

Mature

Living in the South

Newell Lodge
A family story
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Volume 1, Issue 2

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Sincerely,

Dr. Asit K. Jha

Dr. Asit K. Jha, Oncologist



**Dr. Asit K. Jha, Oncologist
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Thank You!

That's the word that comes to mind when we think about the second edition of the Mature Living in the South. Our staff is extremely excited and thankful for the support and many kind words regarding the premier edition.

Mature Living in the South, is a quarterly magazine focused on news and features for people 50 and older in Brantley, Camden, Charlton, Pierce and Ware counties.

This quarter's issue has more great articles about our friends and neighbors as well as timely articles on health and tourism.

Mature Living would not be possible without the support of our advertisers and we express our sincere gratitude for your support.

If you have a suggestion or know someone you would like to see featured in an upcoming edition, let us know. Give us a call at 912-449-6693, 912-449-3385 or email us at matureliving@atc.cc.



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MATURE LIVING IN THE SOUTH THANKS THE FOLLOWING PUBLICATIONS FOR ALLOWING THE INSERTING OF THIS MAGAZINE. PLEASE CONSIDER SUBSCRIBING OR ADVERTISING WITH THESE PUBLICATIONS.

Coastal Shopper & News

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Waycross Journal Herald

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The Brantley Beacon

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Charlton County Herald

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The Blackshear Times

9 9 8

Willie Character:

By Jason Deal

Willie Character is a man of integrity, honest and — as his last name implies — great character.

Described as one of the nicest guys in Waycross, Character moves behind the scenes, never calling attention to himself, but working to make his community better.

The lifelong music educator and community civic servant is known far and wide for doing good deeds.

A whole generation of local school children became acquainted with the personable Character after he arrived here in the mid-60s as music teacher for the elementary school grades.

After some years, he taught at the junior high or middle school level, and then moved to teaching music at the new Waycross College (now South Georgia State College) as well.

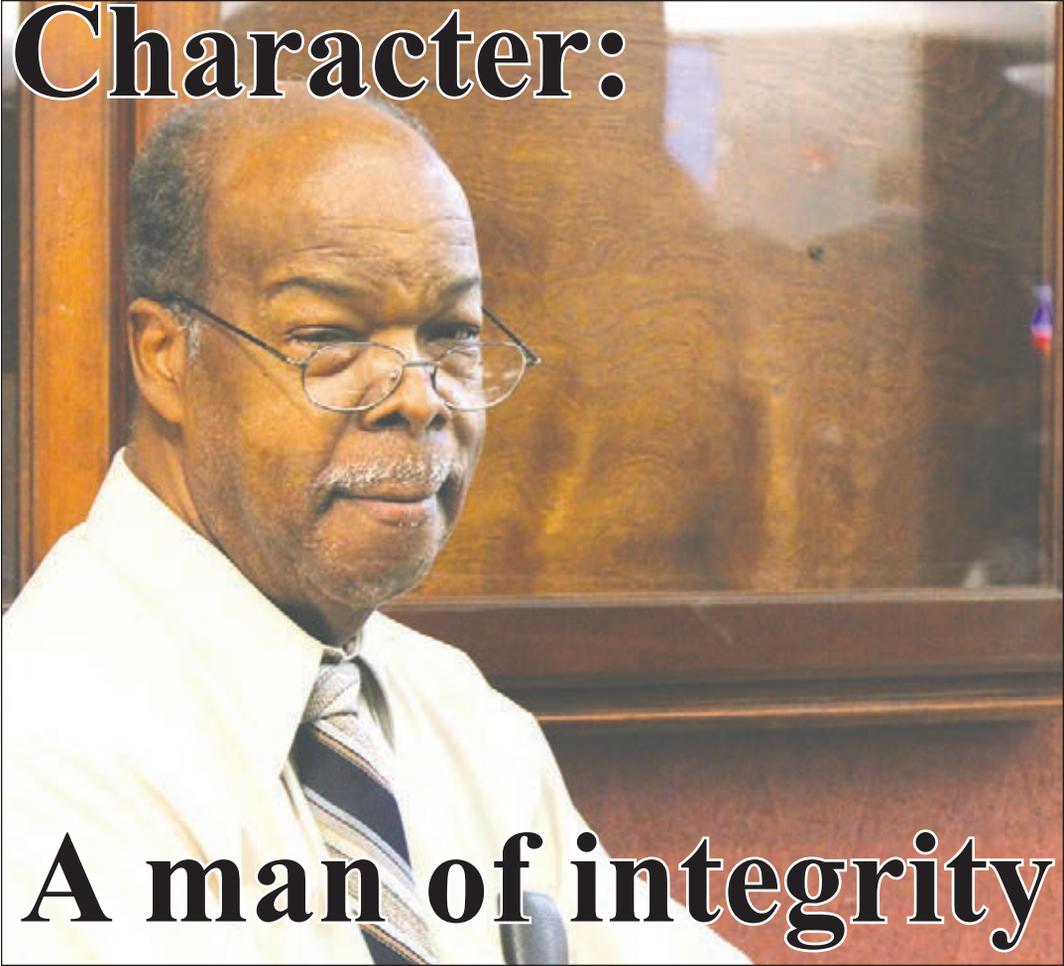
Character's supply of teaching awards and community honors is quite impressive.

"People have been very kind," he humbly said.

Character has always found time to lend a hand where needed throughout the community and he has been called upon often.

Other projects, he initiated himself.

As a gifted musician, he is only too happy to share his talents, especially on piano. Character might be found playing at nursing homes, for Chamber of Commerce



A man of integrity

WILLIE CHARACTER IS SHOWN PLAYING THE PIANO.

events, at the Waycross Police Department's Senior Safety Day and the Jacobson Brotherhood Award program.

The local Okefenokee Heritage Center wouldn't command near the reputation it has without the contributions of Character.

The exhibitions and permanent displays he has either led or contributed his sizable efforts to include the "From These Roots" project which chronicles the history of the African-American community in Waycross and Ware County.

He has recently undertaken the Red Hill Cemetery Restoration Project. The historic cemetery is located near the Satilla River oppo-

site of Hardee's off the dirt portion of Screven Avenue. The burial ground has almost been overtaken with weeds, and its presence all but erased by the ravages of time and Mother Nature.

"A little while longer and no one would have been able to find it without an archaeological mission," he said.

Character is devoted to the cause of rescuing the cemetery from obscurity, and the Heritage Center recently accepted the deed from the city.

Red Hill is not the only black cemetery that would have been forgotten without Character's diligence.

"One of the things I've been most proud of is researching where black cem-

eteries were through the years located in our area," he said. "I went around to all of them that I could find and took photos and made notes. There are 3 of them in all. I really enjoyed working on that the most of all, I believe."

The 69 year-old Character has represented Waycross on a statewide basis many times. He served for years on the Georgia Music Hall of Fame Committee and on the Georgia Music Festival Committee which annually honored outstanding Georgia musicians.

He joined efforts with others, including Bill McIntosh and the late Harold Smith, to research the history of the Waycross City Auditorium,



WILLIE CHARACTER SPEAKS AT A RECENT COMMUNITY EVENT.

chronicling the “big music” names who have played the venue – acts like Elvis, James Brown, Louis Armstrong and many others.

The Open Mike Night gatherings at the Heritage Center were always one place Character could be found. His love for music and youth drew him there.

“Billy Ray Herrin was the force behind the Open Mike,” Character recalled. “I’m glad he started that. That was a great thing for people who might have been too shy or under confident to play or sing otherwise.”

Character, many times for no charge, would score the music local budding songwriters performed at the Open Mikes.

“Yes, that is something I would do, create sheet music of

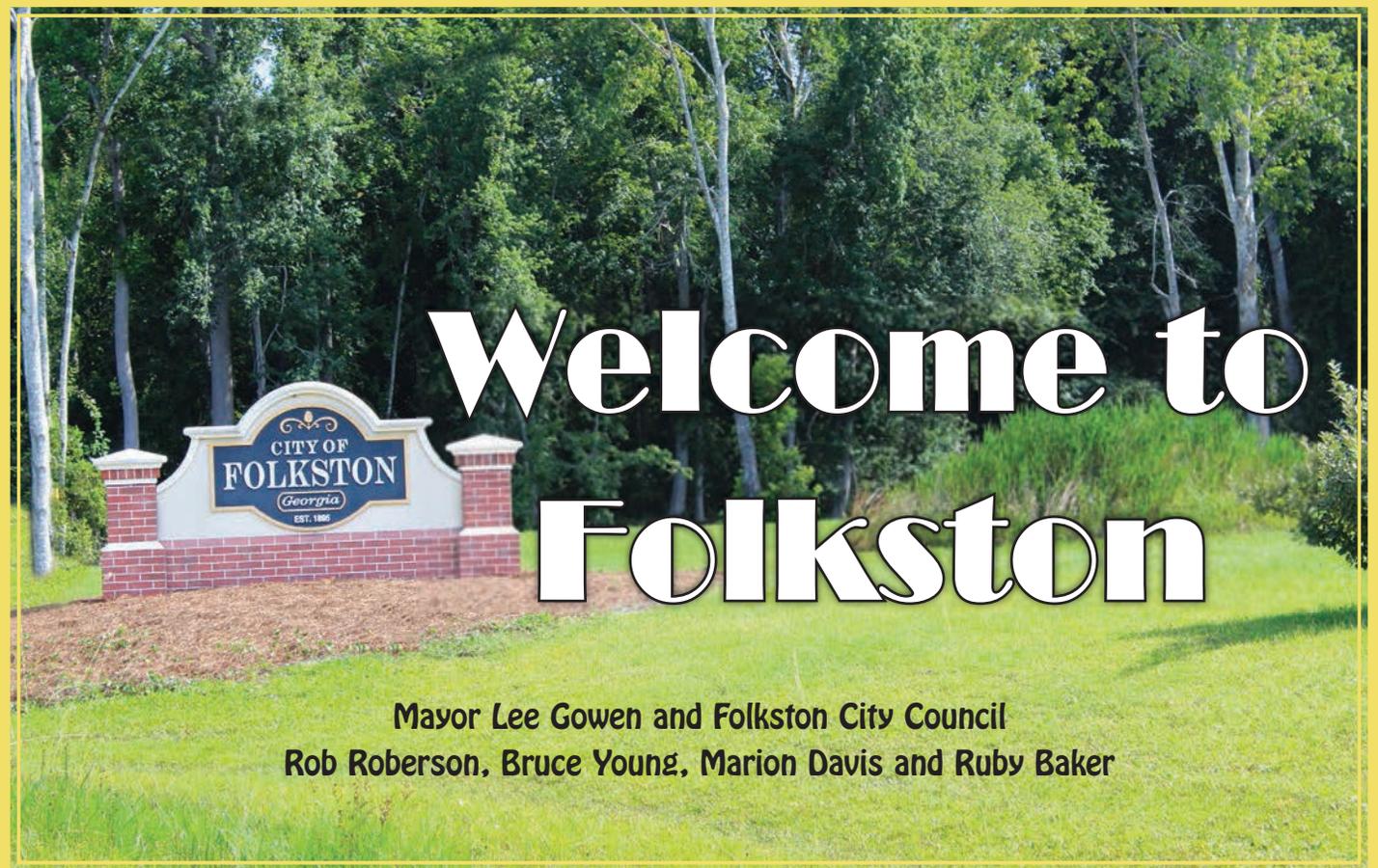
-their original songs,” he said. “I enjoyed that. It was really a joy.”

Together they played a key role in establishing the Center High School Museum.

Character is most at ease volunteering with young folks and creating smiles.

He and his wife, Dorothy, have been active volunteers in the local school systems through the years and have served dutifully at local churches, their own and many others.

Gary Griffin, former news editor of the Waycross Journal-Herald, contributed to this story. Photos by Gary Griffin and Myra Thrift.



**Mayor Lee Gowen and Folkston City Council
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CARL SUTTON WITH ONE OF HIS JEWELRY CREATIONS REPURPOSED FROM OLD SILVERWARE.

Carl Sutton's **COOL CREATIONS**

By Jason Deal

Carl Sutton has some “cool” creations.

The creations are not related, however, to his role as owner and repairman for Carl’s Heating and Cooling of Patterson.

Sutton has taken up the art of making jewelry, bracelets and rings from spoons, nails and other shiny metal items.

He says he discovered his new found hobby by accident.

“I really got into it because of my granddaughter. She was needing a way to make some money so I helped her make up some necklaces with beads and chains. She did very well with it and I decided to try my hand at it. It just grew from there,” he says.

Sutton stays busy and on the go responding to calls for his

heating and cooling business, which he has owned and operated for the past two decades.

His spare time is in short supply and comes few and far between. In addition to his work, Sutton is also active at Youmans Chapel Baptist Church and is a HAM radio operator. When his spare time does come, he takes up his jewelry making hobby.

“It is interesting to me,” he said. “You can make all kinds of new and interesting things. Each piece is a little different, because each of the raw materials are a little different.”

Sutton buys old silverware — spoons, forks and knives — at garage and estate sales. He also has used old keys and even nails for his creations. He’s even had neighbors and

friends donate old silverware to him for his craft. He uses a silver soldering tool, a drill and other cutting tools to make the jewelry.

"I learn by trial and error, but it generally turns out good," he said.

His fellow church members at Youmans Chapel Baptist Church are his guinea pigs for trying out new ideas.

Sutton points out each piece of jewelry is unique.

"I tell folks that it is an original because the metals in each piece are different," he said. "I also tell them to be careful with it, because it will tarnish, so you have to keep it polished."

Sutton makes rings, necklaces and bracelets from the spoons. He makes rings out of old house keys and a popular item, especially at Easter, are his cross necklaces crafted from nails. He has also created smaller versions using the tines of old forks.

He re-purposes spoon parts to create "fish" earrings, using a cutting tool to make the mouth and a drill to make the tail. The silver soldering tool makes the metal pliable enough to form the fins and tail of the fishes.

Among his more unique creations are a set of rings formed from commemorative 50 state spoons and Gerber baby spoons he has made into rings and earrings for mothers. He also has some pieces with the theme: Love, Joy and Faith. Sutton has also used knife pieces to make key chains.

Sutton didn't give prices for his work and he sells his merchandise mainly at small community festivals. He plans to

have a booth at one of Patterson's upcoming events and has

previously been featured at the Okefenokee Heritage Center. Sutton enjoys the process of making each one of his creations.

"It is always something unique and different when you get finished with it," Sutton says.

That's what make it "really cool".



ANOTHER OF SUTTON'S UNIQUE CREATIONS.

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Protecting America is family tradition

BY TAMMY GREY

Edward Canady was born on July 4th, 1922 in Swainsboro, Georgia. A couple of years later, his family moved down to Brunswick. He was an Army brat born into a family whose ancestors have fought in every single conflict the United States has been involved in since the late 1600s/early 1700s. Every generation had at least one person who served this country and Canady was more than willing to keep that tradition alive. He had some impressive boots to fill: during World War II, his father was the youngest First Sergeant in the Army.

Edward carved out a stellar career for himself in the Army, which started with him with joining the National Guard when he was just 6. Due to his age, his parents had to sign off on the paperwork that would allow their only child to start his military career.

Growing up, his dad and mom (who was a rivet driver during the war) gave him some advice he still follows to this day: "Treat other people like you want to be treated. Do the best you can, work hard, try to be an honorable person and have your personal integrity". The advice served him well in military and personal life. He said, "It defines who I am, whether good or bad".

As soon as he was able, Canady attended the North Georgia Military College in Dahlonega, which he says

was 'a very good experience'. He got his commission, went to Ranger School and Airborne School, and was then sent to Vietnam. Edward served in Special Operations during seven campaigns of active combat over a stretch of two-and-a-half years in Vietnam as a combat infantryman for an air-mobile division.

When talking about those he served with, he said "We were a very close unit and every person we lost over there is a heartbreak. I still mourn those guys. Everyone one of them was willing to die for me, and I was willing to die for them."

Edward achieved the rank of Major during active duty and was a Lieutenant Colonel in the reserves. He earned several medals, including a silver star, three bronze stars, a purple heart, and ten air medals. He has medals for valor, but humbly explains that "the guys I was with earned those for me. I just happened to be their leader." During his tenure with the Army, he also served as an equal opportunity officer for two major commands, and they were recognized as the best EO departments in the Army.

After 34 years in the Army, injuries prevented him from being able to perform his job to his high standards. He retired and returned to his Georgia roots. He chose Camden County so he could be close to his mom in Brunswick.

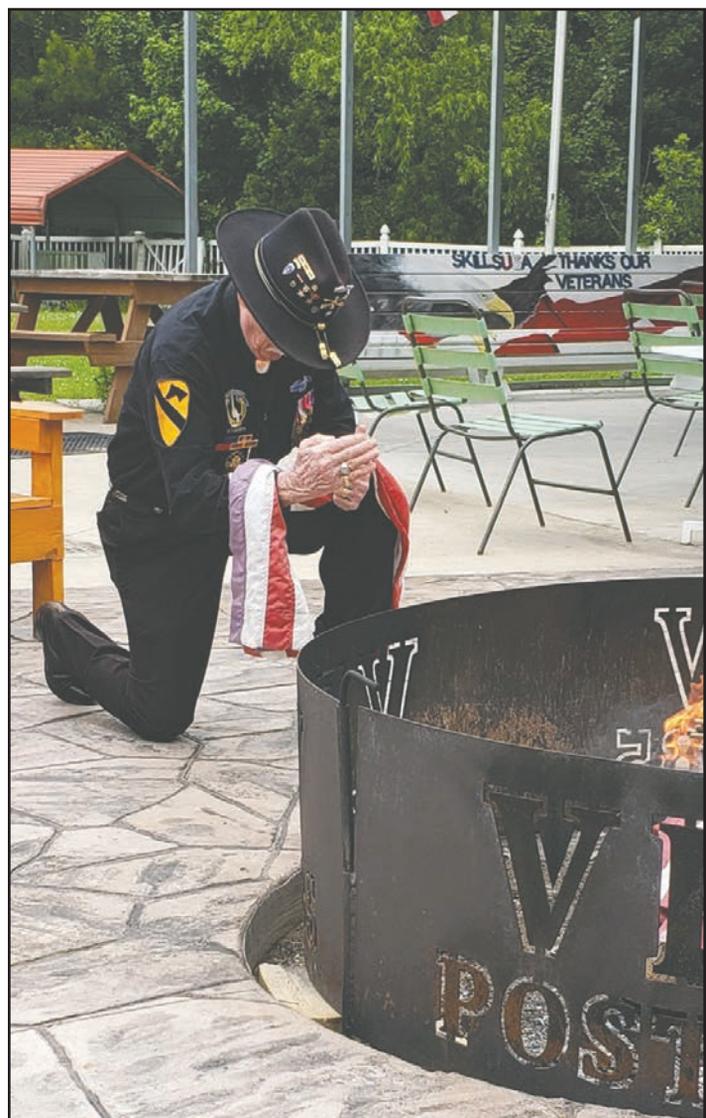
The things he learned during his time in the service still guide him now. He is optimistic about the future of this country because there are still those who are willing and able to give up their lives to protect the freedoms we enjoy in America.

Edward is married, has two daughters and six grandchildren. His eldest grandson wants to be a helicopter pilot. He kept the family tradition alive by joining the National

Guard and Edward had the honor of swearing in his grandson.

Edward is actively involved with the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in Kingsland. He has a smile and kind word for everyone he sees.

Long time friend and fellow veteran Patsey Nuzum said, "Mr. Canady is my personal hero. He truly is a humble hero who has devoted his life to his country."



CANADY KNEELS FOR FALLEN SOLDIERS DURING A FLAG RETIREMENT CEREMONY.

Recently, he had the honor of retiring a flag. He chose to kneel to recognize the guys who did not come home with him and to recognize all the women and men who served this country and gave their all.

Canady loves helping people and particularly enjoys interacting with the Eagle Scouts. He has some great words of wisdom for members of the younger generation considering entering the service.

“If you want to be in the military, it is a great way to serve your country in a selfless manner. Don’t go into it expecting any great rewards, but enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are contributing to our country”, Canady says. He also lets them know your word is all you really have, and stresses that “your word is your bond; live by it”. The one thing Edward hopes everyone remembers about him is that he served his country with honor.



CANADY IS PROUD TO HAVE SERVED HIS COUNTRY.

Savvy Senior: Financial help for retirees and how to keep an eye on an aging parent

Dear Savvy Senior,

Are there any financial assistance programs you can refer me to? The coronavirus pandemic has cost me my part-time retirement job and has shrunk my measly IRA account.

Need Retiree

Dear Need,

Absolutely! In addition to the \$1,200 federal coronavirus stimulus check that was distributed in April and May, there are many other financial-assistance programs (both public and private) that can help struggling retirees, as well as give relief to family members who help provide financial support for their loved ones.

To find out what types of assistance you may be eligible for, just go to [BenefitsCheckUp.org](https://www.benefitscheckup.org), a free, confidential web tool designed for adults 55 and older and their families. It will help you locate federal, state and private benefits programs that

can assist with paying for food, medications, utilities, health care, housing and other needs. This site – created by the National Council on Aging – contains more than 2,500 programs across the country.

To identify benefits, you’ll first need to fill out an online questionnaire that asks a series of questions like your date of birth, ZIP code, expenses, income, assets, veteran status, the medications you take and a few other factors. It takes about 15 minutes.

Once completed, you’ll get a report detailing all the programs and services you may qualify for, along with information on how to apply.

Some programs can be applied for online; some have downloadable application forms you can print and mail in; and some require that you contact the program’s administrative office directly (they provide the necessary contact information).

If you don’t have internet access, you can also get help in-person at any of the 84 Benefit Enrollment Centers located throughout the U.S. Call 888-268-6706 or visit [NCOA.org/centerforbenefits/becs](https://www.ncoa.org/centerforbenefits/becs) to locate a center in your area. Some centers also offer assistance over the phone.

Types of Benefits

Depending on your income level and where you live, here are some benefits you may be eligible for:

Food assistance: Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help pay for groceries. The average SNAP benefit for 60-and-older households is around \$125 per month. Other programs that may be available include the Emergency Food Assistance Program, Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

Healthcare: Medicaid and Medicare Savings Programs

can help or completely pay for out-of-pocket health care costs. And, there are special Medicaid waiver programs that provide in-home care and assistance too.

Prescription drugs: There are hundreds of programs offered through pharmaceutical companies, government agencies and charitable organizations that help lower or eliminate prescription drug costs, including the federal Low-Income Subsidy known as “Extra Help” that pays premiums, deductibles and prescription copayments for Medicare Part D beneficiaries.

Utility assistance: There’s the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), as well as local utility companies and charitable organizations that provide assistance in lowering home heating and cooling costs.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Administered by the Social Security Ad-

administration, SSI provides monthly payments to very low-income seniors, age 65 and older, as well as to those who are blind and disabled. In 2020, SSI pays up to \$783 per month for a single person and up to \$1,175 for couples.

In addition to these programs, there are numerous other benefits they can help you locate such as HUD housing, home weatherization assistance, tax relief, veteran's benefits, senior transportation, respite care, free legal assistance, job training and employment and debt counseling.

Dear Savvy Senior,

Can you recommend any services or technology that help me monitor my elderly mother who lives alone? Since the coronavirus pandemic started last March, my sister and I have noticed my mom's health has slipped a bit, so we would like to find something that helps us keep tabs on her when we're not around.

Concerned Daughter

Dear Concerned

Depending on how closely you want to monitor your mother, and what she's comfortable with as well, there are check-in call services along with some new monitoring

technology devices you can turn to for help. Here are several to consider.

Check-In Calls

If you just want a simple check to make sure your mom is OK every day, consider signing her up with a daily check-in call service program. These are telephone reassurance programs run by police or sheriff's departments in hundreds of counties across the country and are usually provided free of charge.

Here's how they work. A computer automated phone system would call your mom at a designated time each day to check-in. If she answers, the system would assume everything is OK. But if she didn't pick up or if the call goes to voice mail after repeated tries, you (or her other designee) would get a notification call. If you are not reachable, calls are then made to backup people who've also agreed to check on your mom if necessary.

The fallback if no one can be reached, is the police or other emergency services personnel will be dispatched to her home.

To find out if this service is available in your mom's community, call her local police department's nonemergency number.

If the police or sheriff's department in your mom's community doesn't offer a check-in call program, there are organizations and companies you can turn to that offer similar services directly to consumers.

One I love that's completely free to use is Mon Ani (monami.io, 650-267-2474), which offers a volunteer phone bank that provides phone or video calls daily, weekly or anything in between. The volunteer will connect with your mom, provide companionship and make sure everything is OK. And, they'll let you know if they detect a problem.

Monitoring Technology

Technology also offers a variety of new ways to help you keep an eye on your mom when you can't be there.

One nifty new option is the Electronic Caregiver's (electroniccaregiver.com) "Premier" product, a wearable wrist device that provides activity monitoring, a 24/7 emergency help button, medication reminders and a GPS locator so you can determine your mom's whereabouts when she's away from home.

It's also linked to a family caregiver app to keep you and other loved ones in the loop. The device is free with

a monthly subscription that costs \$40 to \$60 a month, depending on the level of monitoring.

If your mom is primarily homebound, another option to consider is a sensor-monitoring system like Caregiver Smart Solutions (caregiversmartsolutions.com). This uses small sensors (not cameras) placed in key areas of your mom's home to track her activities – everything from whether she used the coffee pot to how much she's watching TV – and will let you know if something out of the ordinary is happening. For instance, if she went to the bathroom and didn't leave, it could indicate a fall or other emergency.

You can also check up on her patterns anytime you want through the system's website or app. And for additional protection, it offers emergency call buttons that can be placed around the house. Caregiver Smart Solutions starts at \$99 for their activity sensors, plus a \$29 monthly service fee.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

LAUGHTER IS SOME OF THE BEST MEDICINE:

"The Old Days"

Grandpa was telling his young grandson what life was like when he was a boy.

"In the winter we'd ice skate on our pond. In the summer we could swim in the pond, and pick berries in the woods. We'd swing on an old tire my dad hung from a tree on a rope. And we had a pony we rode all over the farm."

The little boy was amazed, and sat silently for a minute. Finally he said, "Granddad, I wish I'd gotten to know you a lot sooner!"

"When you are dissatisfied and would like to go back to youth, think of Algebra."

-Will Rogers



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The Carter family's story of *Newell Lodge*

Growing up in the Race-pond community in Charlton County, a young Harvin Carter couldn't wait to get out and travel. Little did he know all of his adventures would lead him right back home.

After graduating high school, Harvin attended Florida Military College on a basketball scholarship. When he finished there, he moved on to Americus, where he finished his degree. Later, Harvin got his chance to break out of the state for a job at a shipping yard in Virginia. After a few years, he started a new job in Jacksonville, Florida, working in fire sprinklers – a job he didn't know would start him off on his own path.

During his time in Jacksonville, through a group of friends, Harvin met a young lady named Kay, a single mother of a little girl, who was working at a real estate company. The two hit it off and in 2009, they were married.

"It wasn't like a magic moment," Kay said, with a laugh. "It was just by chance."

Eventually, Harvin knew fire protection was something he needed to share with people closer to home, so he started his own business in Waycross. After a while, Harvin decided to move his business, along with his fam-



HARVIN AND KAY CARTER WORK WITH THEIR FAMILY TO MAKE NEWELL LODGE FEEL LIKE HOME.



KAY CARTER, WITH THE HELP OF GRANDSON LOGAN, KEEPS THE LODGE IN TIP-TOP CONDITION.

ly, back to Folkston. Though, Harvin and his work still require a bit of traveling, which gave him the best of both worlds.

The couple and their daughters, Wendy and Ashley, continued their lives in Folkston. Kay even served as Clerk of Court for 16 years before retirement. Their girls grew up, got married and had children of their own, John, Jared, Kris and Logan. The Carters even have their first great-grand on the way.

“They never walk out the door without saying, ‘I love you’,” said Kay.

After decades in the business, Harvin retired and set his eyes on a much different project.

During her time as Clerk of Court, following Harvin’s retirement, Kay was approached by her husband regarding a piece of property he was interested in buying.

“When he saw the land, he could see the potential,” said Kay, “and once they started clearing it, I finally could too.”

It took four-and-a-half years to clear the land and eventually the project consumed all the extra time they might have had. But from all of this hard work came Newell Lodge and Resort.

“It was all completely Harvin’s idea,” Kay laughed, “he was up in the clouds and I was on the ground telling him to come back!”

Finally, Kay knew it was time for her to retire and help Harvin in this new venture.

Newell Lodge and Resort spans 5 acres and is home to 300-year-old live oak trees. There are cabins available, as well as pitch tent and RV camping spots. Fishing and campfires are offered as well. The resort is home to a dude ranch where visitors to Newell Lodge can experience the landscape of the Okefenokee region from horseback. The lodge is also a popular venue for weddings, receptions, and reunions. Horse-drawn carriages are a favorite for brides and visitors.

“It was mostly going to be horseback riding and the cabins were going to be built on four or five acres, so they could be sold if need-be,” shared Kay, “But we started to see it for what it was.”

Those passing through Newell Lodge will see the tranquility and beauty and hear the silence of years gone by.

“I tease Harvin about it,” Kay joked, “All he said was ‘I’m



THE LODGE CARTER CREATED WITH HIS FAMILY CONTINUES TO BRING OTHERS TOGETHER.

getting out’, but he rebuilt what he left.”

The most important part of the lodge for the Carter clan, however, is family.

“At the end of the day – when you’re in a crunch – that’s who comes through. That’s what it’s all about,” said Kay.

Their youngest daughter, Ashley, plays a big roll for the resort and all of their grandchildren have grown up working at the lodge. While John and Jared have moved on to other opportunities, their youngest grandsons Kris, 21 and Logan, 8 are still doing their part. Kris is a one of the highly qualified horse guides, while Logan has taken on more of a managing role.

“Logan is always worried about being late for work,” Kay laughed, “They’ve all played a role and we’re hoping to pass it on.”

The resort has become a special place to the family, so whenever help is needed, all Kay and Harvin have to do is call.

“Maybe that’s why it’s been successful. It’s about business of course, but it’s more about family and caring,” shared Kay, “When people see it, they feel welcome and like they’re part of it. At least, that’s what we hope.”

No one enjoys seeing visitors have a good time more than Harvin. Guests of the lodge often fish in the pond and invite him over for a fish fry.

“I’ll go to look for him and I’ll find him with a family just talking and having a good time,” Kay chuckled, “I tell him not to aggravate the family while they’re on vacation, but he’s always invited!”

Newell Lodge and Resort is meant to be a place where individuals and families can get away from every day business to unwind and reconnect.

“It’s like coming to another time and I think people are searching for something more substantial,” she shared. “It gives us a sense of ourselves we didn’t know we needed.”

Though retirement hasn’t been quite what they thought it would be, Kay and Harvin wouldn’t change a thing.

“I make myself stop and appreciate what it is,” Kay said. “We never thought we’d have this.”



THE DUDE RANCH AT THE LODGE ADDS A SENSE OF PEACE NOT FOUND IN TODAY’S WORLD.

Meet a local star:

By Sarah Tarr Gove

He's a star!

Chico the Chihuahua — Pierce County's most loved dog, particularly in the senior citizen community — has been cheering up folks all over town with his jaunty outfits and sweet kisses for years in his role as a therapy dog alongside handler and owner, Karen Herndon.

"He's so good with the residents, so lovable. They look forward to when he comes," says Pam Cox, longtime activities director at Harborview-Satilla. "He's a blessing to many."

Melissa Durham, admissions coordinator at Harborview-Pierce, agrees.

"They just drop by and come in and visit (prior to COVID-19). Chico would have on his cute outfit. They would go down the hall and into residents' rooms to try and bring joy and happiness," Durham says.

Even bed-bound residents get a special visit from Chico.

"It's been a great blessing to have them here. To see the joy they've brought these residents has been great, and the service they provide here is extraordinary. They (residents) light up when they see Chico come in," Durham adds.

While residents have been isolated during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, Chico and Herndon have participated in drive-by community parades to cheer up residents at area



Chico the Chihuahua

senior living homes and visited with others through the window, waving and spreading cheer.

"They've driven through and everybody is tickled (to see him)," Cox says.

"They share some love and let everybody know that they're missing them ... outside of course," Durham adds.

Chico has earned his

fame and reputation over the years as one of the best pet therapy dogs in the region, and received several awards for his work. Herndon adopted the petite, laid-back pup from Blackshear pet rescue group Allmons All About Animals in 2012 and started the path towards licensing for pet therapy shortly after.

The pair work regularly

with patients at Harborview Health Systems-Pierce, Gardenview Assisted Living, Harborview Health Systems-Satilla and members of the senior center (served by ActionPact). Chico is also the star of a test anxiety relief program, "Paws and Relax" at Coastal Pines Technical College and he's made special visits to Hospice House patients and



JANICE LLOYD, RESIDENT AT HARBORVIEW-PIERCE, WAVES TO THERAPY DOG CHICO THROUGH HER BEDROOM WINDOW AT HARBORVIEW. KAREN HERNDON, CHICO'S OWNER, AND OTHER LOCALS GATHERED ON THE HARBORVIEW LAWN IN MARCH TO WAVE TO RESIDENTS AND HOLD UP SIGNS OF ENCOURAGEMENT DURING THEIR TIME OF QUARANTINE DUE TO COVID-19. CHICO'S SHIRT ENCOURAGED RESIDENTS TO 'STAY PAW-SITIVE.'

countless others in the community.

Herndon recalls the moment she knew pet therapy was what she and Chico were called to do. Chico visited with a lady at a senior living facility for a few minutes and the lady said, "I used to have a dog just like that."

Herndon thought little of it until staff members later told her the woman hadn't spoken a word since she was admitted to the facility — much less put together a whole sentence.

Cox recalls a similar story with one of their patients several years ago. The man had been a resident there for nine months and was also non-verbal for that time. Af-

ter Chico's visit, staff members discovered the resident had owned a beloved poodle that had been placed with a foster family when he was admitted to the facility.

"When she came that very first visit and walked around with Chico, it was the first time the man had said anything," Cox recalls.

The pet therapy duo has been all in since then. And, the community hasn't overlooked their hard work. Herndon and Chico received a Pet Therapy Award from Pierce County Nursing Home in 2016, Volunteer of the Year from Concerted Services, Inc., and the Leona Dixon Bright Spot Award in 2016.

Chico may very well have

more outfits than Herndon or most other folks in Pierce County. He always shows up dressed for the occasion, whatever it may be, thanks to skilled seamstresses Christy Hawkins and Melissa Yeomans.

He attends community events (prior to COVID-19 lockdowns) like Happy Hour at Harborview-Satilla, a themed evening of live entertainment and snacks for residents. Sometimes the party is a Hawaiian luau, other times it's a Chinese New Year or a 70's themed event. Regardless, Chico has the perfect ensemble for the occasion.

"She'll dig in his closet and find something to match the theme," Cox says with a

laugh.

Ever the good sport, Herndon often shows up in her own coordinating outfit — like her Easter Bunny jumpsuit, complete with long, floppy ears.

Chico's personality and calm demeanor — he never meets a stranger or balks at being cuddled and kissed — is atypical for his breed.

Nancy Allmon, owner of the pet rescue where Herndon adopted Chico, doesn't recall the details surrounding his rescue all those years ago, but her years of working with animals made her realize how unique Chico is.

"He's one of a kind. That's not typical at all for Chihuahuas. He's an exceptional dog ... very unlike his

breed," Allmon says.

His personality is what makes Chico's therapy visits so effective for seniors.

"He's such a loving-natured dog," Cox says.

Herndon and Chico only visit Harborview-Satilla monthly, doing most of their therapy work at the facility in Pierce County, but she's just a call away when they have a resident who isn't responsive and needs some cheering up. Chico is the cure.

(See more on page 17)

**KAREN HERNDON
AND CHICO
RECEIVED PIERCE
COUNTY CHAM-
BER'S BRIGHT SPOT
AWARD IN
2016 FOR THEIR
COMMUNITY
SERVICE EFFORTS.**



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Chico faces health struggles

Pierce County senior citizen therapy dog, Chico, has been battling his own health struggles in recent months after being diagnosed with leukemia in April.

He's currently undergoing chemotherapy — a six month treatment regiment — at Southeast Veterinary Oncologists and Internal Medicine in Orange Park, FL.

It was touch and go for a few days in April until doctors at Kimbrell Veterinary Clinic in Blackshear and the cancer specialists in Florida were able to get Chico stabilized, but with a blood transfusion, a plasma donation, a stint in the oxygen chamber and two chemo treatments behind him now Chico seems to be on the mend, says Karen Herndon, Chico's owner and pet therapy handler.

Herndon has been overwhelmed by the outpouring of community support for Chico. She returned home to Blackshear from the veterinary critical care hospital in Florida to find an abundance of cards and gifts at home.

Area ministers have prayed over Chico, and supporters have launched a GoFundMe account to raise funds for his treatment. Others are mailing donations directly to Herndon to avoid GoFundMe's processing fees.

"God's not done with us!" Herndon says tearfully.

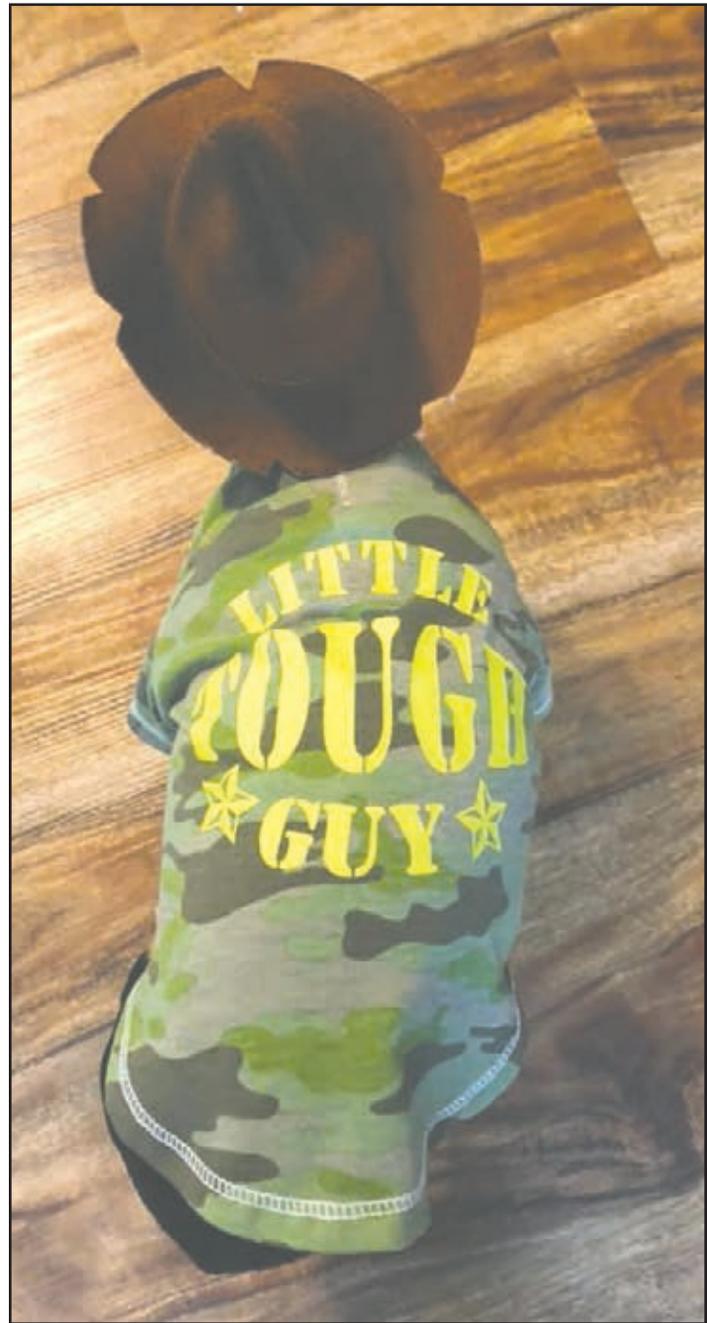
"The Lord answers prayers for animals, too," says Pam Cox, activities director at Harborview-Satilla, where Chico visits with residents often and is beloved by the staff as well.

He'll have to take a break from regular visits at area senior living facilities while undergoing chemo, but most of those facilities have been on lockdown due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic for weeks anyway.

Herndon has still taken Chico to participate in driveby parades for residents and visited with some through their bedroom windows.

"All of our residents are thinking about Chico with him going through his cancer battle," says Melissa Durham, admissions coordinator at Harborview-Pierce.

Those who wish to donate towards Chico's medical expenses can mail donations to Herndon at 214 Moore Street, Blackshear, GA 31516, or



CHICO IN HIS "LITTLE TOUGH GUY" OUTFIT.

donate online at: https://www.gofundme.com/f/chicos-support-fund?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet&fbclid=IwAR3R2cpcCD6h3Qzdfuz5Y4iSAiOhTP_Vf-wkVPYyNn4ZtKSGI2NV4QxIABW8.

Any funds remaining after Chico's medical expenses are paid will be donated to Allmons All About Animals, the pet rescue where Herndon adopted Chico in 2012.



Bruce Davis: A remarkable story

By Jason Deal

Bruce Davis knows the highways and back roads by heart. That trait might not seem unusual in his role as a dispatcher for the Brantley County Road Department.

What's remarkable about Davis is he has never seen the roads, signs or anything else.

Davis was born blind, but he hasn't allowed lack of sight to get in his way.

"I enjoy what I do and I have been blessed with the ability to do it," he said.

Davis, a life-long resident of Brantley County, began work as a dispatcher August 21, 1981 at the Brantley County Sheriff's Office under then Sheriff Cordell Wainright. He later transferred to the Brantley County Emergency Management Agency in 1983 and then became the road department dispatcher in 1988.

Davis has a near photographic memory and once he hears a location or a description of something, he files it away in his mind for later use. When the need arises, he can describe not only the road, the location and area, but can also describe houses right down to the color of the trim work and tell the listener about the people who live there.

Davis downplays that gift with a humble admission.

"I have gotten lost in some places before," he said. "But, if someone gives me directions on how to get out, then I can find my way."

Road department personnel have good naturedly taken Davis riding, making many twists and turns and back tracks just to test his knowledge.

On these excursions, after attempting to thoroughly confuse him, they ask Davis to tell them where they are. Davis always gets the location right - always.

On a typical work day, Davis sits at his work station rocking slightly with the two tools of his trade, a radio and a telephone. He fields calls from the public and directs personnel to problem areas. He also helps coordinate work crews. Above all else, he gives precise directions.

Co-workers have described him as a walking GPS.

In addition to his skill with maps and directions, Davis is also a self-taught pianist.

He took one formal piano lesson in 1969 and then started playing by ear. He's never looked back.

He played eight years with the band, Waycross Express. The group opened for stars including George Strait and toured with hopes of reaching Nashville.

While those hopes didn't quite work out, Davis had already memorized the directions to Music City.

He enjoys music and is blessed with a talent for getting the pitch right.

He was house musician for the now closed Blueberry Hill Restaurant in Hoboken and was the music leader for Brantley County's annual tree lighting ceremony at the Christmas Festival.

The highlight of the evening was a Christmas carol sing-along with Davis taking requests and accompanied by youngsters gathered around the piano. The evening ends with Davis playing and leading the singing of "Angels Among Us" by Alabama.



DAVIS SINGS WITH THE GOSPEL GROUP “THE SOUL SEARCHERS”.

Currently, Davis is a member of “The Soul Searchers”, a gospel group. He regularly performs at churches and local civic gatherings including the Okefenokee Rural Electric Membership Corporation’s Annual meeting.

In addition to his work with the road department and his music commitments, Davis was also honored by the residents of Nahunta when he was elected to represent them on the city council.

Davis has a laptop that scans and reads documents for him so he can make an informed decision and vote for his constituents.

Before entering politics himself, Davis was once recruited by a candidate for his expertise and knowledge of the county.

The candidate asked Davis to accompany him campaigning and meeting folks.

Leaving one house, the candidate promptly backed his car into a tree.

Davis laughs at the memory.

“I told him to look out. I said even I saw that tree and I am blind,” Davis said.

Davis has driven before too. He drove the Nahunta Fire Truck in the city’s annual Christmas parade.

“You get to go the whopping speed of 4 m.p.d.,” he said. “That’s four miles per day.”

He had a fireman sitting beside him giving him directions, just like his late father did walking beside the truck when he drove on the farm as a boy. He just has to worry about the brake, gas, clutch and steering wheel. Somebody else watches the road.

Davis has been married to his wife, Ginger, for 26 years and they live in Nahunta. Their children include Brandon, Joanna, Jennifer, Jessica and Lee. They also have grandchildren including Aiden, Eli, Lila, Jonathan, Mackenzie and twins Shaylon and Leanna. The Davises are active at Little Memorial Baptist Church in Browntown, where Davis plays the piano.

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Family Memories

By Sarah Tarr Gov

September 27, 2010 was a dark day for Earl and Roselyn Lovell as they said goodbye to one of their four children much too soon in a Savannah hospital room. The day their son, Danny, died only became more tragic when the couple learned their family home in Pierce County was burglarized that same night.

The Lovell family leaned heavily on their faith in God

and the support of their remaining children and grandchildren that year. Then a few months ago they experienced a miracle, one they still can't quite believe.

Nearly five years after the break-in — and just in time to comfort Roselyn through her battle with Stage 4 lymphoma — a treasured family memory blanket stolen all those years ago was returned to the family. The quilt, sewn in 2005, features the faces of

all their children and grandchildren, including Danny.

"It was like my brother found a way to be with my mom this year, of all times, of her going through her cancer treatments," says the Lovell's daughter, Lorrie.

"It was really exciting for Lorrie to bring that back to Mama," Roselyn says. "We are grateful to have it back. It's a good memory of what our family looked like in 2005, and it will be treasured."

A Brantley County woman's curiosity and the power of social media to bring people together get the credit for the blanket's return in late January.

Cindy Neesmith was headed to Brunswick on U.S. Highway 8 one afternoon when she noticed a plastic bin sitting in the ditch. On her way back home, she pulled off to investigate and found the family quilt.



ROSELYN AND EARL LOVELL ARE PICTURED WITH THEIR FAMILY MEMORY QUILT THEIR DAUGHTER GIFTED BACK TO THEM. THE QUILT WAS RETURNED NEARLY FIVE YEARS AFTER IT WAS STOLEN WHEN THE LOVELL'S HOME WAS BURGLARIZED. THE COUPLE HAVE FOUR CHILDREN, EIGHT GRANDCHILDREN AND THREE GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN.

stuffed inside. The blanket was the only salvageable item in the box.

“She found that blanket and just knew some family member would want it back,” Lorrie says.

“Something told me to turn around and go get the blanket,” Neesmith said. “I knew it was really special to someone.”

Neesmith took the blanket home, cleaned it and posted a photo of it to Facebook, hoping someone would recognize one of the photos.

Someone did.

In less than a week’s time, a former co-worker of Lorrie’s spotted the social media post and contacted Lorrie who then reached out to Neesmith. Ecstatic to hear the blanket had been recovered, Lorrie hurried to meet Neesmith.

“You can tell it’s aged a little, but for it to be gone that long, it was in great condition,” she says.

Roselyn, elated to have the blanket back, says she can’t tell any difference in its condition after five years.

“You can’t tell there’s any wearing of it at all in that many years!” Roselyn says.

The Lovells express their gratitude for Neesmith’s efforts in retrieving the blanket. Lorrie even returned to the spot where the blanket was found.

“I wanted to see what she went through. She had to walk through mud to get to it,” Lorrie says.

Returning the blanket was a touching moment for Neesmith, too, one she won’t soon forget.

“I was so emotional be-

cause I knew it was such a special thing for them. It made me so happy that I got the blanket and gave it back (to the Lovells),” she says. “It was worth everything I done to get the blanket.”

Lorrie gifted the blanket back to her mom in February, just before Roselyn began an uphill fight against lymphoma that had spread to several areas.

“It’s just a miracle to me that the blanket showed up after all these years,” Lorrie says. “I think God blessed us with it and said, ‘your family needs this right now’.”

Perhaps that blanket was just what 68-year-old Roselyn and her husband, 69-year-old Earl, needed to face the uncertain days of cancer treatment ahead. Just like they did five years earlier, the couple clung to their faith in God, the support of their family and hope restored when that blanket returned home.

After just three treatments, Roselyn’s PET scan revealed no cancer. She’s on the home stretch now with only one more chemo treatment ahead of her.

Roselyn’s optimism and trust in the Lord is evident even as she recalls those dark times five years ago. The burglary case was solved, a suspect arrested and most of the items of value returned long ago, yet she and Earl don’t dwell on that much at all — material things aren’t what matter most to the humble couple.

“I said, ‘we’re alright. Things can be replaced,’” Roselyn recalls. “It was a horrible thing, but at the



A PRIZED FAMILY BLANKET WAS FOUND BY A CURIOUS PASSERBY IN THIS PLASTIC BIN LYING ALONG THE SIDE OF U.S. HIGHWAY 82 EARLIER THIS YEAR.



LOVELL FAMILY

same time, I was just so appreciative that they didn’t destroy the house. I had to be grateful that it wasn’t any worse.”

She and Earl will celebrate 69 years of marriage this Fall. This year they’ve both faced health challenges and emerged victorious. Maybe Roselyn can convince Earl to finally retire from his longtime job as meat market

manager at Wall’s IGA — a job he’s held for more than 60 years.

Regardless of what lies ahead, brighter days or dark times come what may, the Lovell family will keep trusting in God. The return of their memory qi It has only strengthened their faith.

“It’s been a walk of faith ... what a year to live!” Roselyn says.

Protect yourself from coronavirus fraud

Restrictions implemented to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 have saved untold numbers of lives. The world has adjusted to such restrictions, and many parts of the world have relaxed measures as case numbers have declined.

As communities begin returning to some semblance of normalcy, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned people against letting their guard down. While many of those warnings pertain to the importance of continuing to practice social distancing as economies reopen, advisories also include notices about fraud schemes related to COVID-19.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General has advised the general public about scams involving Medicare fraud. Such schemes are targeting Medicare beneficiaries in an assortment of ways, including through text messages, social media, telemarketing calls, and even door-to-door visits. When perpetrating such frauds, scammers seek beneficiaries' personal information, which they then use to fraudulently bill federal health care programs, potentially leaving their victims on the hook for costly unapproved tests related to COVID-19.

The CDC notes the importance of being aware of such schemes. Awareness can help consumers avoid being victimized by scammers, and the following are some additional measures people can take to protect

themselves from COVID-19-related fraud.

- Do not share personal account information. Scammers need their victims' personal information to perpetrate their fraudulent schemes. The CDC cautions beneficiaries to be suspicious of unsolicited requests for their Medicare or Medicaid numbers.

- Do not take callers or visitors at face value. Unsolicited callers or visitors requesting Medicare or Medicaid information should be met with extreme caution. Be suspicious of any unexpected calls or visitors offering COVID-19 tests or supplies. Compromised personal information may be used in other fraud schemes.

- Never click on links in emails or text messages. Do not respond to, or open hyperlinks in, text messages or emails about COVID-19 from unknown individuals.

- Ignore offers or advertisements for COVID-19 testing or treatments on social media sites. Offers or ads for testing are one of the ways scammers are accessing personal information. Only a physician or other trusted healthcare provider should assess your condition and approve any requests for COVID-19 testing.

The COVID-19 outbreak has made it easy for criminals to exploit consumers concerned about their health. Consumers who suspect COVID-19 fraud can contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at (866) 720-5721 or visit [Justice.gov/DisasterComplaintForm](https://www.justice.gov/DisasterComplaintForm) to file a complaint. TF208193

Did you know?

Over the last decade, seniors have become increasingly more savvy in regard to social media usage. The Pew Research Center found that, in 2015, around 35 percent of people age 65 and older reported using social media. That's a large jump from just 2 percent in 2005. As of 2016, 65 percent of people between the ages 50 and 64 reported using social media, according to

Pew. Social media usage among seniors continues to climb, although young adults still comprise the demographic most likely to use it. Among seniors ages 50 and older, Facebook is by far the most popular social media platform used, followed by Pinterest and LinkedIn, conducted by a physician who specializes in Alzheimer's disease.



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