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magazine

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Letter from the Publisher



Take time to travel, relax and seek adventure

Whether it's a walk in a local national forest, a trip to the beach or a vacation across the country or around the world, travel is intriguing to most people. For most, the human spirit craves adventure.

We're inspired and intrigued by some of the stories of adventure in this issue of Currents, and we hope you can find a certain level of amazement here also.

Kate Herndon, a free spirit from Lake City, fascinates us. Her documented travels around the world are mind-boggling. She has seen a lifetime of amazing places, people and things on several continents and she's only 26. She's a believer in bootstrap travel, meaning she travels light and by frugal means to see as much as she can during her quick trips.

We share her story here because it is amazing and inspiring.

Are you aware of the Driftwood Boneyard on Big Talbot Island north of Jacksonville? Big Talbot often gets overlooked. It never sees the crowds of Amelia Island or of the Jacksonville beaches, but offers unique vistas, peace and tranquility.

We found the state's champion live oak tree in Gainesville and spent time with the giant, just gazing and taking in the grandeur of the ages beneath the ancient canopy. As the light changed, our friend John Stokes was able to capture the personality of the behemoth and listen to the heartbeat of nature's age in the shared moment.

On the pages ahead there are some helpful early-summer gardening tips and other features to entertain. We thank you for picking up a copy of Currents, Lake City's original magazine, and choosing to spend time with us.

We hope you find as much adventure, inspiration and enjoyment in reading these stories and absorbing the beautiful photography as we did gathering and producing this magazine issue for you.

We're here for you and we appreciate our readers. Let us hear from you with your story ideas and comments. Send an email to currents@lakecityreporter.com.

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ON THE COVER



Lake City hair and makeup artist and world traveler Kate Herndon climbs up the Haiku Stairs, also known as the "Stairway to Heaven" while traveling in Hawaii.

COURTESY KATE HERNDON

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Louis Galban opened Mima's 1940 in February to bring "a little bit of spice" to North Central Florida.

Lake City's Hidden Gem

Mima's 1940 brings exotic flavors to North Central Florida.

Story and photos by KATRINA POGGIO

The smell of exotic spices filled the air at Mima's 1940 as chef Luis Galban worked his magic at the stove. Like an orchestra conductor creating a symphony of flavors, he whipped up a dish of curry calamari, the special of the day at the Caribbean-inspired restaurant, tucked away on a Lake City street corner.

Galban opened Mima's 1940 in February to bring authentic tropical tastes and homestyle hospitality to rural North Florida.

"I felt the town needed a little bit of spice," he said.

In an area not known for its global cuisine, Galban has brought a little bit of island life to the people of Lake City. His dishes transport diners to different parts of the world thanks to their varieties of flavor.

On any given day, he's mixing unique flavors in the kitchen. He takes traditional dishes like grilled chicken and steak sandwiches and transforms them into gourmet meals with the addition of island flavors like pineapple and red wine jelly.

The impromptu style is part of his ever-changing menu.

Based on the freshest ingredients available and raw inspiration, the daily specials and monthly menu always offer customers a new experience. It's non-traditional, but he's received a positive response from the regulars.

"Whatever I make for the day, they eat," he said contently.

Galban is drawn to the spontaneous and artistic culture ingrained into cooking, but when he first moved to Lake City about a year ago, he was discouraged his vision would not fit in.

Despite this, he could not part with his passion of more than 20 years.

"I couldn't put all that away in a box and stick it in the attic," he said. "Too many years, too many recipes, too many trials to just put it away in a box and tuck it away and just forget about it."

Determined to make his mark and develop the culinary community, he opened the restaurant as a hub for bringing the island flavors to the Gateway to Florida. But insists on doing it with his own flare.

"Whatever you do, it's your chance to be creative and explore," Galban said.

Adding Heart

When a customer walks through the door of Mima's 1940, Galban warmly greets them and introduces them to the menu. Getting to know everyone who sits down at the restaurant and making them feel at home is what separates mom and pop businesses from commercial restaurants.

"I go out of my way to make our guests feel comfortable," he said.

Appreciative that someone wants to try his food, Galban takes customer service seriously. That's why the fresh baked dessert is always complimentary – it's a free token of his gratitude.





Luis Galban poses with his wife Joanna Galban at their restaurant, Mima's 1940. The restaurant is named after Galban's mother who would teach him how to use various spices in her traditional Cuban dishes.

Before he even begins cooking, he searches for the freshest and finest ingredients close to home. Buying local ingredients is one of his core values in running the restaurant, but that is not always the case in the industry.

Galban remembers when he first opened up and a purveyor offered him soup in a bag. Restaurant supply providers make things simple for businesses, but quality gets lost.

"Soups are already made, onions are already cut, sauces are made," Galban said. "And I believe that takes away the fun, the excitement of this job."

Instead, he buys from people who are knowledgeable about what they are selling in the store. He supports businesses, like KC's Produce and Nettles Sausage, right in Lake City.

"You create a relationship," he said.

Handpicking his ingredients from specialized locations adds to the dishes he prepares. Understanding the product makes someone a better chef, he said.

"I just enjoy going out and picking my own stuff, seeing my own stuff. That's how I was brought up. That's how I was taught how to cook."

Early Beginnings

Choosing ingredients at 10 years of age was Galban's first introduction

to culinary. He remembers running to the small, New Jersey neighborhood corner store with his mother's grocery list.

In the kitchen, his mom would teach him how to use various spices in her traditional Cuban dishes. Food was a way she served her community, often feeding the homeless right out of their home.

Galban named the restaurant as a tribute to her. The year 1940 was when she was born and he called her "Mima." Now he keeps a photo of his mother placed on his computer screen at the restaurant.

When his mom sparked a love for food within him, his culinary journey began.

"At a young age I was attracted to the kitchen and that's the direction I went in," Galban said.

He almost went to culinary school, but learned the tricks of the trade through hands-on experience instead.

In 1994, an Italian man started mentoring Galban in Fort Lauderdale, a city in South Florida that holds onto its flourishing culinary scene.

"That's where my heart is," he said.

For 19 years he worked for a catering company and restaurant learning every aspect of the food industry from how to provide premiere ser-

vice to how to hold a knife.

As he moved from one station to the next, he learned the oven, fryer, flat top, dish pit, salads and desserts. He also picked up on different techniques used in cooking around the world.

Eventually he branched off and bought a food truck for a while.

Now he knows a wide variety of global cuisine, like French, Italian and even Thai. He enjoys pulling from different influences to create his own twist on tradition.

"That's why my menu is so unique," Galban said. "It's not just basic stuff. It has to be different."

It's this creativity that energizes him every morning and he wants to use it as a platform to support the community.

Giving Back

Understanding ingredients, knowing how to hold a knife and creating outstanding customer service are all part of the business.

"There's different skills behind cooking so you can make it better," he said.

Learning skills in the kitchen kept him off the street growing up and now he wants to use cooking as a way to give.

After struggling to find professional help to staff his restaurant, he saw an opportunity to step into a

Mima's 1940 is located at 2668 NE Bascom Norris Drive in Lake City at the intersection of U.S. 90 East at the railroad tracks.



mentorship role. He wants to help teach those who share his same ambition and passion.

He has already begun helping through fundraisers and cooking classes.

"We're small, but there's always something you can do," he said.

Supermarkets, bakeries and restaurants nationwide waste food on a daily basis. Galban wants to help the hungry. It goes a long way.

"It makes them feel like somebody does care about them," he said.

Too often people do not help those who need it most.

"You shouldn't deny them a plate of food," he said. "I think that's very important."

Galban sees even more growth on the horizon. Eventually he wants to open another location that focuses on fine dining.

"That's where I see myself. Having this and having the other one going and just bringing the different unique flavors to the city," he said.

His heart is full of love for the industry and he is excited to continue sharing it with those who are willing to try something new.

"We've accomplished so much here," Galban said. "And I've got a lot more things coming up for this city."

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Yours FOR THE Picking

**Rogers Farm welcomes visitors
with U-pick strawberries.**

Story and photos by KAYLA LOKEINSKY



While walking through the fields of strawberries at Rogers Farm, the air is filled with their sweetness. Rows and rows of berries line the ground, as pickers bend over each plant, searching for the reddest, most perfect strawberry. At Rogers, there's no need for grocery carts or roaming the store aisles; all you need is a bucket.

Rogers Farm, a U-pick strawberry farm tucked away on 1,000 acres of farmland between Gainesville and LaCrosse, welcomes visitors to grab a bucket and pick their own produce. Between mid-March and mid-May, the strawberries are plentiful at Rogers Farm, and they're yours for the picking.

The process is simple: once you arrive at Rogers Farm, you can pick up your bucket and take it out to the strawberry field. Then, walk down the rows and fill your buckets to the brim. The berries are just \$1.50 per pound, making them less expensive than strawberries you'd buy at the store.

By cutting out the middle man, Rogers Farm makes sure there's nothing between you and your strawberries.

According to Earline Rogers, the wife of Rogers Farm owner Larry Rogers, the strawberries you pick fresh are much better than the ones that are sold in stores.

"You can pick them red out here," Earline said. "When you go to the grocery store, they pick them green, then they're shipped for like four or five days, so they're a week old when you get them. Plus, they were picked green. It makes a difference in the taste. That's the reason berries don't taste good in the grocery store. That's the difference."

With the Rogers' strawberries, you can definitely taste the difference. They're red all the way to the core and packed with that sweet strawberry flavor. No nonsense, no artificial preservatives, just strawberries.

A Family Business

Three generations of Rogers have worked on the family farm. They have been selling produce at their main location on the corner of SR 121 and NW 156 Ave for over 35 years.

Larry Rogers bought the land back in 1970. Farming is in his blood, and Larry is a fourth-generation farmer.

"My granddaddy farmed, my

🍓 MY GRANDDADDY FARMED,
MY DADDY FARMED, HELL I RECKON
IT WENT BACK TO MY GREAT-
GRANDDADDY. 🍓

— LARRY ROGERS, owner



Rogers Farm owner Larry Rogers (right) poses with his wife Earline Rogers and his son Greg Rogers in their U-pick strawberry field. Three generations of Rogers have worked on the farm.

daddy farmed, hell I reckon it went back to my great-granddaddy,” Larry said.

Larry works on the farm along with his wife Earline, who helps run the farm’s store and takes care of ordering products, and his son Greg, who grows fall peas.

According to Larry, Rogers Farm started growing strawberries in about 1980, and ever since they have continued to add more produce to their family business.

“After that then we started with a few peas and it just kept growing, and now we got probably 400 to 500 acres of peas, 200 to 300 acres of butter beans, it varies from year to year,” Larry said.

Larry had toyed around with the idea of growing blueberries, another popular U-pick fruit, but Earline nipped the idea in the bud.

“Larry wanted to put in blueberries and I said, ‘If you do you can have that counter,’” Earline said while pointing to the sales counter she sometimes works behind. “He said, ‘Why?’ and I said blueberries are in when peas are in to. I said we are loaded that time of year with peas.”

Bursting With Berries

The Rogers seem to be doing just fine by offering U-pick strawberries. According to Larry, on any given Saturday during strawberry season you can find up to 500 people out in the fields picking berries.

Earline says that one of her favorite things about the U-pick farm is being able to interact with all the people who come out to go strawberry picking.

Some visitors can be seen walking away with two or three buckets full of fresh, ripe strawberries. Being able to walk among the rows and rows of beautiful, non-GMO berries and handpick the ones you want is just as fun as getting to eat the berries when you’re done.

However, if you don’t want to pick your own strawberries, Rogers Farm sells them by the carton or the pallet, fresh and ready to be baked into a cake, turned into jam or eaten right from the box.



Rogers Farm has U-pick or we-pick strawberries available starting in mid-March. Visitors can grab a bucket and pick their own berries, or pick up a pallet or carton that’s already been picked.

Fresh Fruits and Veggies

Rogers Farm is so much more than your regular U-pick strawberry farm. They also sell nearly 20 other types of fresh fruits and vegetables, including some that are hard to come by in North-Central Florida.

Besides strawberries, Rogers Farm also grows and sells tomatoes, cabbage, green onions, okra, eggplant, green peppers, watermelons, cantaloupes and peanuts. Starting in April, green beans, roman bush beans, pickling cucumbers and yellow squash are available.

Then starting June 1, it's time for corn, peas and beans. Rogers farm has a wide variety of these vegetables. They have white acre, black eye, pinkeye, purple hull, white butter and zipper cream peas; cranberry, green butter, ford hook and speckled butter beans; silver queen and bi-colored corn.

Their outdoor store, located right on the farm property, also sells a variety of locally-made honey, jelly and jams.

Besides offering fresh, delicious produce, Rogers Farm also hosts its annual Octoberfest, a family-friendly fall event that is packed with visitors each year.

From October 1 to October 30, Rogers Farm turns into a Fall wonderland. The Rogers Farm Octoberfest main attraction is a 12-acre corn maze with a theme and maps to help you along your journey. Other activities include hay rides, a petting zoo, pony rides, duck races, a spook trail and more.

According to Earline, at the last Octoberfest the Rogers had over 5,200 kids come on field trips.

It's these community events and interactive atmosphere that makes Rogers Farm a great family-friendly destination. Located less than 40 minutes from the heart of downtown Lake City, it's the perfect place to go and get the best strawberries in the area.

For more information on Rogers Farm, or to place an order, call (386) 462-2406 or visit www.rogersfarmfl.com.



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Time Flies



Lake City RC Flying Club combines new technology with beloved pastime.

By CARL MCKINNEY | Photos by KATRINA POGGIO

Charles Artley remembers building his first model plane as a child, back when the kits contained nothing more than a pile of sticks and some instructions.

“It was like putting a puzzle together,” Artley said.

That was a far cry from the sophisticated RC aircrafts now being flown by the new generation of talented pilots at the Lake City RC Flying Club. RC planes are currently more technologically-advanced than ever before. They are bigger, flashier and the sport of racing RC planes is becoming more and more popular.

The Lake City RC flying club was founded over 20 years ago, and since then it has grown to roughly 40 members. A mix of teenagers, young adults and pilots over 40, the members have



Gracelyn Arnold, left, 13, and Avery Thornton, 15, navigate the skies with their RC airplanes during the Lake City RC Flying Club Spring Fun Fly event.

formed a tight bond with each other as they spend their weekends taking to the sky.

"It's more like a family," club vice president Norman Green said. "Our friendship goes beyond flying."

Getting Their Start

Some members of the Lake City RC Flying Club have been flying model airplanes long before they came equipped with engines and remote controls.

For example, Artley, 74, has been a model-plane enthusiast ever since he received his first kit as a present from his father.

As basic as it was, the aircraft was a step up from the paper planes his dad flew.

Artley, the club's secretary, learned about aerodynamics, cutting each piece to the proper specifications and making sure everything fit.

"You actually had to shape and create parts," Artley said. "You had to learn to make things work."

When Artley upgraded to his first RC plane in 1960, the technology at the time gave pilots limited control over the planes, only allowing them to steer the rudders.

Now, the radios are miniature computers and lighter planes pack much more power than they used to. The small flying machines are controlled remotely by an operator on the ground using a hand-held radio transmitter. This is a big step from the wooden model airplanes that first came out.

But it's not just the aircraft that have evolved, Artley said.

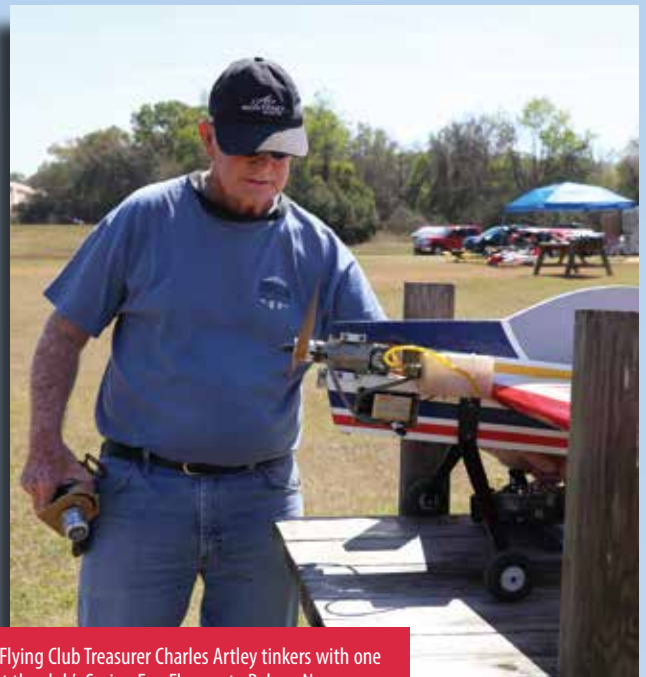
Since joining the Lake City RC Flying Club, Artley has noticed the younger pilots of today are also much better than they used to be.

With razor-sharp reflexes honed by video games and flight simulators, Artley said, the youngsters have raised the hobby's skill ceiling.

"If you saw what kind of maneuvers they could make, real airplanes couldn't even do that," Artley said.

Green, who joined the group after a 19-year hiatus from flying, was greeted by many fresh faces in the airfield.

He taught some of the newcomers the basics, but the students quickly surpassed the masters.



Above: Lake City RC Flying Club Treasurer Charles Artley tinkers with one of the RC airplanes at the club's Spring Fun Fly event. Below: Norman Green (left) helps his stepdaughter Gracelyn Arnold with her RC airplane. "My stepdaughter is 13 and she can fly better than I can," Green said.



“Their performance has improved from what it was 20 years ago,” he said. “They can do a lot more with the airplanes than we can.”

“My stepdaughter is 13, and she can fly better than I can,” Green added.

High Tech

Technological improvements have played a large part allowing novices to learn faster, said Curtis McCallister, 45, club president.

Modern foam aircrafts are more durable than older wooden ones, meaning pilots can practice riskier maneuvers without fear of destroying expensive equipment.

“They can push the aircraft harder,” McCallister said. “That really accelerates the learning curve.”

When McCallister was young, it would have taken months to build a new model from scratch.

Now, should there be an accident, a foam model can be patched up that same day.

“They hit the ground, it’s not a total loss,” he added.

Many of the veteran members go to the club’s field on 1963 SW Bascom Norris Drive just to watch eager young pilots test their limits, Green said.

There’s a calming effect to flying an RC plane, Green said.

“It’s just you and the airplane,” he said. “You just block out the outside world, and for 10 minutes, you’re not worried about anything but that airplane,” he said.

Few hobbyists still build their own aircraft, McCallister added. Most now opt for ready-to-fly or almost-ready-



Brandon Stephens, 17, practices flying his RC airplane during the Lake City RC Flying Club Spring Fun Fly

to-fly kits.

That makes RC flying more accessible to newcomers, but there’s enough challenge to keep it interesting, McCallister said.

“You’re always in competition with yourself,” he added. “Did I fly that maneuver better today than I did yesterday?”

In some ways, flying an RC plane is harder than flying the real thing, Artley said.

“Anybody that’s flying a real airplane, they’re always going for-

ward,” he said. “Right is right, left is left, up is up.”

The club, which generally meets on the weekend, hosts several “fun fly” events per year, Artley said.

Some pilots get creative with their aircraft, Artley said. He’s seen a flying doghouse with Snoopy on top, a flying lawnmower and a flying boat.

By combining a beloved pastime with the technology and creativity of the future, the Lake City RC Flying Club is bonding generations through their love for flying.

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Helping You Make the Transition

CARETENDERS OF LAKE CITY HAS A VARIETY OF SERVICES THAT AID SENIORS IN MAKING A LIFESTYLE CHANGE.

The life changes that come with age can be at once mystifying and frightening. Whether it's something as minor as new glasses or as major as a move to assisted living, Seniors are often concerned that lifestyle adjustments can lead to lack of independence. Thankfully, Mederi Caretenders of Gainesville has a variety of programs aimed at answering questions and easing the transitions that Seniors face.

"As with anyone, when a senior is faced with one or more major life changes - such as a move to an assisted living community where they're changing their lifestyle to accommodate some limitation, or they lose a loved one - this can be very scary and overwhelming and can possibly lead to decline in physical and/or mental health," said Susan Swirbul, a patient care liaison at Caretenders.

Caretenders has a variety of services specifically designed for clients undergoing a stressful period of change. These Seniors might be experiencing new limitations on mobility, cognitive deficits, effects of medication or other challenges that necessitate a change in lifestyle. When combined with declining overall health and other factors, clients can easily become depressed and feel as if they are losing control of their lives.

One such service, the Transitional Care Program, assists in a Senior's transition to an assisted living facility. A physician's order is placed for a comprehensive geriatric needs assessment, which is conducted by a nurse who

is thoroughly trained to identify the imminent needs of the patient.

Once the client is settled in, the program professionals help manage medical needs and communicate with families, assisted living staff and other people involved with the client's care. The program includes a team of psychiatric and medical nurses, therapists and social workers, all of whom have extensive experience and training in working with Seniors in transition.

For patients dealing with loss of mobility or cognitive abilities, Caretenders provides occupational therapists to help them re-learn and perform everyday tasks. They can also ensure that Seniors are using medical equipment correctly - for example, they can demonstrate proper positioning in a wheelchair.

All of these changes can take their toll on a Senior's morale. Psychiatric nurses provide emotional support and teach clients how to deal with their feelings of frustration and helplessness. They also partner with other Caretenders professionals to provide education and moral support to caregivers, as they play a crucial role in a Senior's outlook on life.

"Having an expert team of Caretenders clinicians that specialize in working with senior adults needing transitional support can help seniors sustain good health by incorporating proven techniques, like thorough mental/physical assessments, support counseling and engagement in meaningful activity," said Swirbul.



"I wondered if my family could manage all the care I needed after leaving the hospital."



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TRAVELS

with kate

Lake City's world traveler sees the world with a free spirit on a tight schedule and a tighter budget.

By KAYLA LOKEINSKY (Photos courtesy of Kate Herndon)

From cliff jumping in New Zealand to chasing the Northern Lights in Iceland, Kate Herndon has lived a life full of adventure. At just 26 years old, she has seen parts of the world that most people have only dreamed about. Her desire to explore the unknown and create lasting memories has prompted this Lake City girl to spread her wings and travel the globe.



● **MANHATTAN SKYLINE, NYC**

She has hiked forbidden trails in Hawaii, explored hidden waterfalls in Costa Rica and snowboarded down mountains in Jackson Hole, Wyo. When it comes to seeing the world, Herndon has no fear.

“You’ll never know what you’re missing until you break that fear,” Herndon said. “I think if you truly have a passion to go and see the world, fear is not going to be something you allow to hold you back. You are the only thing standing between where you are and where you want to be.”

This fall, she will be accomplishing another major feat: climbing a portion of Mount Everest, the world’s tallest mountain. In September, Herndon will travel to Nepal to do the Everest Base Camp Trek. While she won’t be climbing all the way to the 29,028-foot summit, the base camp has an elevation of more than 17,000 feet above sea level. As daunting as it may seem to climb the tallest mountain in the world, Herndon can hardly wait.

“I start training soon and I don’t think I have ever been more excited,” Herndon said.

For Herndon, traveling isn’t about going on luxury vacations, but about the life-enriching experiences she has along the way. She is frequently asked how she can afford to travel so much, and it’s her meticulous planning and prioritizing of what she wants out of a trip that allows her to travel on a budget.

“I don’t look at traveling as a vacation,” Herndon said. “Whenever I’m going places it’s not to stay at five-star hotels and wine and dine myself with fancy restaurants and high prices. That’s not what I’m looking for. I’m looking to experience the culture and learn about how people live there and just meet people and connect with people who have the same interests. Whenever you’re doing that you can do it very affordably.”



● **SKÓGOFOSS FALLS, ICELAND**

● **BLACK SAND BEACH, ICELAND**

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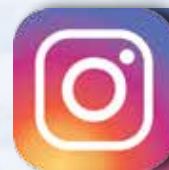
in Lake City and also does hair and makeup for weddings on the weekends. She has a husband, Matt, and a social life. So between all of that, how does she manage to find time to take trips around the world?

The answer is she travels when she can and tries to pack in as much as possible into her short trips. She keeps an on-going list of places she wants to visit, and when she sees an opening in her schedule, she goes for it.

“My work schedule is extremely demanding and unpredictable,” Herndon said. “Depending on how long I am able to be away at that specific time is when I’ll decide what a feasible distance is to go and I will plan accordingly. I like to have multiple things on my list to do for one area so I can really maximize my exploring while I’m there.”

How Does She Do It?

Herndon has a slam-packed schedule. She works full-time as a hair and makeup artist at Hair Graphics



To stay updated on Kate’s travels, follow her on Instagram (@katec08). For more travel tips from Kate you can also visit her blog, www.label-lavitabykate.blogspot.com.



new zealand

While she does like to revisit places, she doesn't like to repeat vacations. For her, there's nothing worse than coming home from a trip and realizing she missed something she really wanted to see. So, she tries to see as much as she can in the time she has.

"It might sound like there is no method to the madness, but I have found that is what works best for me," Herndon said.

Once she decides where she wants to go, she starts planning. While most people find the endless details that come along with planning a vacation downright terrifying, Herndon thrives off of them.

"Most people think of travel as a stress or that it's too much work but I actually find enjoyment in the planning and finding the deals and doing it affordably," Herndon said. "It's just a stress relief for me. It's an outlet and I love it."

Booking a vacation doesn't have to be expensive if you do a little research. Staying in AirBnB's instead of hotels, opting out of checking bags while flying and booking flights that leave at absurd hours are just a few of the ways that Herndon saves money while traveling.

"It really depends on the person," Herndon said. "If you're looking to go away and experience these really fancy hotels and try wines and stuff like that it's going to be more expensive. But, if you're going to travel to connect with people and experience the culture and just get out and become educated in the world it won't be. It's a choice."

By making frugal choices for herself, Herndon is able to see more of the world. She was able to do a four-day solo trip to New York for under \$400, making it one of her most inexpensive trips she's ever taken.

"I am always very frugal when it comes to my travels," Herndon said. "It's a lifestyle that I want to continue not a luxury that I only do once a year."

Herndon's choice is usually to focus on the journey itself rather than where she'll be laying her head at night. That's why she's so picky about who she travels with. While she travels with her husband about 75 percent of the time, she usually chooses to travel solo when he isn't able to make it.

"I am extremely picky about who I will travel with, only because I've learned that my idea of vacations are very different from that of everyone else," Herndon said. "I'm more of a 100 miles-per-hour, non-stop, 'you can sleep when you're dead' kind of girl. I don't even consider my traveling to be 'vacations.' They are definitely adventures. They don't consist of fancy hotels or expensive meals. I'm usually living out of a backpack, sleeping in the car and running on very little sleep. Anything to make it happen."

By taking shorter trips packed with adventures, Herndon optimizes her time and is able to have as much of an experience as she can without having to miss a lot of work. By making sure to make the most of her trips, she is able to experience a lot in a short amount of



● MILFORD SOUND • LAKE TEKAPO • MOUNT COOK, NEW ZEALAND

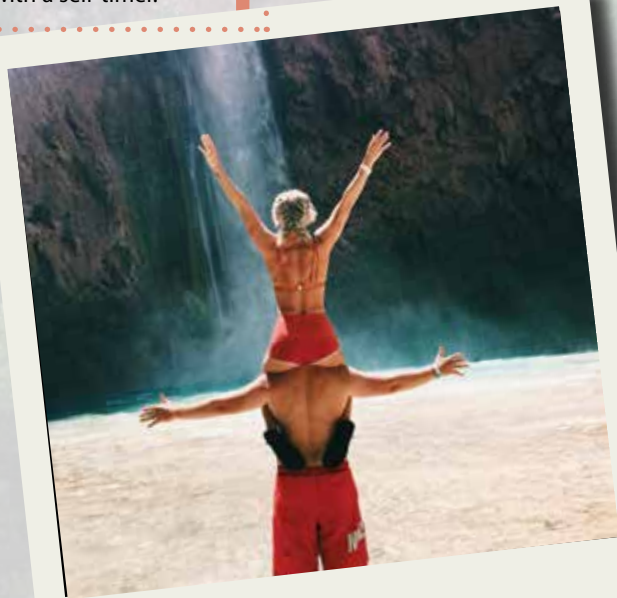


How Kate gets those amazing photos

When traveling on your own or with one other person, it's difficult to get photos of yourself or the two of you together. Over her years of traveling, Kate has become a pro at getting those gorgeous shots.

When she travels with her husband, he usually takes pictures of her and she takes pictures of him. However, if she's traveling on her own, or wants a picture of her and Matt together, she uses a tripod and the self-timer on her camera to get the shot.

"I'm a pro at setting up the self-timer and running in front of the camera," Kate said. "You'd be surprised how many photos of us are done on a tripod with a self-timer."



arizona

time.

"If there is one thing that traveling has taught me, it's to break the mold when it comes to what most people think 'travel' consists of," Herndon said. "I'm a pro at maximizing a three-day weekend. I've accomplished more in that short period of time than most people ever think possible. I've left the country, hiked 11 miles, then turned around and flew all the way back. It's truly about perspective. After all, to everyone else it was 'just another weekend.'"

World Traveler

Herndon has traveled all over the United States as well as overseas to Central America, Europe and New Zealand. Out of all the places she has been, it was her experience in New Zealand last year that has stuck with her the most.

"It was one of the top places on my bucket list for so long and experiencing it for the first time was incredible," Herndon said. "We went during the winter months and loved absolutely everything about it. The scenery, the culture, it truly is just the nonstop adrenaline-junkie's dream. I couldn't have asked for a better trip."

While in New Zealand, Herndon jumped off Shooter Canyon Swing, the world's highest cliff jump. While she sat strapped into a chair attached to a bungee cord, dangling over the canyon below, she experienced the most adrenalin-rushing moment in her life. Plummeting from a cliff that's 358 feet high is something that will be etched into her memory forever.

"It was all one giant blur of adrenaline," Herndon said. "I do remember the second it was over I wanted to do it again."

Herndon has shared a lot of her favorite travel memories with her husband Matt. Although he didn't do the cliff jump with her in New Zealand, together they hiked to Havasu Falls in Arizona. It was their first hike together, and a hike that she had been wanting to do for years. She didn't tell him how far the hike was, and the two embarked on the 22-mile trek and were met with some unexpected challenges.

"We started at 4 a.m. on the hike that was illegal and clearly stated no day trips," Herndon said. "Long story short, we ended up running out of food and water in the middle of the desert with heat temps unlike any other and blisters that covered the entire bottoms of our feet."

They were able to make it through the hike and come back with a unique story to tell. Since then, they have been back and done the hike properly, over the course of three days, and decided they much prefer the legal route.

"Many of my adventures take place outdoors and with that most all of my stories have something to do with how I almost died in one way or another," Herndon said. "Praise God for my husband and our ability to laugh at each other when we end up in the most ridiculous situations."

Nearly getting stranded in the middle of the desert taught her to always do her research before going on a hike or excursion.



- HAVASUPAI, AZ (FACING PAGE SAME)
- MOONEY FALLS, AZ (POLAROID)



santorini, greece



“I think being prepared, that’s one thing I learned the hard way,” Herndon said. “When you think you’ve done enough research, do more research because what you read isn’t always how it is, so you want to be overly prepared.”

When Herndon travels, she always tries to do some sort of hike or outdoor adventure. She has even climbed the Haiku Stairs, also known as the “Stairway to Heaven,” in Hawaii. It’s one of the most extreme and beautiful hikes Hawaii has to offer, and it’s also illegal. It was made illegal 26 years ago after it was deemed “too dangerous for the public.” However, that doesn’t stop people like Kate from attempting the 3,922-stair climb daily.

“The trailhead is guarded and you will be fined if caught,” Herndon said. “We took a five-mile detour and began well before daylight to avoid running into authority. We also ended up climbing down the back side of the mountain to avoid being caught on our return. The stairs were extremely dangerous in multiple areas due to a combination of not being maintained and weather damage. I highly recommend doing plenty of research before you go, and take extreme caution.”

It’s these hikes and memories that she’s made with her husband and on her own that are the most rewarding to her. These are things that she has wanted to do her entire life, and she can check them off her bucket list.

“Reading so much about and doing so much research on something then finally being able to do it for yourself, there’s no other feeling like that really,” Herndon said.

In addition to making some beautiful memories that she will treasure forever, Herndon has also had some funny experiences happen to her while traveling abroad. Like the time she took her mom on a European cruise, and while in Europe she received an unexpected offer: a marriage proposal from a Greek man.

“I would say being proposed to would definitely be one of the funniest things that’s ever happened to me,” Herndon said. “He offered to buy me homes in different countries and I was like, “Is this guy serious?”

Where To Next?

Herndon is constantly planning and researching where she will travel to next. After her trip to Nepal coming up in September, she will be traveling to Thailand in November. From there, she hopes to continue checking countries off of her bucket list, including Japan, China, Argentina and Norway just to name a few.

“It’s funny because the second I mark something off my bucket list, I add two or three more things,” Herndon said. “It’s definitely a never-ending list.”

As far as long-term, Herndon wants to eventually have enough room in her work schedule to take her time while she travels.

“I don’t think people really realize how short my travels actually are,” Herndon said. “Very rarely do I ever go anywhere for longer than four or five days.”

While she loves her job and her clients and is grateful to be able to do something she loves, she wants to eventually be able to travel more without having to spread herself too thin to make it happen.

Traveling has changed Herndon’s mindset about life and people more than anything else.

“As a whole, it’s shaped me into the person I am,” Herndon said. “I’m very free-spirited I would say. It’s molded me into a different person.”

The best advice she can give someone who wants to travel is take the time to make it happen.

“Time literally is of the essence,” Herndon said. “You’re not going to get this time back [making time to travel] might not be convenient.

“You have to make it work,” Herndon said. “You have to be willing to fly at inconvenient times and work really late nights so you can make the time for it. I think if more people realized how much you can do when you just set your mind to it, more people can do it.”



● FRANCE (ABOVE) ● ICELAND (BELOW)



● PORTOFINO, ITALY (BELOW)



. . . DRIFTWOOD BONEYARD . . .

A HIDDEN Treasure

The Driftwood Boneyard near Jacksonville is a beach off the beaten path.

Story and photos by KATRINA POGGIO

Like a beach frozen in time, the shores of the Driftwood Boneyard on Big Talbot Island are filled with tree limbs and trunks that have been transformed by nature and turned into works of art. Located just outside Jacksonville, this secluded beach is unlike any one you've seen before.

The Driftwood Boneyard is home to salt-washed

live oak and cedar trees that have found their way to the sand over years of storms and erosion.

What you're left with is century-old trees that are almost skeletal in appearance, but still strong and mighty. The view of the beach covered in twisted limbs and trunks is breathtaking, and offers an experience you won't be able to get anywhere else in Florida.







The secluded beach has earned the name Driftwood Boneyard for the white and bone-like tree remains laying on the sand.

You won't find ice cream shops, high-rise condos and a swarm of tourists taking over the beach and cluttering your view here. You can enjoy this unique Florida beach in solitude. It's the perfect beach for someone who loves the sand and sea but hates the crowds that often linger there.

This slice of paradise is less than an hour and a half from Lake City. It is part of Big Talbot Island State Park, one of seven parks on Talbot Island just north of Jacksonville. It's not your usual tourist trap with shops on every corner. All you'll find here is the sand, the sea and the trees.

No Bones About It

While the pristine water of the Atlantic and the piles of sand are beautiful, it's the large pieces of trees and driftwood that make this beach on Big Talbot Island so stunning.

When walking onto the beach, it almost feels like you shouldn't even be there. Like it's a secret place, untouched by man, and you're unsure about whether your presence will disturb it.

Due to erosion, trees along the shore wither up and become driftwood, resulting in trusted limbs and loss of color.

Some of the fallen trees are large enough to climb on and lay across. A few are so big that you can't even reach the top of some of their limbs reaching towards the sun. Others are small and tangled together, creating a web of limbs. There are even one or two large pieces of driftwood that are completely alone, like pieces of art on display in a museum.

This off-the-radar spot is not the best for swimming because there are no lifeguards there, but it's perfect for exploring, relaxing and taking photos. It would make a great destination for engagement or family photos.



Off The Beaten Path

The entrance to the Driftwood Boneyard, also known as Boneyard Beach, is easy to miss. After driving past marshes, waterways and islands, you will see the Talbot Island signs on A1A. If you go over a bridge and suddenly find yourself driving around Amelia Island, you passed it.

Approaching the park on the coastal highway, you'll pass over multiple bridges with boat ramps on the side, a convenient area to launch a kayak or cast a fishing line. After passing the Little Talbot Island State Park sign, you'll drive up on the Bluff's Scenic Shoreline Picnic Area on the righthand side.

Now, nothing about this sign would indicate you're at a beach. In fact, you might even think you're in the wrong place. The picnic area surrounded by trees makes you feel like you're in the woods instead of on the coast. But trust us, you're right where you need to be.

There is no ranger station or guide checking in visitors. Just a self-service pay station asking for the \$3 entrance fee.

When walking onto the beach, it almost feels like you shouldn't even be there. Like **it's a secret place, untouched by man, and you're unsure about whether your presence will disturb it.**



Nothing about Driftwood Boneyard's entrance sign would indicate you're at a beach. The picnic area surrounded by trees makes you feel like you're in the woods instead of on the coast.





With just a dirt parking lot and some wooden picnic tables in view, you can hardly see the ocean. Through a small lookout point through the trees, you can see the large branches of the whitewashed trees and smell the salty air.

The Shoreline Access Trail, located at the picnic area, takes you through the maze of trees and after about a 10-minute trek, you are staring at the coastline.

The trail abruptly ends where the cliff drops off, and you are suddenly walking through soft, white sand. There is a slight drop and a path with a steep decline, but once you walk down it, you are right on the Nassau Sound looking out to the southernmost point of Amelia Island.

The beach is home to an abundance of wildlife, both on the shore and in the saltwater.

If you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of an Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin, which are often spotted there. From December to March you can also see Northern Atlantic Right Whales offshore.

If you walk the beach at low tide, small crabs can be seen crawling through the exposed, withered up tree roots. Critters also make homes within the barnacles that grow on the tree trunks closer to the ocean. Along the shoreline, egrets and Great Blue Herons wander through the shallows, searching for their next meal. Also keep your eyes open for clam, scallop, oyster and periwinkle shells. Visitors can collect shells as memorabilia, however, the protected driftwood must be left on the beach.

If you're looking for a beach that's off the beaten path, the Driftwood Boneyard is the perfect place to go. It will redefine what you think a beach should be, and help you realize what it could be.



WHERE WE'VE BEEN

The people of Lake City share photos from their worldwide adventures



new york city



iceland



antarctica



From the frozen shores of Antarctica to the sunny California coast, Lake City residents have left their footprints all over the world. Here are some snapshots and highlights from a few trips taken by the people of Lake City.

ICELAND

In February, Holly Frazier, Amy Francis and Kate Herndon decided to chase the Northern Lights while on their four-day girls' trip to Iceland. Throughout their adventures, the group stayed in quaint towns outside the capital of Reykjavik. They visited Höfn, Skógar and Selfoss as they went about their sightseeing route. Most of the time they were self-guided exploring, which took them to unique landscapes. Frazier, a wedding photographer, documented their trip on her blog, hollyfrazier.com, showcasing all the adventures the three friends had while exploring the new country.



ANTARCTICA

At the end of 2016, Lake City's Nick and Rupal Patel took a 19-day cruise that took them to some of the most incredible places in the world, including Antarctica, the South George Islands and the Falkland Islands. Patel and his wife went with some local friends, including Janak and Bhavna Patel, Sunil and Pravina Patel, and a couple from Jacksonville. They planned the trip about two years in advance, and saw countless types of wildlife and natural sites. Nick recommends the trip to anyone who has the time and resources to make it happen.

CALIFORNIA

In April, Emily Clark, a Lake City resident, made her way across the country to San Diego, California to attend her cousin's wedding. She spent the first half of the trip in Temecula wine country. She and her family hiked Walker Canyon and were able to experience the last spring wildflower blooms. Then, once in San Diego, they spent as much time on the coast as possible, visiting the stunning Sunset Cliffs, watching the newly-pupped sea lions and seals, and exploring Coronado Island, Balboa Park and other parts of downtown San Diego.



NEW YORK

Currents staff writer Taylor Gaines traveled on a plane that was New York bound this March to see the hit Broadway musical "Hamilton." He had been listening to the cast recording non-stop for about a year and had imagined seeing it so much it was like a memory. "It somehow exceeded my insanely high expectations," he said. "The whole show was just incredible. It's still hard to believe that we were actually in the room where it happens." "Hamilton" is often described as a hip-hop musical about America's founding father Alexander Hamilton. It won 11 Tony Awards in 2016, including best musical, best original score, and best actor in a musical for Leslie Odom, Jr., who played Aaron Burr for the first year of the show's run on Broadway. The cast recording is 46 songs and runs nearly two-and-a-half hours.

Taylor, whose family is originally from New York, is a frequent visitor to the city. While he was able to spend time with his family and see some of New York's best sites, it was seeing "Hamilton" on Broadway that was the highlight of his trip.



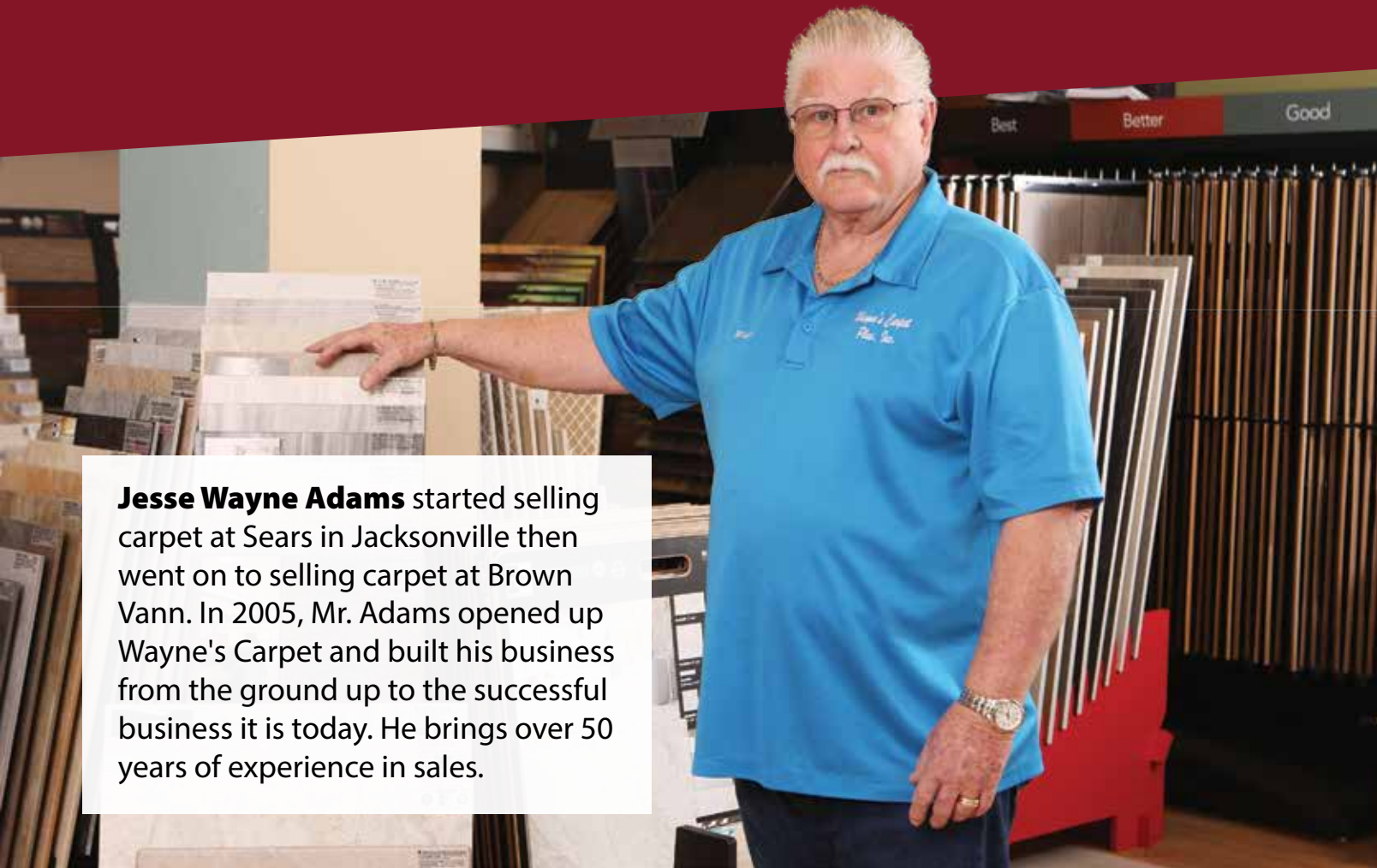
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• • • STRANGERS IN • • •
SAVANNAH



The Starland House, located in the Starland Art District in Savannah, is a fully-restored home that the owners turned into an Airbnb. The house has six Airbnb guest rooms and three shared bathrooms, and is within walking distance of many restaurants and coffee shops. It is about a mile outside of the Savannah Historic District. This room (above) in the Starland House is called "Belle's Boudoir" and is fully furnished with victorian furniture, including a vintage sewing machine and a French movie poster for Beauty and the Beast.

How we toured the streets of Savannah while staying in a stranger's home.

By KAYLA LOKEINSKY | Photos by KAYLA LOKEINSKY and KATRINA POGGIO

When we pictured ourselves on our girls weekend getaway, we never imagined we would be staying in a stranger's house, sleeping in their bed and eating their bagels for breakfast. Or that we would be sharing that house with people we had never met. But, that's exactly the experience we had while staying at an Airbnb rental in Savannah.

It felt like we were breaking into someone's home. We were using their towels and eating their food, but we never saw the people who actually owned the house. The homeowners were not there, but we were most certainly not alone.

In the four-bedroom, two-bathroom, 1920s Victorian house, only one room was ours. The other rooms were occupied by strangers. The thought of sharing a house with other people didn't phase us when we booked the Airbnb. After all, who cares about that when you're saving hundreds of dollars by not staying in a hotel. We didn't know what we had gotten ourselves into until we got to the house, walked up the stairs, and realized we would be having to share a bathroom and very thin walls with others.

The obvious questions rolled through our minds. Would running into them be awkward? What if we had to go to the bathroom and they were using it? What if we could hear what was going on in the next room? What were we thinking?

Airbnb Newbies

Savannah is one of the most beautiful cities in the country. With its rich history, beautiful greenery and abundance of things to do, places to eat, it's no wonder it's such a travel hot-spot.

But trying to stay at a hotel in the middle of the famed Historic District of Savannah is, to say the least, costly. One night at any given hotel could cost between \$200 to \$350 dollars. If you stay too far out of the downtown center, it's a pain to get back into the city every day.

However, Katrina and I were determined to see Savannah. But, as two young working girls, we wanted to travel to this famed city without breaking the bank. So, we decided to use Airbnb, an online marketplace where hosts can offer up their homes, apartments or vacation

rentals to travelers.

We booked Belle's Boudoir in the Starland House, a fully-restored Victorian home in the Starland Arts District. Located just a mile from the Historic District, the booking came with free parking, wireless internet, free bikes to use and complimentary breakfast (score!). Plus two nights at the Airbnb cost less than one night in a hotel in the Historic District. We couldn't pass it up.

When we got to the Starland House, we were the only ones there. The uneasy feeling of being in someone else's home was there as we tiptoed around the house, checking out the furniture, what was in the fridge and peeking around the corners to see if someone would pop out.

The room looked just like the photos, with Victorian furniture, clean towels and even a complimentary bottle of wine. In there, we were safe. It was once we opened the door and ventured into the main part of the home that we felt nervous.

We weren't in the house long before we left to get food. We had arrived late and wanted to rest up before a full day of exploring. So we went to bed early, and once we laid down, that's when we heard footsteps. I tensed up, like they could hear me breathing, as I waited and listened to see what the people would do next.

The walls in older houses such as this one don't have insulation, so you could basically hear everything happening in the next room. Every word and sound came though loud and clear. Everything. Luckily our hosts had supplied each room with earplugs to get us through the commotion.

Airbnb Tips and Tricks

Searching for an Airbnb is similar to looking for a hotel on a travel deal site like Travelocity or Trip Advisor. You just type in your destination, the dates of your trip and the number of guests then voila! A list of places shows up, giving you lots of options to choose from.

You can rent an entire home or apartment or just a room in a home. If you're traveling with a large group, Airbnb is a far better option than a hotel because you can have a whole home to yourselves at a much cheaper price.

Make sure to read the descriptions of the Airbnbs very carefully. Sometimes you may think you're getting a whole house to yourself, but you might only be getting a room. Also, watch for hidden fees like cleaning or parking fees.

Just like hotels, Airbnb prices change depending on the time of year and day of the week you're booking. So, if you have time during the week to travel, the rentals will be cheaper.

Always read the reviews of the hosts! A room may look beautiful in the photos, but people who have stayed there might be able to shed more light on the real situation of the place.



Even though we shared a house with other people during our weekend getaway, we never actually saw them. We only heard them. Our goal was to interact with them as little as possible, and since we were only at the Airbnb to sleep and shower, we were successful.

In fact, we hardly noticed anyone else was there. Except when we had to use the bathroom and one of the other guests was hogging it for 40 minutes. Besides that, staying with strangers wasn't as annoying as we thought it might be.

Exploring Savannah

The goal for this trip was to see as much of Savannah as possible in the two-day span we had there. We decided to book a trolley tour to take us around the city. It was the best idea we had during the trip. The hop-on, hop-off trolley tour came with free parking. So, we drove to the first stop, parked our car and rode the trolley around the city. It was perfect because we had a guide telling us all the historical information about everything we passed, but we were able to get off at the stops we knew we wanted to explore ourselves.

Our first stop was Forsyth Park. Hopping off the trolley, we stumbled on a small Farmer's Market, where we were able to see some local vendors and sample about 20 different types of pecans. When in Georgia, am I right?

Forsyth Park was buzzing with activity as the Savannah College of Art and Design was setting up for its Sidewalk Arts Festival. SCAD students, alumni and high school students created colorful chalk masterpieces on the sidewalk of the park. While we got there before the festival started, it was fun to see the sidewalk lined with colorful lanterns and students mixing their chalks.

We spent more than an hour roaming the grounds of the 30-acre park. Then, when we had our fill, we walked back to the trolley stop and traveled around to see more of Savannah's historic sites.

We got off the trolley again at City Market, a four-block, open-air market in the Historic District. We wandered around for hours, popping in and out of different local shops, and taking full-advantage of all the free samples the cookie and candy stores were giving out.

First, we found our way to the Savannah Bee Company, a gourmet honey and beauty supply store. We didn't go there for the lotion and lipgloss; we went there for the mead. The shop offered a mead sampling, where you could try different types of the alcoholic beverage, which is created by fermenting honey with water. Every one we tried was better than the next, and the small samples allowed us to have a taste without getting tipsy.

After more shopping and eating lunch, we traveled down to River Street, where we did more shopping, sampled chocolates and enjoyed the gorgeous Savannah day watching the boats roll in.

By this time, we had been wandering the streets of Savannah for six hours and needed a break. So, we rode the trolley back to where we parked our car and headed to our Airbnb to freshen up and rest before going back into the Historic District that night.

While we were resting, we heard our ambiguous fellow travelers come back to the house, and we of course hid in our room until we knew they were gone.

On The River

After getting all dolled up, we decided to venture back to River Street for dinner and to find some nightlife. It was then that we realized that taking the trolley was the way to go. Because the trolley didn't run at night, we decided to drive to River Street and find parking. 30 minutes of circling around and sitting in traffic later, we finally found a parking spot in a garage a couple blocks away.

Once we got down to River Street, we figured out why people

Top: Forsyth Park occupies 30 acres of the historic district of Savannah. The park's fountain was added in 1858. **Center:** City Market is one of Savannah's most popular areas. It is full of charm and packed with local shops and restaurants. One popular restaurant in City Market is Wet Willie's, a frozen-daiquiri bar and restaurant. Their food is tasty and they have dozens of daiquiris to choose from. **Left:** The Farmer's Market near Forsyth Park was loaded with local produce. **Bottom:** The Savannah Bee Company is a gourmet honey, health and beauty store that offers free samples of all their varieties of honey. They also offer samples of mead, an alcoholic drink of fermented honey and water. For \$7 you can have samples of their six different types of mead.

say to make a reservation everywhere you go in Savannah. Every single restaurant on River Street had at least a 45-minute wait. We walked up and down the street trying to find anywhere we could eat at right away. Finally we settled on Dockside Seafood, a local place with a classic menu that also served fried green tomatoes (Katrina refused to leave Savannah without eating them).

After that, we walked to Savannah Smiles Dueling Pianos. This late-night dueling piano saloon was full of hilarious comedians and piano players, who put on a stellar performance. The place was packed with all different kinds of people. From bachelorette parties to retirement parties to bridal parties; we even saw a bride and groom there right after their wedding. She was still wearing her wedding dress! The crowd was full of energy and everyone in the bar put their arms around each other while belting out Piano Man.

After a night out on the town, we went back to our Airbnb and called it a night. The next morning, we woke up and checked out of the room, meaning we just took all our stuff (including the free bottle of wine) and left the keys.

We decided to check out Jones Street, which is considered to be the prettiest street in Savannah and among the most appealing in the country. Its charm lies in the beautiful architecture of the homes and the overarching canopy of trees that lines the street. It was one of the most beautiful neighborhoods I had ever seen.

Afterwards we drove to The Ordinary Pub, a brunch spot that is anything but ordinary. From the street, all you can see is a door marked with their logo. It's easy to miss, in fact we walked right past it. But once we found it, we opened the door, walked downstairs and the space opened up into an eclectic underground restaurant. And the food was out of this world. Everything had a bacon weave on it. It was bacon woven into a beautiful square. I never thought bacon could look like art until I went here.

The Ordinary Pub serves "Man Brunch" as I like to call it. The food was big and full of meat, with vegan and vegetarian options also available. I got a club sandwich, while Katrina got the "Bacon Brunch Bowl," which was tater tots covered in sausage gravy, sausage, eggs, peppers, cheddar cheese and was topped with a bacon weave.

We left Savannah with full hearts, and even fuller stomachs.

Our experience in Savannah is one we will never forget. By staying in an Airbnb, we were able to save money and use it towards activities we wanted to do rather than where we would be staying. It was the best decision we could've made, and we would do it again in a heartbeat.



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Story and photos by TAYLOR GAINES



We live in the noisiest time in human history. We hate silence in our conversations. We struggle to go seconds without a screen or a speaker. We feel like time spent in silence is time being wasted.

We have forgotten our nature. We have forgotten that silence can be a good thing.

“Silence is not the absence of something, but the presence of everything,” says acoustic ecologist Gordon Hempton.

To understand what he’s talking about and reconnect with your true natures, a visit to Cedar Lakes Woods and Gardens in Williston is a must.



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The “presence of everything” is palpable there.

There’s a profound silence at Cedar Lakes Woods and Gardens. It’s not absolute, and not lacking in sound completely. But it feels like the way things are supposed to be. Everything comes into stronger focus there. The world makes a little more sense. It’s as if you’re seeing the world the way it was meant to be seen.

One of the most striking things about Cedar Lakes Woods and Gardens is its Japanese style. It seems out of place in North-Central Florida, but somehow, the garden full of koi ponds, torii gates, Japanese gazebos and a Japanese footbridge makes sense when you’re there. It’s a tiny piece of Japan just two hours away from Lake City, an oddly placed bit of paradise.

Cedar Lakes Woods and Gardens is a pretty well-kept secret despite its overwhelming beauty. If you come on a weekday, you might just have the whole place to yourself.

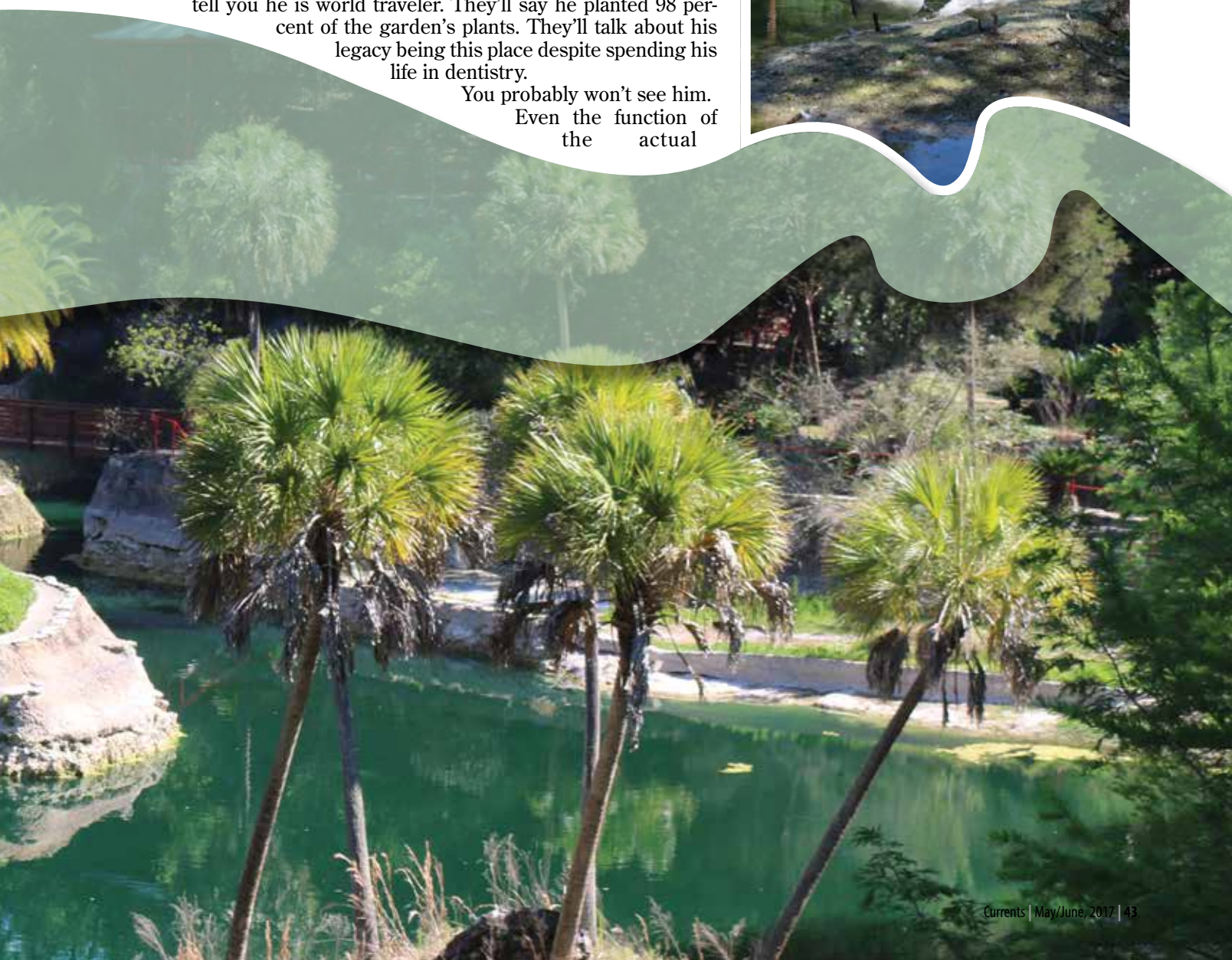
You’ll walk in and stop by the quaint and friendly welcome center. Then you’ll go around a dirt path, duck under some trees and the entire place will open up. There will be a bowl of sorts, a basin alive with palm trees, islands and wildlife all around. Spend as much time as you want there. Then stay a little longer. It’s worth it.

The place’s creator and former owner is Ray Webber. He’s a dentist who still lives on some property adjacent to the lakes, woods and gardens.

Webber is a mysterious and benevolent character to those who work at Cedar Lakes Woods and Gardens. People call him “eccentric.” They’ll tell you he is world traveler. They’ll say he planted 98 percent of the garden’s plants. They’ll talk about his legacy being this place despite spending his life in dentistry.

You probably won’t see him.

Even the function of
the actual





place is mysterious in the 21st century. There's no advertising budget most of the year. Word spreads about the lakes, woods and gardens through social media and word-of-mouth. This is why you might have the whole place to yourself.

The lakes, woods and gardens are a 20-acre portion of a 100-acre property. They are owned by Cedar Lakes Woods and Gardens Inc., a nonprofit charity that isn't solvent yet because everything goes back into the place running well. It's a full sanctuary, too.

It takes an hour-and-a-half to two hours to walk through every area of the lakes, woods and gardens, but you're doing yourself a disservice if you don't spend more time there.

Enjoy the view from Lookout Point. Relax in the hammock on Cabbage Palm Island. Sit down and eat lunch in Tim's Gazebo. Take a slow walk through the Japanese Gardens. There are dozens of landmarks to check out while you're there.

Tami Tucker, one of Cedar Lake's four full-time employees, says you are doing things wrong if you are in and out in two hours.

"That's code for 'slow down,'" she said.

Too often, we forget that the world didn't used to have all of the gadgets, screens and machines we have all grown so accustomed to. We forget what it means to sit and think. We forget what it means to be calm.

Take everything in. Stop, and look around. You might get to experience true silence, silence the way nature intended it. And you might just enjoy it.

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Thank you, thank you, thank you, Edward, Bo and Mr. Eugene for making this process a very easy and pleasant one for me. God bless. ”

– Jennifer “Cookie” Morton



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hooked

ON DIVING

Jim Hollis has traveled all over the world to pursue his love of diving.

Story by KATRINA POGGIO | Photos by KAYLA LOKEINSKY

Right diving, ice diving, cave diving – Jim Hollis has done it all. From scuba diving with a 65-foot whale shark in Costa Rica to swimming alongside swirling schools of fish in the Egyptian Red Sea, he has seen the world through the plastic of a dive mask and with a tank strapped to his back.

“I like to see the challenge of the ocean,” Hollis said. “Because every time you jump in the water you’re going to see something totally different.”

The Mayo-based scuba instructor’s infatuation with the sea has grown into a lifelong journey. He has taught more than 7,000 people how to dive since he became an instructor in 1969.

Being able to bond with fellow divers, observe natural beauty and travel the world are just some of the reasons why Hollis has stayed in the diving business for so many years.

“It’s kinda hard to say what the best thing is,” Hollis said. “I just thank God I’ve got a chance to see it all.”

Diving Around The World

Scuba diving has taken Hollis to Jamaica, Grand Cayman, Mexico, Israel, Egypt, Hawaii, Costa Rica, Guam – the list goes on and on.

One of his most frequently-visited dive destinations is Cozumel, Mexico, which he made his 70th trip to three years ago. The underwater visibility off the Mexican island is 125 feet on a bad day.

“It’s like crystal water,” he said. “The diving is phenomenal.”



Cozumel is a convenient and inexpensive trip close to home, but sometimes Hollis stretches his sea legs much further.

Hollis traveled to the western Pacific to experience Truk Lagoon in Micronesia, a dream destination for divers. The lagoon was host to Japan's Imperial Fleet during World War II and now is home to the world's best wreck dives.

"Micronesia is the epitome of diving," he said remembering the trip.

But his absolute favorite diving destination is the Red Sea, an Indian Ocean-inlet lying between Africa and Asia that is home to more than one thousand species of fish.

Throughout his years of diving in some of the most beautiful and exotic places in the world, he has experienced moments that have been both breathtaking and frightening.

During one diving exposition in Costa Rica, Hollis was ascending along the anchor line after a 100-foot dive when he looked up to see a dolphin circling around.

"All of a sudden I noticed the baby dolphin coming out," Hollis said with a smile. "I saw the tail fin coming out."

Another dolphin, acting as a midwife for the mother in labor, starting hitting her to help the calf come out. Then the midwife took the newborn dolphin up to the surface so it can take its first breath of air.

"Just that fast that baby was born and that fast it was taught how to go to the top and get air," Hollis said, still astonished at the memory.

However, not all of his diving memories are so joyful. Some were extremely dangerous.

While diving among sea lions off the coast of Baja, California, a large, dark blur swam past him in the distance. Feeling the presence of a killer whale was slightly alarming, especially when their prey was swimming around.

"I guess they were trying to pick out lunch," he said. However, he was not on the menu, he jokes.

These saltwater adventures keep Hollis adding new explorations to his dive log year after year.

Hooked On Diving

Hollis got hooked on diving when he was in the Navy. He later opened seven dive shops in Orlando. His speciality was teaching the diving skills then flying to exotic locations with his students to go on destination dives. He eventually moved up to Mayo 27 years ago because he would usually drive north to the

"I LIKE TO SEE THE CHALLENGE OF THE OCEAN."

- JIM HOLLIS, WORLD-TRAVELING SCUBA DIVER

springs capital for certification dives.

Now he is considered a master instructor and is multi-certified by five different diving organizations to teach the beginning level open water through open water instructor.

"All the associations are good associations, but it's the instructor that makes a difference," Hollis said. "I like to teach people to dive because I like to see people have a good time."

Before his students can splash into the water and start diving reefs and wrecks, they have to learn safety basics in the shallows of a pool. Suiting up with a mask and snorkel, fins, BC, regulator, tank and weight belt is intimidating at first, so students must get comfortable with their gear before venturing out to open water.

Hollis has taught many students over the year, and he faced many challenges just as most teachers do. But his greatest challenge was teaching a man without legs how to scuba dive.

Hollis was excited when his friend told him she knows someone who really wants to learn to scuba dive.

"However, he's in a wheelchair," she said unexpectedly about the paraplegic who



Scuba diving instructor Jim Hollis (bottom right) teaches a scuba diving class at Fanning Springs State Park. Hollis starts his classes at a pool near his home and then takes the classes to local springs to practicing diving and earn their scuba certifications.



used to be a lifeguard.

How could he teach someone to dive who couldn't kick their legs through the water? Hollis said it was a rewarding experience when he was able to figure it out.

Teaching new skills to ambitious dive students is only one of Hollis' many rewarding teaching moments.

During a dive class at a local spring, Hollis saw a 1,500-pound manatee glide up behind one of his dive students. She had never seen a manatee before, but soon after she had a mother and calf swimming nearby.

"She just fell in love," Hollis said.

Scuba diving also builds a community among such a variety of people. When divers connect with other divers, they have an instant friendship.

"You just got an automatic conversation starter," Hollis said.

He always enjoys sharing stories and learning about new diving spots from other people.

"I just like the places you can go and the things that you can see," Hollis said. "I like the expressions on people's faces when they get in the water."

He never gets tired of watching them fall in love with the sea.



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BE YOUR OWN

Tour Guide

Follow these steps to take charge of your own vacation plans.

By TAYLOR GAINES

MAKE UP YOUR MIND

Indecisiveness and inability to pull the trigger will absolutely cripple your vacation before it even gets started.

1

"You've gotta pick somewhere," said Norman Lewis, as associate professor at the University of Florida and a seasoned traveler who has been all over the world. "Otherwise you go nowhere."

As one popular travel blog, Nomadic Matt, puts it, "A lot of people talk vaguely about travel. They never say where they are going, just that they are going."

The best and quickest way to speed up your decision-making process is to focus on what you are looking for in a vacation.

Pick a place that fits your needs. If you're looking to relax on a beach and get some sun during your winter vacation, New York City probably isn't the place to go. Similarly, if you want to visit ancient ruins and world-renowned art museums, the Caribbean Islands probably won't be your cup of tea.

"Different people are going to have different priorities," Lewis said. "Know what's valuable to you and try to do those things."

Economically, the travel blog Thrifty Nomads recommends thinking about which places might fit your budget by looking into currency rates, off-season travel and special deals. We'll talk more about budgeting specifically for your trip later.

The most important thing to do is to not get stuck thinking that 10 different places would be great for your vacation. Make a choice, and stick to it. Otherwise, you'll never end up on vacation at all.



CALIBRATE YOUR EXPECTATIONS & PLAN YOUR TRIP

2

First, here's something that might be tough to swallow.

"You are not going to see or experience everything in one trip," said Lewis, who has made 10 trips abroad and been to 13 different countries. "Don't try to worry about it. Live your life expecting that you'll go back."

Not understanding this truth can lead many travelers to over-planning, or worse, setting their expectations so high that they will inevitably be disappointed.

Lewis said he tries to focus on enjoying the things he does rather than worry about the things he won't have time for. On multiple trips to Paris, he has been to the famous museum The Louvre eight times. It took seven trips just to see the whole thing, and he said he's gotten something completely different out if every time.

It is important to translate this mindset into your day-to-day vacation planning.

"The biggest mistake people make is trying to do too many things in a day," Lewis said.

Jen and Ted Avery, who run the popular travel blog Thrifty Nomads, said another way to cut costs and stress during travel is by being flexible in your planning.

They would know. They've been living nomadically for two and a half years.

"A general plan is good, but over-planning can be costly and stressful if you schedule every day and hour to a T," Jen said in an email interview. "For instance, not being fixed on particular restaurants for every meal provides the ability to eat cheaper at local Mom & Pop shops or street markets (which often have the best food anyway)."

To find things to do, look at some of the most trusted travel guides on the web. Lewis and many travel blogs recommend RickStevens.com, LonelyPlanet.com and TripAdvisor.com for finding great places to eat, stay and spend time all around the world.

The easiest thing to do is use all three sources and to compare and contrast the information you come up with. You'll have tons of ideas in no time.

You sit at your computer, staring at the screen. You scroll through page after page of flight options, restaurant recommendations and adventurous excursions.

Egypt. Japan. Puerto Rico. The world is full of amazing, beautiful places.

So where do you go? How do you get there? What do you do once you arrive? The questions are endless. The daunting task of answering them all is enough to stop someone from going on vacation all together.

Vacation planning doesn't have to be this way. It doesn't

have to exist in a realm where you constantly dream of the countless sights the world has to offer and never actually attempt to visit them.

You can make your fantasy vacation actually happen. And you can do it all on your own. Follow these guidelines and you will be able to pull off the trip of a lifetime. With five easy steps, you can become your own travel agent.

BALANCE YOUR BUDGET

3

It gives many travelers peace of mind to know how much their vacation is probably going to cost before they embark on the journey. Others prefer closing their eyes, holding their nose and taking the plunge, then checking the damage when they return home.

Regardless, there are simple ways to ensure you don't spend more money than you need to. There is a balance to the travel, lodging, eating and adventurous aspects of your vacation. Figure out which things are important for you to spend money on.

Lewis likes to budget the most money for cultural experiences while making up the balance in things like food and lodging.

"For some people, cuisine is important," he said. "That's a great experience, but that's not personally my goal. I love to experience local culture in various forms. Art, museums, talking to people."

Also, just because you are spending less in certain areas does not mean you are decreasing your odds of making great memories.

For example, Lewis once spent the night watching Champions League soccer in a hostel on a Scottish countryside, surrounded by passionate soccer fans. It was weird and unexpected, but it's something he'll always remember.

"I never would have had that in a hotel," he said. "Often the things you end up remembering the most are those experiences that didn't cost you very much."

Practically, Lewis said, you should also always try to use public transportation, if available. An airline credit card with rewards can be useful for saving money on flights as well.

When it comes to booking flights, travel experts are somewhat at odds. The consensus among travel blogs seems to be that the sooner you order tickets, the cheaper, but flight prices also fluctuate randomly throughout the year.

Make a spreadsheet, lay out your budget, and then prepare for the unexpected.



DOT YOUR I'S AND CROSS YOUR T'S

4

Speaking of the unexpected, there are a lot of things you need to do while traveling that might not even cross your mind.

For example, take international travel. You need to tell your credit card company you are going abroad so they don't shut your card down. You need to make sure all of your upcoming bills are paid or set to be paid. You also need to decide what to do with your cell phone.

People have come to rely on their cell phones for communication and navigation, Lewis said. You need to decide whether using paper maps works for you or whether you want to pay roaming charges to make calls.

Domestically or internationally, there is one thing Lewis swears by in his travels.

"Pack light. Pack light. Pack light," he said. "The realization every traveler makes is you really can live without all that stuff and you'll be fine."

Lewis recommends packing enough clothes for six days' worth and washing them in your sink or tub every night before hang-drying.

"Nobody ever regrets packing light," he said. "Everybody regrets packing heavy."

Jen backed up that sentiment. She said even the most seemingly remote places will have a place to buy items you may have forgotten to pack.

"When you pack, revisit your pile over and over again," she said. "It will be easier to cut down when you can look at the pile with fresh eyes."

Also consider packing small, helpful items such as a reusable water bottle, hand sanitizer or lip balm. And don't forget your phone charger or travel documents.

**Pack light. Pack light.
Pack light. ... Nobody
ever regrets packing light.
Everybody regrets
packing heavy.**

— Norman Lewis, associate professor at the University of Florida and a seasoned traveler



SOAK IT IN

Look, we've all been on vacation with people who are so set on completing their checklist that they forget to enjoy the trip itself.

5

Don't force yourself to take a million pictures. Don't try to cover every inch of every tourist attraction. Vacation is not for getting stressed out. Sit back, really take it all in and enjoy yourself.

"Be present in each moment as it happens," Jen said. "Concentrate on the sights, sounds, scents and scenery around you. Before you know it, you'll be back home wishing you were on that trip!"

Take this example about people visiting museums from Professor Lewis.

"Most people spend no more than seven seconds looking at a painting," he said. "I'm going to stop and spend 30 seconds studying something and looking at it from different angles."

Take that to heart. Soak it all in. Remember, you're not going to get to see and do everything on one trip.

"You're in this fabulous place," Lewis says. "Just stare and enjoy it."



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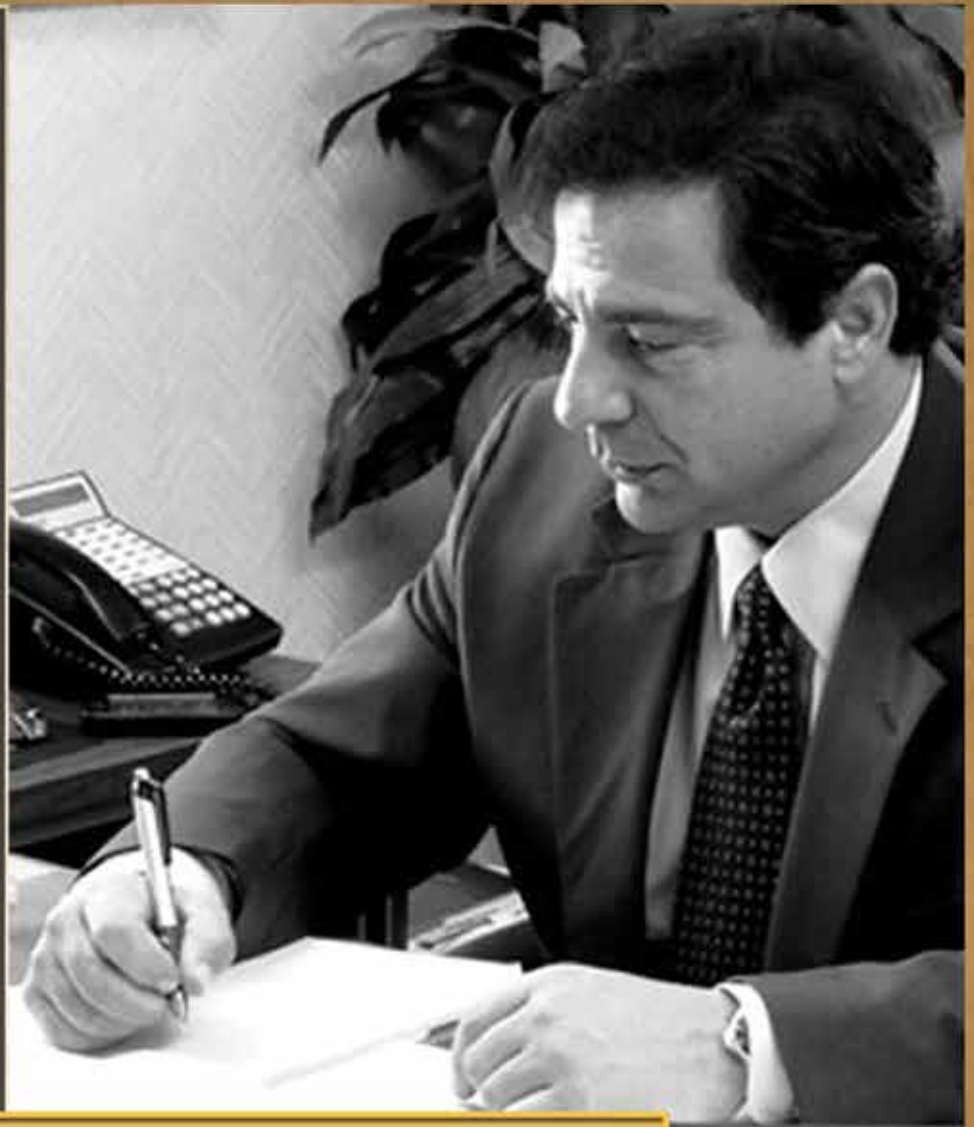
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I was born and raised in Fort Lauderdale. I've traveled to New York five times. I've never been on an airplane.

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My family and I made the voyage up the East Coast and back in a loaded-down minivan.

THIS IS OUR STORY.



On The Road

I don't know how it's even possible, but it seemed like every time we drove to New York there was a baby in the car. Have you ever ridden in the car for 24 hours straight with a baby? It's not fun. At all.

When I was 6 years old, my parents, my sister Paige, who was 3, and my sister Kara, 1, headed north for a white Christmas. We left a couple days before December 25 to spend the holiday with our family. Since my mom is from Queens and my dad is from the Bronx, we tried to go up for the holidays when we could.

Naturally, since it was so close to Christmas, Paige and I were horrified by the thought that Santa wouldn't know where to bring our presents. My mom reassured us that Santa knew where we were, but that didn't stop us from crying and fussing the entire way there. We prob-

ably asked my parents 100 times if Santa was coming. Little did we know that on the roof of our van was a luggage carrier filled with toys wrapped and ready to be opened.

As we got older, the crying fits faded away and were replaced with tantrums and arguments that all sisters know well. After my third sister, Brenna, was born, we made the drive to New York one final time.

That trip sticks out the most in my mind because during the 48-hour round-trip to New York and back, we only had one break. Other than stopping to go to the bathroom and grabbing Burger King from the nearest rest stop, we were driving. With four kids, all of them girls, you can imagine the amount of bathroom breaks we had to take.

Travels

Currents editor Kayla Lokeinsky recounts her family's crazy road trips to the Big Apple.

My dad loves driving. He gets some sort of weird pleasure out of sitting in the car for exhaustingly long periods of time. His plan was to make the 24-hour road-trip to New York without stopping. My mom however, wasn't having it. After we made it all the way to Maryland, my mom snapped. She couldn't take sitting in the car anymore. So, after a couple minutes of shouting that she had to get out of the car or she would go insane, we pulled off at the next exit and checked into a hotel.

On the way home, my dad was determined to make it all the way back to South Florida without stopping. Back then we had a minivan, and my three younger sisters sat in the middle row with a tiny TV and a portable VCR watching Disney movies and Barney and singing the same songs over and over again. I was squished all the way in the back row with the luggage, listening to Shania Twain's greatest hits on my CD player and trying to get the Barney theme song out of my head. Every 30 minutes or so, someone would yell out, "Kayla, raise your hand if you're alive," just to make sure I was still back there.

Once everyone fell asleep, I got a new job: designated driver entertainer. My dad just kept talking and talking and talking. He wouldn't stop. And, every time I told him I was tired, or I wanted to rest my eyes, he told me it was my job to keep him awake. I don't even remember what we talked about while driving down the highway at 4 a.m., but I do remember singing all of AC/DC's greatest hits while my sisters snored away.

After that trip, Paige and I refused to get into the car for two weeks. Whenever we stepped into a car, we instantly got nauseous. Driving non-stop for two days will do that to a person.

People say its not the destination, but the journey that matters most. While we did love the destination, it was always the journey that we never wanted to relive.

The Big Apple

Once we finally got to New York, those worries about having to get back in the car faded away. As born and raised Floridians, my sisters and I only ever got to see snow while we were in New York, so we took full advantage of the winter wonderland, making snow angels, snowmen and eating the snow off the ground (probably not the smartest thing to do).

Some of my most vivid childhood memories happened in the snowy banks of New York. Like the time I was four and my sister Paige beamed me in the head with a snowball so hard I fell down. Or, when I was six and my dad was pushing me on the swings and he pushed me so high I flipped completely over the top of the swing set and fell face-first into the snow, and he laughed hysterically. Good times.

However, on our last trip to New York, our first as a family of six, I wasn't able to have any snowy experiences. It was the hottest



Born and raised in Fort Lauderdale, Currents editor Kayla Lokeinsky's only experiences with snow are from her childhood trips to New York.



Currents editor Kayla Lokeinsky is pictured with her mom, Nancy Lokeinsky, her dad, Brian Lokeinsky, and her sisters, Paige, Kara and Brenna Lokeinsky. The Lokeinsky Family frequently makes trips throughout the state together, but their longest trips have been their 24-hour drives to New York.

week of winter New York had ever had. The cherry blossoms were blooming in December. We went ice skating in Central Park in jeans and T-shirts and wore flip flops while we walked around. Then, the day after we left it snowed. It seems like we brought that Florida heat with us.

These funny moments always give us great stories to tell, and the good times always outweighed the bad. Those snowy nights in front of the fireplace at our family's home, drinking hot chocolate and defrosting over slices of real New York pizza. Then, waking up the next morning and eating fresh bagels then running out into the snow for the rest of the day. Those are moments I will always remember.

While we would all love to get back to New York and see the sights and our family, my sisters and I only have one rule: no road trips!



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ADVENTURE *Awaits*

Lars Anderson paddles his canoe down the Ichetucknee River at Ichetucknee Springs State Park. Anderson, who owns Adventure Outpost in High Springs, leads visitors through the waterways of North Florida while running his canoe and kayak touring company.

Lars Anderson's guided river excursions show the beauty of natural North Florida.

Story and photos by CARL MCKINNEY

Adventure has been on Lars Anderson's mind since he was a young boy.

Inspired by his childhood expeditions into the creeks and woodlands surrounding his home in Gainesville, Anderson, now 60, has turned his passion for the outdoors into a career. Through his business, Adventure Outpost, Anderson takes to the water and leads tours through the waterways of North Florida.

The High Springs-based canoe and kayak tour company takes explorers through the some of the area's most beautiful waterways, with Anderson leading the way.

A Young Explorer

Nature was always a place where Anderson felt most at home.

"I grew up with a real love for the outdoors," Anderson said.

Rattlesnake Creek, near Anderson's childhood home in Gainesville, started out as a place for him to escape the world.

"I was a really introverted kid," he said. "I just kind of liked being on my own. The forest was right there. What better way to get away from the hustle of people?"

The more time Anderson spent in the woods, the more familiar they became, he said.

"I sort of felt like I knew some of the animals," he said.

For instance, the young explorer saw the same woodpecker on the same tree every day for years.

When he was around 10 years old, Anderson volunteered at the University of Florida Museum of Natural History.

Archaeologists were conducting a dig on a Native American site, bringing the findings back for Anderson to sort through.

The child's imagination ran wild when he sifted through the shark teeth, bird bones and bits of pottery.

After that experience, Anderson became more inquisitive when he explored Rattlesnake Creek.

He wondered about its history, imaging the people and animals that used to inhabit the land.

"As a kid, you sort of still have your magical thinking," Anderson said. "There was a kind of magic to the forest and all these creatures that lived there in the past."

One day, he discovered an old line-trap left behind by a long-dead settler. He found another, and another, ultimately collecting around eight or nine over a span of years.

"Slowly, the forest became alive for me," he said. "Knowing that all these people used to live there and used that same forest."

In middle school, Anderson worked for an exotic pet dealer, where he mingled with dedicated naturalists when he wasn't studying the cobras, ocelots and other dangerous animals.

Turning A Passion Into A Career

The flora, fauna unique geography and history of rural North Florida still captivated Anderson in

his adult years, inspiring him to record a nature audiobook in the mid-80s.

However the project, titled "North Florida Adventures," evolved into something bigger. Utilizing fictional characters, the audiobook teaches both the human and natural history of sites along the I-10 corridor.

Listeners can drive along the route as they learn about landmarks, including ones close to Columbia County, such as the Stephen Foster State Park near the Suwannee River.

While writing a print book, titled "Paynes Prairie: A History of the Great Savannah," Anderson developed a love for teaching about nature that matched his passion for exploration.

In 1997, Anderson decided to open Adventure Outpost, a High Springs-based canoe and kayak touring company.

Anderson's tours encompass 65 bodies of water in North Florida, including the Ichetucknee, Suwannee and Rainbow Rivers.

Anderson offers guided river excursions frequently throughout the year. Adventure Outpost also offers sales and rentals of canoes, kayaks, camping equipment, books, maps and more.

However, it's Anderson's tours that keep the customers coming back for more.

Overcoming His Fear

Although Anderson was confident in his nature knowledge when he opened his business, one thought gave him many restless nights.

As he imagined leading a tour group down the Ichetucknee River, Anderson remembered his college-year struggles with social anxiety, which he had yet to overcome.

"I was a terrible introvert," he said.

Still, he didn't back down from the challenge and used the job as an opportunity to hone his public-speaking skills.

For instance, Anderson had to learn how to tailor his tours to the groups' personalities.

"One person might want a little bit of informa-

tion, another might want a lot more," he said. "I had to learn to read the room."

It took about 10 years for Anderson to feel comfortable speaking in front of others.

"It was a long, slow process," he said.

When he first started doing tours, Anderson hoped to foster a connection between his clients and nature.

Sometimes, however, he helps build a connection between the clients themselves.



Adventure Outpost

30 NW 1st Ave. High Springs, FL 32643
For questions of tour reservations,
call (386) 454-0611 or email
riverguide2000@yahoo.com

Anderson recalls taking a father, son and grandson on a tour through Rainbow River

The trio had an incredible afternoon, bonding over the pristine sights.

About a month later, Anderson learned that the grandfather, who had arranged the tour, had died.

The son was thankful for having that final meaningful experience with his father.

“That’s definitely one of the more special ones” Anderson said.

When Anderson is taking his tour groups through an exploration, he doesn’t share all his favorite spots. Some of the more hidden spots are reserved for him.

There was one hidden gem he liked to go to be alone, until he led a tour group there one day and the location exploded in popularity after a description of it later appeared on a blog.

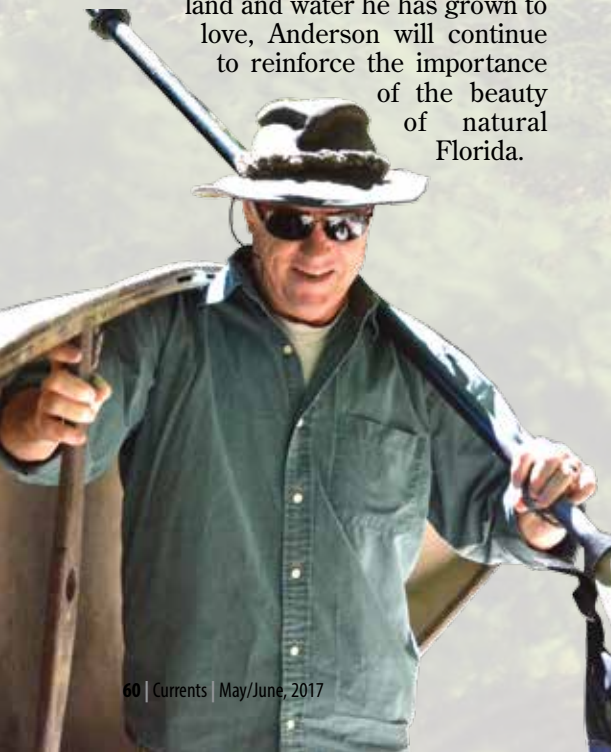
“I can tell just by the wording it came from me,” he said. “To this day, I regret having put that one on the map.”

One lesson Anderson hopes to enforce through his guided tours is the importance of preserving Florida’s waterways. Anderson believes that the deterioration of Florida’s natural resources is due to a lack of connection with nature, which he hopes his tours help address.

“How can we just idly sit back and watch all these amazing springs die?” he said.

“We have this appreciation for nature, but we don’t have this deep concern that you only get when you really know a place,” he added. “We don’t have this deep, heartfelt connection to the land.”

By sharing his own passion for the land and water he has grown to love, Anderson will continue to reinforce the importance of the beauty of natural Florida.



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UNIQUE EATS

These restaurants bring something deliciously different to the North-Central Florida.

By KAYLA LOKEINSKY

Our little corner of the country is made up of some of the best restaurants in North Central Florida. From gastro pubs to mom-and-pop shops, the area has something for everyone. But where can you find food that you won't be able to get anywhere else?

Not just something tasty, but something distinctly different from chain joints. Well, tucked away on back roads and in small shopping plazas are some of the most distinct flavors in the Suwannee River Valley. These restaurants are offering some unique eats that you need to try.

FACING PAGE: TOP: Farmers Market Salad, The Great Outdoors
 LEFT: Tuna Bowl, Marion Street Deli
 TOP RIGHT: Spinach Calzone, Italian Pizzeria
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Squash Casserole, Chasteen's

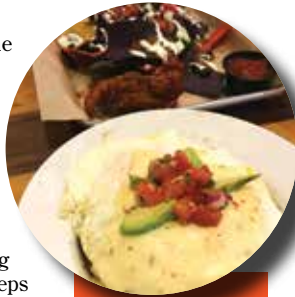
Marion Street Deli & Pub

Marion Street has quickly become one of Lake City's most popular dining spots. Unlike many of the newer restaurants that have made their way to the area, Marion Street isn't a chain or corporate owned. It's a local spot. The exposed-brick walls are decorated with vintage pieces, old newspaper clippings and maps of the area. The live music and full bar combined with a low-key atmosphere make this place a dining destination in Lake City. However, what keeps people coming back is the food.

Marion Street Deli and Pub is not your typical restaurant. Its menu is full of dishes you would expect to find a fancy restaurant in a big city. Made with fresh ingredients and packed with flavor, the food is undeniably good, and also something you can't get anywhere else in the area.

It's not often you'll find a place in rural North Florida with ahi tuna poke or white truffle fries on the menu. Marion Street's selection is wide and full of variety. You can try the ahi tuna bowl, made with seared sashimi ahi tuna, jasmine rice, house-made soy Tamari ginger sauce, avocado, cucumber and green onions. Or, the Lake Isabella Tacos, named for one of Lake City's many lakes. These savory tacos come in either mahi mahi, shrimp or Hawaiian pulled pork and are piled high with cabbage, cilantro, pico de gallo, cash fresca cheese and spicy Marion sauce, plus homemade black-bean salsa on the side.

Even their traditional southern dishes offer a new twist. The honey sriracha chicken and waffles, backyard brisket sliders and meatloaf stacks take southern food to a new level. One thing is for sure: if you're looking to try something new, make your way to Marion Street.



The Power Bowl at Marion Street Deli & Pub is made with fresh, cubed sweet potatoes, black beans, fresh spinach, house salsa, two organic eggs and pepper jack cheese. You can add salmon, ahi tuna, chicken, tofu or avocado.

Chasteen's

Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name. For the people of Lake City, that place is Chasteen's. Walking into Chasteen's is like walking into your mama's kitchen. That warm, inviting feeling washes over you and you instantly feel like you're home, even if you've never been there before.

Chasteen's has been a Lake City staple for nearly 20 years. The owners, Robert and Emmie Chasteen, opened their first restaurant, Robert's Dock, in February 1978 then opened Chasteen's in downtown Lake City in 1999. The popular local lunch spot is only open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday - Friday, and the line can sometimes be all the way out the door.

What sets Chasteen's apart, besides the friendly faces, is the delicious food they serve up every day. Everything is homemade and prepared with love. You can literally taste it.

The food at Chasteen's is always fresh, and the menu is full of tasty salads, sandwiches and of course their signature Buffalo Bites, chunks of chicken that are covered in their sweet and spicy buffalo sauce. The side dishes, soups and desserts at Chasteen's are different throughout the week, and they always post on Facebook what those items will be each day. If you're a die-hard customer, you have the rotation memorized by heart.

For newcomers, they always have the list of today's sides at the counter, and their tantalizing desserts lined up along the side. You can expect a long line when their coveted squash casserole or chocolate delight is on the menu.

They also have a special sandwich each month, which you can always expect to be packed full of flavor. Make sure you try them when you can.

Chasteen's serves up comfort food at its finest. In fact, you can even bring Chasteen's home with you. They sell take-and-bake casseroles that you can bring home to your family and have a home-cooked meal.

Eating at Chasteen's is a right of passage for the people of Lake City. It's a down-home dining experience that you just can't get anywhere else.



Each month Chasteen's serves up a special sandwich, like this Buffalo Club Sandwich.

Italian Pizzeria

Tucked away in a small shopping plaza on US Highway 90 in Lake City is some of the best Italian food we've ever had. Italian Pizzeria is dishing out authentic Italian cuisine, family style.

Owner Jose Cruz opened Italian Pizzeria three years ago and runs it with his family by his side. Originally from El Salvador, Cruz has been working in Italian restaurants since 1997, and decided to open up his own shop right here in Columbia County.

Italian Pizzeria offers a variety of authentic Italian dishes that range from the traditional slice of cheese pizza to upscale European dining, all at an affordable price. Usually if you want to get Italian food of this caliber you end up paying a pretty penny. But at Italian Pizzeria, everything on the menu is under \$20, including their delicious large pizzas.

Italian Pizzeria is mostly known for its pizza (hence the name) and they have a number of pizzas you won't be able to get anywhere else in the area. Their veggie primavera, eggplant parmigiana and rio rancho pizzas are just a few of their many delicious pizza options that are not only unique, but extremely tasty.

Italian Pizzeria has all the traditional Italian fare, including calzones, stromboli, pasta dishes, subs and salads. However, it's their pasta specialty dinners and daily specials that really set them apart.

Pasta dishes such as their calamari marinara, made with squid, tomatoes and garlic over linguini, and specialty dinners like their veal saltimbocca, which is veal topped with spinach, prosciutto and mozzarella in a light wine sauce with plum tomatoes, make Italian Pizzeria one of the most authentic Italian restaurants in the area. And even better, not only is the food packed with that traditional Italian flavor, it's also extremely affordable and served up in a comfortable atmosphere.

It's difficult to make Italian food both well and fast. At Italian Pizzeria, they have mastered that feat. It's the perfect place to go and grab lunch or have a casual dinner with family and friends, but the food is five-star quality.



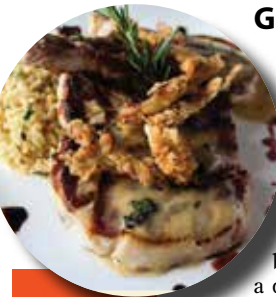
The Calamari Marinara at Italian Pizzeria is made with fresh squid and shrimp, cooked and tossed with marinara sauce, fresh herbs and a sprinkle of parmesan cheese.

Great Outdoors Restaurant

An upscale restaurant where you least expect it, Great Outdoors Restaurant is a true hidden gem of High Springs. This restaurant is by far one of the nicest in the Suwannee River Valley, with stunning rustic decor and amazing food that is not only tasty, but different from anything else you can get in the area.

The Great Outdoors Restaurant has been open for 10 years and has since become a dining destination in North Central Florida. Serving up lunch, dinner and delicious drinks, this American eatery is home to five-star chefs who have won Golden Spoon Awards six years in a row.

Their menu is full of dishes made with the freshest ingredients and packed with flavor. Their menu is full of southern favorites with a fine-dining twist. Like their root beer pork chop, made with twin center cut six-ounce chops, marinated in bourbon and draft root beer and smothered in bacon gravy. Or their farmers market salad, made with organic greens, baby spinach, toasted almonds, seasonal fruit, chopped mango, golden raisins,



One of the Great Outdoors Restaurant's most popular dishes is the Root Beer Pork Chops, made with twin center-cut 6-oz chops, marinated in bourbon and draft root beer and smothered in bacon gravy.

goat cheese and a strawberry mint vinaigrette.

High Spring is surrounded by some of North-Central Florida's most beautiful waterways, so its no surprise that the Great Outdoors Restaurant has delicious seafood dishes. Shrimp bruschetta, "Florida Cracker Calamari", beignet fish tacos and shrimp and grits are just some of the many seafood dishes Great Outdoors Restaurant is serving up.

The Great Outdoors Restaurant has spectacular food and the atmosphere to match. The inside of Great Outdoors Restaurant is filled with rustic decor that makes it warm and inviting. You can also dine outside on the patio or under the boathouse, where you can enjoy your meals under the stars and live music. They also have the Opera House upstairs, which can be reserved for events.

Great Outdoors Restaurant also has a fully-stocked bar, the Spring House Tavern, which serves up some specialty drinks that are unlike anything else. Wet your whistle with a caramel apple, chocolate macadamia nut or key lime pie martini.

They also have weekly specials like Tuesday Hamburger Heaven (1/2 off burgers), Thursday Half Price Wine Night and live music under the stars Wednesday through Sunday.

If you're in the area, Great Outdoors Restaurant is a dining destination you don't want to miss.



Gardening IN THE EARLY SUMMER



We have had a glorious spring, cool nights and breezy days. We've also had torrential rain and thunderstorms to rival a tiny hurricane. It was a welcome rain though after such a long dry spell and I'm ready for those summer showers in the afternoons.

Summer has arrived and as a gardener I dread the heat. But if we plan our gardens early with plants that will take the heat, the time spent outside will be a little easier.

No heavy pruning now. Drastic pruning during the heat causes flushes of tender growth that will struggle during the high temperatures when water is scarce. Light pruning is fine, just don't cut back more than one-third of the new spring growth. This is true of lawns as well; don't remove more than one-third of the grass blade length with any single cutting. Letting the grass grow higher helps to shade the runners from the hot sun. Longer grass blades help the grass to photosynthesize or make food to grow deeper roots and stronger tops. Scalped grass is one of the worst things we can do to our lawn- the longer the blade length, the deeper the roots grow and won't require as much water. When you do water give the lawn ¾ inch at a single time and then not until it begins to show the need again. Frequent shallow watering ¼ inch will cause the roots to come to the surface. A light watering, ¼ inch is for when you apply fertilizer so that it won't leach out of the root zone.

Lawns are the biggest drain on our time and water and money compared to any other plant in the garden. Ideally we should strive to have as little areas of grass as we can. Enlarge your garden beds, you don't have to have lots of plants, just trees and maybe a few shrubs, and as they become established they will take care of themselves. Using 3 inches of mulch in the beds will help control weeds, retain moisture and help with erosion. The good thing about having all your plants inside the beds is when you do mow the lawn you won't have to go around individual trees or plants.

If your azaleas need pruning be sure to do it before July, or there will be no blooms next year as the buds start forming in the summer. This is also true for your camellias as their buds are already in place.

Start pulling out older vegetables at the end of June, except for eggplants, sweet potatoes, southern peas, okra and peppers. Any other vegetables will attract vegetable pests and controlling them would require too much spraying for fungus and insects. It is a good idea to let the vegetable garden rest in July and August while preparing the soil for your fall garden.

As our winter flowering annuals such as snapdragons and petunias begin to look tired it is best to pull them out as well. Leaving them past their prime encourages pests. Flowering annuals will last longer if you keep them dead-headed. If you let them go to seed they will "think" their mission is over and will quit flowering. Perennials should also have the old flowers cut off so they don't use energy forming seeds.

May is a wonderful month for flowering perennials, daylilies, agapanthus, amaryllis, jacobinia, late blooming azaleas, hydrangeas, pentas, rain lilies, blood lily, crinum, and gingers will all be in their glory. This is a

AMARYLLIS

Amaryllis are the easiest flowering perennials to bring to bloom in the month of May.

BLOOD LILLY

Native to South Africa, the Blood Lilly is also called the fire-ball lily for its fiery red flowers.

CANNAS

A great plant for a sunny exposure is cannas, which has large, colorful, tropical-looking leaves and flowers.

DIAMOND FROST

Diamond Frost blooms constantly all summer and into fall with dainty white flowers growing to a height of 12 to 18 inches.

PENTAS

Pentas is considered an annual in other parts of the country, but a perennial in the North Florida heat.

CANNAS

Cannas will survive in the shade, but they will not grow as large and the darker-hued leaves (red or purple) will lose their color.

DAYLILIES

Hemerocallis (daylily's botanical name) means "beauty for a day."



favorite time of mine to enjoy what wonderful plants we can grow in North Florida. Most of these plants will do well with partial sun and some shade. Many plants can take the morning sun and then appreciate a little protection from the hot mid-day and early afternoon sun. A great plant for a sunny exposure is cannas, which has large, colorful, tropical-looking leaves and flowers, which come in yellow, pink, red and orange.

Besides your established perennials you can add so many colorful summer annuals that are readily available at local nurseries. The suppliers are getting better at letting the consumer know what the plant needs as far as sun requirements. Some require six hours of sun, some three to six hours and others less than an hour. They also give temperature limits as to the hardiness of the plant. When the temperatures start to rise I still enjoy working in my garden but prefer to spend the time in the shade.

A few of my favorite shade-loving annuals include wax-begonia, torenia, coleus, creeping jenny, many ferns, impatiens and Diamond Frost Euphorbia. Diamond Frost blooms constantly all summer and into fall with dainty white flowers growing to a height of 12 to 18 inches. This is a Proven Winner plant which means it has been grown and tested in our zone for all things desirable in a plant. It is heat and drought tolerant. As a plus, it is deer resistant. It flowers profusely with more sun but does quite well in the shade.

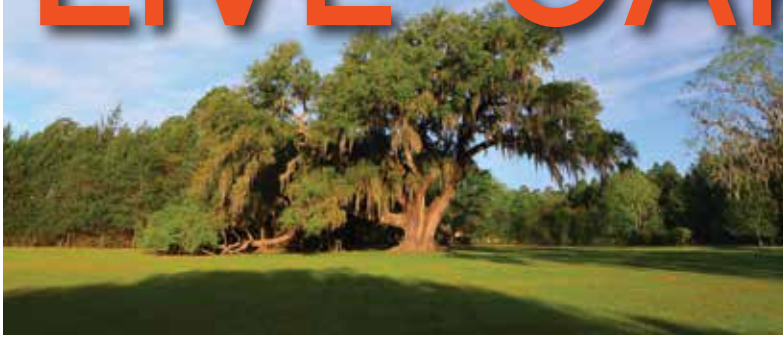
Another Proven Winner is Summer Wave Blue Torenia or wishbone flower and one I plant every year. It has true-blue flowers all summer and sometimes reseeds itself. It is a spreading low grower with a cascading growth habit, reaching three to six inches high. They make a great container plant or hanging basket. There are also upright growing torenias in lavender, rose and white. Torenias perform well even in the sun and intense heat and humidity of our climate. They are deer-resistant and don't need dead-heading. There is also a trailing yellow variety with a maroon throat.

For sunny areas there are many annuals to choose from: marigolds, zinnia, angelonia, melampodium, gazania, sun coleus, cosmos, gaillardia, sunflower, portulaca, rudbeckia, salvia, cleome, lantana and ageratum.

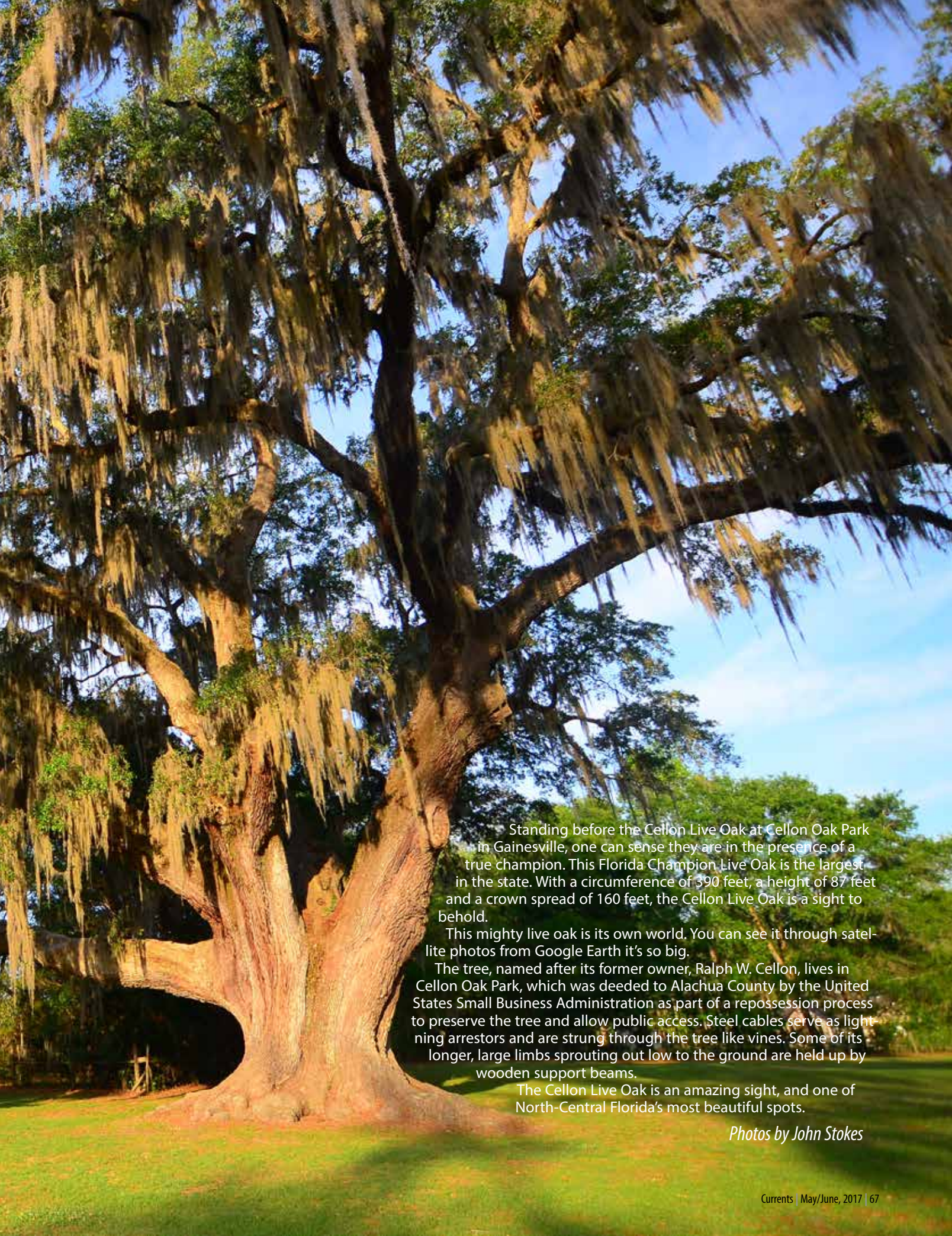
Enjoy our Florida summer, where so many come to enjoy our beautiful beaches, lakes and springs. Be a responsible gardener so all can continue to enjoy these treasures.

Martha Ann Ronsonet | Avid gardener and author of *Gardening in the Deep South and Other Hot Pursuits*

Florida's Largest LIVE OAK TREE



Florida Champion Tree
Live Oak
Height 79 Feet
Circumference 344"/29 Feet
Average Crown Spread 154 Feet



Standing before the Celson Live Oak at Celson Oak Park in Gainesville, one can sense they are in the presence of a true champion. This Florida Champion Live Oak is the largest in the state. With a circumference of 390 feet, a height of 87 feet and a crown spread of 160 feet, the Celson Live Oak is a sight to behold.

This mighty live oak is its own world. You can see it through satellite photos from Google Earth it's so big.

The tree, named after its former owner, Ralph W. Celson, lives in Celson Oak Park, which was deeded to Alachua County by the United States Small Business Administration as part of a repossession process to preserve the tree and allow public access. Steel cables serve as lighting arrestors and are strung through the tree like vines. Some of its longer, large limbs sprouting out low to the ground are held up by wooden support beams.

The Celson Live Oak is an amazing sight, and one of North-Central Florida's most beautiful spots.

Photos by John Stokes

Currents



**THESE
BRACELET
TRENDS WILL ADD
SPARKLE TO ANY
OUTFIT.**



Candy

Story and photos by KAYLA LOKEINSKY

From chunky stones to delicate beading, the possibilities with bracelets are endless. They are the perfect accent to any outfit, and can easily transform what you're wearing. With the right accessories, you can go straight from the office to a night out on the town.

With all the different choices out on the market, it's hard to decide which bracelets are right for you. Are you

looking for something to make a statement? Or do you need something to add a subtle hint of style to an everyday outfit? If you're asking yourself these questions, the answers can easily be found on a rack of jewelry.

We have partnered with Southern Sisters Boutique & Embroidery in Lake City to bring you five bracelet trends that are perfect for adding a little arm candy to your look.

Large Stone Bangles

Bangles have become important accents to wrists, completing an entire look. Bangles can vary from thin gold and silver ones to big, bulky ones full of colors. However, the most popular bangles right now are the ones that are made up of large stones. They are usually made out of thin metal bands, wrapped together with three or four large gemstones attached. These bracelets are perfect statement pieces. The thin bands contrast with the chunky stones, making them pop against the skin. All you need to do is slip one on and you instantly have a cool, bohemian style going on. For an extra impactful look, layer two or three on top of each other to make your bracelets the focal point of your outfit.

Stacks

Stack it up. Pile it on. When it comes to jewelry trends, layering is everywhere. What's not to love about the look? It offers endless opportunities to accessorize based on what you're wearing, where you're going, or even your mood. There is no shortage of options with stacked bracelets. You can mix and match until you find the perfect look. Stacks are usually made up of five or six bracelets layered on top of each other. It's best to pair a few solid-colored, simple beaded bracelets with one or two larger statement bracelets, such as ones with bigger stones or gems, to add more pop to the set. A stacked bracelet set is perfect for pairing with jeans or shorts and a T-shirt to add some sparkle to a casual look.



Sentimental Bracelets

Jewelry doesn't have to just be about style. Sometimes your jewelry can have sentimental meaning. Bracelets with inspirational quotes or charms that have a special significance to the person wearing it are trending, and not only are they cute, they're also a daily reminder of something that is important to you. For example, these "Mommy and Me" bracelets we found at Southern Sisters are the perfect gift for Mom. Not only are they stylish, but they are also something that you can your mom or loved one can share forever. These remind us of friendship bracelets we had when we were kids, except they're way cuter.



Monograms

Monograms are everywhere. Monogrammed towels, backpacks, shoes, shirts, purses, you name it. If it's made of fabric or leather, you can monogram it. Monogrammed jewelry is also becoming more popular now, especially monogrammed bracelets. A simple monogram on a wooden or metal bracelet is an adorable accessory that's perfect for game day or a day running errands. Plus, you won't have to worry about anybody borrowing it!



Dainty Beads

There's something about a simple beaded bracelet that is just so classy and elegant. Dainty beaded bracelets are all the rage right now. They are so simple and easy to wear, yet they add a pop of sophistication to anything you have on. These thin beaded bracelets are great for layering or wearing just one at a time. They don't get in the way or jingle when you walk, and they are subtle without going unnoticed. A simple sun dress and strappy sandals go great with these dainty little bracelets. Slip one on and you're ready to go.

*All jewelry shown can be purchased at Southern Sisters Boutique & Embroidery, located at 124 North Marion Street in downtown Lake City.

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Why I work at FGC...

"My 'Why FGC' is very dear to me. I cherish the opportunity to invest into the future of our students. I know how important it is for students to have mentors to encourage them towards a bright future. I had a troubled youth that caused me to be put in a situation that I did not believe in myself, but I had mentors that believed in me and saw my potential. I was able to visualize it and harness that potential to overcome those obstacles. It was all because someone believed in me, at a time I could not believe in myself.

That's what I want to do for FGC students. Because I know as a young person they struggle with identity or many other matters. But, what matters is they have the ability to run this race of life with confidence, and they don't have to fear the unknown and as we - having gone through what they have - share our experiences and wisdom, I have seen how it helps them. This is why I love my job, and welcome working with the future leaders of our community. I am simply paying forward what others have done for me."



Eulalio Cruz

FGC Alumnus & Employee

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