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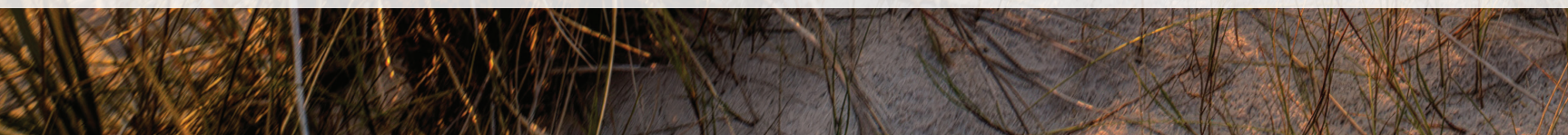
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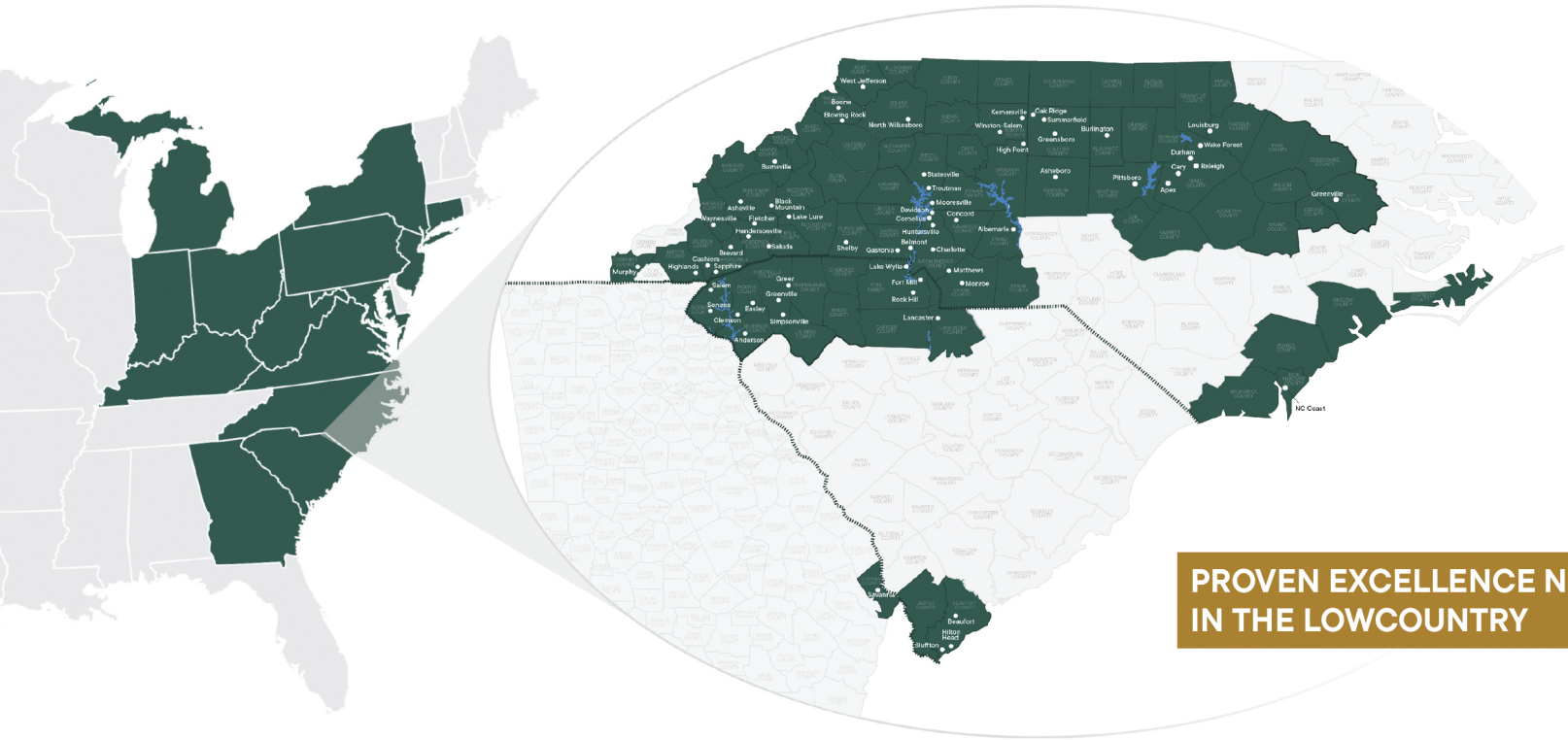
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the team

What is your resolution for 2026?

"Continuing to spend quality time with my family."
- LORI



"To spend more time outside having fun on nice days."
- LANCE



"Lower my blood sugar."
- JEREMY



"Square things away. Tie up loose ends."
- CHARLES



"Lots of quality family time."
- ASHLAN



"All about nutrition. Cook better, eat better and feed my dogs better."
- BAILEY



"To invest more time in my hobbies, and maybe pick up some new ones!"
- ALEA



"More time for Mahjong!"
- REBECCA



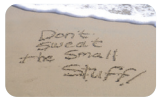
"Consistency over perfection, every single day."
- KRISTIN



"I have so many things to work on that I have to make them on the daily!"
- LISA



"Don't sweat the small stuff."
- LEAH



"To enjoy life to the max."
- BRUCE



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Jan features



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The Next Wave

This issue looks ahead with intention, charting what's next through smart ways to start the year. You'll find resolutions that hold steady, winter experiences worth the chill and a look at emerging technology, fresh books and films, new businesses and major projects taking shape across the Lowcountry. We also turn to trusted local medical professionals for health insights, alongside inspiration for food, style and home, offering a clear view of what's on the horizon.

SHORELINE SHIFT Crews work along the "heel" of Hilton Head Island near Port Royal as part of the 2025–2026 Beach Renourishment Project. Phase 1, completed in 2025, included Port Royal, Fish Haul and Pine Island. Phase 2 is now underway, covering Central Island, South Island and South Beach and is expected to wrap up by the end of May 2026. Learn more about the project on **page 70**.

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LESLIE SHIELS



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Riding the next wave

Exploring the projects, people and ideas setting the tone for the year ahead



TIME WELL GATHERED Publisher Lori Goodridge-Cribb spent the holidays soaking up family time with her husband, David, their grandchildren Luke, Maeve, Emma and Kinsley, and the rest of their crew. She was reminded once again that the true marathon of the season isn't the cooking but keeping up with the grandkids.

When we launched LOCAL Life more than nine years ago, we set out to celebrate the people, stories and everyday beauty that make the Lowcountry feel like home. Since then, life here has only grown richer. Our shores keep drawing new faces. Our longtime residents keep building the kind of community visitors fall in love with. And together we've become one of the most sought-after places to live in the Southeast.

That popularity brings pressure, of course, which is why we're grateful for the steady hands guiding Hilton Head Island, Bluffton, Beaufort, Port Royal and the rest of Beaufort County. Local leaders continue to work hard to protect what pulled most of us here in the first place. They're weighing growth with care, keeping an eye on the lessons from places like Pooler and Charleston, where rapid expansion changed the landscape almost overnight. Here the goal is different. We want progress without losing the marsh views, quiet moments, traditions and shared pride that define this place.

If early signs are any indication, 2026 is shaping up to be our strongest year yet. Every town in the county has bold plans in motion, and this issue is designed to help you ride that momentum. Inside, you'll find smart ways to start the year, from resolutions you'll actually keep to winter experiences worth bundling up for. We dig into trending technology, fresh book and movie releases, new businesses opening their doors, major projects on the horizon and local leaders shaping the future. Our medical professionals share insights on health trends for the year ahead. Our food, style and home sections are packed with ideas, including 2026 colors of the year, fashion trends, recipes and tips for getting your home and habits in order.

It's a full look at what's next, written for those who love calling the Lowcountry home. Here's to a year of good choices, good stories and good living. I'll see you out there.



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PUB NOTES

TURNING THE PAGE

Wow, this past year flew by. I keep wishing time would slow down just a little so I can soak in more of the life I'm lucky to live. As we turn the page, I'm reminded how much joy comes from the simple things: time with my family, mornings that start a little too early and the steady rhythm of life here in the Lowcountry.

I'm also grateful for LOCAL Life. This magazine has grown into something far bigger than I imagined when we started it. Each issue challenges me, inspires me and connects me to the people who make this place special. It's been one of the great privileges of my life to help tell those stories.

So I'm heading into the new year with a full heart and a sense of curiosity about what's next. If the past nine years are any indication, we're in for another good ride. I can't wait to see what the new year brings.

2025 COVER OF THE YEAR



The readers have spoken. LOCAL Life's 2025 Cover of the Year is the wooden swing at Wright Family Park in Bluffton, featured on our March 2025 cover. The image was captured by Alyssa Franck, a Clemson University student with a sharp eye for Lowcountry landscapes. Every issue of LOCAL Life is built to last, filled with stories, ideas and insights that stay useful long after the month has passed. Want to revisit your favorite covers and articles? Browse past digital issues anytime at ***locallifesc.com***.



ON THE ROAD TO RELIEF Have you spotted the LOCAL Life Jeep around town? This month, we pulled up alongside ***Dr. Heather Hinshelwood and Henry Criss*** of Fraum Health. If you're dealing with pain, stop by their office in Main Street Village to learn about treatments that can help you find lasting relief.

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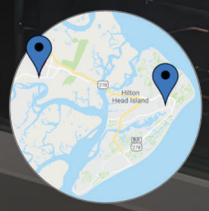
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MEET LOCAL CREATIVES BEHIND THE SCENES



Michaela Satterfield Roberts *Writer*

OTHER CREDS: BS in journalism and minor in interior design from Missouri State University **FOR THIS ISSUE:** *Sparking a Sea Change* feature about Barton Seaver **HOMETOWN:** Springfield, Missouri **CURRENT HOME:** Ozark, Missouri **LOCAL CONNECTION:** Spent the best summer ever living on Hilton Head while working as an intern at *LOCAL Life*. **WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE LOWCOUNTRY?** The landscape is stunning. The people are friendly. It's just a magical place. **FAVORITE LOCAL PLACES:** Mitchelville Beach, Daufuskie Island and Java Burrito. **HOBBIES:** Painting, Pilates, making Instagram reels (my most-watched got 5.6 million views!). **WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?** The Jonas Brothers' latest album on repeat. **WHAT ARE YOU READING?** *A Study in Charlotte* by Brittany Cavallaro **2026 RESOLUTION:** To be more present. **HIGHLIGHT OF 2025:** Traveling to Hawaii for the first time to visit one of my best friends. **WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2026?** Taking a trip to the Pacific Northwest — Oregon, Washington and Alaska.



Marc Schwitters *Photographer*

FUN FACTS: Lived on Hilton Head Island for 15 years in Palmetto Dunes and Sea Pines. Featured in HGTV's *Vacation House for Free* TV series in 2014. Believe me, it wasn't. **FOR THIS ISSUE:** Parting shot, *The Last Wave* **HOMETOWN:** I have moved every 5-6 years since I was a child. **CURRENT HOME:** Salt Lake City **WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE LOWCOUNTRY?** Honestly, my friends at South Beach Racquet Club. Hilton Head is a very transitional place. Hard to find real locals. South Beach Racquet Club is the place to do it. **FAVORITE LOCAL PLACES:** Fiesta Fresh, Annie O's and especially Social Bakery. Owner Phillipe Feret is a close friend and a master at anything he chooses to do. Hard to not include Frankie Bones for its bread and escargot. **HOBBIES:** I build custom fishing rods. **2026 RESOLUTION:** Make another year a great one. Ski, hike, fish and stay happy. **WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2026?** My family on day one. Means we all made it another year.



Analisa Chase *Artist*

OTHER CREDS: Self-taught, nationally collected artist with works sold across the U.S. **FOR THIS ISSUE:** Cover artwork, *Morning Fog* **HOMETOWN:** Palmyra, New York **CURRENT HOME:** Bluffton **LOCAL SINCE:** 2017 **WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE LOWCOUNTRY?** Palmetto trees, lots of them! The abundance of creatures in this area and the surrounding ecosystems. And...the weather is warm (HOT) and cozy too. **WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST ABOUT YOUR HOMETOWN?** Fishing in the Erie Canal for carp, bridge jumping and Canaltown Days. **FAVORITE LOCAL PLACES:** Really anywhere there's live music, a fun active crowd and good conversation. **HOBBIES:** Gardening, sourdough-bread baking and binge watching '80s movies. **WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?** I'm a classic rock gal through and through; I do listen to everything from Motown to classical though. **WHAT ARE YOU READING?** The Bible, a little bit every day. I'm a researcher at heart, so whatever I have an interest in, I read about. **HIGHLIGHT OF 2025:** Rediscovering my creative voice, letting go and watching my art evolve in ways I didn't expect. **WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2026?** More time with my family; time is short. Room to create and embracing the changes that come, even the hard ones, trusting they're part of moving forward with purpose.

Others who guided our vision toward 2026 ...

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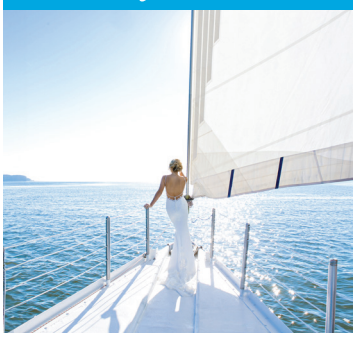
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On the web: Articles our readers are loving at ***LocalLifeSC.com***.

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2. DIY bath soaks for the ultimate night of self-care



3. Indoor and outdoor fireplace inspiration from local builders



Tech that lets the view shine

Scan this QR code to learn how a local couple created their forever home on Dataw Island with help from **CAV Integrated Home**. From marsh views to smart-home features, their space blends Lowcountry beauty with technology that works.

About the cover

*Soft, layered and quietly powerful, the painting **Morning Fog** by Bluffton artist Analisa Chase captures a moment suspended between calm and motion. A self-taught, nationally collected artist and juried member of the National Association of Women Artists, Chase draws inspiration from memories of deep, moody waters off the New England coast she visited in her youth. The piece reflects the stillness of early morning at sea and the anticipation of what comes next, a fitting visual metaphor for The Next Wave issue. Find more of her work on Facebook at Analisa Chase Fine Art or on Instagram (@analisachasefineart).*



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Color when you least expect it

COASTAL DISCOVERY MUSEUM CAMELLIA GARDEN, HILTON HEAD

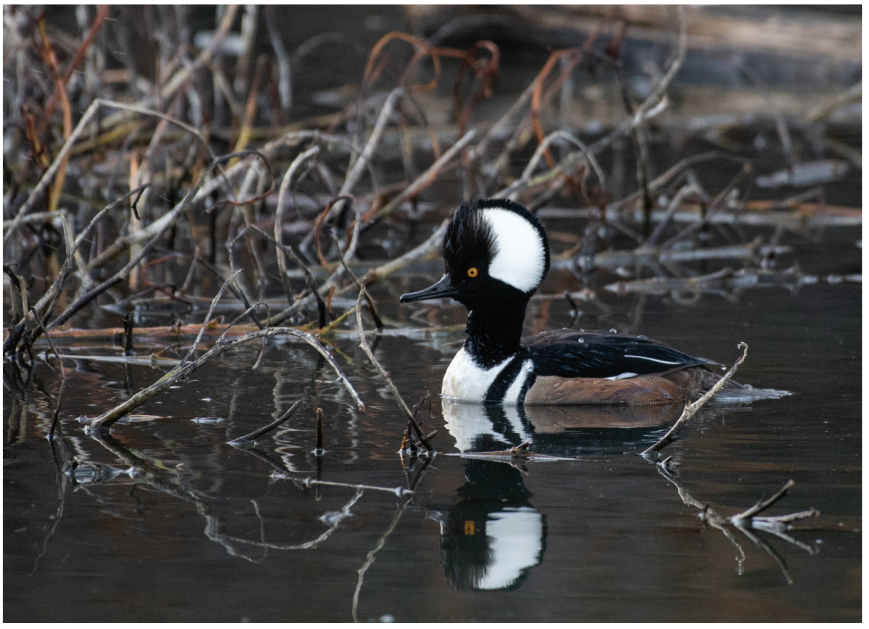
At Honey Horn the Camellia Garden feels like a welcome surprise in midwinter. More than 130 varieties bloom through March, filling the garden with shades of pink, red and white beneath moss-draped oaks. It's easily one of Hilton Head's prettiest winter walks. After exploring the garden, follow the boardwalks out toward the marsh for wide, quiet views of the tidal creek.

Winter days the Lowcountry way

FIVE LOCAL EXPERIENCES THAT SHINE IN JANUARY

STORY BY LANCE HANLIN

January may be the Lowcountry's most overlooked treasure. The water's too cool for swimming, but it's the perfect month to lace up, layer up and wander. The bugs vanish, the crowds stay away, and the trails feel like they belong to locals again. It's one of those rare stretches when a light jacket is all you need, and the whole coast seems to slow its heartbeat. We picked five local experiences that capture the quiet magic this season brings.



Winter wildlife at its best

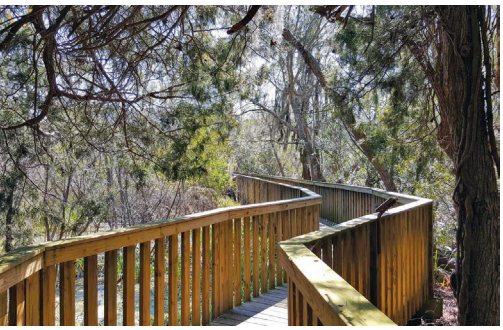
PINCKNEY ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Pinckney Island shines in winter. Cool air makes the wide gravel trails perfect for hiking or biking, and the mix of salt marsh, tidal creeks and open areas draws in plenty of seasonal wildlife. Blue-winged teal, ring-necked ducks and hooded mergansers gather in the ponds, while red-shouldered hawks keep watch from the treetops. The marsh grasses shift into warm winter tones, and with fewer people on the paths, the whole refuge feels still and absorbing.



Drama on the winter shoreline **HUNTING ISLAND STATE PARK**

Winter gives Hunting Island a mood all its own. The driftwood-strewn shoreline looks sculptural in the low winter sun, and the quiet beaches feel almost cinematic. The lighthouse remains closed for structural repairs, but its black-and-white tower still anchors the landscape and makes a striking backdrop for photos. You might also see horseback riders along the waterline, since permitted horses are allowed on the beach during the winter months.



Quiet trails and morning mist
SEA PINES FOREST PRESERVE, HILTON HEAD

Cool mornings at Sea Pines Forest Preserve often start with a soft fog rising from Lake Thomas. With the summer vegetation thinned back, the landscape feels more open and peaceful. Herons and egrets move slowly through the wetlands, and the Indian Shell Ring is easier to appreciate without dense undergrowth. It's one of the best January spots for unhurried walks and a little quiet reflection.



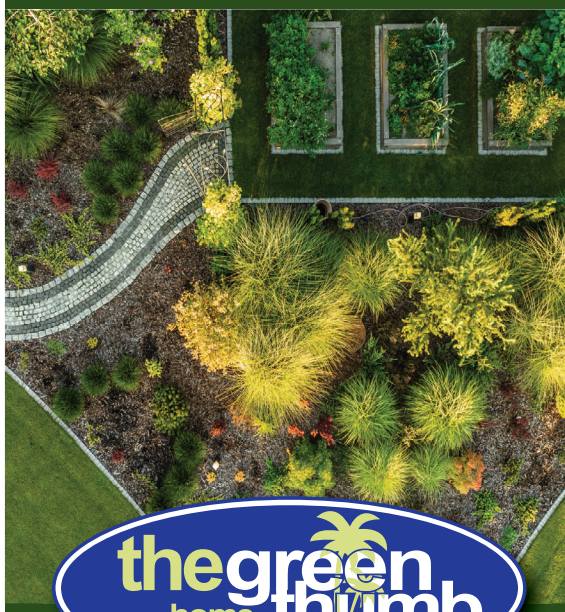
A quick loop full of life
CYPRESS WETLANDS, PORT ROYAL

The Cypress Wetlands in Port Royal offer an easy, scenic winter walk along a short, flat boardwalk loop. The rookery starts to stir this time of year, so you may spot egrets, herons and anhingas using the wetlands, along with turtles sunning on logs and the occasional marsh rabbit darting through the brush. It's a simple, engaging outing and a reminder that winter here still brims with wildlife.

MORE PLACES WORTH EXPLORING IN JANUARY

- ***Mitchelville Freedom Park:*** *Quiet shoreline, rich history and beautiful winter light over Port Royal Sound.*
- ***Jarvis Creek Park:*** *A peaceful loop around the lake with easy wildlife viewing when the vegetation thins out.*
- ***Fish Haul Beach Park:*** *One of the island's most serene winter beaches, perfect for long walks at low tide.*
- ***Fort Fremont Preserve, St. Helena Island:*** *Cool weather makes exploring the 19th-century fort ruins and forested trails even better.*
- ***Victoria Bluff Heritage Preserve, Bluffton:*** *A low-key hiking spot where winter gives you wide views through the pines.*
- ***Sands Beach, Port Royal:*** *Great for spotting dolphins from the boardwalk and climbing the observation tower on crisp days.*
- ***Savannah National Wildlife Refuge:*** *A top spot for winter birdwatching, especially along Laurel Hill Drive when ducks are plentiful.*
- ***Spanish Moss Trail, Beaufort:*** *Cool temperatures make it ideal for biking the long, scenic stretches between Beaufort and Port Royal.*
- ***Church of the Cross, Bluffton:*** *Winter camellias begin to bloom around the historic sanctuary, adding soft color to one of the Lowcountry's most peaceful waterfront spots.*

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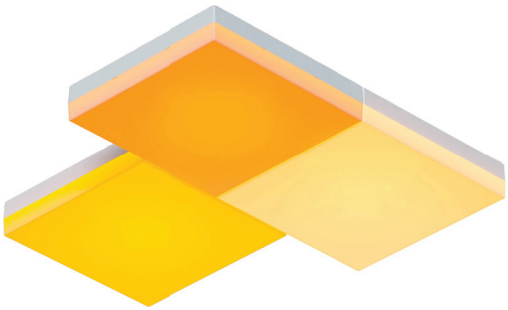
SELECTIONS BY MACKENZIE LIONBERGER



Do not disturb

OZLO Sleepbuds

Good ideas start with good sleep, and these tiny earbuds help you get there. OZLO Sleepbuds use soft sound files and gentle noise masking to create a bubble of calm when the house finally settles. They're comfortable enough to wear all night and include a personal alarm that wakes you without disturbing anyone else. They're great for light sleepers and anyone trying to reset after a busy holiday season. ***ozlosleep.com. $274***



Light years ahead

Nanoleaf Skylight Smart Panels

Overhead lights don't usually spark excitement, but Nanoleaf's ceiling panels change that. You can shift from bright morning light to a warm evening tone or bring in full color when you want some fun. Scenes run on a schedule or through your phone, which give kitchens, offices and playrooms a quick mood upgrade. ***nanoleaf.me. $249***



Clean breeze

Dyson Purifier Humidify+Cool Formaldehyde

Lowcountry homes deal with humidity, allergens and the occasional mystery odor. This Dyson model tackles them all with one machine. It filters the air, adds moisture when the heat kicks on and circulates a cool breeze in warmer months. It also breaks down formaldehyde, a pollutant often released from furniture and flooring. It's a helpful year-round companion if you care about breathing cleaner air. ***dyson.com. $919***



Say cheese

Analogue AF-1

Film is having another moment, and the Analogue AF-1 makes it easy to join in. This compact point-and-shoot gives your photos a gorgeous, nostalgic feel without any fuss. It slips into a pocket and is ready whenever something worth remembering happens. It's a fun way to slow down, shoot intentionally and build a little box of 2026 memories. ***analogueshop.com. $557***

Noise no more

Sony WH-1000XM6

Start the new year with a little more quiet. Sony's WH-1000XM6 headphones serve up clean, detailed sound while shutting out everything you don't want to hear. They run for about 30 hours on a charge, pair with multiple devices and stay comfortable during long days. They're a solid choice for flights, focused work or simply giving your brain a break. ***sony.com. $400***





Through the looking glass

Ray-Ban Meta Wayfarer (Gen. 2)

These aren't your average sunglasses. The second-generation Ray-Ban Meta Wayfarers let you listen to music, take calls, snap photos and ask questions with your voice. Built-in speakers and a hands-free camera turn everyday errands into a small tech adventure. They're a practical pick for travelers, walkers and anyone who wants a little AI help without pulling out a phone. ***ray-ban.com. $479***



Booked and busy

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite

If you want fewer distractions this year, the Kindle Paperwhite keeps things blissfully simple. No social feeds, no notifications, just access to more books than you could ever read. The 16GB model is light, easy on the eyes and waterproof enough for beach days. Curl up with a mystery, dive into a classic, or download something new before your next trip. ***amazon.com. $125***



AI in your pocket

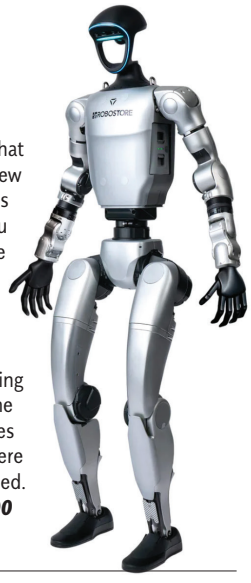
Rabbit r1 AI Companion

This bright orange gadget feels like a peek into the near future. The Rabbit r1 uses conversational prompts to handle the things you usually tap through on your phone. It can book reservations, create playlists, sort your messages and learn your daily habits. It keeps life moving without pulling you into another screen rabbit hole. ***rabbithmi.com. $199***

House robot, upgraded

Unitree G1 EDU Plus Humanoid (U2)

If you've ever wondered what it might feel like to live a few steps into the future, this humanoid robot gets you pretty close. The Unitree G1 EDU Plus is a fully articulated, human-scaled machine built to walk, gesture and learn through advanced AI training tools. No, it won't load the dishwasher yet, but it does offer a wild glimpse of where personal robotics are headed. ***robostore.com. $53,900***



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The easy side of innovation

PRACTICAL WAYS AI AND SMART DEVICES CAN SIMPLIFY LIFE IN 2026

STORY BY AUDREY GEIB

Technology moves fast, which can make it tough to know what's actually worth using. Between smart rings, wellness apps and planning tools, some innovations really do make day-to-day life smoother. The trick is finding the ones that fit your routine and don't feel like a chore to learn. Groups like the Hilton Head Island Computer Club, a volunteer local community education service that offers one-on-one guidance, are great at helping residents stay confident with new tech.

Here are a few smart tools bringing a little ease, order and peace of mind to life in the Lowcountry.







THREE wellness gadgets worth trying

1. Know your body better with the Oura Ring 4 Ceramic
The Oura Ring is a sleek smart ring that tracks sleep, activity and overall well-being. It measures heart rate, temperature and movement, then translates that data into clear insights about how well you're resting and recovering. The new Oura Ring 4 Ceramic keeps the trusted hardware but adds a high-performance zirconia ceramic exterior in four fresh colors. It's an easy way to keep tabs on your health without wearing a bulky device. $500 plus $70 per year for the app.

2. Rise and shine smarter with the Hatch Restore 3
The Hatch Restore 3 turns mornings and evenings into calmer rituals. With a sunrise alarm, sound machine and soft-glow light, it helps you wind down naturally and wake up without the shock of a phone alarm. You can adjust light colors, choose soothing sounds and follow guided rest routines that ease you into better sleep. It's a small bedside upgrade with a big payoff. $170 plus $50 per year for the app.

3. Unwind and relax with the Therabody SmartGoggles
If you carry tension in your face or behind your eyes, these smart goggles can help. Therabody SmartGoggles use gentle vibration, heat and massage to ease eye strain, release stress and promote deeper relaxation. Pair them with the Therabody app's guided breathing sessions, and you'll feel like you've snuck in a quick spa visit at home. $200

FIVE unexpected ways AI can make life easier



1. Smarter spending. AI can help you make sense of your money habits without diving into spreadsheets. Budgeting apps and chatbots such as Monarch, Quicken and Rocket Money look at your spending patterns, flag forgotten subscriptions and suggest simple ways to save more each month. You can also ask tools like ChatGPT or other LLMs like Google's Gemini to break down financial terms or sketch out a savings plan.



2. Dinner, decoded. Standing in front of the fridge wondering what to make? AI can fill in the blanks. Plug in whatever ingredients you've got, or ask for ideas that match your mood. Tools like ChatGPT or Whisk will generate recipes, meal plans and even grocery lists in seconds. Whether you want to eat healthier, save time or avoid the nightly "what's for dinner" debate, a little AI support goes a long way.



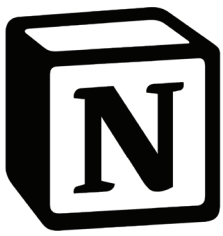
3. Mindful moments. If you're trying to build healthier habits, AI can offer small nudges throughout the day. Apps like Calm, Woebot and Replika use smart prompts and mood tracking to guide quick check-ins, encourage reflection and help you manage stress. They're not meant to replace real connection; just to help you slow down and reset when life gets busy.



4. Travel companion. Planning your next getaway is easier with AI along for the ride. Apps like GuideGeek and Wonderlog build custom itineraries, recommend local restaurants and highlight can't-miss spots based on your interests. They'll even help with packing lists and shortcuts, acting like a travel agent who knows you well and never sleeps.



5. Write it right. From emails to résumés to creative projects, AI can help your writing land the way you want it to. Tools like Grammarly and Claude can spot typos, adjust tone and suggest cleaner, clearer phrasing. A few quick edits can turn a rushed draft into something polished and confident.



ONE organizational app

Let Notion organize your life
Notion pulls notes, to-do lists and project planning into one customizable workspace. Its built-in AI can summarize meetings, draft task lists, brainstorm ideas and help you stay organized without juggling multiple apps. Think of it as a digital assistant that learns your workflow and keeps everything running smoothly.


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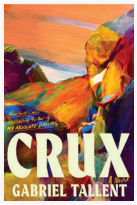
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Pages ahead

A look at the early-2026 releases ready to capture your imagination

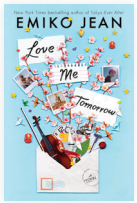
***Denise Friday**, a social worker at Hilton Head Island Elementary and mother of twins, finds both joy and reflection in a good book. For The Next Wave issue, she shares the titles she's most excited to dive into as 2026 begins.*



***CRUX** BY GABRIEL TALLENT*

Dan and Tamma are two teenagers in their last year of high school. With limited opportunities, difficult home lives and one shared outlet — rock climbing — their friendship becomes the anchor pulling them through.

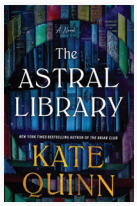
Release date: Jan. 20



***LOVE ME TOMORROW** BY EMIKO JEAN*

High school senior Emma no longer believes in love after her parents' divorce. But when she starts receiving letters from someone claiming to be the love of her life writing from the future, she sets out to uncover who it is.

Release date: Feb. 3



***THE ASTRAL LIBRARY** BY KATE QUINN*

Down-on-her-luck Alix Watson takes refuge in the Boston Public Library, where she discovers a portal that allows her to enter books — with rules. She wanders fog-soaked tunnels with Sherlock Holmes, explores swampland with Tom and Huck and encounters sightings of Jane Eyre.

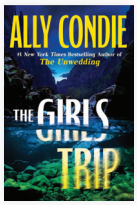
Release date: Feb. 17



***THE KEEPER** BY TANA FRENCH*

A woman's murder in a remote Irish village ignites a bitter town feud. This is the final book in the Cal Hooper trilogy, following "The Searcher" and "The Hunter." It can stand alone, but don't deny yourself French's beautiful, haunting storytelling.

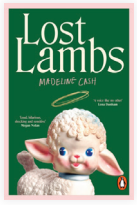
Release date: March 31



***THE GIRLS TRIP** BY ALLY CONDIE*

Three women who bonded through an online book club decide to meet after two years of supporting one another. They choose a dream vacation in a national park, but the trip takes a dark turn when one of the women disappears.

Release date: April 7



***LOST LAMBS** BY MADELINE CASH*

A debut novel full of wit, dysfunction and family chaos, balanced with surprising tenderness. You will laugh out loud at this nutty story of a family who takes on a potentially corrupt billionaire shipping magnate.

Release date: Jan. 13



Chapter chat

*LOCAL Life's Rebecca Kerns, an avid reader, shares her take on **The Woman in Suite 11** by Ruth Ware, book No. 2 in The Woman in Cabin 10 series in "Rebecca's Reading Room Chat," our new video book review series. With its taut suspense, cozy-with-a-blanket atmosphere and twisty turns, it's the kind of story that makes for an ideal winter read. Watch it now on LOCAL Life's YouTube channel: **youtube.com/@locallifesc***

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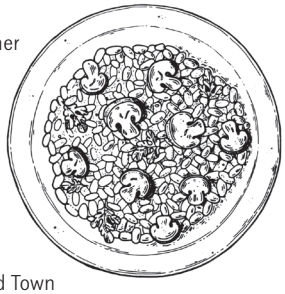
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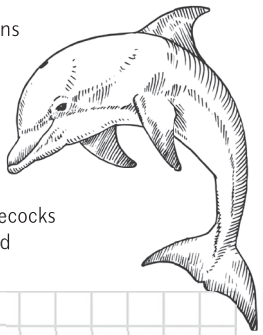
January crossword challenge for locals

CLUES BY LANCE HANLIN + GRID BY JEREMY SWARTZ



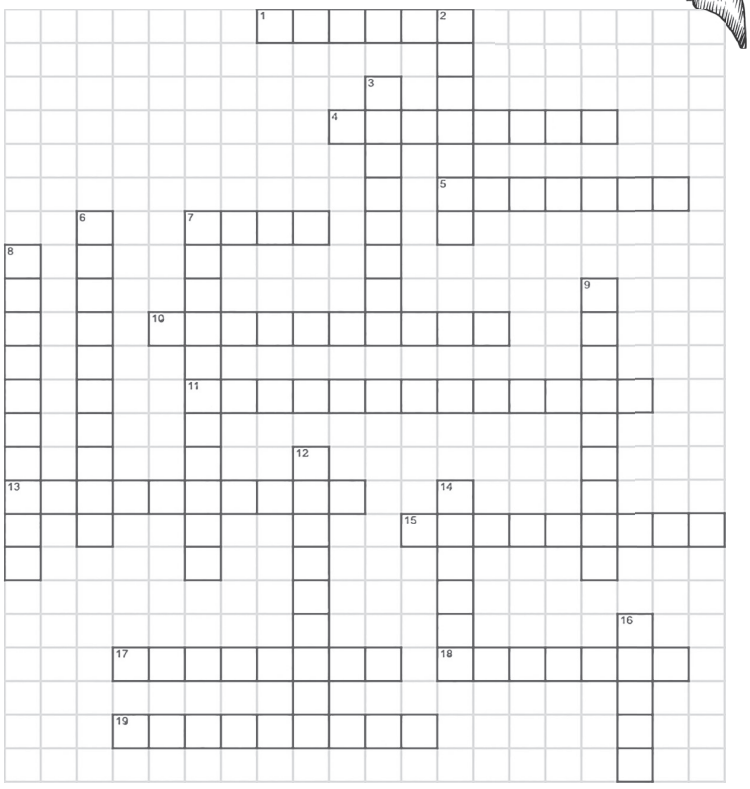
ACROSS

1. Cultural celebration on HHI beginning Jan. 29
4. Visitors who come in January for softer winter weather
5. Slow-stirred Italian rice dish popular in winter
7. Center on St. Helena that MLK visited five times
10. Promise made on Jan. 1
11. Process of adding sand to an eroded beach
13. Tennis Grand Slam in January: ____ Open
15. Zodiac sign ruling Jan. 1-19
17. Zodiac sign that begins Jan. 20
18. The Farmers Market of HHI takes place on this day
19. Shopping and dining destination in the heart of Old Town



DOWN

2. Bluffton house museum built by enslaved West Africans
3. Arena in Savannah that's home to the Ghost Pirates
6. Dolphin species most often spotted in local waters
7. Bright winter fruit packed with ruby-red seeds
8. Chamber event offering prix-fixe menus: ____ Week
9. Tomato-based stew named for a Georgia city
12. January's birth flower, known for its delicate petals
14. January birthstone with a deep red glow. Think Gamecocks
16. Roman god of beginnings for whom January is named



ANSWER KEY

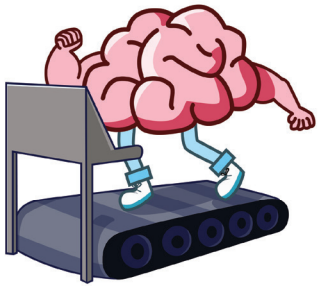
ACROSS 1. GULLAH 4. SNOWBIRD 5. RISOTTO 7. PENN 10. RESOLUTION 11. RENOURISHMENT 13. AUSTRALIAN 15. CAPRICORN 17. AQUARIUS 18. TUESDAY 19. PROMENADE **DOWN** 2. HEYWARD 3. ENMARKET 6. BOTTLENOSE 7. POMEGRANATE 8. RESTAURANT 9. BRUNSWICK 12. CARNATION 14. GARNET 16. JANUS

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STEP TO IT!

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1. Fill in each blank below with a word that fits the definitions on each side.

Portion of _____ To Separate

Type _____ To classify

Severe _____ Part of a boat

2. Find the word in the bottom row that best completes the following sequence.

HIGH ABSURD DELIGHT START _____

a) LIFT b) PLAY c) NOTE d) COLOR

3. Find a six-digit number in which the first digit is three less than the second and five less than the third, the third digit is two less than the fourth, the fifth digit is six less than the fourth and the last digit is double the fifth. The sum of all the digits is 32.

4. The names of three capital cities are interlettered below. Can you find them? (The letters are in consecutive order.) There are seven null characters.

L W O O A T N S T D H A O I W N N A P G M O T C I O L T N

5. Which of the scrambled words below is least like the others? (The difference has nothing to do with vowels, consonants or syllables.)

NNGPAITI SCLPUTREU SIMUC LLWA

ANSWER KEY

1. part, sort, stern 2. c) NOTE (Each word in the sequence begins with two letters in alphabetical order.) 3. 257,938 4. LONDON, WASHINGTON, OTTAWA 5. WALL (The three other words are art forms: PAINTING, SCULPTURE, MUSIC.)

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The hot list

What to watch, read and listen to in January

SELECTIONS BY DAISY DOW

STREAMING









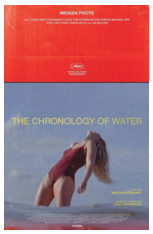
NETFLIX ***His & Hers*** *(drama)* Anna (Tessa Thompson) appears to have it all as a successful TV news anchor in Atlanta, but off-camera she lives a reclusive life, shutting out family and friends. When she hears about a murder case in her hometown of Dahlonega, Georgia, she drops everything to investigate. Returning home forces her to confront her estranged husband, Jack (Jon Bernthal), now the primary detective on the case. He views her involvement with suspicion, but Anna sees things differently. **Release date: Jan. 8**

PEACOCK ***Ponies*** *(thriller)* Stationed in the American Embassy during the Cold War, Bea (Emilia Clarke) and Twila (Haley Lu Richardson) fly under the radar as secretaries, so much so that they're classified as "PONIES," short for "persons of no interest." When their husbands are inexplicably killed in the USSR, the women climb the intelligence ladder and become CIA operatives. Dispatched to uncover what really happened, Bea and Twila prove they belong in the field, not behind desks. **Release date: Jan. 15**

HBO ***A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms*** *(fantasy)* On the continent of Westeros, Ser Duncan the Tall (Peter Claffey) sets out to make a name for himself as a knight. Set 100 years before the events of George R.R. Martin's series Game of Thrones, this adaptation of The Hedge Knight follows Dunk's rise from lowly squire to respected knight. With his own squire, Egg (Dexter Sol Ansell) by his side, the unlikely pair experience the highs and lows of battles both on and off the field. **Release date: Jan. 18**

ESPN ***CFP National Championship*** *(live football)* College football's biggest night kicks off at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens. Back in August, plenty of Clemson and Carolina fans pictured themselves making the 500-mile pilgrimage for a shot at glory. Since neither team came close, it's probably best to settle in at home, skip the SunPass tolls and enjoy the title game from the couch. **Kickoff: 7:30 p.m., Jan. 19**

MOVIE THEATERS



The Chronology of Water *(drama)* Lidia Yuknavitch (Imogen Poots) escapes her abusive home by earning a swimming scholarship to a Texas college. On paper she is a promising athlete with Olympic potential, but her alcohol and drug use derail her future. She pivots, enrolling at the University of Oregon, where she discovers the healing power of writing. When a professor takes a chance on her, she uses the craft to confront and understand her tumultuous childhood. **Release date: Jan. 9**

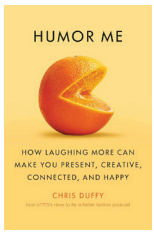


A Private Life *(mystery)* Dr. Lilian Steiner (Jodie Foster) cares deeply about her patients and gains intimate insight into their lives. When one dies in what is deemed a suicide, she refuses to accept it. Her investigation takes her from trash cans to her ex-husband's doorstep as she refuses to stop until she uncovers the truth. **Release date: Jan. 16**

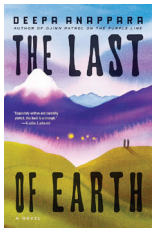


Dead Man's Wire *(historical)* In 1977 Tony Kiritsis (Bill Skarsgård) reaches a breaking point with the Meridian Mortgage Company. He storms their Indianapolis office and takes company president Richard Hall (Dacre Montgomery) hostage, rigging a pulley system and noose attached to a shotgun aimed at Hall's face. Based on a true story, Dead Man's Wire offers a gripping window into the mind of a desperate kidnapper who paraded his hostage through the streets. **Release date: Jan. 16**

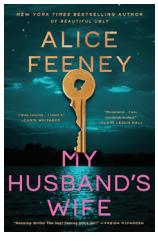
BOOKS & NOVELS



Humor Me *By Chris Duffy (nonfiction)*
Comedian and TED podcast host Chris Duffy believes humor can transform even the most ordinary moment. In this playful field guide, he blends research with personal stories to show how laughter connects us, diffuses tension and helps us navigate everyday life with a lighter touch.
Release date: Jan. 6

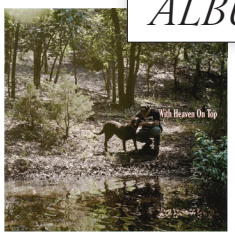


The Last of Earth *By Deepa Anappara (fiction)*
Set in 19th-century Tibet, this sweeping historical novel from the award-winning author of Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line follows lives shaped by upheaval, resilience and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world. Early readers are already calling it one of the standout releases of the new year.
Release date: Jan. 13



My Husband's Wife *By Alice Feeney (fiction)*
Birdy prefers life quiet and contained in her London flat, but an unexpected inheritance forces her out of her comfort zone and across the map to claim a mysterious property. Meanwhile, Eden, a struggling artist on the brink of her big break, returns from a run to find her key no longer fits — and a stranger inside insisting she is Eden's husband's wife, a claim he shockingly confirms.
Release date: Jan. 20

ALBUMS



With Heaven on Top
By Zach Bryan (country)
Release date: Jan. 9



Secret Love
By Dry Cleaning (alternative)
Release date: Jan. 9



Locket
By Madison Beer (pop)
Release date: Jan. 16

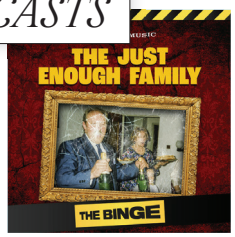


Hyperlove
By Mika (pop)
Release date: Jan. 23

PODCASTS



Camp Swamp Road
Subject: Investigation



The Just Enough Family
Subject: Drama



The Lonely Palette
Subject: Art history



Everything Is Alive
Subject: Documentary storytelling

TRAVEL



Hanifaru Bay, Maldives
Swim among mangroves and coral reefs to spot whale sharks.



Antigua, Guatemala
Hike near the summit of Pacaya Volcano for clear views of the Sierra Madre de Chiapas.

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Community in action

A place to SOAR

HOW A LOCAL NON-PROFIT HELPED AN ATHLETE WITH DOWN SYNDROME FIND CONFIDENCE, COMMUNITY AND LIFT-OFF

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM



SIDE BY SIDE For Jacob Morasko and his dad, Paul, Special Olympics and SOAR Special Recreation have strengthened a bond that keeps growing on and off the course.

When 19-year-old Jacob Morasko hits the court, the track or the golf course, he shows up with a level of joy and determination that pulls you in. Jacob, who has Down syndrome, has been part of Special Olympics for 11 years, competing in swimming, unified basketball and unified track and field. But when his family moved from Massachusetts to the Lowcountry a year and a half ago, something changed. His world opened up a little more.

He found SOAR Special Recreation, the Lowcountry's official Special Olympics partner. The local non-profit enriches the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through inclusive, community-based recreation. With more than 600 athletes across Beaufort, Colleton and Jasper counties, SOAR creates spaces where fitness, friendship and confidence grow naturally. For Jacob, it's done all that and then some.

Since joining SOAR, Jacob has thrived in basketball, track, swimming and golf. His skills have sharpened, his medal count has grown, and his confidence has taken off. He also served as a North American Youth Ambassador for Special Olympics and will compete at the USA Games this summer. One of his favorite moments comes on the golf course, where he plays unified rounds with his dad, Paul.

"Since moving to South Carolina, Special Olympics has afforded us the opportunity to get involved with the community, and we appreciate the financial support it receives from SOAR," Paul says. Cheering Jacob on, and sometimes competing right beside him, is something he values every time they step onto the course.

Jacob sums it up simply. "SOAR has given me the opportunity to play golf with my dad and basketball with my friends on a team," he says. "I can't wait to start playing pickleball with my friend Tyler."

Through every practice, every huddle and every high-five, Jacob shows what SOAR makes possible. It's a place where athletes of all abilities find belonging, build lifelong skills and discover just how much they can do.



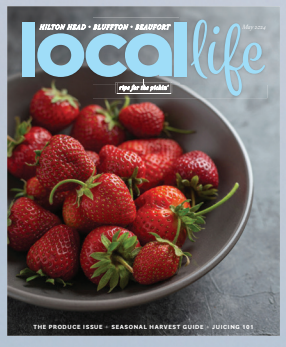
Take action

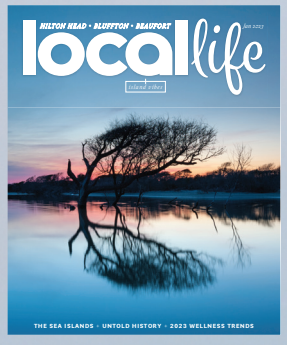
SOAR Special Recreation is looking for volunteers who want to help create meaningful experiences for local athletes with special needs. No experience required, just an open heart and a willingness to learn. Find details at ***soarspecialrecreation.org***.

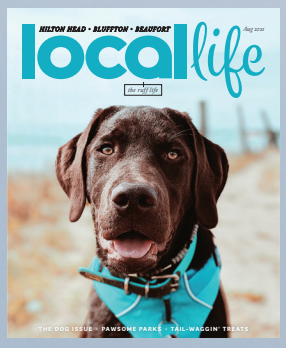


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DON'T FORGET TO LIVE LIKE A LOCAL

What makes them local



SLEIGHT OF HAND Close-up magic is Laham's signature. With a deck of cards, a few everyday objects and a clean, practiced touch, he creates illusions that happen inches from your eyes. It's the kind of magic that first captured his imagination at age 10.

adjective. lo·cal | lō-kəl

1: *characterized by or relating to position in space: having a definite spatial form or location* ***2:*** *of, relating to, or characteristic of a particular place: not general or widespread: of, relating to, or applicable to part of a whole* ***3:*** *primarily serving the needs of a particular limited district of a public conveyance: making all the stops on a route*

Magic man

From Lebanon to Hilton Head, Nicholas Laham found home through magic

STORY BY BECCA EDWARDS + PHOTOGRAPHY BY ACE ILLUSIONS

With a new year comes that familiar sense that anything can happen, a feeling Nicholas Laham understands better than most. Adopted from Lebanon at six weeks old, he found his calling at age 10 after a magician wowed him with a simple red sponge ball. Magic became more than a hobby. It became a path.

"Magic taught me that anything is possible, not just from mastering tricks but from building a business around something I love," Laham said.

His success didn't appear out of thin air. It came from steady work, countless hours of practice and a real passion for illusion. His story shows that hope might be the most powerful trick of all.

Q: When did you move to the Lowcountry? A: In 2021 because of Kerry Pollock at the Magic Cabaret. I went to one of Kerry's shows when visiting and spent time with him getting pizza after his show, talking about magic. At the end of our visit, Kerry said he would hire me full-time if I ever wanted to move here. I went back and got my finances and plan in place and moved here.

Q: What drew you to magic? A: I was 10 years old when my parents took me to the Hard Rock Cafe Hotel restaurant in Orlando. We went for dinner, and a roaming magician came to my table to show off his skills. After I saw the red sponge ball trick, I was hooked on magic. I read and watched videos, and I have taken lessons and spent time with many well-known professionals such as Tim Felix, Mac Kin and Kerry Pollock. My dad also encouraged me to pursue magic often taking me to magic stores, shows and conventions.



PICK A CARD Nicholas Laham found his way from Lebanon to Hilton Head Island by following one simple idea: anything is possible. Now a professional magician, he brings that sense of wonder to events across the Lowcountry. Book a performance at acelllusions.com or text 616-215-3785.

Q: Do you consider the Lowcountry a magical place? A: Yes. My first visit, I knew immediately this is where I wanted to live year-round. What I love most about living here is that it seems to be summertime all year-round.

Q: January is the month of fresh starts. When have you experienced a fresh start that helped you reach your goals? A: Within the past year I have set goals and I have been putting the action, time and effort into each goal, and they seem to be blooming in the present.

Q: Do you have a New Year's resolution? A: To be performing magic full-time!

Q: What are some of your most popular magic tricks? A: The most popular tricks are sleight of hand, such as changing dollar bills into hundreds or twenties. I can do a lot of different illusions, and I perform at a wide range of events such as dinner parties, trade shows, special events, birthday celebrations, country club events and retirement communities.

Q: What is your motto in life? A: Treat everyone with kindness and compassion, and help someone every day.

Q: What is one fun fact no one else knows about you? A: As handsome as I am, I am still single! LL



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Local business buzz

What's new, what's next and what's making waves across the Lowcountry

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM

January brings fresh energy to the Lowcountry. Cool mornings and clean slates make it a great time to see what's opening, what's on the way and what's brewing for 2026. ***Here's the latest buzz.***



NOW OPEN

A fresh take on feeling better

The Well Co. *Palmetto Square, Bluffton*

The Well Co. is now open, with a holistic, no-shortcuts approach to physical therapy and movement. The team focuses on long-term strength and real recovery in a space that feels supportive, not clinical. Think expert guidance with a friendly, local touch.



Art you can wear

Marshpuppy

Marshpuppy is now online, bringing Bluffton's wit, wildlife and Lowcountry charm to life through hand-drawn apparel. Local artist and marsh enthusiast Robyn Carter transforms gators, grits and everyday coastal quirks into tees with real personality, each starting as one of her original sketches.



Color, pattern, personality

Rachel Loomis Living *Tanger 1, Bluffton*

This colorful new boutique is packed with bold patterns, bright décor and giftable finds from the creator of Beaufort Belle. It's creative, cheerful and perfect for anyone who likes their home to feel a little more "them."





Kids' clothes made easy

The Children's Place

Tanger 2, Bluffton

A new stop for parents who need cute, durable, affordable clothes fast. Newborn through size 14, easy mix-and-match options and zero stress. Simple as that.

Relaxation from the top down

Demure Head Spa *South Island Square, Hilton Head*

Hilton Head's newest escape is all about the scalp. Demure Head Spa offers Korean-style head spa rituals, detoxifying shampoos, gentle head baths, massages and zero-gravity pedicures. Add facials, lashes and waxing, and you've got a soothing little world of its own.



COMING SOON



Start Beaching *Delivery, Hilton Head Island*

Starting in March, Start Beaching will deliver electric-powered beach carts straight to your door or favorite beach access. Stocked with chairs, a cooler and a sun shade, their Beachie wagons promise smoother trips across the sand and far fewer pre-beach negotiations.





The Three Muses of Bluffton

Hilton Head Village, Bluffton

Coming soon to Hilton Head Village (the Marshalls plaza), this boutique will offer dancewear, alterations, sewing classes and custom designs. It's a welcoming spot for dancers, makers and anyone who loves a little artistry in their everyday life.

Mountain High Outfitters

Tanger 2, Bluffton

Opening soon at Tanger 2, Mountain High Outfitters will bring trusted outdoor brands, helpful staff and gear for the whole family. Whether you hike, paddle or just like comfy trail shoes, this place is shaping up to be your new go-to.



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2026 Wellness Forecast

HOW SMARTER TOOLS AND PERSONALIZED CARE ARE SHAPING HEALTH IN THE YEAR AHEAD

STORY BY LANCE HANLIN



Health in 2026 looks less like a checklist and more like a conversation: one that's personal, proactive and rooted in real life. Across the Lowcountry, physicians and wellness experts are moving away from one-size-fits-all care and toward smarter tools, earlier answers and treatment plans shaped around the individual. From primary care and mental health to vision, mobility, dentistry and cancer detection, innovation is meeting intention in ways that feel practical, not overwhelming. This year's wellness forecast brings together insights from trusted local specialists who are on the front lines of that change. They're embracing technologies that catch problems sooner, reduce unnecessary interventions and help patients stay active, confident and engaged at every stage of life. The takeaway is simple. Wellness isn't just about living longer. It's about living better, with care that feels informed, human and tailored to you.





Technology that supports human connection

Mental health care in 2026 is balancing innovation with intention, using technology to enhance care without replacing the human connection at its core. ***Dr. Patrick Wiita***, who is triple board-certified in adult psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry and forensic psychiatry, says the year ahead will be defined by careful, patient-centered use of emerging tools.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? Artificial intelligence (AI) is everywhere, and possibly already in your doctor's office. The current focus in the mental health field is in using AI to streamline administrative tasks, such as clinical documentation, so that your doctor or therapist can be as present as possible during your session. The technology is still quite a ways off from being useful for making diagnostic or treatment decisions.

Are there any new technologies you're excited about? AI-enhanced virtual reality exposure therapy for the treatment of phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other anxiety disorders is likely to become more affordable and widely available. This technology has shown promise in the research setting, particularly with military veterans, for many years and combines highly personalized technology-driven care with the currently most effective evidence-based therapeutic strategies.



FACING FEAR Virtual reality exposure therapy (VRET) uses immersive, controlled VR environments to help patients safely face feared situations such as heights, flying, spiders or combat scenarios as an effective treatment for phobias, PTSD and anxiety disorders.



A smarter path to midlife health

Primary care is shifting in ways that feel more personal and more empowering, especially for women navigating midlife changes. ***Dr. Stephen Luther***, a board-certified internal medicine specialist and founder of Symbios Health, says 2026 will bring long-awaited clarity to women's health and promising tools in regenerative care.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? As 2026 dawns, women's health is entering a brighter era, with groundbreaking FDA updates clearing decades of fear around hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for menopause — removing outdated warnings and spotlighting its power to ease hot flashes, boost bone health, sharpen memory and even guard against heart disease and cognitive decline, all while showing no increased cancer risk for appropriate candidates. We are championing this shift through our SymbiosStrongHer Movement, empowering women to reclaim their vitality by understanding their unique hormonal, metabolic, nutritional, strength and mobility needs.

Are there any new technologies you're excited about? In 2026 a natural, cutting-edge wave is sweeping beauty and intimacy — using nothing more than your own blood and a small amount of your own fat. We are helping patients turn back the clock with platelet-rich plasma (PRP) and autologous adipose-derived stem cells (ADSC). These gentle, in-office treatments deliver smoother, glowing skin, fuller facial and body contours and thicker, healthier hair that looks completely natural— while quietly transforming sexual health by restoring confidence, comfort, stronger performance for men and renewed sensation and pleasure for women.



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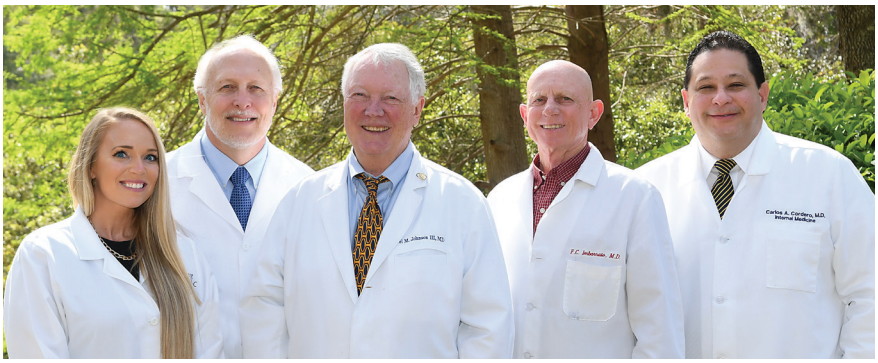


Here's to a Happy & Healthy New Year!

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A physician-owned practice, Main Street Medical has a large team of health care professionals able to provide a wide variety of services that include both primary and urgent care. In addition to adult and pediatric care, the team also provides women's care, x-rays, laboratory services, medication assistance, and employment physicals.



(from left) Nicole Clegg, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, Van Gauby, MD, Joel Johnson III, MD, Franics Imbarrato, MD, Carlos Cordero, MD

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Smarter tools, earlier answers

Oncology is entering a period of rapid innovation, with technology reshaping how cancers are detected, monitored and treated. ***Dr. Gary W. Thomas***, a hematologist and oncologist at the Nancy N. and J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion at St. Joseph's/Candler – Bluffton Campus, says 2026 will bring meaningful steps toward earlier diagnoses and more personalized care.



What trends do you see coming in 2026? Advances in AI. Though my practice does not yet use AI, its use in the field of oncology has already and will continue to improve the interpretation of pathology slides and imaging. AI tools assist doctors with detecting and analyzing cancer cells in ways that can be challenging for the human eye alone to spot. The benefits will be increased accuracy and earlier diagnoses, which typically translate to more favorable patient outcomes. It's important to note that the healthcare industry as a whole is researching the safest and most effective ways to deploy AI in healthcare. AI models are also impacting cancer drug development and individualized patient treatment plans. AI models are being tested to predict patients' responses to drugs as well as in the areas of day-to-day clinical support and connecting oncology expertise to underserved communities. While still in the very early phases, I predict AI use in oncology may be the most important potential cancer-field breakthrough in my lifetime.

Are there any new technologies you're excited about? Circulating Tumor DNA (or ctDNA) testing. A personalized blood test that can be used to detect microscopic traces of cancer cells in the blood of an individual, which can be used to monitor for early recurrence of cancer much earlier than traditional radiographic imaging would allow. The test also can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of treatments, which could eliminate potentially unnecessary treatments for patients or determine the need to intensify necessary chemotherapy treatments. Prospective clinical trials are currently underway, and while the test can detect for any cancer, it is most used currently with colorectal cancer patients. In short, the net benefits to patients would be earlier diagnosis of disease recurrence, thus better long-term outcomes, thanks to a lesser need for taxing treatments and radiation exposure, which also lower overall patient costs. I predict a massive expansion of the use of this technology over the next five years.



CATCHING CANCER SOONER
Circulating tumor DNA testing offers earlier, more precise detection of cancer recurrence, giving patients a better chance at effective treatment with fewer unnecessary therapies.



Clearer vision through personalized care

Eye care is becoming increasingly individualized as patients look for treatment plans tailored to their specific needs, concerns and goals. ***Dr. Scott K. Schultz***, senior partner at Bishop Eye Center and a specialist in laser cataract surgery and glaucoma, says that connection and precision will shape the year ahead.



SMARTER DATA, BETTER VISION: Designed for exceptional precision, Cassini Ambient provides real-time anatomical data that supports more accurate lens alignment and improved visual results.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? I predict that in 2026 the trend of patients seeking personalized eye care will continue, with treatment plans specifically tailored to their individual needs, concerns and goals. To make this possible, it's essential to engage with patients and truly understand their unique eye care challenges. Whether developing treatment plans for conditions like cataracts, glaucoma, dry eye syndrome or offering solutions such as contact lenses, glasses or laser vision correction, communication plays a critical role in delivering effective care. Equally important is having a team of dedicated eye care professionals working together to support each patient's journey. We are proud to offer a team of professionals who not only provide expert care but also take the time to listen to and understand our patients. With state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, ongoing education and years of experience, we are able to create customized treatment plans that deliver targeted, meaningful results — all within a friendly and comfortable clinical environment. We are committed to treating each patient as an individual, exceeding expectations and building lasting trust with the people of the Lowcountry. We want our friends and neighbors to turn to us for all their eye care needs.

Are there any new technologies you're excited about? Innovation continues to drive the exceptional care we provide to our community. In 2023 Cassini — a global leader in surgical precision — selected Bishop Eye Center as one of only three centers worldwide to help develop its advanced iris-registration software. This technology precisely maps each patient's iris and scleral anatomy, enabling exceptionally accurate alignment of astigmatism-correcting intraocular lenses during cataract surgery. Building on this collaboration, Cassini has now chosen Bishop Eye to be the only center in the world to assist in developing Cassini's next major innovation: their groundbreaking Ambient ophthalmic device. Through this collaborative partnership our early research and clinical insights are helping shape the future of ophthalmology, driving progress that leads to more accurate surgical planning and better outcomes for our patients.



START FRESH

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Heather Hinshelwood, MD

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Heather Hinshelwood, MD is passionate about healthy living and guiding patients toward informed decisions. She focuses on non-surgical care options for individuals seeking alternatives to joint replacement.

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Precision care for every generation



Urology is evolving quickly, with advances in robotics and minimally invasive techniques, helping patients of all ages recover faster and maintain better long-term health. ***Dr. Maurizio Buscarini***, a board-certified and fellowship-trained urologist with Beaufort Memorial Urology Specialists in Beaufort and Okatie, says 2026 will bring major steps forward in surgical innovation and preventive care.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? One major trend is the expansion of single-port robotic urological surgery into non-academic medical centers, including community hospitals. This minimally invasive approach, which is used to treat prostate, bladder and kidney conditions, requires only one incision. It offers significant benefits for patients, such as less pain, quicker recovery and an earlier return to daily activities. In some cases, patients are even able to go home the same day. Another important shift is the growing focus on proactive healthcare for adults over 80. As people live longer, many older adults remain active and healthier than previous generations, which creates opportunities for preventive urologic care and surgical treatments once considered off-limits. Our population is aging, but overall health is improving. We must be prepared to meet the evolving needs of this demographic.

Are there any new technologies that you're excited about? The single-port robotic system is one of the most exciting advancements in our field. It represents a new standard of care because it allows procedures to be done through a single incision while reducing complications and improving precision. Focal therapy is also gaining momentum as a minimally invasive option for patients with non-aggressive prostate cancer. By targeting only the cancerous tissue and preserving healthy portions of the gland, patients experience fewer side effects than with more aggressive treatments. Many can undergo the procedure on an outpatient basis. We are also seeing meaningful growth in kidney-sparing techniques and the broader movement toward outpatient surgery for cancer patients. These approaches help maintain kidney function and significantly shorten recovery times. Advances in minimally invasive kidney stone treatment are another exciting area. Miniaturized scopes and vacuum-assisted systems such as ClearPetra are transforming care by delivering excellent results with far less trauma to the body. These newer techniques have largely replaced older procedures that required larger incisions and much longer recovery periods.



LESS PAIN, FASTER RECOVERY
Single-port robotic urological surgery uses one small incision to perform complex procedures like prostatectomies, kidney surgeries and bladder surgery, with robotic instruments and a camera passing through a single port, offering less pain, faster recovery and shorter hospital stays.



A healthier smile through smarter tools

Dental care is entering a more precise and preventive era, driven by artificial intelligence, digital design and a deeper understanding of how oral health shapes overall wellness. ***Dr. Susan Couzens***, DMD, of Couzens Dental, says 2026 will bring a more integrated and personalized approach to keeping the mouth and body healthy.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? Advancements in dental AI will dramatically increase our accuracy in diagnosing cavities, gum disease and bite issues. Real-time analysis of radiographs, 3D scans and patient health data will help us catch problems earlier and with greater precision. CEREC technology is also evolving. It now uses smarter margin-detection algorithms, faster milling and an expanded range of ceramics and hybrid materials to create natural-looking inlays, onlays, veneers and multi-unit restorations in a single visit. These tools are encouraging dentists to pursue deeper training in digital workflows, AI-guided design and advanced restorative techniques to ensure the highest-quality outcomes. Salivary testing will also become a key part of dental care in 2026. These tests identify oral pathogens, inflammatory markers and systemic-risk indicators, allowing for earlier, more personalized preventive care. Combined with our growing understanding of the mouth-body connection, including its links to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and autoimmune conditions, dentistry is becoming more integrated, preventive and holistic than ever before.

Are there any new technologies you are excited about? We have used CEREC technology since 2020 and continue to expand our digital capabilities with the support of a certified laboratory technician. We also incorporate state-of-the-art salivary testing to provide early warnings that help patients maintain both oral and systemic health. These tools allow us to deliver restorative care with exceptional precision while supporting long-term wellness.



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— Jim C. (Patient)



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Practical tools for healthier living

After more than 45 years in practice, ***Dr. Joel Johnson III*** has seen medicine evolve in remarkable ways. At Main Street Medical, he says 2026 will bring even more accessible treatments and a new level of patient engagement driven by everyday technology.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? We expect to see much wider availability of GLP-1 medications. Prices are coming down, access is improving, and the need is tremendous. These medications aren't just for weight loss or diabetes management. They can be truly life-changing. We're learning more each year about additional benefits, including improvements in sleep apnea, cholesterol and blood pressure. As research grows and availability expands, I think more people will be able to use these tools to improve their overall health.

Are there any new technologies you're excited about? Technology is making its way into everyday medicine in a big way. Wearable devices are one of the most exciting changes. Apple Watches and Oura Rings now track everything from heart rate and blood pressure to EKG readings. Activity apps offer workout guidance and monitor progress, including a modified VO2 max test that gives a quick snapshot of cardiovascular fitness. The sleep-tracking features are incredibly useful. I check mine every morning. These devices are fun to use, but more importantly, they give patients real information that can help guide healthier habits.



DOCTOR APPROVED: Dr. Joel Johnson III of Main Street Medical champions wearable devices like the Apple Watch and Oura Ring, which help patients keep a closer eye on everything from heart rhythms to sleep quality.





CLARITY IN CARE
The SUREcore Needle is a specialized, single-use prostate biopsy system that captures larger, cleaner and more intact tissue samples than standard needles, reducing fragmentation and crush artifacts to support more accurate cancer diagnosis.

Earlier answers, fewer disruptions

Urology is entering a new era where smarter tools are helping physicians detect cancer earlier while minimizing stress and unnecessary procedures for patients. ***Dr. Eric Gwynn***, a board-certified urologist at Novant Health Coastal Carolina Medical Center, says 2026 will continue pushing care toward greater precision and confidence.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? We're moving toward a future where cancer detection is smarter, more precise and less disruptive to patients' lives. In urology, that means using advanced imaging and tools that let us be selective about when and where we biopsy or treat cancer. The goal isn't simply to find disease; it's to do it with fewer procedures, less uncertainty and more confidence in the results. That shift is especially important in community-focused hospitals like ours, where getting clear answers faster can reduce anxiety and help people move forward with the right plan.

Are there any new technologies you're excited about? I'm very excited about a new prostate biopsy needle system called SUREcore, which we've recently introduced here. I had the opportunity to help evaluate this next-generation biopsy method through clinical trials, and I've seen how it improves what matters most — the quality of the tissue we collect. Biopsy may sound routine, but the tiny samples we collect drive every decision that follows. This new system helps us gather cleaner, more complete tissue, which leads to more accurate results, fewer repeat biopsies and better information to choose the right treatment for each individual patient. It's a small change in the procedure, but it can make a big difference in someone's diagnosis and peace of mind. I was also invited to share our experience at the American Urological Association's 2025 Annual Meeting in Las Vegas. Seeing how this technology is gaining interest nationwide reinforces how meaningful it can be for patients. The best part is that people in our community can now access this level of technology without having to travel far from home.



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Built for longevity and movement

Wellness in 2026 is shifting away from reactive care and toward strategies that help people stay active, mobile and independent for longer. ***Dr. Heather Hinshelwood*** of The Fraum Center says the year ahead will continue to emphasize prevention, restoration and personalized support for long-term health.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? In 2026 I expect a continued shift toward proactive wellness that focuses on longevity, prevention and mobility. More people want care that helps them stay active and independent instead of simply reacting to pain or injury. This aligns with our Relieve, Restore, Revitalize model about helping patients live the healthiest and most vibrant life possible. I am especially excited about the continued growth of restorative medicine. These approaches give patients new options to support their body's natural repair processes while addressing the root contributors to pain and movement limitations. At Fraum Health we evaluate each patient as a whole person to determine whether these strategies may support their goals. This will remain a key part of our 2026 plan.



MOTION IS MEDICINE
Proactive, personalized care is helping locals stay mobile, confident and fully engaged in the activities they love at every stage of life.

Are there any new technologies you're excited about? New noninvasive technologies are becoming much more precise and patient focused. I look forward to advances in laser-based therapies, improved spinal decompression systems and tools that enhance posture, gait and recovery. These technologies help us deliver more personalized and effective care while improving comfort and outcomes for patients. A major trend is the increased use of individualized, data-driven insights. Wearables and advanced diagnostics are giving people a clearer understanding of how lifestyle, stress, movement and sleep affect their long-term health. This helps patients take an active role in their wellness journey and strengthens the collaborative approach we use at Fraum Health. Wellness in 2026 will be defined by prevention, personalization and meaningful patient partnership.

Frames with personality, lenses with precision

Eyewear in 2026 is about contrast and customization, pairing bold style statements with smarter lens technology. ***Billy Simmons,*** LDO at Eyeland Optique, says the year ahead invites people to think of eyewear as both fashion and function.

What trends do you see emerging in 2026? Spring eyewear trends are all about contrast — bold geometric shapes on one end and minimal metal or acetate styles on the other. It's the perfect season for building an eyewear wardrobe, and there's no reason you can't enjoy both. On days when you want to stand out, bold geometric frames are ideal. Think large angular silhouettes inspired by the '60s and '70s: oversized squares, octagons and dramatic butterfly shapes. For a more understated look, minimal metals and acetates offer clean, classic simplicity. They're far from boring, often featuring unique finishes and rich, subtle colors. Another key look for 2026 is the return of the oval shape — timeless, flattering and easy to wear.

Are there any new technologies you are excited about? The world of AI is driving major advancements in prescription lenses, especially progressive designs. By analyzing millions of lens prescriptions, designers can create wider peripheral viewing zones, smoother transitions and larger reading areas. When we combine these AI-enhanced designs with the precise measurements we take in-office after choosing your frame, you get the best vision possible, with minimal distortion, compared to basic progressive lenses.



FASHION, MEET FUNCTION
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Sharper vision, smarter aesthetics

Eye care is becoming more precise, more personal and more holistic as advanced surgical tools merge with aesthetic technologies that support both vision and confidence. ***Dr. Jane Kokinakis***, a board-certified ophthalmologist at Beaufort Eye Center, says 2026 will continue pushing the field toward individualized care.

What trends do you see coming in 2026? In 2026 we expect eye care to continue moving toward even greater precision and personalization. Cataract surgery will keep advancing with minimally invasive techniques, next-generation surgical platforms and state-of-the-art lens designs that sharpen vision at every distance — near, intermediate and far. In eye wear, oversized but well-balanced frames are here to stay, joined by dramatic, non-traditional shapes that bring a fresh artistic edge. Lightweight, minimal designs like rimless styles will continue trending, and color palettes will lean soft and sophisticated with mint greens, lavenders, blush tones and earthy neutrals. Blue-light filtration and digital eye-strain protection will remain essential as screen time continues to shape daily life.

Are there any new technologies you're excited about? Absolutely — it's an energizing time in our field. We are thrilled to expand into advanced physician-directed aesthetics, offering state-of-the-art treatments that support both eye health and overall skin rejuvenation. Our state-of-the-art dry eye therapeutics now include IPL (intense pulsed light) technology, which improves tear function while also addressing pigmentation and vascular concerns. We're also introducing triLift, a breakthrough technology that provides a face-lift-like effect with no injections, no surgery and no downtime. These innovations let us care for patients more holistically — eyes, skin, confidence and well-being, all in one place.



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A GENTLER GLOW Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) offers a non-invasive way to ease dry eye discomfort while brightening and smoothing the skin. It's also an effective option for gentle, targeted facial hair removal.



Move well, live well

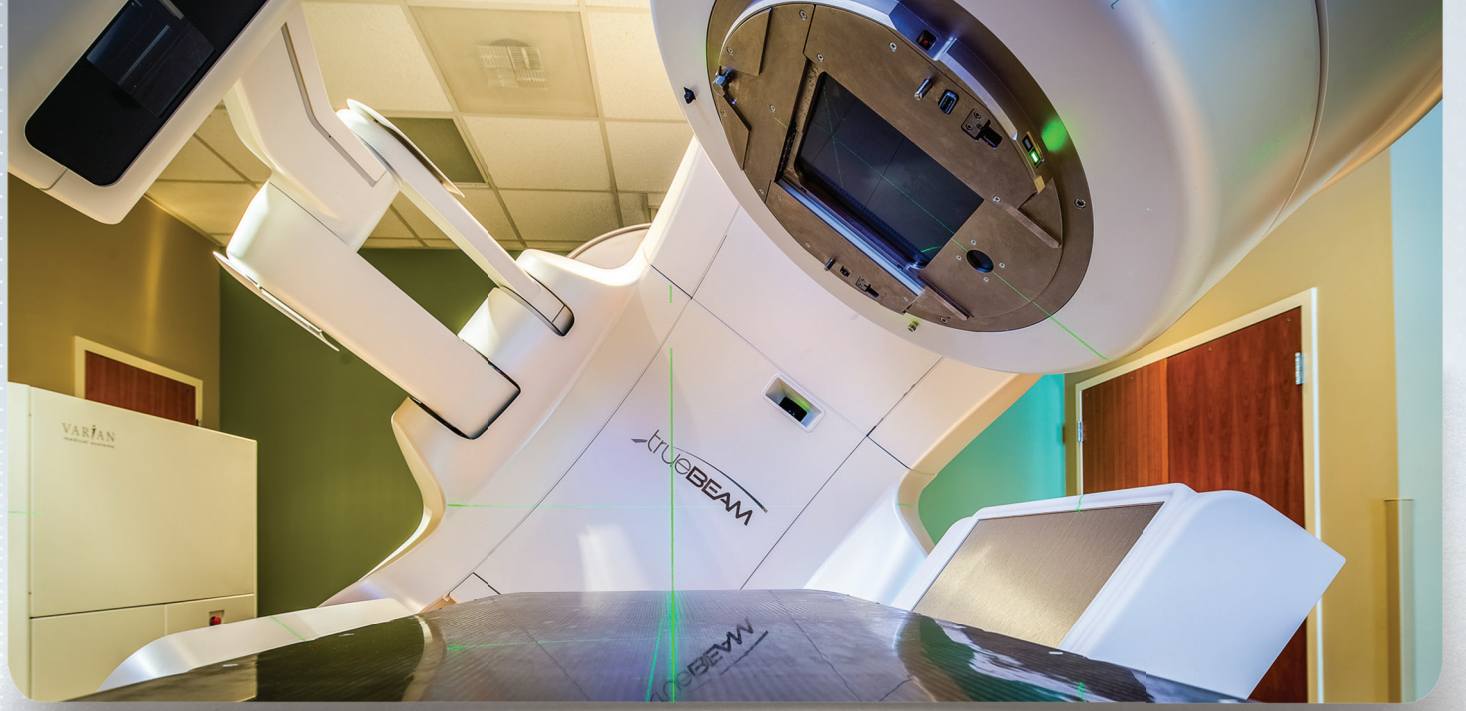
Staying mobile and pain-free matters in the Lowcountry, especially if you spend your days swinging a golf club, chasing pickleballs, biking the island paths or simply enjoying time outside. Many locals want to stay active without turning to invasive treatments. ***Dr. Ken Horup*** of Discover Specific Chiropractic, a board-certified neuropathy specialist, says the future of spine and nerve care is moving toward smarter, more personalized solutions that help people keep doing what they love.

What trends do you expect to shape neuropathy and spine care in 2026? High-powered laser therapy is becoming more precise and clinically effective. It allows us to achieve deeper penetration into the body to improve circulation, reduce inflammation and support nerve regeneration in ways we couldn't a decade ago. I'm looking forward to the ways we can promote faster healing throughout the body. I also enjoy educating patients on the purpose of different light therapies, how they function and the most effective ways to use them to treat their condition.

What new technologies are you excited about? In 2026 I see a strong shift toward precision-based conservative care. More people are looking for natural, non-invasive ways to handle conditions like neuropathy, disc issues and spinal degeneration that are specific to them. There's less interest in one-size-fits-all treatments and more focus on personalized plans for regenerative health. These often include lifestyle changes, nervous system support and metabolic guidance that come together in one customized plan. People are becoming more proactive in their wellness, not reactive. They're more intentional about staying healthy, mobile and strong as they age and want plans tailored specifically to them.



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The next wave

Much like the tides, change never stops in the Lowcountry. Meet three locals who are helping define what that change will look like

STORY BY BARRY KAUFMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA STAFF

In a place like the South Carolina Lowcountry, change is as inevitable as it is constant. Even before the first human footprint was pressed into the pluff mud, this area was undergoing daily metamorphosis with tides creating and erasing creeks, streams and islets from wrinkles left in the Earth by glaciers.

That pace has only accelerated over the last half century as developers began coaxing this land into community. Each home, business, golf course and house of worship put its mark on the landscape.

Spurred on by development, the landscape continues to shift. An argument could be made either way on whether this helps or hurts, but as long as there are people guiding that growth in the right direction, we can feel at peace with our surroundings. As the next wave approaches, meet three locals helping shape it.

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Stan Rogers

This scientist brings a lifetime of river knowledge to safeguarding Bluffton's waterways

Since its inception, the May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee, known to most as WAPAC, has welcomed Bluffton residents who want to play a part in preserving the river's pristine beauty, water quality and shellfish. Many have answered the call over the years, each contributing time and talent. But only a handful of members bring the perspective Stan Rogers offers as both a longtime member and now its chair.

"I grew up in Hampton County, but Bluffton was my backyard," he said. "During the summer I grew up on the river, fishing and shrimping and doing all that fun stuff."

Informed by a love of the water cultivated on sunny summer days, Rogers pursued a career in fish and wildlife biology at Clemson University. After earning his undergraduate degree, he worked as a consultant, helping private landowners and industry manage their land.

During this time, he was fortunate to land a contract and eventually his first federal position with the Air Force. As one of the largest landowners in the country, with more than 25 million acres in its portfolio, the Department of Defense regularly seeks experienced wildlife management professionals. The government job took Rogers to Colorado, where he worked with Air Force Space Command as a biologist and program manager, helping ensure compliance with environmental laws across the continental United States, Hawaii, Alaska and abroad. A later move brought him to Washington, D.C., where he worked for nearly a decade with NOAA and agencies around the world to help enforce the Endangered Species Act.

After 12 years in the mountains of Colorado, this Lowcountry native was finally back on the water with NOAA. That return only underscored how much he missed the rivers of his youth.

"In my life journey, it was a question of, 'How can I get home?'" he said. "Then here came this amazing, perfect job, and in 2019 I was lucky enough to move back to Bluffton. That has been a dream come true."



That dream job was working for NOAA, managing Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, 12,000 acres of protected ocean about 40 nautical miles from Tybee Island, where right whales, dolphins and sea turtles find refuge. Along with year-round opportunities for fishing, diving and boating, the sanctuary supports important marine research, education and outreach.

"We do surveys, research and long-term monitoring of offshore habitats, along with compliance work," Rogers said.

His work at Gray's Reef brought him home, and he immediately set out to give back.

"When I moved back to Bluffton, one of the first things I wanted to do was get involved," he said. "Lo and behold, I saw an announcement that they were looking for members for WAPAC."

The seven-person committee, made up of citizens with backgrounds in wildlife, fisheries or watershed management, advises the town on rainfall and weather patterns, stormwater management and development, all with the goal of preserving the May River's natural beauty and important shellfish, including oysters. Having grown up on the river before spending decades in fisheries and wildlife management, Rogers chairs the committee with both experience and heart.

"What makes Bluffton and the Lowcountry so special? It's our communities, our culture and our people, but the rivers, estuaries and salt marshes are the backdrop to all of that," he said. "I'm really proud to contribute to the strategic plan through WAPAC and advise the Town of Bluffton on smart growth."



HOME WATERS After a career spent protecting waterways from Colorado to Washington, D.C., Stan Rogers found his way home to the May River in 2019. Now chair of Bluffton's May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee, he brings lived experience and scientific expertise to preserving the waterways that shaped his childhood and continue to define the Lowcountry's culture, community and future.







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Just do one little thing

No one needs to tell Stan Rogers that Bluffton's recent history has been one of explosive growth. Coming from Hampton County as a child, he remembers the one-square-mile town of two-lane roads Bluffton once was. Returning as a seasoned wildlife management professional gave him a different perspective on that growth.

"Every time I came back, there would be something new," he said. "You look at U.S. 278. It was a two-lane road, and now it's four lanes and a bridge. All kinds of things happened over time. All this progress makes our community thrive, but on the natural resource side, there are tradeoffs."

He credits the Town of Bluffton's strategic plan with guiding development thoughtfully while respecting the natural environment. But he adds that residents still have a role to play.

"People love the place they live and want to keep it natural, vibrant, clean and healthy," he said. "As our community grows, there's more opportunity for action. Even little things matter. Picking up that bottle floating by while you're out on the sandbar. If everyone does something small, collectively we do something big. Everyone can do their own part."

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Jeff Netzinger

This civil engineer applies science and strategy to protecting Hilton Head Island's shoreline

No one needs to tell the Town of Hilton Head Island how drastically the landscape can change. As an island that some geologists would describe as more of a sandbar than an island, Hilton Head has been under constant siege from erosion since the Holocene Epoch. But when you have found a place as special as this to call home, preserving every square foot becomes essential.

Seeing this wave coming, the Town took the prescient step of beginning regular beach renourishment in the 1990s. Spreading millions of pounds of fill sand from offshore sources onto local beaches helped protect them from wave action, allowing continued enjoyment for residents and visitors. A second major renourishment was completed in 2006, bookended by smaller fills and restorations in the years before and after.

When the Town revisited beach renourishment in 2025, responsibility for overseeing the project fell to Engineering and Public Projects Director, Jeff Netzinger.

"I'm a civil engineer, and I practiced in the private sector for 20 years before coming to the town in 2017," Netzinger said. "My background is in transportation and stormwater. I didn't have experience with the beach. Some folks here at the Town left, and I was available as an engineer. But I understood the concepts behind beach renourishment and the value of keeping beaches nourished from a resilience standpoint."

Helping fill in the finer points of his knowledge was Christopher Creed with Foth-Olsen, the Jacksonville-based firm leading the renourishment project.

"I was fortunate that he was available to further educate me because Foth-Olsen has been helping us take care of



our beaches for 35 years," Netzinger said. "I've learned a lot. It's remarkable how many times I've been asked to give presentations to various stakeholder groups, so I've become well versed in what's been going on."

As crews pump sand onto the beaches, working one stretch at a time around the island, Netzinger remains both on-site overseeing construction and out in the community helping residents understand the need for renourishment.

"In the private sector I wasn't as directly plugged into construction because most of my work was done by the time plans were released, so this has been really rewarding," he said. "You get a lot more job satisfaction when you actually see the results of those engineering efforts."

Those efforts are paying off with beaches that protect the shoreline, attract visitors and provide habitat for the wildlife that calls Hilton Head home.

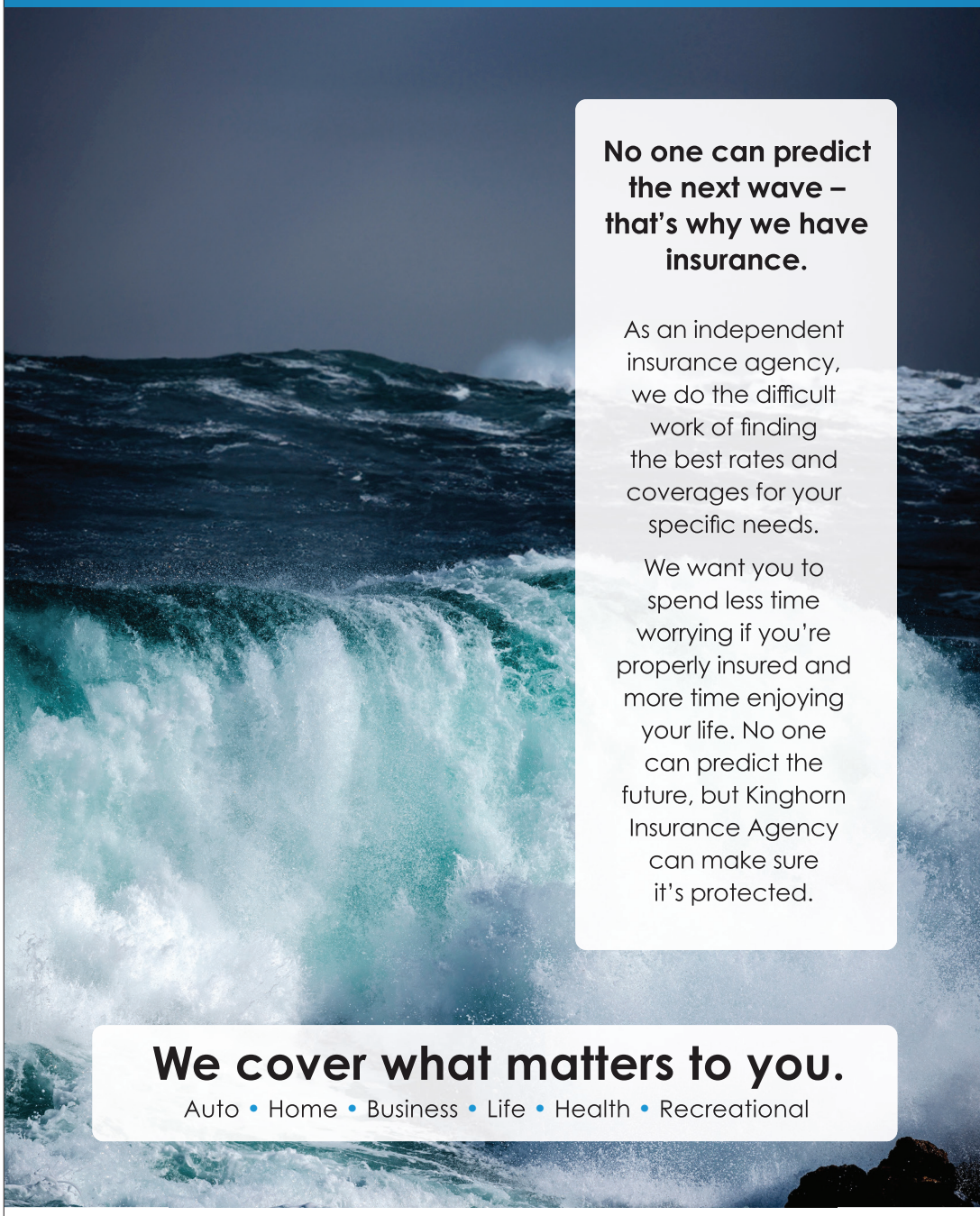
"These beaches are our first line of defense when it comes to storm surge and wave action, and they're a fundamental component of our economy here on Hilton Head," Netzinger said.



©FOTH-OLSEN

HOLDING THE LINE As Hilton Head Island's director of engineering and public projects, Jeff Netzinger is overseeing the latest chapter in the island's long-running beach renourishment program. With a civil engineering background in stormwater and infrastructure, he helps safeguard the shoreline that serves as the community's first line of defense against erosion, storms and rising seas, while preserving the beaches that define island life.

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Our beaches are open

The numbers behind the Town of Hilton Head Island's $47.5 million beach renourishment project are staggering. Across more than 46,500 feet of shoreline, workers will pump nearly 2.2 million cubic yards of sand from offshore sources. The work is staggered across five zones, moving at a rate of about 200 to 300 feet per day.

With so much activity underway, it's easy to assume favorite swimming and surfing spots will be off-limits, but Netzinger wants to put those worries to rest.

"When people hear we're renourishing the beach, they assume the entire shoreline is closed," he said. "If you're in Ohio planning a trip next spring and see a beach renourishment project scheduled, you might think that means the beach is closed and you should wait a year. That's just not true."

"It's a moving operation that runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and at any given point only about 1,000 to 1,200 feet of beach is closed," he said.

Rest easy knowing that even your favorite stretch of sand will likely be closed for only a day or two and will reopen more beautiful than ever.



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Rob Merchant

This longtime planner is helping Beaufort County prepare for change before it arrives

Everyone has a calling, but not all of them shout. For Rob Merchant, Beaufort County's planning and zoning director, his penchant for planning only became clear after he had already earned a degree in industrial design.

"I always say it's unrealistic for people to know what they want to do with their lives at 18," Merchant said with a laugh. "I grew up in an urban, walkable environment, and before I was able to articulate why, I knew I really enjoyed that kind of place. I began to learn there was a whole field of planning, and that's when I stumbled on a book called *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, by Jane Jacobs."

Jacobs' influential work outlined how city planning could be about more than tearing down old things and building new ones, showing how thoughtful plans could benefit both the environment and the people who live there. Merchant was hooked and changed careers after earning a degree in planning. But in Pennsylvania's rust belt, opportunities were limited.

"I wanted to move somewhere with more dynamic growth, so I moved here in 1999," he said.

At the time, Beaufort County was just beginning its period of rapid expansion, and Merchant found himself with a front-row seat to the change.

"When you're in a lower-growth area, you're doing less planning and more grant writing and special projects," he said. "In an area like this, the planning aspect really comes to the forefront."

Working for Beaufort County, Merchant helped thread the needle of responsible development, balancing economic realities with environmental impact. He prioritized citizen input as the county advanced its comprehensive plan, implemented policies to protect valuable natural resources, improve the built environment and work more cooperatively with the county's neighbors.



Today much of his focus is on resilience and anticipating what comes next.

"We want to be armed with information about sea-level rise, climate change and how those things impact our communities," Merchant said. "That's why resilience is built into our comprehensive plan."

That information comes from many sources, including long-term data from Charleston Harbor and Fort Pulaski, showing more than a foot of sea level rise since the 1930s, as well as local observations of more frequent coastal flooding, with water sometimes overtopping the seawall at Beaufort's Waterfront Park during tropical storms and king tides.

"Those events have consequences," he said. "They start as nuisances, but over time they can create real public safety problems. Rather than seeing climate change and sea-level rise as a single catastrophic event, it's more accurate to think of them as a series of small issues that add up."

Rather than reacting after the fact, Merchant's approach emphasizes planning ahead. His department is reviewing sections of the comprehensive plan, coordinating across county departments and preparing for a public review process in early 2026.

"The idea isn't a full rewrite," he said. "It's an opportunity to see where course corrections make sense and where new policies may be needed."



FORWARD THINKING As Beaufort County's planning and zoning director, Rob Merchant helps guide one of South Carolina's fastest-growing regions with an eye toward long-term resilience. Grounded in data, community input and a respect for place, his work translates rising tides, flooding patterns and growth pressures into practical planning decisions that shape how Beaufort County lives, builds and prepares for the future.





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Future focused

As Beaufort County's sustained growth collides with the realities of rising sea levels, Merchant knows his work will only become more complex. He is already looking ahead at ways to manage those challenges.

He is exploring ways to streamline the development review process, providing clearer and faster guidance to developers while maintaining the integrity of the comprehensive plan. Internally, he has helped to assemble a cross-departmental group to assess how proposed changes may affect county operations.

"The state of South Carolina is a good environment for planning," Merchant said. "Local governments are required to update their comprehensive plan every 10 years and conduct a five-year review. We've done that work internally, and now we're working with the planning commission, which is ultimately responsible for the plan and the review of each chapter."

The next step will be public engagement in early 2026.

"This isn't a comprehensive plan rewrite," he said. "It's a chance to see if course corrections are needed and to introduce new policies that reflect where we are and where we're headed." LL



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HOW HILTON HEAD ISLAND, BLUFFTON, BEAUFORT AND PORT ROYAL ARE INVESTING IN RESILIENCE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN 2026

STORY BY AUDREY GEIB

Beaufort County continues to evolve as one of the Lowcountry's most dynamic regions, where rapid growth, environmental resilience and community investment shape nearly every decision local governments make. From strengthening stormwater systems and preserving coastlines to expanding parks, revitalizing historic spaces and building the infrastructure needed for the next generation, municipal leaders entered 2025 with major goals and delivered meaningful progress. Across Hilton Head Island, Bluffton, Beaufort and Port Royal, leaders have spent the past year advancing long-planned projects, repairing aging systems and investing in the facilities and public spaces on which residents rely. Their work reflects a shared commitment to protecting the character of life in the Lowcountry while preparing for the future. As the new year begins, the region's municipal leaders are ready to move forward with confidence following the successes of 2025.



©FOTH-OLSEN

SHAPING THE SHORE Pumps push new sand onto the beach at Pine Island, restoring key stretches of coastline as part of the island's multi-phase renourishment effort.

Hilton Head Island

INVESTING IN EVERYDAY EXCELLENCE

Hilton Head's vision for 2026 centers on strengthening the places locals use every day, from parks and shoreline to public facilities and roads. Town Manager Marc Orlando said that philosophy is driving the island's improvements for 2026.

"Great streets, great parks, great facilities to house the staff and serve the public has been our motto," Orlando said.



©FOTH-OLSEN

SAND MEETS STRATEGY Before-and-after photos show the impact beach renourishment has had at Fish Haul Beach, a favorite walking spot for locals.

Beach renourishment

Hilton Head's multi-phase beach renourishment will remain one of the town's largest and most visible undertakings in 2026 "Beach renourishment is absolutely critical," Orlando said, emphasizing the town's responsibility to preserve and protect its shoreline. "Hilton Head Island beaches are absolutely the front door to Hilton Head Island. And as I like to say, we're investing in what we value."

The $47.5 million project will place more than two million cubic yards of beach-compatible sand along five segments of the island's coast. Phase one, completed in late 2025, covered Port Royal (the Heel), Fish Haul and Pine Island. Phase two, encompassing Central Island, South Island and South Beach, is slated for completion in spring 2026.





©THE WILSON GROUP

NEW ARRIVAL Rendering shows the expanded terminal's roadway approach and inteior, designed to enhance the experience at Hilton Head Island Airport. Inside the expanded terminal new seating, jet-bridge gates and modern finishes elevate comfort for travelers.

Upgrades for the island's hometown airport

Airport Director Jon Rembold said the airport's ongoing improvements are meant to modernize the facility while preserving what he calls its "hometown airport" identity. The main focus is the terminal expansion, opening in April, which will include a larger TSA checkpoint, updated concessions, new gate seating and jet-bridge boarding.

"Everything will be completely brand new," Rembold said, noting additions such as a family restroom and a service-animal relief area.

Tree-removal work at both ends of the runway helps keep the airspace free of obstructions, aligning with FAA requirements and improving accessibility for pilots.

"We've had pilots actually take note of it," he said. "They're like, 'You guys are doing some great work.'"

The air-traffic control tower recently received federally funded upgrades, including a $300,000 FAA grant for new communications equipment and refreshed workspace features. Looking ahead, phase two will renovate the main building, bringing new baggage systems and improved rental-car areas.

Rembold said the improvements won't necessarily add new airlines but will strengthen the airport's appeal and "greatly enhance our ability to deliver that first-class experience." With more room and comfort, he said, the airport hopes to offer more flight options for residents and visitors.

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The award recipient will receive a $10,000 grant to bestow to a charitable organization or organizations based in CFL's service territory. The following groups of people are ineligible to receive the award: current board and staff of CFL, individuals who are paid staff of a nonprofit, and elected officials.

The Joan and Wade Webster Community Impact Award will be presented on March 18, 2026 at CFL's Annual Community Meeting, taking place at the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina.

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Stormwater & drainage



Orlando said stormwater remains one of Hilton Head's highest priorities, especially in areas where aging systems are vulnerable to tidal influence or heavy rainfall. He noted that these infrastructure investments are essential for long-term resilience.

The work includes major pump stations like the Wexford station, as well as maintaining ditches and canals across multiple jurisdictions. Orlando explained that every major storm event provides valuable insight into how water moves across the island, and those lessons directly shape the town's response and investment strategy.

"Our community members, our residents and our businesses deserve it," Orlando said. "That's why we collect the stormwater utility dollars — to reinvest back into the system." He added that this fiscal year's stormwater capital budget is more significant than in prior years, calling it a reflection of Town Council's commitment to resilience and long-term infrastructure needs.

Coastal Discovery Museum

Orlando said the Coastal Discovery Museum remains a key community asset because it operates on town-owned land, yet is managed and maintained by the museum itself. With its growing lineup of community events, from large gatherings like the Seafood Festival to its educational programs, the need for reinvestment was clear.

Improvements center on creating a barrier-free, safe and more polished environment, a direction Orlando described as part of the town's long-standing philosophy of stewardship.

The Town Council budgeted $450,000 for upgrades at the Mary Ann Peeples Pavilion. The town will replace light fixtures and fans and upgrade the pavilion's electrical system to support future programming. Additional lighting will highlight the oaks and brighten the pavilion's pathways. New hardscaping, patios, pathways and refreshed landscaping will enhance the event space and improve accessibility to the adjacent building and throughout the Camellia Garden. Further projects will update flooring and office spaces, address interior repairs to the Discovery Lab and complete structural repairs to the horse barn. Other improvements include gate and boardwalk repairs, well and field irrigation, fence repairs and HVAC upgrades.





©ONESTREET RESIDENTIAL

A PLACE TO CALL HOME A rendering of Northpoint, the 157-unit community set to bring attainable, island-based housing to Hilton Head's workforce.

Workforce housing

According to Orlando, the town remains fully committed to workforce housing, with major progress expected in 2026, including the launch of Hilton Head's first town-supported workforce housing community, Northpoint.

Breaking ground in January, Northpoint will include 157 multi-family units consisting of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. What makes the development especially notable, Orlando said, is its financing model. One Street Residential, the town's private development partner, secured an equity partner unlike any previous Town of Hilton Head project.

"RBC is the real estate developer's equity partner," he said. "It is the first-of-its-kind fund that RBC has created and invested in." Orlando called the partnership innovative, adding that the project reflects years of collaboration among the developer, community members, the town and RBC.

As construction begins at Northpoint, the town is simultaneously preparing its next workforce housing initiative. "We will bid very soon for our second workforce housing public-private partnership," Orlando said. The next site is a tract acquired by the town in the Muddy Creek neighborhood on Bryant Road. The goal is to establish a full neighborhood investment through another partnership model. While that project will take much of 2026 to advance — largely through developer selection and agreement-building — it signals a long-term, multi-site housing strategy for the island.

For Orlando, breaking ground at Northpoint marks an important moment both professionally and for the community.

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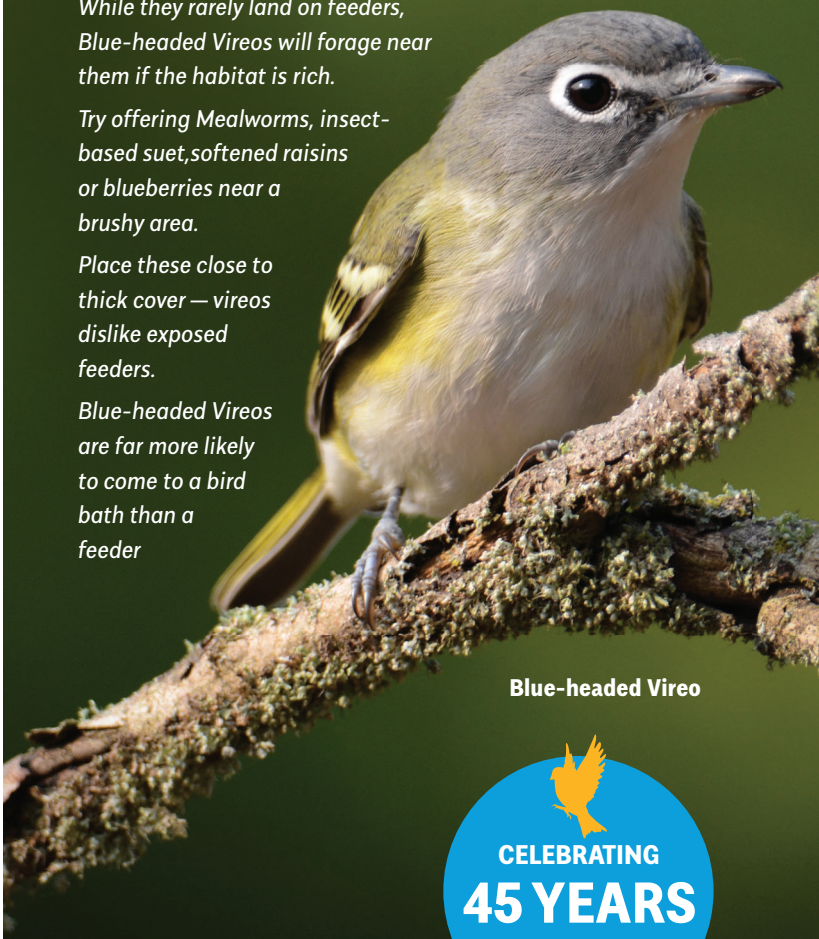
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Parks & recreation

Orlando said the town is making significant investments to modernize recreation opportunities by upgrading and creating new family-friendly spaces. He emphasized that these are not superficial upgrades but meaningful improvements designed for long-term community use. "I believe that great places have great streets and great public spaces," he said.

At Islanders Beach Park, improvements will enhance accessibility, safety and amenities at one of the island's most frequently visited shoreline spaces for locals. Patterson Park and Taylor Family Park are moving forward as new neighborhood anchors, each designed to support family use and community gatherings.

One of the largest recreation investments is an 18-court pickleball complex along Arrow Road near Crossings Park, created in direct response to resident demand. Orlando said the town has been intentional about scaling recreation to meet the needs of an increasingly active population.

At the same time, the town is preparing a substantial transformation of the Bristol Sports Arena, including redesigning the skate park, building a new pump track, replacing lighting and adding updated amenities. These improvements underscore the town's commitment to multi-generational use.





GAME ON Plans for an 18-court pickleball center along Arrow Road outline a community-focused addition to the town's recreation system. Bristol Sports Arena will receive a redesign including the building of a new pump track.

Road and pedestrian safety improvements

Orlando said one of the town's most meaningful recent transportation efforts is the safety project between Dillon Road and Beach City Road, a model he hopes to replicate elsewhere.

"That was a funding partnership with Beaufort County and a road improvement with SCDOT," he explained. "We obtained a significant portion of the funding from the county through traffic impact fees, and then we worked with DOT to improve their road."

Although the roadway itself is state-owned, the town took the lead in making the corridor safer for pedestrians.

"We're very proud of that, and I call it our first case study — a testament to future similar investments on heavily traveled roads," Orlando said.



Town operations

The Town of Hilton Head Island is making major moves to modernize town operations and prepare its organizational structure for the future. A key step is renovating 4 Office Way, the recently purchased former PNC Bank building the town is converting into functional space for key departments, including information technology and engineering. The project allows the town to consolidate operations, expand workspace and create a more efficient environment for staff and public services.

"We're proud to enhance and expand our footprint as a government campus throughout the island, and we're excited about that big picture," Orlando said.

Another project is the town's investment in a new Fire Rescue headquarters on Park Lane. The town purchased the building to meet the growing needs of Fire Rescue and to give the department the space and facilities required to meet modern standards. Orlando said ensuring that Fire Rescue has an appropriate headquarters is a clear priority.

"We need to have the right facilities for our fire department," he said.

Together these projects reflect what Orlando describes as a broader initiative to invest in the operations that keep Hilton Head running. The goal, he said, is to align facilities with the community's expectations and long-term needs.

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Bluffton

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR A BIGGER TOMORROW

Bluffton remains one of the fastest-growing corners of Beaufort County, and the town spent much of 2025 laying the groundwork for long-term stability. With major utility upgrades, development projects and continued momentum in business and residential growth, Bluffton's focus has been on preparing infrastructure and planning tools that can keep pace with its expanding population.



©AUDREY GEIB

RISING TO MEET DEMAND The 1.5-million-gallon water tower near the intersection of Buckwalter and Bluffton Parkway stands ready to meet the demands of Bluffton's expanding population.

Infrastructure investments

Sewer upgrades are underway through the Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority, which is investing $21 million to increase capacity at two major pump stations — one at Buck Island Road and Baylor Drive, and another at Malphrus Road and Pine Forest Drive. The improvements will boost flow rates by nearly 80% to support future neighborhoods, commercial areas and mixed-use districts across town. Addressing the region's population surge, the Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority also completed a $28 million water tower capable of holding 1.5 million gallons and supporting more than 11,000 customer connections. Together, these upgrades lay essential groundwork for Bluffton's continued growth.

Planning for growth

Bluffton's long-term planning continues to be guided by Blueprint Bluffton, the town's 2022 comprehensive plan. Recent adjustments, including a housing impact analysis and new tools to support workforce housing, reflect the town's effort to balance rapid development with housing accessibility and community character. In 2025 the town also advanced several policy and budget decisions to support infrastructure, drainage improvements and public spaces without increasing property taxes.

New development momentum

Development activity continues to shape Bluffton's next phase. Magnolia Square, a mixed-use community between May River Road and Jason Street, moved forward with a final development plan submitted for approval. The project aims to blend residential, commercial and community-oriented elements, part of a broader trend toward walkable, mixed-use hubs throughout the region. Similarly, Pepper Hall — a large multi-family development consisting of 25 buildings with 332 units, including a 7,000-square-foot amenity center — is under development along the Okatie River on a 20-acre site.



©AUDREY GEIB

GROWING ROOTS The future Magnolia Square site, where a new mixed-use neighborhood is planned to take shape along May River Road.

Community spaces & identity

Even with fast growth, Bluffton has continued investing in the parts of town that make it feel like classic, hometown Bluffton: parks, historic corridors, drainage improvements in older neighborhoods and public-space upgrades. These efforts echo the town's ongoing emphasis on livability, as Bluffton transitions from a small coastal town to a thriving community.



©AUDREY GEIB

HEALTH HUB RISING MUSC Health's Bluffton Medical Pavilion rises along Buckwalter Parkway, bringing expanded primary and specialty care to southern Beaufort County.

Medical expansion

Bluffton's healthcare infrastructure is undergoing a major upgrade, with multiple new medical campuses planned to meet the needs of its rising population. Beaufort Memorial Hospital's Bluffton Campus, approved by the state in March 2025, is moving forward as a 28-bed community hospital at the corner of Innovation Drive and Buckwalter Parkway. Expected to open in late 2026, the facility will include an emergency department, surgery center, cardiac catheterization lab, inpatient acute nursing unit and comprehensive imaging services. At the same time, MUSC Health is constructing a 54,000-square-foot medical pavilion in Bluffton, set to open this spring. The center will consolidate existing care services and introduce new specialties, including primary care for adults and children, oncology infusion services, pediatric urgent care, vascular care and sleep medicine, among others. On Parkside Drive, construction is underway on Novant Health's Washington Square Medical Park, a 40,000-square-foot medical office campus that will include a 10,000-square-foot freestanding emergency department. The facility will offer advanced diagnostics as well as primary care, cardiology and gastroenterology, with room for future expansion. Together these projects mark a turning point for Bluffton's medical landscape, reducing travel times, expanding emergency and specialty care access, and accommodating demographic growth by bringing comprehensive healthcare closer to home.



Beaufort

PRESERVING THE PAST; PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Historic, resilient and community-driven, Beaufort spent the past year advancing projects that honor its past while preparing the city for its future. From long-overdue drainage upgrades and landmark preservation efforts to major park improvements and a transformative new memorial, leaders focused on strengthening the places and stories that define Beaufort. The result is a year marked by progress, preservation and a renewed investment in the city's neighborhoods and waterfront.



WHERE HISTORY MEETS THE TIDE Framed by Palmetto trees and river views, Beaufort's waterfront tells a story of resilience, preservation and a city preparing thoughtfully for what comes next.



©DON TROIANI

FIRST IN THE FIGHT The First South Carolina Volunteers of African Descent was the Union Army's first Black regiment, formed in 1862 from formerly enslaved men in South Carolina's Sea Islands, making them pioneers in Black military service during the Civil War.

First South Carolina Volunteers of African Descent Memorial Park

One of Beaufort's most meaningful upcoming projects, according to City Manager ***Scott Marshall***, is the creation of a memorial park honoring the First South Carolina Volunteers of African Descent — the first Black soldiers in the U.S. Army. The six-acre site will sit prominently along Boundary Street, overlooking the river.

"Their story has not been given the justice it deserves in remembering how important they are to the history of this whole country, not just this area," Marshall said. Formed in Beaufort because the city was a Union stronghold following early occupation during the Civil War, the regiment predated the famed 54th Massachusetts by about a year. "Many of their descendants still live here today," he added.

Marshall emphasized that this project is about more than design — it is about correcting an absence in the historical record. "You can go downtown, and you'll find very little mention of their regiment," he said. "And that's a shame." The goal is to create a place that commands attention. "We want it to be the kind of place where, as you're coming down the street, you go, 'What is that? I've got to pull in there.' And you don't leave without knowing who they were and how important they were."

Marshall also highlighted the role of Dr. Elijah Washington, a longtime community leader who died in August. "He was the primary catalyst for that effort," he said. Washington's dedication to honoring the regiment's legacy continues to guide the city's commitment to building a memorial worthy of their service and sacrifice.

With a design contract close to being finalized, the city expects to begin fundraising — a 2026 milestone Marshall said he is "really, really looking forward to."



©CITY OF BEAUFORT

DRAINAGE IN ACTION Crews work on the Charles and Craven streets stormwater drainage project, a key upgrade to improve stormwater flow in the surrounding neighborhood.

Charles & Craven Street stormwater project

Marshall said Beaufort's Charles and Craven streets stormwater project marks the first major step in addressing long-term flooding risks in downtown. "It's one of several stormwater drainage projects slated for the downtown area," he said, noting it is funded through a federal grant and managed by the South Carolina Office of Resiliency. The need, he emphasized, is critical.

"We have pipes underground, some made of clay, that have been there for over 100 years," he said. "Without doing these drainage projects, 20, 30, 40 years from now, we may not have much of a downtown."

Arsenal building preservation

Beaufort's historic Arsenal building — an antebellum landmark and museum — is undergoing essential façade repairs. Marshall said preserving it requires special care. "There are a lot of issues with the façade," he said. "It's a historic property, so you can't just throw any plaster you want on there."

Because Beaufort is a designated Landmark Historic District, all restoration must meet strict review standards, ensuring the building remains true to its centuries-old character.





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OFF LIMITS
Fencing marks the areas affected by deterioration, as the city weighs design options for a safer waterfront.

Waterfront Park platform rehabilitation

Marshall said the most significant challenge, and opportunity ahead, is determining the future of Beaufort's iconic Waterfront Park. The aging relieving platform, supported by hundreds of piers, has deteriorated to the point where it is unsafe for pedestrians.

"The engineering report was very clear. It said pedestrians should not be allowed on the lower relieving platform," he said. Inspections revealed that "of the 570 piers, you could only see about 300," with the rest buried in silt and impossible to inspect.

The city is exploring design alternatives with its new waterfront advisory committee, and a public survey is underway. The goal, he said, is to determine "how we will fix this problem," whether by rebuilding in place, redesigning or creating a hybrid of floating and static structures.







©CITY OF BEAUFORT

PAVILION IN PROGRESS Construction continues on the Washington Street Park pavilion, a key investment in the neighborhood's revitalization. New playground equipment brings fresh energy to Pigeon Point Park in Beaufort

Southside Park & Washington Street Park improvements

For Marshall the recent park investments represent a significant, long-overdue improvement for families and Beaufort's neighborhoods.

Southside Park — once the site of a decommissioned water treatment plant — "sat empty for a long time" but is now a thriving neighborhood park. Seeing the opportunity to finally build the kind of park the Mossy Oaks neighborhood had envisioned, the city bonded against future Parks and Tourism revenue to bring the plan to life. "We bonded enough money to build the first phase of that park," he said, a milestone for a community that had been waiting for generations.

Washington Street Park is undergoing major upgrades as well. The new amenities include a pavilion, practice tennis court, basketball court and spaces designed for families and visitors. "It's nice to know that finally, after 20 years, we have a park in that neighborhood where people have been expecting a park for a long time," he said. For him the upgrades reflect Beaufort's commitment to ensuring its public spaces match the quality of life residents deserve.

Duke Street streetscape & drainage

Work continues toward long-awaited streetscape and drainage improvements on Duke Street. Marshall said residents in the 1600 block have been waiting for this extension since earlier grant-funded phases were completed.

"It makes sense to finish out that project and continue phasing it down that street," he said.

Although design disagreements with the Department of Transportation have stalled progress, the city is committed to completing it. "We're not going to give up on that project," he said.

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Port Royal

ANCHORED IN AUTHENTIC COASTAL HISTORY

Port Royal has always taken pride in its strong sense of place — a coastal town shaped by authenticity, character and a deep connection to the water. Town Manager Van Willis said that spirit continues to define the community today.

"What separates us and makes it special is there's a level of authenticity to the town and its residents," Willis said. "We are truly a coastal community: A true kind of blue-collar ethic that shines through in our architecture and our people."



©DEAN ROWLAND

BACK TO THE DOCKS The shrimp boats along Battery Creek on Port Royal's south end have long defined the town's waterfront identity. With a rebuilt dock and a new shrimp processing facility underway, town leaders hope to once again make Port Royal a preferred place for shrimpers to unload their catch.



©TOWN OF PORT ROYAL

A SAFER CROSSING In 2025 the Town of Port Royal opened a $1.5 million causeway to Sands Beach, giving visitors a safer, more accessible way to reach the popular shoreline known for shark tooth hunting and spectacular sunsets.

Shrimping dock rebuild & processing facility

For Willis, few projects embody Port Royal's identity more than the plan to rebuild the town's historic shrimping dock between Shell Ring and Fishcamp, along with restoring the adjacent processing facility.

"We will be rebuilding the dock as well as starting the rebuild of the processing facility so the shrimpers can actually offload in Port Royal," he said.

Willis believes this project can help reverse some of the decline in shrimping across Beaufort County. By giving local boats a reliable place to offload, process and distribute their catch, the town hopes to strengthen a more sustainable, locally rooted seafood economy.

"The shrimp are still there," he said. "We just don't have the shrimpers to go get those shrimp because economically it made no sense… and now this could be an opportunity for us to stand that back up somewhat."

Supported by state funding, with help from S.C. Rep. Shannon Erickson, the plan bolsters an industry that has dwindled from thousands of boats to just a handful.

For Port Royal the project is more than economic development — it is an homage to its origins. The rebuilt dock and processing facility will restore a way of life that shaped the town's architecture, food culture and the blue-collar spirit Willis describes as essential to Port Royal's authenticity. Reviving this working waterfront, he believes, honors both the community's past and its future.

Naval Hospital sidewalk

Willis said the reconstructed 400 yards of sidewalk in front of the Naval Hospital is a testament to perseverance after nearly a decade of waiting, planning and coordination.

"It took us nine years to get that small section of sidewalk built," he said.

The reconstruction provides a wider, safer pedestrian path along Ribaut and Old Shell roads, as well as a connection to the town's sidewalk network and pathways extending safely to Lady's Island.

"It connects the trail that crosses the bridge over to Lady's Island and connects with our network of sidewalks that we're finishing up," Willis said. "It's a great opportunity, not only for exercise but for people to commute on foot safely."



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Spanish Moss Trail

Willis said the new Spanish Moss Trail crossing at Ribaut Road represents a milestone in the town's partnership with Beaufort County and the state. The $700,000 project will connect Port Royal to the more than 10 miles of paved multi-use path. The crossing will feature a new pedestrian-activated signal to ensure a safe passage for trail users.

At one end of the Spanish Moss Trail, Willis sees the crossing as critically important. He shared his goal of extending the trail to Sands Beach. Construction began in September and is anticipated to be completed in early 2026.

Battery Creek waterfront promenade

Willis said renewed planning for a public waterfront promenade fulfills a vision dating back to 2004, when the town first learned the port would close.

"One of the things we heard over and over again was access to the waterfront," he said.

The planning effort brings together a range of stakeholders — including Shell Ring, Fishcamp, the Spanish Moss Trail organization and adjoining property owners — to map out a cohesive strategy for the 2-mile stretch. The committee's work will shape how the public experiences the waterfront for decades, linking recreation, commerce and the town's deep connection to Battery Creek. For Willis, ensuring the promenade is thoughtfully planned is essential to honoring community input and preserving one of Port Royal's defining assets.

Paris Avenue streetscape

Willis said one of the most transformative projects coming in 2026 is the first phase of the Paris Avenue overhaul.

"It'll be a complete redo of curb and gutter, utilities, pavers — even benches and trash cans," he said.

The improvement zone stretches from Ribaut Road past the post office and Cypress Wetlands. As Willis explained, "It's part of a larger $15 million redo of Paris Avenue."

Sewer expansion and septic phase-out

Willis said Port Royal continues to work closely with the Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority to eliminate aging septic systems near sensitive waterways.

"We created a master plan to address sewer on Ribaut Road — that's a major hole in our system," he said.

The town also plans to fill remaining gaps downtown. For Willis the goal is clear: protect water quality and support responsible commercial growth.



Stormwater improvements

According to Willis, long-awaited stormwater drainage upgrades in The Village neighborhood will soon break ground.

"The upgrade of this system will address long-standing issues in that neighborhood," he said.

The improvements include roadway paving and installing a 541-foot storm sewer. This project marks progress toward a long-term stormwater drainage master plan that will address a significant portion of the town.

Willis said the new master plan gives Port Royal something it has never had before: a comprehensive roadmap for drainage improvements over the next decade.

"It gives us a blueprint for capital projects moving forward," he said. With priority basins now identified, the next challenge is financial. "We have the manual in hand — now it's chasing down funding to make those things a reality."

Economic development study

Willis said Port Royal will begin a significant economic development study in 2026, funded by a grant from the Beaufort County Economic Development Corp. The goal is to determine what types of businesses are a good fit for the town's commercial corridors.

"They're getting an understanding of what would be a good fit for us," he said, noting that the study will examine demographics, traffic projections and recruiting potential.

Safe Harbor port redevelopment

Willis said the long-awaited redevelopment of the port property remains a defining project for the town.

"We're still working with Safe Harbor on the redevelopment of the port property," he said.

After years of setbacks, he's hopeful the partnership will deliver meaningful progress. "It's going to make 2026, 2027, 2028 — it'll still take a few years," Willis said. But the marina and its accompanying amenities will reshape the waterfront for generations. *LL*

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RESTORED GRACE
On Brams Point Road in Spanish Wells, this longtime family home reflects a decades-long partnership between owners Dan and Shannon Stratton and architect Mike Ruegamer, who first renovated it 30 years ago and recently returned to update the interior and exterior while preserving its original character.



HOME SHOWCASE

The myth of eternity

Nothing lasts forever, but a home with beautiful bones can always find a new lease on life

STORY BY BARRY KAUFMAN
PHOTOS BY JOHN MCMANUS

When homeowners Dan and Shannon Stratton first approached the concept of taking over stewardship of this Brams Point home in Spanish Wells 30 years ago, they weren't necessarily in the market for a renovation, particularly on a home that was already well-seasoned. Built in 1982, it would have been a prime candidate for a teardown. But something about the home called to them.

"We looked at it sitting on three lots, and at first the plan was to pull the house down, divide the lots, build two houses, flip one and build our dream home on the other lot," said Shannon. "But when we really looked at it, the bones of this house were so special — the intricate moldings, the arches, everything. It's a special house. We're really grateful we were able to keep it and just take care of it."

They called in Mike Ruegamer of ***Group 3 Designs*** to take those lovely bones and build something timeless on them. There was only one problem.

"Clients want timeless, but there's really no such thing," he said. "In 30 years, things change, aesthetics change, and how a family uses a house changes. Things always need to be updated."

Even if timeless is a myth, the team at Group 3 got pretty close on that first renovation 30 years ago. When the time came to address all the things that inevitably changed, Ruegamer was brought back to revisit his old project. What they created this time around challenges his hypothesis. Timeless actually may exist, and they may have created it here.

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BRIGHT PASSAGE
Sun streams through the new playful patterned windows, turning the brick corridor into a glowing link between the home's wings. Outside, the expanded glasswork gives the house a lighter profile and a graceful connection to the gardens.



A walk in the light

One of the most visible updates came in the glass-enclosed hallways that bridge the home's heart and its wings. The home's windows were updated across the board with small squared Federal-style panes replaced by more ornate and playful curves.

In the hallways they created a wonderland of light and scenery.

"It's a very large, spread-out house, so those spaces are a nice transition to the side wings," Ruegamer said. "There were bays with narrow transoms, and we designed bold new windows that made for a nice feature while also enhancing the view."

Those windows, so beautifully displayed in the corridors, were the biggest item on Shannon's to-do list.

"When we bought the home, we replaced every door and window," she said. "The windows were very small panes, very traditional Lowcountry style, and changing them out changed the whole look of the house inside and out."

A new kitchen recipe

As anyone will tell you, the easiest way to give your home an entirely new look, assuming all-new windows aren't in the plans, is to refresh the kitchen. With this space they not only gave it the kind of aesthetic face lift that now graces the entire home, they also added entirely new ways of living in the kitchen.

"We had redone the kitchen along with everything else 30 years ago. They wanted to expand it and open it to the back, with a larger dining area because their family has grown," Ruegamer said.

The original, more ornate pine cabinets were augmented with new high-gloss white cabinets that better reflected the limestone tile and overall lighter look of the kitchen. The expansion outward also included the larger windows that now surround the home, creating a light-filled dine-in area with extraordinary views and a few surprises of its own. Concealed within a sidebar, a flat-screen TV pops up to catch the news or game when desired.







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But any in-home chef will tell you, the coolest addition to the kitchen came when the Strattons had the inspired idea to share the kitchen fireplace with a working pizza oven.

"We love to cook. Dan's the pizza chef. It's something we had talked about for years and years, and we were originally going to do one on the outside," Shannon said. Fortunately, the fireplace made the ideal spot to create their own pizzeria inside. Well, ideal may be a strong word. "It took a lot of engineering and creative teamwork between architect Mike Ruegamer and the contractor, Rick Harrington."



FRESH AND AIRY
The redesigned kitchen pairs lighter cabinetry and expanded windows with wide-open views of the backyard, creating a bright place to cook, dine and gather. A hidden TV adds flexibility, while an existing fireplace now shares space with a pizza oven.



From porch to panorama

Perhaps the largest structural change came in the rear of the home, where a large, classically Southern back porch was enlarged and enclosed.

"In the South you really need a screened porch," Shannon said. "We loved that because it opened everything up and greatly increased the usability."

Just as their plans once included subdividing their lot, the Strattons subdivided their back porch and used its space to get closer than ever to that timeless feel they've been chasing all these years.

"When they enclosed the porch, it let them open all the house doors and added so much livability," Ruegamer said. "It also let us bump out the kitchen with the new style of windows that enhances the views."

It's the same kind of light touch that was used so effectively throughout the home's latest renovation. By adding and changing deliberately, homeowner and designer were able to bring the home into the 21st century while honoring everything that made it so special in the first place.

"It's kind of a landmark on the island that we get to be stewards of," Shannon said. "It's a great property and a great piece of land." *LL*

THE BIG REVEAL
The reimagined windows in the dining room opened up the spectacular views to the Intracoastal Waterway that were previously obscured by small double-hung windows with narrow transoms.





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GET THE LOOK

A space that sings

CREATE AN ALCOVE THAT FEELS WARM, BALANCED AND DISTINCTLY YOUR OWN

STORY BY BARRY KAUFMAN + PHOTOS BY JOHN MCMANUS



A STUDY IN SYMMETRY A sculptural mirror, the shine of the baby grand and soft drapery layers create a quiet moment of glamour in this Brams Point living room. Balanced accents and warm neutrals keep the space serene, while the open French doors frame a calming Lowcountry view.

For more than three decades, Dan and Shannon Stratton have treated their Brams Point home as both a retreat and a gathering place. When they set out to update the home again, one of the biggest transformations came from pushing the rear wall outward, reclaiming what had once been part of a wide Southern porch. The change opened up the living room and gave new energy to the space where the couple entertains most.

Their baby grand piano, long squeezed into whatever corner it could occupy, now has a dedicated alcove shaped specifically for it. The expansion was not simply about gaining square footage. Working closely with ***Group 3 Designs***, the Strattons created a true focal point, anchored by a striking mirror they had collected and framed with custom trim.

"It created a nice accent wall," said Ruegamer. "The room really came together around that."

With French doors that spill out to the screened porch, the living room now lets music drift easily inside and out, offering a space that feels both elegant and welcoming. It is a room designed to be heard and enjoyed.

Try this at home

With a few thoughtful choices, you can create an alcove that feels polished, inviting and personal, much like the Strattons have achieved in their Bram's Point home.

Create a focal wall: The custom mill work surrounding the sculptural mirror turns the piano alcove into the star of the room. A statement mirror or standout piece of art paired with trim or paneling can elevate an otherwise simple wall.

Let music set the mood: The baby grand anchors the space, but the idea works in any home. Give instruments or a listening setup a dedicated spot to add personality and make the room feel lived in.

Bring in soft symmetry: The draperies frame the French doors on both sides and help balance the curves of the piano and mirror. Even small repetitions, like paired accessories or similar shapes, create a calm sense of order.

Invite the outdoors in: The French doors lead directly to the screened porch and pull the Lowcountry view into the room. If you cannot add new doors, look for ways to improve sight lines to bring in more natural light.

Choose a harmonious palette: Soft neutrals keep attention on the water and the reflective surfaces. Light walls, warm wood floors and subtle metallic finishes work together to create a space that feels elegant without being formal.





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Aging gracefully

SUBTLE CHANGES AND LASTING CRAFTSMANSHIP WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE AN OUTDOOR SPACE THAT ENDURES

STORY BY BARRY KAUFMAN + PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN MCMANUS



BACKYARD GRANDEUR
With its patinated roof and wrap of white columns, the pool house brings architectural grace to a setting made for easy outdoor living.



A PLACE TO PAUSE
Afternoon light spills across the stepped brick terrace, where fresh plantings and graceful window arches frame an easy spot to sit, breathe and soak in the view.

One of the easiest ways to refresh a home, without losing the qualities that make it special, is to update only what truly needs care. When ***Group 3 Designs'*** Mike Ruegamer returned to this Brams Point property, he knew the outdoor spaces called for a light, respectful touch. Much of the beauty you see today began with his earlier work on the home.

"I designed that 15 years ago. That was not original to the house," he said.

The pool house still serves as the backyard's anchor. Its copper dome has mellowed into a soft green patina that settles naturally beneath the canopy of live oaks. Classical columns define the open-air pavilion and create an easy transition from poolside to shaded seating. The harmony continues across the main house, where the long-aged green roof shifts to a newer copper red above the expanded dining room, which will age slowly to match the green patina. .

Together the architecture and landscape show how gentle updates can elevate a space rather than reinvent it. The result is a backyard that feels calm, cohesive and unmistakably Lowcountry. *LL*



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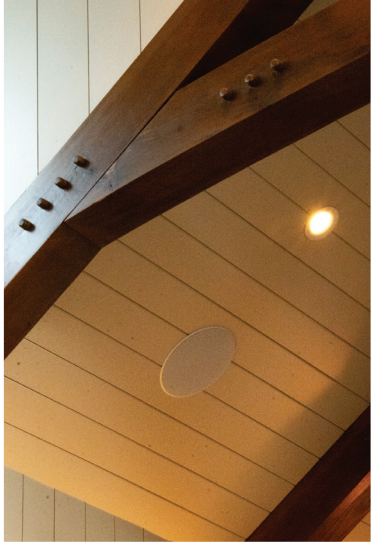
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CEILING SPEAKERS THAT DISAPPEAR
The ceiling speaker array fills both the great room and the adjoining kitchen with balanced, high-quality sound. Even at elevated volumes, music is simple — no bulky floor speakers in sight, just an even wash of rich audio that matches the space's beauty.



DESIGNED TO PERFORM
With its soaring beams, oyster-tabby fireplace and fully retractable glass wall, this Colleton River Club great room blends Lowcountry character with modern ease. Natural light, layered textures and seamless indoor-outdoor flow make it a sophisticated gathering space that is effortlessly comfortable.



HIDDEN TECHNOLOGY, PERFECT PRESENTATION
To keep the great room's clean aesthetic intact, CAV Integrated Home's system designer placed all amplifiers and electronics in a nearby closet. A compact equipment rack houses the technology, keeping performance close at hand while keeping the living space uncluttered.



THE BEAUTY OF OYSTER SHELL TABBY
The fireplace, wrapped in authentic oyster-shell tabby, adds texture and local heritage to the room's design. The material — a blend of lime, sand and oyster shells — creates a coastal-rustic look that anchors the space beneath its elegant timber mantle.

ROOM OF THE MONTH

The sound of home

Design-forward audio transforms a Colleton River great room without disrupting its beauty

STORY BY ALEA WILKINS + PHOTOS BY JASON CLARKE

In a beautiful waterfront home at Colleton River Club, the great room serves as the heart of daily life — a welcoming hub that connects the kitchen, outdoor living and private indoor spaces. Centered around a striking oyster shell tabby fireplace, the room was designed by ***CAV Integrated Home*** to invite both relaxation and performance. The audio-video system features a flexible two-mode design: a discreet soundbar for casual viewing and clear dialogue, and a hidden array of ceiling speakers ready to transform the space for gatherings or spirited listening sessions. The result is a great room that pairs coastal charm with acoustic sophistication — technology that enhances comfort without interrupting the architecture.

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BUBBLING UP

Like champagne or sea foam, this sculptural chandelier dazzles with its own fizz. Its overlapping circle design emulates bubbles, and white, transparent glass keeps the effect light-handed. When unlit, it subtly floats over the dining table, but when switched on, the light fixture pops.

Lush life

TROPICAL GREENERY AND LUXE ACCENTS REDEFINE COASTAL HOME DESIGN

STORY BY ALEA WILKINS + PHOTO BY CORNELIUS MORECRAFT

Far from the tranquil interiors of most common beach homes, this dining room with furniture from ***Coastal Home*** *takes Lowcountry design to the wild side. Vibrant jewel tones sub in for muted blues and creams, and Dorothy Draper-esque wallpaper packs a dramatic punch. Yet tropical greenery and grand arching doorways act as subtle reminders of the space's location, feeling at once exotic and right at home. This unexpected approach to coastal decor breaks the rules, daring to redefine what a Lowcountry home can look like.*



BASIC BEACH

Perhaps the most similar to typical beach home decor, the dining chairs tie into the coastal feel with a rattan back panel. The delicate pattern lets the air in, keeping it cool if the door is propped open, and cream cushions make it a plush place to rest over coffee or cocktails.



SCENE SETTING

Depicting a lush, oceanside forest, this wallpaper by Coastal Home transports viewers to an exotic paradise of Dr. Seuss' creation. Trees in vivid cyan, flamingo pink and jade green frame a painted waterway, an allusion to the view outdoors that also feels imaginative and faraway.





BULLSEYE

If aiming for extra comfort and personality, this round rug hits the mark. Beneath the dining table, it breaks up all the wooden elements on the floor, building interest (and a touch of softness) while complementing the purple tones throughout.



IN THE LOOP

Feeling hypnotized? The loops on this sideboard have a captivating effect. Uncommon, eccentric and, somehow, fitting, the furniture follows the lead of the rest of the decor, opting for surprise over simplicity. It mirrors the round shapes in the rug, chandelier and dining table, thematically bringing the room full circle.



ANCIENT INFLUENCE

A pedestal takes potted plants to new heights, and this classic column elevates with stately polish. While a tree or other tall plant could've filled the space, the white pedestal adds dimension and contrasts against the dark wall. Plus, it's versatile to put any plant on display.

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EXPERT ADVICE

A new outlook

Custom window treatments can make your home more personalized and protected in 2026

STORY BY CASSIE NICOLACE + PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY BUDGET BLINDS

*If home improvement is on your resolution list, look no further than outward. Window treatments — the shades, shutters and other solutions curtaining your home — are a small investment that can make a big impact. This year the experts at **Budget Blinds** predict that personalization will lead home design trends, and window treatments are no exception. Explore how homeowners are customizing their shades for more creative design, greater privacy and enhanced living in 2026.*

1. Layered up

Instead of traditional window treatments, the new year calls for new ideas. Creative layering, like pairing soft Roman shades with more structured café shutters, expands the aesthetic and practical possibilities. Together the combination develops eye-catching contrast in structure and color. Aside from style benefits, layering also allows for more flexible light control. Each shade can be adjusted to let in the right amount of light, keeping homes comfortable all throughout the day. If privacy is a top priority, a treatment installed to the bottom of windows can be an effective solution that still welcomes sunlight in. With creative layering, it's all about knowing what you want and blocking the rest out.

2. Monochrome moment

In 2026 there's room for both simplicity and maximalism. Using bold colors in a mostly monochromatic scheme is a great way to make a room feel rich and unique without having to go overboard on decor or knick-knacks. Color-matched shutters add instant drama, extending the color from the walls through the windows. To achieve this look, seek the assistance of experts who will customize your window treatments with an exact color match. When brought together, the elements should seamlessly flow into each other, creating a look that is striking.

3. At-home oasis

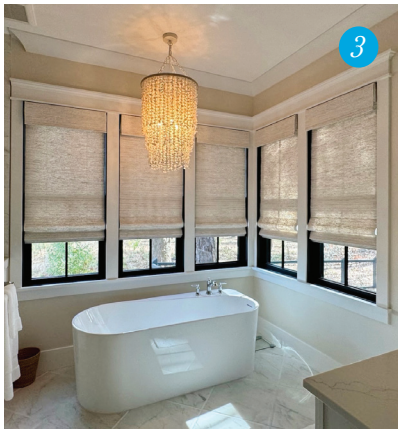
Inspired by recent wellness trends, home design has finally made its way into the ultimate care routine. Bathrooms are increasingly being designed as retreats that help homeowners recharge from the outside world, and the right window treatments complete the ambiance. Automated woven shades with an interior lining can be the finishing touch the room needs, giving it an elevated, luxurious feel while granting total privacy for ultimate relaxation.

4. Adjust automatically

While using smart systems to control lighting, temperature and security is common in modern homes, integrating window treatments into these programs can offer greater convenience and unexpected advantages. By using a smart app to adjust their blinds, homeowners can manage all their window treatments at once, saving the effort to manually operate them room-by-room. Further, homeowners can increase their energy efficiency by scheduling their window-treatment settings to adjust throughout the day. Set the blinds to crack open at sunrise, or schedule them to close every afternoon when the sun's rays get hot. Plus, manage blinds even when away from home for increased security and peace of mind. Since a wide range of window treatments can be automated, there are options to fit every home and lifestyle.











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Shades of what's next

PAINT LEADERS AND COLOR EXPERTS SHARE THE TONES SET TO SHAPE 2026

STORY BY LANCE HANLIN

Color trends have a funny way of marking time. The avocado greens of the 1970s, the mauves of the 1980s, the Tuscan golds of the early 2000s and the gray-everything craze of the last decade all had their moment before stepping aside for whatever came next. Paint is still one of the easiest ways to make your home feel new again. A fresh color can modernize a kitchen, calm a bedroom or give purpose to a corner you've never quite figured out. Winter is one of the best times to tackle it in the Lowcountry, especially on those overcast, soggy days when it's too messy outside for anything fun.

Of course, painting is still a commitment. Whether you're climbing the ladder yourself or calling in a pro, you don't want to choose a color that feels dated by spring. That's where the annual Colors of the Year help. They offer a curated peek at where interior design is heading. This year's picks from paint leaders and color experts point to a palette of grounded greens, warm browns, hushed neutrals and one surprisingly airy white. The mood is calm, connected and a little nostalgic, with plenty of depth for anyone craving more character at home.

Here's a closer look at the shades the pros say we'll be loving in 2026 and why they're worth considering for your own spaces.



©BEHR



The smoky showstopper

Behr Hidden Gem Hidden Gem is that smoky jade that immediately slows your pulse. In this color-drenched living room, the walls, trim and mantle glow with layered depth, and the room feels like it was designed to unwind in. Rich woods, velvet textures and abstract art love this shade. It carries a sophistication that doesn't try too hard, which makes it ideal for those who want a space with presence but not pretense. Try it for a library wall, a moody dining room or a den that doubles as a winter retreat on chilly evenings.

The clean slate

Pantone Cloud Dancer Pantone named Cloud Dancer its 2026 Color of the Year, and it's easily the softest, quietest pick of the bunch. This gentle white is meant to evoke clarity and calm, something many of us have been chasing in recent years. It isn't stark or chilly. It feels more like early morning light reflecting off still water. It works especially well in bright, open rooms or in spaces where you want your art, textiles or views to carry the story. If you're ready to try it at home, a quick Paint Score search will point you to a near-perfect paint match for this serene shade.

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The French whisper

C2 Epernay Epernay is a warm, earthy ochre inspired by limestone villages and sunlit stone. In this kitchen it washes the cabinetry in a soft, creamy glow that feels both traditional and fresh. This shade has a quiet elegance that pairs beautifully with brass hardware and natural light. It's the kind of color that makes a room feel gently collected rather than decorated. Those with classic homes, or anyone craving a warmer neutral for their kitchen or mudroom, will appreciate how effortlessly Epernay adds depth without stealing the show.



The tailored neutral

Benjamin Moore Silhouette Silhouette blends burnt umber and charcoal into a color that feels as polished as a well-fitted blazer. In this paneled room the color wraps the walls in a warm shadow that's surprisingly soft for such a dark tone. Paired with sculptural furniture or natural leather, it creates a modern take on classic coziness. Silhouette is perfect for anyone moving away from gray but not quite ready for pure brown. Use it in a study, a music room or anywhere you want a grounded, handsome backdrop that still feels approachable.



The modern evergreen

Dunn-Edwards Midnight Garden Midnight Garden is a deep, muted green crafted for people who love a natural palette but want something more complex than sage. In this mudroom the color carries a subtle sophistication, especially when paired with bronze pulls and simple styling. It's grounding without being too dark and instantly makes a room feel finished. This is a fantastic pick for built-ins, laundry rooms or entryways that need a hint of calm. It also plays well with the wood tones common in Lowcountry architecture.



The soft-hearted pink

Farrow & Ball Scallop Scallop is one of Farrow & Ball's rare new releases, and it's already a crowd favorite. In this sitting room it creates a warm, rosy canvas that feels uplifting without drifting into sugary territory. It's a pink for people who don't think they like pink. The shade's softness complements natural woven textures, blonde woods and casual styling. Try it in a bedroom, breakfast nook or hallway where you want a little color without overwhelming the space.



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The nostalgic neutral

Dutch Boy Melodious Ivory Melodious Ivory leans creamy with hints of peach and yellow. In this dining room it creates an inviting backdrop that highlights art, plants and handmade details. It's an easygoing shade that welcomes layering, which makes it ideal for homes filled with collected pieces and heirlooms. If you're looking for a color that feels warm but still airy, this could be the middle ground you've been seeking. It's especially lovely for guest rooms or sitting rooms.



©GLIDDEN

The mood maker

Glidden Warm Mahogany Warm Mahogany is a rich red with a grounded, earthy base. It shines in this bedroom, wrapping the room in a cozy, fireside glow. Paired with rust velvet, textured pottery and soft bedding, it becomes a space that encourages you to slow down. It's bold but strangely calming. Consider Warm Mahogany for an accent wall, a dining room that comes alive at night or a space where you want a little romance without going full crimson.



©SHERWIN-WILLIAMS

The easy neutral

Sherwin-Williams Universal Khaki Universal Khaki is exactly what its name promises: a neutral that works everywhere. In this dining room the wall color sits quietly behind furniture and terracotta, grounding the space without demanding attention. It's warm enough to feel lived-in but light enough to keep things bright. If you've struggled to pick a foolproof neutral for an open floor plan, this could be the one.



©VALSPAR

The restorative green

Valspar Warm Eucalyptus Warm Eucalyptus is a soft, retro-inspired green with comforting warm undertones. In this kitchen the color pairs beautifully with tile, wood and natural fibers. It offers a peaceful balance, especially for rooms where you want nature's influence without going full forest green. It's great for bedrooms, entryways or any spot where you want to create a refreshing pause in your home's color flow. *LL*

Every detail matters.



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Fresh start

SIMPLE WAYS TO GET ORGANIZED FOR THE NEW YEAR

STORY BY AUDREY GEIB + PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN VECCHIO



The start of a new year invites clarity: a clean slate, a calmer space and a little less clutter crowding your corners. But getting organized doesn't have to mean a full-house overhaul or a picture-perfect pantry.

Meaghan Resenhoeft, owner of NEAT Method Savannah and Hilton Head Island, says it's about "making simple solutions for everyday families to follow that they can actually keep up with on a daily basis."

Start with what you see every day

Instead of tackling your whole home at once, begin with a space small enough to finish but visible enough to make an impact. That drawer you can't open without something getting stuck? Start there.

"Start small," Resenhoeft advises. "Start with a drawer in your kitchen. Take it all out — do you need 10 wooden spoons? Probably not. If you start small, you're likely to succeed."

The goal isn't to throw everything away; it's to notice what serves you and what doesn't. That small success builds momentum for bigger projects later.

If you like structure, the NEAT Method literally wrote the book on it.

"Last January we launched a book, and it's kind of like a cookbook, per se," she says. "It gives you simple projects that you can do — like recipes — with small tasks."

PERFECT PANTRY Using generically labeled bins in your pantry, like these brass canisters, helps create a system that can be easily maintained as your grocery list and seasonal snacks change.



SPICE IT UP After deciding which spices should stay and which should go, consider transferring them to cohesive jars for optimal organization, like this spice jar set.

Let go of what's taking up space

Every house has that space that holds things nobody uses but everyone steps around.

"Water bottles is one," Resenhoeft laughs. "If it doesn't have a top, it needs to go in the garbage."

How many water bottles are too many? Resenhoeft recommends three bottles per person. The same goes for spices that expired last year.

"Spices are an easy thing to go through," she says. "If they're expired or not opened, you can probably throw them away."

What about those papers that seem to multiply in your office?

"Get rid of files you don't need," she said. "Shred them and try to make it digital if possible."

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DIVIDE YOUR DRAWER
Making use of dividers within drawers like these drawer dividers can help keep your clothes organized.

Of course, it's not always that easy. Many of us hold onto things out of nostalgia: the towel from a long-ago tournament or the souvenir mug from a race decades past.

Decluttering is not about guilt; it's about the relief that follows when you clear up that space. If you feel sentimental about a collection of clutter, start somewhere else.

Create systems you actually stick with

Once you've pared things down, it's all about keeping them that way. Getting organized doesn't mean aiming for perfection; it's about setting yourself up to maintain calm in the middle of real life.

"You just walk in the door, and you feel lighter," Resenhoeft says. "Your house doesn't have to be perfect all the time, but if a system is in place, it's going to be a lot easier when your neighbor's about to pop over and you've got five minutes' notice."

Think simple: group like-items, use bins and baskets, and give everything a home.

"We're not believers in labeling absolutely every drawer," she adds. "When you can clearly see that there are brushes in there, you don't need to label it. It's just about things being somehow contained."

Stay flexible

Perfection is the enemy of progress and the fastest way to burn out on organizing.

Rigid rules often make it harder to stay organized.





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©NEAT METHOD



Resenhoeft suggests keeping categories broad so your system can evolve with you.

"Don't label a canister 'oatmeal,' maybe label it 'breakfast,'" she says. "If your kids are over oatmeal next month, you can put bars in it instead."

That flexibility makes your space feel more livable and less staged, because the goal isn't museum-level neatness, it's a home that actually works for the people living there.

"You have to make it a system that people are going to follow and not go crazy over," she says.

Make it a habit, not a headache

Resenhoeft's secret to staying organized? Small daily wins that add up.

"Have a bin in your kids' rooms or laundry room for donations," she says. "It doesn't have to be huge, just manageable."

The same goes for adults; closets are another easy place to check in regularly, making sure that every piece in there is something you will wear and love. If not, donate it. Meaghan suggests making resetting a weekly ritual.

A little order, a lot of calm

The real reward isn't only a perfect pantry or a color-coded closet. It's walking into your home and feeling peace instead of pressure.

"Your house doesn't have to be perfect," she says. "It just has to work for you."

A little less stuff, a bit more space to live. That's a resolution worth keeping. *LL*

CLEAN OUT YOUR CLOSET

Go through your clothes, keeping only the items you really love. Organize them by style or color to make your daily routine of getting dressed feel like shopping in your very own boutique.





FLORAL OF THE MONTH

The art of stillness

AN IKEBANA-INSPIRED NEW YEAR

STORY BY KIM EPLEY + PHOTO BY AMIA MARCELL



***Kim Epley**, artistic director at The Studio at Farmer Blue, designs with blooms grown on her 12-acre farm in Seabrook. This month she turns to the quiet discipline of ikebana to welcome the new year.*

If the new year invites us to slow down, ikebana shows us how. This Japanese art turns simplicity into poetry by focusing on balance, form and space. Using a few accessible ingredients arranged with intention, this month's design becomes quietly sculptural and reflects the season's call for calm, clarity and gratitude.



A STUDY IN WINTER SIMPLICITY This ikebana-inspired arrangement from Farmer Blue Studio uses snapdragon, gerbera daisy, ilex and field-foraged greenery to bring calm, structure and sculptural beauty to the New Year's table.

In the arrangement

COLOR

1. *Gerbera daisies*
2. *Snapdragons*
3. *Ilex winterberry*

GREENERY

4. *Huckleberry*
5. *Evergreen*
6. *Fern*

Design notes

Focus on line and form. Choose three primary stems: a tall leader, a medium support and a grounding element that symbolically represent heaven, earth and humanity.

Choose simple vessels. Shallow bowls, low ceramics and minimalist vases let the structure shine. Soft tones and matte finishes reinforce the sense of calm.

Honor seasonal beauty. One snapdragon placed with intention or a single branch of ilex can have as much visual impact as a full bouquet.

Care with intention. Refresh water daily, trim stems at an angle, and let the simple act of tending the arrangement become its own quiet moment of gratitude.



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PETAL PROJECT

Winter glow candles

Pressed flowers add a gentle, garden-inspired touch to cold-weather evenings

***Chrissy Mozeleski** owns Helena Hills Farm, a U-pick flower farm in Hardeeville known for its seasonal blooms and creative floral workshops. This month she guides readers through making winter glow candles decorated with delicate pressed flowers.*





As winter settles in, the farm slows down. The flowers rest, the air turns crisp, and cozy evenings call for a little extra light. This simple craft brings that glow indoors. Pressed-flower candles combine nature's beauty with the warmth of a flickering flame to create the perfect setting for peaceful reflection. They also make a handmade gift that feels thoughtful and heartfelt. Each candle becomes a tiny piece of preserved garden magic that glows softly through the season.

STEP 1: Gather supplies

You will need:

- *Plain white pillar candles (soy or beeswax work best). Choose candles with smooth sides so your flowers adhere easily and evenly.*
- *Pressed flowers, leaves and greenery*
- *Mod Podge and a small paintbrush*
- *Parchment paper*
- *A heat tool or hair dryer*
- *Optional: ribbon or twine for decoration*

STEP 2: Press or dry flowers

If you do not already have pressed blooms, this is the perfect time to start. Collect small, flat flowers such as violas, cosmos, vinca, ferns or petals from your holiday bouquet. Press them using a flower press, or place them between layers of cardboard, white cotton fabric and felt. Stack heavy books on top, and let them sit for one to two weeks until they are fully dry and flat. The more variety you press now, the more creative freedom you will have later.

STEP 3: Arrange your design

Decide how you want your candle to look. A natural and organic style works beautifully. Use a light coat of Mod Podge to place your flowers and greenery on the candle's surface. Small petals add delicate detail, and larger blooms should be used with intention so they do not overwhelm the design. Think of it as building a tiny winter garden on wax. Keep the arrangement soft and simple.

STEP 4: Set the flowers

Place a piece of parchment paper over your design, and gently warm it with a heat tool or a hair dryer on low. As the wax softens, the flowers will settle into the surface and adhere securely. Move the heat slowly and evenly to avoid melting too much of the candle. Once the candle cools, peel back the parchment to reveal a smooth and seamless design.

STEP 5: Add the finishing touch

Tie a ribbon or velvet bow around the base for a soft winter finish. Try colors such as sage, blush, cream or ivory to complement the natural tones of your flowers. Display your candle on a tray, beside a stack of books or near a window where it can reflect light and bring warmth to your space. Each candle is unique and serves as a glowing reminder of the garden's beauty, even in winter.

A SOFT WINTER GLOW Pressed-flower candles bring subtle color and warmth to long winter nights. Gather friends for an evening of crafting, and create a collection that is as unique as the blooms you have pressed.



CRAFT IN PROGRESS Pressed blooms, soft brushes and a simple pillar candle come together in a calm, creative moment. This step is where the magic happens, as each flower is carefully placed before being sealed into the wax.

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WILDLIFE WONDER

Leave it to beavers

Our ponds and wetlands thrive when these engineers are allowed to do their work

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM

Beavers may not be as visible as the flashier wildlife of the Lowcountry, but few animals do more to shape the landscape. Often misunderstood, these rodents are nature's original engineers, sculpting wetlands, slowing water flow, improving water quality and creating thriving habitats for countless species. To better understand their vital role (and why they deserve far more appreciation than they often receive), we spoke with Jeanne Paddison, executive director and lead wildlife rehabilitator at Savannah Wildlife Rescue Center (SWRC).

"Beavers are gentle giants in the rodent world. They are a keystone species, meaning the environment they create as part of their work provides homes for many other species," Paddison explained. "There are species that can only exist in these environments. So when people slaughter beavers, rather than wrapping trees and finding other ways to peacefully coexist, they are actually wiping out all the other species that depend on the ecosystem the beavers create."

Despite their importance, beavers are among the most misunderstood animals in the Southeast. In Georgia, Paddison notes, they can legally be hunted 365 days a year, even during the months they are raising young. "It's a really crazy situation with beavers," she said. "People don't realize how special they are as parents. They care for their babies for two years, and the 2-year-olds even stay to help raise the new babies."

While conflicts typically arise around flooding or tree damage, Paddison stresses that these issues are entirely manageable. There are proven, humane tools like flow devices, pond levelers and simple tree-wrapping that allow humans and beavers to coexist without conflict. "There are solutions," she said. "If people are upset with them, there are ways to solve the flooding issues and allow the beavers to stay."



AFTER-DARK ARCHITECTS Beavers are common in the Lowcountry, even if most people rarely see them. Nocturnal, they stay out of sight during the day and stick to quiet freshwater pockets. Their numbers have been growing steadily.

Beaver-built ponds and wetlands become magnets for wildlife. Birds, amphibians, reptiles, insects and mammals flock to these new ecosystems, many of which wouldn't exist without the beavers' engineering talents. And contrary to popular myth, they do not eat fish. "They are vegetarians," Paddison emphasized. "They will not clean your pond of fish."

Unfortunately, some beavers never get the chance to fulfill their ecological calling. At SWRC, Paddison has rehabilitated several, including two young siblings with a heartbreaking story. "These are Tater and Tot," she said. "They were both trapped by a landowner who killed their mother and then snared them. Tater was snared around the waist and almost died from how tight it was. Tot was snared around his tail; we thought he was going to lose it because circulation was cut off. But it healed, and he was releasable."



©JEANNE PADDISON

SAVED SIBLINGS The Savannah Wildlife Rescue Center rehabilitated these two young beaver siblings, Tater and Tot, after they were injured by a landowner's snare.



STICK BY STICK Beavers build their lodges by stacking branches and mud into a sturdy dome with thick, weatherproof walls. Inside they keep a dry, insulated chamber reached through underwater entrances. They maintain the structure year-round, adding fresh sticks and patching weak spots as needed.

Beavers ask for very little: quiet spaces to build, family units to raise and a landscape where their work can benefit the world around them. In return, they give us cleaner water, healthier wetlands, richer biodiversity and ecosystems that thrive long after they move on. Living with them just takes a bit of understanding – and, as Paddison says, a willingness to coexist.

How to spot a beaver

Beavers move quietly and prefer low light, so sightings take patience. With a few key clues, though, you can tell when one is close even before it surfaces. Here's what to look for.

- **Go at the right time:** Visit at dawn or dusk. Beavers are most active when the light is low and the water is calm.
- **Find the right habitat:** Look for slow-moving freshwater: ponds, lagoons, creeks, retention ponds and wetlands with plenty of nearby trees.
- **Scan for surface movement:** A smooth, V-shaped wake on the water often means a beaver is swimming just ahead.
- **Look for the lodge:** Check the shoreline for dome-shaped piles of sticks and mud. Some lodges are built into the bank and blend in easily.
- **Spot the chew marks:** Beavers leave behind sharpened, pencil-like stumps and stripped branches. If you see fresh wood chips, they're nearby.
- **Watch for muddy slides:** Beavers create slick paths from the shore into the water. These are especially noticeable in soft mud.
- **Listen for quiet clues:** Soft splashes, gentle tail slaps or the sound of gnawing wood can give away their location.
- **Stay still and let them come to you:** Beavers are wary. A little patience and a quiet stance go a long way toward a sighting.



©JEANNE PADDISON

TINY SURVIVOR
Baby Beatrice lost her mother in a flood at less than 2 weeks old.

Who you gonna call?

If you find an injured, trapped or orphaned beaver, contact one of these local rehabilitators:

- ***Savannah Wildlife Rescue Center:*** *912-596-1237*
- ***Paws Animal Wildlife Sanctuary:*** *864-683-3190*
- ***Tiffany VanBlaricum:*** *843-422-2654*
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FREQUENT FLYER

Blue-headed vireo

A THOUGHTFUL WINTER VISITOR WITH A SCHOLAR'S GAZE AND A GUARDIAN'S HEART

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM + PHOTOS BY MARY ALICE TARTLER



LISTEN UP
Scan this QR code *to hear the call of the blue-headed vireo.*

SPOT THE SPECTACLES The blue-headed vireo spends the winter in the Lowcountry, usually arriving in November and staying through March. It's easy to overlook, but once you spot those white "spectacles," you'll notice them everywhere.

Among the Lowcountry's winter visitors, few carry themselves with the quiet confidence of the blue-headed vireo. Think of it as the Atticus Finch of songbirds. Not because it's a finch or has any interest in harming mockingbirds, but because it carries the same steady, measured calm that makes you pay attention.

Its appearance is the first clue. The blue-headed vireo wears a soft mix of mossy green, bluish gray and yellow-green, framed by crisp white "spectacles" that give it a thoughtful, almost studious expression. A white throat and belly brighten its face and underside, while its wings show neat black-and-white markings. It looks like a bird that's always observing, always taking notes.

Its behavior only reinforces the impression. Blue-headed vireos move deliberately through the canopy, scanning for insects with a kind of gentle patience. They seem in no rush. Their song, usually delivered by males, is often the first hint they're nearby. It's similar to the red-eyed vireo's refrain but a bit slower and sweeter, with small pauses that make it sound like the bird is choosing each phrase with care.

For years this species and its close relatives were grouped together as "solitary vireos," a nod to their quiet manners. Ornithologists later split the group into three species in 1997: Cassin's, plumbeous and blue-headed. Ours is the most colorful of the trio and the only one that spends its winters in the East. Even during disputes, it stays composed. Males often settle territorial questions through counter singing, taking turns like polite debaters. If things escalate, they may ruffle feathers, posture or give chase, but true fights are rare. Here in the Lowcountry they often join mixed flocks, slipping through branches alongside warblers and kinglets.

The Atticus comparison becomes even clearer when you look at their family life. Blue-headed vireos form devoted pairs that often remain together for years. Both parents help build the nest, but the male usually takes the lead, weaving materials around a forked branch and shaping the cup with careful intention. He stays present after the eggs hatch, feeding the nestlings with admirable consistency. That calm, committed parenting is driven in part by high prolactin and low testosterone during breeding season, which nudges males to put family first. And when danger appears, these otherwise mild birds shift instantly into protector mode, firing off sharp alarm calls to warn their mates and young.

Thoughtful in appearance, patient in behavior and unwavering when it matters, the blue-headed vireo is worth noticing this winter, especially if you appreciate a little integrity in your backyard birdwatching.

Where to find them

"The captivating blue-headed vireo graces the Lowcountry as a dedicated winter resident, typically arriving in November and remaining through March. While this bird is fundamentally an insectivore consuming caterpillars, moths, beetles and spiders, its winter diet shifts to include essential energy sources. They rely heavily on the abundance of small native fruits and berries available in our coastal areas. These include the fruits of sumac, wild grape, dogwood and elder, with the highly available wax myrtle being a particular favorite. The fruits provide the vital energy needed to sustain them throughout the cooler months. Unlike many backyard visitors, the blue-headed vireo generally avoids seed feeders. Instead, they prefer to forage within the underbrush and thickets, searching for their favorite insects. During migration you may spot the blue-headed vireo as part of mixed flocks, often appearing alongside yellow-rumped warblers and other small traveling songbirds as they pass through your yard."

– Mary Alice Tartler, Audubon Master Birder



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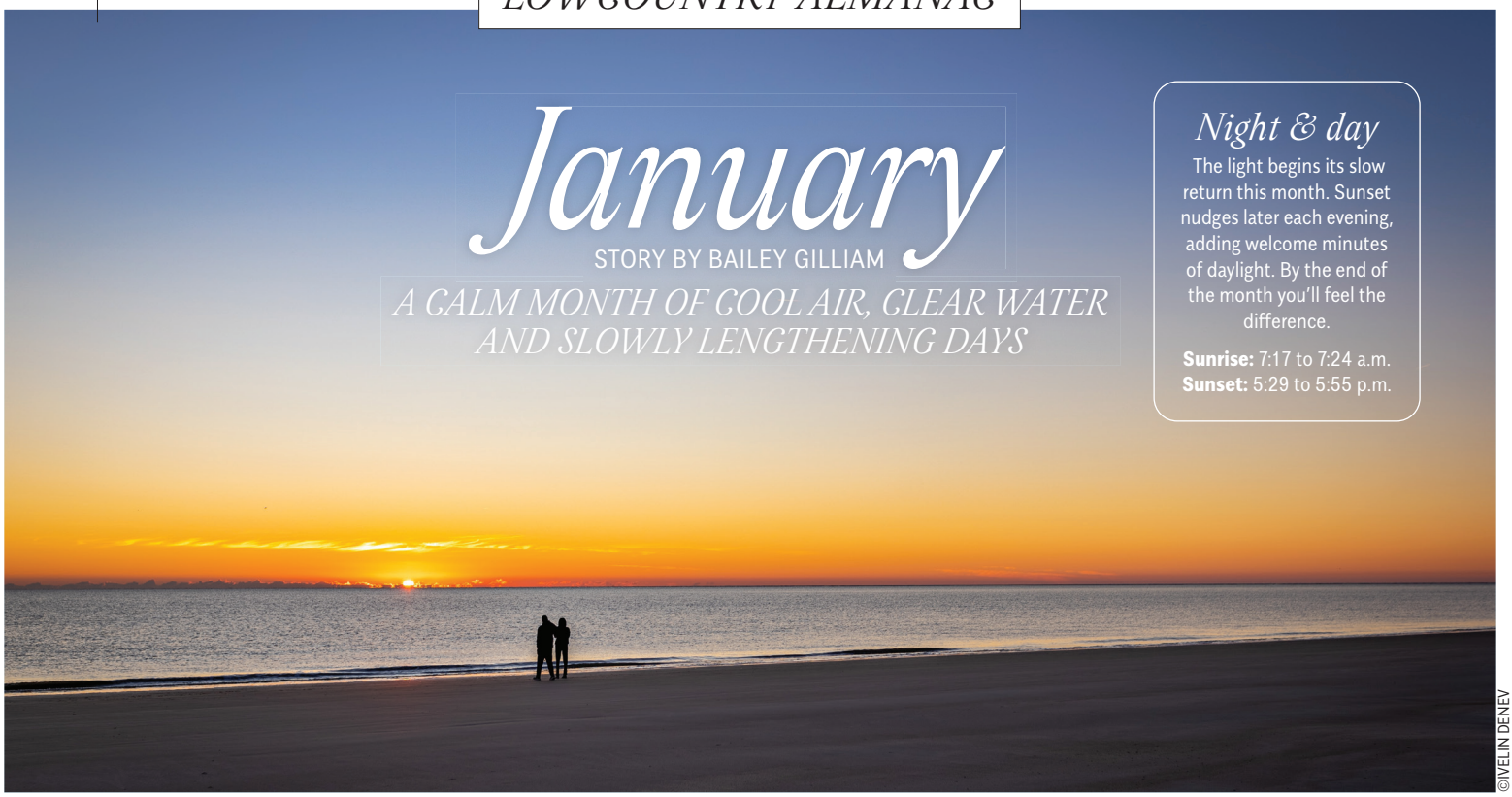
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LOWCOUNTRY ALMANAC



January

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM

A CALM MONTH OF COOL AIR, CLEAR WATER AND SLOWLY LENGTHENING DAYS

Night & day

The light begins its slow return this month. Sunset nudges later each evening, adding welcome minutes of daylight. By the end of the month you'll feel the difference.

Sunrise: 7:17 to 7:24 a.m.
Sunset: 5:29 to 5:55 p.m.

©IVELIN DENEV

SUNRISE FOR TWO Photographer Ivelin Denev captured this silhouette of a couple taking in a January sunrise at Burkes Beach on Hilton Head Island. With the shoreline mostly empty this time of year, locals can enjoy peaceful mornings like this all winter long.

January arrives with a clean slate and subtle beauty. The Lowcountry feels calm and stripped back, the air, cool and crisp, and the water is sharper in color and clarity. With a few extra minutes of daylight added each day, it's a month that invites you to reflect and reset. Named for Janus, the Roman god who looks to the past and the future, January offers space for contemplation and small beginnings. It's an ideal time for uncrowded beach walks, sunrise paddles or birdwatching in our preserves. With insight from the *2026 Old Farmer's Almanac* and *Grow Great Vegetables South Carolina*, this guide helps you start the new year in rhythm with the coast.

Weather predictions

January settles in with a familiar chill. It's one of our coolest months, the kind that makes morning walks feel sharp and invigorating. Expect stretches of bright, dry weather with the occasional rain pushed in by coastal winds.

Average temperature: 44 degrees (3 degrees below average)
Rainfall: 2.5 inches (2 inches below average)

WEEK-BY-WEEK FORECAST
Jan. 1-6: Sunny and very cold
Jan. 7-14: Sun early, then showers; turning milder
Jan. 15-22: Sunny and mild
Jan. 23-24: Sunny and cold
Jan. 25-29: Rain at times, then clearing; turning very cold
Jan. 30-31: Showers, milder

Astronomical events

Cool, clear nights make January one of the best months for sky watching. The moon is bold, the meteors are quick, and there are even a few visiting comets worth looking for.

Jan. 3: Full supermoon, known as the wolf moon. It's said wolves howl more often this time of year, likely from hunger and long winter nights.

Jan. 3-4: Quadrantids meteor shower peaks with up to 40 meteors per hour under dark skies.

Jan. 6: Comet 24P/Schaumasse reaches its brightest point.

Jan. 18: New moon

Jan. 20: Comet C/2024 E1 (Wierzchoś) swings near the sun at perihelion and may show up nicely in binoculars.

Tides & currents

*If you plan your days by the water, keep your tide chart close. **Scan this QR code** for up-to-date tide and current predictions from NOAA.*

In the garden

January is a planning month. Gardeners tidy, take stock and prepare for what's ahead. It's a good time to dream up your spring beds, tune up tools and handle the tasks that set the tone for the seasons to come.

PREP Gather catalogs, order seeds, review last year's wins and missteps, test your soil, sketch out a garden map, make a planting schedule, prune trees and shrubs, and prep beds for early spring. You can also start chitting seed potatoes in flats.

PLANT It's mostly a quiet month in the dirt, but a few crops can get a head start.

Indoors: *Start brassicas, hot peppers, globe artichokes, celery, leeks, tomatoes, eggplants, Asian greens and rhubarb.*

Outdoors: *Direct sow bunching onions, peas, beets, chard and carrots. It's also your last call to transplant trees, bushes, canes and crowns.*

HARVEST Winter harvests are simple but satisfying. Look for arugula, Asian greens, carrots, collards, Egyptian onions, kale, leeks, lettuce, mustards, spinach and turnips.



Best days

According to the lunar calendar, these are the top dates for a few everyday tasks. Plan your month with a little celestial help:

Go fishing: Jan. 1-3, 18-31
Start a diet: Jan. 1-3, 18-31
Quit smoking: Jan. 4, 9, 14
Get a haircut: Jan. 10-12
Begin a new project: Jan. 15-16
Wash floors: Jan. 21-22
Color hair: Jan. 26-27



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IT'S TIME TO TURN OVER A NEW LEAF — LITERALLY

STORY BY ALEA WILKINS AND SUZANNE BARTON



THE EARLY SPROUT WINS Most spring seeds need six to eight weeks of indoor growth before the last frost (late February to early March). Give them that early start and they'll be ready to thrive when the weather finally warms.



SCORPIONS? YEP, WE'VE GOT THOSE TOO Be careful when reaching under plants this winter. A scorpion might be tucked in there, adding to the Lowcountry's already colorful cast of backyard critters, from copperheads and gators to black widows, fire ants and no-see-ums. The ones you're most likely to spot are the southern unstriped scorpion, found statewide, and the striped southern scorpion, which stays close to the coast. Both are small and generally harmless. Their sting feels more like a bee or wasp than anything out of a horror movie.



A new year means a fresh start — your garden included. Though it's the offseason in the Lowcountry, winter is a crucial time for planning and preparation. Come spring, your garden will thank you. With guidance from the manager of The Green Thumb, ***Suzanne Barton***, put in the work now to bring out the best version of your garden this year.

[LOCAL Life] What should I do now to prepare my garden for the next growing season? **[Suzanne Barton]** Now is the time to plan, so when you start planting in March, you'll have everything you need. Check out your local gardening store for their selection of seeds. Once you've chosen your desired plants, check their instructions. Most seeds that you plant in the spring should be sowed indoors for six to eight weeks before the last frost, so starting early is key.

[LL] How should I take care of my garden over the winter? **[SB]** Fungus, disease and insects can overwinter in your garden. The best thing you can do is be diligent and routinely inspect what's going on. Clean up any brush, fallen buds or pine needles, but be careful when reaching under plants — snakes and scorpions like to rest there. If you go slowly, wear gloves and use tools with a long handle, they'll leave you alone.

[LL] How can I keep my tools in good condition? **[SB]** Tools are often overlooked, but they need a yearly check-up. Keeping them sterilized is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of disease in your garden, so it's important to clean and store them properly. My preferred method is to use rubbing alcohol — it wipes off sticky sap, disinfects and is inexpensive. For storage, add a light coat of oil to your tools, then keep them off the ground in a dry place. If your tools are rusting, soak them in white vinegar for 24 hours, and the rust will loosen enough to be scrubbed off. And if your tools need to be sharpened, stop by your local hardware store. Most places that sell gardening supplies offer sharpening services to keep your favorite tools working their best.

[LL] My garden is looking a little sparse. Is there anything I can add this time of year? **[SB]** To add interest over the winter, invest in some extra structure. A trellis or tuteur can bring a little height and drama, and since they don't involve construction, they're super easy to install. I especially like bird baths because we always want more pollinators to stop by our gardens. Keep the baths clean and full of fresh water, and the birds and butterflies will bring life to your backyard.



A SPLASH OF CARE
A birdbath is a simple winter gift to your backyard visitors. Fresh water can be hard to find this time of year, so a clean, shallow bath gives birds a reliable spot to drink and preen.

Spring cleaning? Start in winter

Smart seasonal tips from Lowcountry Gardening



©JOEY WILLIAMSON, HGIC, CLEMSON EXTENSION

KNOW YOUR DIRT A soil test is one of the easiest ways to get your garden ready for spring. Clemson University offers simple mail-in kits with everything included. Order one at clemson.edu, pop your sample into the prepaid envelope and you'll receive a clear report with recommendations tailored to your yard.

Have your soil tested by Clemson's Agricultural Lab so you can amend the soil in time for spring planting. Soil test bags with instructions can be picked up and returned to the Beaufort County Extension office at 18 John Galt Road, Beaufort, or the Master Gardener Plant Clinic, Hilton Head. The cost is $6.

Additional guidance

- Unless there has been a severe freeze, begin removing diseased and injured, crossing and rubbing limbs from trees and shrubs. It is easier to see what needs to be removed when they are leafless.
- After a freeze your plants may need water if the soil has dried out.
- Wait until spring to fertilize plants. You don't want to encourage new growth that will be easily damaged by another frost.
- Don't prune cold-damaged plants right away. The dead foliage may insulate the plant from further injury.

Excerpted from Lowcountry Gardening, written and published by the Lowcountry Master Gardener Association. Grab a copy of this guide to all things Lowcountry gardening for $5 at The Greenery, Bruno Landscape & Nursery, The Green Thumb or the Master Gardener booth at the Bluffton and Port Royal farmers markets. For more information, head over to ***LowcountryMGA.org****.*

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2026 STYLE

Defining the year in fashion

BY BAILEY GILLIAM

As we step into 2026, the Lowcountry's boutiques and brands already are shaping the looks that will define the year ahead. Think elevated essentials, innovative textures and a wave of color that feel both bold and deeply wearable. Local shop owners and stylists are tapping into a moment where comfort meets creativity, where everyday pieces get thoughtful upgrades, and statement-makers feel right at home. ***We asked some of your favorite retailers what's inspiring them for 2026 and what trends they predict will take over wardrobes in the months to come.***





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Forsythe Jewelers

"As we head into 2026, we're seeing a strong demand from our clients for bold, statement jewelry. Chunky silver and eye-catching two-tone pieces are leading the way. With yellow gold having been a major trend for the past eight years, we are also noticing a desire for more white gold. We also are receiving more requests for vibrant color gemstones, as people look to incorporate lively pops of color into their accessories."

– Rebecca Lovette, Forsythe Jewelers



AVAILABLE AT

Spartina 449

"This season is about elevated ease with flattering midi-length dresses and wide-leg jeans. Our Celia midi dress captures the trend beautifully, crafted from buttery-soft Peruvian cotton and patterned with lovely blue-and-white florals and charming bird motifs. It's a refined and comfortable look that transitions effortlessly into the new season. Striped jeans offer a fresh twist to your elevated denim rotation this spring. Customers will love the bold, vertical coffee stripe on our Blanche wide-leg jean, adding a touch of visual interest while elongating your figure. Plus, the wide-leg silhouette is universally flattering and on-trend this season."

- Ashley Elmer, Spartina 449



AVAILABLE AT

Brims on the Bluff

"In 2026 luxury fashion embraces restraint and intention, transforming the way we experience style. It is no longer about visibility or loud statements. It's the subtle hues of meaningful pieces. Heritage is re-imagined, creating pieces that feel both timeless and entirely new and meaningful. Palettes favor neutral, layered with the occasional hint of color that conveys serenity and calm. In a year defined by reflection and balance, luxury speaks softly yet profoundly through every detail, every texture and every silhouette."

– Lauren Dembeck, Brims on the Bluff



AVAILABLE AT

Heritage Fine Jewelry

"Stacking is trending in 2026. Whether you're layering necklaces or stacking bracelets, multiples are a great way to show off your individual style."

– Jennifer Lance, Heritage Fine Jewelry

AVAILABLE AT

Island Child

"COLOR. COLOR. Lots of color!"

– Senny Powell, Island Child





AVAILABLE AT

Outside Hilton Head

"For 2026 we predict that beaded jewelry and layering will continue. It is a refined way to elevate any ensemble, add depth and mix materials and textures. Shine on!"

– Maggie Metheney, Outside Brands



AVAILABLE AT

Palmettoes

"We're seeing a return to a more tailored look for women. The ruffles, flounces and puffy sleeves of past seasons are giving way to clean lines and thoughtful construction, with a stronger emphasis on beautiful fabrications rather than added embellishments."

– Dennis Jaworski, Palmettoes



AVAILABLE AT

Maggie & Me

"For spring 2026, Gretchen Scott is all about stripes and ric-rac ribbon trim, almost like candy stripes, with colors that are just beautiful. I'm especially loving the colorful tie-as-a-belt detail, and the palette she chose for the season is so cheerful and fresh."

– Rebecca Mancini, Maggie & Me



AVAILABLE AT

Eyeland Optique

"The big trends are bold geometric shapes, minimal metals and acetates and ovals. Very similar to last year. "

– Billy Simmons, Eyeland Optique



AVAILABLE AT

Jean-Pierre Klifa

"Where feminine meets unforgettable – a soft-hued statement dress designed to turn every moment into a memory. Effortless elegance, resort-ready comfort and timeless charm in one perfect piece."

– Katie Geisbert



AVAILABLE AT

Currents

"Think electric blue and vivid yellow for spring '26. Delicate butterflies will flutter across apparel and accessories."

– Claudia Emmert





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Gifted

"Enewton continues to be our best-selling jewelry line, as it's worry-free wear. Made in Atlanta, super fun to stack and totally unique, as everyone puts their stack together differently."

– Meredith Taylor

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INTO THE BLUE

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Available at Hilton Head Soap Co.

WHY SO BLUE?

Perfect for all occasions, these Terrafirma Ceramics are sure to bring a touch of coastal charm to your home.

Available at Pyramids





DRINK IT UP

This Blue Italian Jumbo Cup & Saucer is decorated with an iconic and classic design in cobalt blue and is the perfect vessel for tea, coffee or hot cocoa.

Available at Cassandra's Kitchen

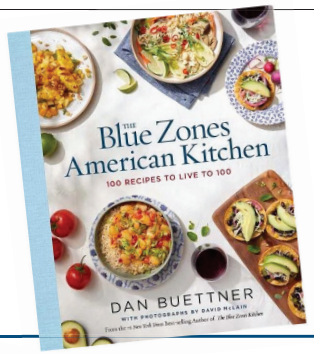
BEAUTIFUL IN BLUE

This collection of blue decor is perfect for adding some coastal colors to your home for the new year.

COOK BY THE BOOK

Keep your New Year's resolutions on track with this inspirational cookbook, featuring over 100 plant-forward recipes.

Available at Hilton Head Oils and Balsamics





BIZZY BEE

Make your table a showstopper this new year with these blue bee china plates with pewter bee decorations.

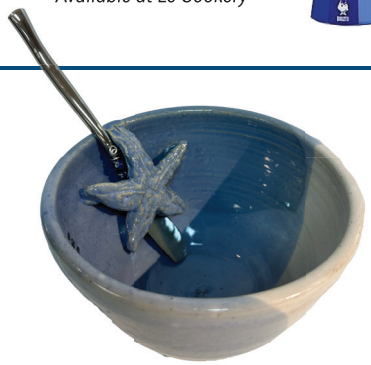
Available at J. Banks Design

CUP OF JOE

Take your coffee to the next level with this Mediterranean-inspired Coffee Ritual Gift Set, featuring an iconic Italian inspired design.

Available at Le Cookery





YOU'RE A STAR

Serve up dips with coastal elegance with this locally made dip bowl with a starfish design.

Available at Gifted

WILD BLUE YONDER

Brighten up your space with this stunning table lamp, featuring a hand-painted foo dog design with accents of solid brass hardware.

Available at Marsh on the May





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5-MINUTE HISTORY

When Charleston fell, Carolina rose

A DEVASTATING BRITISH VICTORY IN 1780 BECAME THE TURNING POINT THAT AWAKENED SOUTH CAROLINA'S MOST DETERMINED FIGHTERS

STORY BY RICHARD THOMAS

Richard Thomas is an owner and guide for Hilton Head History Tours and is the author of Backwater Frontier: Beaufort Country, at the Forefront of American History.

When intelligence reports reached Charleston in late March 1780 that British forces under Gen. Sir Henry Clinton and Adm. Mariot Arbuthnot were leaving New York with the mission of capturing the capital and strategic port city, a call went out for all available troops to gather for its defense. Continental Army soldiers under Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, along with militia from the colonies of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia, more than 6,500 strong, arrived by March 28. All members of the Beaufort District militia, except for a few left in reserve to guard the home front, were mustered and marched there.

The British Army advanced overland from Savannah and from points in North Carolina and Virginia to cordon off the city from the north, south and west, while Royal Navy warships completed the envelopment to the east. The siege lasted 45 days (March 29-May 12, 1780), and marked one of the most consequential British victories of the entire Revolutionary War. The surrender of Maj. Gen. Lincoln and nearly 5,500 troops represented the largest American loss of manpower in more than 10 years of conflict. Many of the captured troops, mainly militiamen, were paroled shortly after their detention.

Paradoxically, this crushing defeat did not quell the revolutionary fervor in South Carolina. It reignited it. The fall of Charleston catalyzed a decentralized, tenacious movement that powered the next wave of determined resistance, ultimately undermining British control and reshaping the war's trajectory in the South.



SURRENDER BEFORE THE STORM This illustration by LOCAL Life designer Charles Grace depicts Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln ceding Charleston to British forces on May 12, 1780. It was one of the largest American defeats of the Revolutionary War and paradoxically helped ignite the fierce partisan resistance that followed across South Carolina.

A defeat that ignited resistance

The British Southern Strategy hinged on the belief that Loyalist sentiment was strong in the Carolinas and Georgia. By capturing Charleston, the British hoped to rally Loyalist support, pacify the region and use it as a base to roll up the rebellion from south to north. Initially, this seemed plausible. With Charleston under British control and the Continental Army in disarray, South Carolina appeared positioned for pacification. Clinton issued proclamations offering pardons to former rebels who pledged loyalty to the Crown, and many Carolinians, especially among the established planter class in the Lowcountry, accepted parole.

However, British overreach soon backfired. Clinton's successor in the South, Gen. Charles Cornwallis, rescinded the terms of parole and demanded active service from former rebels. This betrayal alienated many who had been willing to remain neutral or even cooperate. The British occupation quickly came to be seen not as liberation but tyranny. The harshness of British and Loyalist militia enforcement further inflamed Patriot sentiment.

British strategy unravels

With the Continental Army shattered and Charleston occupied, the war in South Carolina shifted to the backcountry, and the South Carolina military began to rebuild along regional

lines. Here a new kind of warfare emerged: irregular, mobile, stealthy and deeply personal. Bold leaders such as Francis Marion ("The Swamp Fox") in the Lowcountry, Thomas Sumter ("The Gamecock") in the Midlands and Andrew Pickens ("The Wizard Owl") in the Upstate organized passionate partisan bands that harassed British supply lines, ambushed detachments and rallied local support. These men, many of whom had been sidelined or paroled after Charleston, became the new face of resistance. Former ship captains that had served in the South Carolina Navy prior to its capture at Charleston, including John Stoney of Hilton Head and Daniel Cutler Braddock of Beaufort, procured new vessels and operated out of back creeks and hidden estuaries to disrupt British shipping south of Charleston and out of Savannah.

The terrain of South Carolina, with its swamps, dense forests and rivers, favored guerrilla tactics. Marion's men, for instance, would strike British outposts and vanish into the swamps, frustrating attempts at retaliation. These partisans operated with minimal resources, relying on local knowledge and civilian support. Their success demonstrated that the British could not control the countryside, even if they held the cities. The fall of Charleston and the subsequent British occupation radicalized many South Carolinians. The British miscalculated the depth of Loyalist support and underestimated the resilience of the Patriot cause. Far from quelling rebellion, the siege and occupation galvanized it.

Rise of the partisans

The British presence became a unifying threat, and the partisan war gave ordinary Carolinians a direct role in the struggle for independence. The grassroots resistance also had a psychological impact. It proved the war was not lost, even after such a catastrophic defeat. The victories of partisan leaders, such as Marion's lightning raids, Sumter's stand at Hanging Rock and Pickens' role in the Battle of Cowpens, became rallying symbols of defiance. Locally, partisan initiatives such as William Harden's capture of Fort Balfour and the retaliation of Hilton Head's "Bloody Legion" inspired hope and drew recruits, further stoking the fire of revolutionary spirit in the South.

These victories, fueled by the momentum of post-Charleston resistance, ultimately led to Cornwallis's retreat into Virginia and his eventual surrender at Yorktown in 1781. Ironically, the siege that was meant to end the rebellion in the South instead sowed the seeds of British defeat. *LL*

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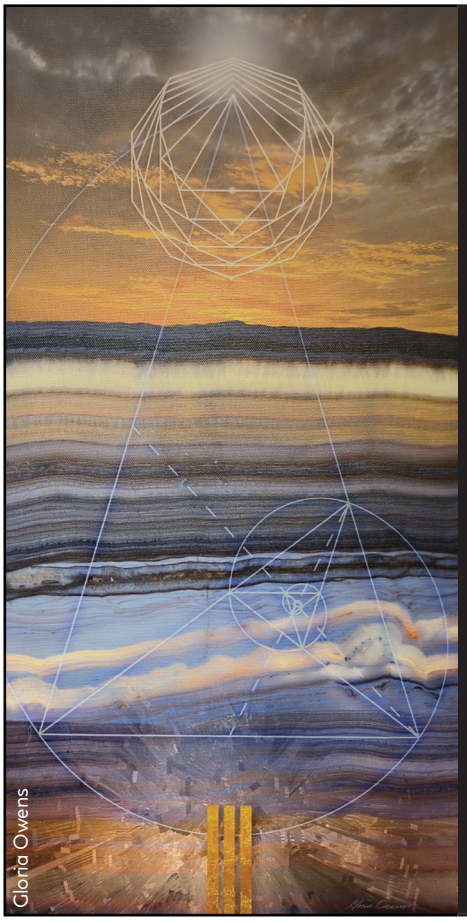
The Gullah Museum

KEEPING THE STORY ALIVE

STORY BY CAROLYN MALES + PHOTOGRAPHY BY LYNDSI CAULDER



LITTLE BLUE HOUSE This little blue house was built in 1930 for my Uncle Duey. He never married and didn't have children. He was Mama's brother, and she made sure, because he was special — he was like her child — that he had his little house to live in. We cooked for him and did his washing, and he looked out for us and we looked out for him. This is the only restored Gullah house on Hilton Head.



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ANCESTORS ROOTS This is the body of the first 18-wheeler that came across the Hilton Head bridge in 1956. A Great Dane! My Aunt Rena, who was not in the best of health, had been living with us and wanted a place of her own. So in 1966 my cousin's husband purchased it, brought it to our yard, and partitioned it into a three-room house for her. Amiri Farris painted the mural.

The ground Louise Miller Cohen walks on holds stories — stories told in the echoes of footsteps that trace not only her own family history but a slice of Gullah-Geechee island life that was, and remains, threatened as developers swallow up these parcels of land. Cohen grew up on Gumtree Road across the street from where the Gullah Museum of Hilton Head now stands.

Her great-grandfather, William Simmons, born in slavery on a Beaufort plantation, had escaped to Mitchelville on Hilton Head Island during the Civil War. He would serve in Company B, 21st U.S. Colored Troops on Morris Island as a cook and then a guard. Later, after catching and recovering from smallpox, he was reassigned as a nurse. Today only part of the 15 acres Simmons bought remains, but Cohen brings the Gullah community from the past to life as she sits down with visitors, relating spirited tales, interspersed with Gullah and song, including spirituals. Afterwards, her listeners roam the grounds viewing the exteriors of assembled buildings and artifacts: the house, Great Dane trailer, migrant houses, bateaux — and, yes, the trees and plants that played a role in that history.



LOUISE MILLER COHEN God wanted me to remember what I was told and what I learned through the years.



BATEAU We lived off the land and rivers here. And from September to April, men would be out there collecting oysters. We had oyster factories here in Hilton Head. Men would pick the oysters, bring them to the docks and wash them, and the women would shuck the oysters.





HISTORY LESSON Mama rented out these to seasonal workers who came to harvest crops in the 1950s. They picked crops like squash, cucumbers and tomatoes on local farms here and harvested flowers in the Pritchardville area. She rented to the same people year after year.

Cohen, who founded the museum in 2003, says there's still much work to be done. She ticks off projects, beginning with fixing the sign out front, landscaping, repairing buildings, adding an herb garden along with a chicken yard and coop and developing an area for storytelling, basket-making demonstrations and other traditional crafts. Fundraising has begun, along with further restoration of the iconic little blue house where Cohen's Uncle Duey lived in the 1930s. Once the latter is completed, visitors will be able to get a real-life glimpse of that era as they walk through its three small rooms filled with furnishings and functional objects from that era.

Photographer Lyndsi Caulder brought her artistic eye to the museum buildings and grounds. Caulder's exhibition, "The Gullah Museum: Storytelling Through Photos" at Town Hall this month evokes that bygone era and the community spirit that dwells within these hallowed acres.

"When I met with Louise, she told stories that had been passed down from generation to generation right on the ground we were standing on. She made me feel the faith and love the Gullah people have for the land and how they have always worked with what the earth can give us."

All proceeds from the show will go to the museum. LL

Visit the museum

What: The Gullah Museum of Hilton Head Island
When: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays by appointment
What: 12 Georgianna Drive, Hilton Head Island
Details: Along with visits, the museum also sponsors events like the Gullah Heritage Festival and the Gullah Food Festival. For more information, visit gullahmuseumhhi.org. To schedule a visit, call 843-681-3254.

See the exhibition

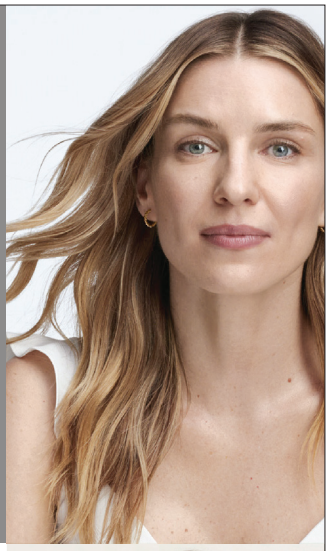
What: The Gullah Museum: Storytelling Through Photos by Lyndsi Caulder
When: Jan. 5-Feb. 28
Where: Hilton Head Island Town Hall
Details: The exhibition is open during public meetings. For information and special group showings call 843-341-4703.

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THE HILTON HEAD ISLAND GULLAH CELEBRATION MARKS 30 YEARS OF HONORING CULTURE, CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY

STORY BY LANCE HANLIN

The Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration is one of those rare events that feels deeply rooted while welcoming anyone curious enough to attend. Beginning in late January and running through February, it traces music, food, storytelling and art back to the people who shaped the island long before it became a vacation destination. Through language, craft and food, the Gullah preserved a culture found nowhere else in the United States. The celebration honors that history while inviting the community to learn, listen and taste what defines the island. Now in its 30th year, the month-long festival offers gallery exhibitions, conversations with cultural leaders, live music, shared meals and immersive experiences that bring Gullah traditions into the present. Whether you stop in for one evening or follow the celebration all month, each event adds another layer to the story.

A TASTE OF TRADITION The Ol' Fashioned Gullah Breakfast on Feb. 7 brings history, heritage and home cooking together at Mitchelville Freedom Park.



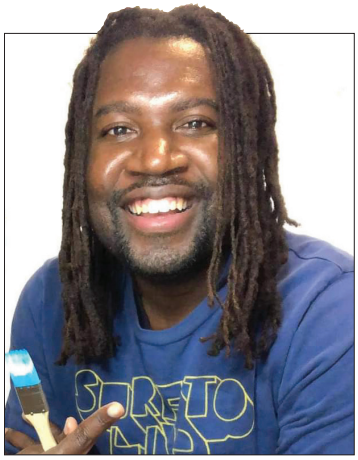


©HILTON HEAD ISLAND GULLAH CELEBRATION





ART WITH ROOTS Amiri Farris is the featured artist for the 2026 Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration, running Jan. 10 through Feb. 29 at venues across the island. A familiar presence at the annual event, the acclaimed artist has spent years teaching workshops, sharing his work and helping advance the celebration's mission of honoring Gullah traditions through creativity.



©AMIRI FARRIS

Art that talks back

Visual art has always been central to the Gullah Celebration, and this year's anchor exhibition is *Arts Ob We People: A Gullah Geechee Art Exhibition*. Opening Jan. 29 at J Costello Gallery inside Red Fish, the show runs through Feb. 28 and features work by Amiri Farris and Ren Dillard. Using bold color, texture and narrative, the artists explore Gullah identity, memory and place. An opening reception is set for Jan. 29 from 5 to 7 p.m., offering a chance to meet the artists and make an evening of it, with dinner nearby.

Conversations about heritage

On Feb. 3, the Coastal Discovery Museum hosts Djuanna Brockington, interim director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. Her talk focuses on protecting historic sites and amplifying local voices, connecting preservation work to everyday life in the Sea Islands. The program runs from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Tickets are $30.

30 years framed

The celebration's visual history takes center stage on Feb. 5 with *30 Years Framed: Posters of Our Past*, an opening reception at the Coastal Discovery Museum from 5 to 7 p.m. The exhibition brings together 30 iconic festival posters, presented for the first time as a complete retrospective. Each design reflects the era, artists and stories that shaped the Celebration over three decades. Select posters will be available for purchase.

Sacred space, shared stories

On Feb. 6 *Friends & Family at The First African Baptist Church* brings music, storytelling and prayer to Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park from 7 to 8 p.m. Founded in 1862, the First African Baptist Church is the oldest congregation on Hilton Head Island. The program explores its role in faith, leadership and community life, offering a deeply moving evening rooted in spiritual tradition.

We Still Rise

The Ol' Fashioned Gullah Breakfast returns Feb. 7 from 9 to 11 a.m. at Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park. The morning features tastings of traditional Gullah dishes, coffee and hot chocolate, set against the backdrop of one of the island's most significant historic sites. Ticket holders also receive access to the 2026 Freedom Day Celebration beginning at 11 a.m. Tickets are $30.



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We are pleased to welcome Dr. Alexis Almeida back to Bluffton, the town where she grew up. She is proud to return and care for her neighbors. Raised in a big family and surrounded by role models in medicine, she was inspired early on by the impact of compassionate, connected care. She chose family medicine because it allows her to build lasting relationships with patients of all ages — often caring for multiple generations.

Outside the clinic, Dr. Almeida enjoys spending time with her family, traveling and reconnecting with her hometown community. We're excited she's back in the Lowcountry — doing what she loves, close to home.

To schedule an appointment, call **843-706-2523**.

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©HILTON HEAD ISLAND GULLAH CELEBRATION

TWILIGHT GATHERING On Feb. 13, Gullah Twilight Music with Deas-Guyz brings live jazz, Gullah food and artisan vendors to Shelter Cove Community Park.

> *Through language, craft and food, the Gullah preserved a culture found nowhere else in the United States.*

GOLF FOR A CAUSE A new addition this year is the Native Island Golf Classic, teeing off Feb. 15 at Port Royal Golf Club. More than a day on the course, the tournament supports the Rev. Isaac W. Wilborn Jr. Scholarship Fund, helping local students take their next steps toward college.



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Foundations of freedom and memory

On Feb. 10 the Coastal Discovery Museum hosts *Mitchelville and the Gullah Museum: Foundations of Freedom and Memory*. The evening explores the legacy of Mitchelville, one of the first self-governed towns established by formerly enslaved people during the Civil War, alongside the work of the Gullah Museum of Hilton Head Island, founded by Louise Miller Cohen. Together the stories highlight resilience, self-determination and living tradition. Tickets are $30.

Twilight music under the trees

Live music takes center stage Feb. 13 with Gullah Twilight Music featuring Deas-Guyz at Shelter Cove Community Park from 5 to 8 p.m. Guests are encouraged to bring blankets and settle in for an evening of jazz-influenced rhythms, artisan vendors and food rooted in Gullah tradition. Tickets are $25.

Bridges between generations

On Feb. 17 the Coastal Discovery Museum welcomes Emory Campbell and Tom Barnwell Jr. for *Bridges Between Generations*, a conversation from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Campbell, a lifelong Gullah leader and cultural ambassador, and Barnwell, whose family history traces directly to Mitchelville, share stories that connect land, memory and leadership across generations. Tickets are $30.

Gospel that carries history

The Gospel Series continues Feb. 20 at Central Oak Grove Baptist Church from 7 to 8 p.m., featuring the Voices of El Shaddai. For more than 27 years the choir has brought together singers from Sea Island churches to perform traditional spirituals and contemporary gospel infused with Gullah language and rhythm. The concert is free, with guests encouraged to contribute to the church offering. RSVP is requested.

Golf with a purpose

The Native Island Golf Classic tees off Feb. 21 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Port Royal Golf Club. The tournament supports the Rev. Isaac W. Wilborn Jr. Scholarship Fund, providing college scholarships to local students. The field is limited to 108 players. Entry is $135 per person.

Sea, soul and sunshine

Later that day, the *Sea, Soul and Sunshine Brunch* runs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Tiki Hut. Hosted by the Beach House Hilton Head Island, the brunch pairs oceanfront views with live music from the Hallelujah Singers and Gullah-inspired flavors. No tickets are required.

Roots, recipes and reunion

From 2 to 5 p.m. Feb. 21, Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park hosts the *Roots and Recipes Reunion: A Gullah Cook-Off Celebration*. Chefs and home cooks prepare dishes centered on okra, rice and collard greens. Celebrity judges include Chef BJ Dennis, Art Fennell and Jesse Blanco. Guests vote for the People's Plate. Tickets are $25.

A village brought to life

The celebration concludes Feb. 28 with the 30th Anniversary Gullah Celebration Village from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Coastal Discovery Museum, presented in partnership with the Hilton Head Island Seafood Festival. The immersive village recreates a historic Gullah coastal community, complete with interpreters, artisans and storytelling. Featured chefs BJ Dennis and Kardea Brown lead a live cooking showcase highlighting Gullah foodways. Access is included with a Seafood Festival general admission ticket. Tickets are $20.

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Memories breathe and burn, setting my senses alight.
Words ring inside me, reverberating from my ribcage.
They burn on my tongue, each one a different color.
Stories wind their way through my bloodstream.
I peel them out of my skull, syllable by syllable,
bleed them from my fingertips like rain.

Seized from the marrow of my bones,
they burn across the page like wildfire,
unearthed letter by letter, like sand-scoured runes.
The universe of the mind is dark and endless.
Words are the tourniquets of memory,
the alchemy of language transforming pain.

— Jessica Goody

ABOUT THE POET **Jessica Goody** was born and raised on Long Island and now calls the Lowcountry home. She writes for several local publications and is a frequent contributor to The Creativity Webzine. Her poetry collection, *Defense Mechanisms*, was released by Phosphene Publishing and is available on Amazon. Her work has appeared in *Reader's Digest*, *The Seventh Wave*, *Event Horizon*, *Really System*, *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and *The Maine Review*. She received the 2016 Magnets and Ladders Poetry Prize. Jessica has cerebral palsy.

ABOUT THE ARTIST **Joanna Chalson** holds a BFA from Wittenberg University and a master's in art education from Manhattanville College. She continued her training at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the University of Chicago, where she received the Rosenberg Printmaking Award. Her work has been exhibited widely, earning honors at the Ohio Printmakers Show, the Hilton Head Plantation exhibit and the Art League of Hilton Head's Metamorphosis Show. Joanna has taught art in schools across Ohio, Iowa, New York and Rome, Italy, as well as adult classes in New York for 14 years. She now teaches at the Art League of Hilton Head Academy.



Melodies by **Joanna Chalson**



37 Hopes Neck Drive Palmetto Bluff

4 BEDROOMS | 4.5 BATHROOMS | 4,242 SQ FT

A custom masterpiece by CS Thomas, quietly tucked within Palmetto Bluff's coveted May River Forest. Framed by river and golf views and bordered by preserved land, this private retreat was featured in Southern and Coastal Living for its exceptional craftsmanship. A soaring great room beneath a cupola opens to a slate fireplace porch, designed for effortless indoor-outdoor living. Reclaimed wood floors, smart-home integration, and Kelly Caron interiors elevate every detail. Three-bay garage with EV hookup, plus turnkey cottage and art studio. Tier 1 Golf membership available.



46 Millwright Drive, Windmill Harbour

4 BEDROOMS | 3.5 BATHROOMS | 4,311 SQ FT

Set on nearly an acre of prime marsh frontage in Windmill Harbour, this 2025 fully renovated residence captures panoramic views from Jarvis Creek to Calibogue Sound. Sunrises, passing boats, and coastal wildlife unfold beneath moss-draped oaks and palms. Inside, bespoke cabinetry, wide-plank white oak floors, and a Carrara marble island anchor a chef's kitchen appointed with Wolf and Sub-Zero. The home offers two offices, elevator, gym and sauna, and a serene primary suite with sunroom.

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WHAT'S FRESH IN JANUARY?

Snap into the season

WHY GREEN BEANS DESERVE A SPOT ON YOUR WINTER TABLE

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM



Green beans bring a welcome pop of color when winter plates start leaning a little beige. They've long been a Southern favorite, whether simmered low and slow, tucked into casseroles or served crisp alongside weeknight suppers. Thanks to the Lowcountry's mild climate, they show up at markets nearly year-round and feel especially refreshing in January. Their clean, grassy taste pairs well with almost anything, and the tender snap reminds you that fresh, simple ingredients still shine during the coldest months of the year.

WEEKNIGHT GREEN BEANS

Bright, crisp and full of flavor, these sautéed green beans come together in minutes. Start by heating a little olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat, then add fresh green beans and cook until they blister and turn glossy. Season them simply with salt, black pepper and a squeeze of lemon. The high heat keeps them snappy, while the seasoning brings out their natural sweetness. It's an easy side that works with just about any winter meal.

No strings attached

Green beans trace their roots to the ancient terraces of the Andes, where they were grown thousands of years ago and became a staple across Central and South America. Columbus carried them back to Europe in 1493, and they quickly found a home in early gardens. By 1542 botanist Leonhart Fuchs produced the first drawing of bush beans, a legacy later reflected in the naming of the fuchsia. Early beans weren't the tender pods we know today. They were tough and stringy, grown more for decoration than dinner. Centuries of crossbreeding eventually gave us string and stringless varieties, including Calvin Keeney's breakthrough snap beans in 1889 and the popular Bush Blue Lake in 1962. Today more than 130 varieties thrive, from slim haricots vert to broad, meaty Romano types. It's a family of beans that continues to evolve while staying deeply familiar.





LOCAL LIFE TEST KITCHEN

Spinach and green bean omelet

This simple omelet makes a clean, bright breakfast that feels right at home in January. Fresh spinach and tender green beans add texture and color, while the eggs tie everything together in a light, satisfying way.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
1 cup fresh spinach, roughly chopped
4 large eggs
2 tablespoons milk or cream
1 tablespoon olive oil or butter
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
Optional add-ins: grated Parmesan, sliced green onions, herbs (dill, tarragon or parsley)

DIRECTIONS [1] Bring a small pot of salted water to a boil. Add the green beans and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until bright and just tender. Drain and rinse under cool water. Set aside. **[2]** In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, milk, salt and pepper until smooth. Stir in the spinach and cooked green beans. **[3]** Heat the olive oil or butter in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Pour in the egg mixture and spread the vegetables evenly. Cook without stirring for 3 to 4 minutes, until the edges begin to set. Reduce heat to low and cover the skillet. Cook another 4 to 5 minutes, until the center is firm and the omelet is cooked through. **[4]** Slide the omelet onto a plate and cut into wedges. Add Parmesan or herbs if you like. Serve warm with toast, fresh fruit or a small salad.

Beans, beans, the magical fruit

Green beans may be simple, but their nutrition profile punches above their weight. They're low in calories, high in fiber and loaded with vitamins A, C and K, which support immunity, healthy skin and strong bones. B-vitamins help keep energy steady, and minerals like potassium, iron and magnesium support everything from fluid balance to red blood cell production. They're also packed with antioxidants that help reduce inflammation and may lower the risk of heart disease and certain cancers. Light, hydrating and easy on the stomach, they bring a healthy lift to winter meals without feeling heavy.







A green bean thumb

Home gardeners love green beans because they're easy to grow and generous with their harvests. The two main types are bush beans and pole beans. Bush varieties stay compact at 1 to 2 feet tall and don't need support. Pole beans can climb up to 10 feet and need a trellis or pole. Both prefer temperatures between 60 and 75 degrees, which makes our region a welcoming place for successive plantings. Grow them in full sun and well-drained, fertile soil. Plant seeds when the ground reaches at least 60 degrees, setting them 4 inches deep and spacing bush varieties 2 to 4 inches apart. Reliable performers include Bush Blue Lake 274, Contender, Derby, Provider, Kentucky Wonder, Kwintus and Mountaineer White.

Here are a few simple ways to cook green beans:

Roast: *Toss with oil and roast at 425 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes.*
Sauté: *Cook in a wok or frying pan over medium-high heat for 7 to 10 minutes.*
Boil: *Drop into salted boiling water for 6 to 8 minutes until just tender.*
Steam: *Steam over boiling water for 10 to 12 minutes.*
Microwave: *Add 1/4 cup water to a microwave-safe dish. Cook 3 minutes for a cup or 7 to 12 minutes for a pound.*
Blanch: *Boil for 3 to 4 minutes, plunge into ice water, and drain. Ideal for freezing.*



Snap decisions

Fresh green beans should look young and feel firm, with a smooth surface and good color. The best ones snap cleanly when bent and are no thicker than a pencil. Skip pods with bulging seeds, limp texture, rust spots or scars, which are signs that they're past their prime. Uniform size also helps them cook evenly.

For your inner peas

Store green beans unwashed in a paper or perforated plastic bag, and keep them in a slightly warmer part of the refrigerator. They'll stay crisp for two to three days. If they start to wilt, a quick dip in ice water perks them up. When you're ready to cook, rinse the beans and trim the ends. Most modern varieties don't need de-stringing, which keeps prep quick and easy. Good storage and gentle handling go a long way toward preserving their fresh flavor, whether you steam, sauté, roast or simmer them.

Snap them up

Green beans have a mild, earthy flavor and a satisfying bite that works in almost every cuisine. After trimming, leave them whole or cut them into pieces for quick cooking. They're delicious steamed and tossed with lemon and butter, sautéed with garlic and shallots, or roasted until the edges caramelize. Southern cooks love them simmered with ham hocks, onions and a splash of vinegar. Classic dishes like salade niçoise give them a starring role. They also pair well with almonds, hazelnuts, Parmesan, mushrooms, tomatoes, citrus, béchamel and plenty of herbs. You'll find them in stir-fries, pickled in jars, holiday casseroles and just about any dish that benefits from a clean, crisp vegetable. LL

LOCAL LIFE TEST KITCHEN

Green bean casserole

This classic casserole is the reason green beans show up at so many winter tables. Tender beans, a creamy sauce and plenty of crispy onions make it comforting without feeling heavy. It's simple, familiar and always one of the first dishes to disappear.

INGREDIENTS (casserole)

1 1/2 pounds fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
*8 ounces **sliced mushrooms***
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 cup chicken or vegetable broth
1 cup heavy cream or whole milk
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 cup crispy onions, plus extra for topping (recipe below)



DIRECTIONS [1] Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the green beans and cook 4 to 5 minutes until bright green and just tender. Drain and plunge into an ice bath to stop the cooking. Drain again and set aside. **[2]** In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and mushrooms and cook until the mushrooms release their moisture and begin to brown. **[3]** Sprinkle the flour over the mixture, and stir until everything is coated. Cook 1 minute. Slowly pour in the broth, stirring constantly. Add the cream, salt, pepper and nutmeg. Simmer 3 to 4 minutes until thickened. **[4]** Stir the blanched green beans into the sauce, and add 1 cup of crispy fried onions. Mix gently to coat. **[5]** Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Transfer the green bean mixture to a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Bake for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and sprinkle generously with additional crispy onions. Return to the oven for 5 to 10 minutes, until the onions are golden and the casserole is bubbling at the edges. Let the casserole rest for 5 minutes before scooping.

INGREDIENTS (crispy onions)

1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced into rings
1 cup buttermilk
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
Vegetable oil, for frying

DIRECTIONS [1] Soak the sliced onions in buttermilk for 20 minutes. Mix the flour and salt in a shallow bowl. **[2]** Heat oil in a deep skillet over medium-high heat. **[3]** Dredge the onions in the flour mixture, and fry in batches until golden, about 2 to 3 minutes per batch. Drain on paper towels.



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DISCOVER South Carolina

Local flavor: 2026 trends

Fresh ideas, bold flavors and the creative spark shaping the year ahead

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM

A new year always stirs up a new appetite. One that craves novelty just as much as comfort. In 2026 that appetite is leading us somewhere exciting. Local chefs and restaurants are pushing past familiar borders and leaning into flavor mashups, global influences and techniques that invite a little curiosity back into the kitchen. It's a year defined by reinvention: classic dishes getting smart updates, unexpected ingredients moving into the spotlight and creativity showing up in ways that make you pause mid-bite. This edition of Local Flavor explores the trends shaping how we will cook and eat in the year ahead. Whether it's a clever twist on a beloved staple or something boldly unfamiliar, these are the dishes proving that the most memorable meals are the ones that surprise us, and the ones that make us excited to cook again.



LITTLE PIES, BIG COMFORT
These cottage pie bites stole the spotlight at Skull Creek Boathouse's recent Flavors Without Borders event. Each one is a tiny, golden bundle of comfort, with crisp pastry holding a hearty beef filling and a swirl of mashed potatoes toasted just enough to add color and warmth.



A PERFECT IRISH PAIR
Flavors Without Borders proved that Redbreast 12 and cottage pie bites are a natural match. The whiskey's honeyed sweetness and soft spice mirror the savory filling and silky potatoes, creating a warm, layered bite that feels straight from Ireland.

A taste of Ireland

A PLAYFUL TWIST ON COTTAGE PIE THAT'S IDEAL FOR WINTER ENTERTAINING

Living in the Lowcountry comes with plenty of perks, and one of the best is the steady stream of creative wine dinners and themed events our restaurants dream up. 2026 is all about merging flavors and unleashing creativity. And Skull Creek Boathouse recently hosted such an event that stood out, a globe-trotting evening crafted by general manager ***Chris Butler*** and executive chef ***Jesus Lopez***. The event was called Flavors Without Borders, and it sent guests on a five-course journey through Italy, Ireland, Spain, Mexico and France. The night began with a classic Old Fashioned and only got better from there. Of all the dishes served, one small bite from the Ireland course kept the crowd talking. The team was kind enough to share the recipe for their cottage pie bites, a playful twist on the pub staple that tastes even better than it looks.

SKULL CREEK BOATHOUSE

Cottage pie bites

Think of these bites as comfort food dressed up for company. They deliver everything you love about a traditional cottage pie, only wrapped in crisp puff pastry and sized for snacking. The filling is rich and savory, the potatoes pipe into soft little peaks, and the cheddar brings the whole thing together. They're easy to assemble and even easier to disappear from the tray.

INGREDIENTS (meat filling)

1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 onion, finely diced
1 small ***carrot, diced***
1 garlic clove, minced
16 ounces ground beef
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 tablespoon Worcestershire
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 tablespoon flour
1/3 cup beef stock
1/4 cup green peas



DIRECTIONS [1] Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat.**[2]** Add onion, carrot and garlic. Saute until softened, 5 to 7 minutes. **[3]** Add ground beef and cook until browned, breaking it up as it cooks. **[4]** Stir in tomato paste, Worcestershire, thyme, salt and pepper. **[5]** Sprinkle flour over the mixture and stir for 1 minute. **[6]** Pour in beef stock. Simmer about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until thickened. **[7]** Stir in peas. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.

INGREDIENTS (mashed potato topping)

2 medium potatoes, peeled and chopped
1 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoons milk, more if needed
Grated cheddar cheese
Salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS [1] Boil potatoes in salted water until tender, 10 to 12 minutes. **[2]** Drain and mash with butter, milk, salt and pepper. **[3]** Let cool so the mixture thickens and pipes more easily.

ASSEMBLY [1] Heat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease a muffin pan. **[2]** Cut and shape puff pastry into each cavity. Bake about 6 minutes until lightly golden. Remove from oven. **[3]** Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees. Fill each pastry cup about two-thirds full with meat filling. **[4]** Pipe mashed potatoes over the top. Add a pinch of grated cheddar. **[5]** Bake about 10 minutes, long enough for the potatoes to firm up.

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WHAT CHEFS LOVE

We asked local food experts for their favorite culinary trend for 2026.



THE SEA PINES RESORT
"My favorite trend for 2026 will be the continued push toward healthy and sustainable food items. Our guests continue to seek out vegetable-forward dishes with whole grains and health-forward sauces. This includes a shift toward fish- and poultry-focused dishes."
— Chef Benjamin Harris

HILTON HEAD OLIVE OILS & BALSAMICS
"I see customers looking for more balance in how they cook and what they consume. They want to balance health, wellness and flavor. As information about gut health, fiber, protein and healthy fats such as olive oil becomes more available, people are choosing to eat more mindfully. I believe the days of 'fat-free' or 'cabbage soup' diet trends are gone. Consumers today are more knowledgeable and information-driven than ever. It shows in how they choose ingredients and what they cook with. We are seeing a real surge in traditional cooking methods and, of course, balance."
— Rachel Lively





THE SOUR LOAF CO.
"For 2026 I'm loving the quiet revolt back to real, hyper-local food. Folks are drifting from industrial shortcuts and reaching for ingredients with heart — grown nearby, handled with intention and made by actual humans. And with it comes this sweet return to community. Neighbors knowing their baker, their farmer, their miller again. Good food doesn't need a lab; it needs time, soil and people who care. That's the future I'm excited for."
— Chef Lindsay Shockley

CACTUS STREET CANTINA
"I'm loving the fusion and cross of cultural trends. The blending of flavors from different parts of the world can put a different spin on dishes."
— Lauren Jordan



ASK THE CHEF

Question:

Dear Chef,

How can I get creative cooking at home? I want to blend different flavors and cultures, but I'm not sure where to begin.

— Curious by Calibogue



Answer:

Dear Curious,

*According to chef **Will Overacre** of Michael Anthony's Cucina Italiana, the best place to start is surprisingly simple: begin with what you love. "First of all, know what you like and cook what you like, and start there," he said. One of the easiest ways to spark new ideas is to eat widely. Visit restaurants serving cuisines you're curious about, and pay attention to the flavors that make you think, "I want to try this at home." Once something inspires you, look it up and give it a go in your own kitchen.*

Chef Overacre adds that every cook already has a personal "flavor fingerprint" in the fridge. "If you're a Creole person, you're always going to have celery, peppers and onions. Some people always have mustard. There are just things you always keep around," he said. Use those familiar ingredients as your base, then start branching out. If you love chicken, for example, stick with chicken, but learn eight new ways to cook it. Try an Asian-inspired version one night, a Spanish-style dish the next, then something with Indian spices after that. The ingredient stays comfortable; the flavors get adventurous.

And if something flops? That's part of the fun. "Don't be afraid to try new things," he said with a laugh. "If at first you don't succeed, eat it and try again." Chef Overacre notes cooking is a lot like golf. "You can play your whole life and never get good at it. You get mad every time, and then happy when you finally do something right."

The trick is to keep swinging. Keep tasting. Keep experimenting. Creativity in the kitchen isn't about perfection. It's about staying curious enough to try again.



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Savory ice cream

A PLAYFUL TREND THAT BLENDS HISTORY, TECHNIQUE AND A TOUCH OF WHIMSY



©CARRIE HIRSCH

COASTAL CREAM Carrie Hirsch's smoked oyster ice cream shows just how playful and refined savory ice cream can be. Served in gleaming half shells and finished with bright lemon zest, it blends creamy sweetness with a gentle brininess that feels perfectly at home in the Lowcountry.



Savory ice cream is having a moment. It is surprising, fun and far more rooted in history than most people expect. While the idea of herbs, cheeses or vegetables in a frozen treat might seem unusual, many of these combinations are not new at all. Parmesan ice cream appeared in European kitchens in the 1700s long before it resurfaced on modern tasting menus. Today's chefs are simply building on that foundation and pushing it in new directions.

Carrie Hirsch of The Culinary Institute of the South explains the appeal. "Savory ice cream is a growing culinary trend that challenges the traditional perception of the frozen treat as exclusively a dessert. While a cold, creamy base remains consistent, these innovative variations incorporate ingredients typically found in main courses or appetizers, all of which add rich umami or piquant notes." She emphasizes that these flavors are not gimmicks, but thoughtful nods to long-standing techniques and traditions.

Modern versions explore everything from olive oil and balsamic vinegar to roasted garlic, sweet corn, tomato, miso and even foie gras. Some are served with seafood or roasted vegetables, while others appear between courses as palate cleansers. The thrill comes from the contrast: silky sweetness meeting salty, earthy or herbaceous notes in a way that feels unexpected, yet balanced. As Hirsch puts it, this trend "expands the boundaries of traditional frozen confections."

CARRIE HIRSCH

Smoked oyster ice cream

A savory ice cream is a refreshing way to begin a meal as an amuse-bouche with a glass of bubbly. Unlike classic ice cream, this version excites the taste buds and hints at the flavors to come.

INGREDIENTS

1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 ounces)
2 cups cold heavy cream
1 can smoked oysters in oil (3 ounces)
Lemon zest, for garnish

DIRECTIONS [1] Drain and rinse the smoked oysters. In a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the oysters and 1/4 cup heavy cream. Cook over low heat for 5 minutes, stirring often. Do not allow to boil. Strain out the oysters and refrigerate the infused cream for 1 hour. **[2]** In a large chilled bowl, whip the remaining heavy cream with an electric mixer until stiff peaks form. **[3]** In a separate bowl, stir together the sweetened condensed milk and the oyster infusion. Fold this mixture into the whipped cream. Transfer to a freezer-safe meatloaf pan, and cover with plastic wrap. Freeze for at least 6 hours, or until firm. **[4]** Let the ice cream sit at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes before scooping. Serve 2 tablespoons in clean oyster shells, and garnish with lemon zest.





HERB-INFUSED DELIGHT Basil lemon ice cream blends two flavors not often found in dessert. The basil adds a cool, herbal note that softens the tartness of the lemon, creating a balance that is refreshing rather than sweet. To make it, steep fresh basil in warm cream, mix the infused cream with sugar, lemon juice and zest, then chill and churn until smooth and fragrant.

Common ingredients and flavors

Cheeses: *Parmesan, chèvre, burrata, blue cheese*
Herbs and spices: *Basil, rosemary, thyme, cardamom, black pepper, saffron, wasabi*
Umami additions: *Miso, soy sauce, mushrooms, roasted garlic, foie gras*
Vegetables: *Sweet corn, tomato, beet, avocado*
Meats: *Bacon, chorizo*
Other accents: *Olive oil, balsamic vinegar, Sriracha, Earl Grey tea, even mayonnaise as a stabilizer*

Keys for success

Balance: *Keep a hint of sweetness to create harmony among salty, sweet and umami elements.*
Infusion: *Steep herbs, spices and aromatics in the cream base to create subtle, layered flavor.*
Texture: *Add cheeses, roasted bits or crunchy toppings for contrast and complexity.*

How to use it

- *Serve as a palate cleanser or unexpected appetizer.*
- *Pair with soups, such as Parmesan ice cream on tomato soup.*
- *Use alongside rich or warm dishes for temperature and flavor contrast.*
- *Serve as dessert, just one that leans savory rather than sweet.*



SOUP ON A STICK Made with ripe tomatoes, cucumber and herbs, gazpacho popsicles capture all the bright, chilled flavors of traditional gazpacho but present them in a form that feels fun and unexpected. To make them, simply blend your favorite gazpacho recipe until smooth, pour it into popsicle molds, and freeze until firm.



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HOW TO

Build your own seacuterie board

A COASTAL TWIST ON THE CLASSIC GRAZING BOARD

Charcuterie boards have been trending for what feels like ages, while another style has been quietly waiting its turn. In 2026 the seacuterie board finally steps into the spotlight, and in the Lowcountry there may be no better place to embrace it. A seacuterie board follows the same principles as a traditional charcuterie spread, only seafood takes center stage. According to David Sprowles of Nibbles N Bites Catering, everything starts with quality. "Our seacuterie boards start with superb fresh, sustainably caught seafood," he said, noting that freshness shapes both flavor and texture. His approach is simple: choose well, handle gently, and let the seafood shine.

For Sprowles, seacuterie is more than a trend. It mirrors the rhythm of coastal life. "Living on Hilton Head Island, coastal living is in our backyard, so are seacuterie boards," he said. He often smokes his own seafood for added depth, a technique he admits has become something of an obsession. Yet underneath the creativity, his philosophy stays grounded. "We love food, freshness and flavors. Food is love, and we respect the process and the seasonal flavors."

A seacuterie board never needs to be complicated or overly styled. Think of it as a colorful, balanced spread that is easy to assemble and even easier to enjoy, whether you live by the coast or simply want to channel the feeling for an evening.





©NIBBLES N BITES CATERING

SMOKED AND SAVORY This smoked fish board from Nibbles N Bites Catering shows how abundant and beautiful coastal entertaining can be. Layered with vibrant slices of seared tuna, rich smoked salmon, creamy dips, bright mango, lemon wedges and fresh herbs, it brings together color, texture and flavor in a way that feels both elegant and relaxed.

1. Build your base

Choose a sturdy foundation. A wooden board, slate or tray works well, and if you are serving cold or raw items, line the surface with crushed ice or even a layer of salt for temperature control and visual appeal. Add small bowls first to anchor the layout. Use them for lemon-garlic oil, salmon dip, cocktail sauce or seaweed salad. Once your structure is set, build outward.

2. Cast your seafood lineup

Now bring in the stars. Tinned sardines, anchovies, mussels or tuna can stay in their tins or be transferred to small bowls. Cooked shrimp, oysters on the half shell, crab dip, lobster salad, smoked salmon, vegan caviar or pre-cooked mussels all work beautifully. Use what is fresh, what you enjoy and what you can source locally. As Sprowles notes, "Our fresh seafood is carefully sourced to ensure quality and safety."

3. Add the sides that shine

With the seafood in place, fill in the supporting cast. Brie, feta or sliced hard cheeses add richness and contrast. For crunch, reach for water crackers, toasted baguette slices, seaweed chips or kelp chips, keeping them away from wetter items so they stay crisp. Fresh and pickled elements bring brightness and balance. Lemon wedges, grapes, persimmons, berries, red onion slices, olives, capers or pickled kelp all pair naturally with seafood's briny depth.

4. The final touch

Finish with the details that make the board feel polished. Fresh dill, chives or parsley add aroma and color, while grainy mustard, crème fraîche or a light vinaigrette provide dipping options. Small tongs, picks and spoons keep everything organized and easy for guests to navigate.



©NIBBLES N BITES CATERING

BOARD OF BOUNTY This stunning board from Nibbles N Bites Catering is a full celebration of coastal abundance. Packed with seared tuna, smoked salmon, lobster salad, clams, mussels, shrimp and an array of bright garnishes, it delivers a mix of textures and flavors that invite guests to linger and sample.





A new luxury in chocolate

INSIDE THE PISTACHIO-PACKED TREAT BLENDING MIDDLE EASTERN TRADITION WITH MODERN OBSESSION



SECRET INGREDIENT

Dubai chocolate is one of those ingredients that has gone from curiosity to obsession almost overnight. What began at Dubai's Fix Dessert Chocolatier as an inventive, knafeh-inspired treat has become one of the most coveted sweets online. The bar is glossy and hand crafted, filled with a sweet pistachio-tahini cream and layered with crisp shards of toasted kadayif pastry. The texture is what stops people in their tracks. It is silky, nutty, crunchy and just a little nostalgic. One bite made it an instant internet moment. "Dubai chocolate elevates everything it touches," said Laura Castro, owner of The Coffee Lab coffee trailer in Bluffton. "It is smooth, creamy, lightly crunchy and unforgettable. It is the kind of flavor that makes people close their eyes on the first taste or sip. For us, it turns a latte into a little luxury moment."

At its core, Dubai chocolate is a modern reinterpretation of Middle Eastern dessert traditions. The filling echoes the flavors of knafeh, blending pistachio paste, tahini and sometimes cream into something both sweet and subtly savory. The crunch comes from kadayif, the delicate strands of shredded phyllo dough toasted until golden and folded into the filling to create its signature snap. The entire bar is finished with high-quality milk or dark chocolate, tempered to a glossy shell that breaks cleanly when you bite into it. It is craftsmanship wrapped in indulgence. Once TikTok discovered it, demand exploded, and major brands like Hershey's and Lindt rushed to release their own versions.



©THE COFFEE LAB

A LUXE LIFT The Coffee Lab coffee trailer in Bluffton has tapped into a winning combination by pairing its signature brew with rich Dubai chocolate.

Part of the bar's appeal is the way it bridges cultures, and flavor blending is shaping up to be a defining trend for 2026. For those who grew up with knafeh, halva or pistachio-rich pastries, the flavor feels familiar and nostalgic. For others, it offers an accessible entry point into Middle Eastern sweets. It is comforting yet new, decadent yet balanced. Even the name carries its own mystique. "Dubai chocolate" suggests glamour, craftsmanship and a touch of luxury, even now that mass-market versions are appearing on supermarket shelves.

From Dubai to your kitchen

Can you make it at home? Close enough. Layer tempered chocolate in a mold, and fill it with a mixture of pistachio paste, tahini, powdered sugar and a splash of cream. Fold in finely crushed, toasted kadayif for the essential crunch, cap it with more chocolate, and chill until set. It will not be identical to the bars crafted in Dubai, but it captures the essence: creamy, crunchy, melt-in-your-mouth luxury in a single bite.

The ways to use Dubai chocolate are as indulgent as the bar itself. Enjoy it as is for the viral crunchy-creamy pistachio-kadayif experience, or turn it into something even richer by spreading granola butter or extra pistachio cream between two pieces for a decadent sandwich. Its components work beautifully in desserts. Fold the filling into energy bites, crush the bars into a crust for cheesecakes and cookie pies, or layer it with strawberries and whipped cream for elegant parfaits. Bakers can swirl the pistachio filling into babka or breakfast buns, and brunch lovers can drizzle it over waffles and pancakes or melt it into a glaze for savory-leaning dishes. Whatever you dream up, remember to keep the bars cool or refrigerated if they contain fresh elements. That signature snap and silkiness are half the magic. *LL*



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Sparking a sea change

National Geographic Explorer Barton Seaver shares how seafood can shape healthier people, stronger communities and a more sustainable future

STORY BY MICHAELA SATTERFIELD ROBERTS + PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRETA RYBUS



When most people look at a plate of seafood, they see the catch of the day. When Barton Seaver, chef turned National Geographic Explorer, looks at a plate of seafood, he sees an opportunity to change the world.

As a self-proclaimed "seafood evangelist," Seaver left nearly two decades in the restaurant world behind to enter his current role for National Geographic in 2010. He was compelled by the opportunity to spread the word about the impact of seafood, influencing the world on a larger scale than a restaurant could offer.

"I saw opportunity to expand the traditional footprint of a chef's role and begin to talk more broadly outside of the confines of a restaurant kitchen," Seaver says.

He went out with a bang. Before exiting the restaurant scene, Seaver was named America's "Chef of the Year" by *Esquire* in 2009 while working at a restaurant called Blue Ridge in Washington D.C. For Seaver, though, it's never been about the esteem.

"I do the work I do because I believe it's our purpose in life to be a good neighbor, and that's what sustainability is ultimately about."



SEAFOOD STANDARD-BEARER
Chef, author and sustainability advocate Barton Seaver has emerged as one of the nation's leading voices on responsible seafood. You can meet him at this year's Hilton Head Island Seafood Festival. Seaver will lead a Master Class on Friday, Feb. 27, and take the spotlight on the Celebrity Chef Demonstration Stage on Saturday, Feb. 28.







©SEAFOOD THAT MATTERS

SEAFOOD, SIMPLIFIED In Seaver's kitchen, seafood becomes a canvas for clarity and balance. He pairs clean flavors with careful methods, from slow-poached fish layered with lemon to vivid salmon served with fresh herbs and quick-sautéed vegetables. Even his composed lobster plates honor the ingredient first, proving that beauty can arise from restraint, not excess.

A new way to see seafood

Seaver views seafood as a tool that can make a positive impact in numerous ways. It offers nutrition that can influence the course of public health. Decisions made about sourcing by restaurants and other consumers have potential to steer the economy. It can even be a piece of the puzzle in addressing environmental issues, such as climate change.

Writing is one way Seaver endeavors to inspire others to use the tool of seafood more often. His book, *American Seafood: Heritage, Culture & Cookery from Sea to Shining Sea* received the International Association of Culinary Professionals People's Choice Award in 2018.

The latest addition to Seaver's repertoire of nine books, *The Blue Food Cookbook*, was co-authored by Andrew Zimmern and hit the shelves in October 2025.





In his books Seaver sets out to shatter myths that often cause home cooks to shy away from cooking with seafood. Among these myths is the belief that seafood is difficult to both shop for and prepare. He says the abundant information available about seafood often sparks confusion, which he hopes to dispel with clarity about what cooks actually need to know.

"Ultimately, my work is around giving people permission to fall in love with seafood, to make it their own and put it on the table more often," Seaver says.



SEAFOOD FORWARD Barton sees seafood as far more than a meal. In his view, it can restore ecosystems, strengthen brain and body health and spark real change in the way we eat, the way we govern and the way we shape our food systems.

Diversity from the dock

One aspect of seafood that drives Seaver's own love for it is diversity. To demonstrate this, he contrasts seafood with poultry.

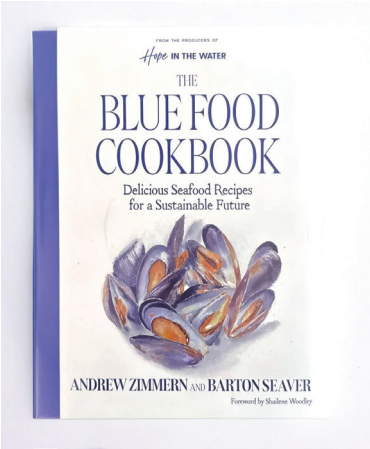
"No offense to chicken, but white or dark, and that's about it," Seaver says. "Let's talk about salmon."

Seaver proceeds to rattle off a long list of salmon varieties, including Sockeye, Coho, Chum, Pink, and King. In addition, different methods of preparation mean a wide variety of textures can be achieved with the pink-orange fish.

"And that's just the salmon category," Seaver says.

He likes to include diversity on each plate he prepares, incorporating a variety of ingredients to add interest to the dish. Among Seaver's favorite ingredients, citrus is high on the list for its bright flavor. He is fond of bluefish and mackerel for their "culinary versatility." Seaver does most of his cooking on





Related reading

The Blue Food Cookbook
BY ANDREW ZIMMERN AND BARTON SEAVER
Created in partnership with the James Beard and Emmy-nominated PBS docuseries *Hope in the Water*, *The Blue Food Cookbook* serves as a modern guide to cooking seafood responsibly. This first-of-its-kind "sustainable seafood bible" answers common questions about sourcing, safety and sustainability while offering more than 145 recipes that celebrate fish, shellfish and edible plants from oceans, lakes and rivers. With clear buying advice, essential techniques and globally inspired dishes, it shows home cooks how to enjoy seafood confidently, deliciously and with care for the waterways that provide it.

the five-foot-wide Argentine wood grill he built himself in the backyard of his home in Maine.

"A piece of bluefish off the grill with a basil walnut pesto and a grilled lemon on top of that – that's about as good as it gets," Seaver says.

Casting the message

When Seaver isn't at the grill cooking up diverse flavors, you can find him globe trotting to spread the good news about seafood.

This year Seaver plans to attend the Hilton Head Seafood Festival as a part of the talent lineup. His goal is to continue the work of "seafood evangelism" at his third festival appearance. In addition to serving up some delicious seafood, he hopes to spark more love for seafood with his enthusiasm and expertise.

"I'm going to bring my joy, my passion, my deep expertise, and my commitment to all things salty, scaled, and shelled onto the stage," Seaver says. "I'm going to preach the gospel of all things delicious from the sea." *LL*

SAVE THE DATES

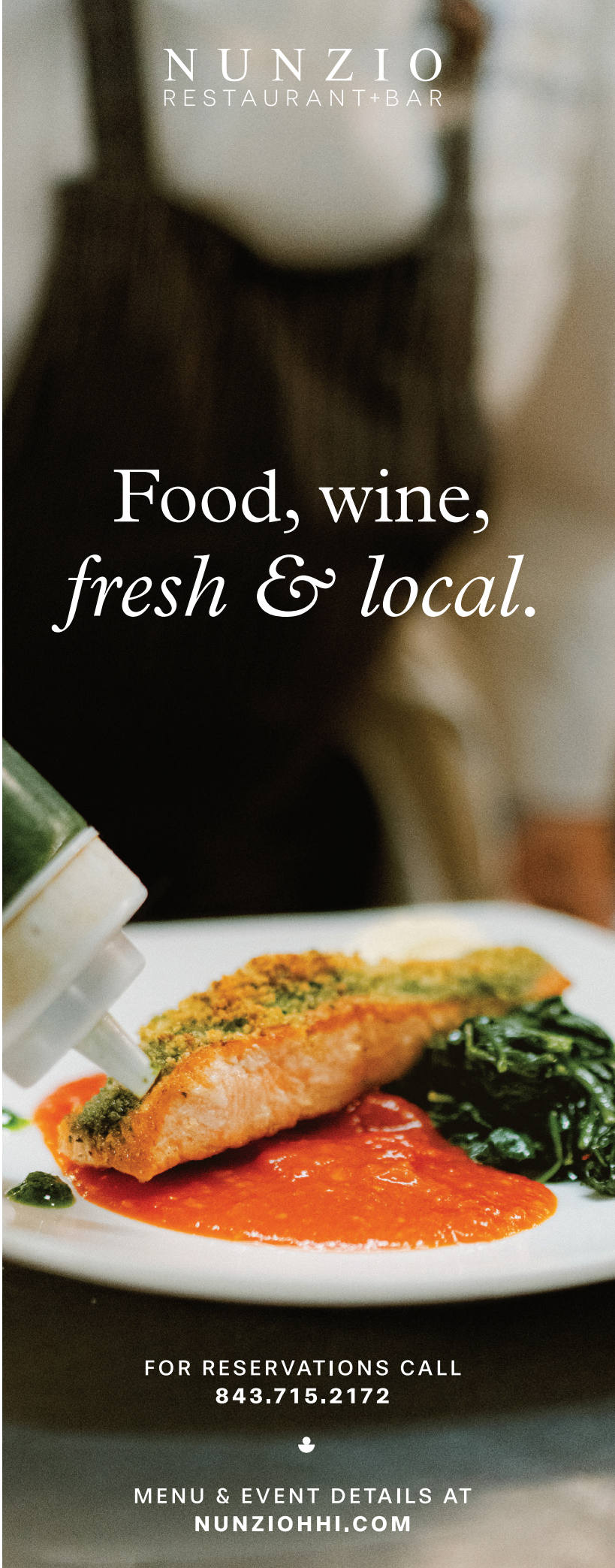
Hilton Head Island Seafood Festival

FEBRUARY 23-MARCH 1

2026 SCHEDULE

Feb. 23-27: Lowcountry Experiences on the Water, Hudson's, $135
Feb. 23-28: Daufuskie Island History Experience, Daufuskie Island, $115
Feb. 25: Secrets of the Craft with Brewer John Rybicki, 4-5:30, Lincoln & South, $59
Feb. 25: Asado by the Sea, 6:30-8:30, The Beach House, $275
Feb. 26: Zero Forks Given, 6:30-8:30, Omni Hilton Head Oceanfront, $125
Feb. 27: Pig Pickin' & Oyster Roast, 6:30-8:30, Coastal Discovery Museum, $140
Feb. 28: Saturday Seafood Festival, 1-5 p.m., Coastal Discovery Museum, $20
Feb. 28: After Party, 4 p.m., Lincoln & South, $10
March 1: Kegs + Eggs, 10 a.m.-noon, Lincoln & South, $60

Tickets available at: ***hiltonheadseafoodfestival.com***



FROM SCRATCH

Wild mushroom risotto

IMPRESS WITH A RESTAURANT-QUALITY DISH THAT CAN BE MADE AT HOME

STORY + PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEA WILKINS

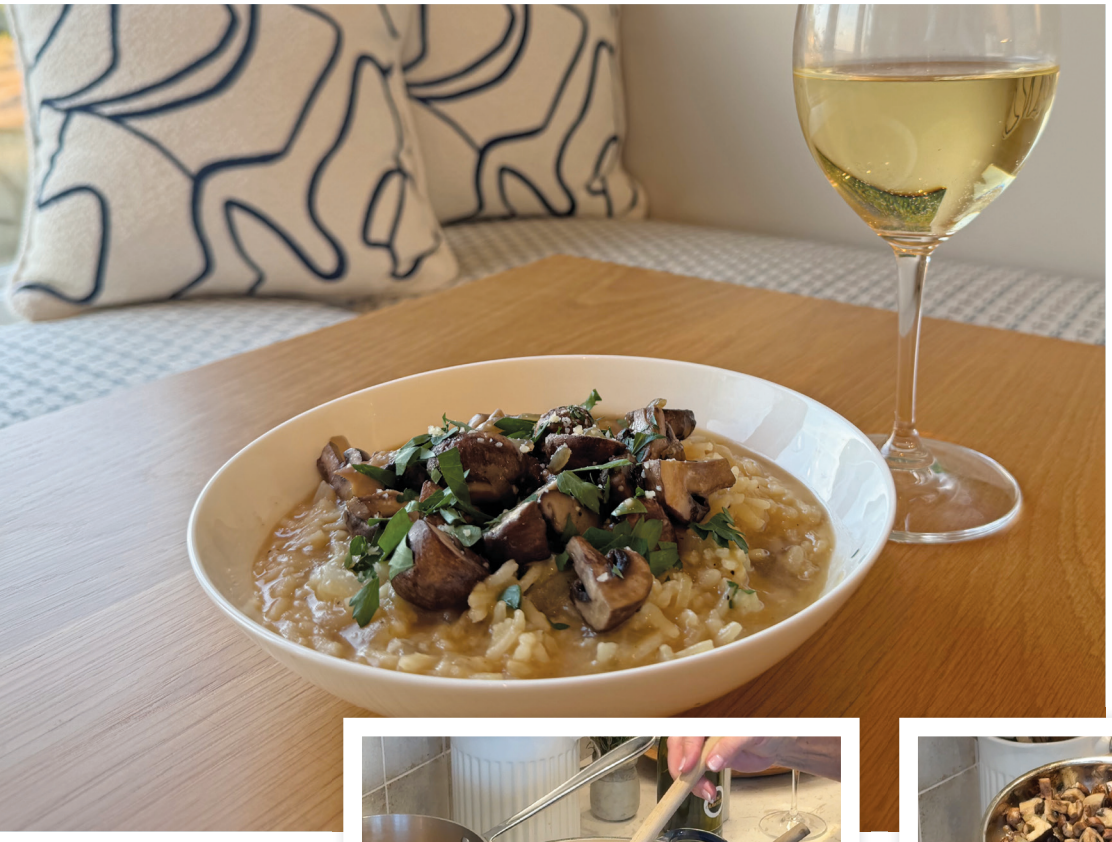


Risotto is often left for the professionals. Creamy, rich and perfectly balanced, it sounds too complex for the home chef, but LOCAL Life publisher ***Lori Goodridge-Cribb*** proves it's all in the timing. Over low heat, sweet onions caramelize, and Arborio rice simmers in chicken stock and white wine. A little consistent stirring makes the magic happen, creating a thick, luxurious dish worth indulging in. When topped with wild mushrooms, this elegant risotto brings restaurant-quality to your dinner table.



Watch & learn

Watch Lori prepare this dish "From Scratch" on LOCAL Life's YouTube Channel ***@LocalLifeSC****.*



COLD-DAY COMFORT When it's cold out, nothing hits the spot like a dish that warms you from within. This wild mushroom risotto delivers soothing, earthy flavors that feel right at home on a cool winter day.



SECRET TO CREAMINESS Ladling in warm stock, little by little, helps the rice release its starch slowly, creating the creamy texture that defines a perfect risotto.



MUSHROOM MAGIC The sautéed mushrooms on top give the risotto a rich, earthy depth that balances the creamy rice and brings the whole dish to life.

Wild mushroom risotto

INGREDIENTS

2 cups Arborio rice
6 cups chicken stock
8 ounces baby bella mushrooms, halved
4 ounces shiitake mushrooms, halved
1 whole sweet or white onion, chopped
4 tablespoons butter
1 cup Parmesan cheese
Fresh parsley, chopped
1/2 cup white wine (Lori prefers Kim Crawford's Sauvignon Blanc)

DIRECTIONS [1] Add a third of the chopped onions to a pan with mushrooms. Add remaining onions to a large pot or Dutch oven. Sauté each over medium-low heat with 2 tablespoons butter, a drizzle of olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. In a different pot, warm chicken stock over medium heat. **[2]** Add rice to the large pot with onions. Stir for a couple minutes, until rice is slightly toasted. Add white wine. Simmer until most of the liquid has been absorbed, about 3-5 minutes. **[3]** Ladle two cups of warmed chicken stock into the pot with rice and onions. Stir intermittently until liquid has mostly been absorbed, then add another cup of chicken stock. Repeat until rice is tender and desired consistency has been reached, 30-ish minutes. **[4]** Stir in Parmesan cheese. Season with more salt and pepper to taste. **[5]** Spoon risotto into bowls. Top with sautéd mushrooms, chopped parsley and more cheese if desired.


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RESTAURANT news&notes

FRESH CONCEPTS, UPDATED KITCHENS AND CHEF-DRIVEN IDEAS ARE GIVING LOCAL DINERS PLENTY TO SAVOR

BY BAILEY GILLIAM

Savor what's fresh

January arrives with cool mornings, clearer horizons and a dining scene ready to stretch its legs. New openings, refreshed menus and a few bold ideas are setting the pace for 2026, giving locals plenty of reasons to get out and enjoy what's cooking. From long-anticipated arrivals to small popups with big personality, the first month of the year offers no shortage of flavor.

NOW OPEN





Nom Nom Poke Shop

NEW RIVERSIDE/COMPASS COMMONS, BLUFFTON

Nom Nom Poke Shop opened its second location, bringing its made-to-order poke bowls from Savannah to Bluffton's New Riverside Village. The shop offers dine-in and takeout, with online ordering available and Uber delivery on the way. Fans know the drill: fresh ingredients, bright flavors and bowls you can customize to your heart's content. The Bluffton location mirrors the feel of the popular Bull Street original, giving the growing New Riverside community an easy, flavorful option for weeknight dinners or lunchtime cravings.





Lowcountry Soda Company

POP-UP

Lowcountry Soda Company has joined the beverage scene with its specialty "dirty sodas" made with flavored syrups, fresh fruit, cream or coconut milk. It's a simple idea that hits the spot, especially for anyone looking for something festive without alcohol. The Bluffton-based popup aims to capture everyday Lowcountry pleasures in each drink, whether it's a beach-day cooler or a treat between errands. The team is mobile for now, so check their schedule to see where they'll be pouring next.



Revive Kombucha

LOCAL MARKETS

Revive Kombucha is offering raw, small-batch kombucha brewed in Beaufort with live cultures and thoughtful ingredient pairings. Each batch is crafted for clean, bright flavor, with rotating seasonal varieties that lean into whatever's fresh. While there's no brick-and-mortar shop yet, you can find Revive at local markets and retailers like Well House Juicery and Anchored Vessel. Kombucha fans looking for a local source will appreciate this addition to the growing beverage community.



Howling Dixie

LOCAL MARKETS

Howling Dixie is turning up the heat with small-batch hot sauces made right at home and sold at markets, events and a handful of local retailers. The brand takes its name from the owner's dog, whose attitude seems to match the spice level. There's no storefront, but it's easy to track them down. Follow on Facebook for pop-up announcements, or order directly by calling or texting 631-805-2578. If you like a little kick in your kitchen, this is a fun local pick.

COMING SOON

La Nopalera Mexican Restaurant

PORT REPUBLIC STREET, DOWNTOWN BEAUFORT

La Nopalera Mexican Restaurant is getting ready to spice up downtown Beaufort with its third Lowcountry location. The family-run favorite, a go-to for generous plates and longtime local hospitality, will soon fill the former Jah'Lion Caribbean Cuisine and Emily's space on Port Republic Street. The timing is set for early in the new year. Fans can expect the same crowd-pleasing dishes and laid-back comfort that have made La Nopalera a Beaufort staple for nearly three decades. It's a welcome boost to downtown's dining mix and a fitting next step for a restaurant locals already love.



The Frozen Fiddler

THE BLUFFTON BOOKSHOP, OLD TOWN

A new chapter is about to open on Bridge Street. The Bluffton Bookshop and its companion icery, The Frozen Fiddler, are gearing up to bring fresh life to the corner near Bluffton Oyster Factory Park. The bookstore will offer fiction, nonfiction, travel picks, cookbooks and a charming children's room. Next door The Frozen Fiddler will serve pre-packaged ice cream, shaved ice and other grab-and-go treats from artisan makers. A patio, a splash of color from a planned mural and a calendar of community events will round out the space. It's shaping up to be the kind of spot where you can linger with a new read or cool off with something sweet after a walk through the park.

NEWS & NOTES

Michael Anthony's helps the next generation

Michael Anthony's Cucina Italiana recently took part in the Technical College of the Lowcountry's seventh annual Chefs Table Benefit Dinner & Auction. The restaurant donated two standout experiences: an In-Home Chef's Experience Dinner and a private hands-on cooking class. Each sold for $7,500, contributing a total of $15,000. This year's event raised $265,000 to fund scholarships, strengthen programs and expand opportunities for TCL students across the Lowcountry. With this milestone the Chefs Table has now topped $1 million raised since it began, continuing its tradition of supporting culinary education and the students who will shape the region's food scene.

Spring Island community gives back

For the fifth year in a row, the Spring Island community rallied in the spirit of giving. Residents donated 164 turkeys and nearly $65,000, helping provide Thanksgiving dinners for 850 neighbors in the Gullah community. Their support also helped supply meals twice a month for more than 650 residents and offered continued assistance to the New Life Deliverance Church food bank. The effort shows how deeply the community cares for its Lowcountry neighbors and how much impact a united island can make.

Lowcountry Fresh spread holiday cheer

Last month Lowcountry Fresh assembled Blessing Bags filled with simple essentials, and every bag purchased in the store was delivered to Bluffton Self Help to support families in need. To make each gift go further, the owners matched all donations up to $5,000. Shoppers were invited to stop in, share some goodwill and help brighten the season for Bluffton families.



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DON'T FORGET TO SHOP LIKE A LOCAL

TRY THESE

Buzzworthy bites worth seeking out

Bite into the buzz. These inventive dishes are turning heads (and taste buds) across the Lowcountry.



HANDHELD HEAVEN

Sister Sister Deli gives a Southern staple a clever upgrade with its pimento cheese hand pies. Flaky, house-made crusts surround creamy pimento cheese for a portable treat that hits all the right notes. It's comfort food you can hold in one hand and brag about with the other.

TACO 'BOUT IT

Side Hustle Brewing Co. is shaking up Tuesday nights with its walking taco special. Pick your single-serve bag of chips, choose a protein, and pile on the toppings. Eat it right from the bag while wandering the taproom, or settle in with a pint. It's fun and messy in the best way.





MEDITERRANEAN MAGIC

Jane Bistro & Bar's shrimp pesto Romesco blends Italian and Spanish influences into one standout dish. Blackened shrimp, artichokes, grape tomatoes, spinach and feta join penne in a roasted red pepper cream sauce. The result is bright, bold and as pretty on the plate as it is satisfying.

BRUNCH, ELEVATED

Bad Biscuit's biscuit French toast takes brunch in a playful new direction. Fluffy biscuits become golden French toast, topped with caramelized apples, powdered sugar and a drizzle of caramel and rum cream sauce. It's the kind of dish that makes you rethink breakfast.





HOLY CREPE

Charlie's L'Étoile Verte turns out chicken crepes that feel tailor-made for cooler days. Tender chicken, mushrooms and spinach are tucked into delicate crepes, covered in béchamel, topped with Swiss and baked until everything melts together. Cozy, classic and a little bit indulgent.

CAJUN TWIST

The Quarterdeck's crawfish eggrolls bring a punch of Louisiana flavor to the coast. Crawfish, spicy chorizo, corn and the Southern trinity are wrapped in a crisp shell, dusted with Tajín and paired with zesty QD rémoulade. Order one for the table, then see who reaches fastest.





TAKE FLIGHT

Bye Bye Birdie is reimagining deviled eggs with rotating flights. Right now you'll find three Italian-inspired versions: Pepperoni and cheese, margherita and supreme. They're playful, unexpected and almost too good to share. Almost.

POLISH PIZZA

Dough Boys Pizza's Ryan's rogi channels pierogi flavors in pizza form. A mashed potato base is topped with bacon, onions and a blend of house cheeses and cheddar. A dollop of sour cream seals the deal. It's carb-on-carb comfort, and we're crazy about it.





SOUTHERN INDULGENCE ON A BUN

SliderBar Bluffton's chicken-fried steak slider delivers big flavor in a small package. A crispy fried steak patty meets garlic-roasted mashed potatoes and rosemary turkey gravy. It's a full Southern supper, conveniently tucked inside a bun.

WRAP IT UP

GG's Restaurant & Bar turns comfort food into a crowd-pleasing handheld with the Say Grace chicken, bacon and mac wrap. Fried chicken, mac-n-cheese, bacon and tangy BBQ sauce are pressed into a grilled wrap. Feeling bold? Toss the chicken in your favorite wing flavor.



Quick Bites

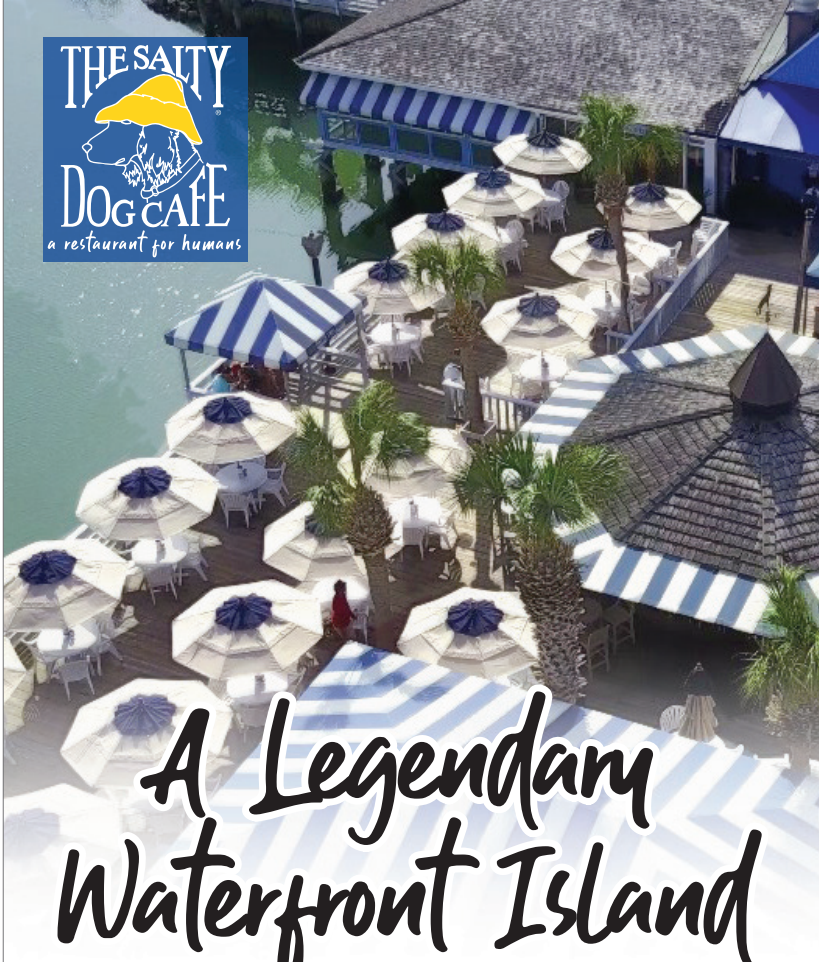
NUGGETS FROM THE LOCAL FOOD & BEVERAGE SCENE

The Purple Cow *is open at 32 Office Park Road, giving locals one more reason to treat themselves. If you've heard the buzz, it's deserved.*

A few familiar names have signed off for good. ***Nick's Steak & Seafood*** *and* ***Zunzibar*** *on Hilton Head,* ***Odd Birds Cafe & Market*** *in Bluffton,* ***Hardee's*** *in Port Royal and* ***Duke's BBQ*** *in Ridgeland have all closed permanently. Raise a glass to the good meals and memories.*

Seasonal shutters are also in play. ***Boujee Bowls*** *in Beaufort and* ***Frye's Corner*** *and* ***Scoopasaurus*** *on Daufuskie are taking their winter naps and plan to wake back up in March.*

Alexander's Restaurant & Wine Bar *will take a break starting Jan. 5 for renovations. Expect it back in the spring looking refreshed and ready for another busy season.*



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WWMD

What would Margaret drink?

Margaret Pearman, *a certified sommelier with the Court of Master Sommeliers, curates the celebrated wine list at Charlie's L'Etoile Verte. For January, she offers her take on Michelin's move into winery ratings.*

Wine's next gold standard

MICHELIN UNCORKS A NEW CHAPTER WITH THE MICHELIN GRAPE

Since 1900 the Michelin Guide has shaped the way we talk about great food and hospitality. Its stars have launched the careers of chefs, filled reservation books around the world and influenced how diners decide where to spend a special night out. Michelin's secret sauce has always been its inspectors. They show up quietly, judge consistently and prize skill, creativity and genuine hospitality.



RAISING THE BAR Beginning in 2026, Michelin Grape will debut in Burgundy and Bordeaux, regions long known for setting the standard in winemaking.

In 2026 Michelin will tackle a new frontier called Michelin Grape. Wineries will soon be vying for a place on the list, knowing that an endorsement from Michelin carries real weight. The idea builds on the guide's long tradition of precision and high standards, now applied to the world of wine.

Inspectors will judge wineries and wine programs on terroir expression, sustainability, craftsmanship and the overall experience for guests. It's not just about what's in the glass. It's how the wine reflects its place and the people who make it. Just as chefs chase stars, vintners and sommeliers will now have a new badge of honor to aim for: the Michelin Grape.

For wine enthusiasts this offers a trusted compass in a world full of options. Whether you're planning a tasting trip, stocking your home bar or simply curious about new producers, the Michelin Grape will highlight the standouts. For winemakers it provides a global stage to show what thoughtful viticulture and good hospitality can achieve.

Raise a glass. A new era of wine appreciation is about to begin, and it might make choosing your next bottle a whole lot more fun.

The Michelin Grape

For wine lovers Michelin's new rating system introduces a simple guide for choosing standout producers.



3 Grapes: *Exceptional estates you can trust in any vintage.*

2 Grapes: *Excellent producers known for consistent, high-quality wines.*

1 Grape: *Very good makers whose wines show character and shine in strong years.*

Selected: *Dependable producers chosen for well-crafted, enjoyable wines.*

Zero proof, full flavor

BRIGHT, LOCAL MOCKTAILS HELP EASE INTO JANUARY WITH CLARITY AND STYLE

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM

A fresh year calls for fresh sips and January's lineup is all about flavor without the alcohol. *This month, we're celebrating the art of the mocktail with vibrant, tasty drinks crafted by our favorite local makers. From bright citrus blends to rich winter fruits, these zero-proof creations offer a delicious way to reset, recharge and savor the season with clarity and style.*



BURNT CHURCH DISTILLERY

Grapefruit basil soda

Crisp, citrusy and completely spirit-free, this mocktail from the team at Burnt Church Distillery blends herbal freshness with ruby-red grapefruit for a bright, refreshing mocktail, perfect for a clean start to the year.

INGREDIENTS

3 ounces Amethyst Grapefruit Basil
1 1/2 ounces soda water
1/4 ounce simple syrup
Ruby red grapefruit

DIRECTIONS [1] Combine Amethyst, soda water and simple syrup into a rocks glass. **[2]** Stir, top with ice, and garnish with a basil leaf and grapefruit wheel.



CASSANDRA'S KITCHEN STORE

Dark cherry lime

Bold, bright and vibrant, this mocktail from Cassandra's Kitchen Store layers deep cherry richness with fresh lime for a refreshing, spirit-free sip that tastes lively and indulgent.

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup dark cherries
1/2 cup fresh lime juice
2 tablespoons Lakewood Organic Pure Black Cherry Juice
1 can Pellegrino Dark Morello Cherry & Pomegranate
Lime wedge

DIRECTIONS [1] In a large glass, add the cherries, lime juice and cherry juice, and muddle slightly. **[2]** Fill the glass with crushed ice, and then fill to the top with the Pellegrino. **[3]** Garnish with a lime wedge.



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Clear minds, clean starts

HOW HEALTHIER DRINKING HABITS AND SMARTER SWAPS ARE SHAPING 2026

STORY + PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE PECK



AMETHYST NA BOTANICAL SPIRITS

Raspberry rose spritzer

Bright, floral and refreshingly light, this zero-proof spritzer lets Amethyst's Blueberry Ginger Mint shine.

INGREDIENTS

2 ounces Amethyst Blueberry Ginger Mint
1 ounce Roseade Spritzer Rose Lemonade
1 ounce Poppi Raspberry Rose soda

DIRECTIONS Garnish with a lemon wheel and a couple of raspberries.

©AMETHYST NA BOTANICAL SPIRITS

Thinking of cutting back on alcohol this month? You're not alone. Dry January has gained significant traction over the last few years. Young adults were the first to embrace the effort, but its popularity has expanded across all age groups. A survey conducted by Morning Consult reports that 22% of U.S. adults age 21 and older said they are participating in Dry January in 2026, compared to 17% who say they participated in 2023.

For many people, December is full of social gatherings, family events, holiday meals and New Year's celebrations, which can lead to an overindulgence in adult beverages. Dry January offers an opportunity to eliminate alcohol and help reset drinking habits. Health concerns like consuming excess calories, poor sleep quality and increased anxiety are among the reasons people might give Dry January a try.

As a result of this social shift, the beverage industry has seen an impressive rise in demand for nonalcoholic (NA) beverages. For many, drinking a beer or enjoying a glass of wine is typical at social gatherings. A growing offering of NA beverages makes it easy to swap out alcohol during happy hour while still enjoying time with friends.

Andrew Kelly has been the beer buyer at Roller's Wine & Spirits on Hilton Head Island for four years. Recently he has seen huge growth among the offerings in the nonalcoholic beverage industry. "It's a bigger section now. It's much bigger than it used to be. I used to have a tiny little shelf with a couple of things on it, and now it's grown into an enormous undertaking," he said.

Kelly noted that after experiencing positive health changes, some past Dry January participants have altered their drinking habits well past the start of February. "I've got regular customers that did Dry January and then they continued throughout the

year," he said. "One particular couple who buys a certain brand of NA wine just stopped drinking alcohol during January, and it's been two years for them."

Kelly, along with Stephanie Skager, Roller's Wine & Spirits manager and sommelier, shared some nonalcoholic beverage suggestions for those looking for a new NA drink to try during Dry January.



A light touch

The Classic is a nonalcoholic malt beverage crafted by Ceebo Brew Co. in Mount Pleasant. It's described as a crisp pilsner with a light flavor profile and a small citrus note. "You can't really tell that it is an NA beer and, honestly, it's really refreshing for people who want something light," Kelly said.

An IPA that behaves



Chaosmachine India Pale Ale is a nonalcoholic beer crafted by Burial in Asheville. "They are very well known in the IPA world. They are probably one of the best breweries in the region," Kelly said. "It's got a really good flavor to it and hop structure — just alcohol removed."



Bubbles without the burden

Joie Sans Souci, which means "fun without worry," is an alcohol-removed sparkling wine made in France. It's available in single-serve glass bottles or in a traditional wine bottle in both white and rosé varieties. "I personally think in NAs, the sparklers have really been the standouts as far as flavor and being close to wine," Skager said.







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A spirit that doesn't spike

Little Saints St. Ember is another nonalcoholic spirit that was originally launched on the TV show "Shark Tank." The spirit contains lion's mane mushroom, which can act as a mood enhancer. It mixes well with ginger beer or can be used as a substitute for mezcal or tequila in a margarita or mule recipe. "You're not getting a buzz, but you're getting a little lift," Skager said.



Minty without the mischief

Little Saints also crafts a nonalcoholic mojito sparkling cocktail with reishi and damiana. The drink can be served on the rocks or consumed straight from the can. "You can just throw it in your cooler on the boat or on the beach as an alternative," Skager said.

Botanicals, bottled bright

Amethyst is a nonalcoholic spirit option focused on botanical flavors. It's produced locally in Bluffton and is a Burnt Church Distillery brand. It's crafted in four flavors: Lemon Cucumber Serrano, Blueberry Ginger Mint, Grapefruit Basil and Watermelon Lime. Each variety starts with distilled water and is then infused to create its unique flavor profile. The spirit can be served neat, at a 1:1 ratio with mixers, or combined with cocktail ingredients.





DRY DELIGHTS Golden-hour light catches two vibrant, alcohol-free cocktails, proof that going zero proof does not mean sacrificing color or creativity. Whether you are easing into Dry January or exploring new yearlong habits, drinks like these offer all the refreshment and ritual without the buzz.

Smart swaps

Looking to keep the ritual without the alcohol? These easy swaps let you enjoy familiar flavors while staying committed to Dry January or anytime you want a lighter option.

- *If you love **prosecco**, try an alcohol-removed sparkling wine with bright bubbles and a clean finish.*
- *If you order **gin & tonics**, reach for a botanical NA spirit mixed with tonic and a squeeze of lime for the same refreshing bite.*
- *If **margaritas** are your go-to, mix a citrus-forward NA spirit with lime juice and ginger beer for a zesty, tequila-free twist.*
- *If you crave a cold **beer**, pick up a crisp NA pilsner or IPA that delivers full flavor without the buzz.*
- *If you like **whiskey** cocktails, try an oak-aged NA spirit with soda and orange peel for a smooth, smoky stand-in.*
- *If you enjoy **spritzes**, combine NA aperitif-style spirits with soda water and a citrus wheel for a refreshing sunset sip.* LL



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We are pleased to welcome Carrie Alexander, MD, back to the Lowcountry. Dr. Alexander views patient care as a partnership that results in a care plan to promote health and focus on preventing issues before they start. After 25 years of practice, she understands that every patient has different goals and needs. Her most enjoyable days at work are when she can congratulate patients on achieving any health goal they agreed upon. She is married with two grown children who were her motivation to return to the Lowcountry. We are so happy to have Dr. Alexander join our care team and look forward to the positive impact she will have in our community.

To schedule an appointment, call **854-235-2830**.

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Hilton Head Choral Society presents Vienna Boys Choir

STORY BY BAILEY GILLIAM



2025 © LUKAS BECK

To mark its 50th anniversary season, the Hilton Head Choral Society is welcoming one of the world's most well-known musical ensembles to the Lowcountry: Vienna Boys Choir. The internationally celebrated group will perform Monday, Feb. 23, and Tuesday, Feb. 24, both at 7 p.m. at Lowcountry Community Church in Bluffton.

Founded more than six centuries ago, the choir stands among the most storied musical institutions in history. Its unmistakable clarity, warmth and youthful brilliance have charmed audiences from Vienna's Imperial Chapel to concert halls in more than 100 countries, earning it a reputation as the gold standard of children's choral music.

Bluffton audiences will be treated to the choir's *Made in*

Vienna Boys Choir

When: 7 p.m., Feb. 23-24
Where: Lowcountry Community Church, Bluffton
Details: Tickets are $35-$50 and can be purchased at ***hiltonheadchoralsociety.org***. For assistance, call 843-341-3818 or email tickets@hiltonheadchoralsociety.org.



2025 © LUKAS BECK

Austria program, a spirited, globe-spanning concert that blends the elegance of Strauss waltzes and polkas with Austrian folk traditions, contemporary works and unexpected international pieces. The selections will showcase not only the choir's purity of tone but also its versatility and charm.

"Welcoming Vienna Boys Choir as part of our 50th anniversary season is an extraordinary honor," says Dr. Dustin C. Ousley, HHCS artistic director. "Its legacy of musical excellence aligns beautifully with our own commitment to choral artistry, and we are thrilled to share this rare and unforgettable experience with our community."

Recognized by UNESCO for its cultural significance, Vienna Boys Choir comprises four touring choirs drawn from a diverse student body in Vienna, where choristers ages 6 to 19 receive a world-class musical education. Collectively, they present nearly 300 concerts each year to almost half a million listeners, making these Bluffton performances a rare privilege for Lowcountry audiences.

Tickets for both performances are available at hiltonheadchoralsociety.org. For assistance, call 843-341-3818, or email tickets@hiltonheadchoralsociety.org.



2025 © LUKAS BECK



Large Art Exhibit

When: Times vary, Jan. 5-Feb. 7 **Where:** SOBA Gallery
Details: Shop extra-large artwork celebrating artistic diversity and individual creativity. ***sobagallery.com***



Anything Goes! 2026 Member Show

When: Times vary, Jan. 6-30 **Where:** Art League of Hilton Head Gallery
Details: Don't miss this annual member show. Attend the reception and vote for the People's Choice Award from 5-7 p.m., Jan. 14. ***artleaguehhi.org***



Play That Goes Wrong

When: Times vary, Jan. 28-Feb. 22 **Where:** Arts Center of Coastal Carolina
Details: This comedy throws you into the disastrous opening night of "The Murder at Haversham Manor," where quite literally everything goes wrong. ***artshhi.com***

Arts & Culture





Every Brilliant Thing

When: Times vary, Jan. 22-Feb. 1 **Where:** SoundWaves
Details: Lean Ensemble member Matt Mundy returns for a brilliant and life-affirming celebration of the lengths we will go to for those we love. ***leanensemble.org***



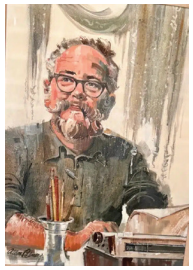
30 Years Framed: Posters of Our Past

When: Times vary, Jan. 10-Feb. 28
Where: Coastal Discovery Museum
Details: Step into three decades of cultural storytelling with a special anniversary exhibition honoring the Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration. ***gullahcelebration.org***



Arts Ob We People: A Gullah Geechee Art Exhibition

When: Times vary, Jan. 29-Feb. 28
Where: J Costello Gallery, Redfish
Details: Step into a soul-stirring showcase of Gullah Geechee art and culture. Attend the reception from 5-7 p.m., Jan. 29. ***gullahcelebration.org***



OTHER ARTS & CULTURE EVENTS

Now-March 23: *It's Thursday! Artists of the Round Table at Coastal Discovery Museum*

Now-June 20: *The History and Archaeology of Fort Motte at the Morris Heritage Center*

Jan. 30-31 & Feb. 1: *Newsies Jr. at USCB Center for the Arts*

Jan. 28-April: *Beyond the See at the Sea Pines Community Center*



Charity & Community



Hilton Head Humane events

Don't miss these opportunities to support our four-legged friends across the Lowcountry. ***hhhumane.org***

UPCOMING EVENTS

Happy Hour: *4-6 p.m., Jan. 15, Nectar Bluffton*
Nala's Adoption Event: *4-6 p.m., Jan. 23, Nala's Beach*
Wooftop Party: *4-6 p.m., Jan. 29, Poseidon*



A Musical Feast 2026

When: 6 p.m., Jan. 20
Where: Hilton Beachfront Resort & Spa (Palmetto Dunes)
Details: Celebrate the HHIPC's 30 years of promoting and nurturing talented young pianists at this fundraising event. ***hhso.org***



OTHER CHARITY & COMMUNITY EVENTS

Jan. 3-10: *Chamber Wellness Week in Hilton Head and Bluffton*

Jan. 10: *Wreaths Across America Beaufort Wreath Retirement at Beaufort National Cemetery*

Jan. 31: *Snow Day at Shelter Cove Community Park*

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2026
MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2026

John Morris Russell, *conductor*
Reid Messich, *oboe*

Eric Whitacre Prelude in C
Richard Strauss Oboe Concerto, TrV 292 (AV 144), D Major
Sergei Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 2, Op. 27, E minor

Featuring Rachmaninoff's lush symphony and Strauss's oboe concerto with principal Reid Messich. Plus, the regional premiere of Eric Whitaker's *Prelude in C*.

BEETHOVEN AND MOZART



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2026
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026

Samuel Lee, *guest conductor & viola*
Brian Allen, *violin*

Louise Farrenc Overture No. 2, Op. 24, E^b Major
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Sinfonia concertante, K.364, E^b Major
Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No. 4, Op. 60, B^b Major

2024 Malko Conducting Competition winner Samuel Lee conducts classics by Beethoven and Mozart, featuring violinist Brian Allen.

Special Events

HHSO YOUTH CONCERTO COMPETITION

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026, 1:00 PM

St. Luke's Anglican Church, Hilton Head Island

The HHSO Youth Concerto Competition has been attracting the most talented young musicians from throughout the southeastern United States since 2009. In addition to cash prizes and scholarships awarded to all finalists, the first-place winner receives an opportunity to perform as soloist with the HHSO and Maestro JMR.



Orchestra Series subscriptions and tickets are available now. Visit hhso.org or call (843) 842-2055.

Food & Drink



2026 Chamber Restaurant Week

When: Jan. 31-Feb. 7
Where: Locations vary
Details: More than 80 local restaurants are serving up special prix-fixe menus featuring new creations, signature favorites and can't-miss dishes from the area's top chefs. ***hiltonheadchamber.org***





Hilton Head Olive Oils & Balsamics events

Learn how to make the perfect salad dressing, try some new dishes, or engage in friendly competition at one of these upcoming events. ***hiltonheadoils.com***

UPCOMING EVENTS
Salad Dressing 101: *3 p.m., Thursdays starting Jan. 8*
Tasty Trivia: *5:30 p.m., Jan. 14 & 28*



A Sourdough Experience

When: 5:30 p.m., Jan. 26 **Where:** Cassandra's Kitchen Store
Details: The Sour Loaf Co. comes to Cassandra's Kitchen for an interactive workshop on the sourdough process. ***cassandraskitchen.com***



Culinary events at The Sea Pines Resort

Enjoy one of these wine dinners, tap takeovers and other events this month at one of the restaurants in The Sea Pines Resort. ***seapines.com/events***

UPCOMING EVENTS
Spanish Wine Dinner: *6:30 p.m., Jan. 9, Harbour Town Clubhouse*
Tap Takeover: *5-8 p.m., Jan. 20, Fraser's Tavern*
Sazerac Whiskey Dinner: *6:30 p.m., Jan. 23, Sea Pines Beach Club*
Pint Night: *5-9 p.m., Thursdays, Fraser's Tavern*
Oyster Roasts: *1-4 p.m., Saturdays, Coast, Oceanfront Dining*



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Vienna Boys Choir

Monday, February 23 + Tuesday, February 24, 2026 | 7pm
Lowcountry Community Church | 801 Buckwalter Pkwy, Bluffton

The Hilton Head Choral Society is bringing one of the most famous choirs in the world to Bluffton. The Vienna Boys Choir has been enchanting audiences for centuries with their pure and pristine sound and charming performance style.

"bright, light voices through the centuries"
– The New York Times



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Food & Drink



Hibachi Dinner Cruise

When: 6-8 p.m., Fridays
Where: Outside Palmetto Bluff
Details: Set sail on a two-hour Sunset Hibachi Dinner Cruise in Palmetto Bluff, featuring live hibachi cooking, stunning May River views and a full dinner aboard a luxury catamaran. ***outsidehiltonhead.com***





Lowcountry Boil Dinner Cruise

When: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Thursday **Where:** Shelter Cove Harbour & Marina
Details: Outside Hilton Head and Sprout Momma present a two-hour sunset cruise, complete with a chef-prepared Lowcountry boil, southern desserts and a full bar.
outsidehiltonhead.com



Rollers events

Rollers Wine & Spirits is the perfect place to try new wines. Sample and purchase new wines at one of these weekly tasting events.
rollerswineandspirits.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Grapevine Academy: Wines of the Iberian Peninsula: *Jan. 7*
Grapevine Academy: Sparkling Wines of France: *Jan. 21*
Restaurant Week Kickoff Party: *Jan. 29*
Grapevine Academy: Wines of Piedmont: *Feb. 4*









OTHER FOOD & DRINK EVENTS

Jan. 7: *Prime Rib Night at Chef Frank's Bistro*
Jan. 8-17: *Beaufort Area Hospitality Association Restaurant Week in Beaufort*
Jan. 10: *2nd Saturday Shop & Stroll at Windhorse Gallery & Marketplace*
Jan. 11: *Barre to the Bar at Shellring Ale Works*
Jan. 15: *Cigar Night at Shellring Ale Works*
Jan. 15: *Truffle & Torch: An Evening with AMA & Shaken & Stirred at May River Manor*
Jan. 20: *Monthly Wine Club Social & Pick-Up Party at Windhorse Gallery & Marketplace*
Jan. 23: *Soups & Stocks Class at the Culinary Institute of the South*

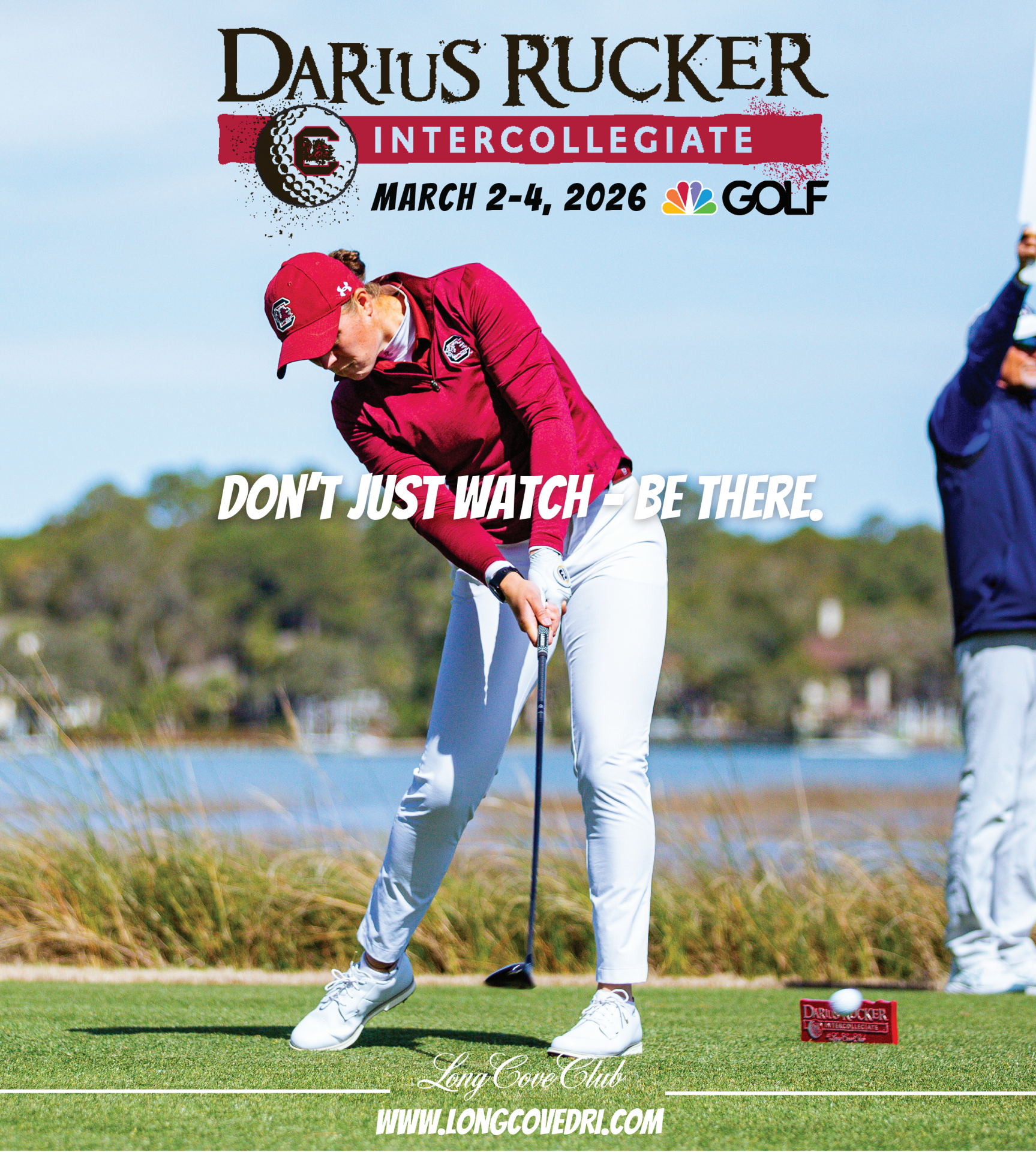
DAILY EVENTS

Tuesdays: *Battles & Bread at Wine Time Bluffton*
Tuesdays: *Tuesday Wine Tasting at Blacksheep X Sabbatical*
Wednesdays: *Pasta Night at Wine Time Bluffton*
Wednesdays: *Wine Tasting Wednesdays at Wine Time Washington Square*
Thursdays: *Featured Wine Tasting at Wine Time Bluffton*

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Lectures & Classes



Restorative Medicine Seminar

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Where: Fraum Center for Restorative Health
Details: Attend a free educational event on the latest advancements in restorative medicine with a complimentary lunch. Learn how you can help your body heal itself with highly effective, non-invasive solutions to chronic pain. ***fraum.com***







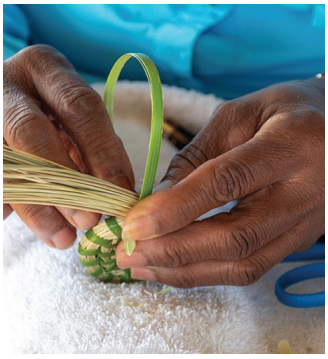
Art League Hilton Head classes

Learn a new skill and unleash your creativity with one of these workshops at the Art League Academy on Cordillo Parkway. For a complete list of classes, visit ***artleaguehhi.org***.

UPCOMING CLASSES

Beginner Watercolor Painting: *8:30 a.m., Jan. 10*
Earrings 101: Assembly and Attachments: *12:30 p.m., Jan. 19*
Stained Glass: *1 p.m., Jan. 24 & 25*







OTHER LECTURES & CLASSES

HILTON HEAD AUDUBON EVENTS

Jan. 8: *On the Wings of Shorebirds at Hilton Head Library*
Jan. 22: *Avian Breeding Behaviors at Shipyard Beach Club*
Jan. 31: *Introduction to Bird Photography at Mitchelville Freedom Park*

BEAUFORT COUNTY LIBRARY EVENTS

Jan. 12: *Local Author Event: The Art of Storytelling at Hilton Head Branch*
Jan. 13: *Managing Money: A Caregiver's Guide to Finances at Bluffton Branch*
Jan. 14: *The Library Travel Guide: River Cruising at Hilton Head Branch*
Jan. 20: *Brain Wellness Workshop at Beaufort Branch*
Jan. 21: *Book Page Water Colors at Port Royal Branch*
Jan. 22: *Financial Literacy Workshop at Hilton Head Branch*
Jan. 24 & 27: *The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz-Birkenau at Beaufort Library & Port Royal Branches*
Jan. 24: *Gardening in the Lowcountry at Bluffton Branch*
Jan. 27: *Basics to Blooms: Native Plants at Beaufort Branch*
Jan. 28: *The Library Travel Guide: Africa at Hilton Head Branch*

WACHH EVENTS

Jan. 9: *David Satterfield: The Trump Foreign Policy: A First Year Assessment*
Jan. 23: *Ajay Chhibber: India's Rise in a Changing World*

PORT ROYAL SOUND FOUNDATION EVENTS

Jan. 24: *Fish Printing*
Jan. 31: *Indigo Dye Workshop*

PAT CONROY LITERARY CENTER EVENTS

Jan. 25-26: *Pat Conroy as Nature Writer*

LIBRARIES FOR KIDS INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Jan. 19: *Author Series: Mary Martha Green*

USCB EVENT

Jan. 13: *Lunch with Authors: Mary Martha Green at Belfair Clubhouse*

COASTAL DISCOVERY MUSEUM EVENTS

Jan. 17 & 31: *Sweetgrass Basket Class*
Jan. 24: *Camellia Buds and Leaves Watercolor Workshop*

SAVANNAH BOOK FESTIVAL

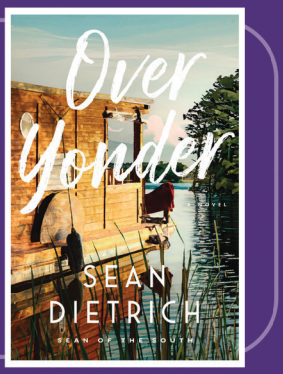
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TICKETS on SALE January 9

FREE FESTIVAL Saturday, Feb. 7

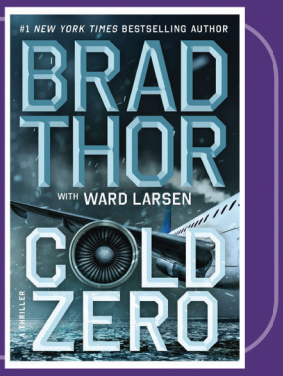


SEAN DIERTRICH: Southern Storyteller with Humor, Heart & an Unexpected Family.



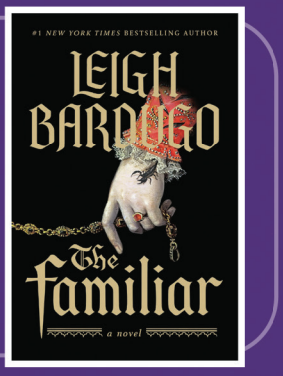


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THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

JAN 28 – FEB 22



A hapless amateur theater troupe attemps to stage a 1920s *MURDER MYSTERY*, but everything that can go wrong, **DOES**. The cast's increasingly desperate efforts to finish the show lead to HILARIOUS, CATASTROPHIC results.

"NOTHING IS AS FALL-DOWN FUNNY. GO!" NEW YORK POST

"COMIC GOLD!" VARIETY

"YOU'LL NEVER HAVE A BETTER TIME IN A THEATER!" FORBES

UNFORGETABLE PERFORMANCES AWAIT!

30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG
JAN 28 – FEB 22
2026

hairspray
APR 22 – MAY 24
2026

MEAN GIRLS
JUN 24 – AUG 9
2026

TOM PAPA GRATEFUL BREAD TOUR

Celtic Angels of Ireland

METTA QUINTET

AN EVENING WITH MENTALIST MATT COOPER

COMEDIAN TIM MEADOWS

DIVAS THROUGH TIME

THE BLACK JACKET SYMPHONY PRESENTS AC/DC BACK IN BLACK

BEST SEATS. BEST PRICE.

WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE & SAVE

SCAN TO LEARN MORE AND SUBSCRIBE!

ARTS CENTER OF COASTAL CAROLINA
14 SHELTER COVE LN • ARTSHHI.COM • 843 842 ARTS(2787)

Markets & Shopping





FARMERS AND ART MARKETS

Enjoy the local flavors of the Lowcountry with some of these regular farmers and art markets:

Bluffton Farmers Market:
Noon-4 p.m., Thursdays, 68 Boundary St.

Hilton Head Island Farmers Market:
9 a.m.-1 p.m., Tuesdays, Coastal Discovery Museum

Port Royal Farmers Market:
9 a.m.-noon, Saturdays, Naval Heritage Park

Forsythe Farmers Market:
9 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturdays, Savannah

Beaufort First Friday:
5-8 p.m., first Friday of each month, Downtown Beaufort

Hilton Head Community Market:
9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Saturdays, Shelter Cove Community Park

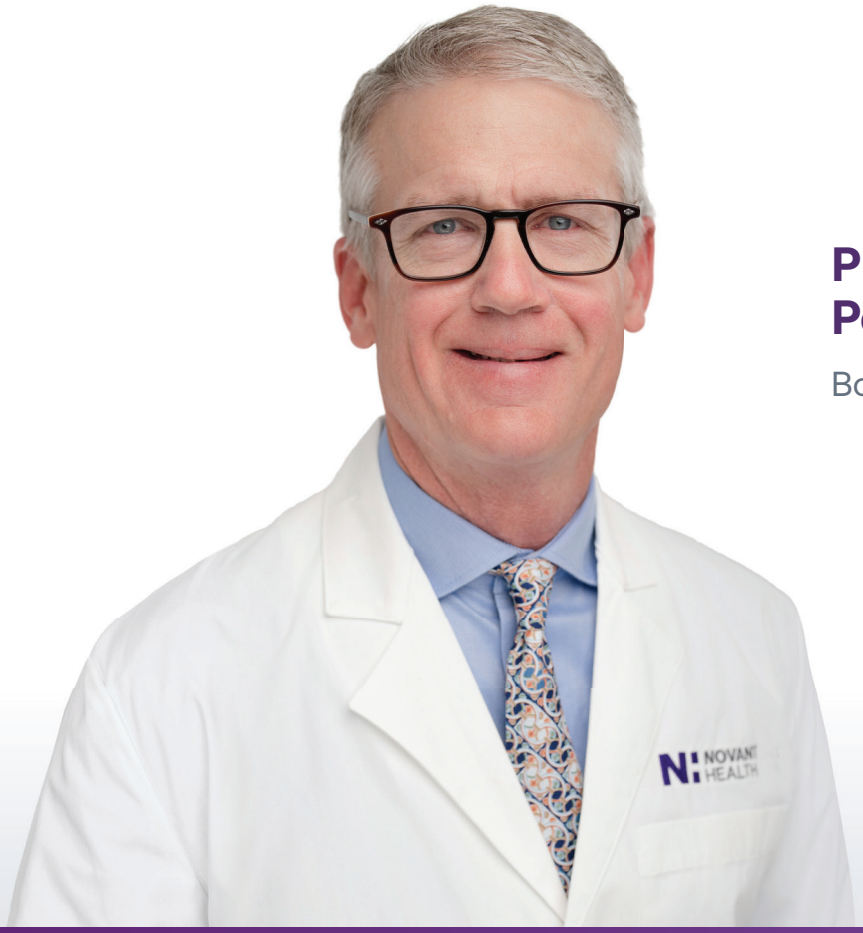
Habersham Farmers Market:
4-7 p.m., Fridays, Habersham Marketplace in Beaufort

Farmers & Fishermen Sunset Market at Savannah Harbour:
4:30-8:30 p.m., 1st, 3rd & 5th Saturdays, Hutchinson Island

Side Hustle Brewing Co. Farmers Market:
1-5 p.m., third Sunday of each month, Side Hustle Brewing Co.

Second Saturday Shop & Stroll:
10 a.m.-2 p.m., second Saturday of each month, The Shops of Paris Avenue

Winter Artisan Market:
10 a.m.-5 p.m., Jan. 26, Tanger Outlets



Please welcome Pete Parramore, MD.

Board-certified in urology

Bringing remarkable urological care to the Lowcountry

We're pleased to welcome Pete Parramore, MD, to the Novant Health team as we continue expanding access to safe, effective and comprehensive urological care. Dr. Parramore specializes in urology and has 30 years of experience taking care of patients. His addition provides further access to high-quality urological care close to home. The Lowcountry is now home for Dr. Parramore, and we are excited he is bringing his remarkable expertise to the Bluffton community.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)
- Kidney cancer
- Kidney stones
- Prostate cancer
- Bladder cancer

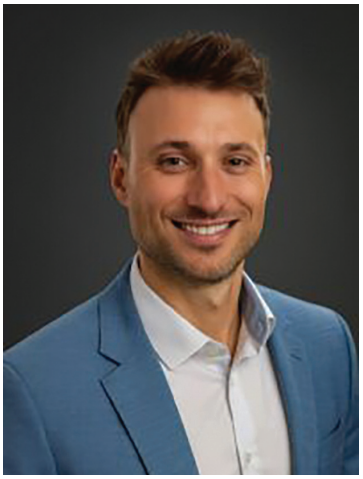
To schedule an appointment, call **843-706-2255**.

Novant Health New River Urology
75 Baylor Drive, Suite 205, Bluffton, SC 29910
843-706-2255 | Fax: 843-706-2257

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Music & Entertainment





Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 2

When: 4 p.m., Jan. 18 & 7:30 p.m., Jan. 19
Where: First Presbyterian Church
Details: An evening of sweeping emotion, lyrical beauty and timeless inspiration awaits as John Morris Russell and the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra present a program that bridges centuries, styles and personal connections. ***hhso.org***

OTHER HHSO EVENTS

HHSO Youth Concerto Competition: *1 p.m., Jan. 31, St. Luke's Anglican Church*



OTHER MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS

Jan. 11: *USCB Chamber Music Series at USCB Center for the Arts*

Jan. 16: Natural Wonder: *The Ultimate Stevie Wonder Tribute Experience at USCB Center for the Arts*

Jan. 25: *The Mary Green Chorale: Mozart à la Carte at Lowcountry Presbyterian Church*

Jan. 31: *Shore Notes Sun City Harmonizers Show at Sun City Resort*



Regular live music venues

Life is better with music, so why not enjoy live music every day of the week? These are some of our favorite local spots with regular live music this month. Check their websites and Facebook pages for details.

DAILY SHOWS

Brother Shucker's
Coast, Oceanfront Dining
Coligny Center Stage
Fishcamp on Broad Creek
FISH Casual Coastal Seafood
Frosty Frog
Harbourside
Kind of Blue
Lincoln & South Brewing Company
Luther's Rare & Well Done
Quarterdeck
Ruby Lee's
San Miguel's
Scott's Fish Market
Skull Creek Boathouse
The Boardroom
The Crazy Crab Jarvis Creek
The Jazz Corner
The Salty Dog Cafe
The Sandbar Beach Eats
The Studio
Tiki Hut



MORE GREAT SPOTS (SELECT NIGHTS)

A Lowcountry Backyard Restaurant (Mondays-Fridays)
Agave (Thursdays-Saturdays)
Big Bamboo Cafe (Mondays-Saturdays)
Black Marlin Bayside Grill & Hurricane Bar (Wednesdays-Saturdays)
Bluffton Oyster Co. Family Seafood House (Fridays & Saturdays)
Burnt Church Distillery (Thursdays-Saturdays)
Captain Woody's Bluffton (Tuesdays)
Celeste (Fridays & Saturdays)
Cheap Seats Tavern 2 (Fridays)
Chophouse 119 (Fridays)
Hilton Head Brewing Co. (Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays)
Hop Dog (Fridays)
Island Winery (Saturdays)
Lot 9 Brewing Company (Saturdays)
Melrose Oyster House & Beach Club (Thursdays-Sundays)
Nectar Farm Kitchen in Old Town Bluffton (Fridays-Sundays)
Okàn (Thursdays and Saturdays)
Pomodori Too! (Thursdays-Saturdays)
Red Fish (Tuesdays-Saturdays)
Reilley's Grill & Bar (Wednesdays-Fridays & Sundays)
Rollers Wine & Spirits (Tuesdays & Thursdays)
Santa Fe Cafe (Wednesdays-Saturdays)
Shellring Ale Works (Fridays-Sundays)
Sprout Momma (Wednesdays)
The Clubhouse at Okatie Creek (Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays)
The Dunes House (Mondays-Fridays)
The Rooftop Bar at Poseidon (Wednesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays)
Tio's Latin American Kitchen Bluffton (Fridays)
Zunzibar (Mondays-Thursdays)



Please welcome Renee Ricci, DO, MPH.

Obstetrics and gynecology

Bringing remarkable care for women to the Lowcountry

Renee Ricci, DO, MPH, joins Novant Health as we continue to expand comprehensive women's health services. Dr. Ricci brings compassionate, patient-centered care to support women through every stage of life. Her expertise and dedication will strengthen our commitment to providing high-quality care across the Lowcountry.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Preventive care and wellness
- Reproductive health
- Prenatal, pregnancy and postpartum care
- Menstrual and hormonal health
- Gynecological care

To schedule an appointment, call **843-540-5857**.

Novant Health Riverside Women's Care
75 Baylor Drive, Suite 200, Bluffton, SC 29910
843-540-5857 | Fax: 843-524-5655

NOVANT HEALTH

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Wedding Planning Directory

WEDDINGS IN THE LOWCOUNTRY

A comprehensive resource for all steps in wedding planning.

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Sports & Outdoors



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JANUARY RACES

Sign up for one of these January races to support a good cause and stay in shape.

UPCOMING RACES

New Year's Resolution Run: *7 p.m., Jan. 3, Corner Perk Old Town Bluffton*

2026 Beaufort Oyster Boogie 5K Run or Walk: *8 a.m., Jan. 17, Downtown Beaufort*

Daufuskie Island Marathon: *8:30 a.m., Jan. 18, Haig Point*

YMCA's Beast Obstacle Course Event (Run/Walk): *9 a.m., Jan. 24, Beaufort-Jasper YMCA*



©DAUFUSKIE ISLAND MARATHON





Palmetto Bluff Conservancy events

The PBC team facilitates tours, classes and workshops, programs, research and field trips to promote conservation. Visit palmettobluff.com/conservation for a complete list of events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Edibles, Medicinals and Other Uses of Plants: *10 a.m.-12 p.m., Jan. 9*
Brown Bag Lunch: American Woodcock: *12-1 p.m., Jan. 21*
Brown Bag Lunch: North American Land Trust: *12-1 p.m., Jan. 28*



OTHER SPORTS & OUTDOORS EVENTS

Jan. 10: *Palm Trees & Pistons at Nala's Beach Bar & Grill*

Jan. 10: *Rose Hill LGA Golf Tournament at Rose Hill Golf Club*

Jan. 24: *Puppy Plunge at Beaufort-Jasper YMCA*

Jan. 29: *Lowcountry Legal Volunteers Ride for Justice at Local Kollective HHI*

2026 FISHING EXPO & BOAT SHOW

COME SEE THE LATEST IN FISHING TECHNOLOGY FROM SOME OF THE BEST TACKLE VENDORS IN THE INDUSTRY!

SATURDAY
FEB. 7TH | 9 AM – 4 PM

FREE!
FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY EVENT
@
PORT ROYAL SOUND FOUNDATION CAMPUS,
310 OKATIE HIGHWAY
RIDGELAND, SC

- EDUCATIONAL BREAKOUT SESSIONS TAUGHT BY NORTH END CHARTER FLEET & OTHERS
- HANDS-ON CLINICS: CAST NET THROWING, RIGGING TIPS, AND FLY-FISHING TECHNIQUES
- BOAT DISPLAYS FROM TOP BRANDS, INCLUDING GRADY-WHITE, SEA HUNT, PARKER, AND G3
- VENDOR BOOTHS WITH LIVE DEMOS AND PRODUCT SHOWCASES
- EXCITING RAFFLES & GIVEAWAYS DRAWINGS THROUGHOUT THE DAY
- LOCAL FOOD TRUCKS SELLING DELICIOUS SNACKS AND MEALS

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THE BOATHOUSE EST. 1987 SALES · SERVICE
THE BOATHOUSE TACKLE & GEAR

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
GW GRADY-WHITE BOATS
PORT ROYAL SOUND FOUNDATION

UNITE FOR GOOD

Celebrating 50 Years of Service



We are proud to recognize the incredible dedication of our esteemed Rotary Club member, **Bruce Pitkin**. Bruce has been an integral part of our club for a remarkable 50 years, embodying the Rotarian spirit of service above self. His steadfast commitment to the Rotary Club of Hilton Head Island and the community at large is truly commendable.

Please join us in celebrating Bruce's exceptional milestone and the lasting impact he has made on our club and the countless lives he has touched.



NEW HHI CLUB MEMBERS

Rotary members lead with compassion and service, making a lasting difference in communities around the world. Because of this, The Rotary Foundation has rated Hilton Head Island Rotary Club **FOUR STARS** for the seventeenth consecutive years.

The Rotary Foundation

Charity Navigator
FOUR STAR
17 consecutive years

Rotary Hilton Head Island

UNITE FOR GOOD

Check Us Out | Get Involved | Come to a Meeting | Participate

Meetings are held on Thursday at 12:30 pm.
Palmera Inn & Suites on 12 Park Lane, Hilton Head Island.

843.686.4100 HILTONHEADROTARY.ORG

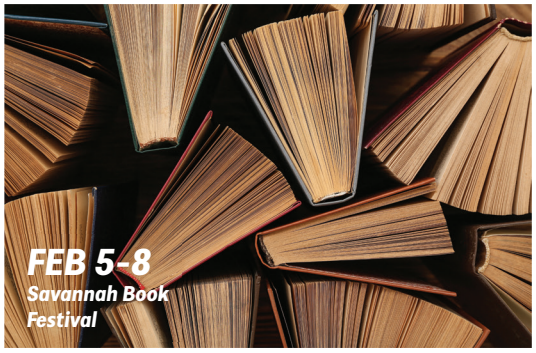


SAVANNAH EVENTS

Jan. 8: *#art912 Artist Talk: Julia Roland at the Jepson Center*
Jan. 11: *One Love Adoption Event at Petco on Abercorn*
Jan. 16-17: *Savannah Hockey Classic 2026 at Enmarket Arena*
Jan. 17: *Savannah Philharmonic: Tchaikovsky's 5th at The Lucas Theatre for the Arts*
Jan. 17: *Savannah Animazing Con 2026 at the Savannah Convention Center*
Jan. 19: *Martin Luther King Day Parade throughout Downtown Savannah*
Jan. 19: ***Larry the Cable Guy*** *at Johnny Mercer Theatre*
Jan. 23: *Lowcountry Home & Garden Show at the Savannah Convention Center*
Jan. 23-24: *Mountainfilm on Tour Savannah Festival at the Savannah Cultural Arts Center*
Jan. 24: *SCAD Day Savannah*
Jan. 24: *Stout Fest at Two Tides Brewing Company*
Jan. 24: *A Taste of Ireland at Johnny Mercer Theatre*
Jan. 31: *St. Paul's International Food & Wine Tasting at St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church*



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SAVE THE DATE

Feb. 1: *Fripp Friends of Music presents Appalatin at Fripp Island Community Center*
Feb. 1-28: *Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration, locations vary*
Feb. 4: *Grapevine Academy: Wines of Piedmont at Rollers Wine & Spirits*
Feb. 5-8: *Savannah Book Festival in Historic Downtown Savannah*

TO SHOWCASE AN EVENT

You may be able to post your event for free in our Happenings section. Head to ***locallifesc.com****, click "Contact Us," and include a title, date, time, location, description, a link to the webpage and photos if possible.*





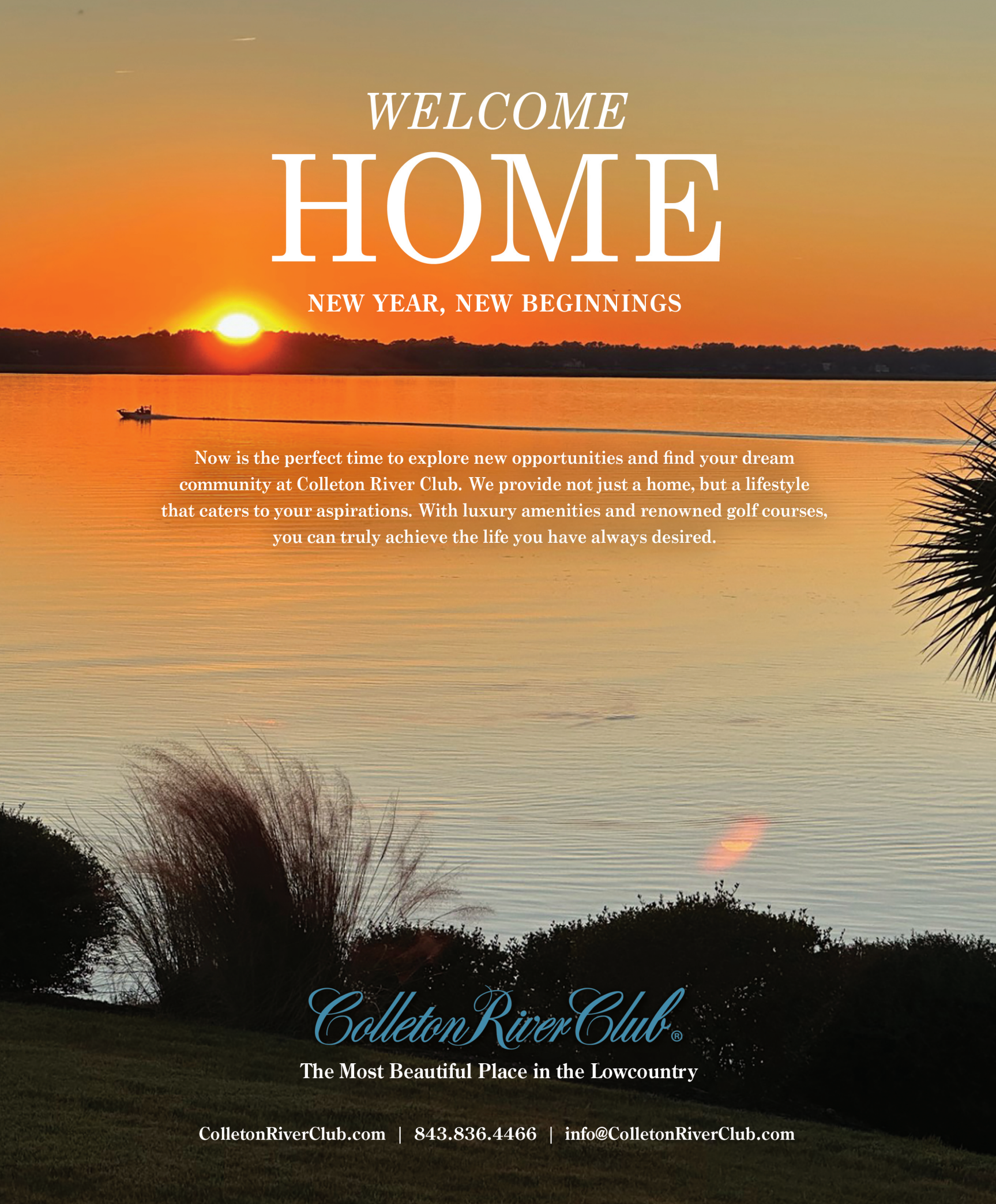
The last wave



Lands End, Sea Pines

Though Hilton Head Island isn't a classic surf mecca, devoted locals chase its modest swells all year long, even in January when the water temps linger in the fifties. Photographer Marc Schwitters caught this cold-weather surfer taking one last ride near Lands End in Sea Pines as a full moon lifted into a pastel sky.

HIT US WITH YOUR BEST SHOT **Have you taken a great local photo?**
Send your high-res image to info@wearelocallife.com or upload it at locallifesc.com/partingshot.


WELCOME
HOME
NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS
Now is the perfect time to explore new opportunities and find your dream community at Colleton River Club. We provide not just a home, but a lifestyle that caters to your aspirations. With luxury amenities and renowned golf courses, you can truly achieve the life you have always desired.
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