

WEST OF FREE PRESS



HOW BELLS RING ARE YOU LISTENING?

Local toy store brings holiday magic back to West Ashley with miniature Coburg Cow

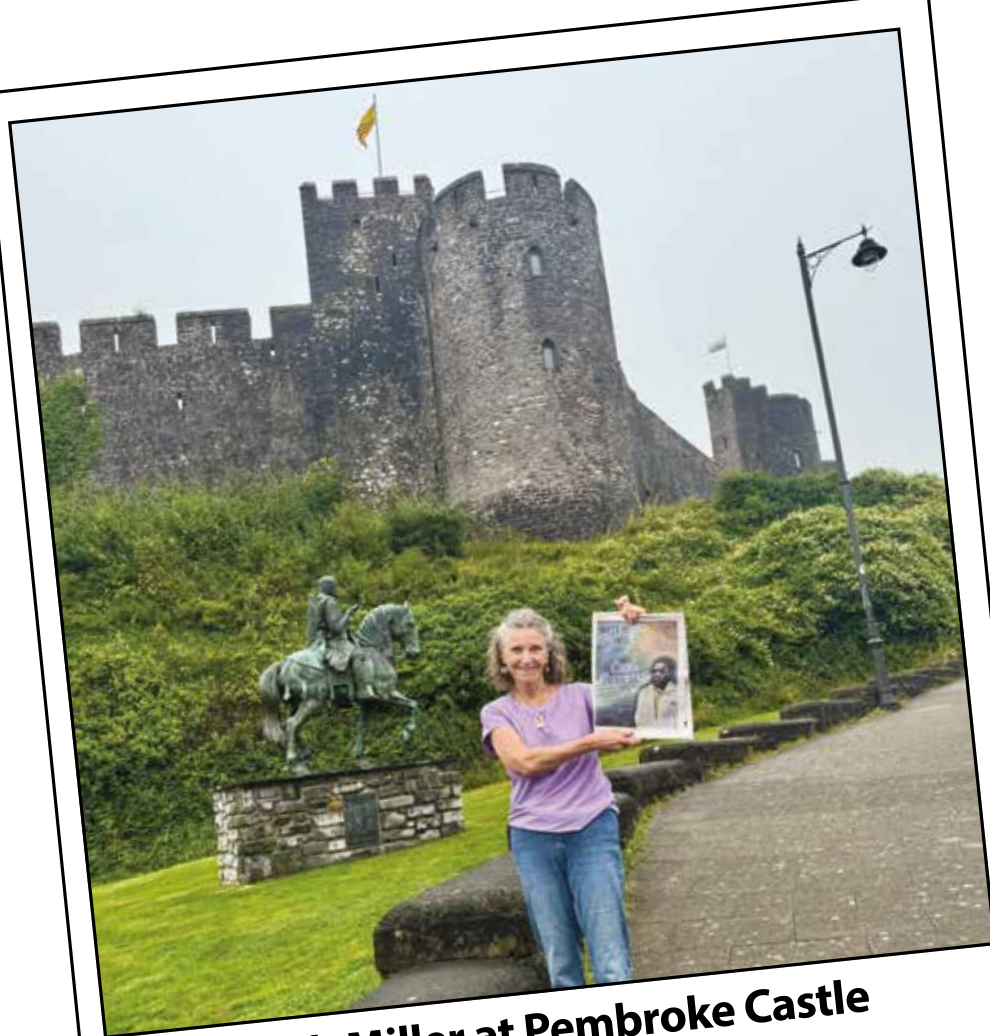
SEE STORY PAGE 8 ...

Also inside ...

Lakeside Harmony for Healing • Carolina Creamware Ornaments • AMOR's Merry Mingle ... and more!



**Will Hurst and Jeff Gredlein
in Helen, Georgia for Oktoberfest**



**Ruth Miller at Pembroke Castle
in Pembroke, Wales**

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Suite # 2

Charleston, SC 29407



JUNE BUG

BREED: Hound Mix
SEX: Female
AGE: 4 years
COLOR: Brown
SIZE: Large
SPAYED/NEUTERED: Yes
HOUSTRAINED: Unknown
ID: 79080A



PHILLY WILLY

BREED: Domestic Shorthair Mix
SEX: Male
AGE: 9 years 1 months
COLOR: Black
SIZE: Small
SPAYED/NEUTERED: Yes
HOUSTRAINED: Unknown
DECLAWED: No
ID: 78812a

PETS OF THE MONTH



Charleston Animal Society
2455 Remount Road
North Charleston, SC 29406
www.charlestonanimalsociety.org

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WEST OF FREE PRESS

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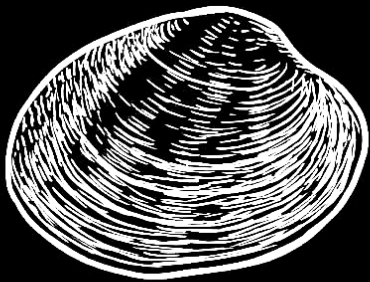
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December 14 & 28 from 5-9pm

James Island Charlestowne Fermentory

December 15 & 29 from 3-6pm

Graft Wine Shop for Good Neighbor Sunday

December 20 from 5-8pm • Odyssey Bottle Shop

December 22 from 1-8pm • Low Tide Brewing

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NEWS

“The core of what we do is connecting people with nature through entertainment and that is why this event has the potential of being tremendously powerful in its healing abilities.”

— Holland Duell, Woodlands Nature Reserve co-owner

Healing Through Music

Lakeside Harmony for Healing: Music for June Waterman to be held at Woodlands Nature Reserve

by Jenny Peterson | News Editor

The Woodlands Nature Reserve is a West Ashley gem—6,000 acres of unspoiled wilderness featuring lakes, blackwater swamps and forested trails that hosts day-trippers, paddlers and campers.

On Saturday, Dec. 7, it will serve another purpose: to host the event “Lakeside Harmony for Healing: Music for June Waterman.” It’s a special family-friendly all-day event to honor and support conservationist and Woodlands Nature Reserve trustee June Waterman in her battle with stage four cancer.

It’s a special family-friendly all-day event to honor and support June with a heartfelt celebration and an uplifting way to rally the community for her and the land she has worked so passionately to protect.

Set against the backdrop of the Woodlands’ tranquil lakes and forests, the lakeside concert venue will feature performances by Chris Roberts, Ben Whitney, Droze & The Drift, and Dallas Baker & Friends. There will be vendors, food available for purchase and outside coolers are welcome.

June and her family have been stewards of the land for generations. She, her siblings and their father implemented conservation easements on the land, ensuring wildlife in perpetuity. June’s company, Woodlands Nature Reserve, strives to demonstrate how humans can have a positive impact on ecosystems.

The event is both a love letter to June and a love letter to the serene space she helped protect. Her love for nature is the foundation for the event, explains Holland Duell, June Waterman’s brother.

“(Woodlands Nature Reserve) Director of Events, Everett White (also owner of



SoulShine Studios) realized the opportunity to bring people together in this setting to create a meaningful event and prioritize human-powered healing through music in nature,” said Duell. “White curated the list of performers for the event after witnessing multiple occasions of powerful healing occurring through music on site at Woodlands Nature Reserve,” Duell said.

As an inclusive event, tickets for Lakeside Harmony for Healing: Music for June Waterman are donation-based. Sponsorships are available as well as overnight camping passes, which include

access to the event.

All proceeds will go toward supporting June Waterman and her family, as well as the ongoing conservation efforts at the Woodlands Nature Reserve, ensuring that it continues to inspire and heal future generations.

“Donation-based tickets allow anyone to come and enjoy the music regardless of their financial contribution. It creates an open and holistic approach to integration of artists for the purpose of healing,” said Duell. “It will be an intimate crowd in a beautiful, natural setting and provide

wonderful memories of music and nature.”

Sponsorships include digital marketing on the event’s social media pages, a dedicated sponsor tent at the event, advertising on event merchandise, signage and more.

Attendees can watch the concerts from the front row or settle in by the water’s edge to hear live melodies drift across the lake. Between sets, attendees are encouraged to explore the tranquil forest trails, unwind with a lakeside walk, meander on bike paths, watch kids splash in the sandy shallows and/or launch kayaks, paddleboards and canoes for an afternoon of fun.

From lakeside campfires and art displays to local vendors and food, there’s something for everyone and all ages to enjoy. Bring your kayak, paddle board, hiking gear or bike and make a day—or night—of it.

“The core of what we do is connecting people with nature through entertainment and that is why this event has the potential of being tremendously powerful in its healing abilities— bringing together the force of nature and the mystic of music,” said Duell.

Lakeside Harmony for Healing: Music for June Waterman will be held on Dec. 7 from 1- 8 p.m. at Woodlands Nature Reserve.

All are invited to gather with June Waterman to shower her with healing music. Tickets and more information can be found at www.woodlandsnaturereserve.com. Donations can be made through the ticketing system or people can acquire a ticket at no charge. The address is 4279 Ashley River Road., at the north entrance to Woodlands Nature Reserve.



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No Place For Hate

West Ashley's Montessori Community School leads the way in anti-bias initiative

from Staff Reports

Over the last 20 years, schools nationwide have committed to creating inclusive learning environments through the "No Place for Hate" program. Charleston County School District is becoming a designated "No Place for Hate" school district, and Montessori Community School in West Ashley is the model for this holistic, school-wide to improving school climate.

Created by the Anti-Defamation League, "No Place for Hate" is a student-led school climate improvement program that cultivates student leadership, unites the school community, and engages students and staff in active learning. The program uses the power of peer influence for good. As a "No Place for Hate" school, Montessori Community has made a public commitment to challenge bias and bullying.

"One of Maria Montessori's most famous quotes is 'establishing peace is the work of education,'" said Montessori Community

School Principal Rachel Young. "I am humbled and in awe of the work that everyone at MCS does every day to create a peaceful, welcoming, inclusive environment for all. You can feel it when you walk into the building. It is a beautiful place."

In celebration of this designation, Montessori Community held its first-ever whole-school "No Place For Hate" event recently. Students, staff, and parents formed a human chain around the school building to "hug the school."

Through this national movement, students from all backgrounds have a framework that builds awareness and empowers students to take action. The program is designed to leverage the wisdom of students, teachers, administrators, and family members to plan and achieve their school climate goals.

For more information about the "No Place for Hate" initiative, visit www.noplacforhate.org.



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St. Andrew's Parks 2024 Holiday Programs



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1095 Playground Road

Contest Rules located at www.standrewsparks.com



Holiday Tree Lighting

Date: Tuesday, December 10 @ 6pm

Ages: All Ages | Fee: Free

Location: St. Andrew's

Picnic Shelter, 1095 Playground Road



Tennis Winter Break Camp

Ages: 5-14

Session 1: December 23, 26, 27

Session 2: December 30, 31, Jan 2, 3

Time: 9am - 12pm

Location: St. Andrew's Parks,

1095 Playground Road

Grubbin' with the Grinch

Date: Friday, December 13

Time: 5pm - 8pm | Fees: \$25

Location: St. Andrew's Gymnasium,

1095 Playground Road



Letters From Santa

Register by December 6

Fee: \$5.00



Remix Winter Break Camp

Ages: 5-12

Session 1: December 23, 26, 27

Session 2: December 30-January 3

Time: 7:30am - 6pm

Location: St. Andrew's Gymnasium,

1095 Playground Road



For more information visit
www.standrewsparks.com
or contact Jake Rossignol at
jrossignol@standrewsparks.com

Cow Bells Ring, Are you Listening?

Local toy store brings their holiday magic back to West Ashley with miniature Coburg Cows

by Jaon Perry | Contributing Writer

The famous story series about Eloise, a young girl who grew up in the Plaza Hotel in New York has nothing on our local version.

Elizabeth "Schnookie" Darby, described how magical it was to spend her childhood surrounded by toys in the original Wonder Works store. She tagged along with her mother to work at the age of nine. Owner Christine Osborne made her feel so special, tying on a proper little apron, making her a name tag, and in between doing homework in the stock room, gave her tasks and rewards. Darby was officially on the payroll at fifteen, helped buy and manage and is now owner and Head Magic Maker at Wonder Works West Ashley and Mt. Pleasant.

It was a family business then and now, with her mother and sister Julia (French teacher at WAHS) having worked in the shop, her brother serving as CPA, and father chief supporter. She met her friend Amanda working together as high school students. They have remained fast friends through the years and are now raising their own young families. Family members still rally to lend a hand during holiday rushes.

We in West Ashley are obsessed with our Coburg Cow statue. We know that and we are proud of it.

My kids loved WonderWorks. Celebrating the West Ashley shop reopening in the Indigo Plaza on Savannah Highway after closing in 2020, I wandered in to be greeted by enthusiastic staff offering to help me. But I had come with a suggestion for them. I had found a miniature toy version of our famous cow that looked exactly like her and suggested it might be a good item to carry in the shop. I'd been staging silly photo ops with my mini Bessie for years.

The next time I popped in, there was a small scale cattle dairy set up next to the cash register. I posted a fun picture on social media that was shared and viewed over 7,000 times and the staff set up a waiting list to fill the demand. I envision tiny herds of cattle marching to Charleston.

They have run out and reordered mini versions of our Coburg Cow three times and have more on the way for West Ashley holiday gifts and stocking stuffers. One mini cow has traveled to Europe and another has been attending Elvis Tribute Artist concerts and posing for photo ops.

"I'm excited to bring the magic back to



West Ashley!" As much fun as mini cows are, they are the least of the plans in place for the holiday season and beyond. Darby's eyes sparkled with ideas to bring the magic back and has upcoming events planned for kids and us older kids at heart.

Clay Rice silhouettes are a Charleston tradition. Clay Rice is an internationally acclaimed, multi-award winning silhouette artist and children's author. Darby had worked with Clay Rice for a year and she considers him family. He will be in the West Ashley location cutting custom silhouettes on Sunday, 12/22 from 1 - 4 p.m. For more information, visit ricegalleries.com.

Saturdays (Sundays in the Mt. Pleasant location) from 1-3 p.m. is Pokémon trading and battling time. The onsite Pokémon Master spends 10-15 minutes with each child.

The season of giving began in October. Thanks to a Buy One, Give One promotion, over 400 Barbies & Hot Wheels were donated to the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital.

Stay tuned for a Lego Contest in January with judging and displays in the store. Winners will be announced by category and age groups up to adults and will include Facebook voting.

Birthday Bins are described as a wonderfuntastical spin on a birthday wishlist - a physical, interactive gift registry.



Children fill a bin with any toys they would love to get on their birthday. Friends & family can shop right out of the bin, get a 10% discount, & complimentary gift wrapping. Birthday Bins are simple, fun, and FREE!

Check the web site and social media for details on Fairy Hair (Moms included!).

For more information, visit www.wonderworkstoys.com.

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OCTOBER 24

ANIMAL SERVICE RESPONSE

Officers were called out to a waterfront park about reports of a dead dog inside a trash bag discovered on the shore. Officers found a deceased small dog wrapped in a blanket inside the bag. The dog was transported to the Charleston Animal Society and a microchip scan turned up a local owner. Officers spoke with the owner who said the dog passed away the night before and she and her husband did not know what to do with its body, so they took the dog to the park at midnight to perform a "water sendoff." Officers told the woman she needed to pick up the dog from the animal society and properly dispose of it.

OCTOBER 25

LARCENY BY FALSE PRETENSES

A hair salon owner called police to report a scam; apparently via a Facebook page, a "stylist" had enticed several people to make \$50 "deposits" for hair services at the salon. The owner said no one at the salon is affiliated with the page, no one at the salon received deposits and believes it is a scam. The owner said he is worried the scam will reflect badly on the business. Officers were able to see the Facebook page when taking the report, but it was quickly taken down shortly after.

OCTOBER 27

THEFT FROM BUILDING

A woman reported that while she was shopping at a local grocery store, she believed someone stole her wallet out of her purse that was unzipped in her shopping cart. The wallet contained cash, credit/debit cards, her driver's license and a Starbucks gift card. Less than 20 minutes after she walked into the store, the woman said she began getting notifications from her bank that her card was being used at a big box retailer. Three charges of \$500 were declined, but additional charges of \$522.89 and \$506.31 did go through. The grocery store will provide video surveillance for the investigation.

OCTOBER 30

GENERAL INFORMATION

A panicked mother called police to report that her 1-year-old was buckled inside of a ride share and the driver drove away before

the woman could get inside the car. The woman said the driver was not picking up phone calls or responding to texts. The call came into police as a possible kidnapping. Officers quickly caught up with the vehicle and the ride-share driver said she was unaware that the woman was not also in the vehicle and that it was an accident. She apologized profusely and returned the child immediately. According to the report, the South Carolina statue for kidnapping was not met and everyone was free to go.

OCTOBER 30

ASSISTING OTHER AGENCIES

A woman was arrested for pointing a firearm at a motorist stemming from a road rage incident. Officers located the suspect's vehicle and the driver admitted that there was a gold pistol in the trunk.

NOVEMBER 14

DISORDERLY CONDUCT

A 57-year-old man was arrested after causing a disturbance at the entrance to a grocery store, screaming obscene language and asking customers about the location of his boat. Officers observed an odor of alcoholic beverage emanating from his person along with slurred words and noted the man had trouble maintaining his balance.

NOVEMBER 17

RESISTING ARREST

Dispatch received a call regarding a reckless driver on the Ravenel Bridge who nearly hit the caller's vehicle. The driver relayed the vehicle's location. The driver was pulled over in West Ashley parking lot, but sped through the parking lot and the driver exited the vehicle and began running away. Officers detained the passenger and will prepare a slew of charges for the driver, including warrants for failure to stop for blue lights, operating a vehicle without a license and open container of beer or wine in a vehicle.

NOVEMBER 18

THEFT OF MOTOR VEHICLE PARTS OR ACCESSORIES

A man reported that his car was making strange noises and when he brought it to a mechanic, it was discovered that his catalytic convertor had been stolen. The

man doesn't know when the theft would have occurred and the vehicle did not have any signs of forced entry.

NOVEMBER 19

SIMPLE ASSAULT

Officers were called to a West Ashley bar due to an argument between two patrons where one patron on the way to the bathroom passed another patron in a hallway and reportedly said, "Get the f*ck out of the way." When the man returned from the bathroom he approached the patron and said, "Are you the guy who said that to me?" and the man replied "Yes" and he was pushed from his bar stool and hit his head on the bar. Neither man wanted to press charges, but the bartender requested that the man who pushed the other man off the stool be placed on trespass notice.

NOVEMBER 21

LARCENY BY FALSE PRETENSES/ SWINDLE

A woman told officers that she had been scammed by someone she believed was Keanu Reeves for the past five months and she believed she was in love. She said they met while playing Scrabble online. Their relationship moved to a messaging app and they began texting about being in love with each other. On the third day of them talking, "Keanu Reeves" asked her to join his "foundation." The woman paid him \$1,600 via a cash app. Over the next four months, she continued to send "Keanu Reeves" money, totaling \$21,000 via Bitcoin and Apple gift cards. The woman's children became aware of the scam and convinced her to file a police report.

NOVEMBER 23

PROSTITUTION

A woman called police to report an unknown man in a vehicle in her driveway. Officers approached the man who said he was there to meet a friend and then admitted he was there to meet a female escort who he met online who he had paid \$155 via Cash App in advance for escort services. That person gave him the address. He said once he paid the money and arrived at the address, the person no longer answered text messages or phone calls. Officers clarified to the man that the scenario qualified as "prostitution." The case is ongoing.

OCTOBER 23

SHOPLIFTING

The manager of a clothing store reported that an employee was stealing merchandise by switching tags, placing 50 cent "clearance" tag on full priced items that she would then purchase for the lesser amount. Camera footage in the store showed that most recently, the employee had switched tags for five pairs of Dickie's coveralls. She paid \$2.72 for the five items, which are valued at \$738.

OCTOBER 24

ASSIST FIRE

Officers were called to help assist with an apartment fire after a woman said she was cooking potatoes and told "Alexa" to turn off the stove after the timer went off, but the potatoes caught fire. The woman moved the fiery pot of potatoes onto her back porch and then discovered the stove itself was on fire. She tried to smother the fire with a towel, but the towel caught fire. Firefighters were able to extinguish the blaze and rescue the woman's cat. Most of the residents of the apartment building were able to return except for a family in a nearby unit, who were relocated by the Red Cross due to the damage.

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THURSDAY: BOGO All Apps 4-7pm

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SATURDAY: Buy One Signature Sushi Roll,
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WEEKLY EVENTS

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TUESDAYS: Live Trivia 7-9pm

WEDNESDAYS: Music Bingo with Aaron 8-11pm

THURSDAYS: Team Trivia 7-9pm

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*Merry Christmas
 from our family to yours!*



“I’ve truly enjoyed connecting with the wonderful people at Drayton Hall, and we’re planning workshops as part of an ongoing partnership” – Janette Wall, Carolina Creamworks

If you want to get someone on your holiday shopping list something local this year, the gift shop at Drayton Hall has got you covered. It’s got everything from hand-crafted jewelry, locally written books, food, homeware, and more. Plus, all shop proceeds benefit the Drayton Hall Preservation Trust, whose goal is to foster a deeper understanding of colonial America and the evolution of life in the South by discovering, researching, conserving, and interpreting the history, context, and culture of one of West Ashley’s most historic sites.

This year, one of the more unique items you can buy from Drayton Hall is a hand-crafted piece of Carolina Creamware, a type of early historic pottery that was unique to the area. This distinct style is the inspiration for local ceramic artist Janette Wall. Her body of work depicts scenes of the Lowcountry in blue and white.

For the holidays, Wall created specialty, one-of-a-kind ornaments, each featuring a unique hand-painted scene. In addition to her ornaments, she also crafted hand-painted mugs, bowls, platters, and more.

“I’ve always been drawn to the traditional blue and white style of ceramics. While researching Charleston’s pottery history, particularly in Cainhoy, I discovered John Bartlam, a pioneer who brought this style to life in the Lowcountry,” explains Wall. “In 1765, he adapted techniques from Wedgwood, England, and established his own production here. But instead

of depicting classical antiquity scenes, Bartlam painted scenes of the Lowcountry—an approach that deeply resonates with me.”

Although only a few of Bartlam’s works have survived, they’ve inspired Wall to create a body of work that reflects Charleston and its rich natural surroundings. All of her work is thrown on the wheel or hand-built, and each piece is hand-painted.

“The creation of modern ceramics is not much different than the past—electricity now powers our wheels and kilns,” says Wall, who first discovered her love for ceramics as a child growing up in Atlanta, taking classes at the Callanwolde Fine Arts Center.

After a long break, Wall reignited that passion at Cone 10 Studios here in Charleston, where she learned from local ceramic artist Susan Gregory. In 2020, she joined Studio Union with the clear goal of launching her own brand. And

Carolina Creamware was born.

According to Wall, Drayton Hall reached out over the summer and wanted to partner with her because they were looking for a local artist making pottery that resembled historic pieces. They invited Wall out to tour the property with their team of experts and to explore their collection of ceramic artifacts. Wall toured the house and grounds to get inspiration for scenes to paint for the collaboration.

“I’ve truly enjoyed connecting with the wonderful people at Drayton Hall, and we’re planning workshops as part of an ongoing partnership,” Wall says.

Drayton Hall is located at 3380 Ashley River Road. For more information, call (843) 769-2600 or visit www.draytonhall.org. You can find more work from Janette Wall at www.carolina-creamware.com.

Cream of the Crop

Local ceramic artist Janette Wall’s custom Carolina Creamware ornaments are available at Drayton Hall

by Lorne Chambers | Editor



“Everything But Gasoline”

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DINING

“We believe anyone who is in need of nourishing, fresh, and healthy food, should have access to it, especially during a challenging health crisis.”

— Maria Kelly, AMOR Healing Kitchen Founder & Executive Director

With Thanksgiving in the rearview and a new year just ahead, AMOR Healing Kitchen in West Ashley is inviting the entire Charleston community to make a difference while celebrating the season. The beloved local nonprofit, which provides nourishing, plant-based meals to individuals facing critical health challenges like cancer, is launching not one but two year-end fundraisers: an online silent auction, which officially began on Nov. 29, and its annual Merry Mingle Holiday Party on Saturday, Dec. 7. Proceeds will directly support AMOR’s mission to deliver healthy meals to those in need.

In 2024, demand for AMOR services increased dramatically, with 90 percent of clients receiving meals free of charge. This, coupled with rising food costs, has made AMOR’s mission even more important and increased the impact of financial contributions.

“We serve approximately 100 clients a week, which is double what we did in 2023,” says Maria Kelly, AMOR’s founder and executive director. “2024 has been one of our busiest and most successful years in operation since we were founded in 2018. We grew in so many ways.”

Each week, AMOR’s culinary director, Terri Henning, sets the menu and then works with teen volunteers to prepare the meals for the patient and their caregiver, using fresh local ingredients, some of which are donated by local farms. Then adult volunteers (a.k.a. Delivery Angels) come to the kitchen each Friday to pick up and deliver the meals and a fresh bouquet of flowers, which are also donated or recycled from local companies. Clients receive four complete meals, one healthy snack, one healthy dessert, a printed menu with reheating instructions, and a small bouquet of fresh flowers. To date, AMOR has delivered nearly 75,000 meals since it was founded in 2018. It has 55 teen volunteers from 12 schools and approximately 90 adult volunteers.

Not only did AMOR double the amount of clients this year, it also expanded its board of directors, which is an active team that not only provides guidance to the organization but also assists in many operational aspects, according to Kelly.

“We also expanded our Grab and Grow business. Grab and Grow is our food-to-go business that makes our food available to the public and also helps fuel our mission of

providing our meals free of cost to those in need,” she says. “It is a weekly service that offers a few take-and-bake meal options, a hearty soup or salad and healthy snacks – all made with seasonal, locally sourced ingredients.”

In 2024, AMOR scored another big win by becoming one of six non-profits in the area who were supported and funded by Empower Charleston, part of the Coastal Community Foundation that connects and invests in people and local nonprofit organizations to co-create a sustainable and equitable community.

“We believe this will help bring a lot of momentum to the organization,” says Kelly, who is hoping to increase AMOR’s impact in the community in 2025. “There are so many people who are in need of our services that we are currently not reaching. Through establishing our sustainable growth model through our Grab & Grow business and also with solid community partnerships, we believe we’ll be able to double again the number of people we are serving. We believe anyone who is in need of nourishing, fresh, and healthy food, should have access to it, especially during a challenging health crisis.”

Another way that AMOR continues to build partnerships and reach the greater Charleston community is through its community cooking classes. For example, last month, AMOR teamed up with Slow Food Charleston to head a workshop that celebrated local, heirloom produce, which is something that aligns with both organization’s missions.

A dozen attendees learned how to make a hearty, plant-based Panzanella Salad featuring “Ark of Taste” ingredients: Candy Roaster Squash, a variety cultivated by the Cherokees in the southern Appalachian Mountains in the 1800s; Marsh Hen Mill Sea Island Red Peas, a heritage variety of cow peas that is central to Gullah Geechee

A Season for Giving

Community invited to support AMOR Healing Kitchen’s Silent Auction and Merry Mingle event on Dec. 7

by Lorne Chambers | Editor



cooking; and Tiller Baking Co. Heritage Grit and Heritage Carolina Gold Sourdough, and local arugula.

One of Slow Food’s missions is to preserve the vast biodiversity of foods that are at risk of extinction. “Ark of Taste” is a living catalogue of these foods that Slow Food works to keep in production and on our plates. The cooking class highlighted these unique plant-based ingredients.

Since the New Year is a time when people often consider making changes, particularly about their diet and their health. We asked Kelly her advice to someone wanting to explore a more plant-based diet in 2025.

“It doesn’t have to be all or nothing, but we are certainly tipped disproportionately towards convenience and ultra-processed foods. I like to think of it as what you are adding instead of what you are taking away. The more plants you add to your diet, the better you will feel and the more motivated you will be to let go of the foods that aren’t really serving your overall well-being,” says Kelly, adding that ordering food from AMOR is a great way to kick things off in 2025 and ease into incorporating more plants into your diet.

A good way to find out more about AMOR and to support what they are doing within our community is to attend the Merry Mingle

Holiday Party from 5-8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 7, at their location at 2 Magnolia Road in the Avondale Business District. The event will be a festive evening featuring live music from Lee Barbour, delectable hors d’oeuvres prepared by AMOR’s team, and holiday cheer for the whole family. Tickets are \$45 for individuals, \$35 for Healing Hearts members, and \$25 for accessible, student, and kids. Tickets can be purchased online at www.amorhealingkitchen.org/merry-mingle.

Another way you can help AMOR this holiday season is by bidding on its silent auction, which runs through the Merry Mingle on Dec. 7. Auction items include stays at the Charleston Place downtown, Tides Hotel on Folly Beach, and a cabin near Brevard, N.C. There are also gift cards to local salons and spas, as well as restaurants such as Chubby Fish and Marbled & Fin, and even a curated dinner by James Beard Award-winning chef Jason Stanhope of Lowland. There are also beauty products, one-of-a-kind experiences, jewelry, and much more. New items are added regularly, so check back often at www.givebutter.com/c/rkUvtd/auction.

For more information on AMOR Healing Kitchen, drop by the shop at 2 Magnolia Ave. or visit www.amorhealingkitchen.org.

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Fall To Winter

All the best seasonals are available now

Leaves of deep crimson, bright orange, plum, and gold cling to increasing bare tree limbs or scatter on the ground below. It's a wonderful sight as it signals holiday ales for many beer snobs. While pumpkins, Märzen, and harvest beers are still lingering on some shelves, the winter seasonals are here. This 'between fall to winter seasonal' time is what I like to call The Most Wonderful Time of the Beer!

With the spastic weather happening right now, it's great that the fall offerings are hanging on. For those slightly warmer days—a bit of sun and a breeze across the brow—there's still nothing like the clean, malty finish of an Oktoberfest. This style just screams summer is well and over, commence to dropping leaves, and bring on the chilly evenings.

Like me, once Thanksgiving was over, you were likely tired of pumpkin ales. Certainly, this year, no one could

fault you. They arrived too early; there were just too many, and the punks couldn't stand out from all the other 'pumpkin spiced' foods and drinks on the market.

If you're hop-inclined, numerous fresh-hopped ales are at their peak right now. Celebration Ale from Sierra Nevada is one of the best and the flavors of juicy wet hops won't get any fresher than this beautiful beer.

For me, it's the appearance of Celebration Ale and other cold-weather beers that signal the arrival of the holidays. Winter seasonals come in several different styles and types. Still, they are just so fitting for the celebration season, and different approaches to winter beer make for a fast-paced few months of tasting and buying brews that do not stay around very long, much like the holidays themselves.

These beers go by many different names, yet the most dominant style is

actually winter warmer. Some call them holiday beers, others Christmas special brews, and some denote them "holiday-spiced" selections. Whatever their title, brewers from all over have offered winter specialties for the gathering of family and friends over the holidays. The beers created for the cold winter months were made with strong flavors and higher alcohol levels, hence the name winter warmer.

To make the beers stand out from other dark, strong ales, and in keeping with the spices and flavors reminiscent of the holidays, many winter warmers will have flavors such as gingerbread, cinnamon, nutmeg, brown sugar, molasses, or even the essence of spruce, pine or fruit trees in the profile. These spiced beers can be an amazing addition to the typical holiday fare.

For me, it was the trio of Sierra Nevada's Celebration Ale, Avery Old Jubilation, and Great Divide's Hibernation Ale that had me wishing for a night in the 40's, a fire pit and my wool cap. Rumor has

it that Great Lakes Christmas Ale is soon to follow, rounding out the foursome from hoppy to spiced and back again.

The blue label from Highland Brewing means that the ever wonderful Cold Mountain winter ale is here. A Christmas spice cookie as a beer if there ever was one, this ale is delicious and is perfectly fitting for the festive days of December.

Soon the Belgian winter seasonals will appear, those Belgian Strong Dark Ales made with rich, sweet malts, fruit and spices, dark and boozy and delicious. These beers are what the holidays are all about. Enjoy the brew ... Cheers.

Dr. Jeffrey Gredlein, a.k.a. The Beer Snob, is a college professor of psychology but is a longtime beer enthusiast. For comments or suggestions, drop him a line at publisher@westof.net



Wishing you a season full of cheer!

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A Name to Know

John William Swistak Sr. built some of the most iconic structures in West Ashley

John William Swistak Sr. is not an everyday name in West Ashley. Today is the day we make it one.

Swistak's company, Liberty Construction, built two beloved and iconic buildings in Avondale west of the Ashley River. Rodenberg's Grocery Store (now the Victory) and The Ashley Theater (now Mellow Mushroom). Both have stood the test of time in the community. These locations have evolved with different functional purposes as the needs of the residents have changed over the decades.

After the grocery closed, the Rodenberg's building housed a fun and funky thrift shop for many years before the transformation to the Victory where one can enjoy food, fitness, or finesse in a variety of shops.

In addition to the regular movie lineup, The Ashley Theater was used as a sanctuary on Sunday mornings before the afternoon matinees start times. Then after the theater closed, Consigning Women occupied the space prior to the transformation to the Mellow Mushroom replete with a lighted sign that harkens back to the neon sign of the original theater. Coincidentally, the Feb. 26, 1950 Sunday edition of The News & Courier announced both the opening of The Ashley Theater and the upcoming opening of Rodenberg's.

So, who was John William Swistak Sr.? In a delightful phone conversation, his daughter, Nancy Swistak Ulery Biddlecom, shared his story. Swistak was the son of Czechoslovakian immigrants who settled in Pennsylvania. When he moved his family to Charleston, he initially worked for Dawson Engineering. He formed a partnership with Daniel Ellis Grimball to establish the construction business known as Liberty Construction. The partnership was short-lived, as Grimball was tragically killed in an automobile accident at the very young age of 24. Swistak would also leave the community too soon at the age of 33. However, in that short time, he developed a friendship with many of the influencers of the time: Augustus Constantine, Ed Kronsberg, and Adolph Rodenberg to name a



Illustration of Rodenberg's Grocery prepared by Augustus Constantine, the architect, and in the care of Nancy Swistak Ulery Biddlecom.

few. In addition to the iconic, beloved buildings in Avondale, his "construction fingerprints" are left on many other buildings on the peninsula, like Leon's Men Wear at 497 King St. and St James Methodist Church Education Building at 68 Spring St., to name just a couple.

Swistak and his family enjoyed living in the Bur Claire area of James Island and were members of the Blessed Sacrament Church in West Ashley. One can see his devotion to the Catholic community through some of his volunteer work. It's reported that Swistak directed the volunteer labor that built the Catholic Church on Folly Beach known as Our Lady of Good Counsel. His sister, Katherin was the teacher at the church kindergarten until she returned to Pennsylvania in 1949 to care for their ailing father. Swistak and Father John J McCarthy, the Pastor at Blessed Sacrament Church on Savannah Highway were close friends. Father McCarthy officiated at his funeral, according to Swistak's obituary.

Swistak left us reminders of his short, productive life from Folly Beach to West Ashley to the peninsula of Charleston. Remember the Swistak name next time you are out and about in Avondale.

Hidden stories about West Ashley? Contact Donna Jacobs at westashleybook@gmail.com.



John and Marjorie Swistak.
(Photograph of courtesy of Nancy Swistak Ulery Biddlecom)

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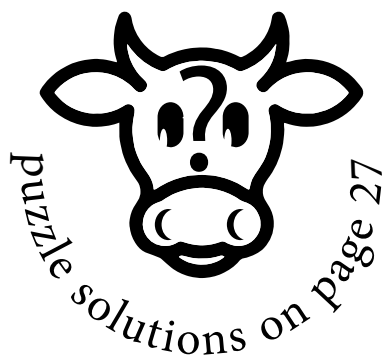
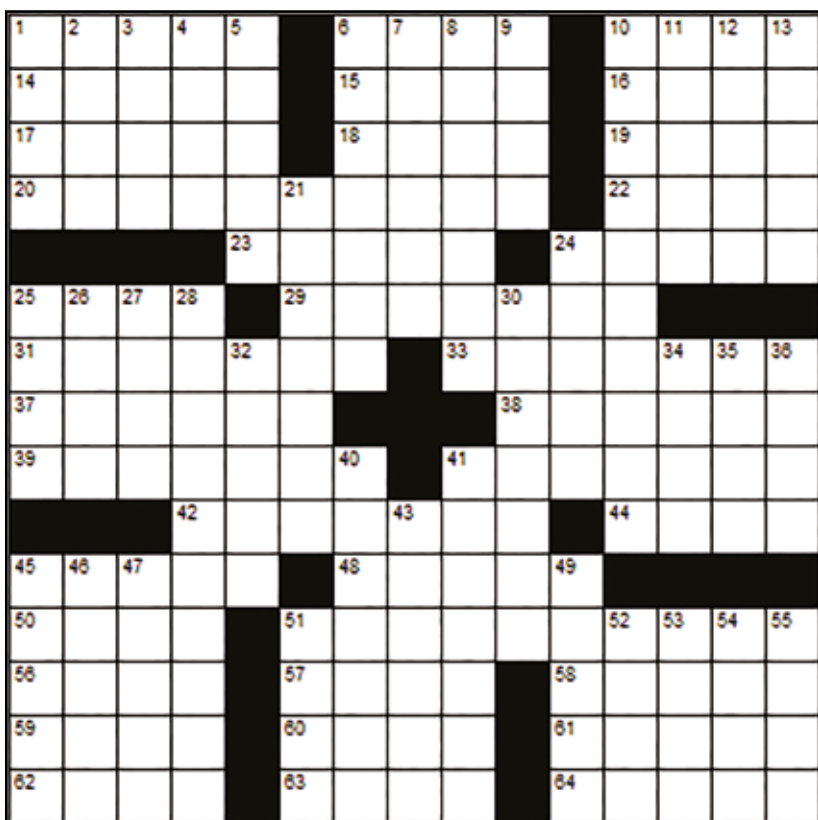
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TRIVIA

1. MOVIES

What British actor portrayed Scrooge in "The Muppet Christmas Carol"?

2. MUSIC

In the song "Frosty the Snowman," what made Frosty come to life?

3. HISTORY

The Celebrated Christmas Truce temporarily halted fighting during what war?

4. CHRISTMAS CHARACTERS

A booklet printed by Montgomery Ward featured the first appearance of what beloved Christmas icon?

5. LANGUAGE

What word for Christmas or a Christmas carol was borrowed from French?

6. LYRICS

Which classic Christmas carol contains the lyric "Strike the harp and join the chorus"?

7. FOOD

In the early 1800s, the first gingerbread houses were reportedly inspired by what famous fairy tale?

8. DEPARTMENT STORES

The holiday classic Miracle on 34th Street centers on what real-life department store?

ACROSS

1. Complain
6. Dugout shelter
10. Walk in water
14. Consumed
15. Multicolored
16. Frosts, as a cake
17. Beg
18. A place to swim
19. Heads
20. Self-control
22. Not false
23. Column style
24. Pennies
25. Didn't dillydally
29. Laic
31. Number
33. Dangerous current
37. Having a low pH
38. Corrupted
39. Nearest orbital point
41. Radiant
42. Modifier
44. Being
45. Perspiration
48. Stupendous
50. Sword handle
51. One of three copies

56. African sheep
57. Sexual assault
58. Dominates
59. Quash
60. Assert
61. Musical instrument
62. Biblical garden
63. Clutter
64. Condition

DOWN

1. Cried
2. Healthy
3. Any thing
4. Half-moon tide
5. Terminated
6. Clothing
7. Having artificial body parts
8. Happen again
9. Inactive
10. Coldest part of the year
11. Fruit of the oak tree
12. Beginning
13. Twisty turns
21. A skin disease
24. Genus of goats
25. Break in two
26. Purple shade
27. Arab ruler
28. Allegiance
30. Generous
32. Not left
34. Nile bird
35. Lairs
36. Border
40. Inscribe
41. Paging devices
43. Complains
45. Remove facial hair
46. Full of excitement
47. Wash out with a solvent
49. Novices
51. Streetcar
52. Abrupt
53. Seaweed
54. Suckling spot
55. Anagram of "Seen"



Grubbin' with the Grinch – \$25, Friday, Dec. 13th from 5-8pm at St. Andrew's Gymnasium, 1095 Playground Rd.

Holiday Meet & Mingle with Santa Claw and Santa Paws – A festive afternoon of joy and laughter at the scenic waterfront Carriage House. Bring your pets and kids. Sunday, Dec. 15th from 1-4pm. To purchase tickets, www.magnoliaplantation.com. Magnolia Plantation and Gardens is located at 3550 Ashley River Rd.

Holiday Sip & Stroll at Drayton Hall – Saturday, Dec. 14th from 2-4pm. Enjoy traditional mulled wine & beer available for purchase. Includes Landscape Audio-Tour and access. G/A \$25, Members \$15. Purchase tickets on website www.draytonhall.org. Drayton Hall is located at 3380 Ashley River Rd.

Holiday Tree Lighting – All ages, free. Tuesday, Dec. 20th at 6pm at St. Andrew's Parks, 1095 Playground Rd.

Letters from Santa – Register by Dec. 6th. Fee: \$5. St. Andrew's Parks, 1095 Playground Rd.

Seasonal Delights: Home for the Holidays Magnolia House Tour – Experience the enchanting beauty of the holiday season from Dec. 6-Jan. 6th. To purchase tickets, www.magnoliaplantation.com. Magnolia Plantation and Gardens is located at 3550 Ashley River Rd.

Sip Sip... Hooray – 7th annual Champagne Tasting. \$40pp. Thursday, Dec. 5th from 2-10pm. Avondale Wine & Cheese, 813 Savannah Hwy.

Toys for Tots Drive – Purchase tickets in advance for the Holiday Wine Tasting. Drop in 4-8pm. Bring an unwrapped toy and enjoy a complimentary glass of wine. Sunday, Dec. 8th at Avondale Wine & Cheese, 813 Savannah Hwy.

Wreath Workshop – Get into the holiday spirit with wine and charcuterie while creating a beautiful wreath. Your finished wreath will be around 18-24". Dec. 10th from 6-8pm. \$60 non-members, \$55 members. To purchase tickets: www.middletonplace.org. Middleton Place is located at 4300 Ashley River Rd.

Grand Illumination and Dinner – Celebrate like it's Christmas of 1782 and make your way through the illuminated gardens where you'll meet reenactors portraying free and enslaved men and women, then feast on chef-prepared buffet dinner. Adult \$110, child \$45. Dec. 12-14th 6-8pm. To purchase tickets: www.middletonplace.org. Middleton Place is located at 4300 Ashley River Rd.

ARTS, CRAFTS, MUSIC,

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Art Classes
Instruction in Oils for all levels; morning and evening classes and workshops. The Studio, 2408 Ashley River Rd. Unit N (843) 766-5664. The American Needlepoint Guild All skill levels welcome. Meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 10am. Old St. Andrews Parish Church in Fellowship Hall, 2604 Ashley River Rd. For more information, contact nancythechief@gmail.com.

The Embroidery Guild of America
All skill levels welcome. Meets on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 2:30pm, but come early and stitch with them. Old St. Andrews Parish Church in Fellowship Hall, 2604 Ashley River Rd. For more information, contact nancythechief@gmail.com

Jewelry Instruction
Looking for a new experience this fall? Treat yourself or a friend to a hands-on jewelry class with Pat at PDL Studio 52, offering individual and small group classes and workshops. Learn to design, saw, solder, shape and polish metal to create rings, earrings, necklaces and bracelets that you will love to wear again and again. My West Ashley studio is well equipped with all the tools and materials you will need to create your personal jewelry masterpiece. Open to all students. Flexible scheduling with a discount on a 10 session package. Contact Pat @ 646-263-1043 for details. <https://pdlstudio52.artspan.com>

Mahjong Game
Weekly Mahjong game with a \$5 PIE. Tuesdays at 6:30pm. Meets at the Pavilion in Shadowmoss (meets in the Clubhouse if it's raining). Meet new people and have some fun! All skill levels welcome.

The Sampler Guild of Charleston
All skill levels welcome. Meets on the 4th Monday of every month at 10am. Old St. Andrews Parish Church in Fellowship Hall, 2604 Ashley River Rd. For more information, contact nancythechief@gmail.com

Soap and Candle Making Workshops
Call for details. Pluff Mud Mercantile, 2408 Ashley River Rd. (843) 872-6022.

Square Dancing Fun Night
Belles & Beaus Square Dance Club invites you to a free, open-house Fun Night on Friday, Jan. 24th from 6:30-8:30pm at Holy Spirit

Evangelical Lutheran Church, 3075 Bees Ferry Rd. An experienced square dancing "caller" instructor will walk you through the basics. If interested, please call 843-556-3578 or 843-801-0998.

VITA (Voluntary Income Tax Assistance) is looking for volunteers. VITA provides tax preparation help, free of charge, with a focus on low to moderate income taxpayers 50 and over helping them get credits and deductions they've earned. The key to this service is volunteers who are trained and IRS-certified. Tax counselors receive extensive free tax training and become certified by passing an IRS exam in January. Volunteers of all backgrounds and ages are welcome and needed to serve clients in the Charleston area. Familiarity with income tax returns and technology is helpful, but not required. Contact Fran Williams 803-443-1878 or email francesca.m.williams@gmail.com for more information.

West Ashley Quilting and Sewing
Meets the second Tuesday of each month at 460 Arlington Dr. from 10am-noon and the 4th Tuesday of the month at Five Eighth Seams, 1888 Raoul Wallenberg Blvd. from 10am-2pm for open sew. Find on Facebook or contact cgb7507@gmail.com.

West Ashley Writer's Group
Established in 1999, this is the longest running writer's group in the Charleston area. Writers of all types and genres are welcome. Free. The group meets on Zoom on the 4th Wednesday of the month from 7-9pm. Message the group here to receive the Zoom link: <https://www.facebook.com/westashleywritersgroup>

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Bees Landing Recreation Center
1580 Ashley Gardens Blvd. (843) 402-4571. www.charleston-sc.gov. Call ahead for more info. Bricks 4 Kids, StoryTree Theater, Little Nature Lovers, Busy Bees Ballet, Monthly Art Workshops.

• **Cards & Coffee.** Fridays, 1pm-4pm. Free.

• **MahJongg.** Tuesdays, 1pm-3pm. Free.

• **Bridge.** Wednesday, 10am-12pm. Free.

• **Acoustic Music Group.** Thursdays, 2pm-4pm. Free.

Bees Ferry Library
3035 Sanders Rd., (843) 805-6892, www.ccpl.org. This library offers a variety of events and activities for children, teens, adults, and seniors including children's story-time, computer classes, crafting events and more.

Charleston County Parks
The Charleston County Parks system offers a variety of activities, classes, and even summer camps. Check their website for more information: www.ccprc.com.

Hurd/ St. Andrews Library:
1735 N. Woodmere Dr., (843) 766-2546, www.ccpl.org
This library offers a variety of events and activities for children and teens, including crafts and month-long challenges.

SPORTS & RECREATION

St. Andrew's Family Fitness Plus:
1642 Sam Rittenberg Blvd., (843) 763-3850, www.standrewspark.info. Offers a variety of activities for adults and children.

St. Andrew's Parks & Playground:
1095 Playground Rd., (843) 763-4360, www.standrewspark.com.

• **Afterschool Program** – Only \$85 per week. St. Andrews Playground, 1095 Playground Rd.
• **2025 Spring Youth Sports Registration** – T-Ball/ Baseball ages 4-14; Softball ages 9-12; Track ages 7-14; Volleyball ages 7-14. Early registration: Jan. 1-19, \$45 PSD residents, \$70 non-PSD residents. Regular registration: Jan. 20-Feb. 2, \$60 PSD residents, \$85 Non-PSD residents. Late registration: Feb. 3-7 (based on availability), \$80 PSD residents, \$105 Non-PSD residents.

• **Esports Program** – co-ed ages 10-16. Space is extremely limited.
• **Pickleball** – Tuesdays & Thursdays 10am-12pm, \$2 per person. Bring your own equipment or borrow. All skill levels welcome. St. Andrews Parks Gymnasium, 1095 Playground Rd.

• **Remix Winter Break Camp** – Ages 5-12. Session 1: Dec. 23, 26, 27; Session 2: Dec. 30-Jan. 3 from 7:30am-6pm.
• **Tennis Winter Break Camp** – Ages 5-14. Session 1: Dec. 23, 26, 27; Session 2: Dec. 30, 31, Jan. 2, 3 from 9am-12pm.

West Aquatic Center
www.ccprc.com
5156 Highway 165 Hollywood, SC 29449. (843) 762-6160.

SENIOR
Waring Senior Center:
2001 Henry Tecklenberg Dr. (843) 606-7877, www.lowcountrysenior-center.com for more info. The West Ashley Senior Center offers a variety of fitness classes including yoga, Tai Chi, synergy, dancing, and strength training, for all levels, and art classes. Available for both members and non-members.

OUTDOOR
Caw Caw Interpretive Center:
5200 Savannah Hwy. (843) 795-4386. Register online at www.ccprc.com. Offering a variety of children's walks through the forest and along the waterways, where they learn about animals and their habitats.

• **Understanding Rice Culture**
To talk about land in the Lowcountry is an automatic invitation to talk about rice, who grew it, where it came from and how cultivation changed the landscape in ways that are still evident today. Fee: \$10, ages 16 & up. Saturday, Dec. 14 from 11am-12:30pm.

Charleston Parks Conservancy
www.charlestonparksconservancy.org
• **Charleston Trees Native Tree Giveaway**

The Charleston Parks Conservancy, in partnership with Charleston Trees, is excited to offer free native trees to City residents. December 6 from 8am-3pm. Magnolia Park and Community Garden. RSVP at www.charlestonparksconservancy.org. Magnolia Park and Community Garden is located at 272 Magnolia Rd.

Charles Towne Landing
www.southcarolinaparks.com
1500 Old Towne Plantation Rd., Charleston, SC 29407. (843) 852-4200.

• **Great Guns on the Ashley (Artillery Demonstration)**
December 7 from 1-3:30pm. Meet at the Gun Platform along the History Trail. Free with admission.

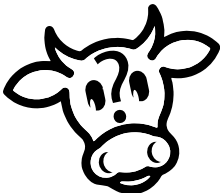
Stono River County Park
3580 McLeod Mill Rd., www.ccprc.com.

West Aquatic Center
West Aquatic Center/ Hollywood
Town Hall is located at 5156 SC-165, in Hollywood. www.ccprc.com for more info.

The West Of Free Press Community Billboard is free listing for events taking place in West Ashley. Please submit all happenings to: publisher@westof.net.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

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SUDOKU SOLUTION

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TRIVIA ANSWERS

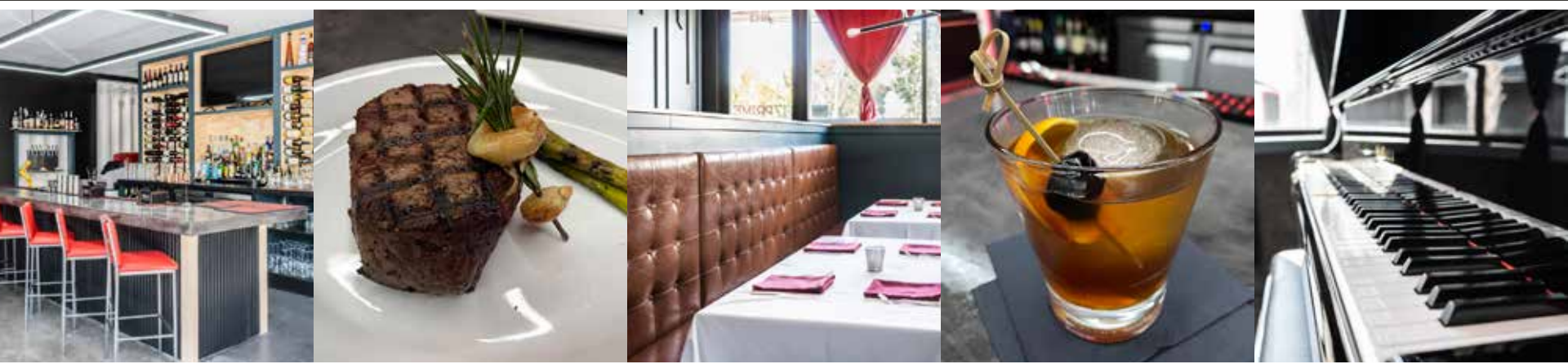
1. Michael Caine
2. An old silk hat
3. World War I
4. Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer
5. Noel
6. Deck the Halls
7. Hansel & Gretel
8. Macy's

17

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