The Sumter
ITEM IMPACT
Local News for Everyone
SERVING SOUTH CAROLINA SINCE OCTOBER 15, 1894

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2026
2 SECTIONS, 32 PAGES | VOL. 3, NO. 9

2026 Gift guide

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Former SHS standout Addison making the most of his opportunity with Gamecocks

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Holiday markets, Sumter Chamber's shopping campaign and more

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NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2026

Shop locally, volunteer this season to support Sumter

It's the season to be thankful for the family, friends and freedom in our lives, which includes our nation's veterans who have bravely stepped up to serve our country. Thank you to all veterans who have helped keep this beautiful country free. This county with Uncommon Patriotism is proud to show up to help its veteran residents through various organizations and remembers them at Christmas with donations of goodies for Shaw Air Force Base. I hope we as a community will always honor these men and women who have made our country what it is today.



Melanie Smith

During this season of thankfulness and giving, we have put together our annual Gift Guide to help you know which organizations could use your help through volunteering, though it's not an exhaustive list. Many churches, youth centers, nursing homes, veterans support services and ministries would likely welcome extra assistance this time of year. You don't have to give material items to make a big difference here – often it's simply your time that can go a long way. Choose a charity or event to volunteer for, and bring the kids along for a seasonal lesson in helping your neighbors.

If you've still got some gift recipients to cross off your holiday list, look no further than local holiday markets throughout the season. There are so many across this area I'm sure I couldn't include them all. But they will feature local vendors and crafters so you can shop locally and keep those dollars in our community, part of this year's campaign the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce is sharing. Santa Shops Sumter is an effort to encourage everyone to support small businesses by shopping with them here in our county, and we've included an article from the Chamber about this initiative in the guide. Several of these vendor markets also support worthy causes.

Here at *The Sumter Item*, we have our own community holiday shopping event in the works for the second year – JingleFest! We hosted it last year at USC Sumter, and the event was recognized by the South Carolina Press Association with the statewide Award for Innovation. Back this year will be visits with Santa, the bookmobile from Sumter County Library and a reading corner for kids, plenty of vendors to choose from and food trucks to satisfy those holiday cravings. We started JingleFest to connect with residents and readers and celebrate local small businesses, and photos with Santa will raise money for Sumter United Ministries' Fireside Fund again this year. We hope to see you there on Saturday, Dec. 12, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at USC Sumter, 200 Miller Road. This event is free to the public, and parking is also free.

However you choose to celebrate it, we hope you enjoy this merry season.



ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM

***The Sumter Item*'s JingleFest, a Christmas market featuring local businesses, will be held at USC Sumter again this year on Saturday, Dec. 12.**

OSTEEN
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Established 1894
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The Sumter Item is published each Wednesday and Saturday by Osteen Publishing Co., 36 W. Liberty St., Sumter, SC 29150, and delivered via USPS. Major holiday delivery may be altered due to USPS schedule.

Periodical postage paid at Sumter, SC 29150.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Osteen Publishing Co., 36 W. Liberty St., Sumter, SC 29150.

Publication No. USPS 525-900



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Paid For By Murrell Smith for House

Recent headlines show Liberty expansion, district student address issue

BY BRUCE MILLS
bruce@theitem.com

LIBERTY STEAM WILL ADD 2ND K-8 SCHOOL NEAR SHAW

After its state authorizer conditionally approved a Liberty STEAM Charter School's Board of Directors replication application to establish a second K-8 school, Sumter's first tuition-free public charter school is officially expanding.

Liberty STEAM will add the school in western Sumter County with a planned opening date of July 2030 that will at buildout serve 900 additional students after the state Public Charter School District's board voted in support of the charter's board application on Oct. 29.

Three days earlier at its Oct. 26 board of directors' meeting, Liberty's nine-member board unanimously approved a resolution for the replication application of its existing K-8 educational model. School Superintendent Brenda Hafner and Liberty STEAM Charter School Foundation CEO and President Trevor Ivey, who was also a school co-founder, then submitted the application to the state authorizer/sponsor.

Since Liberty STEAM was founded in 2018, it has been under the umbrella of South Carolina Public Charter School District, which is based in Columbia.

Both K-8 schools will feed into one countywide Early College and Technical School, according to a Liberty news release and Hafner, who spoke with *The Sumter Item*.

The Sumter-based charter school has generally discussed future expansion efforts since early 2025 because of local families' interest to include another K-8 school near Shaw Air Force Base in the western portion of the county, but the votes officially put a long-term plan into action.



ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Liberty STEAM Charter School sixth-graders take part in a music elective class on July 29 in the school's new Junior Academy campus inside Sumter Mall.

Since Liberty STEAM was in the formation stage and opened its doors for students in August 2021, its focus has been a rigorous academic curriculum, preparing students for future college and career opportunities locally and providing a public school choice option to area families.

WILSON HALL AMONG 15 SCHOOLS TO WIN ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT GRANTS

Sumter's largest private school, Wilson Hall, was one of 15 state K-12 schools to recently earn up to $2,500 each through a state agency to support student-led environmental education projects.

Annual grant funding through the state Department of Environmental Services' Champions of the Environment program recognizes schools for projects promoting environmental stewardship through hands-on learning, according to a Nov. 4 agency news release. This year's winning projects focus on pollinator gardens, habitat restoration, resource conservation and environmental monitoring.

"These projects give students the opportunity to take what they learn in the classroom and make a meaningful difference in their communities," state Department of Environmental Services Director Myra Reece said.

Wilson Hall was recognized for its Outdoor Learning Garden, where students "will create and maintain a native pollinator habitat. Adult volunteers will guide students in the installation of rain barrels, downspout diverters and a drip irrigation system. Students will record their observations of soil health, precipitation levels, water requirements and wildlife diversity and share the data through QR codes on educational signage," according to the state agency's website.

"A Master Gardener will help identify the appropriate garden location, evaluate soil and water conditions, select plants and develop a garden plan."

Project summaries will be due by the end of April, and Wilson Hall was the only school in Sumter, Clarendon or Lee counties to be selected.

ACCURATE STUDENT ADDRESSES KEY TO SOLVING DISTRICT BUS ISSUES

Accurate student home addresses is much more important to improving late buses in Sumter School District than implementing a 4.5-year-old rezoning study, where only minimal transportation efficiencies were achieved. That is based on a recent

SEE **EDUCATION,** PAGE A5

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EDUCATION

FROM PAGE A4

discussion with the superintendent and a review by *The Item* on the previous realignment project work.

Building off previous discussions from the district's deputy superintendent and chief operations officer with the full board, Superintendent Gerald Gary confirmed recently that a full-scale online enrollment/registration campaign in the spring for parents to provide proof of residency will greatly improve district bus transportation challenges going forward.

For at least the last decade under different superintendents, the district never conducted an annual registration process to verify and update students' home addresses and whether they would be bus riders or car riders to assist with district transportation efficiencies.

Gary told *The Item* in an Oct. 26 meeting that to not have an annual, or once every two years, proof of residency process to update addresses is rare for a large school district in the state, like Sumter, and will be a key to helping the current transportation dilemma and late buses.

"That's a major key because there have been times that bus drivers have shown up to addresses and there is not a kid there but the address is in our system," he said.

District administrators and bus transportation leaders conducted a bus route audit in the summer with an outside firm of all routes and stops, and one driver route – for example – from last school year had 36 stops, but 19 were invalid stops where no children were picked up.

Gary added that hiring more drivers is a critical issue for the district, "but the address issue is also a major piece to helping the process."

The new superintendent started April 1 and wanted to do a registration in the spring/summer but was told that it would be too disruptive that close to the start of this school year.

The annual enrollment campaign in the spring to update and verify students' home addresses will be followed by some bus rerouting next summer. In the process, some students will be moved to other schools based on their accurate address data and the goal will be to minimize late buses for the start of next school year in August, Gary added.







Opening doors for veterans and military spouses

State Department of Employment and Workforce touts STAYS program

BY BRUCE MILLS
bruce@theitem.com

Military veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce offer unique and highly marketable skills, and a relatively new state employment initiative looks to tap into those qualifications and open doors for former service members.

For about 2.5 years, the state Department of Employment and Workforce has featured the "Stay to Apply Your Skills in South Carolina" program, or STAYS, for veterans and military spouses, and agency Executive Director William Floyd and other staff recently shared the program's benefits at a Sumter job fair.

STAYS participants who use the department's SC Works system are guaranteed five interview opportunities with participating employers, even though those interviews do not necessarily guarantee employment, Floyd said.

"It's up to the employer and job seeker to seal the deal, so it is not a guarantee," he added. "But the program is about helping to open the doors to the veteran or their spouse to connect with these employers and have actual interviews."

The state Department of Employment and Workforce often simply goes by the acronym DEW, and Floyd added those veterans' unique qualifications and skill sets were the ingenuity and creativity behind establishing the program.

Some veterans and their spouses' resumes look quite different from a civilian job seeker because their military training is unique and also what would appear to be "job hopping" is not the case because the job is moving them to new places, Floyd said.

SEE **STAYS,** PAGE A10

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ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Area employers offered information and job applications to local job seekers to include veterans at a Veteran Job and Resoure Fair on Nov. 10 at Sumter County Civic Center.





Thank you for your service: 3 Sumterites tell why they joined

BY BRUCE MILLS
bruce@theitem.com

At the conclusion of the annual Sumter County Veterans Day Parade on Wednesday, Nov. 11, in downtown Sumter, Shaw Air Force Base leaders and Sumter dignitaries honored 40 local veterans for their military service and presented them a medallion, American flag and other items.

The Sumter Item *took some time to talk to three and asked why they decided to join the military and make it a career.*



PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM

City of Sumter Mayor David Merchant, left, shakes hands with veteran James Munford after he was one of 40 local veterans who was honored at the close of the Veterans Day festivities in downtown Sumter.



The annual Sumter County Veterans Day Parade and ceremony were held Wednesday, Nov. 11, in downtown Sumter.

JAMES MUNFORD

Hometown: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Branch: U.S. Air Force (21 years)

"I joined the Air Force because I always wanted to serve my country, and I realized that there is a greater cause out there and freedom is not free.



MUNFORD

"Also, I wanted to make the world a better place, and I thought it was my obligation to join the military to make sure that we have all the fundamental rights that we should have as a nation. I just thought it was my duty and honor to serve.

"I picked the Air Force because it was better suited for the lifestyle that I wanted to live. I was more into technology, I always wanted to be a computer programmer, and the Air Force provided the best opportunity for me to do that."

MICHAEL PUCK

Hometown: Sumter, South Carolina
Branch: U.S. Air Force (2 years); Air National Guard (36 years)

"Initially, back in 1986, I was going to college and couldn't afford it, and I didn't want to generate a lot of bills. So, I figured Air Force since I grew up here in Sumter. I signed up and told them I wanted to go to Myrtle Beach [Air Force Base].



PUCK

"Sure enough, they sent me to Myrtle Beach. Two years after that, I wasn't happy and was ready to get out now, and so they said, 'You can go to McEntire and serve the rest of your time there.'

"I moved back to Sumter, and I thought I was just going to finish up at McEntire and be done, but I enjoyed it. Being out at McEntire, the camaraderie is very deep. You get to know the people and you live with, work with these people every single day.

"It is a pretty close-knit group for 30 years of serving with somebody.

"You don't travel everywhere as far as PCS-ing and reassignments. Once you start there, you finish there.

"So, I got to be close friends with everybody, and that was 38 years and 13 deployments.

"I was a bomb loader for F-16s for the entire time I was out there.

"I was a civilian and traditional Guardsman up until 2006. Then, I switched my position and went full time and finished out from 2006 until 2024."

DAVID THOMPSON

Hometown: Beckley, West Virginia
Branch: Army National Guard (30 years)

"One of my cousins was in the Guard, and he introduced me to it. Also, I had uncles who were in the Army and Air Force, and it just kind of felt right. I was 21 when I joined in West Virginia.



THOMPSON

"I did 30 years from '87 to 2017 as a traditional Guardsman.

"Originally, I joined probably because of personal pride and being a part of the military. For some reason, it always appealed to me.

"The structure of the military was one thing I enjoyed and got out of it. You had a set time to do things, deadlines and a structure of rank. Basically, a lot of times when you are young and you are out on your own, you don't have that structure and can struggle.

"Also, the friendships that you develop was something else I got out of it. There are people to this day that I can call up and say, 'Hey, what are you doing?' And I have not talked to them in two years, and we talk like it was yesterday. That is the same for the regular military as well.

"And, then, of course, there is the retirement. We stayed for the retirement.

"When we moved to Sumter and South Carolina, I joined the unit here in Columbia on Bluff Road.

"Also, I had a great support system who supported me in my endeavor in my wife and children because there were times when I missed birthdays or anniversaries. I was able to come back from Kuwait and Operation Iraqi Freedom for our oldest daughter's graduation."

‘Resident Evil’ movie brings video game lore to life

I have always found myself fully immersed in the world of video games ever since my formative childhood years. Taking journeys by escaping into the world of Nintendo, Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo and PlayStation consoles are memories that are forever treasured.



A REVIEW BY ISAIAH RIDLEY



The “Resident Evil” franchise from its inception began a significant movement of crafting the perfect collection of stories, paving the way for post-apocalyptic scenarios involving mutated zombies. What separated “Resident Evil” from other games was how it became more of an atmospheric, intense and haunting experience with innovative graphics, impressive and immersive sound designs, exploring ruins of Raccoon City and using your instincts as far as combating abominable creatures from mysterious origins.

Its popularity brought live-action adaptations into theatrical formats with mixed to polarizing backlash. Even the most enthusiastic fans of this franchise will readily admit the results for a proper rendering of a “Resident Evil” story into an actual acceptable film have not been the most ideal to say the least. There have been countless times when I pondered aloud the provocative question, “Is it that complicated to remain faithful to the source material?”

Director Zach Cregger, the inventive mind behind two excellent horror films titled “Barbarian” and “Weapons,” has an uncanny talent of combining classic horror tropes with the perfect blend of suspense, intensity and sprinkles of cathartic comedy. The trailer for his adaptation of “Resident Evil” was sincerely intriguing. I could tell Cregger was taking a unique approach with the source material that generated an overwhelming sense of alienation with enthusiastic fans.

The film stars Austin Abrams, Zach Cherry, Kali Reis and Paul Walter Hauser. Abrams portrays character Bryan Hodukavich, a medical courier taking on the task of delivering an unknown package to a scientific corporation in Raccoon City. While on his journey, he finds himself experiencing horrors beyond his understanding.

As the film progressed deeper into the story, I understood Cregger’s creative approach as far as not including the iconic characters from the games. As I watched the film, I believed it appropriate to incorporate an everyman and how he would behave facing living abominations if such horror unfolded onto an unsuspecting civilization. One example I will refer to curious readers and viewers is a game called “Silent Hill.” Rather than the main character being a combat-experienced special ops agent or law enforcement, he is facing a living, breathing nightmare, the same as Bryan in this “Resident Evil” story. He has no combat experience, and he is naïve, afraid and out of his league.

Cregger channels his brilliant usage of suspense, intentionally for the perspective of the audience lingering on shadows, creatively maneuvering the camera, building upon the intense atmosphere that had the hairs on my neck and arms standing up. It was the same sensation I can remember quite vividly when playing the games, too. There are scenes where it completely felt like a “Resident Evil” scenario coming to life on the big screen with certain action sequences, familiar creatures and effective jump scares catching the viewer off guard.

Admittedly there are moments in the film when the humor from Bryan takes away from certain scenes during or after frightening revelations. There comes a time when it is imperative to scale back the comedy before the scene itself transforms into parody, and once that occurs, the desired effect from the beginning loses its luster. Abrams represents the everyman struggling to keep all his mental faculties together whereas, from my perspective, Cregger using that approach allows the story to remain grounded. Bryan’s comedic reactions and outward dialogue provide an example of how an individual under these less-than-ideal conditions would express himself with these living abominations.

As a fan of the games, I see three ways to interpret this “Resident Evil” adaptation: 1) as an everyman’s experience of horrors he does not understand until events unfold; 2) as Cregger’s own vision of “Resident Evil” rather than a return to familiar territory; or 3) as a story set in the same universe that could pave the way for Leon, Chris and Claire Redfield or Jill Valentine to investigate the outbreak in Raccoon City. As in the games, the mystery of the deadly virus unfolds through exploration, with players discovering clues, diaries, video footage and scientific notes.

Previous attempts to adapt “Resident Evil” to a live-action format have yielded disappointing results. This could have easily become another run-of-the-mill, middle-of-the-road, lackluster cinematic affair. I appreciated how Zach Cregger incorporated unique elements of suspense, horror, and comedy; it all reminded me of how the late, great Alfred Hitchcock would have potentially adapted a video game concept to the silver screen. There are moments of sheer terror, intense suspense, gruesome gore and mystery of what is lurking in the darkest of shadows. The comedy has a way of detracting from the most prominent moments. In the end, this is the best adaptation of establishing the “Resident Evil” lore compared to past attempts. My final verdict is two thumbs up and 9/10 reaction. I found this cinematic journey a massive improvement and a step in the right direction with this film and look forward to what arrives in the future with the franchise.

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



Social Security Matters

Does a veteran who uses VA Healthcare need Medicare at age 65?

Dear Rusty: I'm not yet old enough, but must I enroll in Medicare at Age 65? I am a disabled military veteran with VA benefits, so must I still take Medicare when I turn 65?

Disabled Veteran

Dear Disabled Veteran:

First, please accept my gratitude for your military service to our country. And please also know that if you now rely 100% on the VA for all your health care needs, and you expect that to continue for the rest of your life, then you have the option to decline enrolling in Medicare Part B when you turn 65. However, if you believe that using health care providers from outside the VA may someday be in your future, you should enroll in Medicare when you are first eligible.

Although you are required to enroll in Medicare Part A (coverage for inpatient hospitalization services) if you collect Social Security after age 65, enrolling in Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient medicals services) is always optional because there is a monthly premium for Part B ($202.90 for 2026 – changes yearly). So, as a military veteran using VA health care, you have a choice to either enroll in Medicare Part B at age 65 or not if you get all your health care services from the Veterans Administration. Just be aware that VA health care is not considered "creditable" for Medicare purposes, so if you do not enroll in Medicare Part B during your Medicare Initial Enrollment Period and later choose to enroll in Medicare Part B, there will be a permanent Late Enrollment Penalty for enrolling in Medicare Part B outside your initial enrollment period (your Medicare IEP is three months on either side of the month you turn 65).



RUSSELL GLOOR

So, the decision you will need to make as you approach 65 years of age is this: Will all of your health care needs always be provided through the VA? Or do you want the convenience (and flexibility) to know you can use any health care provider anywhere the U.S. or its territories, whenever and wherever you wish? If the latter is true, then you should likely enroll in Medicare Part B when you turn 65. You can still use the VA for some services if you are enrolled in both, but there is no coordination of benefits (e.g., the VA will not make copayments if you use Medicare services and vice versa). Which means that you may also wish to also consider a Medicare Advantage plan or a Medicare Supplement plan to go with Medicare Part B if/when you enroll.

I hope this answers your question, but please don't hesitate to contact us again if needed. And, importantly, thank you for your service to our country.

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STAYS FROM PAGE A6

"Some private civilian employers might not understand that there is uniqueness about that veteran both in terms of their resume as well as the unique skills the veteran provides to that employer," he added.

Veterans' technical skill sets, such as those of former military aircraft mechanics, are in high demand across the state for the manufacturing sector and other industries, according to Floyd.

He added that generally all veterans possess soft skills, such as showing up for work on time, actively engaging in work and following work rules.

"Those three things, veterans do them each and every day, and that is an advantage to them," Floyd said. "That's a great starting point for that particular candidate."

DEW operates SC Works centers across the state, including its operation at 31 E. Calhoun St. in downtown Sumter.

As a foundation for veterans' job services, the agency has more than 700 years of military service among veterans who work on the DEW and SC Works teams.

According to Floyd, in the last year the agency served more than 51,000 veterans through the SC Works system, and those services are also available to the general public.

In the greater Sumter region that also includes Clarendon, Lee and Kershaw counties, SC Works' veteran business consultant is retired U.S. Air Force veteran Timotheus Durden.

Through an individual case management process, those services could include just one or two services for a particular veteran or a more intensive approach for someone else, he said.

"It could be as simple as writing a resume all the way up to helping them to secure housing and employment," Durden added.



Area employers offered information and job applications to local job seekers to include veterans at a Veteran Job and Resoure Fair on Nov. 10 at Sumter County Civic Center.

ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM

BY THE NUMBERS

51,000
Veterans served at SC Works centers in state during last year

1,200
Approximate total of veterans and veterans' spouses who are current STAYS program participants

1,000+
Job fairs and hiring events coordinated by DEW each year

500
STAYS participants who have found jobs since program began 2.5 years ago in 2024

Source: S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce





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SPORTS

E-mail: sports@theitem.com

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2026

Former Sumter High standout Addison making the most of his opportunity with Gamecocks

BY TIM LEIBLE
tim@theitem.com

Former Sumter High standout Anthony Addison is making a splash in his second season at South Carolina.

After getting a taste of college football last fall, Addison has been electric in his first full season of action. He has the seventh-most tackles on the team with 29, which he pairs with five tackles for a loss and four sacks, several of which have come in critical situations for a team that was ranked 21st before an injury to quarterback LaNorris Sellers led to a loss against Arkansas, which sent USC tumbling out of the Associated Press Top 25, at least for the moment.

"It just feels good to see the work that I've been putting in," Addison said. "I'm just going to continue doing the things that got me on the field in the first place."

'We're in the spotlight, and I don't take that for granted. I'm just trying to use this game to impact others in a positive way and make sure everybody can get where they need to be.'

ANTHONY ADDISON

Former Sumter High standout, USC defensive lineman

Addison quickly made his impact felt this season. He recorded a sack and a tackle for a loss in the Gamecocks' opener against Kent State. He then matched that performance as South Carolina opened SEC play against Mississippi and the following game at Alabama.

One of the reasons for his quick start was the fact that he got a taste of SEC football a year ago.

"Last year just kind of helped me understand what they wanted and what they needed," Addison said. "It just helped me come in this year and start hot, start faster, because I already knew what my coaches were expecting and looking for. I already knew what time it was, so I just had to go out and execute."

The former Sumter High star is also bringing the right mentality to work every single day.

"One of the things is just attacking each day like it's a game, attacking practices like they're games," Addison said. "And just having more confidence every time I step on the field that the man across from me is not supposed to be out there with me. Just trying to have that mentality of dominating everybody in front of me. That's what I'm trying to do, win every rep and make my rep my best rep."

Addison has learned a lot since his early graduation from Sumter High in December of 2024. He's been a sponge during his time with the Gamecocks, but he specifically credits defensive ends/outside linebackers coach Deion Barnes for helping push the right buttons.

"I learn stuff from everybody. I pick up things from my teammates, coaches, anybody, but Coach Barnes, ever since he came to campus, he's really been honed in on helping me take my game to the next level because he came in and said he sees me at a high

SEE **ADDISON,** PAGE A12



AP FILE PHOTO

South Carolina head coach Shane Beamer shakes hands with former Sumter High star and current USC defensive lineman Anthony Addison (40) before their game against Texas A&M on Saturday, Nov. 7, in Columbia.

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ADDISON FROM PAGE A11

level," Addison said. "He sees me as an impact player, and we put in the work together to ensure that I can have the season that we both put in the work to do. Doing the extra stuff with Coach Barnes really propelled my game, and it's still propelling my game."

South Carolina's season has been far from smooth. The Gamecocks lost their first three conference games, culminating in a heartbreaking 35-34 overtime loss at home against Kentucky. But USC followed with four consecutive wins, bashing Florida 38-19 before their bye week before wins against Tennessee, Oklahoma and Texas A&M. During that stretch, Addison has been a monster. He had five tackles against Florida before monster games against the Sooners and the Aggies. Addison had six tackles against OU, with an assisted sack and an assisted tackle for a loss before helping seal a 17-9 win over Texas A&M with an assisted sack. He added 1.5 tackles for a loss and eight total tackles, both career highs.

"We just came out with a mentality that we'd had enough," Addison said. "We came out with the intent to win and to dominate. I feel like everybody's mindset was to play their best game and win their rep, and that's what we've been doing. We were just trying to win our rep, give our best rep and trusting the man beside us and behind us to have our backs."

South Carolina struggled without Sellers against Arkansas, taking an ugly 34-6 loss, but Addison's mentality remains unchanged.

"I just wanted to attack each week the same. Win, lose or draw, I'm coming to beat the man in front of me, to dominate the man in front of me. I've been trying to do that every game, that's just my mentality," Addison said. "Later in the season, we've had more wins and more success, but I've been trying to do the same things I was doing before. I guess the plays I'm making now are just helping us win."

The former Sumter High star is also keeping his two hometowns in the front of his mind as he shines on Saturdays. He announced plans to give out what he's dubbed the "Be the Pressure Award" to athletes from his hometown of Bishopville and his alma mater, Sumter High.

"We wanted to give it out to the guy we felt like stood out and helped their team win, make impact plays and was just an undeniable dog," Addison said. "I wanted them to be recognized for it to give them extra motivation."

The two-time Gamecock takes great pride in representing both Bishopville and Sumter the right way as he gains more attention on a national stage.

"I love how what I'm able to do can impact others in a positive way," he said. "We're in the spotlight, and I don't take that for granted. I'm just trying to use this game to impact others in a positive way and make sure everybody can get where they need to be."



AP FILE PHOTO

Former Sumter High star and current South Carolina defensive lineman Anthony Addison (40) prepares to rush against Alabama on Saturday, Sept. 26, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

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Bowling becomes favorite sports activity



Sammy Way
REFLECTIONS

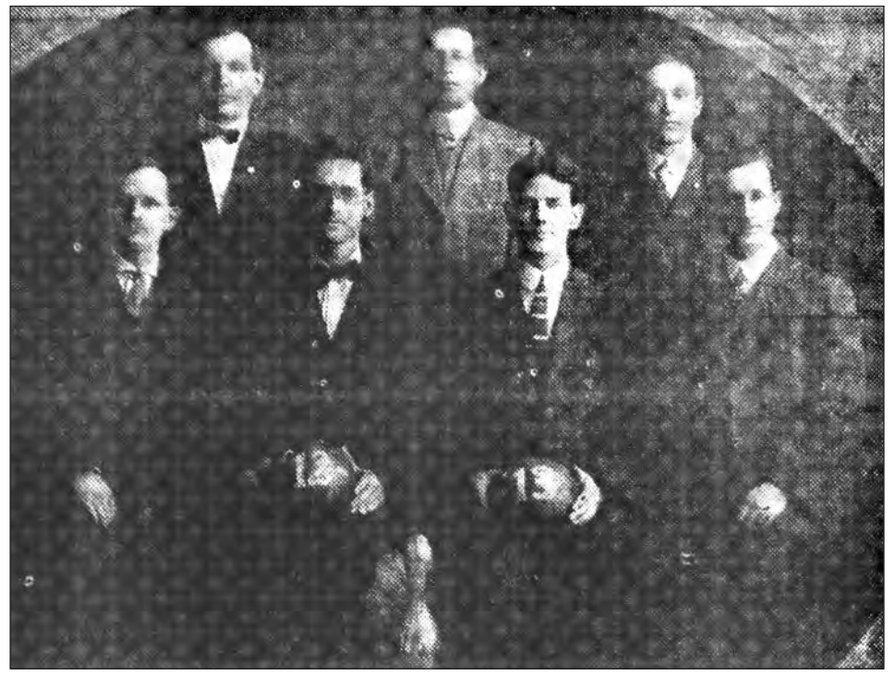
Reflections revisits the sport of bowling as it became one of Sumter's favorite recreational activities. According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia, "The earliest form of bowling known to exist has been traced back to ancient Egypt around 5,000 BC. The ancient Egyptians rolled stones at various objects with the goal of knocking them over." The author used data and photos from Wikipedia Encyclopedia and *The Item* archives to prepare this paper.

An article appeared in the *Watchman and Southron* referencing bowling on May 2, 1912. It mentioned that a bowling team from Florence sent a challenge to the Sumter YMCA for any team to bowl against them at any time. The challenge was accepted by an enthusiastic bowler from Sumter, and a series of matches was arranged. The time of the games had not been determined, nor was the team selected, but it was probable that the first game was in Sumter.

The 1912-1913 picture of the State Championship Bowling Team was featured in the *Watchman*, and the team consisted of seven men, six of whom were Sumter natives, and one came from Columbia. The team members consisted of Hal W. Harby, H.L. Birchard (director of the YMCA), Harry Reid, O. H. Folley, J. A. McKnight, Willie Cuttino and Waverly Levy.

On Oct. 26, 1936, a bowling alley with five new alleys opened at 103 N. Main St. Bland DuBose was in charge of the business. Ladies were allowed to bowl free of charge on opening night with prizes given to both ladies and gentlemen for the high scores of the evening.

With the onset of World War II, bowling increased in popularity with young men serving in the armed forces seeking recreational activities while on leave. As a result, "A modern bowling alley and recreational center was constructed ... at the Boyle Motor Company building which was entirely renovated and redecorated to house 8-pin and 10-pin alleys along with a large lobby."



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTOS

This group of young men comprised the championship bowling team in Sumter for the 1912-13 season. They are, from left, Hal W. Harby, H. L. Birchard, Harry Reid, O. H. Folley, J. A. McKnight, Willie Cuttino and Waverly Levy. Birchard was the first secretary of the Sumter YMCA. All but Reid were Sumter citizens.

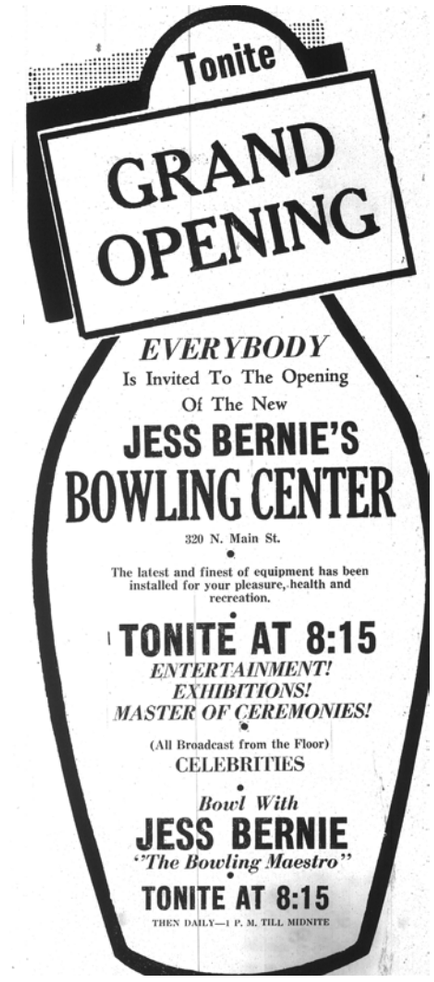
"Financing the project was Ray Blanding, W.E. Covington and Norman Chandler, all well-known Sumter businessmen. Mr. Chandler also acted as managing director. Equipment totaling about $20,000 was set up in the building by the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company of Chicago, whose representative, James A. Hayes Jr., of the Atlanta office was in Sumter making final plans for beginning the work."

"Establishment of a modern bowling alley had been under discussion here for some time. A popular sport among civilians, bowling was also one of the favorite recreational pastimes of military personnel, and since the inception of Shaw Field the need for a large alley in Sumter appeared urgent. Capt. George E. Sargent, special services and public relations officer at the post, wrote to the Chamber of Commerce pointing to the necessity for such an establishment, and the matter was taken up at the last meeting of the Chamber's executive board."

"The lobby of the new bowling center featured a refreshment counter and attractive furnishings. Alleys were set up in the space which served as the mechanical department of the motor company, and the former lobby was redecorated to furnish the lobby for the bowling center. The new Community Recreation Center at 329 N. Main St. had its grand opening June 11, 1942, with large crowds in attendance. The Center was the first of its kind here."

Over the course of time, several other bowling establishments opened in the downtown area. These bowling facilities met the needs of the Sumter public until Brunswick Lanes came to Sumter in 1960. Sumterites no longer had to venture to Florence or Columbia because of the lack of bowling facilities in Sumter. Bowling enthusiasts were able to use a 24-lane facility on Broad Street Extension featuring modern automatic equipment, a nursery for children and a snack bar.

"Manager Jim Coyle threw open the doors of Sumter's beautiful, new bowling center, Gamecock Lanes, at 7 o'clock on Jan. 20, 1961, allowing the public to view the city's newest sports attraction. 'We'd like to have everyone stop by for a few minutes to see what a modern facility we have,' commented Coyle."



This ad for Jess Bernie's Bowling Center was published March 13, 1944.

This holiday season is packed with activities for everyone

Make room for all that turkey and sweet potato casserole. On Thanksgiving morning, Thursday, Nov. 26, run or walk during the **Turkey Trot 5K** and for kids the **Gobbler Dash** starting at 9 a.m. The YMCA's 44th year of the event includes the Gobbler Dash Fun Run for kids, back this year with T-shirts and trophies. This is a certified 5K course, with finish line and chip timers by Strictly Running. The dash will take place on a city trail for kids ages 6 to 9, supervised by YMCA staff. Register through Nov. 22 at the YMCA or online at *https://tinyurl.com/4j6c263s*. Late registration will open Nov. 23 with an additional $10 fee. Early packet pickup is Wednesday, Nov. 25, from noon to 7 p.m. in the Community Health Room at the Y. Get there early to get your shirt. They are first come, first served. Race day registration and packet pickup begins at 8 a.m., and race begins at 9 a.m. Volunteers are needed to make this event a success. For more information, contact Missy Corrigan at (803) 773-1404.

Rock around the Christmas tree with Sumter County during its **annual tree-lighting ceremony**, being held this year on Friday, Dec. 4, at 6:30 p.m. on the old courthouse lawn, 141 N. Main St. "Enjoy festive holiday musical selections performed by Sumter County elementary school student choral groups, then join us for the countdown to the official lighting of the Sumter County Christmas Tree! This is an outdoor event, so bundle up, wear layers, and come ready to enjoy an evening of Christmas cheer with our community."

Charleston Gospel Choir is coming to Sumter for Christmas at Patriot Hall on Saturday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. The performance will take place at the newly renovated Patriot Hall, 135 Haynsworth St. It is a part of the SC250 Commemoration and will be conducted by Vaughn A. Richardson. Tickets for the event range from $16.50 to $38.50 and can be purchased online at *www.sumterpatriothall.com*, by phone at (866) 811-4111 or at the door one hour before the performance.

Sumter First Church of God's Craft Show is coming up Saturday, Dec. 5, at the church's fellowship hall, 1835 Camden Highway, Sumter, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shop from more than 20 local and surrounding area artists for handcrafted goods and boutique items, including clothing and accessories, coastal decor, soaps, crochet items, ornaments, sublimation tumblers, shirts, baked goods and more.

The Evening Optimist Club is hosting the **annual Sumter Christmas Parade** on Sunday, Dec. 6, at 2 p.m. The theme for the 2026 Christmas Parade is "Christmas Dreams." Local schools, churches, car clubs, businesses and community groups will travel from the Riley Ball Park lineup area through downtown Sumter beginning at 2 p.m. If your school, civic club, church or business would like an application, contact *SumterSCParades@aol.com*. Deadline for entry is Friday, Nov. 13.

Enjoy the annual **Backcountry Christmas** event at Sumter Museum on Saturday, Dec. 12, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Find out how Christmas was celebrated in Sumter in the 1800s while strolling around this replica of a backcountry homestead, with a blacksmith forge, kitchen garden and other buildings in use hundreds of years ago. The museum is at 122 N. Washington St.

Gather the whole family for a merry day packed with festive fun, laughter and cheer. Best of all — it's free! Shop 'til you sparkle with local vendors, snack on tasty treats, sing along to music, snap a photo with Santa, and feel your heart grow three sizes from all the jolly vibes. Come ready to jingle, mingle and make merry memories! Join *The Sumter Item* on Saturday, Dec. 12, at USC Sumter, 200 Miller Road, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for **JingleFest**. This event is free to the public, and parking is also free.

Sumter Civic Chorale's Christmas concert, **"Sing the Songs of Bethlehem"** by K. Lee Scott, will be presented on Sunday, Dec. 13, at 3 p.m. Trinity United Methodist Church, 226 W. Liberty St., Sumter. Admission is free, and all are welcome.

It wouldn't be a merry Christmas without seeing the more than one million lights at **Swan Lake Iris Gardens** at least once during the season. The Opening Night Ceremony is on Tuesday, Dec. 1, at 6 p.m., on the lawn beside the Visitors Center, 822 W. Liberty St. The Fantasy of Lights display is open nightly, closing at 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday through Dec. 31. Admission is always free. This event is designed as a drive-through, but visitors are allowed to park to take pictures with the lights. Access to the walking trails is closed after dusk. Lights are all along the main parking lot area to Swan Lake Iris Gardens, along Liberty Street and along Garden Street (enter at Liberty Street and exit onto Oakland Avenue). No parking is allowed along Garden Street; however, parking will be available in the lot across from the Heath Pavilion. And don't forget to visit Santa's Village during Fantasy of Lights for a free holiday evening. Bring your own camera for photos with Santa and enjoy the seasonal atmosphere beside the Visitors Center. Santa is available only on these dates from 6 to 8 p.m.: Friday, Dec. 4; Saturday, Dec. 5; Friday, Dec. 11; Saturday, Dec. 12; Friday, Dec. 18; and Saturday, Dec. 19. The lake is at 822 W. Liberty St.





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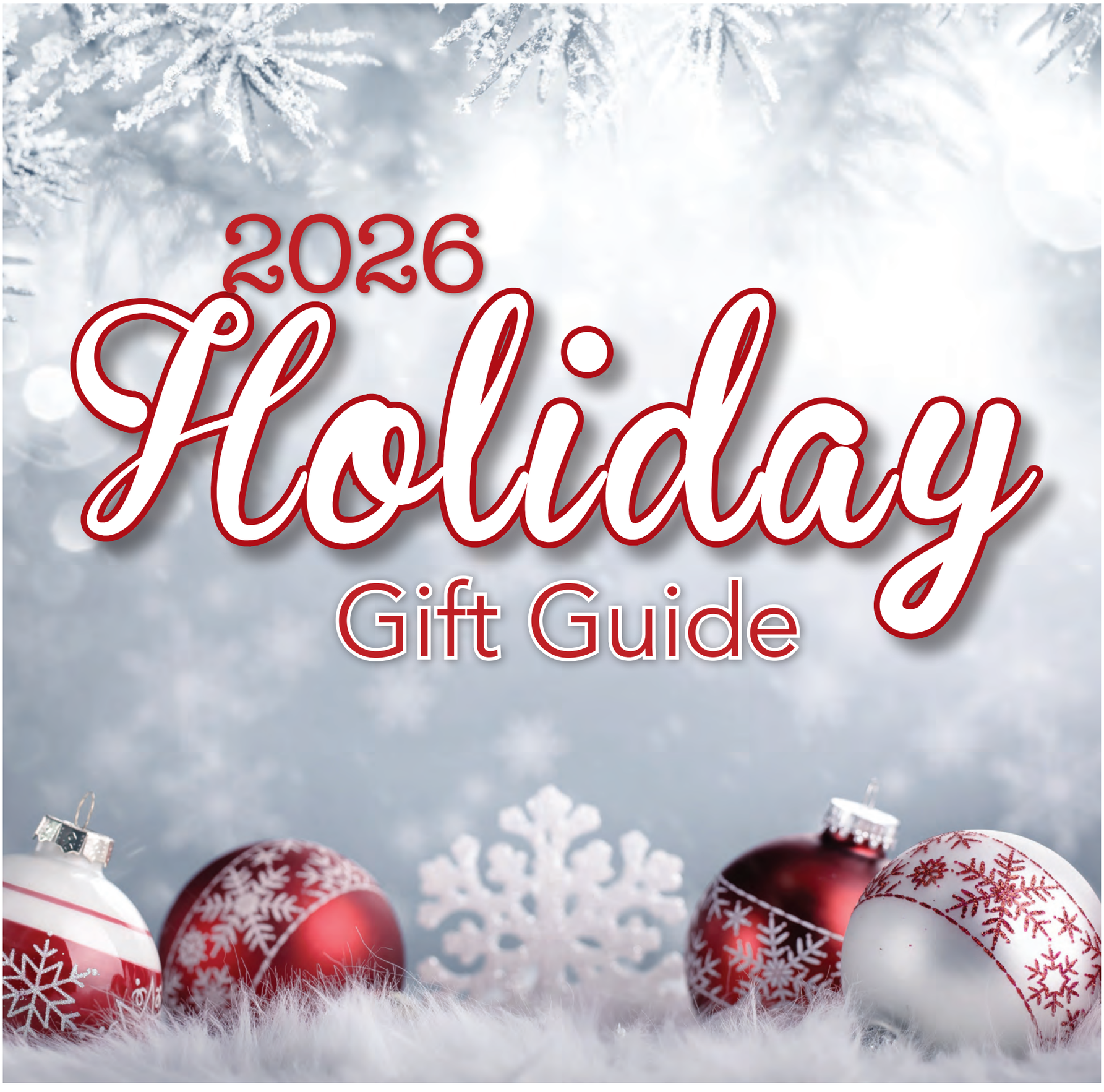
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2026
Holiday
Gift Guide

JINGLE ALL THE WAY:

Award-winning holiday event returns

By Alaysha Maple
alaysha@theitem.com

the Sumter ITEM

Holiday magic was plentiful at *The Item's* inaugural JingleFest as a crowd of 500 attendees gathered for a joyful start to the most wonderful time of year.

Dozens of children gathered for book readings and signed up for library cards to begin their own reading journeys, with help from Sumter County Library and its bookmobile. Parents and grandparents snagged last-minute gifts from more than 40 local vendors and grabbed a bite to eat as they browsed.

Many snapped a picture with Santa. All proceeds from the photo-op benefited *The Item's* Fireside Fund, established in 1969 to support Sumter United Ministries and provide crucial heating assistance to families in need during the cold months, having raised more than $1 million to date. Proceeds from the day totaled $593.54, donated in the name of JingleFest attendees.

JingleFest may not be what you expect from a newspaper, but that's exactly what makes it special. The event gives *The Item* an opportunity to connect with residents, celebrate small businesses and organizations and support an important cause by raising money for Fireside Fund.

More importantly, events like JingleFest strengthen the relationships that help sustain local journalism in Sumter. At a time when communities across the country are losing their local newspapers and becoming news deserts, community partnerships supporting the

SEE **JINGLE,** PAGE B3



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DEC. 12
11A.M.-4P.M.

Santa • Vendors • Food • Music • Crafts • Holiday Reading Corner


Photos by Item File


Photo by PKC Photography



JINGLE FROM PAGE B2

event help ensure *The Item* can continue serving as a trusted source of local news, information and storytelling for generations to come.

Which is why JingleFest was recognized by the South Carolina Press Association with the statewide Award for Innovation. The award was part of the press association's annual PALMYs contest for advertising in newspapers.

"JingleFest was not only an innovative event to drive non-traditional revenue to the newspaper, but more importantly this project showcases *The Sumter Item's* commitment to serving and connecting the community. Outstanding effort from concept, design, planning, promoting and executing this fun, family-friendly event! And kudos for raising money to help those in need. Outstanding work!" reads a judge's comment.

With so much more holiday cheer to share, *The Item's* JingleFest returns to USC Sumter, 200 Miller Road, on Saturday, Dec. 12, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

With 50-plus vendors signed up and more coming in, the event is shaping up to be bigger than before. This year will feature a variety of nifty crafters and niche creations, bringing options for everyone.

The Item, in partnership with Bouncer World, will also host free, interactive entertainment for attendees of all ages. There will also be live entertainment, featuring groups known and loved by Sumter and surrounding areas.

Coming back this year will be the reading corner, photos with Santa and craft tables so folks can make unique crafts for the holidays.

Want to get a jump on holiday shopping? To browse a list of vendors, or for more information, visit www.theitem.com/jinglefest2026/.

This event is free and open to the public.



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Santa shops Sumter:

Keep the cheer here

Submitted by The Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce

This holiday season, the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce is rallying residents and businesses behind a shared goal: to make shopping local part of how Sumter celebrates Christmas. Santa Shops Sumter, presented by Air Solutions, is the Chamber's first official holiday shop-local campaign, and it comes with an invitation for the whole community: "Keep the cheer here, shop Sumter."

The campaign gives businesses across Sumter a chance to promote what they offer together during one of the busiest shopping seasons of the year. It also gives residents a reason to explore their own town, from visiting a shop they've always meant to stop in to picking up a gift card from a business they already love. The idea is simple: when it's time to shop for the holidays, start with Sumter.

That invitation will show up throughout the season in a few different ways. Local businesses will contribute prizes for the 25 Days of Sumter giveaways. Chamber staff will take on a $100 gift basket challenge. Families and vendors will come together downtown for the inaugural Christmas on Calhoun. And shoppers can turn to an online gift guide whenever they need an idea or want to see what's available close to home.

Chamber Charlie the Elf: Santa's littlest helper. Sumter's best gift ideas.

Chamber Charlie's Gift Guide, available at SantaShopsSumter.com, brings together gift ideas from Sumter businesses. Named for the Chamber's holiday elf, the guide lets shoppers browse by recipient or explore categories such as gifts for the home, gift cards, experiences and services. Listings link directly to participating businesses so shoppers can find out how to buy or book a gift.

Peyton Richardson, the Chamber's director of communications, visited several holiday open houses in Sumter over the past two weeks. Along the way, she picked up gifts for family and friends and gathered photos and video for Santa Shops Sumter.

"For small businesses, a first visit in November or December can turn into a customer relationship that lasts well beyond Christmas," Richardson said. "That's what we hope to encourage with Santa Shops Sumter. When you start checking names off your list, we hope you'll look here first."

Over 300 local small businesses that are Chamber members are listed in the "Santa Shops Chamber Members" section of SantaShopsSumter.com. The Chamber encourages residents to start their holiday shopping there and see what they can find right here in Sumter. A search for a Christmas gift might lead to a shop worth revisiting for a birthday, a service shoppers can use themselves or a new business to recommend to a friend.

A $100 challenge and 25 chances to win

The Chamber will put its own local shopping skills to the test in the Great Sumter Gift-Off. In the video series, Chamber staff will compete to build the best gift basket with $100 each, shopping locally for the items that go inside. With the same spending limit, each shopper must decide which gift will anchor the basket and what to add with the money left over.

Viewers will get to see where the shoppers go, what they pick and how their baskets come together. A single item might spark an idea for a stocking stuffer or a host gift. An entire basket might give someone a starting point for putting together their own.

The 25 Days of Sumter giveaways give residents another way to take part. Prizes from local businesses will introduce entrants to more of what's available around town. Entering to win is free at SantaShopsSumter.com/25daysofsumter.

Christmas on Calhoun debuts Dec. 4

The Chamber will host its inaugural Christmas on Calhoun on Friday, Dec. 4, presented by Air Solutions Heating & Cooling. The celebration is free to attend and will run from 4:30 to 9 p.m. at the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce, 32 E. Calhoun St. in downtown Sumter.

Visitors will have a chance to browse local retail vendors, food

SEE **CHAMBER,** PAGE B5

CHAMBER FROM PAGE B4

and beverage vendors, partake in seasonal treats, visit with Santa, and activities for children will give families several reasons to spend part of the evening on Calhoun Street, whether they come with a shopping list or simply want to see what the market has to offer.

Christmas on Calhoun takes place the same evening as Sumter County's annual Christmas Tree Lighting, scheduled from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The market opens two hours before the lighting begins and stays open until 9 p.m., so visitors can browse before heading to the ceremony or stop by afterward. For families who already make the tree lighting part of their December plans, the market adds another stop to an evening downtown.

At the market, shoppers can ask a vendor about an item, hear how it was made or learn where to find the business later. Vendors get to hear firsthand what shoppers are looking for, and residents get to put a face to a business name they may have seen online or heard from a friend.

Keep the cheer Here!

There's room for Sumter businesses in holiday gifting beyond what goes under the tree. An oil change takes an errand off a busy parent's list, a massage gives someone an hour to themselves, an experience creates lasting memories, and an HVAC tuneup helps a loved one get their home ready for winter. Each is a way to show you care while supporting a Sumter business.

That's a message Jimmy Davis, owner of locally owned Air Solutions Heating and Cooling, hopes more shoppers will take to heart. Davis has a young family of his own and looks forward to the holidays. As the owner of the small business presenting Santa Shops Sumter, he wants to see businesses across Sumter have a strong season.

Keep an eye out for Santa Shops Sumter holiday gift bags sponsored by The Retreat, along with other campaign merchandise coming soon to the Chamber's online store at SumterChamber.com.

For local gift ideas, information on entering the 25 Days of Sumter giveaways and details about Christmas on Calhoun, visit SantaShopsSumter.com.





Christmas Eve fun for families



The day and evening before Christmas is a time of much anticipation for young children, particularly those awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus. What children do not realize is their parents have been working hard behind the scenes for many weeks to help maximize the holiday magic, and Christmas Eve often is the final push to get everything done before the big day (and man in red) arrives.

Keeping children happy and entertained on Christmas Eve can free up time for adults to check off their to-do lists and savor some of the holiday spirit themselves. Here are some traditions to explore on Christmas Eve that are entertaining for kids and adults.

• **Decorate gingerbread houses.** Christmas Eve is a great night to decorate gingerbread houses. Families who do not freshly bake the panels for the gingerbread houses can rely on pre-made kits available at various stores. It's a smart idea to have some extra icing available, especially if kids are anxious to "glue" on extra candy embellishments.

• **Attend evening services.** Most churches hold Christmas Eve services, with some offering a Midnight Mass for parishioners. Spending time at these services enables families to slow down and celebrate their faith.

• **Do a Christmas pajama reveal.** It's traditional in some families to buy matching PJs to wear to bed on Christmas Eve and then lounge around in them on Christmas morning. Whoever is in charge of wrapping gifts can set apart the Christmas PJs by wrapping them in a different patterned paper. Then everyone opens the pajamas at the same time for the big reveal.

• **Leave out reindeer food.** Kids can have a fun time putting together a batch of special reindeer food. After all, Santa isn't the only one doing the heavy lifting delivering gifts; his reindeer probably get hungry, too. Reindeer food can be made using a few different ingredients, namely oatmeal, shredded carrots and glitter. Children can decide where to toss this reindeer food, with some opting to make a path along the front lawn leading toward the house.

• **Watch a holiday classic.** Choose a Christmas movie and gather the family around to watch it. Some options include "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," "Miracle on 34th Street," "Elf," or "A Christmas Story." Set up a popcorn bar nearby where everyone can customize their popcorn with different add-ins, like chocolate candies, cheese or seasonings.

Christmas Eve traditions can be fun for kids and families as they anticipate all the festivities to come on Christmas morning.

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Give the gift of your time

Volunteer this holiday season

BY MAITI MARTIN



If you have no extra cash to buy gifts for families in need this holiday season, the gift of your time will be well appreciated. There are many opportunities for volunteers to get involved this year, from packing holiday dinner boxes to being a role model for Sumter children.

Red Youth Center

The Salvation Army Red Shield Youth Center is looking for caring, dependable volunteers who have a heart for working with children, according to its social media page.

Volunteers can help students with their homework, play games, read with the kids, assist with activities and be positive role models. "This is a great opportunity for college students who need volunteer hours, internship experience, or hands-on experience working with children. It's also perfect for anyone considering a career in education, social work, psychology, counseling, or youth development," the center said.

Volunteers will need to complete an application, pass a background check and complete Safe From Harm training. If you're interested in making a difference in the lives of our youth, contact Crystal Brown at (803) 464-3670 for more information.

Tuomey Hospice

Prisma Health Tuomey Hospice is always looking for volunteers to provide compassionate support for patients in their homes. There is a special kind of person who feels called to serve - not for recognition, but because compassion feels like part of who they are. Hospice volunteers provide companionship, comfort, and emotional support to individuals and families during one of life's most tender seasons. If you have a special gift such as musical talent, hair styling or others, you may provide those gifts during your visits as well!

No medical experience is required. Training, guidance, and ongoing support are provided. If you feel a quiet "yes" in your heart, contact the Prisma Health Tuomey Hospice office at (803) 773-4663 for more information.

Habitat for Humanity

Hundreds of Sumter residents have new homes thanks to the generosity of their community through monetary donations and time from volunteers through Habitat for Humanity's Sumter chapter. The organization welcomes volunteers to help with office tasks, construction, its retail store and community outreach at events. For more information about opportunities, read Habitat for Humanity's volunteer handbook at https://tinyurl.com/4pbwsznz.

Saving Sumter Strays

Have a heart for animals? Saving Sumter Strays welcomes volunteers to walk dogs, groom, socialize, foster or help with transport and upkeep of the shelter. If you are interested in attending an orientation, complete the volunteer application at https://www.savingsumterstrays.com/volunteer. The website also includes a foster application. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old.

Sumter United Ministries

Sumter United Ministries will offer two holiday volunteer opportunities through its Giving Thanks Dinner Box Program and Help an Angel Fly Christmas program. During Thanksgiving, volunteers can help collect and donate food, pack dinner boxes and distribute food to local families in need.

During Christmas, volunteers can help provide gifts to families by donating presents, organizing donations and preparing gifts for distribution. These programs allow community members to support local families during the holiday season. If interested, visit https://sumterunitedministries.org/get-connected.

Volunteers can also help with the Crisis Relief Ministry by organizing the warehouse, picking up food donations, data entry and more; in the Construction Ministry by building wheelchair ramps and replacing roofs and helping in a cleanup crew; and in the Medical Ministry with data entry. Volunteers will take part in a one-hour orientation session that will help them choose how they would like to help Sumter United Ministries. Call the ministry at (803) 775-0757 to get started.

City of Sumter Community Cleanup

Help spiff up your community before the holidays. City of Sumter will host its last Community Cleanup of 2026 on Saturday, Dec. 12. This is an opportunity for volunteers to clean up, beautify and improve the local community. The city holds cleanups every two months on Saturday mornings and welcomes others to hold their own cleanups as well. For more information or to sign up, visit https://tinyurl.com/5e69djcy. The 2027 schedule will be released in the coming weeks.

Sumter Senior Services

Sumter Senior Services offers volunteer opportunities to help older adults maintain their well-being and stay connected to their community. Volunteers may assist with meal preparation and delivery, senior activities, office tasks and other support services. These opportunities are a great way to make a positive difference in the lives of local seniors. For more information, visit www.sumterseniorservices.org/volunteerops.html.

Palmetto Optimist Club

Palmetto Optimist Club supports children and the community through projects focused on literacy, recreation and service. Volunteers can help with activities such as Reading in the Park, children's events, donation drives and fundraising projects. For more information, visit www.palmettooptimistclub.com.

Crosswell Home for Children

Crosswell Home for Children offers opportunities to support children through educational activities, campus projects, donations and special events. Volunteers can assist with tutoring, organizing clothing donations, maintaining the grounds or helping with recreational activities. To learn more, visit www.crosswellhome.org/get-involved.

The By Name Project

The By Name Project, founded by Jeff Wright, started in 2016 with the goal of finding people whom others ignored and befriending them. If they look hungry, offer them a meal. If they seem lost or lonely, lend them an ear.

The nonprofit strives to meet immediate needs of individuals in downtown Sumter, around Magnolia Street. They serve every first and third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon. To sign up, visit www.thebynameproject.org/volunteer-opportunities.

Did you know?



Christmas lights help set the scene for the holidays and enhance the atmosphere of gatherings and celebrations. While it may seem like Christmas lights have always been part of holiday festivities, they're actually a relatively modern addition. Electric Christmas lights were the invention of Edward Hibberd Johnson in 1882. Johnson was an associate of Thomas Edison, and Smithsonian notes Johnson hand-wired 80 red, white and blue electric light bulbs and placed them on a spinning Christmas tree in his New York City home. Johnson's lights were likely inspired by the first strand of electric lights that Edison hung outside of his New Jersey laboratory two years prior. These Christmas lights gave rise to more displays in subsequent years. President Grover Cleveland put up the first electrically lit Christmas tree in the White House in 1895. While electric lights may have been pretty, they were very expensive for the average person. In the 1920s, companies like General Electric started crafting safe, affordable and ready-to-use light strings for consumers, paving the way for more widespread adoption during the holidays.

Black Friday vs. Cyber Monday: When to shop

Retail holiday enthusiasts may be partial to one day over another, but come the holiday season, there might not be too big a difference between Black Friday and Cyber Monday. In a recent interview with NBC News, Dr. Ngoc (Cindy) Pham, an associate professor of management, marketing and entrepreneurship at Brooklyn College, noted that holiday season retail holidays like Black Friday and Cyber Monday are now part of a single, extended shopping cycle, which has resulted in nearly identical deals being available on each day. Black Friday, which occurs on the Friday after Thanksgiving, and Cyber Monday, which falls on the Monday following Thanksgiving weekend, used to be separated by in-store shopping (Black Friday) and online shopping (Cyber Monday). But Pham notes fast shipping, more flexible return policies and competition between retailers has made it difficult to differentiate between the two events. Despite that, Pham notes Black Friday still might be a better day to find big-ticket items like large electronics, as retailers aim to attract customers to their stores (on a day many consumers are not working) and clear products like these which tend to be high-inventory. Cyber Monday, when consumers tend to be working or at school, is a day to find smaller electronics and smaller items, as these tend to be easier to purchase on mobile phones or when visiting traditional websites.

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Find the perfect gift at these holiday markets

Stuck trying to figure out a gift for a friend or loved one? You may find what you're looking for at one of these many upcoming holiday events. Some benefit charity, too, so you'll feel good knowing you helped a worthy cause with your shopping.

SUMTER

The first Christmas on Calhoun will be held on Friday, Dec. 4, from 4:30 to 9 p.m. for a festive night of community cheer, festive activities and shopping, of course. This event is part of Santa Shops Sumter, the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce's shop local campaign this holiday season, and it will be in tandem with the Sumter County Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on the old courthouse lawn from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Enjoy the market, hot chocolate, a glimpse of Santa and more at 32 E. Calhoun St. "Bring your family, invite your friends, and help us kick off a new holiday tradition in the heart of Sumter!"

Sumter Farmers Market makes a special return for one day only after its regular closing for the season on Friday, Dec. 4, for its Holiday Market from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Shop with local vendors, enjoy delicious food from food trucks, and support small businesses. The market will be at University of South Carolina Sumter, 200 Miller Road.

The annual Christmas Market at Patriot Hall returns on Saturday, Dec. 5, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 135 Haynesworth St. This is a free, family-friendly celebration featuring local vendors with gifts, food, goods, handmade treasures and free gift wrapping. The kids can see Santa, too!

Sumter First Church of God's Craft Show is coming up Saturday, Dec. 5, at the church's fellowship hall, 1835 Camden Highway, Sumter, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shop from more than 20 local and surrounding area artists for handcrafted goods and boutique items, including clothing and accessories, coastal decor, soaps, crochet items, ornaments, sublimation tumblers, shirts, baked goods and more.

Have an art lover in your family? Be sure to shop for the holidays at Sumter County Gallery of Art's SCGA Holiday Market and Shop. "Shop local, give art and spread holiday cheer! Join us at the Sumter County Gallery of Art Holiday Market for a festive day of shopping, creativity and community!" This event will be held Saturday, Dec. 5, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Sumter County Gallery of Art, 200 Hasel St. "Discover unique, handcrafted gifts, original artwork, and one-of-a-kind treasures created by talented local artists and members of the Sumter Artists' Guild. Every purchase supports local artists and helps keep the arts thriving in our community!" If you aren't able to attend on that date, the Holiday Shop will continue through Dec. 19. "Skip the ordinary gifts this year and give something meaningful, creative, and locally made!"

Enjoy s'mores, a visit with Santa, bounce house, free crafts for the kids and plenty more at the two-day Market on the Green Holiday Market. If you can't catch it Saturday, Dec. 5, it will return Saturday, Dec. 19. A visit with Santa is available in exchange for the donation of a new, unwrapped toy for Toys for Tots or a donation of nonperishable food items to the market's food drive. Shop from among local vendors and find something delicious to eat as you enjoy live music. It will be at 4215 Thomas Sumter Highway in Dalzell those two Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m.

Gather the whole family for a merry day packed with festive fun, laughter and cheer. Best of all — it's free! Shop 'til you sparkle with local vendors, snack on tasty treats, sing along to music, snap a photo with Santa, and feel your heart grow three sizes from all the jolly vibes. Come ready to jingle, mingle and make merry memories! Join The Sumter Item on Dec. 12 at USC Sumter, 200 Miller Road, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for JingleFest. This event is free to the public, and parking is also free.

The sixth-annual Holiday Cheers Christmas Market returns to the Sumter American Legion building on Dec. 19 from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. More than 1,000 people attend this event each year for arts and crafts, handmade gifts and food. The building is near the fairgrounds at 34 S. Artillery Drive.

CLARENDON

Here's your chance to snag some famous biscuits. The Clarendon Pilot Club Bazaar returns this year at Manning Presbyterian Church on Tuesday, Nov. 24, from 4 to 6 p.m. Homemade biscuits, pies, cakes and candy will be available for holiday giving and eating. Help support the civic club through this annual fundraising event. The church is at 233 N. Brooks St., Manning.

Shop from a variety of local vendors to find exactly what you need for gift giving this holiday season (or just for yourself), including some unique items, along with both dine-in treats as well as take-out BBQ at the St. Matthias Christmas Bazaar. The event will be held on Saturday, Dec. 5. Links to tickets and vendor registration can be found at www.StMatthiasAnglican.org/events. The church is at 9 N. Dukes St., Summerton.

Haven't found what you're looking for yet for a Christmas gift? Maybe you'll see it at the first Safe Harbor Clarendon Christmas Bazaar at Emmanuel Baptist Church on Saturday, Dec. 5. There will be handmade items, unique gifts, seasonal items and much more. All vendor fees go to Safe Harbor Clarendon to support its mission to end domestic violence in Clarendon County. The church is at 1794 Old Georgetown Road, Manning.

The Holiday Market's new open-air market kicked off for the public on Nov. 18 and will run year 'round on Fridays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Vendors can bring seasonal items, and they will need to contact City of Manning for a business license. Call (803) 225-0183 for more information. Crafts, plants, produce, canned goods and more will be available at the market, 225 S. Boundary St., Manning.





Faith & Family for the Holidays

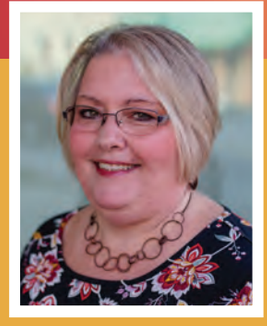
Celebrate the Christmas season and connect with the Sumter region through Faith & Family for the Holidays. This special section inside The Sumter Item will highlight local events, church services and community opportunities. Faith & Family for the Holidays will also be promoted across Item social media and email newsletters, reaching more than 100,000 local citizens. All ads are full color.

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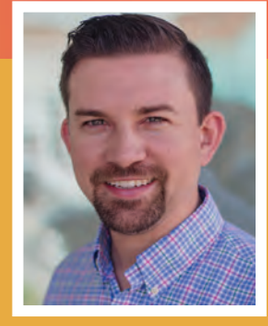
Nov. 24, 2026

Publish date

Dec. 12, 2026



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the Sumter ITEM

Shaw Spouses Club brings friendship, holiday cheer to military community

By Alaysha Maple
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As we reflect on Veterans Day and look ahead to the holiday season, the Shaw Spouses Club continues its tradition of connection, service and community.

The organization brings together military spouses from different branches, backgrounds and stages of military life while supporting service members and the greater Sumter community. From scholarships and charitable donations to its holiday tradition that gives service members something sweet to look forward to, the club offers opportunities to build friendships and make a difference.

In this holiday Q&A, Shaw Spouses' Club President Nancy Galas shares more about the club's history, its work through the years and how the community can be part of its mission.

For readers who may not be familiar with the organization, could you share the history and mission of Shaw Spouses Club? When was the club established? What does membership look like?

"Spouses' Clubs can be found at many installations across the military. Shaw Spouses' Club has been active for about 10 years as an all ranks club; prior to that, separate clubs for officer and enlisted spouses existed.

Our mission is to promote a supportive atmosphere for military spouses and the broader community through social activities, scholarships, charitable giving and networking. We aim for 'friendship with a purpose.' We are a great place to connect with other spouses stationed here and support our service members at Shaw and in Sumter.

Our club is open to all local military spouses regardless of rank or branch of service. Our current members are a mix of demographics. Some of us are brand new to military life, some of us have seen our spouses through their career and are enjoying retiree life!

We are a mix of Army and Air Force spouses, a mix of ages, a mix of rank! We are diverse in our experiences but come together for friendship and community service."

What does the Shaw Spouses Club do throughout the year, and what are some of its primary programs, activities and initiatives?

"We participate in many events on Shaw [Air Force Base].

Most recently, we had a trunk at the annual Boo Bash Trunk or Treat. We host an annual Cookie Drive for Airmen in the barracks in December. We host an annual Auction Fundraiser in order to raise funds for our scholarships and charitable grants.

We also have club social gatherings to strengthen our bond as members [and] have monthly social gatherings as well as small interest group gatherings. We have a book club, craft club, lunch bunch and more!"

Military life can involve frequent relocations, deployments and career adjustments. How does the organization help spouses navigate those experiences, build friendships and establish a support system, particularly for those who are new to the area?

"I think each of our members gets something a little different from membership.

For me, spouses' club has always been a quick and easy way to get to know new people when we arrive at a new duty station. In addition to forging bonds of friendship between our members, we are also serving our military community both inside and outside the installation gates."

Is there a particular project, event, family, individual or experience that stands out as an example of the difference the organization hopes to make?

"Our annual cookie drive is probably the biggest tradition we have.

We are coordinating with our club members and citizens in Sumter to bring some holiday cheer to our airmen who are here on their own. Those living in the barracks are usually newer to service, and this may be their first holiday away from home. This is a tradition that I think is unique to Sumter and Shaw AFB!"

As the holidays approach, is there any message you'd like to share with the community about the club's upcoming events and/or also the importance of connection and supporting one another?

"You can join SSC at any time of year!

Our cookie drive is Dec. 15, and our annual charity auction is Feb. 20, 2027.

The winter holidays are a time that are about spreading light and warmth to those around you whether you are surrounded by the same people every year or if you're in a new place with new people. Spread the joy where you can!"

For more on Shaw Spouses' Club, visit www.shawspousesclub.com, follow them at ShawSC on Facebook or @shawspousesclub on Instagram.

Holiday baking can go beyond cookies



Baked goods and the holiday season go hand in hand. Many families incorporate baking into their holiday season traditions. There's no limit to the treats that can be baked come the holiday season, but families who want to offer something less traditional, but equally delicious, can try this recipe for "Pecan Brownies With Icing Sugar" from Lines+Angles.

Pecan Brownies With Icing Sugar

12 ounces plain dark chocolate, 70 percent cocoa solids
9 ounces butter
3 large eggs
9 ounces dark brown sugar
2 ounces flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
5 ounces chopped pecan nuts

To decorate:
Icing sugar

1. Heat the oven to 325 F. Grease a 7" x 11" rectangular baking dish and line the base with non-stick baking paper.
2. Put the chocolate and butter in a pan and heat gently, stirring until melted. Allow to cool slightly.
3. Whisk the eggs in a mixing bowl until pale and frothy, then add the sugar, a spoonful at a time, whisking until thick and glossy.
4. Gently fold in the melted chocolate mixture. Sift in the flour and baking powder and fold in with the pecan nuts.
5. Spoon the mixture into the baking dish, level with the back of a spoon and bake for 40 minutes, until the top has a cracked appearance and the center is still a little soft to the touch. Do not overbake, or you will lose the famous sticky brownie texture. Cool in the pan.
6. Cut into slices and sift over a little icing sugar.

How to stay within budget when hosting for the holidays



Family and friends are a big part of the holiday season. Countless people reunite with family and friends between late November and early January, and many even host loved ones during this festive time of year.

Hosting loved ones during the holiday season can fill a home with love and laughter. Hosting can save guests the cost of staying in a hotel, but it can put a strain on hosts' finances at a point in the year when budgets may already be stretched thin. Thankfully, there are many ways to stay within budget when hosting for the holidays.

• Trim the guest list. Rising food costs have been a topic of discussion for much of the year, so hosts can anticipate spending more to feed their guests in 2026. The Economic Research Service reports that food-at-home costs increased by roughly 3 percent between June 2025 and June 2026, and the cost of holiday season staples like beef and veal experienced particularly large price swings. The ERS also notes that food prices tend to spike each December due to increased demand. Hosts can combat rising food costs by trimming their guest lists to include only family and close friends.

• Shop in advance. While food costs tend to spike in December, many holiday season staples can be purchased in advance and frozen. Beef, chicken, veal, and other main courses can be purchased prior to December and stored in the freezer. This can help hosts avoid rising food costs and also offers a way to spread out hosting-related costs so hosts are not spending extra money on food during a time of year when they also need to shop for gifts and possibly even spend on travel.

• Request that guests help to share the cost. Hosts may handle the cooking, but that does not mean they need to provide everything. Ask guests to bring snacks, desserts, and beverages. Sharing food and beverage responsibilities saves hosts money and many guests would love to pitch in.

• Simplify at the bar. Alcohol prices do not necessarily experience the same dramatic spike in cost as food come the holiday season. But spirits can still be expensive, and prices can always rise. When planning the drinks menu for a holiday party, hosts can emphasize simple and less expensive beverages like beer and wine. Cocktails might be a go-to for some people, but they often require multiple ingredients in addition to the more costly spirits like whiskey and vodka.

Hosting for the holidays can make the season more fun but also more expensive for hosts. These strategies and more can help hosts stay on budget this December.





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