things," Morgan said.

Finding others who share your interests enables you to reap the benefits of living in a community like Heron Pond no matter your address.

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AGING IN ATLANTA



Tom Czekanski, senior curator and restoration manager at the National World War II Museum, stands in front of one of the surviving World War II-era PT boats as it undergoes restoration in New Orleans. The PT-305, a U.S. Navy patrol torpedo boat that sank three vessels and saw action in Europe, is back in New Orleans where it was built and tested - what historians describe as the nation's only fully restored ship of that type that saw direct combat in World War II.

TRAVEL

Military museums not to miss visiting this season

By Karon Warren
for the AJC

We officially celebrate our military veterans on Veterans Day Nov. 11, but that doesn't mean we can't celebrate them all month long – or all year long. A great way to do that is by visiting the many military museums that pay homage to all branches of the military and their former and current members. Here are five not-to-miss military museums to get you started.

National Infantry Museum

About an hour and a half southwest of Atlanta in Columbus, the National Infantry Museum honors the journey of the American infantryman with artifacts, interactive exhibits, and much more in six galleries grouped by chronological order. However, before that, visitors enter the museum through the “Last 100 Yards Ramp,” an immersive and informative exhibit that sets the stage for the museum. “This facility serves to educate, honor, and preserve the legacy of the oldest branch of the United States Armed Forces,” said Peter Bowden, President & CEO of Visit Columbus, GA. nationalinfantrymuseum.org

The National WWII Museum

The National World War II Museum in New Orleans tells the story of the American experience in World War II, including why it was fought, the various campaigns, how the war was won, and what that victory means today. Exhibits include video, audio, and written components to tell the stories of all those involved in the war: American leaders, soldiers, and the families at home. Six differ-



The National Infantry Museum in Columbus, Ga., is the site of the Global War on Terrorism Memorial that opened in October of 2017.
CONTRIBUTED BY NATIONAL INFANTRY MUSEUM

“This facility [The National Infantry Museum] serves to educate, honor, and preserve the legacy of the oldest branch of the United States Armed Forces.”

Peter Bowden,
President & CEO of Visit Columbus, GA.

ent buildings make up the museum, so you'll need to plan plenty of time to visit them all. nationalww2museum.org

National Veterans Memorial and Museum

In that other Columbus in Ohio, the National Veterans Memorial and Museum honors veterans from all branches of service through interactive and video exhibits, infor-

mative signage, and much more. “Everyone knows a veteran whether you realize it or not, and, at the museum, we share veteran stories in their own voices to inspire our guests in person and online to be of service in their communities,” said retired Lt. General Michael Ferriter, Army, founding president and CEO of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. Two notable spots at the museum are the Remembrance Gallery on the mezzanine level

and the Memorial Garden behind the museum. Both provide opportunities for remembrance and reflection of those who have served. nationalvmm.org

National Naval Aviation Museum

On the grounds of Naval Air Station Pensacola in Pensacola, Fla., the National Naval Aviation Museum explores and documents the history of aviation of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Throughout the two buildings that comprise the museum, visitors can enjoy flight simulators, and see more than 4,000 artifacts and more than 150 restored aircraft, including those of the Blue Angels. In fact, if you plan your visit right, you can catch the Blue Angels as they practice their routines in the skies overhead. navalaviationmuseum.org

U.S. Army Airborne & Special Operations Museum

The U.S. Army Airborne & Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville, N.C., documents the history and members of these elite groups whose members jump from the sky and into battle. Exhibits start with 1940s history and carry on through today's military actions. Artifacts, videos, and informative signs and displays showcase the training, equipment, and missions these soldiers embarked on in the fight for freedom. asomf.org



The A-4 Skyhawks once used by the Blue Angels flight team are on display there, in the Blues' famous diamond formation. The flight team has a home at the Pensacola Naval Air Station.

CALENDAR

6 FESTIVE THINGS TO DO IN NOVEMBER

Get ready for the holidays

By Lesly Gregory | For the AJC

Thanksgiving may be the major holiday of November, and it officially ushers in the holiday season. That means lights and festivities kick off early and are just waiting for you and your family to experience. Even as you ready your turkey and stuffing this month, consider these different ways to have some fun outside the house, many of which remind us that November is a month for joy.



Stone Mountain Park's Christmas activities include holiday lights, festive music, visits from holiday characters and more. CONTRIBUTED

CATCH SOME HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Stone Mountain Park Christmas

Enjoy year-round park attractions like the Summit Skyride and Scenic Railroad, or hike up Stone Mountain, during the day, then celebrate the holidays in the evening. As the sun goes down, you'll find festive music and millions of lights. Certain holiday characters often make an appearance and family-friendly shows provide plenty of entertainment. 2-9 p.m. now-Tuesday, Jan. 2 on weekends and school holidays. Ticket prices can vary by day. Adult tickets are \$24.99-\$49.99 and child tickets, for ages 3-11, are \$24.99- \$44.99. Stone Mountain Park, 1000 Robert E. Lee Blvd., Stone Mountain. 800-401-2407. stonemountainpark.com/activity/events/stone-mountain-christmas

“The Nutcracker”

Presented by the Northeast Atlanta Ballet, this well-known performance is a classic rendition of “The Nutcracker.” Clara and the Nutcracker Prince set off on an adventure through the Land of Snowflakes and Kingdom of Sweets. The music, choreography, costumes, and sets come together to create an enchanting evening for the whole family, both young and old. Times vary. Friday, Nov. 24-Sunday, Nov. 26. Tickets are \$21 per person and everyone two and older requires a ticket. Gas South Theater, 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway, Duluth. 770-813-7500 gassouthdistrict.com/events/detail/the-nutcracker-neab



COURTESY OF HANART CULTURE.

IllumiNights at the Zoo

The IllumiNights Chinese Lantern Festival at Zoo Atlanta celebrates the inspiration that can come from nature. After dark, more than 100 lanterns alight, representing plant life and animals that are both real and imagined. Each hand-painted lantern lights your way as you walk through the zoo. Make sure to stop for some hot cocoa and roast marshmallows by the fire as you explore. Zoo members can purchase preview tickets for Thursday, Nov. 16-Sunday, Nov. 19. 5:30-9:30 p.m. with the last entry at 8 p.m. Monday, Nov. 20-Sunday, Jan. 14. General admission tickets range from \$17.99-\$24.99 based on age and date. Zoo Atlanta, 800 Cherokee Ave SE, Atlanta. 404-624-9453 zooatlanta.org/event/illuminights

Christmas Tree Lighting & Santa on the Square

The City of Marietta's annual Christmas tree lighting welcomes Santa to the square. He and the mayor will officially light the Christmas tree, but festivities begin before this special event. Throughout the evening, you'll hear local choirs perform and can even write a letter to Santa. An ugly holiday sweater parade will also take place prior to Santa's arrival and the tree lighting. 4-8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 30. Free admission. Glover Park, 50 N. Park Square, Marietta. mariettaga.gov/208/Christmas-Tree-Lighting-Santa-on-the-Square

START YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING

Piedmont Holiday Gift Market

Emphasizing visual arts and holiday gifts, the Piedmont Holiday Gift Market supports local artists while giving you a venue to get your holiday shopping done. Up to 100 handcrafters will offer up their unique pieces. You'll find everything from photos and paintings to leatherwork, blown glass and jewelry. Festive music and hot cocoa will add some holiday flare. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 25, and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 26. Free admission. Piedmont Park, 1320 Monroe Drive, Atlanta, affps.com

AGING IN ATLANTA

ACTIVE AGING

Racquetball diehards still promote the game

By Elizabeth Crumbly
for the AJC

Twice a week, Tom Dunham hits the racquetball court – the same as he’s been doing for 40 years now.

Players partner up as participants trickle into these sessions, and the group tries to make things fair as they pair up for doubles play.

“If it’s lopsided... like if there’s two slow guys against two fast guys, it wouldn’t be fun, so we just change it up,” Dunham said.

Dunham, 64, plays mostly at Recreation ATL in Lilburn, but he’s played a lot over the years on LA Fitness courts, too. This is a fast-paced game that usually takes place in an indoor enclosure, and players use tear-drop-shaped racquets to ricochet shots off a front wall.

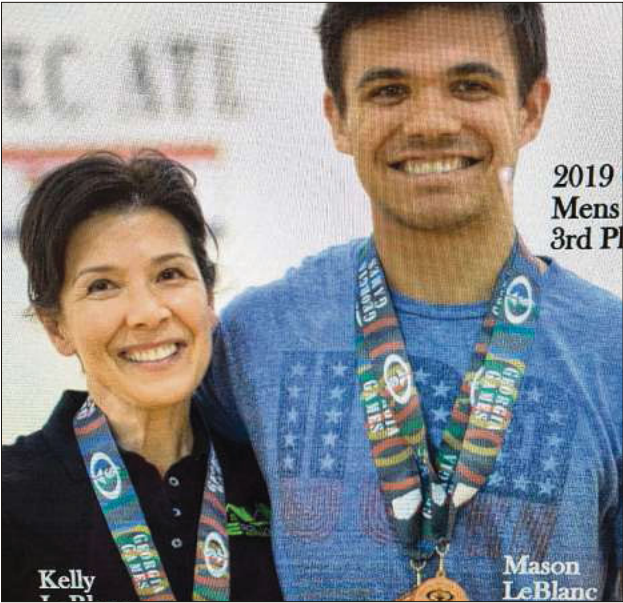
The nature of the game

Basic rules, according to racquetballrules.us go as follows: Games begin with a first serve against the front wall, and a rally begins. In singles, before two bounces of the ball, the other player must hit it against the front wall. The other player can hit the ball, either after one bounce or in mid-air, against the front wall. Play pings back and forth like this in rallies, which end when a player lets the ball bounce more than once. Each rally won means a point scored. The game goes to 11 or 15 points.

Like Dunham, Kelly LeBlanc, also in her 60s, picked up the game earlier in her life. Her



Racquetball singles format occurs in sets called rallies in which participants volley a ball against a front wall. Here, Daniel De La Rosa, left, and Jake Bredenbeck engage in a rally.



Kelly LeBlanc, left, with her son, Mason LeBlanc, after a racquetball tournament.

brother introduced her to it in college, and she continued playing after she got her first job.

When she married and had children, racquetball ended up on the back burner. But she picked it back up in 2011 after attending a tournament in Atlanta.

“I started practicing, met some great people and started competing,”

she said. “And from then on, I was hooked as far as competitions went.”

She competes regularly – usually every other month. LeBlanc said few women play now, so outside of competition in Georgia Racquetball-sanctioned tournaments, she often ends up playing – and winning – against men at her level. She’s played regularly over the years at the same spots Dunham has used.

She uses the game to get her cardio in.

“I’ll get 10,000 (steps) pretty much every time I play or close to it,” LeBlanc said. “On a weekend where there’s a tournament, there could be 12-13,000 steps, just because you have more matches throughout the day.”

Dunham, who played tennis before racquetball, likes the contained nature of the game.

“The ball can’t get away – you can hit it as hard as you want,” he said. “It’s a great sport to learn hand-eye coordination. You don’t have to keep running six courts over to collect your ball.”

He prefers the ball action on concrete-walled courts as opposed to paneled ones.

“I’m not a hard hitter, so I need that fast response – that full energy – to rebound the ball,” he said.

Dwindling numbers

Although they’re both die-hard participants, LeBlanc and Dunham cited challenges for staying involved in a sport that’s facing dwindling numbers.

Racquetball exploded in the early 1970s, and Forbes has called its rise the “biggest sports phenomenon in the country” at that time. That story cites expenses in facility construction, to which fitness clubs have to devote valuable indoor square footage, as the reason other activities are replacing racquetball.

LeBlanc recalled seeing around 150 participants at a typical tournament around 2011. Now, she said, that number is more like 40 or 50 for the entire event.

“It’s very sad,” she said. “It’s such a fun sport.”

Dunham has been playing with approximately the same group of eight for about 20 years at different clubs, some of which are now closed. For him, new faces are a welcome sight.

“I like to see new, young players,” he said. “I like to help them if they’re agreeable – if

they’re looking for help. I’d love to see the sport keep going. It’s a fellowship.”

Making changes

Both players have also had to make adjustments to their game to continue playing as they’ve aged.

It’s become harder on Dunham’s knees.

He was playing three or four times a week four months ago, but the schedule proved too much, so he picked up trail biking and now plays racquetball in between rides. One strategy he’s used to offset aches and a slowing game is to play more doubles.

“When you get to our age, doubles is more fun – more rewarding if you’ve got a partner,” he said. “You both can have an opportunity at the ball ... If one’s not moving well that day, sometimes the other guy steps up.”

The doubles strategy has proven effective for LeBlanc, too, although picking the right partner is key.

“I’ve tried to play singles, and that just takes so much out of me as I’ve gotten older. You’ve gotta cover the whole court,” she said. “(In doubles,) if you’ve got somebody that takes all your shots, you don’t get as many shots, but typically, it’s pretty fair.”

Despite challenges, the two persist with a game that’s seen them through several stages of life.

“I’ll take my ibuprofen and go play five or six games,” Dunham said. “Maybe I was a golden retriever, lab or something in another life. I just love chasing that ball around the room.”

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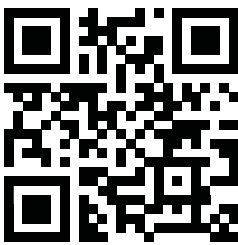
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