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## Market Theatre celebrates 10th anniversary of 24 Hour Musical, benefiting South Main Chapel & Mercy Center

This year, Market Theatre is proudly celebrating the 10th anniversary of its unique and dynamic 24 Hour Musical, an event that has become a beloved tradition

in the community. Benefiting the South Main Chapel & Mercy Center, which is also celebrating its 10th anniversary, this milestone underscores a decade of theat-

rical innovation and charitable support coming together to make Anderson a stronger community.

The 24 Hour Musical is a distinctive

event where participants come together to produce an entire musical within just

**SEE MUSICAL ON PAGE 2**



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# Musical

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

24 hours (yes, you read that correctly). From casting and rehearsing to staging and performing, the process is an intense, whirlwind affair that highlights the dedication and talent of the local theatre community. This rapid production schedule results in a one-of-a-kind performance that captivates audiences with its spontaneity and charm...and no lack of hilarity.

Over the past ten years, the Market Theatre has selected a diverse range of musicals, including crowd-favorites *The Little Mermaid*, *Godspell*, and *Peter Pan*, ensuring a fresh and exciting experience each year. However, as is customary, this year's show won't be revealed until the night rehearsals begin – keeping all actors, artists, and volunteers in the dark until the last moment. The event has drawn theatre enthusiasts from across the Upstate and beyond, eager to witness the unfolding drama and delight of a show created in a single day.

Beyond the excitement of the stage, the 24 Hour Musical serves a vital purpose for the Anderson community. All proceeds from the event are donated to a charity partner, which this year is the South Main Chapel & Mercy Center, a local organization committed to providing essential services to those in need. The Mercy Center offers food, clothing, medical care, and other critical support, playing a crucial role in the community. The funds raised through the 24 Hour Musical over the years, totalling more than \$40,000, have made a significant impact, helping countless individuals and families over the past decade as funds



have gone to local charities including Meals on Wheels, Calvary Home for Children, LOT Project, and The Cleo Bailey Experiment.

As the Market Theatre commemorates this 10th anniversary, it reflects on the power of the arts to bring people together and foster community spirit. This event is a shining example of how creativity and compassion can intersect to create something truly special. Market remains dedicated to continuing this

tradition, inspiring audiences and supporting the incredible nonprofits in Anderson for many more years to come.

The 24 Hour Musical will be presented on Saturday, August 9 at 7:00 pm at Anderson University's Rainey Fine Arts Center. Attendance is free with all donations going to South Main Chapel & Mercy Center. Reserved seating can be purchased at [tickets.markettheatre.org](https://tickets.markettheatre.org) with all proceeds benefiting the charity.



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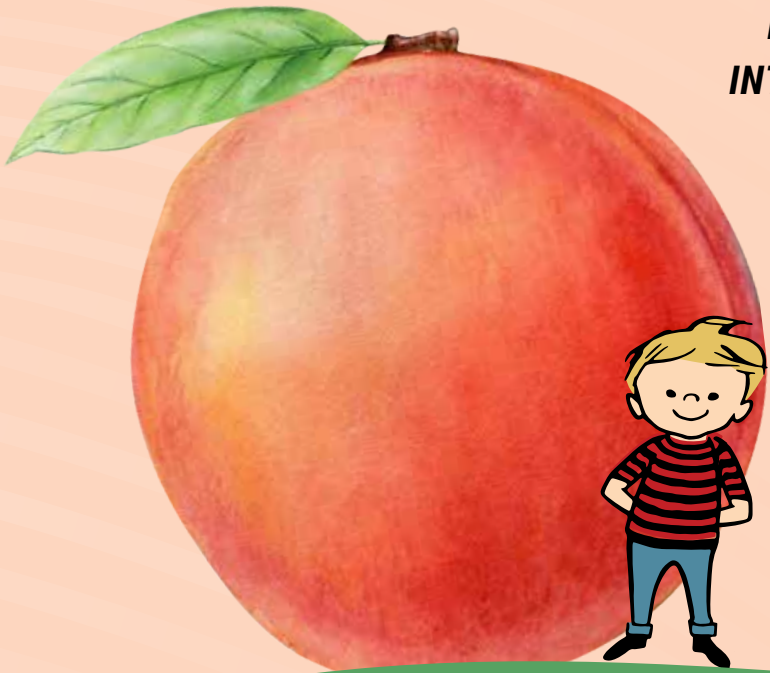
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# To change her life, Anderson author Bren McClain had to imagine the end of it

What if you could change the course of your life by imagining its end? That's what author and Anderson native Bren McClain did more than 30 years ago, and the result has been an award-winning novel set in Anderson County and another on the horizon that coincides with a historic anniversary. And while an obituary set her on this path, she'll also tell you about the perseverance it took to get her where she is today.



Kim von Keller

"When the universe finally opened up for me," she says, "I had done the work, and I was ready."

McClain grew up on a 72-acre farm in the Centerville community,

where her family grew cotton and soybeans and raised beef cattle.

"My paternal grandparents lived across the road from us. We always had a big summer garden, and everyone was expected to pick. We ground our own flour and grits and ate our own beef. About the only thing my mother ever bought at the store was sugar. I've come to appreciate the fact that I grew up in a place in a farming community near New Prospect Baptist Church. If you asked a question, you got an honest answer. I think my people anchored me in the truth and speaking the truth."

As a little girl, McClain spent most of her time outside, but never without her "essentials": a peanut butter sandwich, a canteen of water, a writing pad, and a pencil.

"I always paid attention to the land. I wrote stories and poems and a novel when I was still in elementary school. But the one person who really nurtured that writer's seed in me was my fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Ellen Walters. It wasn't part of an assignment, but I wrote a play about a little girl who finds a hummingbird, and Mrs. Walters made sure it was performed in the school auditorium. If she had ignored me or told me that I was wasting my time, she could have squelched my desire to write."

McClain studied English at Furman University. Following her graduation, she had a series of jobs that used her strong language skills. She taught English at Westside High School. She wrote for the "Anderson Independent." She worked for radio stations and television stations. For a time, she left the South, traveling to California to study at Stanford University's Media Institute. These



experiences led her to a job that, to everyone else at least, meant that she had arrived.

"I was working in media relations for Bell South in Atlanta, and people back home thought it was a big deal to be working at the company headquarters. But on May 4, 1990, a particularly boring workday, I picked up a pad and pen and wrote my obituary. It said that I had been 'a manager of Media Relations.'"

By imagining the end of her life, McClain realized that she could change its direction.

"I immediately scratched through that and wrote this in its place: 'Brenda McClain, writer, died today in.... She also worked as a communications consultant.' I followed that revised obituary with a letter of resignation addressed to Bell South."

Many people, upon making such a monumental decision, experience monumental regret later on. Not McClain.

"I never once doubted myself. Not a millisecond. I started my own company and began doing pro bono work, training executives in non-profits. By the end of May, I had my first client. I always trusted that because I stepped out in faith and courage, the universe would have my back."

Her early business success was not matched by early writing success. She wrote two novels that remain unpublished, but she never wavered in her conviction that she had done the right thing.

"What is it like to receive a letter of rejection? I got bunches of them, and they ouch. I would think, Bren, are you up for that? Fleeting doubts never lasted long, though. You



have to become your own life coach. When I wrote that obituary, I believed that I was put on this earth for a purpose, and when you believe in something bigger than you, you just keep going."

As she honed her talent, she was also building connections as she attended writing classes and conferences. By 2013, McClain had finished her third novel, "One Good Mama Bone," but it wasn't gaining traction with large urban publishers. Two years later, she was attending a conference in Spartanburg where a literary agent spoke of the rise of small regional publishers such as Pat Conroy's imprint, Story River Books, at the University of South Carolina Press. A chance meeting with Jonathan Haupt, co-creator of Story River Books, led her to submit "One Good Mama Bone" for consideration, and it was published in 2017.

"When I found out 'Mama Bone' was to be published, I fell to my knees and cried like a baby," McClain says. "I can still take myself to that moment. For a lifetime of believing and it finally comes to pass, it's an overwhelming sensation of gratitude and humility. I ran outside and wanted to be in nature. I just said, 'Thank you, thank you.' I could have passed from this world without it happening. I could not have been blessed this way. A lot of pieces had to be in place for it to happen."

Set in the early 1950s, "One Good Mama Bone" is the story of Sarah Creamer, a young Anderson County woman who finds herself caring for a child who is not her own. She finds her maternal instincts by observing the fierceness with which a cow named Mama Red mothers her calf. The novel was the

winner of the 2017 Willie Morris award for Southern Fiction and the 2019 Patricia Winn Award for Southern Literature. The French language version, published under the title "Mama Red," won the French Prix Maya for Best Animal Novel.

"And there I was, a 27-year overnight success," McClain laughs.

Not resting on her laurels, McClain is hoping the publication of her second novel will coincide with next year's 75th anniversary of the Savannah River Site. With the title still to be determined, the book tells the story of Eula Bates, a South Carolina woman who refused to give the federal government the right-of-way to go through her farm with a road into the Savannah River Site in 1950. Under the working title "Took," the novel won the 2016 Gold Medal for Best Novel-in-Progress in the William Faulkner – William Wisdom Creative Writing Competition.

"I'm looking forward to sharing the story of Miss Eula Bates," she says.

Dreams are easy to lose, but the little farm girl with a notepad and pencil never lost sight of her dream of being a writer. It just took an obituary to put it on the right path.

"Lots of people have unrealized dreams," McClain says. "What I would say to them is, go back and remember what you were like as a little boy or girl. It's the reason that, in my writing room, I have a picture of me at five years old. I look at it every day and tell her, 'My job is to take good care of you because you have all the answers.' Writing that obituary gave me wings, and with hard work, a spirit of humility and gratitude, and a thousand percent availability, there's nothing I can't do."

## YOUR DENTIST CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

# How to enjoy optimum energy — every day!

In recent features we've been focusing on self-care or "lifestyle medicine", with discussions on stress, how to ensure you are getting restorative sleep, and the benefit of maintaining a positive attitude despite the pressures of modern life.

The ultimate objective of self-care is, of course, making better life choices to avoid health issues and enjoy a better quality of life. And, given that we live in a time of great medical advancements, possibly extending our lifespan.

On that note, let me pose this question...

How do you feel when you wake up in the morning? Ready to embrace the day? Or do you feel tired with a loss of focus, low mood, poor memory, even slowness to react? To compensate, do you find yourself reaching for a candy bar, cup of coffee or energy drink for a lift as the day wears on -- and yet still wonder why am I so tired? (Yes, they provide a fast pick-me-up. But the "high" soon wears off

leaving you feeling drained.)

Good news. Medical science has come a long way in providing us with what can be a lasting solution to keeping that sluggishness at bay.



**Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick**

1. Check your diet. It's the first step in self-care. Specific to energy, go with foods with a low glycemic index. Energy from these foods is released gradually, helping to keep you alert for longer. Snack on almonds or peanuts. They are high in nutrients essential for energy and cell production. Also grapes, an apple or orange. Don't overlook the lowly banana. Studies show they can better sustain energy than sports drinks!

2. Yoga is a well-known fatigue fighter, spe-

cifically the "downward dog" position. Google it. It helps to get your blood flowing, making it an energy boost if you've been sitting at a desk.

3. Drink water. Keep your body well hydrated.

4. Squeeze a workout into your day. What type? Anything. Only 10 minutes at a time will help keep your energy levels at their peak. Move every chance you get. Can't beat a good walk.

5. Hang out with upbeat friends. People who are negative sap your energy; those who are upbeat and excited can give you a lift.

Finally, it's important to realize that with the pressures we all face day to day feeling tired is normal. That said, if you find yourself experiencing constant fatigue and struggling, please see your doctor. A physical checkup can help determine what, if anything, is happening. The sooner the better so you can get back to your rejuvenated and energetic self. Self-

care is a journey we should all be taking. If you have questions, please reach out. Consider us your hometown resource for guidance and support.

*Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick is the owner of Grand Oaks Dental, located at 3905 Liberty Highway in Anderson. A strong believer that dental fear and anxiety should not prevent any patient from receiving the highest quality dental care, Dr. Cannick has received extensive training in Sedation Dentistry and is a certified member of the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation. She is also a member of the South Carolina Dental Association, the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, and the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine.*

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# BLUE JEAN BABY

Jeans are simply the best. You can dress them up or dress them down and when I think of jeans, for some reason, it just says America to me. Levi Strauss patented the first pair of jeans in May of 1873. He put pleats in men's work



**Kristine March**

pants and that's where it all began. He made history indeed.

My love for jeans started at the tender age of thirteen. I remember GAP was really big at the time, circa 1997-98 and I just had to have a particular sort of flare leg style pair and I wore them on the first day of junior high. I felt so grown up and trendy. I had transitioned from Osh Gosh to a real pair of teenage jeans. I don't think I've ever felt more confident in my life than that day.

As I got older, in my late teens and in my early twenties, I had to have designer jeans that cost a small fortune and they even had to be altered perfectly just for me. Now that I'm headed towards forty, I'm all about vintage jeans that my younger self would most certainly frown

upon. Jeans really do tell a story. The seventies were all about bell bottoms and girls even wore their boyfriends' jeans. The eighties were acid wash and the nineties were the bigger and baggier the better. My least favorite jean era was definitely the big baggie ones of the nineties and now my young teenage son is starting to wear them because they're making a comeback, of course. Say it isn't so! I do love a baggy oversized pant on women. I make exceptions to the rule.

The fashion cycle repeats itself every twenty years or so, I guess. Really the most amazing thing about a good pair of jeans is they actually

contour to your body. They're so comfortable and if you buy the right pair, they will probably last you a lifetime. Marilyn Monroe was one of the first women to actually wear blue jeans on the big screen in 1954 in her film A River of No Return and again in 1961 in the film The Misfits. She wore the iconic 501 style by Levi's which was quite the controversy and really a big deal for women to do back then, but leave it to Marilyn to be the rebel. I'm so thankful she did. What jeans are in your closet? Remember to make this sidewalk your runway and kindness always matters. Go put your blue jeans on y'all!

## GOOD TO KNOW

### O'Keefe's Night Treatment for Healthy Feet

BY MELISSA BROWN

Summer can be brutal on your feet. Hot sidewalks, scorching sand, chlorinated pools, blisters, and athlete's feet. Usually by July, I'm too embarrassed by the condition/look of my feet to even get my routine pedicure. But this year, things are different. This year, I have O'Keefe's Night Treatment.

This soothing and restorative cream was developed by a pharmacist, Tara O'Keefe, over 25 years ago for her father, a rancher, and a diabetic, who suffered from severely dry and cracked skin. He had been unable to find anything to ease his pain and discomfort, so Tara began experimenting with ingredients and before long, Night Treatment was found.

How does it work? O'Keefe's hydrates and forms a protective barrier over damaged skin while it heals overnight. It's not greasy and won't rub off on your bedsheets.

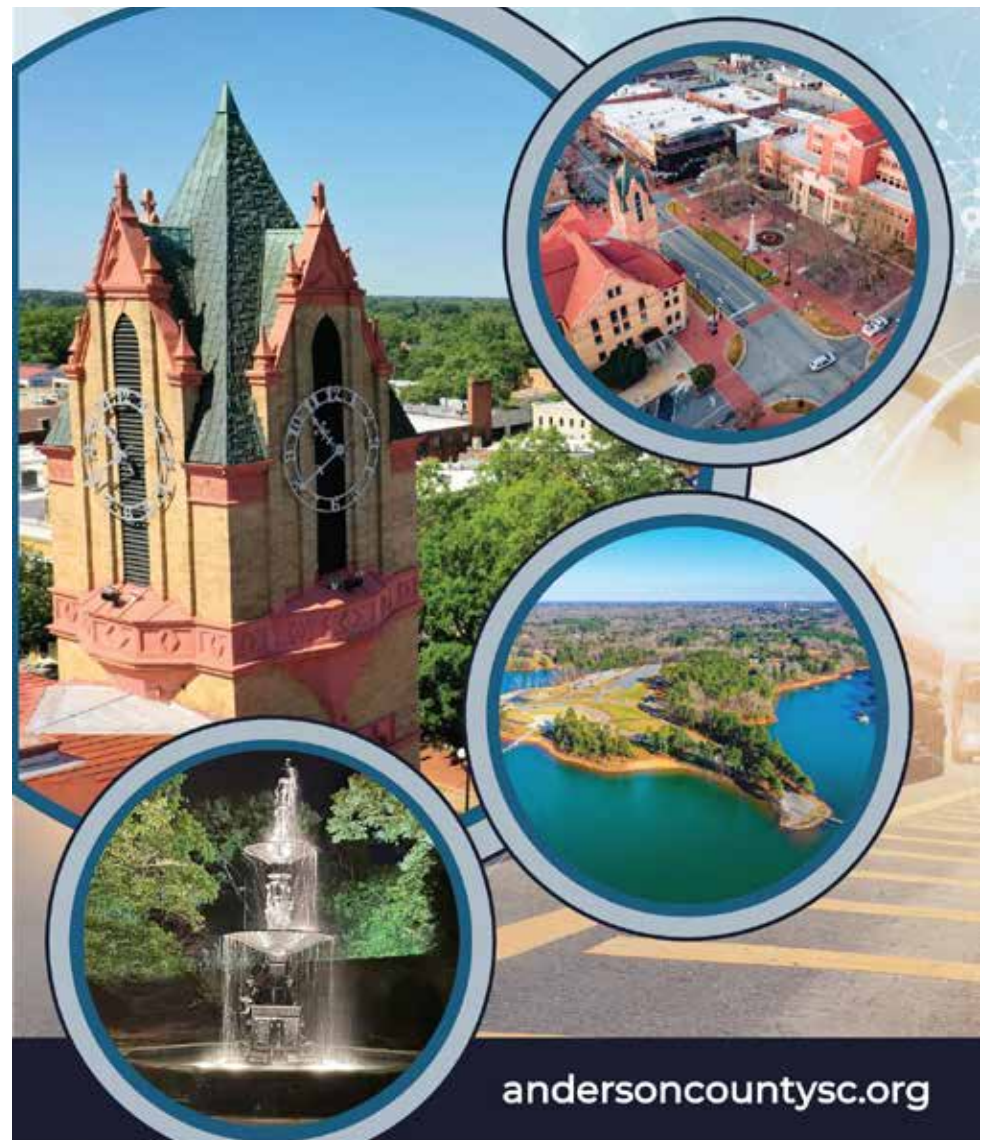
The company claims dramatic results after ONE use and promises a full refund if disappointed. It's hypoallergenic and is safe for diabetic skin.

O'Keefe's can be found at your local gro-



cery or drug store. It costs \$10.49 and is well worth the price.

So if your tanned tootsies could use some TLC, give it a try! You won't be sorry!



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# A tribute to Dr. Ron Wilkins

Early August – hot, sticky, and miserable. And the kids are back in school! (Really?!) So for this issue I'd like to veer to an education-related subject, and also pay tribute to a great man.

Dr. Ron Wilkins was the administrator at Oakwood Christian School here in Anderson for over twenty years, serving as the leader to over 550 students and staff during the heyday years of the 90s and beyond. He was my boss for 17 of those years. Two words describe this man: caring and faithful.

Dr. Wilkins truly did care about those under his leadership – teachers and students alike. Although sometimes he had to make difficult decisions about students, he also showed mercy in various situations. When one young man came perilously close to not graduating due to a failing grade in one required course, Dr. Wilkins made arrangements with the teacher for the boy to do extra makeup work to get that grade to a D-. He didn't have to do that. He was fair and he enforced the rules, but he knew when a situation called for

leniency or mercy. He likewise showed care and love to his staff in many ways.



Ann K. Bailes

Dr. Wilkins was faithful, and he worked hard at his vocational calling. He walked the hallways and looked in our classrooms often, and he knew what was going on in his school. He gave his teachers freedom to accomplish

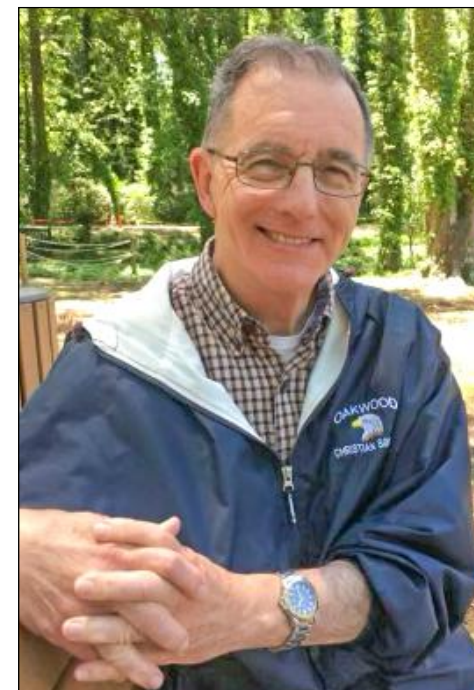
the goals of their classes in whatever ways they could best do so – but we had to get the job done in the end. We all knew that. He was a good supervisor without being a micromanager.

He didn't "fuss," but he didn't let things slide either. I remember many times seeing him go up to a young person who needed correction in some area, maybe a young driver who had been speeding in the parking lot. Dr. Wilkins would put his hand on the young man's shoulder (parking lot speeders were usually young men) and say "I need your help

with something." Almost always, the student responded well. What an effective way of getting the desired result without coming across as a dictator!

And Dr. Wilkins' guiding force was that he was deeply concerned with being true to God in all of his actions and decisions. He was a Christian, and everyone who knew him could see that overriding principle in his life.

Dr. Wilkins passed away in July due to complications from a recently diagnosed illness. Hundreds of people, many of whom were former students, attended his funeral. He made an impact on many lives. We need more Dr. Wilkins in this world! He is an inspiration to all in the field of education, teachers and students alike, to do the best possible job and to influence others. He is greatly missed.



Dr. Ron Wilkins

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# EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

BY RICH OTTER

Emergency medical services in Anderson County were originally provided by volunteer rescue squads functioning from multiple sites independently. They performed a vital service, but they lacked uniformity. Anderson County Council determined there should be a coordinated system.

Medical emergency response is now functioning through several co-operating entities in accordance with state and county criteria. MedShore is a private ambulance service providing emergency transportation and each ambulance is staffed with an emergency medical technician (EMT). An EMT is certified by the state to administer basic life support including specifically authorized medication, procedures to inhibit bleeding, the ability to administer CPR, and to provide general medical trauma care.

The county, through its Emergency Medical Services Division, provides paramedics who are quick responders with advanced training, utilizing vehicles equipped with practically everything available in an emer-



Steve Kelly

gency room except an X-ray machine. They represent the highest medical proficiency for administering such emergency treatment.

County 911 operators are vital first-line personnel who must assimilate incoming information in order to properly deploy needed assistance. They must be able to acquire, often from frantic callers, information necessary to properly inform those responding as to the nature and location of the emergency.

In addition to extensive training, 911 operators are assisted by analytical computer programs. The caller's location is identified electronically that also automatically reveals the nearest available medical assistance. Paramedic vehicles are equipped with trackers. Ambulances with EMT personnel and the paramedics are stationed at multiple, although separate, locations throughout the county to offer maximum response potential.

The 911 operator types into a computer the telephoned information identifying the nature of the emergency with as much information as has been quickly obtained. The computer creates an algorithm that produces a protocol.

For instance, if an automobile wreck would be involved, the degree of seriousness is broken down into five levels of response—alpha, bravo, charley, delta and, the most severe, echo. By knowing the appropriate level, it helps the responder to be alert to what action will be needed immediately at the scene.

Various programed scenarios are analyzed to produce response prob-

abilities. If an individual is suffering chest pains, a protocol is developed when it is learned if the individual is under or over thirty years of age and whether or not there has been a previous history of a cardiac problems. Questions will disclose what event has created the necessity for the call. This may seem routine, but obtaining such information needs delicate guidance under stressful circumstances.

Emergency preparedness is essential for advance planning. The recent "Rock the Country" program with events scheduled July 25-27 utilizing the Civic Center area, was known by early July as having sold some twenty thousand tickets. Contemporaneously, there was also overnight camping.

Emergency Medical Services director Steve Kelly had previously explained: "We will staff a medical team twenty-four hours each day, and when it comes time for the actual event we will provide about twenty-two people a day. It will require eight paramedics and a couple of EMTs. There will be assigned areas, and if someone, for example, were to pass out, they will move the individual

to the medical tent which we will have staffed with a doctor. We will have three ambulances there for the event."

In addition, the county Emergency Management Department under Director Josh Hawkins provided, in addition to its other duties during the program, water stations and cool-down tents to help people stay hydrated and generally assisted the emergency medical operations.

The county's system was groundbreaking although initially considered somewhat questionable. No other similar Emergency Medical System (EMS) was functioning in the state. State officials visited Anderson County and were amazed with the program.

Last year the county's Emergency Medical Services Division was awarded the large EMS system of the year award for the state of South Carolina. Kelly received the director of the year award. Anderson was in competition with the state's largest population counties competing with budgets up to \$30 million a year. The awards were a remarkable achievement for Anderson County.

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# LAZY BOY

While still on the job I used to think that when I retired I would stay in bed until ten in the morning. I imagined loafing around in my underwear until noon, possibly getting dressed for lunch and having endless hours



Neal Parnell

to watch TV, take a nap, read books, take a nap, contemplate the universe, take a nap, or just scratch.

Then I'd walk to the park and play checkers, rock away the day waving from the front porch, and wouldn't hit the hay until midnight...Get

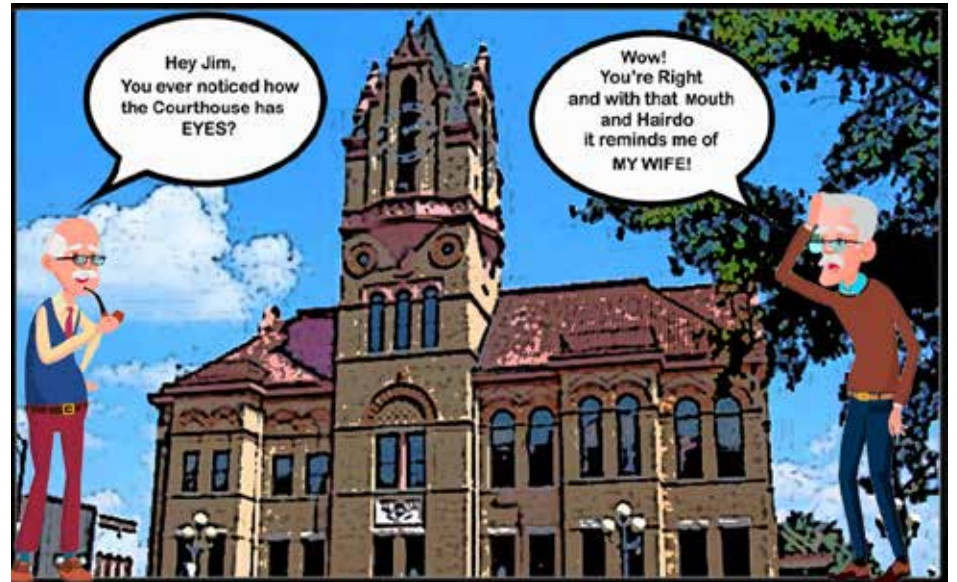
up and Repeat. Life has a way of stepping in and changing my plans and in six years of retirement, I've yet to have a nap. You'd think that reading or watching TV would eventually send me into a comatose state, but when I feel my eyes getting heavy and my body relaxing in the middle of the afternoon, I bolt up and find something to do. I've seen and read of men who retired, and a few years later they just quit getting up, shrivel up, and give up, so I'm not letting that happen to me. Go ahead and psychoanalyze me if you wish, but cleaning the salt and pepper shakers three times a week, and accusing my cat of reading my e-mails is not crazy. So what if I rise at 5 a.m. every morning then shave like I'm still in the Navy, that doesn't mean I'm getting ready to be viewed at Sullivan-King. Going to bed at dusk and waking at dawn is not a reason for my wife (she still works) to call me names like Rooster and Birdbrain. You may think my mind has short-circuited when I tell you

I've given the kitchen

appliances human names. Why waste my time saying three and five-syllable words like dishwasher and refrigerator when I can just say, Josey and Fred?

Josephine Cochran invented the dishwasher, and Fred Wolf invented the first refrigerator for the home. Now that I've beaten the five-year retirement death curse, I think I'm going to try and relax at least once. I'll start by sleeping in until 5:15 a.m., maybe even 5:20. Next, I'll push the retirement envelope by only shaving every other day. My cats are on my retirement schedule and will wonder what's going on when their breakfast is being served late by a scraggly-looking stranger. My wife and I own very nice, matching, remote-controlled, programmable, La-Z-Boy recliners. I've watched her touch one button and see her get laid out like a tablecloth. I anxiously pushed one remote button, my legs started to lift but I freaked out and immediately returned to the safe default rocking mode.

Yes, I probably do need a team of doctors and psychologists with their prescription pads at the ready, telling me to relax, take it easy, and enjoy my retirement. I'd reveal to them that I'm Stressed, Depressed, and Frustrated, but only for eighteen holes. They don't seem to understand that for me, retirement is not an end, but a new beginning with fresh challenges and opportunities that I'd never had time for while working ten hours a day. I can't wait to get up early and learn something new. Oh c'mon Neal, you could stay up till 10 if you wanted to. I could I suppose, but then I wouldn't be able to complete what makes a man, according to Benjamin Franklin, "Early to bed and Early to rise, Makes a Man Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise. Oh well, I do have my Health.



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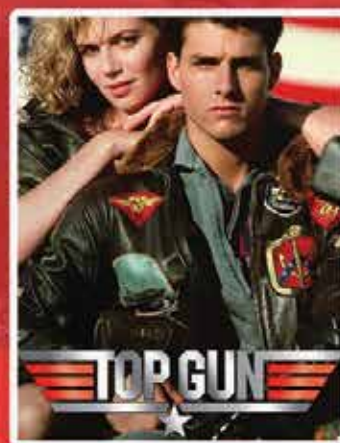
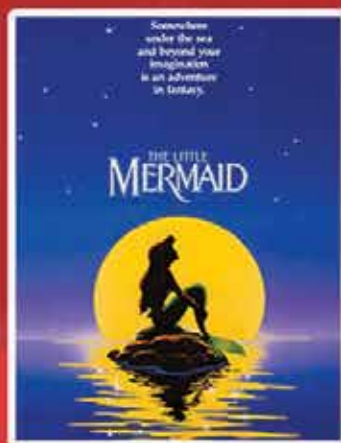
FRIDAY, MAY 17 – SUPER MARIO BROS @ 8:35PM

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## FROM THE SHELF

# On unapologetically seeking joy

Earlier in the year I talked about focusing on getting back to reading for the joy of it. Despite all the nonfiction I've been reading (not a typical joy-bringer for me), I've stuck to picking books to read for my own enjoyment rather than anything else. Doing this has helped me fall back in love with reading. With the success on the reading front, I've started trying to use this practice of 'seeking joy' in all areas of my life.

The past few years I think have been harder on everyone than we like to think (and we think quite a bit on how hard they've been). Between all the global events, economic swings, and push of hustle culture, we've all been caught like hamsters on a spinning wheel. Maybe I'm generalizing to make myself feel less like a "failure" for being generally burnt out, but I

feel pretty confident the increasing speed of life is taking its toll on all of us. Things that we've previously found joy, or just relief in, have become tasks to check off, or worse, something we feel guilty for indulging in because,



Sara Leady

\*flails arms\* look at all the things we SHOULD be whatevering. With the different social pressures and expectations dictating all the world's "shoulds," it's easy to start drowning.

As a librarian I often feel like I 'should' read all the biggest and heaviest lit award winning books but, like, sometimes they're exhausting?

Honestly, often I think they're terrible. The writing and/or research may be incredible, but reading them does nothing but add to the general existential depression of the world (at least for me). It's not that the stories and realities they may reflect aren't important (they absolutely are), it's the standard that only these types of stories hold intellectual merit or are "worthy" of all the awards.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels the knee-jerk reaction to defend my entertainment tastes for not being whatever "enough." Or feel guilty for opting to do something for myself (like rest) instead of finally doing the ever expanding mountain of laundry that needs folding. Even worse when it's opting to indulge in "unworthy" entertainment instead of conquering Wrinkled Shirt Mountain. It's this

thought process that I'm working to dismantle by trying to intentionally seek joy. I don't mean to the extent of ignoring my real life obligations, but I do think it's important to foster a better balance between the "shoulds" of the world, and our "wants" that are often actually "needs."

So, in my need for seeking joy in reading, I'm reading a fair amount of stereotypical romances and "chick lit" that we often judge people for reading because it "doesn't hold any merit" or "have any meat to it." These have been the stories I've needed, the brain candy I was craving to alleviate some of the stress. A favorite among these reads has been Rebecca Yarros's Flight and Glory series. They are peak contemporary military romances and I devoured them. The drama and romance of a Hallmark movie,

just spiced up a bit. I seriously can't remember the last time I loved reading like I currently am, and I think it has everything to do with saying "to heck with it" to the "shoulds."

I'm also seeking joy by getting back into art. It's been years since making time for art, usually due to the pressure of all the things I felt like I should be doing instead of art. Then it was the pressure to make art that was "worthy" of my not doing all the "shoulds." Approaching art as something to play with and find joy in, rather than trying to achieve a piece that feels "worthy" of something, has unlocked a different kind of creativity in me. I'm reveling in the fun of the process, and while I'm entering shows and have even won an award, it's been all about just playing and experiencing the joy of creating again.

So, if you catch me reading a "trashy" romance or spot some dramatic Taylor Swift themed artwork... mind ya business. Or better yet, take it as your invitation to also go unapologetically seek some joy.

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# She's a unique one



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There is a split leaf philodendron, named Big Bertha, in my office that is outgrowing her space. I don't recall where Big Bertha came from. She has been living happily in the office for many years and has been re-potted several times. About six or so springs ago, she was repotted again into a much larger pot and really started growing. It has been quite interesting to watch.

The air in the office is very dry. Plants have to be watered about every week to ten days. Big Bertha is watered at least every week. Houseplants at home do not require nearly that much water, even in winter when the fireplace is in use. Tips of the leaves on this split leaf

philodendron (*Thaumatococcus danianum*) were staying mostly brown and dry. It can be tricky to know if this means a plant is too dry or too wet. Sometimes such symptoms are very similar. But it was obvious when putting my fingers into the soil, Big Bertha gets dry quick. I started misting her, thinking maybe increased humidity would help. I think it has. She could stand repotting again, but I do not dare re-pot her now. Wrestling her would be a heck of a job, and there is no room for her to get much bigger. If I had known how she was going to grow, I would have put her in a deeper pot and put a board to stake her up.

Shortly after she was potted up into the one she is in now, I came in on a Monday morning, and first thing, noticed this root sprouting out. It looked like a skinny rope. It had literally grown about 19 inches in three days. I left it alone as long as possible then started wrapping it around the pot. Before long, there were lots of roots. Assuming this was to help the plant anchor to something in its natural habitat, I did

some reading about split leaf philodendrons.

There seems to be confusion as to what Big Bertha is, botanically speaking. Different botanical names were listed on various websites. She is an epiphyte, somewhat. Epiphytes grow on other plants and do not take any nutrients they need from their host plant. Big Bertha could live outside if she retired to Florida, or somewhere without winter frosts. In rainforests, and other tropical areas, split leaf philodendrons can grow to more than ten feet tall and wide. They can grow large trunk like stems that support their weight. Another reason Big Bertha needs so much water is the leaves are very thin and dry out quickly. Hence why misting seems to help. Many sites show pictures of the roots - some said they anchor the plant to what it is growing on, some said they travel to get down to the soil. One site called it a hemiepiphyte, a term I've never heard of. Trying to understand was information overload. With sciencedirect.com being the easiest

to understand (and that's not saying much), hemiepiphytes produce aerial roots that eventually grow down to the ground to start another plant. This is WAY over simplifying what was

stated on their site, and none of it matters in Big Bertha's case because she cannot stay outside to connect those rope looking roots to the ground.

My mind was all set to cut Big Bertha back and see if she would put back out from the trunk. As she is now, it would not surprise me if the pot tips over. I rotate her to try and keep the foliage balanced. The trunk is growing sideways, is about as big around as my arm, but much skinnier at soil level, and is interesting because where every leaf has died off, there is a scar that makes it

look spotted. All new growth comes from the end of the trunk. But for now, Big Bertha gets a reprieve. I rearranged the printer stand near her. My co-workers know they must work around Big Bertha when using the color printer. They marvel at her too.



Big Bertha

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