

# AGING IN ATLANTA

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BABY BOOM  
BUSINESSES

Group,  
fundraiser  
form from  
friendship

Daughters Against  
Alzheimer's backs  
those with loved  
ones with disease.

By Elizabeth Crumbly  
For the AJC

An organization two Atlanta friends began to support loved ones and caretakers of those facing Alzheimer's disease simultaneously spawned a fundraising event centered on pure fun. And both are going strong six years later.

Susan Watson and Michelle Rooks go way back – they both grew up in Atlanta, and they knew each other in high school. They reconnected when their kids were in school together – and when they found they had mothers who had Alzheimer's.

Rooks ultimately lost her mom to the disease, and Watson is still caring for her mom. Both were looking for ways to support others facing similar situations when they launched Daughters Against Alzheimer's in October 2017. The organization's beginnings, Watson explained, are entwined with those of its signature fundraiser, a lip-sync competition called Battle for the Brain.

"(It) began as a Facebook group. We added people that we knew were affected," she said. "We met in person a few times early on to get ideas for this event."

At first, the fundraiser benefited the Alzheimer's Association. Proceeds currently go to the Goizueta Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at Emory University.

#### A devastating disease

The duo recognized that joining and supporting an organization like DAA, even when it's designed to help, can be overwhelming when a loved one is in the throes of the disease or has passed away from it. The complications of witnessing the deteriora-

Alzheimer's continued on S2



Daughters Against Alzheimer's founders Michelle Rooks (left) and Susan Watson. COURTESY

PARENTING

# Working Grandparents

Nonprofits help Georgians who are stepping in to raise their grandchildren



A recent Project GRANDD trip to the High Museum in Atlanta. COURTESY

By Elizabeth Crumbly | for the AJC

Christine Owens was working as an in-home caregiver when she gained legal custody of her grandson, Kayden. He was just a couple of months old, and she soon suspected he had special medical needs.

She balanced her job with visits to pediatrician after pediatrician, looking for a diagnosis for a condition she couldn't name. As one of many Georgians raising grandchildren and still trying to remain part of the workforce, she found the situation nearly impossible.

#### The numbers

Latest numbers on census.gov put grandparents living with and responsible for their grandchildren under age 18 at nearly 94,000 in Georgia. That number represents 36.3% of grandparents living with their children's children statewide, a statistic that's slightly higher than the national average of 32.7%.

Any way you slice it, there's a significant number of Georgians responsible for their grandchildren across the state.

State funding for kinship care, an arrangement that encompasses people raising their grandchildren, has historically been lower than funding for foster families, which can leave children and their caregivers vulnerable, according to Rainie

Jueschke. Jueschke is executive director for Innovative Solutions for Disadvantage & Disability, the Decatur-based nonprofit that administers Project GRANDD, a navigator program for kinship caregivers across the metro area.

According to the Georgia Department of Human Resources website, kinship care arrangements are often informal agreements between relatives – like when parents agree to let grandparents raise children. Other kinship care situations, the site explains, can arise when the child welfare system becomes involved.

Although kinship caregivers may be eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, and the children

Grandparent continued on S2



Christine Owens and her granddaughter, Angel. Owens found support through Project GRANDD, a Kinship Care navigator. COURTESY



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Grandparent

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they’re caring for might be able to get Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, both programs are income based, so simply providing for a minor relative doesn’t guarantee qualification, according to the DHR site. There are also income guidelines for an ongoing TANF supplement called Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

When grandparents have stepped in to raise grandchildren, Jueschke said, they’ve often relied on their own resources.

“The vast majority are outside of the foster care system,” Jueschke said. “(There’s) no guidance, no financial support, no assistance.”

Although new rules from the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families may change that circumstance for many families, kinship caregivers have commonly faced myriad challenges. Food insecurity and difficulty buying clothing and school supplies, Jueschke said, have been common, but she believes that if children can’t be with their parents, then residing with grandparents is usually the next best thing.

“It’s a huge financial struggle,” she said. “We have children living in poverty when they don’t need to be. ... Our goal is to provide the best possible services to support kinship families because these kids are in the absolute best place that they can possibly be.”

And for caregivers stepping in for a second round – or sometimes even third – raising children, holding down employment is one more complication.

“Now, they’re juggling a full-time job and raising grandchildren at an age when they didn’t think they’d be doing this,” Jueschke said.

Finding help

For Owens, now 52, Project GRANDD has sometimes been her only source of help.

Early on, Owens noticed Kayden’s head was more football-shaped than round, but visits to pediatric providers didn’t result in a concrete diagnosis. A Babies Can’t Wait caseworker urged her to take Kayden to Emory University, where a surgeon diagnosed him with sagittal craniosynostosis at 3 years old. Essentially, Owens explained, the skull sutures babies are born with had closed too early; the football shape is typical in these cases. Kayden had to undergo surgery in March 2018 to open the skull and put in metal spacers so his brain could have room to grow.

Although the shape of



Elnora Chambers, an employee with Grands Who Care, headquartered in Rome, has received help from the organization as she’s raised her three great-grandchildren.

COURTESY

**“I had to go home and prepare the meals and have their meals ready for them when they came home from school, and then get them ready to go to bed, and it was a hard job to get them in the bed because they wanted to stay up.”**

EELNORA CHAMBERS

Kayden’s skull has changed to appear more typical now, he has continued to experience complications, including seizures that ended only recently. Now 8, he’s also facing ADHD, autism and a learning disability, Owens said. She recalled times when he was very young and she was working more when her level of fatigue was so high she was afraid of falling asleep at red lights while driving. She had to give up lots of luxuries, cable TV included.

When Kayden was 3, his little sister, Angel, was born, and Owens secured legal custody of her, too. Trying to work with two small children at home was already hard. Those efforts ground nearly to a halt during the pandemic when Kayden



Sherri Feliccia, a Project GRANDD case manager, with donated baby supplies. COURTESY

EQUAL FUNDING AND KIN-SPECIFIC FOSTER CAREGIVER APPROVAL

In September, the White House announced the federal Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families had issued new regulations to allow individual states to make simpler the process by which kinship care providers can become licensed or approved foster care providers.

The rule change will “require that states provide these family members with the same financial support that any other foster home would receive,” according to a Biden-Harris Administration fact sheet.

The freedom individual states have to set kin-specific standards for approval, however, could induce snags for kinship caregivers looking to become licensed or approved as foster care providers, according to Jueschke.

needed homeschooling. Owens had to give up lots of hours, and paying her mortgage was difficult.

One of Kayden’s doctors recommended she join Project GRANDD, where she’s found relief and can lean on her caseworker.

“The caseworker is available at all times,” she said. “Sometimes, I just need to vent and get it out. ... They call you back.”

The program’s support

groups let “you pour yourself out – all your challenges, all your sorrows.”

Right now, she’s still working as a caregiver and in the youth program at her local YMCA once a week. When she began with the YMCA, she worked significantly more, and she could take Kayden with her. His tendencies toward aggressive behavior, however, meant she couldn’t leave him in the child care program, so



**“It’s a huge financial struggle. We have children living in poverty when they don’t need to be... Our goal is to provide the best possible services to support kinship families because these kids are in the absolute best place that they can possibly be.”**

RAINIE JUESCHKE, Executive director for Innovative Solutions for Disadvantage & Disability

she had to step her work way back. Today, the challenges of getting Kayden to his various appointments often torpedo her attempts at steady work.

“It’s like juggling,” she said. “Sometimes, I can’t even work. I just have to be off.”

Project GRANDD has helped with respite care when she needs it, and the program, she said, advocates for grandparents to keep up with their own care through routine physicals.

Because of the amount of work she has to miss, she’s needed help paying her mortgage. Project GRANDD, she said, not only has aided her in securing that help but also in providing holiday gifts for Angel and Kayden, and even food.

“They have showered us with food,” she said. “I’ve asked for a dozen eggs. They’ll give you 18.”

At work/at home

Elnora Chambers, of Rome, knows well the challenges Owens faces. She stepped in to raise her grandson and granddaughter when her daughter died in 1986. The children were ages 5 and 2 at the time.

The work Chambers found in a local carpet mill was physically demanding, and staff cuts meant multitasking. She

had to work on her own machine to keep it running. If a spool ran out of yarn, she had to stop things, put another spool on and thread it.

“I did three people’s jobs,” she said. “That liked to work me to death.”

She left the mill and went to work as a cook at a nursing home. Her schedule was still grueling, and the tasks she performed at work mirrored those waiting for her at home.

“I had to go home and prepare the meals and have their meals ready for them when they came home from school, and then get them ready to go to bed, and it was a hard job to get them in the bed because they wanted to stay up,” she recalled.

Chambers was able to secure disability benefits for herself after a time, and she turned her full attention to her grandchildren. But she wasn’t done caretaking; she was 65 when she began raising her great-grandchildren. Today, she has custody of three of them – all girls – ages 15, 17 and 18. And she’s working again.

Her position with Grands Who Care, a nonprofit designed and administered by Mercy Care Rome and funded through the state’s Kinship Care program, has her doing office tasks and helping to serve meals for GWC’s tricity meetings. Mercy Care, according to its website, is a Trinity Health and St. Joseph’s Health System federally qualified health center, and Chambers’ employment is made possible through the state Department of Human Resources Senior Community Service Employment Program. Grands Who Care, serving Polk, Chattooga and Floyd counties, offers support in the areas of informal counseling, support groups, health management, family recreational gatherings and location of other resources.

Chambers became involved with GWC about a dozen years ago when she needed help with clothing, school supplies and holiday gifts. She hears stories all the time from other grandparents.

“I thought I was having it bad, but to hear other grands who were raising more than I was and to hear what they go through, it’s kind of heartbreaking,” she said.

Her job keeps her busy folding flyers, calling participating grandparents to remind them of meetings, putting together surveys, purchasing groceries for the meals at the meetings and buying school supplies to distribute.

“It’s not a dull moment,” she said, chuckling.

Alzheimer’s

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tion can send shockwaves through caregivers’ lives.

The “silver tsunami” Alzheimer’s represents is a national crisis in relation to the cost of caregiving, Rooks said. When the DAA began, she and Watson met people devastated by what the disease had done to their lives as they rearranged their schedules and finances to support someone affected.

“People were in tears,” Rooks said. “People have lost their homes.”

With that shock and grief in mind, they’ve sought to keep Alzheimer’s research at the center of things while also making the event light-hearted for those who have had up-close experiences with the disease.

“It’s so much fun. It’s a show. You don’t have to dress up,” Rooks said. “You’re not stuck sitting at a table.”

They’ve had participants from some of Atlan-

ta’s best-known companies and organizations: Delta Air Lines, Morgan Stanley, and the Atlanta Falcons cheerleaders.

“It’s Suzie from accounting breaking it down on stage,” Rooks said. “By making it fun, people who wouldn’t normally want to join an organization have gotten involved now.”

Keeping it small

Watson acknowledged that DAA is no different from most startups that begin small and nimble, and she said they’ve worked to keep the non-profit that way so they can focus on fundraising, not organizational management.

“We have kept it small intentionally,” she said. “We’re trying to put boundaries on how we grow so to the extent we can, we avoid that bureaucracy.”

Right now, it’s just Rooks and Watson running things with services like publicity and design contracted out.

At this point, Watson

said, the event will outgrow –or may already has outgrown – its home at the Coca-Cola Roxy, but the staging available at that venue for an intimate vibe can’t be replaced.

The duo is answering the question, “how do we raise more funds and stay where we are?” by making the event available for free live streaming online through its website, Watson said. Viewers can vote online in real-time, too.

The method seems to be working. According to Rooks, last year’s event brought in \$1.25 million – a 40% increase from the previous year – and the DAA has raised nearly \$4 million over the past five years.

Removing the stigma

A stigma surrounding Alzheimer’s often leads people close to those diagnosed with it to try to “have the world remember them the way they were,” Watson said. “But doing that makes no progress toward finding answers.”



Celebrity judges Stacey Leebern, Dallas Austin and Julie Moran at a previous Battle for the Brain lip-sync battle. COURTESY

And more answers can mean earlier interventions.

“If we can identify it, some of the pharmaceuticals that have been developed are effective at the early stage,” she said.

At this point, Rooks said, the DAA funnels money toward fund-

ing biomarker research at Emory for a screening tool that detects indicative proteins and allows for earlier treatment of Alzheimer’s.

It was this concept that encouraged Rooks and Watson to throw their weight behind the search for answers.

“We decided that we really wanted all of our efforts to go toward funding research,” Watson said, adding that Battle for the Brain as a fundraiser was another step toward normalizing discussions.

“Let’s do something fun to help remove that stigma.”



AGING IN ATLANTA

LIFESTYLE

# Take important steps now to prevent falling at home

By **Andrea Clement**  
For the AJC

Falls are among the top health risks for adults 65 or older, causing more than 3 million emergency room visits and 36,000 deaths annually nationwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One out of five falls cause a serious injury, such as broken bones or head injuries. More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by slips, and tumblers are among the top causes of traumatic brain injury and death among older adults. Additionally, medical costs caused by accidents average \$50 billion annually, three-fourths of which are paid by Medicare and Medicaid.

**Who’s most at risk for falling and why?**  
Falling becomes a greater risk around age 65 and older. Within that age group, more than 1 in 3 people fall each year, according to the National Institute on Aging. Physical or mental impairments further increase one’s risk of falling. “Several physiological changes that occur with age make older individuals more susceptible to falls. This includes loss of muscle mass, cognitive decline, visual impairment, memory lapses, dehydration, and urinary incontinence,” said Lori Newcomb, board-certified geriatric pharmacist and clinical consultant pharmacist at long-term care pharmacy Guardian Pharmacy of Atlanta. “Certain neurodegenerative conditions like dementia and Parkinson’s disease further elevate the risk of falls in this demographic.”

Medications increase risk also, she added. “It’s crucial to recognize that medications stand as a leading cause of falls among older adults. Polypharmacy, defined as the concurrent use of five or more medications, is closely linked to a heightened fall risk.”

**Consult with the care team**  
Consulting with health care professionals is an important initial step to preventing falls and managing risks for yourself or a loved one, according to experts. “This should include consultations with a pharmacist, physical therapist and physician.” Newcomb said. “A pharmacist can evaluate the medication regimen to identify any drugs that might increase the risk of falling and suggest modifications like discontinuing medications that cause drowsiness or recommending adjusted doses to prevent harmful interactions.” “Concurrently, physicians can assess and offer guidance on manageable health conditions to diminish fall risk. Engaging in physical therapy, which provides specialized exercises tailored to an individual’s needs, is pivotal in enhancing coordination, gait, balance, and overall physical conditioning to mitigate the risk of falls,” Newcomb added. Additionally, “talking with your loved ones’ health care provider is a great way to determine what fall prevention methods are best for them, depending upon their specific situation,” Kuswita said.

**Stay active**  
Physical inactivity is a significant risk of

increased falls, according to Anna Helmrath, vice president of Medicare strategy and execution at UnitedHealthcare. “In Georgia, roughly 35% of older adults were classified as physically inactive and 32% were classified as obese, according to the America’s Health Rankings 2023 Senior Report,” she said. Therefore, exercise and strength training are vital to preventing falls and decreasing risk. SilverSneakers is one of many free programs available to older adults to help improve and maintain physical fitness, strength, flexibility and mobility. The Medicare program is free for adults ages 65 and older, offering free online exercise classes and free admission to local gyms. “Taking regular walks is a great way to help the body stay healthy. However, walking doesn’t help with fall prevention as much as lower body strength and balance training does,” Helmrath said.

**Key safety precautions at home**  
■ Environmental hazards can also contribute to one’s risk of falling. Therefore, it’s important to secure living spaces of older adults and take general precautions to help prevent falls, according to Christian Kuswita, owner of ComForCare home care of Cobb County. He suggests the following:  
■ Install additional lighting to improve visibility and help avoid trip hazards  
■ Declutter: Secure or remove rugs and other tripping hazards from walkways  
■ Move daily items into easily accessible areas/places

■ Add handrails in bathroom and around the house  
■ Install nonslip pads, especially in the bathroom  
■ Use a bath seat while showering  
■ Paying attention to other key details – wearing proper footwear, eye-wear, and hearing aids that enable older adults to be more aware of their surroundings – can help prevent falls.

**Devastating long-term impact**  
A single fall can be an inflection point, setting off a chain reaction of progressively severe issues. In addition to the physical injuries caused by the impact of the tumble itself, falling can exacerbate

existing risk factors such as immobility or social isolation, which can lead to a person’s general decline in health. Once someone has experienced a fall, their odds of having another accident double. “Falling can reduce an adult’s ability to remain independent, and may increase hospital visits, cause serious injuries such as hematoma, joint dislocation, severe laceration, sprains, internal bleeding, fractures, broken bones or even death,” said Kuswita. Therefore, it’s important to empower older adults to maintain their independence safely, when possible. In addition to health consults and safety precautions, wearable devices can help prevent falls or

monitor loved ones to render aid more quickly. A variety of devices and wearable technologies are available today, including the growing market of remote patient monitoring devices. Kuswita’s company offers a technology called Connected Care, an RPM system that “observes the mental and physical state of a client daily including change in activity in the home,” while also monitoring vital signs, medications, and detecting falls. Other available technologies to help prevent falls and monitor remotely include smartwatches, fall pendants/wearables (like LifeAlert or LifeCall), video/audio monitors and bed sensors.

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Sonya Macon is an instructor at Imagine Yoga. She says that yoga can be an easy alternative to stay active because it does not require you to leave home to do it. “You’re never going to be flexible unless you’re willing to do something that will help you *become* flexible,” she said. CONTRIBUTED

ACTIVE AGING

# Yoga provides long-lasting wellness for all seasons

Mind-and-body discipline benefits people of all ages.

By Yolanda Harris  
For the AJC

Yoga is a fun, year-round practice that offers tremendous health benefits to people of all ages and abilities. Not only does it enhance focus, mood and endurance, studies show yoga helps reduce stress, lowers blood pressure, and improves sleep. It can also serve as a form of therapy to facilitate recovery following surgery or injury. The results, according to Johns Hopkins, can foster relaxation, strength, a positive mindset and even weight loss.

Othene Munson began practicing yoga at an early age while growing up in South Africa. Today, she is 62 and has been a certified yoga instructor in Atlanta for 26 years. She is the owner of The Center for Yoga and offers private and virtual instruction.

“I believe yoga has protected me from a lot of aches and pains, even emotionally,” she said. “It’s one of the promises of yoga – to guard from ailments to come.”

**Movement that heals**

According to the National Institute of Health, chronic stress is a risk factor for various physical and mental health conditions. Some include cardiovascular disease, hypertension, anxiety, depression, diabetes and immune suppression. Relief can be found through certain yoga poses.

“For instance, folding

forward calms the mind and soothes the nervous system, but bending backwards opens the chest and that elevates our emotions and leads us to a clear state of mind and a happy heart,” Munson points out. Twisting the body aids in detoxifying certain organs, which improves overall wellness.

Emory Healthcare neurologist Dr. Neil Lava specializes in treating patients with multiple sclerosis. “A number of my patients have mobility issues, and we find that yoga has helped them with balance,” Lava said. “Some of my patients in wheelchairs do chair yoga and find it very beneficial also.”

**Yoga as a lifestyle**

Some individuals shy away from yoga because they aren’t flexible. To that, Imagine Yoga instructor Sonya Macon, Ph.D., said, “You’re never going to be flexible unless you’re willing to do something that will help you *become* flexible.”

As we age, the body becomes less agile, leading to back pain and sometimes hip replacement surgery. While men and women suffer similarly, Macon says women carry emotions such as loss, trauma, anxiety, fear and grief that carry stress to the hip area. A yoga lifestyle can help.

As a remedy, Macon suggests poses that can be done at home before the TV during commercial breaks. “There are specific hip openers like the butterfly, child’s pose and happy baby, to alleviate pressure. By increasing muscle strength and flexibility you’re helping your body to release

areas of tension.”

**Taking the leap**

While many people enjoy group classes at fitness gyms and community centers, others have turned to virtual instruction and videos.

Chair yoga is also an option for those who have difficulty with mat exercises.

When choosing an instructor, share your limitations. Ask whether he or she teaches “gentle” yoga or uses props like pillows. “It is important to find an environment that is agreeable to your preferences,” said Munson.

**The results speak**

“I am turning 75 next March and one thing that is really great, thanks to yoga, I can get up and down from the floor easily. Also, it has helped my brain fog.” – Inger Ardston

“In January this year, I had spinal fusion surgery on my L4 & 5 disc. After the surgery, I waited two weeks before starting yoga again. I physically feel 10 years younger thanks to the surgery and my yoga practice!” – Peter Vinelli

“I had a spine curvature of 45.9 degrees, I began practicing a modified version of side plank using a chair. When I returned to the doctor one year later ... my spine curvature had reduced to 34.5 degrees.” – Nydia Maldonado

Sonya Macon offers group and individual instruction by request. For more information, email [sonyamacon@imagineyogawellness.com](mailto:sonyamacon@imagineyogawellness.com).

CAREGIVING

# Feeling burnout as a caregiver? Ailment is all too common here

By Patricia Neligan Barley  
For the AJC

Caregiving can present a serious strain on mental health, emotions and finances, and the situation is compounded when those receiving care have health issues.

A 2020 report from the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP indicated that of 48 million American adults offering care to people over age 18, 26% were caring for people with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. That number, the report stated, was up from 2015’s 22%. And caregiving, the report said, worsened the health of 23% of caregivers surveyed, representing a 6% rise from 2015 numbers.

With sandwich-generation caregivers balancing multiple other responsibilities, like dependent children and work, burnout is a very real possibility. Here are some expert perspectives on the situations that lead to burnout and ways to offset them:

**Juggling dynamics**

Seniorly, a San Francisco-based national marketplace for senior living communities, recently published its own report using the aforementioned figures, along with statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, the federal government’s Health Resources and Services Administration, the Census Bureau and the Alzheimer’s Association to determine where caregiving burden will grow most. Its projections put Georgia in fourth place nationally.

Marlena del Hierro, Seniorly vice president of partnerships and commercial strategy, and a gerontologist herself, said sandwich generation caregivers fall between ages 40 and 59. Mental and money-related strain is common for this group, she said.

**Where does burnout occur?**

Caregiver burnout can crop up as the result of several scenarios that often interlock.

Jennifer Olsen, CEO of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers, in Americus, put potential burnout scenarios into three categories.

Administrative burnout, she said, is perhaps the “least glamorous,” but it’s a growing area of concern. Dealing with forms, online portals and passwords and multiple insurance cards takes up emotional and

physical energy for caregivers.

“Trying to figure out all of the forms, the appointments, the process for getting any sort of program or coverage set up for the person that you’re caring for,” she said, “that is draining because that requires the kind of physical work of sitting on hold and the emotional stress that comes from that.”

A workforce shortage also presents problems, Olsen said, as caregivers seek paid workers to cover during times when they need to go to their own appointments and run errands.

And finally, she said, there’s the length of time people spend caregiving, which can last for years.

“That has a wearing effect that we haven’t quite quantified,” she said. “We know that the time that someone spends in the role has an impact.”

**Offsetting burnout**

Offsetting burnout, according to del Hierro, can require some out-of-the-box thinking.

Getting creative with respite care can help, she said. Caregivers might use senior living communities where an older loved one can go for short-term stays of two weeks to 30 days. There are also respite grants available, depending on local resources, she said. She also cited technology, like user-friendly tablets that support memory and motor skills, along with assistive devices for telehealth, and rideshare companies with specialized programs and services.

In the end, she said, help for caregivers can come down to reaching out to friends or support groups.

“(It’s) just asking for help and being really direct about what you need so that you can start supporting yourself before something kind of happens in the grand scheme of things,” she said.

**Local help**

Finding local help is where RCI comes in for Georgians. The institute, Olsen explained, has several ways to connect caregivers across the state with help close to them. One of those mechanisms is the Georgia Care-Net Coalition, which Olsen said works with area agencies on aging throughout the state. Caregivers, she said, can reach out to RCI for help in different areas and be connected with local experts



“Trying to figure out all of the forms, the appointments, the process for getting any sort of program or coverage set up for the person that you’re caring for. That is draining because that requires the kind of physical work of sitting on hold and the emotional stress that comes from that.”

JENNIFER OLSEN, CEO of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers in Americus

through this initiative.

“I think that’s what’s really important when you think about supporting caregivers,” she said. “They are often looking for support or services in the geographic area where they’re based. National organizations may not be able to provide that.”

Like del Hierro, she emphasized reaching out for help to stave off burnout.

“I think one of a few things that is critical is to find either a caregiver support group or even just someone else who has that caregiver experience outside of your own family or your own network,” she said. “That kind of peer engagement is so important.”

Faith communities, area agencies on aging, senior centers, memory care or assisted living facilities with services for caregivers who aren’t necessarily connected with their residents, and larger associations with Georgia chapters are good jumping-off points, she said.

For those who have been caregivers in the past, there’s the opportunity to support those currently in the role. It’s a concept that ties in with a motto of RCI founder Rosalynn Carter, based on the idea there are four kinds of people in the world: those who are, were, need or will be caretakers.

“The journey is complicated and unique,” Olsen said. “And people are looking for someone to talk to who understands.”

HEALTH

# Small lifestyle and diet changes may reduce arthritis pain

By Patricia Neligan Barley  
For the AJC

To alleviate pain as the season changes, understanding how weather, lifestyle choices and age affect our bodies and joints is essential.

Have you ever heard anyone talk about being able to feel a storm coming? Around our joints and the cartilage on the ends of our bones, we have something called synovial fluid. It acts as a lubricant to allow a comfortable range of motion, which decreases when the temperature changes and the fluid thickens.

As the consistency of synovial fluid changes, it plays a critical role in the day-to-day severity of symptoms we may experience with arthritis. Cleveland Clinic

Dr. Andrew Bang, DC explained. “There is an oily fluid between your joints, and when it is cold or the pressure changes, it can get sludgy, and that prevents the oily fluid from lubricating the joint quite as well and can lead to pain when you move around.”

“The principal role of synovial fluid is to reduce friction between the articular cartilages of synovial joints during movement,” the National Library of Medicine reported. Think of it as a lubricant to help your bones move more smoothly, while arthritis is the swelling or tenderness around one’s joints.

With age, the most common arthritis people experience is osteoarthritis, where the cartilage around the joints wears away, causing joint

pain. There are other types of arthritis you can experience at any age that involves your immune system. According to Dr. Mariko L. Ishimori, interim director at the Cedars-Sinai Division of Rheumatology, our joints operate best in temperate weather. Even though cold weather doesn’t cause arthritis, it can make our bodies more sensitive to pain and discomfort.

The good news is you have some control over your body as it relates to synovial fluid. At any time of year, diet, exercise and sleep are the main factors that will help to maintain a more comfortable, pain-free or pain-reduced life.

**Get exercise**

Regular low-impact exercise such as walk-

ing, swimming or biking also helps with overall joint health. If you are not already exercising regularly, now may be a good time to add some moderate activity to your schedule.

**Healthy diet**

Maintaining a healthy anti-inflammatory diet is just as important as staying active. American grocery options often include processed foods that can add to inflammation. Eating plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans and nuts will sustain your body with anti-inflammatory nutrients.

Take stock of what you are eating regularly and make a modest shift – this doesn’t need to be a significant overhaul of your pantry. Start with a

few minor food choices. See how it makes you feel and modify from there. You might be surprised by the difference it could make.

**Reduce inflammation**

Some foods that can cause inflammation are dairy, sugary foods and drinks, and processed meats and cheeses. Try adding something new to your grocery shopping list such as walnuts, garlic, cinnamon or leafy greens. Maybe throw some pineapple in your morning smoothie, which is known to have nutrients to help with inflammation. Then look at the list of inflammation-causing foods, and try to eliminate a couple.

For a more extensive list, check out some

resources from the Arthritis Association’s page.

**Natural options**

The Arthritis Association suggests additional methods to find natural relief for arthritis, including acupuncture, massages and cognitive behavioral therapy to reduce tension and stress throughout your muscles, bones and joints. These can complement traditional treatments that your physician may prescribe for you.

It is also worth discussing the possibility of taking Vitamin D and magnesium supplements if your doctor finds that you are lacking in these important vitamins and minerals to keep your joints performing at their best as you age.



AGING IN ATLANTA

HEALTH

# Don't let hearing loss dampen your holiday season

Early detection can help you hear better and live better.

By Rachel Brown Kirkland  
For the AJC

If you're among the 1 in 8 people in the U.S. living with hearing loss, don't be surprised if the holiday season comes with an extra set of hurdles.

This time of year, people are more likely to be traveling, visiting relatives, attending concerts, going to parties and engaging in other activities when the ability to hear is especially important.

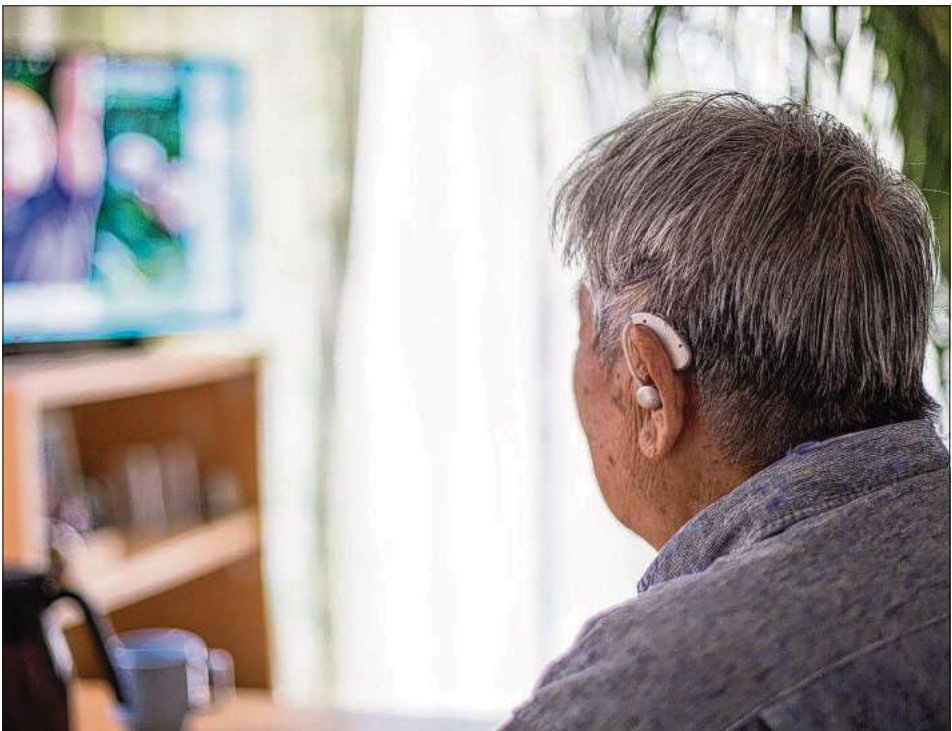
Even mild hearing loss can have an impact on how well you're able to participate.

But help is available, and you don't have to struggle alone and in silence.

"I can't stress how life-changing it can be when you do seek assistance," said Ibrahim Dabo, a board member of the Atlanta chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America. "Hearing loss had affected me for at least 15 years before I started using hearing aids, so you can imagine how profoundly my life changed."

While some hearing loss can be prevented by minimizing prolonged exposure to loud noises and wearing ear protection in loud environments, hearing loss can also be age-related. According to the National Institutes of Health, about 1 in 3 people between ages 65 and 74 have hearing loss.

Age-related hearing loss can be due to



Hearing loss can result from exposure to loud noises over a long period of time or from age-related deficiencies. The National Institutes of Health reports that 1 in 3 people between the ages of 65 and 74 have hearing loss. ADOBESTOCK

changes in the inner ear, middle ear and nerve pathways from the ears to the brain, according to the NIH.

Hearing Loss Association of America executive director Barbara Kelley said some early signs of needing a hearing assessment include trouble hearing on the phone, thinking other people are mumbling, turning the volume on the television up too loud for others, and friends and family complaining you often ask them to repeat what they say.

"Hearing can be elusive," Kelley said. "We don't know what we're missing, and we assume we can wait to address it. But there's truly no such thing as a small hearing loss because hear-

ing is the way we stay connected to the world around us and to people in our lives."

Untreated hearing loss, she said, can cause people to leave careers and withdraw from relationships and social settings. When that happens, it can lead to isolation, depression and cognitive decline.

"Better hearing is better thinking and better living," Kelley said. "So it's important to treat hearing loss sooner rather than later."

The reasons people delay addressing their hearing include social stigma, access to care, cost of treatment and not realizing what they are missing. Dabo said many years passed before he realized the extent of his

hearing loss. A native of Sierra Leone, Dabo is a former war refugee who is now a motivational speaker and advocate for people with hearing loss.

As a commissioner of the Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing, he advocates for installing hearing loops – technology that directly transmits sound from a microphone to the listener's hearing aids or cochlear implants – in key public places.

He described his journey to better hearing as "an evolving miracle" that drastically changed his life for the better.

"I could hear sermons in church more clearly, understand conversations without feeling lost, reduce my stress levels significantly, and no lon-

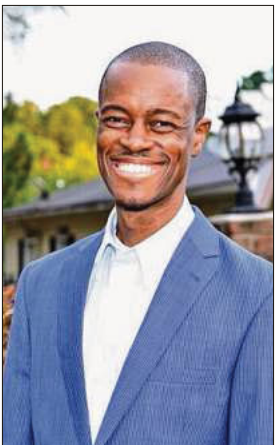
ger isolate myself from social interactions," he said.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for hearing loss, but getting a hearing test is a great first step, Kelley said.

Finding hearing aids that are comfortable can involve some trial and error. Sometimes, it can take a few weeks for your brain to adjust to hearing new sounds.

Kelley advised that if you're purchasing hearing aids from a professional, be sure there is a trial period, ongoing support, adjustment and fitting included.

For more information on HLAA, visit [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org).



**"I can't stress how life-changing it can be when you do seek assistance. Hearing loss had affected me for at least 15 years before I started using hearing aids, so you can imagine how profoundly my life changed."**

IBRAHIM DABO, a board member of the Atlanta chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America

### TIPS FOR MANAGING HEARING LOSS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

- Be well-rested to hear your best at gatherings.
- Ensure you can view everyone's face and read lips by sitting toward the center of the table.
- If you can, sit with a wall behind you to help with background noise and possibly put space between you and a busy kitchen.
- Have an ally to sit with so they can help you.
- Have one-on-one conversations in a separate room.
- Make sure to take breaks often.
- Don't be afraid to ask a person to repeat themselves if you don't hear them.
- No one hears everything, so don't expect perfection.

Source: HLAA





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AGING IN ATLANTA

VETERANS

# Some will always remember Pearl Harbor

Dwindling numbers of veterans still keep remembrance alive.

By Rachel Brown Kirkland  
For the AJC

Some 82 years ago, President Franklin Roosevelt described a deadly attack on a United States military base in Hawaii as “a day that will live in infamy.” Today, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is observed on Dec. 7 in honor of the more than 2,400 Americans killed when Japanese fighter planes attacked Hawaii that day in 1941.

Today, there are very few veterans still alive who were in the military during the events at Pearl Harbor. But many people can remember their parents, grandparents or friends recounting their experiences.

Take Raymond L. Collins, an Atlanta-area Vietnam War veteran who didn’t think he’d live to be 30. A former Marine who retired as a lieutenant colonel, he is now 85 and counts himself among the old veterans who never forget.

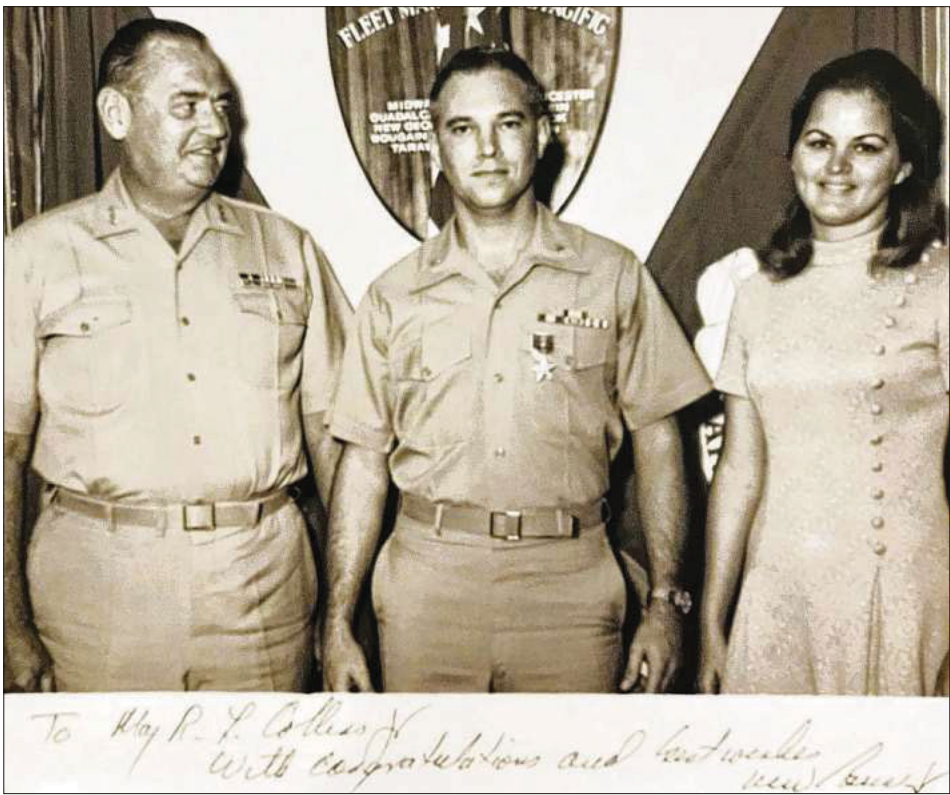
Collins was stationed at Hawaii’s Camp Smith for several years and remembers the camp’s beautiful view of Pearl Harbor of the 1970s. He said he worked for a short time for former Vice President John McCain’s father, who was over the Pacific Command there.

Although nearly a generation had passed since the attacks, tensions remained.

“We always saw the reminder,” Collins said of the military members stationed there. “We visited the memorials on a regular basis and paid our respects.”

Pearl Harbor continues to be an active U.S. naval base near Honolulu, Hawaii, and annual remembrances are held there to remember the attacks that killed 2,400 Americans, injured more than 1,000 others and damaged or destroyed around 20 American naval vessels – including the USS Arizona and USS Utah – and nearly 200 airplanes.

The Pearl Harbor attack



Raymond L. Collins (center), who served in the Marines during the Vietnam War, also spent some of his time in the military in Hawaii. PHOTOS ONTRIBUTED

led to the United States declaring war on Japan and becoming involved in World War II. For many years, Pearl Harbor Day held personal significance for much of the country – just like generations today remember the events of Sept. 11, 2001. But as the number of World War II veterans has dropped to only thousands, Pearl Harbor has receded and become to many just another chapter in history.

Drew Keenan, commander of VFW Post 2681 in Marietta, said it’s important to continue to draw lessons from that momentous day. He said the VFW Post observes Pearl Harbor Day with a ceremony every Dec. 7.

Keenan served in both the Navy and the Marines, and his father was a World War II veteran. At one point, the younger Keenan was head of the Veterans Oral History Project for the Library of Congress and the first person he interviewed was a World War II submariner who happened to be on the same vessel as his dad – the USS Chub.

Keenan remembers his father describing the day Pearl Harbor was attacked. His father, James, was 15 years old when his father heard the news come over the radio. His mother

**“All these organizations that I belong to bend over backwards in remembering Pearl Harbor and 9/11 and other major events. These old veterans never forget. You can look them in the eyes, and you see the history there in their eyes.”**

RAYMOND L. COLLINS,  
Atlanta-area Vietnam veteran

dropped her cooking to hear what had happened.

“I remember my dad being angry,” Keenan said. “He always remembered the terrified look on his mother’s face, and the next day he went down and joined the Army.”

Officials soon discovered Keenan was underage and released him from service, but he managed to eventually join the Navy and served on a submarine. He stayed in until the war was over.

Keenan said people can become students of history and look at Pearl Harbor today with an eye toward heeding its warnings.

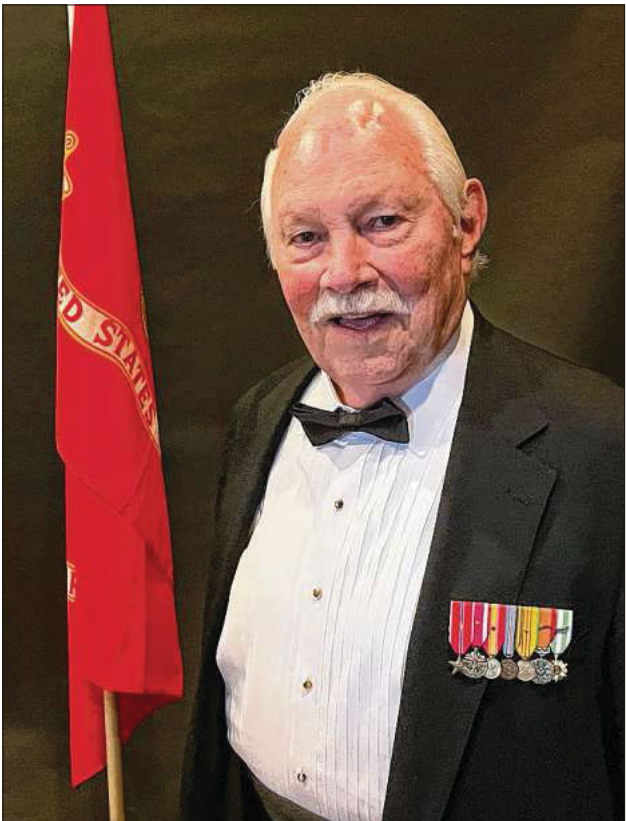
“It’s interesting that we were very complacent prior to World War II,” he said. “History has a way of repeating itself. ... The farther back you look, the further forward you see.”

Collins, who has lived in the Atlanta area since 1987 and is a member of the Marine Corps League in Woodstock and a member of local chapters of the American Legion and VFW, said many military-oriented organizations continue to hold ceremonies on Pearl Harbor Day. In the past, Collins has joined other military veterans for a small service in front of the Atlanta History Center where they meet in front of the World War II memorial and remember those who lost their lives.

“All these organizations that I belong to bend over backwards in remembering Pearl Harbor and 9/11 and other major events,” Collins said. “These old veterans never forget. You can look them in the eyes, and you see the history there in their eyes.”



Drew Keenan served as a hospital corpsman in the Navy.



Raymond L. Collins, 85, a former Marine who retired as a lieutenant colonel, always observes Pearl Harbor Day.

## DAY TRIP

Roosevelt’s Little White House Historic Site at 401 Little White House Road in Warm Springs, Georgia, will hold events on Dec. 2. James Fowler will portray Franklin Roosevelt and recite the “Day of Infamy” speech that sent the United States into World War II. Performances are at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. on Dec. 2. Visit [www.explore.gastateparks.org/info/699](http://www.explore.gastateparks.org/info/699) for more information.

BOOKS

# Family book shines a light on, gives heart to dementia

Father, daughter use life experiences to co-author novel featuring dementia.

By Severo Avila  
for the AJC

A new book co-authored by an Atlanta father and daughter tells the story of a family faced with a tough diagnosis – dementia. And although it’s a work of fiction, there is truth within the pages of the book and real emotions and experiences bound inside its covers.

“Heart Love to Head Love,” co-authored by 92-year-old Kenneth Crooks Jr. and daughter Shelly Michael, is the story of a blended family’s journey after a heartbreaking diagnosis and takes readers on a journey as the family comes to terms with shifting dynamics, tough decisions, memory care issues, day-to-day survival and an uncertain future.

And at its core is a story about love.

The book is loosely based on Crooks and Michael’s own family experiences.

“A man and woman

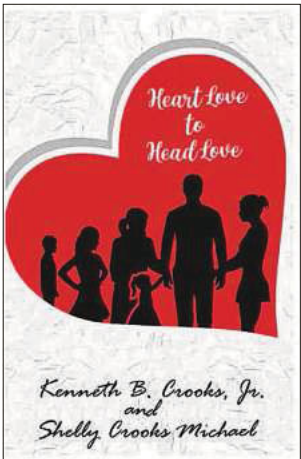
meet and get married, they enjoy a family life but they get divorced and they each remarry,” Michael said. “The two women in those marriages get diagnosed with dementia. They end up getting diagnosed at the same time. And their lives come together again.”

Readers see the family’s struggles through the eyes of one character, the main caregiver, who Michael said is loosely based on her own experiences. But it’s another character who, surprisingly, brings everyone together.

“This book is first and foremost a story,” Shelly said. “It has rich characters and a true storyline. We wanted to make it entertaining, to give the characters dimension. But then it’s also about raising awareness for these issues. It’s for people who might have someone in their family that’s starting to show symptoms and they’re asking, ‘What’s happening to mom or dad or grandma.’”

Michael said she and her dad hope the book might reinforce for others that dementia is not just a natural part of the aging process.

“It’s a disease that needs



“Heart Love to Head Love” is a coming-of-age story framed against the backdrop of managing loved ones with the onset of a debilitating neurological disease.

to be diagnosed,” she said. “It shouldn’t be ignored or written off as old age.”

As for the collaboration between father and daughter, Michael said that although her dad is 92 and blind in one eye, he is very helpful, gregarious and socially active.

“If this book was a tree,” she said, “then I provided the roots of the tree and he added the limbs and leaves. He filled it out.”

Atlanta readers will



Authors Kenneth Crooks Jr. and Shelly Michael are a father and daughter who include their experiences with dementia in their novel. CONTRIBUTED

enjoy many of her father’s additions to the story, Michael said. Not only is the story set in Atlanta, but Crooks added several bits of Atlanta history to the book as well as mentions of locations such as Morehouse, Spelman and even some of his old buddies from back in the day.

The duo have been working on the book for about two years and finally had it published at

the end of August.

“Heart Love to Head Love” is a story with a purpose, she said.

“I think the biggest thing we hear from people who’ve read the book is that there are so many issues that come up in the story that people don’t think about,” Michael said. “And we try to offer some tips about caregiving and letting people see real-life responses to some

**“This book is first and foremost a story. It has rich characters and a true storyline. We wanted to make it entertaining, to give the characters dimension. But then it’s also about raising awareness for these issues.”**

SHELLY MICHAEL  
Author

of these issues. Young people especially have no idea about aging and what happens if someone is diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer’s. But as people live longer, the population with dementia is growing. They may face that one day with someone they love.”

Copies of “Heart Love to Head Love” are available online at [heartlovetoheadlove.com](http://heartlovetoheadlove.com).



# AGING IN ATLANTA

## CALENDAR

# December activities feature holiday magic and more

By Lesly Gregory | For the AJC

The final month of 2023 is upon us. This is always a busy time, but often it's also an opportunity to get out and do so much. From holiday decorations and celebrations to things that keep the whole family smiling and having fun, these December activities have a little bit of everything – holiday magic included.

## ENJOY THE LIGHTS

### Enchanted Safari

Dubbed the Enchanted Safari, this drive-thru light experience lets you discover the jungle without traveling too far from home. Exotic animals, including peacocks, reindeer, and even a T-Rex, will pop up on your journey as you travel through the Tunnel of Tentacles and other illuminated stops. With more than a million lights and an audio-visual component with your host Toukie Toucan, this 20-to-30-minute safari tour is an experience for the whole family.

6 p.m.-10 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays, now-Sunday, Dec. 31. Also open Monday, Dec. 18 and Monday, Dec. 25. Tickets start at \$39.99 per car load. Six Flags White Water, 250 Cobb Parkway North, Marietta. [worldofillumination.com/marietta-georgia-six-flags-white-water](http://worldofillumination.com/marietta-georgia-six-flags-white-water)

### Lights of Life

The Lights of Life display is another opportunity to enjoy more than 1 million holiday lights, but this event includes a few extras. Families can stop to enjoy a train ride, petting zoo and concession stand. It's all part of Life University's enchanting wonderland. Billed as the "most affordable" holiday lights experience in the area, it provides a family-friendly option that isn't too heavy on the wallet.

Now-Sunday, Dec. 31. Buses are \$20 and cars and trucks are \$10. Life University, 1269 Barclay Circle, Marietta. 770-426-2600. [life.edu/lights-of-LIFE](http://life.edu/lights-of-LIFE)

## SPREAD SOME HOLIDAY CHEER

### Decatur Bonfire + Marshmallow Roast

Gather together to kick off cooler temperatures with a giant bonfire. This roaring, holiday blaze is the ideal spot to roast a few marshmallows. A quintessential part of the holidays, creating this gooey treat over an open fire is something everyone should get to do each year. Whether you bring your own marshmallows or grab some at the event, you can check this must-do off your list in Decatur.

6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14. Free admission. Decatur Square, 509 N. McDonough St., Decatur. [www.decaturga.com/community/page/bonfiremarshmallow-roast](http://www.decaturga.com/community/page/bonfiremarshmallow-roast)



### 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer'

Based on the stop-motion animated special from 1964, this family-friendly puppet show follows Rudolph and his friends as they learn that it's okay to be just the way they are. Ideal for younger children. Ticket prices vary based on the date and your seating choice. VIP tickets put you upfront in the theater for an up-close view of the puppetry magic, but there's no bad seat in the house.

Various times, with multiple shows Tuesday-Sunday. Now-Sunday, Dec. 31. Tickets start at \$36. Center for Puppetry Arts, 1404 Spring St. NW at 18th, Atlanta. 404-873-3391. [puppet.org/programs/rudolph-the-red-nosed-reindeer](http://puppet.org/programs/rudolph-the-red-nosed-reindeer)



STEVE SCHAEFER FOR THE AJC

## START A HOLIDAY TRADITION

### Avalon on Ice

Even though Atlanta isn't always cold enough for ponds to freeze over, outdoor ice skating is possible. Create a special memory at Avalon on Ice with this Rockefeller Center-inspired ice skating rink. Fun for the whole family. Spend some time skating, then take advantage of the various restaurants at Avalon for a family meal. You can do a little holiday shopping as well, or even see a movie at the theater.

3 p.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday and noon-7 p.m. Sunday. Now-Monday, Jan. 15. Special holiday hours 10 a.m.-10 p.m. from Tuesday, Dec. 19-Monday, Jan. 1. General tickets are \$18, and children 9 and under are \$14. Ticket prices include skate rental. The Plaza at Avalon, 400 Avalon Blvd., Alpharetta. [experienceavalon.com/events/avalon-on-ice](http://experienceavalon.com/events/avalon-on-ice)



Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted designed the grounds of Asheville's fabulous Biltmore Estate.

PHOTO BY JOHN WARNER

## TRAVEL

# 5 winter road trip destinations you can get to in 4 hours or less

By Karon Warren | For the AJC

While we may all like to cozy up to the fire with a warm cup of hot cocoa during winter, there's no reason why you have to do that just at home. Get out this winter, and explore these nearby destinations for mouthwatering cuisine, scenic attractions and, of course, hot cocoa by the fireplace.

## ASHEVILLE, N.C.

Many people flock to Asheville to tour the Biltmore Estate each year, and why not? It's gorgeous, especially when decorated for the holidays. But that's just the beginning.

"Asheville makes an excellent winter destination for both families and couples!" said Durham, N.C., resident Christina Riley, owner of NC Tripping, a travel site dedicated to North Carolina travel. "During the holidays, the Omni Grove Park Inn hosts the National Gingerbread House Competition, and the houses remain on display throughout the Christmas season. Also, couples can retreat to a cozy cabin in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and then soak in Japanese-style outdoor hot tubs at Shoji Spa."

## NASHVILLE, TENN.

Just minutes from downtown Nashville, the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center is an attraction all its own. Entering the resort's 4.5-acre Delta Atrium, visitors can take a stroll among the trees, enjoy a drink alongside the indoor river, or shop in one of the many boutiques and stores. You can even take a riverboat tour on the river.

Plus, you can choose from a variety of cuisines without ever leaving the property, including Italian food, a steakhouse, Southern specialties, Mexican food, and more. When you're ready for some pampering, head to the Relâche Spa for a massage, body treatment, facial or salon services.

## HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

Well known as Rocket City, Huntsville certainly sets the stage for entertainment with the U.S. Space & Rocket Center, but prepare for much more.

"Huntsville Botanical Garden is fun for all ages with unique focal points scattered throughout the trails," said Becky Beall,



The 680-foot-long SkyBridge is part of the newly renovated SkyLift Park at the top of Crockett Mountain in Gatlinburg, Tenn. COURTESY



A river runs through it .... at the stunning Opryland Hotel, just minutes from downtown Nashville, Tennessee. COURTESY

a freelance travel journalist from Pelham, Ala., and owner of The Travel Voice By Becky. "Between mid-November and the end of the year, Galaxy of Lights transforms the garden into a winter wonderland with lights and music."

You'll also find fabulous food selections as well as popular breweries like Straight to Ale, situated on an old middle school campus, she said.

## GATLINBURG, TENN.

At the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains

National Park, Gatlinburg welcomes you to cozy up in one of its many vacation rental cabins. When venturing out, you can explore the national park or stroll through downtown to pop into a variety of shops, attractions, and restaurants. You also can enjoy the city's annual holiday lights anytime through February.

## HICKORY, N.C.

This small city offers big entertainment during a winter escape. In downtown Hickory, you can shop till you

drop at a variety of boutiques and shops featuring handcrafted and local merchandise.

To get the blood pumping, hit one of the trails throughout Hickory. For instance, the Hickory Trail includes more than 10 miles of walking and biking paths throughout the city.

Art lovers will enjoy the Hickory Museum of Art, where you can see both American and Southern folk art in addition to changing exhibitions from near and far.



AGING IN ATLANTA

COMMUNITY EVENT

# Annual AJC event highlights health issues, estate planning

Attendees to community event were eligible to win a variety of door prizes, including tickets to ‘The Nutcracker’ ballet.

By Kiersten Willis  
kiersten.willis@coxinc.com

Thursday, Nov. 9, marked the AJC’s fourth Aging in Atlanta community event of the year. Kroger was the presenting sponsor.

Gwinnett Technical College hosted the event, where attendees learned about health, estate planning and maintaining connections.

Host Alexandra Offor asked questions as attendees enjoyed a meal and participated in a Q&A. They also had a chance to win prizes, including gift cards from Kroger, Starbucks and Mastercard, and tickets to “The Nutcracker.”

Kaiser Permanente, The Estate and Asset Protection Law Firm, Georgia Relay, Sonder Health Plans, Clover Health, AARP and Visiting Nurse Health System were on hand to chat one-on-one with

attendees ahead of the panel.

Panelists were:  
■ Deanna “Dee Dee” McEwen, Pharm.D., a pharmacist with Kroger Health, Atlanta Division.

■ Lateefah Watford, Doctor of Psychiatry - Kaiser Permanente.

■ Shannon Pawley, J.D., LL.M attorney & CEO at The Estate & Asset Protection Law Firm.

■ Nakia Vaughn, Medicare Advantage sales specialist - Kaiser Permanente.

■ Nicole Williams, journalist and senior manager of partnerships for the AJC.

McEwen answered questions about medication adherence and missing doses, using coupons versus insurance for prescriptions, taking supplements and getting flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

Watford addressed Seasonal Affective Disorder, getting help for

depressive symptoms and anxiety, socializing and maintaining connections, resources for excessive alcohol consumption, and the importance of STD testing.

Pawley discussed essential estate planning documents, misconceptions about wills, trusts, common estate planning mistakes, whether it’s ever too late to begin estate planning, whether people who aren’t wealthy need estate planning, and steps for leaving assets to non-family members.

Vaughn talked about the Medicare annual enrollment period, and the differences between original Medicare and Medicare Advantage plans.

Williams discussed the AJC’s award-winning Everyday Heroes project, and shared the stories of some of the stand-out community heroes over age 50.



Aging in Atlanta’s fourth event of the year included returning panelists who informed attendees on estate planning, medication, socializing and things to do around Gwinnett County for the holiday season. CONTRIBUTED

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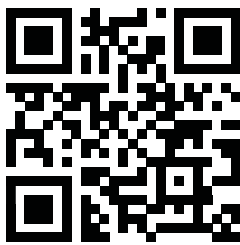
**Stone Mountain**  
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**Augusta**  
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