

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2026

1 SECTION, 24 PAGES | VOL. 3, NO. 8



Know before you vote

Where to go, who is running for office,
absentee and early voting and more

A14

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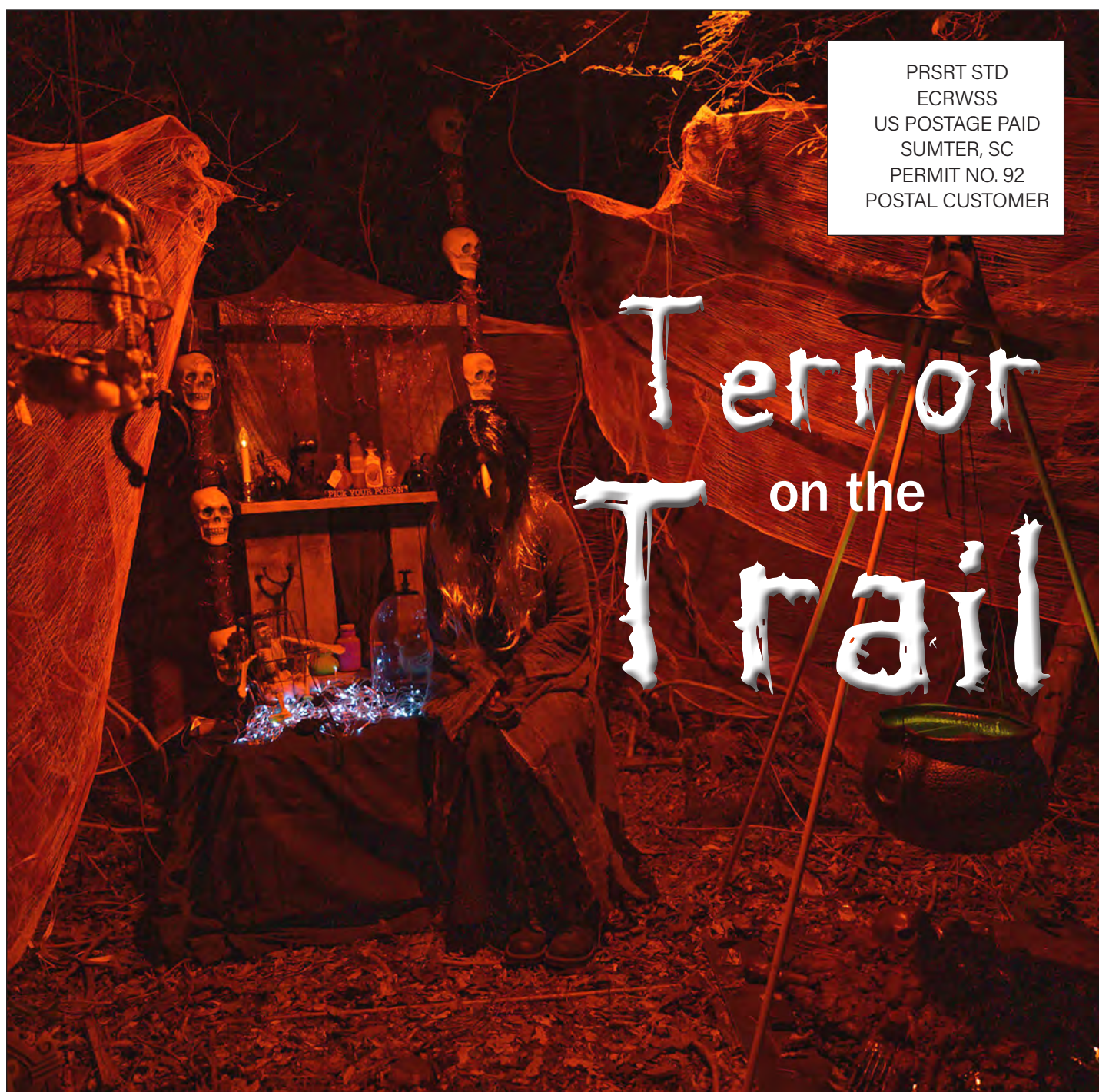
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ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Every year, the Boy Scout troop of Shaw Air Force Base puts on the Terror Trail at Second Mill Pond to fund activities throughout the year. The event started 14 years ago thanks to Brian Davis, and the cast of costumed actors is largely pre-teen and teenage troop members. Others that have become involved are family members or friends of the troop members. Read more about the trail on A12.



HAPPILY EVER AFTER STARTS

Here



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However you celebrate this season, there's something in town for you

It's finally a bit cooler, pumpkins are appearing on local porches, and there are more festive events coming up than you can shake your broom at. From fall festivals to Halloween frights, there are plenty of opportunities to get the kids out to enjoy the season and pick up some candy, of course.

Back again this year, Sumter Museum is hosting its Backcountry Fall Fest, with treats for the little ghouls and princesses, and you can walk around the replica backcountry homestead to see how fall might have looked 200 years ago in Sumter. It won't quite be Salem, but it will be a chance to learn about the past right here at home. If you want to celebrate with the furry friends in your life,

Sumter SPCA is hosting a fundraising Petoberfest this year, with trick-or-treating and free Bark Park for the dogs.

If you're into the scarier side of the holiday, don't forget about the Terror Trail, which is created each year by area Boy Scouts and benefits the organization. It's in the woods by Second Mill and will be sure to have you screaming with horror around every corner. (I know, because I live in a neighborhood across the lake and can hear the yelling in the evenings on the weekends this time of year when I walk my dog.)

However you celebrate Halloween, there's likely something in town going on that you'll enjoy.

Just after the holiday, we head to the polls to choose who we want to represent us, from local races including school board and probate judge to state representatives, governor and more. Find what you'll need to know before you vote in our 2026 General



Melanie Smith



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO

Aldersgate United Methodist Church community members, with help from the USC Sumter tennis, baseball and softball teams, set up for the annual Pumpkin Palooza in September 2023. This year's fundraising pumpkin patch is being held at Sumter Methodist Church.

Election guide, on pages A14-A20. If you'd like to read all the Q&As we received from candidates this year about their platforms, ideas and why they think you should vote for them, use the QR code on page A14. Hover your phone's camera over the code, and click the link that pops up. It will take you to our free-to-read Q&As. In this *Sumter Item Impact* vote guide, you'll

find information about absentee voting, early voting, a precinct list and a list of all candidates running for office. Be sure to do your civic duty if you're eligible to vote.

We hope you enjoy this fall season, and we'll see you at the polls. Follow www.theitem.com for free election updates, which will also be published in our print edition after Election Day.

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36 W. LIBERTY ST., SUMTER, S.C. 29150
(803) 774-1200

Vince Johnson
PUBLISHER
vince@theitem.com

Kayla Green
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
kayla@theitem.com
(803) 774-1235

Melanie Smith
ASSISTANT EDITOR
melanie@theitem.com
(803) 774-1293

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Devin McDonald
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Mark Pekuri
mark@theitem.com
(803) 464-8917

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Education

School board candidate races to lead headlines until Election Day

BY BRUCE MILLS

bruce@theitem.com

15 CANDIDATES IN 5 BOARD RACES; ITEM HAS DETAILED COVERAGE

Election season has begun, and for the always high-stakes Sumter school board races, there are opportunities to get to know more on the candidates for the open nonpartisan seats on the nine-member board.

In addition to the Vote Guide with candidate questionnaires that was published in the Sept. 26 Weekend edition, *The Item* has already started to interview the incumbents and challengers and is publishing race stories weekly for in-depth coverage on the key issues for all five areas with open seats.

Online this series, like other election information, will be free to read as a public service. With five open races, there will be five stories.

The five areas – or districts as they are sometimes referred to – up for the public's vote in this election are Areas 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8, and there are a total of 15 candidates.

The newspaper did a similar series in fall 2022 leading up to that election when all nine board seats were up for election because the board then moved to nine single-member districts from seven districts with two at-large seats.

In part because of that detailed coverage, *The Item* won first place in the category of Community Service journalism in the 2022 South Carolina Press Association Awards Contest for all newspapers.

These five elections will be critical for the overall community's future and also specifically the K-12 education landscape.

TRUSTEES VOTE 4-3 TO REMOVE REZONING DISCUSSION, VOTE

With the stance the school district needs a comprehensive facilities study to be completed before any discussion on realignment or a master plan, a school board majority voted down such a discussion on Sept. 14.

Trustee the Rev. Ralph Canty introduced a motion that passed in a

4-3 vote at the start of Sumter School District's Board of Trustees' meeting that night to delete the realignment and master plan discussion, and he later discussed his perspective on striking the agenda item.

With just two board meetings remaining because he is not seeking reelection, board Chairman Shawn Ragin added the controversial topic of rezoning attendance lines (or realignment) after the original agenda was posted on Sept. 11.

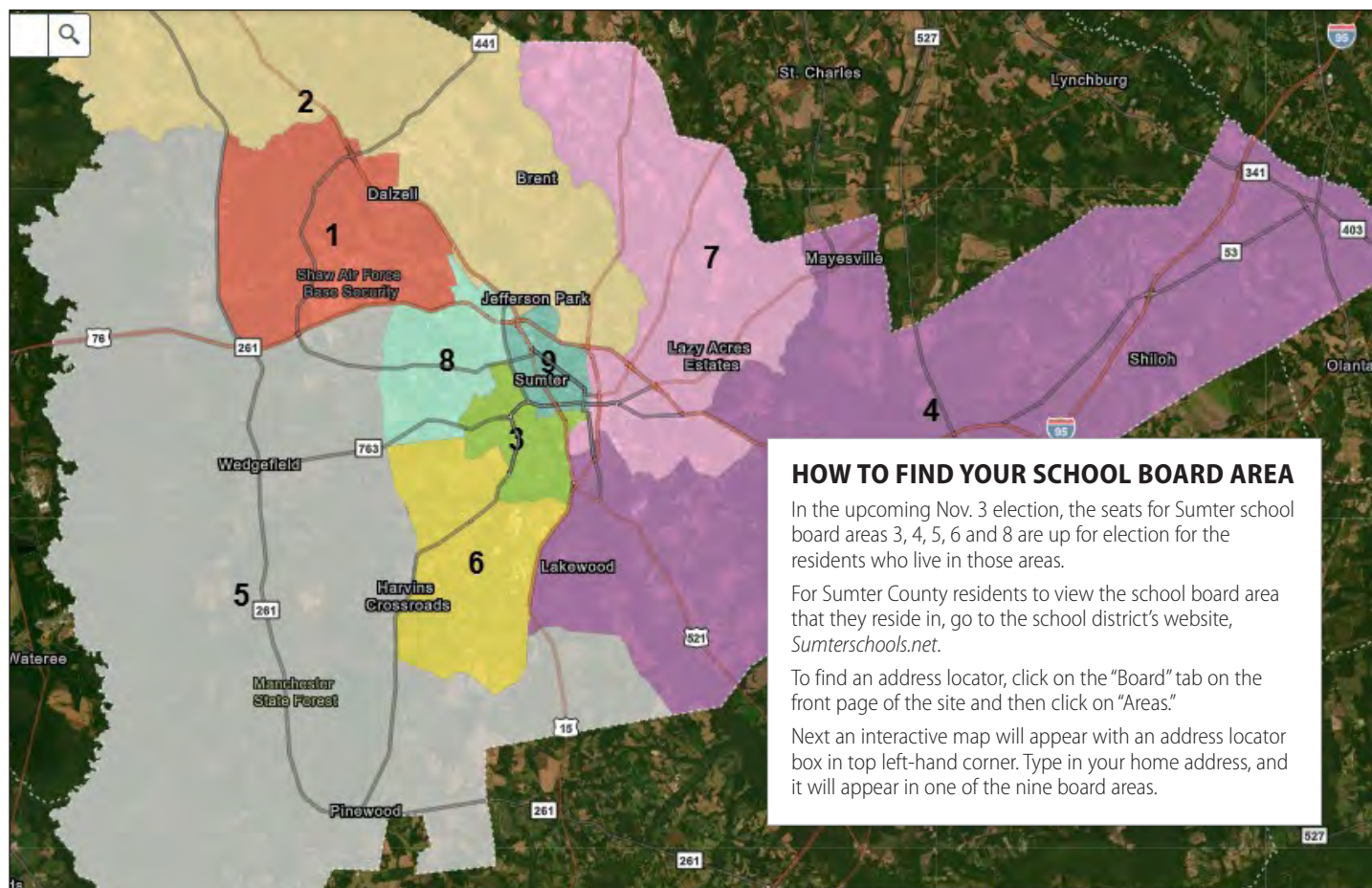
Canty and another trustee, both seeking reelection this year, told *The Sumter Item* after the agenda addition that they questioned his motives on adding the measure, and a third board member also said Ragin's move "could be being used as an election tactic" for November.

Based on discussions at communi-

ty meetings in early September, the tactic would be to see which incumbents were for a major rezoning plan immediately to save "all rural schools" as opposed to who was for realignment with some stipulations.

The chairman ignored *The Item* immediately after a community meeting near Mayesville on Sept. 10, when he initially said the board would be bringing rezoning back to the floor, and did not return the newspaper's phone calls and text messages in the ensuing days.

At the start of the Sept. 14 board meeting, Canty objected to the agenda, and his motion called for removing the realignment and master plan board discussion and a vote later in the meeting "until such time as a facilities study is completed and we have recommendations from the superintendent."



HOW TO FIND YOUR SCHOOL BOARD AREA

In the upcoming Nov. 3 election, the seats for Sumter school board areas 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 are up for election for the residents who live in those areas.

For Sumter County residents to view the school board area that they reside in, go to the school district's website, Sumterschools.net.

To find an address locator, click on the "Board" tab on the front page of the site and then click on "Areas."

Next an interactive map will appear with an address locator box in top left-hand corner. Type in your home address, and it will appear in one of the nine board areas.

MAP PROVIDED

Trustee Bonnie Disney seconded his motion, and Matthew "Mac" McLeod and Phil Leventis also supported it. Those board members against the motion included Ragin, Vice Chairman Brian Alston and Clerk Gloria Lee.

Fellow trustees Tarah Johnson and Brittany English were absent at the start of the meeting for the vote but arrived later.

The district's facilities study – which the board approved later in the meeting for an independent consultant to complete – will take a comprehensive look at all schools to include the age of facilities and whether they could take on more students and capacity issues with updated data. A long-term plan may also be included by the consultant on potential needs to construct new schools.

Decorate for less this holiday season

BY ABIGAIL PITTMAN

abigail@theitem.com

These days, it seems less costs more. Whether you're buying groceries or clothes for work, you might have noticed the higher price tag, trying to stretch every dollar a little bit further.

Repurposing things you already have, things you might normally throw away, to decorate for the holidays means you can spend more money on candy and costumes for the kids. Not only that, re-using and recycling help the planet!

Here are some ideas to get you started on making your own Halloween decorations.

If you have a cardboard box:

The world is your oyster! Corrugated cardboard has lots of DIY uses. You could cut it in half circles and hot glue them together to make cardboard pumpkins.

You could also trace and cut out shapes on a flat piece to make whatever you (or your child) can think of. With a little acrylic paint (you can get some cheaply from Walmart), cardboard becomes a black cat, a spooky pumpkin or even Bluey, depending on your artistic ability.

If you have empty toilet paper rolls:

I recently saved a video from Instagram user Tina Le Mac (@tinalemac) showing how she took the cardboard part of a toilet paper roll and turned it into garland! By flattening the rolled cardboard into a diamond shape, she created triangles similar to a store-bought banner, but paintable

and fully customizable.

If you have some leftover candle wax:

Someone on the internet recently shared a video about her family's tradition. Each year in fall, they gather pretty leaves from outside, melt the leftover candle wax they've accrued over the years, and then dip the leaves in the wax. Doing this preserves the leaves (and makes them smell nice), and then they string the leaves in a garland and display them.

This could easily be done with unscented wax from Michael's if you want to be able to add your choice of scented oil to the mix. I could also see tying the leaf stems together to form something like a bouquet and displaying them that way.

If you have this paper:

You can make papier-mache and create anything! You'll also need some school glue, which you might already have if you have young children.

Cut this paper into strips and dip in a 1:1 mix of school glue and water. Drape the wet paper onto a form – you could use a balloon for this, or I found a pumpkin-shaped wreath frame at Dollar Tree I was going to use. What you use as structure determines how the papier mache will dry.

Once dried, you can paint over the newsprint, punch holes on the edges to tie string and make a face mask. You could hot glue something like a pipe cleaner to your creation to add texture. The options are endless.

If you have the time but not the resources:

This has happened to me more times than I can count.



ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM

For Halloween specifically, I saw a video on Instagram by @rachelteems. art where she made Pillsbury Halloween cookie coasters. I wanted to make my own because they're so cute, but I couldn't find the wooden coasters she used at any craft stores. I wondered about water staining on the wood, but I couldn't find any ceramic coaster shapes in stores either.

Imagine my delight to find out that

Sumter County Gallery of Art offers open pottery studio time on Fridays. For as little as \$8, I was able to start on my coasters and ask all my pottery-related questions of the wonderful volunteers. Because of how I'm making these coasters, I'm going back over the next couple of weeks to paint and complete them, but I'm excited! Visit their website for more: www.sumtergallery.com.

Happy crafting!



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Halloween by the numbers



\$13.5 billion

Total expected spending on Halloween for 2026

\$4.4 billion

Costumes

\$4.3 billion

Decorations

\$4.1 billion

Candy

\$0.8 billion

Greeting cards

74%

Percentage of Americans who plan to celebrate

72 million

The estimated number of U.S. children under the age of 18 (read: potential trick-or-treaters) as of July 1, 2025

Source: Vintage 2025 Population Estimates

56.6 million

The number of occupied U.S. housing units with steps that trick-or-treaters had to climb to collect their treats — or tricks — in 2023

Source: 2023 American Housing Survey

About half of consumers (49%) say they began shopping for Halloween in September or earlier.

Spooky-sounding places

Devils Lake, North Dakota

(2025 population: 7,333)

Seven Devils Town, North Carolina

(2025 population: 314)

Slaughter Beach, Delaware

(2025 population: 255)

Spirit, Wisconsin

(2025 population: 303)

Spirit Lake, Idaho

(2025 population: 2,485)

Slaughters City, Kentucky

(2025 population: 191)

Sleepy Hollow, Illinois

(2025 population: 3,122)

Dead Lake Township, Minnesota

(2025 population: 534)

Truth or Consequences,

New Mexico

(2025 population: 5,949)

Yellville, Arkansas

(2025 population: 1,095)

Source: City and Town Population Totals

2020-2025*

\$115

Planned spending per person

Top celebration plans

Percentage of Halloween celebrants participating in each activity

61% – hand out candy

50% – dress in costume

42% – decorate

42% – carve a pumpkin

42% – watch scary movies

36% – browse store displays or themed stores

Source: National Retail Federation's

2026 Halloween Spending Survey

132.7 million

The number of occupied U.S. housing units — potential stops for trick-or-treaters — in 2024

Source: 2024 American Community Survey

1-year estimates



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Entertainment

'Buddy' is shining example of how to craft a horror film

It has been fascinating to witness the horror genre experience a much-needed resurgence from the formulaic creative approach within the scope of cinema. This year has yielded impressive releases with "Obsession," "Backrooms" and "Evil Dead Burn."

On Sept. 25, I managed to catch a showing of an indie horror film titled "Buddy" directed by Casper Kelly. The trailer opened my curiosity with the creative direction it undertook, involving children's



A REVIEW BY
ISAIAH RIDLEY

friendly series such as "Barney," "Sesame Street," "The Muppets" and "Pee-wee's Playhouse" by taking those elements, transforming those concepts into horror tropes and utilizing those methods to craft an innovative, unique and tension-filled cinematic tale.

Before sharing specifics of the film, I want to preface this review by stating: This is not a family-friendly/children-friendly film by any means. It has myriad disturbing and mature themes, excessive violence and leans into bold

choices with the amount of blood and gore displayed. My disclaimer is to clear up any misconceptions about "Buddy" being a potential film for the entire family and children to enjoy.

Despite my interest in the plot synopsis, there was a strong level of concern residing in my mind. I was wondering whether the execution of this story would land into excellent territory, creating a strong and powerful reminder as to why horror remains my favorite cinematic genre. "Buddy" is a unique, disturbing and wonderfully intense dark tale of a popular children's television series called "It's Buddy." The character of Buddy is a bright orange unicorn, obviously meant to satirize characters like Barney, Big Bird and other popular mascots and larger-than-life puppets that were prominent during the '80s and '90s.

Like those series, it follows a similar formula of teaching values to children such as friendships, responsibilities, overcoming fear and more imperative lessons that shaped and molded our childhood. However, there is an obvious sinister, nefarious, unsettling force living in the show of "It's Buddy."

Each episode offers clues to the viewers establishing how appearances are deceiving to say the least. Kelly took an interesting approach with how the episodes of Buddy were traditionally filmed as if you were in that show. It gave an organ-

ic perspective of the children acting like those characters from "Barney," "Sesame Street" and "Pee-wee's Playhouse." The aesthetic of its atmosphere was a sincere breath of fresh air, as it reminded me of another great film called "Late Night with The Devil," as that cinematic release featured its presentation with the viewer experiencing the story from a late-night talk show perspective from the '70s. The same process remains formulated with this film, as you can find yourself immersed in this Barney-inspired satirized world.

The beautiful element of this story is how it gradually frames the eerie complications of Buddy, his "friends" and how "off" all elements of the show are and offer a creepy atmosphere.

You as viewer recognize there is a sinister component while not completely able to put your finger on what is transpiring. Buddy, the character, voiced by comedian Keegan-Michael Key, portrays the mascot in a unique and unsettling fashion. As the film progresses into darker, sinister, disturbing territory, you find Buddy's personality remains the same as an upbeat, misguided and calm figure, making him even more terrifying. I always found individuals remaining calm despite exhibiting simmering rage far more intimidating than loud personalities. Simply imagine Barney maintaining his calm and bubbly personality with chaos rever-

berating.

Even the acting of the children in this film is an authentic experience with how they behave as how one would expect from pre-teen youngsters.

Their performances are exactly how children acted in shows like "Barney," "Sesame Street" and "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood." It is only when they realize the theme of the series that their acting becomes more believable with the required portrayal of fear.

"Buddy" is another horror film that I maintain and laud as required viewing in a theater setting. It is a memorable experience; the revelatory importance of the plot is what makes this cinematic release worthy of a positive review. There is an imperative underlying message combined with concepts of classic horror film tropes, suspenseful moments, intense acting, disturbing scenes and dark humor that provides levity during all the violent chaos.

"Buddy" is a shining example of how to craft a horror film and wonderful addition to the revival that is continuing in 2026. There is no relying on the gimmick of jump scares. Kelly executed the perfect horror film. My final rating is a 10/10 and two thumbs up for "Buddy." Highly recommended.

To watch Isaiah Ridley's movie reviews online, find him @Izzy's Cinematic Escape on YouTube.

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Friends of the Library Annual Book Sale began Thursday, Oct. 15, but there's still plenty of time to stock up on new books for the colder months. The annual book sale is hosted by the Friends of the Library to help support programs and services the library would otherwise be unable to provide to the public. This includes activities and events for children and adults like the Summer Reading Program and Christmas Winter Wonderland. The sale continues at the following dates and times:

- Saturday, Oct. 17, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - Friday, Oct. 23, from 2 to 6 p.m.
 - Saturday, Oct. 24, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - Sunday, Oct. 25, from 1 to 5 p.m.
- Bag of Books Day is Oct. 25 with books costing \$5 per bag. The book sale happens inside the main library branch's meeting room at 111 N. Harvin St. Book purchases are cash or check only.

Cirque du Luxe is coming to Sumter on Oct. 22–25 at Sumter Speedway. Cirque du Luxe is a family-friendly live circus experience featuring incredible performers, exciting acts, comedy and a special K-Pop performance inspired by the world of K-Pop Demon Hunters. Showtimes are Thursday, Oct. 22 – 7:30 p.m.; Friday, Oct. 23 – 4:30 and 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Oct. 24 – 1:30, 4:30 and 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday, Oct. 25 – 1:30 and 4:30 p.m. One child age 12 and under is free with each paid Adult General Admission ticket using promo code FREECHILD. For tickets and information, visit www.cirqueduluxe.com.

cirqueduluxe.com. Sumter Speedway is at 3150 Wedgefield Road, Sumter.

Sumter author Leah L. Dawkins' newest novel, **"Honeysuckle Swamp,"** will be released on Monday, Nov. 2, during a book signing and author's reception at Sumter Museum. The reception begins at 6 p.m. at 122 N. Washington St. According to her website, "When Harper returns to her small South Carolina hometown, she's determined to build a new life, but investigating the finances of Truluck's most prominent families could put her and her mother in danger. Set against a missing child and an approaching hurricane, 'Honeysuckle Swamp' is a compelling Southern tale of mystery, family and finding your place in a community," according to the museum. Tickets are \$10 for museum members and \$15 for the public, which includes refreshments. Books will be available for purchase. Call (803) 775-0908 for more information.

Veterans Day is Wednesday, Nov. 11, and Sumter County Veterans Association announces its annual **Sumter County Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony**. The parade starts at 10 a.m. down Main Street, and the ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. on the courthouse front lawn, 141 N. Main St. There will be a vendor meet and greet on the back lawn of the courthouse after the ceremony. This year's event also celebrates America's 250th anniversary, and everyone is invited. For more information, contact Valerie Brunson at (803) 436-2303.

Pietas Coalition's **Second Annual Communities Against Trafficking Walkathon** will take place Saturday, Nov. 14, from noon to 5 p.m. at Dillon Park in Sumter, 1200 Clara Louise Kellogg Drive, Sumter. This year's theme is "Every Child Deserves to Bloom," and the walkathon will bring together families, community members, organizations and advocates to promote awareness, prevention, education and community involvement surrounding child trafficking and exploitation. There will be community safety posters, face painting, moon bounce, music and more. Reserve your spot at <https://tinyurl.com/y4buxv88>.

Fall means good times shared with family and friends, plus food. Enjoy them all at the annual **Oyster Roast**, held at Sumter Museum, on Thursday, Nov. 19, from 6 to 9 p.m. This is the 28th year this event is being held. "Eat 'em steamed and drink 'em from a boat." Enjoy all-you-can-

eat oysters and more with beer, wine and live music from Chappell Court Band. Tickets for museum members are \$50, and tickets are \$75 for nonmembers. For tickets and more information, visit sumtermuseum.org. The museum is at 122 N. Washington St.

The **2nd annual First Responders BBQ Cookoff & Car/Truck Show** will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, at Sumter County Civic Center, 700 W. Liberty St. Awards at 2 p.m. Free admission and parking, with raffles and door prizes. To enter the cookoff or show, or to be a sponsor, contact Lt. Mike McCoy at (803) 774-4098.

William Starrett's "Nutcracker," South Carolina's most loved holiday tradition, returns to Patriot Hall on Saturday, Nov. 21, to kick off the season. Buy tickets at <https://southcarolinaballet.com/calendar-tickets>. Patriot Hall is at 135 Haynsworth St., Sumter.



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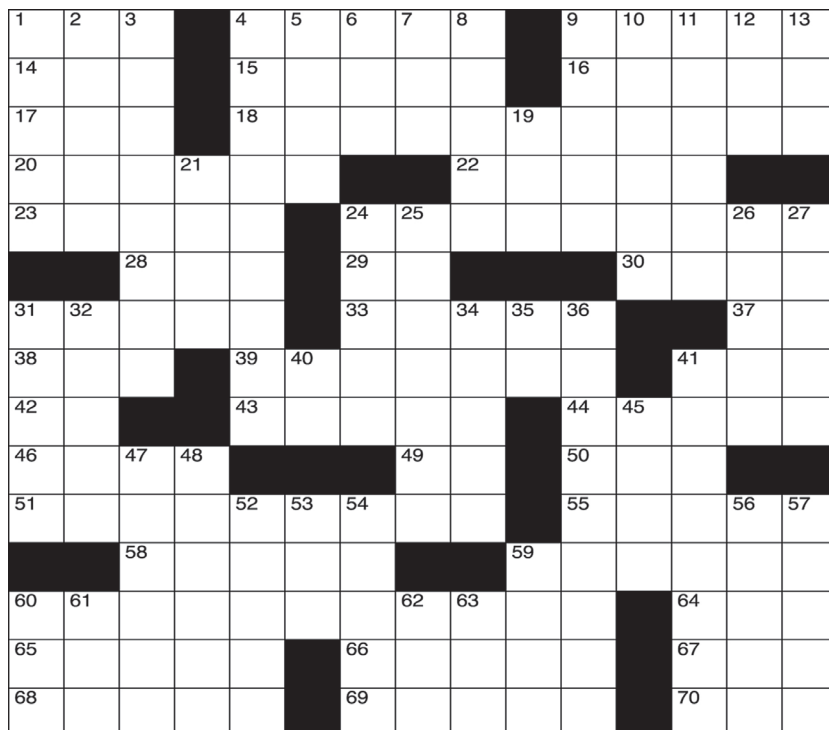
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Midway between south and south-east
4. Fathers
9. Wine grape
14. Al Bundy's wife
15. Derived from am-
monia
16. Venezuelan state
17. Interest rate
18. Experts
20. Vascular tissues
22. Smooth and glossy
23. Administrative re-
gion in S. Korea
24. One from Damas-
cus
28. Special interest
group
29. It cools your home
30. Oh, God!
31. Intestinal pouches
33. Men
37. Twelfth star in a
constellation
38. Former CIA
39. Arrange in grades
of size
41. A baglike structure
in a plant or animal
42. 'The Great Lakes
State'
43. Having earlike ap-
pendages
44. Momentarily stop
46. Ancient kingdom
49. Of I
50. White clerical
vestment
51. Songs to one's be-
loved
55. Charges
58. Computer applica-
tion originator
59. A place to dock a
boat
60. One guided by rea-
son
64. Slang for cigarette
65. Sailboats
66. 'Jerry Maguire'
actor Zellweger
67. Screen type
68. Country legend
Haggard
69. Puts together in
time
70. When you antici-
pate arriving

CLUES DOWN

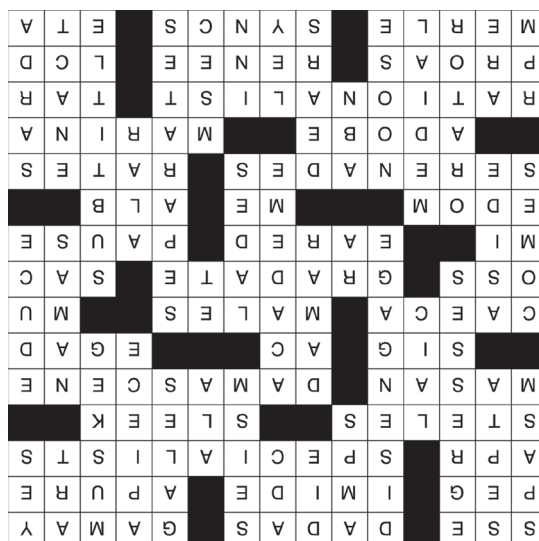
1. Involuntary muscu-
lar contraction
2. Eastern US transit
agency
3. Leaves a place
4. Cease to partici-



pate

5. Current units
6. Cease to exist
7. General's assistant
(abbr.)
8. Earth vibration
9. Very strong winds
10. For each one
11. A bog
12. The creation of
beautiful or signifi-
cant things
13. Affirmative
19. Pie ___ mode
21. Nonclerical
24. Indonesian island
25. Educational envi-
ronment
26. Namibian peoples
27. Bring out or devel-
op
31. Moves into a place
of thought
32. Out of the way
34. Loads a ship
35. Beloved Hollywood
alien
36. Distinguishes
40. The ancient Egypt-
ian sun god
41. Secondary or ex-
planatory title
45. Relating to a wing
47. One who gives a
speech

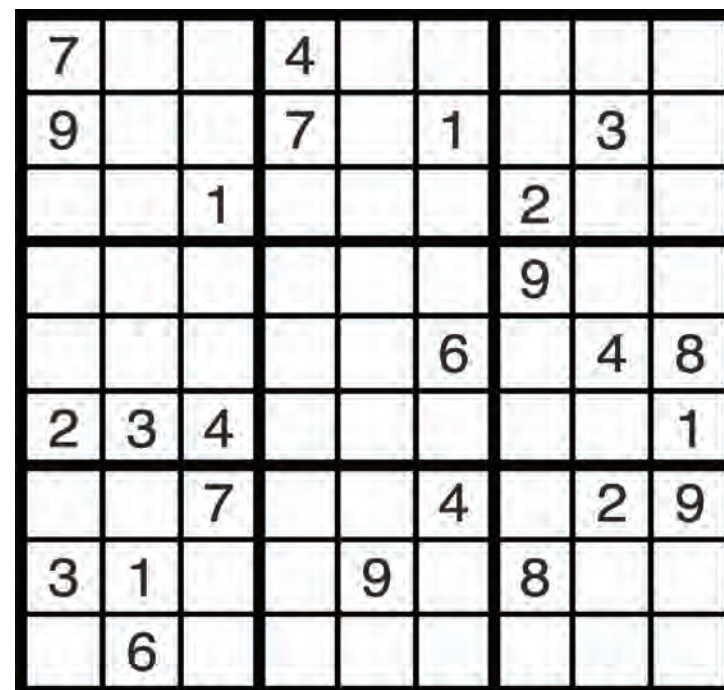
SOLUTION



48. In the middle
52. Loop with a run-
ning knot
53. Airborne (abbr.)
54. Sweet persons
56. Put into play
57. Small cattle breed
59. Millisecond

60. Revolutions per
minute
61. They ___
62. Moon crater
63. A place to stay the
night

SUDOKU

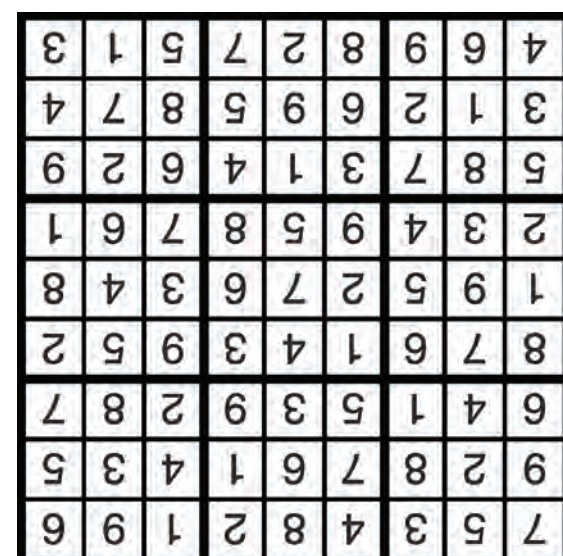


Level: Advanced

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

SOLUTION





Estate planning benefits of trusts other than avoiding estate tax by Glenn Givens

For 2026, the federal estate transfer tax exemption is \$15 million of assets per individual. This means that up to \$15 million of assets can pass through one's estate to beneficiaries free of estate transfer tax. Because of this fact, many people are not concerned with the usage of trusts in their estate plan. This lack of concern could be a mistake.

A person may determine that because he or she has less than \$15 million of assets that there is no reason to use a trust because such trust would not be able to be used as a tool to avoid estate tax. Again, this may be a mistake. There are at least three other common reasons for using a trust in an estate plan besides avoiding estate taxes.

These three other common reasons are distribution planning, probate avoidance and asset protection planning. From one perspective, estate planning is the use of documents in order to answer certain questions that a particular document allows you to answer in effectuating your estate planning goals. For example, as far as distributing your assets, a will allows you to answer the questions of "Who will receive your assets?" "What will they receive?" and "How much will they receive?"

Additionally, a trust has the added feature that allows one to answer the question of "When will your beneficiaries

receive your assets?" Answering this question is valuable in doing distribution planning for children or grandchildren under (for example) age forty. You might not want your child or grandchild to receive the entirety of the portion of your estate they are to receive at an age of less than forty or less than thirty.

You might want to stagger the distributions of a child's or a grandchild's share of your estate over the course of several years – such as part at age thirty, part at age thirty-five and the balance at age forty. A will cannot hold the descendant's distributions or stagger the distributions. A trust can.

You may want to stagger the distributions of your estate until a child or grandchild reaches a more mature age in order to increase the odds that the child or grandchild will be frugal and responsible with your inheritance. In that case, you would want to use a trust in addition to other estate planning documents. Of course, you do not have to stagger distributions with a trust. It is merely an option.

You can use a trust to avoid probate. To use a trust in avoiding probate, you would typically set up a revocable living trust and fund the trust before you die with enough assets and the type of assets that would allow you to avoid probate. Assets can pass in a variety of different ways and avoid probate.

These ways include expiration of a life estate, to a surviving joint owner, under a beneficiary designation or simply by not having enough assets to warrant having an estate go through probate. If one is an owner in fee simple of real property or a portion of

real property or individually owns greater than \$45,000.00 of personal property at the time of one's death, one's estate must go through probate. Now, if you have assets that cannot avoid probate without using a trust or you do not want to avoid probate through other means besides using a trust, then you could set up a revocable living trust and put those assets into the trust (to fund the trust) before you die thereby avoiding probate with such assets when you die.

Why should you care about having your estate avoid probate? There are a few drawbacks for an estate that has to go through probate. First, because of your recent death, it is a difficult time for your family to have to go through a long, sometimes cumbersome and sometimes difficult probate process.

For larger estates that require professional help, there are legal and accounting costs that have to be paid to help probate an estate. Sometimes these costs can be quite expensive. Setting up and administering a trust will not be inexpensive. However, most of the time it should not be as expensive as going through probate – all other things being equal. However, this cost comparison does not account for the usage of a professional trustee who charges fees for trust administration. People can save money on trustee fees by appointing responsible family members as trustees who perform trust administration for little or no cost though.

Also, trusts do not charge probate fees. When an estate goes through the probate process, probate courts charge probate fees based on the amount of gross assets in the

probate estate at the time of death. For the first million dollars of gross assets that goes through probate, \$3,683.00 of probate fees are charged. For every additional million dollars of gross assets that goes through probate, \$2,500.00 of probate fees are charged. For a probate estate (assets passing through probate) of three million dollars, that is \$8,683.00 of fees that an estate would ordinarily not otherwise have had to pay if one avoided probate with those assets.

In the area of estate planning, there are a few different trusts that you can use for asset protection planning. Each of these trusts can be used and otherwise come into play after your death and after the use of a revocable trust during your lifetime – to avoid probate and for other reasons. The types of trusts that I am referring to actually protect the assets for the children of your marriage against taking by a subsequent spouse of your surviving spouse or the children of your spouse's subsequent marriage.

While I am not going into detail about the definitions of these trusts, one can use a standard irrevocable trust, a unified credit trust, a qualified terminable interest property trust or a reverse qualified terminable interest property trust 1.) to give periodic income or an annuity from the principal of one of such trusts to your surviving spouse and 2.) to allow for very reasonable distributions of principal from one of such trusts to your surviving spouse for life while also requiring that the remaining principal of such trusts after your surviving spouse's death be distributed to the surviving children or grandchildren of your marriage. In other words,

you can ensure that your spouse is provided for during your spouse's lifetime while also ensuring that the remainder of your trust's assets go to your children only – not someone else's children and not a subsequent spouse of your surviving spouse. In other words, with these asset protection trusts, you are protecting your assets for your children and protecting your assets against outside beneficiaries while also providing for your surviving spouse during your spouse's lifetime.

In summary, there are several reasons for considering the use of trusts in your estate plan besides just avoiding estate taxes. These reasons include using trusts for distribution planning, probate avoidance and asset protection planning. A trust can be a useful tool in your toolbox to effectuate your estate planning goals.

This article does not constitute specific or direct legal advice for its readers, and it may not be relied upon as such. Glenn Givens is an attorney practicing law in Sumter with Kolb & Givens, Attorneys at Law, L.L.C. Prior to practicing in Sumter, Glenn practiced as a C.P.A. in Columbia for two years and as an attorney for six years in Florence with Scott & Associates, P.C. He currently practices in the areas of Wills, Trusts, Powers of Attorney and other Estate Planning, Probate and Business.

Sumter's Terror Trail open for the season, features new attractions

BY MARSHALL WRIGHT
newsroom@theitem.com

Terror Trail at Second Mill opened on Friday, Oct. 9, for the spooky season.

The mile-long trail, at 1104 Old W. Liberty St., is organized and operated by Sumter Elks Lodge #855.

According to the Terror Trail web-

site, 85% of its proceeds cover costs for items for local scouting Troop 342, like uniforms, food, camping equipment, summer camps and any other supplies they may need.

The remainder supports Sumter Elks Lodge and its educational grants. In recent years, the organization has donated more than \$17,000 to Central Carolina Technical College.

The trail is self-guided with volunteer actors giving good scares



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO

Every year, the Boy Scout troop of Shaw Air Force Base puts on the Terror Trail at Second Mill Pond to fund activities throughout the year. The average time to scream along the trail is up to 45 minutes, and it is available to walk on Friday and Saturday nights starting at 7:30 p.m. through Halloween, Oct. 31.

throughout. Actors can cater their performance based on each group's age and requests.

The average wait time is less than 25 minutes but can increase depending on the number of visitors. No pets, wheelchairs or strollers are allowed on the trail because of the terrain. Visitors can enjoy a covered pavilion, campfires, picnic tables and concession options including hot soups, snacks, cookies, chips and hot/cold drinks while waiting.

The average time to walk the trail is 30-45 minutes.

According to Brian Davis, coordinator for the trail, this season, there are two new attractions at the trail. He kept clues of what they could be close to his chest, so visitors will have to come and experience the fun in person.

The frighteningly fun attraction will run every Friday and Saturday night, starting at 7:30 p.m., ending on the night of Halloween, Oct. 31. Tickets cost \$19 per person.



Tickets for Terror Trail, which runs through Halloween night, are \$19 per person.

ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM

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Have yourself a spooktacular Halloween at these local events

Halloween is around the corner, and there are plenty of local events to ensure you have a spooktacular time this Oct. 31.

Sumter Methodist Church's pumpkin patch is now open. Pick the perfect gourd for celebrating fall at the church, 535 Wilson Hall Road. All proceeds support nonprofit organizations in our community. Special groups by appointment only. The patch is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from noon to 6 p.m.; Wednesday from 8 to 10 a.m. and noon to 6 p.m.; and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

It's that time of year again. Poinsett State Park Campground is hosting a family-friendly **Trunk or Treat** on Saturday, Oct. 17, from 2 to 5 p.m. This annual event is held in partnership with Carolina Camping Club at 6660 Poinsett Park Road, Wedgefield. Wear your costume, decorate your campsite, and enjoy a campfire and activities on this fall night.

Experience a fall day in the 1800s in South Carolina during the **Backcountry Fall Fest** on Saturday, Oct. 24, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. "Step back in time and experience life in the Carolina Backcountry around 1800. Follow the trail through the homestead, with stops featuring historical interpreters, hands-on activities and fall traditions from the past," according to Sumter Museum. There will be festive treats for everyone, with all ages welcome and free admission. The Carolina Backcountry is at the museum, 122 N. Washington St.

Save the date for Alice Drive Baptist Church's annual **Family Fall Festival!** On Oct. 25, the community is invited to the Loring Mill Campus from 4 to 6 p.m. to enjoy Treat Street, inflatables, snacks, food trucks at cost, and fun.

Calling all the girls, guys and ghouls, Sumter Police Department will host its annual **Trick or Treat with Sumter's Superheroes** on Friday, Oct. 30, at Crosswell Drive Elementary School, 301 Crosswell Drive. The event will feature Sumter Fire Department, Sumter County EMS, Sumter County Department of Juvenile Justice and S.C. Highway Pa-

trol. The event begins at 6 p.m. and is open to the public.

Spend Halloween evening at **Petober-fest** this year for a safe, family-friendly holiday that will benefit Sumter SPCA. Visit the shelter at 1100 S. Guignard Drive from 4 to 7 p.m. that night for trick-or-treating, free Bark Park for the dogs, local vendors, furry friends and more. Everything is free. For more information, call the SPCA at (803) 773-9292. If you'd like to be a vendor, text Angel Hankins at (803) 840-5822 for vendor information.

Bring your basket and your costumes, as Sumter County Sheriff's Office invites families to its **Trunk or Treat** on Saturday, Oct. 31, from 2 to 5 p.m. at 1281 N. Main St. The event will include hot dogs, popcorn, chips, cotton candy, drinks and plenty of candy.

Taste the sweet success of a good treat at **Sweet Success Bakery's Ghost and Goodies** on Saturday, Oct. 31, from 4 to 8 p.m. at 27 S. Washington St. Join in on this event where eerie vibes meet tasty treats. Whether you're a ghost story lover or a candy fanatic, you can hang out, indulge and enjoying some chilling delights.

VFW Post 3034 Sumter is hosting a **Halloween Trunk or Treat** on Friday, Oct. 23, from 5 to 7 p.m. Bring the whole family for a spooktacular evening of Halloween fun. The post invites everyone in the community to come out, bring the kids, wear your favorite costumes and enjoy a safe and fun-filled Halloween evening with veterans and the VFW family. If you would like to decorate a trunk and hand out candy, contact VFW Post 3034 at (803) 773-3090 to sign up.

This year, Silverpaper is introducing a fundraising **Sumter Witches Ride**, a family-friendly Halloween event that will benefit Crosswell Children's Home. Join the business downtown at Lollibear, 101 N. Main St., for this 5K bike ride on Oct. 31 at 9 a.m. There will be a festival after at La Piazza. There will be live music, Halloween festivities and family fun. Register for the bike ride at <https://strictlyrunning.com/gpuilreg-8l.asp>.



TRUNK OR TREAT

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OPPOSED CANDIDATES

Here is a list of candidates you may see on your ballot who are running opposed by someone in another party. Every race has the option for write-in candidates. Italics denote the incumbent in the race.

SUMTER COUNTY

Sumter School District Board of Trustees, Area 3 (nonpartisan)

Allie Shaye Bullard
The Rev. Ralph Canty Sr.
Ronald R. Pace
Tiffany Thompson

Sumter School District Board of Trustees, Area 4 (nonpartisan)

Tarah Cousar-Johnson
The Rev. Daryl McGhaney

Sumter School District Board of Trustees, Area 5 (nonpartisan)

Jason Johnson
Roosevelt Miott
Gregory Walters

Sumter School District Board of Trustees, Area 6 (nonpartisan)

Sindy Beam
Matthew "Mac" McLeod
Venitia Reebel

Sumter School District Board of Trustees, Area 8 (nonpartisan)

Philip Good
Phil Leventis
Sherril Ray

Sumter City Council, District 1 (nonpartisan)

Derek Gamble
Anthony Gibson

Sumter Probate Judge

Holly Thompson Blackwood (D)
Charles Eddie Drayton (R)

STATE

Attorney General

Richard Hricik (D)
David Stumbo (R)

Commissioner of Agriculture

DeShawn Blanding (D)
Chris Nelums (UC)
Cody Simpson (R)
Michael Sullens (LIB)

Comptroller General

Tiffany Boozer (D)
Mike Burkhold (R)

Governor

Michael A. Addison (UC)
Walid Hakim (GR)
Jermaine Johnson (D)
Alan Wilson (R)

State House of Representatives, District 50

William L. Oden (R)
Keishan Scott (D)

State House of Representatives, District 64

Michele Demery (D)
Fawn Pedalino (R)

State House of Representatives, District 67

Lisa Davey (D)
Murrell Smith (R)

State Superintendent of Education

Baba Amin Ojuok (formerly Steven Richmond) (UC)
Ellen Weaver (R)
Sylvia Wright (D)

U.S. House of Representatives, District 5

Wes Climer (R)
Mallory Dittmer (D)
Andy Kaplan (FOR)

U.S. Senate

Annie Andrews (D)
Darline Graham (R)
Mark Hackett (CON)
Kasie Whitener (LIB)

For a list of unopposed candidates for Sumter County and state elections for this year's General Election, see page A16.

EARLY VOTING

THE 2026 STATEWIDE GENERAL ELECTION IS ON TUESDAY, NOV. 3

Voters can visit any early voting center in their county during the early voting period, present their Photo ID and vote using the voting system like they would at their polling place on Election Day.

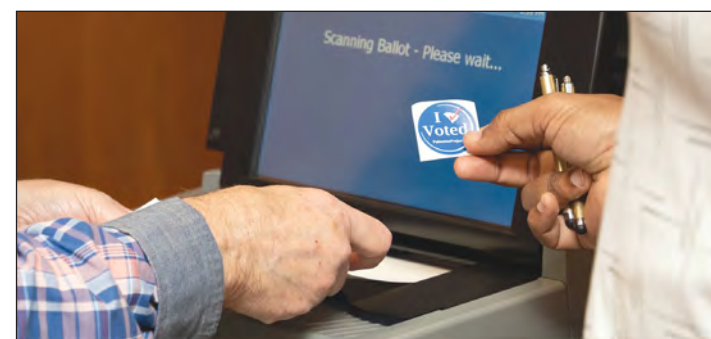
EARLY VOTING PERIOD

- Early voting for 2026 Statewide General Election is Monday, Oct. 19-Saturday, Oct. 31
- Early voting centers are open 8:30 a.m.- 6 p.m. (Monday-Saturday)
- Closed Sunday, Oct. 25

SUMTER EARLY VOTING LOCATIONS

County Voter Registration and Elections Office
129 E. Liberty St., Sumter

Catchall-Shaw Community Center
2680 Peach Orchard Road, Sumter



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO



SUMTER COUNTY VOTER'S GUIDE

VIEW: Looking for more info on local races and candidate Q&As? Read the full Voter's Guide.





ABSENTEE VOTING

On May 13, 2022, Gov. Henry McMaster signed into law legislation passed by the General Assembly that establishes early voting and makes significant changes to the absentee voting process. Absentee voting allows qualified voters to cast a ballot by mail prior to Election Day. In-person absentee voting is no longer authorized by law, as

voters can now participate in early voting.

Who can vote absentee

- People with employment obligations that prevent them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- People attending a sick or physically disabled person which prevents them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- People confined to a jail or pretrial facility pending disposition of arrest or trial that prevents them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.

- People who will be absent from their county of residence during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- People with physical disabilities.
- People 65 years of age or older.
- Members of the armed forces and Merchant Marines of the United States, their spouses and dependents living with them
- Persons admitted to a hospital as an emergency patient on the day of the election or within a four-day period before the election.

How to vote absentee

Voters must apply for an absentee ballot by completing and returning an absentee application to their county voter registration office by 5 p.m. on Oct. 23.

Step 1: Get your application

- You can submit your request for an application as early as Jan. 1 of the election year.
- Call, visit or send your request by U.S. mail to your county voter registration office.
- You must provide your name, date of birth and last four digits of your Social Security number.
- You will be mailed an application.

Step 2: Complete, sign and return the application

- Return the application by U.S. mail or personal delivery to your county voter registration office as soon as possible.
- The deadline to return your application is 5 p.m. on the 11th day prior to the election.

Step 3: Receive your absentee ballot in the mail

- Voters who have applied

early will be mailed their absentee ballot approximately 30 days before the election.

Step 4: Vote and return the ballot

- Return your ballot to your county voter registration office or an early voting center either by mail or personal delivery.
- Must present photo ID when returning the ballot return envelope.
- Acceptable photo IDs:
 - o Driver's license issued by a state within the United States
 - o Another form of identification containing a photograph issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles or its equivalent by a state within the United States
 - o Passport
 - o Military identification

SEE **ABSENTEE**, PAGE A16



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at Sumter



Daniel



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SouthState

ABSENTEE

FROM PAGE A15

containing a photograph issued by the federal government
o South Carolina voter registration card containing a photograph of the voter.

- Place the ballot in the “ballot here-in” envelope and place the “ballot here-in” envelope in the return envelope.
- Be sure to sign the voter’s oath and have your signature witnessed. Anyone age 18 or older can witness your signature. A notary is not necessary.
- Ballots must be received by the county voter registration office by 7 p.m. on Election Day.
- Ballots returned by mail should be mailed no later than one week prior to Election Day to help ensure timely delivery.

Requesting an application for another voter

Immediate family member

- Includes spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law.

- May request the voter’s application by calling or visiting your county voter registration office or sending the request via the U.S. Postal Service to your county voter registration office.
- Must provide the voter’s name, date of birth and last four digits of voter’s Social Security number.
- Must provide the requestor’s name, address, date of birth and relation to the voter.
- Requestors are limited to five requests in addition to their own per election.

Authorized representative

- Must sign an oath that he meets the requirements of being an authorized representative by completing the authorized representative form.
- Must request application in person or by mail (may not request by phone).
- Must be a registered voter.
- Must have permission to act on behalf of a voter who is unable to go to the polls because of illness or disability resulting in his confinement in a hospital, sanatorium, nursing home or place of residence, or is unable because of a physical handicap to go to his polling place or because of a handicap is unable to vote at his polling place due to existing architectural barriers that deny

- him physical access to the polling place, voting booth, or voting apparatus or machinery.
- A candidate, a member of a candidate’s paid campaign staff or a campaign volunteer may not serve as an authorized representative unless the person is a member of the voter’s immediate family.
- Requestors are limited to five requests in addition to their own per election.

Returning an application for another voter

Immediate family members and authorized representatives must return the voter’s application to the voter’s county voter registration office in person (mailing NOT allowed).

Returning an absentee ballot for another voter

Immediate family members and authorized representative

- Voter and person returning the ballot must complete and sign the authorized returnee form.
- Must return the ballot return envelope in person at the voter’s county voter registration office or an early voting center in the voter’s county of residence (mailing is NOT allowed).

- Must present the authorized returnee form and photo ID when returning the ballot return envelope.
- Acceptable photo IDs:
 - o Driver’s license issued by a state within the United States
 - o Another form of identification containing a photograph issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles or its equivalent by a state within the United States
 - o Passport
 - o Military identification containing a photograph issued by the federal government
 - o South Carolina voter registration card containing a photograph of the voter.
- Returnees are limited to five returns in addition to their own per election.
- o Returning more than five ballots for other voters is now a felony crime punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine or five years in prison, or both.

Voters admitted to hospital as emergency patient

- Voters admitted to the hospital as an emergency patient on the day of the election or within four days of the election can have an immediate family member apply for and deliver a ballot to them.

UNOPPOSED CANDIDATES

Here is a list of candidates you may see on your ballot who are not running opposed by someone in another party. Every race has the option for write-in candidates.

SUMTER COUNTY

City Council, Ward 3

Calvin K. Hastie Sr. (Nonpartisan)

City Council, Ward 5

Colin C. Davis (Nonpartisan)

County Council, District 2

Artie Baker (R)

County Council, District 4

Charles T. Edens (R)

County Council, District 6

James T. McCain Jr. (D)

Soil and Water District Commission

John Lee Newman (Nonpartisan)

Town Council, Pinewood

Mamie Houser (Nonpartisan)

STATE

Solicitor Circuit 3

Lester M. Gill Bell Jr. (D)

State House 50

Will Wheeler (D)

State House of

Representatives, District 51

David Weeks (D)



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VOTER FAQ

When do I need to register to vote?

The deadline to register to vote in any election in South Carolina is 30 days prior to Election Day and has passed for this election.

I've moved since the last time I voted, and I haven't updated my voter registration. Can I still vote?

If you moved to...

- Another residence within your precinct, you can update your address at your polling place and vote a regular ballot.
- A different precinct within your county, you are eligible vote failsafe (see below).
- Another residence in another county within 30 days of the election, you are eligible to vote failsafe (see below).
- Another residence in another county prior to the Oct. 4 registration deadline, you are

not eligible to vote. State law requires you to be registered prior to the deadline to be eligible to vote.

• South Carolina after the Oct. 4 registration deadline, you are not eligible to vote. State law requires you to be registered prior to the deadline to be eligible to vote.

Two options for voting failsafe:

1. Vote at the polling place in your previous precinct using a failsafe provisional ballot. A failsafe provisional ballot contains only federal, statewide, countywide and municipality-wide offices.
2. Go to the voter registration office in the county in which you currently reside, change your address, and vote a regular ballot there.

Can I take my child with me to vote?

Yes. Minor children (under

age 18) of a voter may accompany the voter in the voting booth.

What do I need to take with me to vote?

At your polling place, you will be asked to show one of the following photo IDs:

- Driver's license
- ID card issued by the S.C. Department of Motor Vehicles
- Voter registration card with photo
- Federal military ID
- U.S. passport

What if I don't have one of these photo IDs?

If you do not have one of these photo IDs, you can make your voting experience as fast and easy as possible by getting one before Election Day. If you are already registered to vote, you can go to your county voter registration and elections office, provide your date of birth and the last four digits of your Social Security number, and have your photo taken. You can do this even on Election Day. Free ID cards are also available from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

If you cannot get a photo ID, bring your non-photo voter registration card with you to the polling place. You can contact your county voter registration office if you need to replace your non-photo voter registration card. You may vote a provisional ballot after signing

an affidavit stating you have a reasonable impediment to obtaining a photo ID. A reasonable impediment is any valid reason, beyond your control, which created an obstacle obtaining a photo ID. Some examples include: a disability or illness, a conflict with your work schedule, a lack of transportation, a lack of a birth certificate, family responsibilities, a religious objection to being photographed and any other obstacle you find reasonable. This ballot will count unless someone proves to the county board of voter registration and elections that you are lying about your identity or having the listed impediment.

To vote under the reasonable impediment exception:

- Inform the poll managers that you do not have a photo ID and could not get one.
- Present your current, non-photo registration card.
- Sign the affidavit provided by the poll managers stating why you could not obtain a photo ID.
- Cast a provisional ballot that will be counted unless the county board of voter registration and elections has reason to believe your affidavit is false.

What happens if I forget to bring my photo ID when voting in person?

If you forget to bring your photo ID to your polling place,

you may vote a provisional ballot that will count only if you show your photo ID to your county board of voter registration and elections office prior to certification of the election. Results are certified on the Friday after the general election (Nov. 8).

What hours will the polls be open on Election Day?

Polling places are open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Anyone in line at 7 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

Are there any laws about candidates posting their signs along the roadway?

Yes, there are several state laws addressing political signs on roadways, as well as county and municipal ordinances. See S.C. Code of Laws Sections 57-25-10, 57-25-140 and 7-25-210. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the entity that maintains the road (state, county or municipality) to enforce applicable sign laws.

Can candidates or their representatives take people to the polls to vote?

Yes. It is permissible for any person, even a candidate, to give a voter a ride as long as it is being done solely to help

SEE FAQ, PAGE A20

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SUMTER ITEM BEST of SUMTER 2026

SUMTER COUNTY PRECINCTS

Barrier Free — Voter Registration Office, 141 N. Main St., Rm 114

Bates — Bates Middle School, 715 Estate St.

Birnie — Birnie Hope Center, 210 S. Purdy St.

Burns-Down — Alice Drive Middle School, 40 Miller Road

Causeway Branch 1 — Millwood Elementary School, 24 Pinewood Road

Causeway Branch 2 — Millwood Elem School, 24 Pinewood Road

Cherryvale — Cherryvale Community Cntr, 4340 Confederate Road

Crosswell — Crosswell Elem. School, 301 Crosswell Drive

Dalzell 1 — Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

Dalzell 2 — Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

Delaine — Delaine Community Center, 5400 Cane Savannah Road, Wedgefield

Ebenezer 1 — Ebenezer Middle School, 3440

Ebenezer Road

Ebenezer 2 — Ebenezer Middle School, 3440 Ebenezer Road

Folsom Park — Willow Drive Elementary, 26 Willow Drive

Furman — Furman Middle School, 3400 Bethel Church Road

Green Swamp 1 — Sumter School District, 1345 Wilson Hall Road

Green Swamp 2 — Sumter School District, 1345 Wilson Hall Road

Hampton Park — Meeting House at Memorial Park, 407 W Hampton Ave.

Hillcrest — Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

Horatio — Horatio Fire Station, 7720 Sumter Landing Road, Horatio

Lemira — Lemira Elementary School, 952 Fulton St.

Loring — Crosswell Elementary School, 301 Crosswell Drive

Magnolia-Harmony — South Sumter Resource Center, 337 Manning Ave.

Manchester Forest — Wedgefield Fire Station,

2035 S.C. Highway 261 S, Wedgefield

Mayesville — Mayesville Fire Station, 20 S. Main St. E., Mayesville

Mayewood — RE Davis College Preparatory Academy, 345 Eastern School Road

McCrays Mill 1 — Sumter County Career Center, 2612 McCrays Mill Road

McCrays Mill 2 — Sumter County Career Center, 2612 McCrays Mill Road

Millwood — Millwood Elementary School, 24 Pinewood Road

Morris College — North Hope Center, 904 N. Main St.

Mulberry — North Hope Center, 904 N. Main St.

Oakland Plant 1 — Oakland Primary School, 5415 Oakland Drive

Oakland Plant 2 — Oakland Primary School, 5415 Oakland Drive

Oswego — Crestwood High School, 2000 Oswego Road

Palmetto Park — Central Carolina Technical College, 660 N. Guignard Drive, Bldg 700

Pinewood — Manchester Elementary School, 200 Clark St., Pinewood

Pocotaligo 1 — Lakewood High School, 350 Old Manning Road

Pocotaligo 2 — Lakewood High School, 350 Old Manning Road

Privateer — Pocalla Springs Elementary School, 2060 Bethel Church Road

Rembert — Rembert Fire Station, 7045 Post Office St., Rembert

Salem — Rural Fire Station, 6090 Myrtle Beach Hwy., Gable

Salterstown — Chestnut Oaks Middle School, 1200 Oswego Road

Savage-Glover — South Sumter Resource Center, 337 Manning Ave.

Second Mill — USC Sumter Arts/Letter Lecture Room, 200 Miller Road

Shaw — Shaw Heights Elementary School, 5121 Frierson Road

South Liberty — American Legion Home Bldg, 28 Artillery Drive

South Red Bay — South Hope Center, 1125 S. Lafayette Drive

Spectrum — Kingsbury Elementary School, 825 Kingsbury Road

St. John — Shiloh Community Center, 475 Puddin Swamp Road, Lynchburg

St. Paul — Cherryvale Elementary School, 1420 Furman Drive

Stone Hill — Jehovah Baptist Church, 803 S. Harvin St.

Sumter High 1 — Sumter High School, 2580 McCrays Mill Road

Sumter High 2 — Sumter High School, 2580 McCrays Mill Road

Sunset — Kingsbury Elementary School, 825 Kingsbury Road

Swan Lake — Willow Drive Elementary School, 26 Willow Drive

Thomas Sumter — Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

Turkey Creek — Lemira Elementary School, 952 Fulton St.

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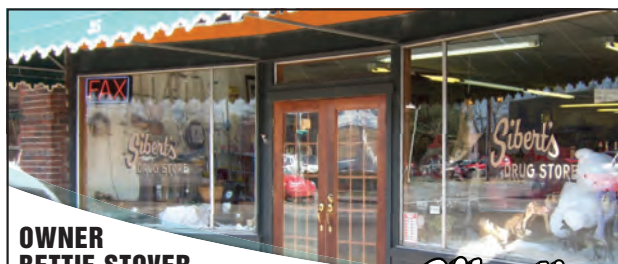
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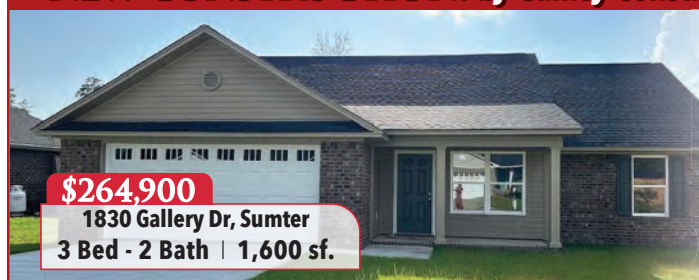
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FAQ FROM PAGE A17

facilitate voting. However, no one can offer a voter anything of value in exchange for voting.

I saw a candidate/member of candidate's campaign at my polling place talking to voters. Can they do that?

Yes, but there are restrictions:

Inside the polling place: No campaigning is allowed. Candidates may be inside the polling place and talk to voters as long as they are not campaigning, intimidating voters or interfering with the election process.

Within 500 feet of an entrance to a polling place: Candidates and campaign staff may campaign as long as they are not intimidating voters or interfering with the election process. However, no campaign literature, signs, or posters are allowed. Candidates are allowed to wear a badge no larger than 4.25" x 4.25" featuring only the candidate's name and office sought. Candidates must remove their badge



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO

upon entering a polling place.

A candidate is definitely campaigning while in the polling place, or there is campaign literature within 500 feet of the entrance.

What can I do?

Inform the poll clerk immediately. If the issue is not resolved, contact the county board of voter registration and elections. The county board will address the complaint.

When I left the polls, I was asked to participate in an "exit poll." Is this legal?

Exit polls are legal and participation is voluntary. They are not conducted by the State Election Commission or the county boards of voter registration and elections. Generally, polls may not be conducted inside the polling place, and we ask that voters not be approached before they have voted. If a voter feels threatened or intimidated by a pollster, it should be reported immediately to the precinct's poll clerk.

Where should I file a complaint about the election?

It's best to report any concerns to a poll manager or notify your county voter registration and elections office as soon as possible. To send a complaint to the SEC, visit the contact page on www.scVOTES.gov. Complaints regarding voting and elections should be addressed to your county board of voter registration and elections.

Source: S.C. Election Commission/
SCVotes.gov

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Religion

Change starts with ourselves, and maybe we will see a difference in the world

In our worship last Sunday, we read a passage of scripture that focuses on how we should live in community, one with another.

The guidance we are given tells us that if we feel that someone has done something to us that we are uncomfortable with, we should go to them and talk it out. Similarly, if we have



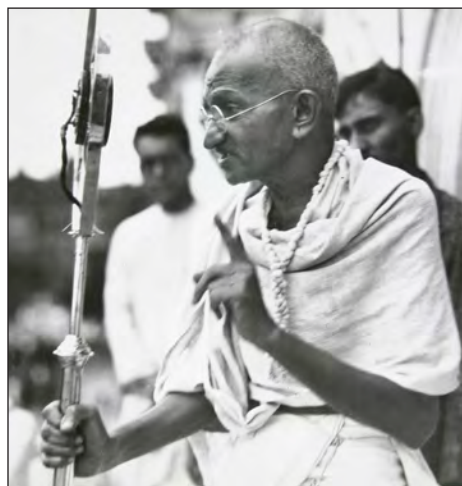
Pastor Stewart Rawson

done something to someone else, we should be prepared to listen to them and to find common ground. I think we are living in a time when we do not address our differences in a constructive and civil manner. We spend far too much time staring at our phones, scrolling through mindless ads and memes designed to get our attention, and we ignore everything that is going on around us.

How many of us know of someone that we need to forgive? How many of us know of someone who has hurt us and we would rather not address it but let it tear us up inside? How many of us know of someone we have hurt that we could reach out to and make amends?

Someone offends us, and we blow up in anger. Someone says something we disagree with, and we attack them. Someone listens to music that we do not like, and we judge them. We see someone who doesn't dress like we do, and we dismiss them.

What can we do to help create a community that we want to live in? Can we play a role in reducing violence in our larger community? Can we volunteer with an organization that helps others, that feeds others, that lis-



AP FILE PHOTO

Mahatma Gandhi talks to a crowd in India in 1931.

tens to those in need?

The great prophet of peace, Mahatma Gandhi, once wrote, "We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change." This quote has been altered by many to say, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Both the original quote and the oft-quoted one reinforce the same powerful message, you and I each have work to do in our own lives. If we focus on becoming better people, more kind and more loving, then before we know it, the world will be different, too.

Change really does start at home. Let us all commit to finding ways that we can be more like the beings that God created us to be. Let us commit to looking at others with more kindness and acceptance; who knows, maybe we will see a real difference. I certainly hope so!

The Rev. Dr. Stewart Rawson is the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in downtown Sumter.

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Sumter's expansion removed some historic structures

Reflections recalls some historic structures that faced removal and sometimes upgrading due to rapid expansion and growth in the past century. The removal of these artifacts, in some instances, has allowed the community to construct new homes and industries that create additional spaces for living and working. Some Sumterites may remember these historic treasures and their locations. However, it is important to note that one, including the Bossard Britton Bridge, is being rebuilt and upgraded. Data and photos used were acquired from *The Item* archives and the writings of Cassie Nicholes.

No review of firms which have contributed to the growth and progress of Sumter would be complete without recognition of John Evans, manufacturer of the famous Sumter trailers. He initially opened a welding shop on Hampton Avenue which was later moved to the site he occupied in 1924 as John Evans Packard Agency, garage and body department at 105 E. Liberty St. In 1928, the shop at 108 E. Liberty was built to manufacture trailers and to render general service. The building which occupied the space prior to being secured by John Evans' garage and Sam's Service Station was Booth Livery Stables which was removed, allowing space for the new facilities. In 1959, the facility was occupied by Carolina Hardware which remained in the building built by John Evans until it closed. This corner of Harvin and Liberty streets was recently cleared of these buildings.

On April 23, 1913, *The Sumter Item* announced "The Imperial," Sumter's new hotel, constructed on Harvin Street, facing Telephone Street, and opposite the A. C. L. Passenger Station, would soon open its doors

to the public. This facility was later sold to the Fladger family and a Mr. Hodges. The beautiful edifice burned in 1968 and was eventually removed, allowing for space on which a Water Department was recently constructed.

On the corner of Washington and Liberty streets once resided the home of L.D. Jennings. An article printed in *The Item* reported that the large frame house built by Jennings in 1905 was initially on the corner of West Liberty and North Washington streets. It was subsequently moved to the rear of the lot and faced Washington Street in the 1920s. W.B. Burns acquired ownership; it was later rented and operated as a boarding house. Burns donated the house to the YWCA, which utilized the facility until it was sold to two separate service stations. The building was demolished in 1968, and the lot remains

empty.

The Britton Bridge opened in 1940 and has been removed with the construction of a new bridge underway. The initial overhead bridge was requested by the citizens of Sumter in November 1922. A delegation of Sumter citizens asked Charles H. Moorefield, state highway engineer, to have the improvement of a railroad crossing intersecting the Sumter-Manning Highway included among federal road projects. The delegation pointed out that considerable traffic crossed the six-track rails just outside the city. The engineer was quoted as assuring his cooperation in securing action. *The Item* reported, "... in May of 1940 a handsome \$180,000 overpass at the foot of South Main Street over the Atlantic Coast Line tracks was to be dedicated to the late Sen. J. B. Britton and opened to traffic, eliminating a dangerous and rough grade crossing and expediting travel on U.S. 15.

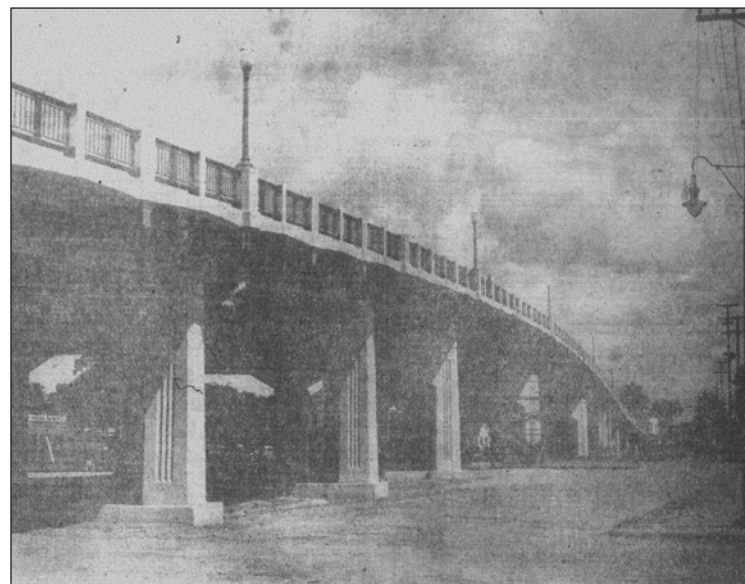


Sammy Way
REFLECTIONS



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JIM BROWN

The Bossard bridge is being rebuilt.



The John Bossard Britton Memorial Bridge was dedicated June 10, 1940.

SUMTER ITEM FILE
PHOTO

Social Security Matters

Medicare's IRMAA hits couple

BY RUSSELL GLOOR

AMAC Foundation Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: My wife and I file our taxes jointly. In 2024, I took an IRA Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) which was significantly more than I was required to take. My Medicare premiums were not affected in 2025, and our Social Security payments were not reduced. Then, our joint filing in 2025 kept us below the IRS' "Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) level. Yet in 2026 our Medicare payments increased and our Social Security payments were reduced.

If my MAGI is below the maximum for 2025, will my regular SS payments/Medicare reductions be restored in 2027? Is there any action I need to take to ensure this will happen, or will our Medicare payments and reduced SS payments be our new norm?

Worried Retiree



RUSSELL GLOOR

Dear Worried Retiree:

FYI, your Medicare premiums in 2026 were affected by the large RMD you took in 2024, which caused a Medicare provision known as the "Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA)" to apply for 2026. When determining the Medi-

care Part B premium for next year (each fall), Medicare uses the income you reported to the IRS two years prior to calculate your Medicare Part B (and Part D) premium for upcoming year.

If you exceed the base "IRMAA" income threshold two years ago, then your Medicare premiums for the next year will include a supplemental amount on top of the "standard" Medicare premium for that year. The

amount of the supplement depends on how much you exceed the base IRMAA threshold by (FYI, the base IRMAA threshold for 2026 for a married couple filing jointly was \$218,000). If your 2024 income exceeded that initial IRMAA threshold, you paid a higher Medicare premium which also reduced your SS monthly payment (because Medicare is deducted from your SS benefit). IRMAA uses a sliding scale to determine how much more than the standard Medicare premium you will pay.

However, that will all automatically correct itself going forward. In other words, when determining your premiums for 2027, Medicare will look at your 2025 income. If your 2025 MAGI is less than the base IRMAA threshold, you (and your wife) will both automatically revert to paying the standard 2027 Medicare Part B and Part D premiums. You don't need to take any action for that to happen; it will all be automatic.

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