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2025 | oct



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Friday nights belong to football
in rural S.C.

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servers—as perfect strangers—saying, “Morning, y’all.”



Before a Friday night football
game, Gilbert player Bryson
Butler carries the American
flag onto the field. Photo by
Thomas Hammond.

Take the 'Challenge'

Local fourth and fifth graders can be published authors and win prizes

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE LEARNING about the men and women who keep our lights on when the students participate in the South Carolina Children's Book Challenge, an education initiative sponsored by our state's electric cooperatives.

This year, the Children's Book Challenge invites fourth and fifth graders to write and illustrate stories that focus on what it's like to be a lineworker and to submit their stories to their electric cooperatives. Winning entries will be awarded cash prizes and an opportunity to have their books published and distributed to schools across South Carolina.

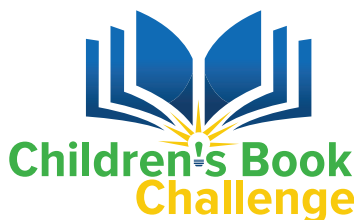
The Children's Book Challenge encourages students statewide to create engaging children's books about energy and the role their electric cooperatives play in their communities. It's a way for educators to engage their students with a cross-curricular project focused on energy education that also correlates to many South Carolina state standards.

Last spring, two books won the top honors in the 2024-2025 Children's Book Challenge. Ansley Gratzmiller, a fourth grader at Buist Academy for Advanced Studies in Charleston, wrote *Electra*, *A Girl's Journey to Electrical Safety*, which won the statewide individual category. In the group division, *Uncle Phil and the Electric Adventure*, crafted by Laurence Manning Academy fifth graders Sadie Gamble, Ellafair DuRant, Rilyn Joyner, and Kayden Crisanti, secured the top honor.

Both winning entries earned their creators a \$500 grand prize and recognition at the South Carolina State House. Their books have been sent to the state's elementary school libraries.

"They learned all kinds of different things, about being a writer and working as a team, as well as the art concepts," says Rebekka Taylor, librarian at Laurence Manning Academy. "Our teachers have come to me and said that their [students'] writing has improved since we started this."

—STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER



▲ Ansley Gratzmiller of Mt. Pleasant and ▲ Laurence Manning Academy students (l-r) Kayden Crisanti, Ellafair DuRant, Sadie Gamble and Rilyn Joyner won last year's Children's Book Challenge.



REGISTER FOR THE BOOK CHALLENGE TODAY! Instructors of fourth and fifth grade students in South Carolina can register for the 2025-2026 Children's Book Challenge at scbookchallenge.com. There, educators will find multiple resources about energy, electricity delivery and local electric cooperatives. **The deadline to register is Nov. 14.** Membership in an electric cooperative is not required.

MEMBERS SPEAK ON THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE



Julie Gregg

MID-CAROLINA ELECTRIC MEMBER

MEMBER SINCE: 2020

HOMETOWN: Chapin

Neighbory service from your co-op

Julie and Bill Gregg had trouble walking their watchdog, Bentley, at night. Nights are dark in rural Chapin, and the Greggs had no exterior lighting.

"The forest is very dark at night even with a little flashlight," Julie says. "And there were many tripping hazards."

One day, Bill noticed a recurring fee on the couple's utility bill. After calling Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative, he learned it was for a lamppost at the top of their driveway. The Greggs didn't know they had a lamppost. Even when they found it, it wouldn't turn on.

A crew from Mid-Carolina promptly came and replaced the bulb. The lamppost now provides plenty of light to keep the Greggs and Bentley safe.

"I was reminded of a favorite childhood poem about Leerie the Lamplighter, come to dispel the darkness every evening," Julie says.

"It was such a friendly, neighborly thing to do."

—JULIE GREGG

Then the Greggs learned that Mid-Carolina Electric would refund all 34 months of charges for the defunct lamppost.

"It was such a friendly, neighborly thing to do," Julie says. "We are strong supporters of our electric cooperative, and they are sincerely helpful to us."

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



Scan this QR code or visit SCLiving.coop/stories to share what you love about your co-op. Entries may be published in future issues of *South Carolina Living*, online and on social media.

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Co-ops power communities ...


in more ways than you may realize *(plus a pop quiz)* BY SCOTT FLOOD

IF SOMEONE ASKED WHAT a local electric cooperative does for your community, you'd probably respond with the obvious: they deliver power to homes, farms and businesses. That's true, but co-ops generate more than electricity for the communities they serve.

Back when investor-owned utilities refused to extend their power lines to the small communities and rural areas that stretch across South Carolina and most other states, electric co-ops stepped up so local residents could enjoy the same comfort and advantages as their city cousins. While co-ops primarily provide a reliable, affordable source of electricity, they have transformed their communities in the process.

 Nearly 900 co-ops nationwide have a **significant economic impact** on the places they call home. That includes supporting nearly **how many? ____** jobs that deliver **what amount? \$ ____** billion in annual compensation—and those employees spend much of that money at their local supermarkets, diners and gas stations, supporting jobs in their communities.

In most of the counties and communities they serve, electric co-ops play leadership roles in championing local economic health by bringing new employers to the area and helping established businesses expand. In addition to working directly with growing companies, they invest in community assets like broadband networks and incubators to help local startups succeed.

 Community members also benefit directly from their co-op's **prudent financial management**. As **what type? ____** utilities, co-ops return to members any money that's left over after covering the cost of operations, maintenance and improvements. These financial returns are known

EDITOR'S NOTE: As you read this column, test your knowledge of electric cooperatives. Fill in the blanks with your best guesses from the choices provided.


ANSWER OPTIONS TO FILL IN THE BLANKS:

Capital credits	7
Not-for-profit	50,000
623,000	51

ANSWERS ON PAGE 19

as **what? ____**. When a co-op's finances are strong, the directors may choose to retire some of those credits by converting a member's share into refund checks or bill credits.


Co-ops step up to handle natural disasters as some of the community's first responders. As rescuers comb through wreckage and treat victims, co-op lineworkers are already hard at work to restore power.

 **Concern for Community** is one of the **how many? ____** cooperative principles, so it comes as no surprise that co-ops seek a variety of ways to support organizations and events in the communities they serve. Whether it's presenting electrical safety demonstrations in elementary schools, helping to organize fairs and festivals, sponsoring athletic teams or promoting food drives for local pantries, co-ops and their staff are involved in extensive outreach.

One of the biggest community priorities for many co-ops involves helping young people develop leadership skills. Co-ops know leadership efforts help those kids and teens become informed, engaged citizens who may one day serve as the next generation of community leaders and co-op employees. Building connections with youth also increases the chance that they'll choose to live in their hometowns.



Lily Sheets attended Cooperative Youth Summit 2025 thanks to Horry Electric Cooperative, and she got an up-close look at the co-ops' rubber goods lab, where gloves are tested to meet strict safety standards for use with high-voltage power lines.

 Perhaps the most familiar and long-running youth-focused effort is the annual **Washington Youth Tour**, which brings teens from co-op communities across South Carolina and most other states to get a firsthand look at our nation's capital, learn about the political process from the people who make and influence our laws, and better understand the impact they can have as citizens. Nearly **how many? ____** students across the nation have participated, and many have since gone on to work for co-ops or enter government roles.

Students benefit from other summer gatherings, such as the South Carolina Electric Cooperative Youth Summit. Along with the usual touring, games and fun, they learn about energy and the people who keep the power running for their families. Sometimes, these experiences spark an interest that eventually leads to a career.

Yes, co-ops do light up communities by delivering safe and reliable electricity to residents and businesses. Yet, their power lies in the many ways they deliver the other kinds of energy that communities need to thrive. ☺

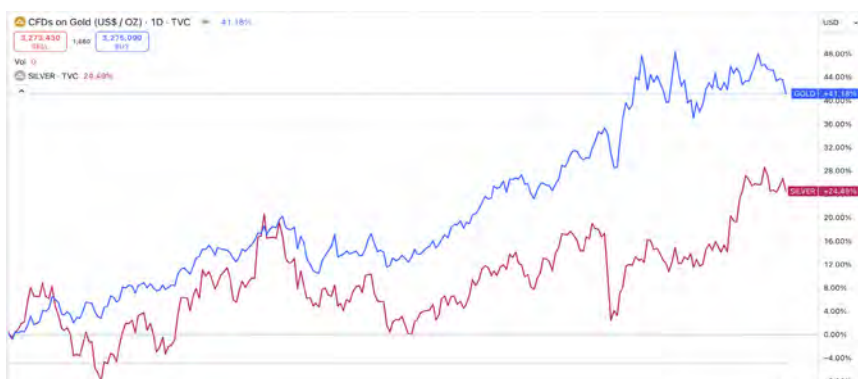
For more than four decades, business writer SCOTT FLOOD has worked with electric cooperatives to build knowledge about energy-related issues.



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5^(ish)-ingredient meals

BY BELINDA SMITH-SULLIVAN

The kids are back in school, which means you now have yet one more thing—*homework!*—to juggle while trying to get a meal on the table. Try these easy meals with only about five ingredients to lighten your overloaded schedule.

BLACK BEAN QUESADILLAS AND AVOCADO

SERVES 6

- 2 14-ounce cans black beans, drained, rinsed and dried
- 2 cups chunky salsa, homemade or store-bought
- 12 10-inch tortillas
- 4 cups Mexican-blend cheese
- 2 avocados, sliced

Sour cream, optional for serving

In a large bowl, combine beans and salsa and set aside. Arrange tortillas on a clean kitchen counter surface. On one half of each tortilla, spread the bean mixture and some cheese, according to your taste. Fold the empty side over onto the filled side and press down firmly.

Spray a large skillet with oil, and heat over medium heat. Add one or two quesadillas to the skillet and spray the tops with oil as well. Fry until golden brown and crisp on the bottom; flip and cook an additional 3–4 minutes until brown on the other side. Remove, slice into thirds and place on serving plates. Add avocado slices and serve with sour cream, if desired.

LEMON ROASTED CHICKEN WITH CAULIFLOWER

SERVES 4–6

- 3–4 pounds young whole chicken, rinsed and patted dry
- Greek all-purpose seasoning
- 1 lemon, quartered, plus additional lemon juice
- Fresh thyme sprigs
- 1 head cauliflower, cut into florets

Liberal season chicken, inside and out, with Greek seasoning. Insert lemon wedges and thyme sprigs into cavity of chicken. Tie legs together with kitchen twine. Spray entire chicken with cooking spray and place in large cast-iron skillet. Set aside.

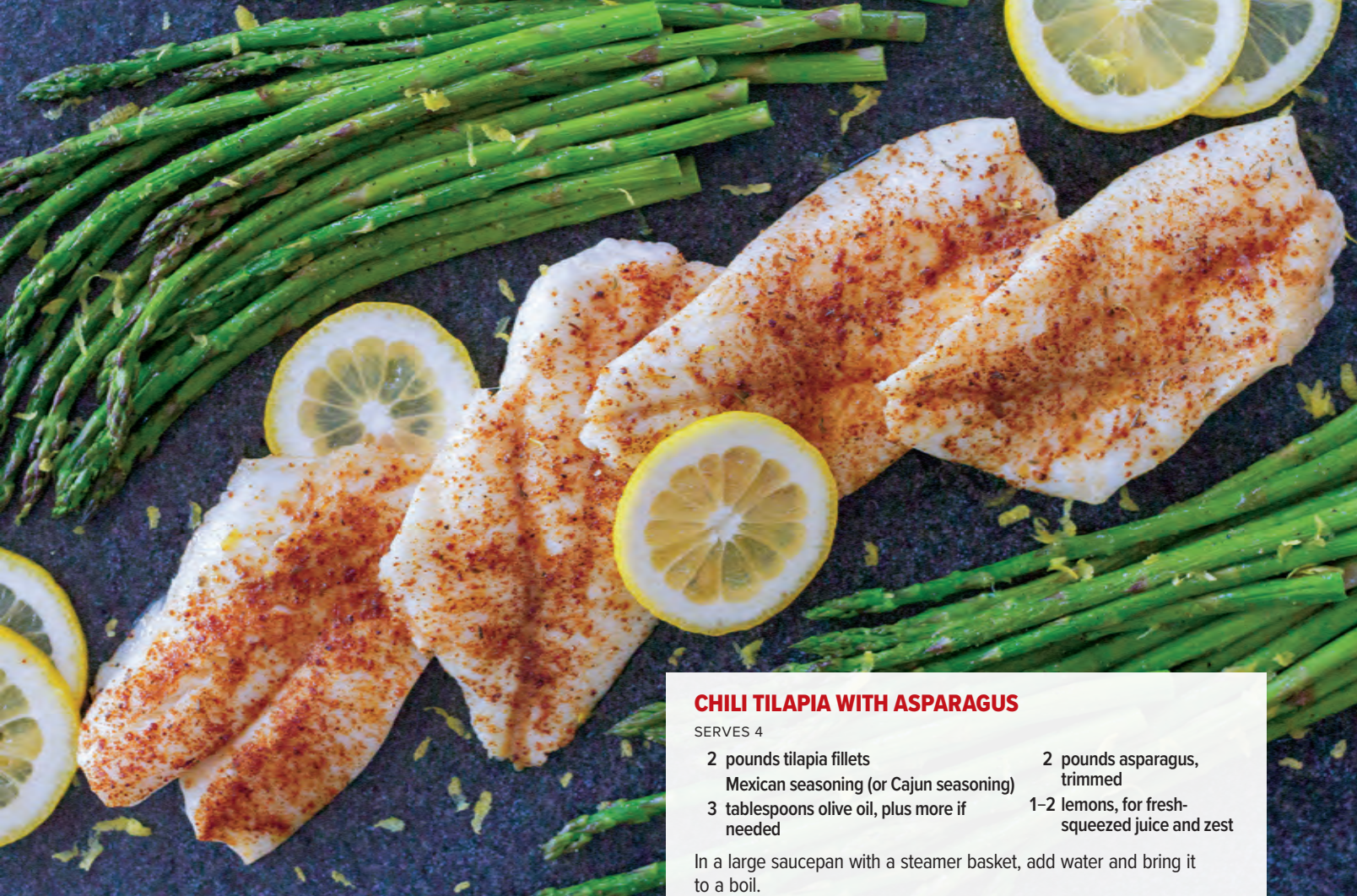
Preheat oven to 500 F. Place chicken in oven and roast for 15 minutes. Turn oven temperature down to 350 F. Toss cauliflower with additional seasoning and additional thyme and scatter around chicken in skillet. Continue cooking chicken and cauliflower for 30–40 minutes until meat reaches 165 F when measured by an instant-read thermometer. Remove chicken from oven to cutting board. Allow to rest for 10–15 minutes. Carve chicken and place on serving platter. Arrange cauliflower around chicken and spoon juices over both chicken and cauliflower. Garnish with additional lemon juice and fresh thyme sprigs. Serve immediately.



GWÉNAËL LE VOT



IT'S A MATTER OF TASTE.



GINA MOORE

CHILI TILAPIA WITH ASPARAGUS

SERVES 4

- | | |
|--|---|
| 2 pounds tilapia fillets | 2 pounds asparagus, trimmed |
| Mexican seasoning (or Cajun seasoning) | 1–2 lemons, for fresh-squeezed juice and zest |
| 3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more if needed | |

In a large saucepan with a steamer basket, add water and bring it to a boil.

Season fish fillets liberally with seasoning. Add oil to a large skillet over medium-high heat. When oil is hot, add fillets. You may have to cook fillets in batches, depending on the size of the skillet. Cook until opaque, flipping halfway through cooking, for a total of 3–4 minutes per side.

While fish is cooking, steam the asparagus. In a large saucepan with a steamer basket, add water and bring it to a boil. Place asparagus into steamer basket over boiling water, cover and let steam until bright green and tender, 4–5 minutes. Remove asparagus from steamer when done and spread onto a serving platter. Lightly sprinkle with seasoning, olive oil and lemon zest. Place cooked fish fillets over asparagus and squeeze all over with lemon juice. Serve immediately. Garnish with additional lemon wedges, if desired.



KAREN HERMANN

CHICKEN IN MUSHROOM SAUCE

SERVES 4

- 1 pound chicken tenders (or boneless, skinless chicken breasts, sliced)
- All-purpose seasoning, to taste
- 3–4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 8 ounces mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme, basil or parsley (or combination), optional

Season chicken with all-purpose seasoning and set aside. In a large skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat and add mushrooms. Cook, stirring, until all liquid is evaporated and mushrooms start to brown. Add chicken and cream and stir well. Cover the skillet and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to medium-low and simmer until chicken is done—turning once or twice—and sauce is thickened. Adjust seasoning if needed. Serve with penne pasta or steamed rice, if desired. Garnish with fresh herbs.



UPGRADES TO ACHIEVE ENERGY SAVINGS are always a winner, but calculating ROI before committing to a project will allow you to play the smartest hand.

Best bets for efficiency projects and upgrades

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Q How do I calculate the return on investment when considering home upgrades?

A Your home likely ranks as one of your biggest investments and most significant purchases, so you want to protect it and maximize the benefits of added investments to enjoy while you're in the home and to increase the home's resale value in the future.

Calculating a return on investment can determine the economic benefit of an upgrade. It measures the gain or loss of an investment in relation to its cost. ROI is calculated by dividing the net profit—the total cost of the investment subtracted from the total revenue generated—by the cost of the investment and multiplying by 100 to find the ROI percentage. The higher the percentage, the better the investment.

If you take out a loan or home equity line of credit or use a credit card, add the borrowed money and interest rate to the investment cost.

Let's put the calculation to work on three hypothetical home projects. Prices will vary based on the scale of your project and the cost of labor and materials in your area. Always remember, "an energy audit is critical to understanding the true savings of each individual scenario," says Matt Porth, manager of energy services at Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative in Lexington.

INSULATION AND SEALING Adding insulation and air sealing represents some of the most cost-effective home improvement

projects and can save money year-round by reducing the energy needed to heat and cool your home. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that air sealing and insulation can save an average of 15% on heating and cooling costs or an average of 11% on total energy costs, and maybe more with extreme temperature swings. Attics, walls, rim joists or floors over crawlspaces should be insulated. The ROI will vary based on your location, existing insulation levels and project cost.

Let's say you spend \$3,000 to insulate your home, saving \$330 per year for the next 20 years. Your net profit is \$3,600. Then, divide the net profit by \$3,000, the total cost of the investment, and multiply the result by 100. That's an ROI of 120%. The calculation looks like this:

$$\begin{aligned} &(20 \text{ years}) \times (\$330 \text{ savings per year}) = \\ &(\$6,600 \text{ gross profit}) - (\$3,000 \text{ spent}) = \\ &(\$3,600 \text{ net profit}) \div (\$3,000 \text{ spent}) = \\ &1.2 \times 100 = (120\% \text{ ROI}) \end{aligned}$$

WINDOWS The most energy efficiency improvement comes when changing out the least efficient windows—single pane with no storm windows—for the most efficient new windows, but South Carolina co-op energy managers usually don't predict big cost savings from window replacements. The exact ROI depends on your location, the energy costs and the efficiency of your heating and cooling systems.

The EPA estimates that upgrading single-pane windows to Energy Star-rated windows can save about 12% on annual energy use. Let's say you replace your

existing windows for \$5,000, saving \$360 per year for the next 20 years. The ROI is 44%.

$$\begin{aligned} &(20 \text{ years}) \times (\$360 \text{ savings per year}) = \\ &(\$7,200 \text{ saved}) - (\$5,000 \text{ spent}) = \\ &(\$2,200 \text{ net savings}) \div (\$5,000 \text{ spent}) = \\ &0.44 \times 100 = (44\% \text{ ROI}) \end{aligned}$$

Windows and insulation upgrades provide the added benefits of making your home quieter and more comfortable. They can also add value if you sell your home.

ROOFTOP SOLAR First, *before* you buy a solar system, be sure to check with your local cooperative about savings claims and the electric rate that would apply to you.

Let's say a solar system costs \$20,000 and is projected to save \$30,000 over 25 years. With a net profit of \$10,000, the ROI is 50%.

$$\begin{aligned} &(\$30,000 \text{ saved over 25 years}) - \\ &(\$20,000 \text{ spent}) = (\$10,000 \text{ net savings}) \div \\ &(\$20,000 \text{ spent}) = 0.5 \times 100 = (50\% \text{ ROI}) \end{aligned}$$

Again, these are only examples. Solar system costs and savings vary depending on where you live, how you pay for the system and your electricity costs. If you have a solar system loan and lease, it can add complexity to a potential sale.

Check for tax credits or incentives to reduce the upfront costs for energy efficiency or renewable energy projects, and compare costs and potential savings to make the best decisions for your home and your bank account. ☺

MIRANDA BOUTELLE writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Marvin Ross

AGE: 42.

RESIDES IN: Dorchester.

CLAIM TO FAME: Restaurants across the Carolinas and Georgia source their pork from Ross's ethically raised hogs at Peculiar Pig Farm. He also participates in hog slaughters, a centuries-old tradition among Black farming communities.

PIG OUT: Schedule catering from Ross's Peculiar Pig Eats or order your own pork or beef straight from the farm at peculiarpigfarm.com.

Farm to table; pig to pork

There's always been something about pigs.

"My grandfather had a farm," says Marvin Ross. "He had everything. Every animal you could think of, he had. And I always took a liking to the pigs. And everybody asked me this question: 'But why the pigs?' I have no idea."

Ross began his own farm on his grandfather's land and named it Peculiar Pig Farm. Pigs, chickens, geese, cows and goats roam Ross's 12-acre plot in Dorchester. After 14 years, Peculiar Pig has become a regular supplier of restaurants in the Carolinas and Georgia.

Ross's family history of farming stretches back five generations, and many of his grandfather's farming methods are still alive on his land.

"You know, my grandfather told me how to drive a tractor," he says. "The same way he farmed, the same way I farm today. I learned what I know how to do from him."

Ross continues to use his grandfather's method of rotating grazing pens for the pigs. He also implements sustainable and ethical practices, such as sourcing feed from local grocery stores and breweries.

One of Ross's goals is to maintain the traditions of Southern Black farmers. He participates in traditional hog slaughters, in which a large pig is butchered, cleaned and cooked. Almost none of the pig is wasted, and the resulting food is shared with the community. Ross views this tradition as crucial.

"It created a camaraderie in the community, where people work together," he says. "And it's self-reliant."

He has plans to expand, too. One goal is to purchase a meat processor, which would allow the farm to be self-sufficient. Another is to replicate the farm's model in other locations. Establishing more farm-to-table operations could help rural economies, Ross says.

"The most economical way to revive rural areas is to have a true farm-to-table concept," he says. "And that way you can be self-sufficient and generate a living for your family."

—HAYDEN DAVIS | PHOTO BY MIC SMITH

FOOTBALL AMERICA

BY JOSH P. CROTZER
PHOTOS BY THOMAS HAMMOND

Friday nights fuel
identity and pride in
rural SC communities

THE GAUNTLET OF SIGNS AND POSTERS at a Gilbert High School football game can blur into a mess of red and black letters. But one large, simple display is hard to miss. On a long, white board in black letters, “Gilbert America” juts into the skyline above the visitors’ stands. With just two words, this town of fewer than 600 residents declares an independence.

The message is about pride and community. And like many small towns in the South, it’s the local high school football team that carries the banner.

“It’s one town, one school and one team, so it’s easy for people to get behind that,” says Chad Leaphart, a former Gilbert High football player and head coach who’s now the athletics director for Lexington County School District One. “It’s a blue-collar town with no stoplights, where people get to come out and support each other on Friday night.”

What happens on Friday nights in the fall is important, not

only to the people of Gilbert but also to those in Abbeville, Bamberg and dozens of other close-knit communities across South Carolina. Their high school football teams’ gridiron glory, both past and present, bonds them to their neighbors and seals their towns’ proud identities.

“It’s the lifeline of the community, the heartbeat of the community,” Abbeville City Councilman Benji Greeson says. “No matter who you are or what side of the tracks you’re from, you’re a Panther. It’s family, and that’s part of the rallying point.”

For Justin Bamberg, a state lawmaker and an alum of Bamberg-Ehrhardt High, a Friday night under the lights is the best way to end the week.

“Athletics in general, but particularly football here, is one of those things that brings everybody together,” he says. “You can forget about your day-to-day drama and come out and cheer on these kids. It’s a vital organ of the community.”

GOOD CALL The Gilbert High football coaches and players pause for a moment of prayer prior to a Friday night kickoff.

The people of Gilbert raised nearly \$300,000 to build their own stadium. “I think that shows you the type of community this is.”

—CHAD LEAPHART,
Lexington County School
District One athletics director
and former Gilbert High
football player





“You can forget about your day-to-day drama and come out and cheer on these kids. It’s a vital organ of the community.”

—JUSTIN BAMBERG, S.C. state representative and Bamberg-Ehrhardt High alum

SCHOOL SPIRIT The crowd at Bamberg-Ehrhardt High’s homecoming game is ready to see some action.

PICK IT UP AND GO

Wayne Ricard wanted to play football, but in 1970, Gilbert High was a few years from restarting its program.

Even when the Indians returned to the field in 1972, Gilbert players and fans still had to travel 9 miles to Lexington High’s stadium, where they shared a “homefield.”

By the mid-’80s, Ricard was president of his alma mater’s booster club, and legendary coach Marty Woolbright had begun building a football program that reflected Gilbert.

“The community was always bought in,” says Ricard. “When Marty got here, it really took off. The whole team played with a lot of heart and guts, and half the time they were winning games they weren’t supposed to. We knew we had to do better for our kids.”

Without any financial commitment from their school district, the people of Gilbert raised nearly \$300,000 to build their own stadium. They held raffles, sold barbecue and had benefit shows featuring iconic Southern comedian Jerry Clower. As they closed in on their goal, the school district contributed the remaining funds for the stadium’s lighting.

“Pick it up and go, that’s what we did,” says Ricard. “It was a collaboration of a lot of hardworking, good people.”

At its completion in 1988, Gilbert High’s Tomahawk Stadium was the first in the district with aluminum seats, concrete light poles and accessible seating. The stadium’s inaugural game was a 50-0 Gilbert victory over Cardinal Newman School.

“I think that shows you the type of community this is,” says Leaphart, who was on the field as a freshman that night. “They were relentless for two years raising money, so they took a lot of pride in that stadium.”

That pride hasn’t wavered.

“I think one of the coolest things coming up as a player was that everyone knew who you were,” says Leaphart, who



START ‘EM YOUNG ▲ Ellie Snelling, 4, cheers on Gilbert High, where her father is an assistant coach. ◀ Wayne Ricard, former president of the booster club, says of the team’s early days, “The community was always bought in. The whole team played with a lot of heart and guts.”



surpassed Woolbright as the school’s all-time wins leader. “When I got the opportunity to come back and coach, I wanted my boys to feel that. The town loves the game so much.”

THEY KNOW FOOTBALL HERE

There’s tailgating, and then there’s what happens at Bamberg-Ehrhardt High School’s homecoming game.

In a small parking lot between the field house and Leon Maxwell Stadium—named after the coach who led the Red Raiders to five lower-state championships and one state title—savory smoke wafts from a multitude of cookers and grills. A DJ leads a dance party with a playlist that can evoke teenage memories and dance moves from any of the past six decades.

Alumni who aren’t dancing, or are too busy rotating ►►



GO-O-O-O TEAM! Bamberg-Ehrhardt High cheerleaders energize the night.

►► chicken wings, are catching up and swapping stories, many of which took place on the nearby fields.

"You can see the camaraderie we have here. We all come together as a family," says Stanley Ross, a 1980 graduate who played on the offensive and defensive lines for the Red Raiders. "The people love football, and they know football around here."

The school, always in one of the smaller-school classifications, boasts three players who rose to the National Football League—Da'Quan Bowers, Ricky Sapp and A.J. Cann.

There is no argument over the important role school athletics play there.

"It's not even a win or lose type of thing," says Bamberg, the state House member who graduated from Bamberg-Ehrhardt in 2005. "It's more about rooting the boys on. Everybody watches them grow up. There is an element of life out

HOMECOMING RULES ► Stanley Ross, a former Red Raider player and 1980 grad, was and still is inspired by the community's support. ▼ Friends from the Class of 1984 arrive at the tailgate in style.



here that you want to keep the youth out of. Sports is a good way to do it."

That nurturing support has a legacy as long and rich as the school's winning traditions. Ross recalls the summer Maxwell took the team to Winthrop University for a weeklong camp to prepare for the upcoming season.

"Our community took care of us for that whole week—our travel, three meals a day, matching sweatsuits and short sets—and we didn't have to pay one penny. I still think about what a good, tight community we have that really supports us."

THE "A" IN YOU

If you don't know about Abbeville High School's storied football program or the passion of its fans, a not-so-subtle introduction greets you along state Highway 72 heading into town.

Standing on Ronald Creswell's well-kept front yard, high enough for anyone coming from Greenwood or Ninety Six to see, is an 8-by-4-foot sign displaying each of the 13 seasons the Panthers have claimed a state championship.

The sign was originally under the scoreboard at the school's football stadium. When a new official display was created five years ago, Creswell asked Panthers head coach Jamie Nickles if he could have the original sign.

"I told him that I'm going to put it in my yard; that's the best place for it," Creswell recounts. "I put it up for the city. I put it up for Abbeville. Ever since, man, everybody loves it."

Creswell is a loyal and longtime Abbeville High supporter, but a 45-year career as a truck driver meant he spent most Friday nights listening to WZLA, a 6,000-watt FM radio station that has broadcast Abbeville High football games since 1992.

In a town such as Abbeville, most people are either at the game or tuned in.

"You can roll the sidewalks up on a Friday night," says Greeson, the city councilman who's also the station's owner and color commentator on those broadcasts. "It doesn't matter if it's a championship game or a game that they are favored by 30 points. It's a family tradition for folks around here."

After state championship victories—nine in the last 16 seasons—fans return from the neutral-site games to the city's historic downtown square and await the arrival of their victors.



WE'RE #1 Ronald Creswell considers the front yard display of Abbeville titles a service to his community.

JOSH P. CROTZER

SOLIDARITY
Abbeville's
game captains
raise their
helmets before
the coin flip.



“It was 1:30 on a Friday morning, but the square was packed with more than 500 people. It gave me goose bumps.”

—BENJI GREESON,
Abbeville city councilman
and WZLA's Abbeville High
football color commentator

Their most recent title game—a 58-20 win over Cross last year in Orangeburg—ended late on a Thursday night, and Greeson wondered if the community would celebrate with the same fervor.

“It’s not like this was our first championship in 25 years,” says Greeson. “It was 1:30 on Friday morning, but the square was packed with more than 500 people. They were cheering, flashing their lights, honking their horns and shooting

fireworks over downtown. It was an awesome scene. It gave me goose bumps.”

Greeson acknowledges that Abbeville’s success makes Panthers football an easy team to embrace, but he’s never seen the support waver.

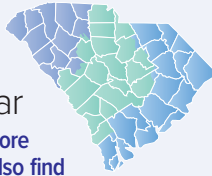
“We’ve had rebuilding years, but the fans never quit showing up,” he says. “The thing that we like to say around here is that the ‘A’ is not on you, it’s in you.” 🐾

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Upstate

OCTOBER

22–30 Boo in the Zoo, Greenville Zoo, Greenville. (864) 467-4300 or greenvillezoo.com.

24–25 Pickens Appalachian Folk Festival, Hagood Mills Historic Site, Pickens. pickensappalachianfolkfestival.org.

24–26 Hog & Barrel, a Bourbon, BBQ, & Bacon Festival, Judson Mill, Greenville. hogandbarrelfestival.com.

24–Nov. 2 Hairspray, Greenwood Community Theatre, Greenwood. (864) 229-5704 or greenwoodcommunitytheatre.com.

25 Fall Harvest Festival, Village Green, Pendleton. (864) 646-9409 or townofpendleton.org.

25 Spooktacular Pumpkin Carving Party, Hickory Knob State Resort Park, McCormick. (864) 391-2450.

25 Trick or Treat, Lake Greenwood State Park, Ninety Six. (864) 543-3535.

27 Clemson University Symphony Orchestra Halloween Spooktacular, Brooks Center for the Performing Arts, Clemson. (864) 656-7787.

NOVEMBER

1–2 Everything Outdoor Fest, Historic Hopkins Farm, Simpsonville. everythingoutdoorfest.com.

7–23 Rent, Mauldin Cultural Center, Mauldin. (864) 335-4862 or mauldinculturalcenter.org.

14–15 Native American Celebration, Hagood Mill, Pickens. (864) 898-2936 or visithagoodmill.com.

15 Greenville Craft Beer Festival, Fluor Field, Greenville. gvlbeerfest.com.

15 Zoom Through the Zoo 5K, Greenville Zoo, Greenville. (864) 467-4300 or greenvillezoo.com.

15–16 Greenville Open Studios, various art studios, Greenville. (864) 467-3132 or greenvillearts.com.

20–22 23rd Annual New Play Festival, Centre Stage, Greenville. (864) 233-6733 or centrestage.org.

21–Dec. 31 Nights of Lights, CCNB Amphitheatre at Heritage Park, Simpsonville. lightsattheatagepark.com.

26–27 Electric City Gobbler 5K and 1 Mile Fun Run, Anderson Mall, Anderson. (864) 353-5113 or runsignup.com.

SCLiving.coop/calendar

Our mobile-friendly site lists even more festivals, shows and events. You'll also find instructions on submitting your event. Please confirm information with the hosting event before attending.

Midlands

OCTOBER

17–30 Boo at the Zoo, Riverbanks Zoo & Garden, Columbia. (803) 779-9717 or riverbanks.org.

18 Fort Mill Fall Festival, Fort Mill Amphitheater and Walter Y. Elisha Park, Fort Mill. (803) 547-2034 or fortmillsc.gov.

18 HILLarity-Fall Fest, downtown, Chester. raisingchester.com.

24–25 Blythewood Fall Championship Rodeo, 10433 Wilson Blvd., Blythewood. blythewoodrodeo.com.

24–25 Jack-O-Lantern Jubilee, downtown, North Augusta. (803) 441-4310 or explorenorthaugusta.com.

25 Creepy Campout, Lake Wateree State Park, Winnsboro. (803) 482-6401.

26 Gervais Street Bridge Dinner, Gervais Street Bridge, Columbia. tickets.coladaily.com.

31 Rocky Horror in Concert, Trustus Theatre, Columbia. (803) 254-9732 or trustus.org.

31–Nov. 1 Pig on the Ridge, downtown, Ridgeway. pigontheridgesc.com.

31–Nov. 9 The Minutes, Workshop Theatre, Columbia. (803) 799-4876 or workshoptheatreofsc.com.

NOVEMBER

1 Sparkle & Spice Holiday Market and Chili Cook Off, Brookland Baptist Church, West Columbia. (803) 796-7525 or ludwigeventplanning.com.

1 Korean Festival, 1412 Richland St., Columbia. (803) 765-2500 or facebook.com/sckoreanfestival.

7 Fall Back Fest, 100–300 block State Street, West Columbia. (803) 791-1880 or westcolumbiasc.gov/fall-back-fest.

7–8 Pelion Peanut Party, 951 Pine St., Pelion. facebook.com/pelionpeanutparty.

8 Jingle Bell Bazaar, Gateway Conference Center, Richburg. (803) 581-2030 or artschester.com.

12–16 You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, Aiken Community Theatre, Aiken. (803) 648-1438 or aikencommunitytheatre.org.

14–Dec. 20 Into the Woods, Trustus Theatre, Columbia. (803) 254-9732 or trustus.org.

16 Jingle Jam Music Festival, Steel Hands Brewery, Cayce. babcockcenter.betterworld.org.

20 Vista Lights, Vista District, Columbia. vistacolumbia.com.

20–23 Legally Blonde: The Musical, Bluebird Theatre, Orangeburg. (803) 536-5454 or otp.org.

21–Dec. 23 Wild Lights, Riverbanks Zoo & Garden, Columbia. (803) 779-9717 or riverbanks.org.

21–Jan. 3 Fireflies Holiday Lights, Segra Park, Columbia. firefliesholidaylights.com.

22 Aiken Fall Steeplechase Championship, Aiken Steeplechase, Aiken. aikensteeplechase.com.

23 Marion duPont Scott Colonial Cup Races, Springdale Race Course, Camden. carolinacup.org.

Pee Dee & Lowcountry

OCTOBER

18 Italian Heritage Festival, The Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn, Hilton Head Island. iachh.org/italian-heritage-festival.

18 Loris Bog Off Festival, downtown, Loris. (843) 756-6030 or lorischamber.com.

20–Nov. 2 Charleston Stage presents Dial M For Murder, Dock Street Theatre, Charleston. (843) 577-7183 or charlestonstage.com.

24–26 Foodees Fest, Magnolia Mall, Florence. foodeesfest.com/events-2/magnolia-mall.

25 BOOtanical Garden, Moore Farms Botanical Garden, Lake City. (843) 210-7582 or moorefarmsbg.org.

25 Charleston Beerfest, Riverfront Park, North Charleston. chsbeerfest.org.

25 Edisto & Beyond Tour, self-guided driving tour, Edisto Island. edistomuseum.org.

25 James Island Connector Run, Folly Road and James Island Expressway, James Island. jicrun.com.

25 Mac and Cheese Festival, Lincoln and South Brewery, Hilton Head Island. hiltonheadmacfest.com.



MIC SMITH

STEP BACK IN TIME The Mythical & Medieval Fest in Myrtle Beach will keep you entertained the weekends of Nov. 8–9 and 15–16.

29–Nov. 2 Hilton Head Island Concours d'Elegance & Motoring Festival, various locations, Hilton Head Island. (843) 785-7469 or hhiconcours.com.

30–Nov. 9 Coastal Carolina Fair, Exchange Park, Ladson. coastalcarolinafair.org.

31–Nov. 10 Eastern Carolina Agricultural Fair, Eastern Carolina Agricultural Fairgrounds, Florence. (843) 665-5173 or ecafair.com.

NOVEMBER

1 Barks & BOOze Wine & Beer Walk, Moore Farms Botanical Garden, Lake City. (843) 210-7582 or moorefarmsbg.org.

1 Charleston Scottish Games, Riverfront Park, North Charleston. charlestonsscottishgames.com.

1 Harvest Festival, Johns Island County Park, Johns Island. (843) 795-4386 or ccprc.com.

1 SC Pecan Music and Food Festival, downtown, Florence. sccpecanfestival.com.

4 Taste of the Town, Myrtle Beach Convention Center, Myrtle Beach. (843) 918-1225 or myrtlebeachconventioncenter.com.

7–16 Charleston Literary Festival, Dock Street Theatre, Charleston. charlestonliteraryfestival.com.

8 Hilton Head Oyster Festival, Lowcountry Celebration Park, Hilton Head Island. hiltonheadoysterfestival.com.

8 Holy Smokes Barbecue Festival, Riverfront Park, North Charleston. holysmokeschs.com.

8 Rockabillaque, Park Circle neighborhood, North Charleston. rockabillaque.com.

8–9, 15–16 Mythical & Medieval Fest, 3833 Socastee Blvd., Myrtle Beach. mythicalmedievalfest.com.

9 Steeplechase of Charleston, The Stono Ferry Racetrack, Hollywood. (843) 534-0172 or steeplechaseofcharleston.com.

12 Holiday Festival of Lights Fun Run & Walk, James Island County Park, Charleston. (843) 795-4386.

13–16 Dickens Christmas Show & Festival, Myrtle Beach Convention Center, Myrtle Beach. (843) 448-9483 or dickenschristmasshow.com.

15 Pawleys Island Turtle Strut 5K/8K/Run/Walk, Town Hall, Pawleys Island. (843) 237-1698 or runsignup.com.

25–Dec. 30 The Great Christmas Light Show, North Myrtle Beach Park and Sports Complex, North Myrtle Beach. nmbchristmas.com.

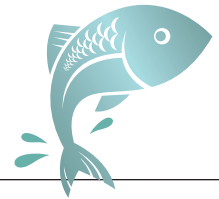
27 Turkey Day Run & Gobble Wobble 5K, downtown, Charleston. turkeydayrun.com.

27 Turkey Trot 5K, Boathouse parking lot, Hilton Head Island. (843) 681-7273 or islandreccenter.org.

28–Jan. 4 Night of a Thousand Candles, Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet. brookgreen.org.

29–Dec. 21 Charleston Stage presents A Christmas Carol, Dock Street Theatre, Charleston. (843) 577-7183 or charlestonstage.com.

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FISH & GAME CHART

The Solunar forecast provides feeding and migration times. Major periods can bracket the peak by more than an hour, minor periods by a half-hour before and after.

	AM		PM	
	Minor	Major	Minor	Major
OCTOBER				
16	2:12	8:24	2:35	8:46
17	2:52	9:03	3:13	9:24
18	3:29	9:39	3:49	9:59
19	4:05	10:15	4:25	10:35
20	4:42	10:52	5:02	11:13
21	5:22	11:33	5:43	11:54
22	6:06	—	6:28	12:39
23	6:54	12:42	7:17	1:06
24	7:46	1:33	8:10	1:58
25	8:40	2:27	9:05	2:53
26	9:36	3:23	10:01	3:49
27	10:32	4:19	10:57	4:45
28	11:26	5:13	11:52	5:39
29	—	6:06	12:18	6:31
30	12:42	6:54	1:07	7:19
31	1:28	7:40	1:52	8:04

NOVEMBER				
1	2:11	8:22	2:34	8:46
2	2:52	9:04	3:16	9:28
3	2:34	8:47	2:59	9:12
4	3:21	9:34	3:48	10:01
5	4:14	10:29	4:43	10:58
6	5:15	11:31	5:47	—
7	6:23	12:07	6:56	12:39
8	7:34	1:18	8:07	1:51
9	8:45	2:29	9:16	3:01
10	9:51	3:37	10:20	4:06
11	10:50	4:37	11:16	5:03
12	11:41	5:29	—	5:52
13	12:03	6:13	12:24	6:35
14	12:42	6:52	1:03	7:13
15	1:18	7:28	1:38	7:48
16	1:53	8:03	2:13	8:23
17	2:28	8:39	2:49	8:59
18	3:06	9:17	3:28	9:39
19	3:48	10:00	4:11	10:23
20	4:34	10:46	4:58	11:11
21	5:25	11:08	5:50	—
22	6:19	12:06	6:44	12:31
23	7:14	1:02	7:40	1:27
24	8:11	1:58	8:36	2:23
25	9:06	2:54	9:31	3:18
26	9:59	3:47	10:23	4:11
27	10:49	4:37	11:12	5:00
28	11:36	5:24	11:58	5:47
29	—	6:08	12:19	6:31
30	12:38	6:50	1:02	7:14

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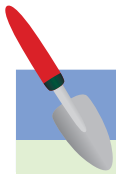
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ANSWERS FOR PAGE 8

623,000 jobs; \$51 billion; not-for-profit utilities; known as capital credits; 7 cooperative principles; 50,000 students.



OCTOBER IN THE GARDEN

■ If the cool autumn breezes fail to ditch your itch to plant more veggies, there is still time statewide to start onions (either plants or sets), garlic and garden peas. Gardeners from Columbia to the coast can also squeeze in another round of spinach, mustard greens, lettuce, kale, Brussels sprouts or collards.

■ Thinking about expanding a vegetable patch or flower bed during next year's growing season? Go ahead and dig up or rototill the new areas now. Leave the ground rough through the winter so the rains and freezing temperatures can help break up the soil, making it easier to work next spring.

■ Get into the spirit of Halloween and "haunt" local nurseries for end-of-growing-season sales on leftover perennials and woody ornamentals.

TIP OF THE MONTH Burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) is a cousin of strawberry bush that was imported from Asia in the 1860s, and its flaming fall foliage certainly tempts gardeners to add it to their landscapes. Don't. It can easily seed about, so burning bush has been tagged as invasive in South Carolina. "Fire Ball Seedless," a noninvasive, sterile cultivar, has been developed, but why not grow wild instead? Many native plants can provide just as much visual autumn bling with their leaves, including Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*), chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), smoketree (*Cotinus obovatus*), oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*), and fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*).



COLOR YOUR WORLD Enjoy the autumn bling of our native oakleaf hydrangea.

L.A. JACKSON



NATIVE WONDER
Strawberry bush is a strange beauty.

The other strawberry

BY L.A. JACKSON

L.A. JACKSON

WHEN I MOVED TO MY CURRENT HOME many eons ago, one of the first things I did was check the property for any neat native plants that might be tucked away in the open areas and woodlands. It took all of about two minutes to find my first botanical treasure: strawberry bush.

I should explain first what strawberry bush (*Euonymus americanus*) isn't. It is not related to the stubby plants that serve up those delicious, juicy berries destined for shortcakes in the spring.

Strawberry bush (also known as "hearts-a-busting") is a native understory shrub that likes to inhabit open forests and shady riverbanks. Being a gangly, skinny plant that only reaches about 5 to 6 feet high, it is easy to miss in the spring and summer. Even its tiny, greenish-yellow blooms attract little attention.

In the fall, however, pollinated blossoms morph into small, bumpy fruit that brighten to a brash magenta and split open to expose fire-engine-red seeds. This unusual display is followed by the deciduous leaves serving up an encore by turning a smoldering scarlet to finish the strawberry bush's autumn show.

Strawberry bush favors moist soil in its native environment, but it can adapt to almost any cultivated setting. Heck, my wild finds have grown just fine in tough clay dirt. Light shade is

The bright seeds will be enjoyed by friendly flyers such as cardinals and bluebirds, but they'll put your tummy in a real twist.

preferred, with some morning sun.

The bright seeds will be enjoyed by friendly flyers such as cardinals, bluebirds, wood thrushes, and mockingbirds, but don't be tempted to try them yourself because they can put your tummy in a real twist.

Being native, strawberry bush is a tough survivor in the wild—that is, except when deer are around. This plant is quite a delicacy for them, so be forewarned that, without fencing, regular sprayings of repellent, or a vigilant yard dog, prunings by Bambi are a possibility.

Despite its appealing beauty, strawberry bush is not a common sight in retail garden centers, except those that have impressive native plant inventories. Online, however, you can find it at regional e-nurseries such as Ty Ty Nursery (tytyga.com) in Georgia and The Shop at Monticello (monticelloshop.org) in Virginia. ☺

L.A. JACKSON is the former editor of Carolina Gardener magazine. Contact him at lajackson1@gmail.com.

One man's perky is another's poison

BY JAN A. IGOE

AS SOMEONE WHO LOVES to eat anything I didn't personally cook, restaurants are like my second home. So I get to see a lot of servers in action.

I never critique, since my budding career in the food service industry lasted 15 minutes, courtesy of a pack of well-lubricated frat brothers who liked the restaurant where I worked. They were performing handstands on the table and demanding more dressing from me, their smiling and obliging server. As I drizzled our famous homemade blue cheese dressing onto their salads, some curious hands left the table to explore my dress. Before I could stop myself, a gallon of that expensive dressing was dripping off their heads. My memory is fuzzy, but the frown lines etched into my boss's face seemed unusually deep when she took me off the schedule and waved goodbye.

Even now, I try to cut well-meaning servers some slack. All I ask is that they fess up when the chef's special is poisonous, refill the water glass before I stick my straw in their aquarium, retreat graciously (without offering any firstborns) when dessert is declined, and don't leave town when we're waiting on the check. Easy.

But that was before Bonnie Sue, the deliriously happy, perpetually perky hometown girl became our server. She was oozing sweet, gentle, southern charm—exactly what you'd expect in this beautiful state—unless you're my friend Tony from New York.

Born and raised in the Big Apple, Tony doesn't get perfect strangers saying "Morning, y'all." If they stroll that close back home, he figures it's to say "Morning. Y'all give me your wallet." It's



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a culture thing. No matter how he tries to fit in here, once his mouth opens and those diphthongy decibels spew out, locals scatter like bowling pins after a perfect strike.

At dinner, Bonnie Sue bounced up as if she were riding a pogo stick, beaming a 500-megawatt grin rarely glimpsed in Cross Bronx territory. She had yet to hand over the menus, but Tony was already breaking out in hives.

Bonnie Sue told us about her brothers, sisters, uncles, goats and being her second-grade teacher's pet before we interrupted to beg for wine.

She fetched it immediately. Of course, not all of it stayed in our glasses, given

all that leaping. But she tried.

Me: "You have a really pleasant personality."

Her: "Everyone says that. I'm just like sunshine. I've always been like this."

As Bonnie Sue skipped away, I noticed Tony's face buried under the tablecloth and all the napkins stuffed in his ears.

Me: "You OK?"

Him: "I give myself 10 minutes. Then I kill her."

Me: "Drink faster. It will pass."

As dinner progressed, Bonnie Sue returned every 17 seconds to preemptively grant any wishes before anybody considered wishing it. All hope of completing a sentence without Bonnie Sue landing between the subject and the verb was lost. Finally, I had to say something.

"I was trying to tell a story," I said gently. Bonnie Sue smiled with delight and pulled up a chair. She loved stories, as luck would have it.

"I was telling the story to him," I said, pointing to the chair where I'd last seen Tony, who had disappeared under the table, possibly to load a weapon.

As Bonnie Sue bounced off to fetch dessert menus, I let Tony know it was safe to come out. "We'll find some traffic. You can honk and practice your hand signals," I coaxed.

The color returning to his face, Tony bounced happily out of the restaurant. I'm not sure, but I think he took her pogo stick. ☹

EDITOR'S NOTE: South Carolina Living is reprinting some of Jan A. Igoe's previous columns. This "Humor Me" originally appeared in the June 2012 issue. Visit SCLiving.coop/news/in-memory-of-jan-igoe.

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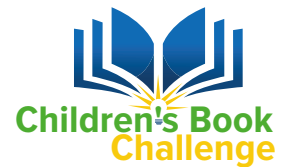


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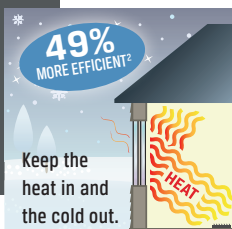


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