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DOGS IN BUSINESS P.73

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Photography by Jarrod Brock

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Photography by Trinity Martin



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ABOUT THE COVER:

The stunning views of Lake Oconee are uninterrupted throughout the home of Cindy and Steve Jones in Reynolds Lake Oconee. Their home is part of this year's virtual tour for the Lake Oconee Showcase of Homes to benefit Greene County Habitat for Humanity.

Photography by Jarrod Brock



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VOLUME XXIII, NO. 3, FALL 2020

*The magazine that reflects the lifestyle of residents
of the Lake Oconee area and beyond.*

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Unsolicited queries and submissions of art and writing not accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope will not be returned. Response time varies and Lake Oconee Living cannot assume responsibility for unsolicited materials. To contact the editor by email, address correspondence to editor@loliving.com.

ADVERTISING

You can request a media kit with information about our distribution, deadlines, readership, and advertising rates and specifications by emailing marketing@loliving.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Lake Oconee Living is published for the United States, its territories and possessions. Four issues per year: \$17. Single issues in the U.S. \$5. To subscribe, please send subscription form (located on page 86) and payment. If you are moving, renewing, or have a question, please enclose subscription label with all correspondence; allow four weeks for change of address.

Address all correspondence pertaining to subscriptions to:

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or call 706.342.7440 or fax 706.342.2140.

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| *from the editor* |

The Home Issue



These past few months have afforded me ample time to stare at the walls in my house and reassess all things interior design. Should I repaint? Change out fabrics and accent pillows? What about these room arrangements?

In the past, nothing has gotten me more motivated to refresh my living spaces than the annual Lake Oconee Showcase of Homes. This tour allows a glimpse into some of the most well-appointed homes throughout Reynolds Lake Oconee. It sparks inspiration and gives me ideas to imitate, more so than photos on Pinterest ever could.

I was relieved to learn, in the uncertain early days of the pandemic that the committee was planning to proceed with the tour. It is, after all, the largest fundraiser of the year for Greene County Habitat for Humanity. Proceeds raised from hundreds of tickets sold and generous sponsorships from local businesses bring in enough money each year to keep the hammers going on Habitat's steady schedule of new homes for deserving residents in the community.

But this year would be different. Instead of hundreds of people visiting each home in person, even more will now be able to view them online through virtual tours.

Lake Oconee Living was fortunate to be able to get a sneak peek of these home to share with our readers ahead of the virtual 4-day tour event (see page 30). This home tour preview is one of my favorite projects of the year, that is, if you don't count our special "Dogs in Business" section that is also featured in this issue.

As any dog-lover understands, it's always a bonus to walk into an office or business and be greeted by a furry friend. I've noticed over the past years that the Lake Oconee region has an abundance of these dedicated workers, and we decided to showcase them in the magazine. On page 73, you'll meet six new faces from local businesses that are ready to assist customers and clients with a wag and a smile.

We hope this Home Issue brings you both inspiration for your home and a little uplifting for your heart.

Enjoy!

Andra Gabre

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| *in the spirit* |

Doggone Good Wine

Scout & Cellar's canine-inspired specialty labels are designed to get the health-conscious connoisseur's tail wagging.

STORY BY
MARY MASTERS



Scout & Cellar, a women-owned business based out of Texas

that delivers Clean-Crafted™ wine directly to doorsteps, has such a love for dogs that they named two labels after them.

The Greeter label is named after Pip, the winery dog and official “greeter.” She greets each person who comes into the office with a smile and a wag.

The Dove Hunt Dog label is one of my favorites. It is comprised of four different Clean-Crafted™ wines, meaning there are no added sugars or chemicals to these organic wines that are sourced from small vineyards around the world where the grapes are hand-picked and hand-sorted. Lab testing guarantees the wines are free of pesticides or chemical additives, making them a healthy alternative to mass-produced wines, and perfect for those who live a Paleo, Gluten-Free or Low-Carb lifestyle.

Here, you will find a detailed description of each wine in the Dove Hunt Dog label.

The Dove Hunt Dog Rosé - \$17

North Coast, CA

100% Syrah, Organic, Vegan, Alc. 13%, RS (Residual Sugar) .05g/l

In the summertime, a light Rosé is perfect for all occasions – poolside, lakeside, happy hours, you name it. This wine is bright and refreshing with notes of strawberry, red cherry, and melon balanced by crushed limestone on a dry finish.

Fun Fact: Many people think the color of Rosé is a direct correlation of the sweetness of the wine but that is false. Rosé gets its color because the grape juice, which is white, sits on the skins which are red, for about six hours. If the skins were taken off immediately, the wine would appear white even though it came from red grapes.

Pairs great with: Seafood, soft cheeses, spicy foods, and lounging lakeside.

The Dove Hunt Dog Sauvignon Blanc - \$22

Potter Valley, CA

100% Sauvignon Blanc, Vegan, Organic, Alc. 13.1%, RS .05g/l

This is one of my favorites and a great

fall wine that is earthy and crisp. It has hints of white peach, melon, and lemon zest on a light body frame with a clean bright finish.

Fun Fact: Centuries ago, in France, Sauvignon Blanc vines accidentally crossed with Cabernet Franc vines to create the popular Cabernet Sauvignon.

Pairs great with: Cold seafood platters, grilled fish and/or roasted vegetables.

The Dove Hunt Dog Chardonnay - \$25

Potter Valley, CA

100% Chardonnay, Vegan, Organic, Alc. 13.5%, RS .05g/l

This is not your typical buttery, creamy chardonnay. This unoaked Chardonnay is fresh and precise with lemon curd, yellow apple, and a hint of pear balanced by a chalky minerality and a clean finish. If you’ve never tried an unoaked Chardonnay or shy away from Chardonnay because of the oaky taste, I would give this one a try.

Fun Fact: Unoaked wine is aged in steel barrels, not oaked ones.

Pairs great with: Sushi and shellfish, roasted chicken, and light pasta dishes.

The Dove Hunt Dog Pinot Noir - \$20

Sonoma Valley, CA

100% Pinot Noir, Vegan, Organic, Alc. 14.3%, 1.2 g/l

For a red wine, this knocks it out of the park and the price is delicious. Even my high-end red drinkers enjoy this one. Juicy and approachable, these fruit-forward notes of wild cherry and red raspberry are balanced by cinnamon graham cracker on a medium-bodied frame with a fruity finish.

Fun Fact: The estate that created this Pinot Noir has been family owned and operated since 1896.

Pairs great with: Beef, veal, grilled chicken or anything BBQ.



Mary Masters is UGA graduate and Independent Wine Consultant for Scout & Cellar. She has a WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust) Level 2 and is currently working on her CSW (Certified Wine Specialist). In her spare time, between hosting wine tastings at private homes or corporate events, she enjoys spending time with her two daughters and two dogs at the lake. For more information, visit scoutandcellar.com/MaryMasters.



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Smoked Queso

Throw this blend of decadent, cheesy goodness in the smoker and sit back and relax. This easy dip is sure to be a smoking hot addition to your fall entertaining lineup.

COMPILED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY MOLLY BILBOW





Ingredients:

- 1/2 small onion, chopped finely
- 1 TBS minced garlic
- 1 can black beans, drained
- 1 can original RoTel, drained
- 1 lb. mild Italian sausage, browned
- 1 large block Velveeta, diced
- 8 oz. Monterey jack cheese, diced
- 8 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, diced
- 1 pkg. cream cheese, cut up

Directions:

Cook down onion in cast iron skillet with a little olive oil until translucent and almost golden, add 1 TBS minced garlic, cook for 30 seconds. Add sausage, and cook until browned.

Add all other ingredients to skillet - and here, you have two options:

1. Stir everything together before placing skillet into smoker
2. Leave ingredients in place for the first hour of smoking, and then stir together for the second hour

(Our tasters liked both, and honestly couldn't taste a big difference.)

Smoke for two hours at 185 degrees.

Serve immediately with sturdy chips.

Makes 2 quarts of queso. Recipe can be halved for smaller groups.



Variations:

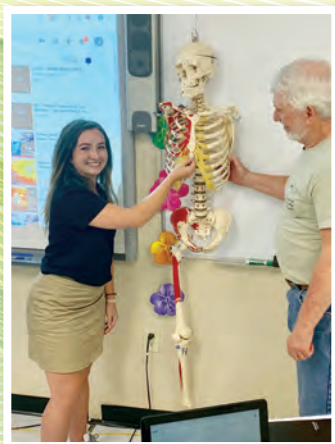
1 diced jalapeno pepper

1 can diced chiles

Smoke an ear of corn, seasoned with salt and pepper, while smoking the queso, and cut the kernels into the mixture at the final stir

Top with your favorite salsa

Sprinkle top of finished queso with a blend of breadcrumbs and parmesan cheese and place under the broiler in your oven for a few minutes, to give it a golden crust.



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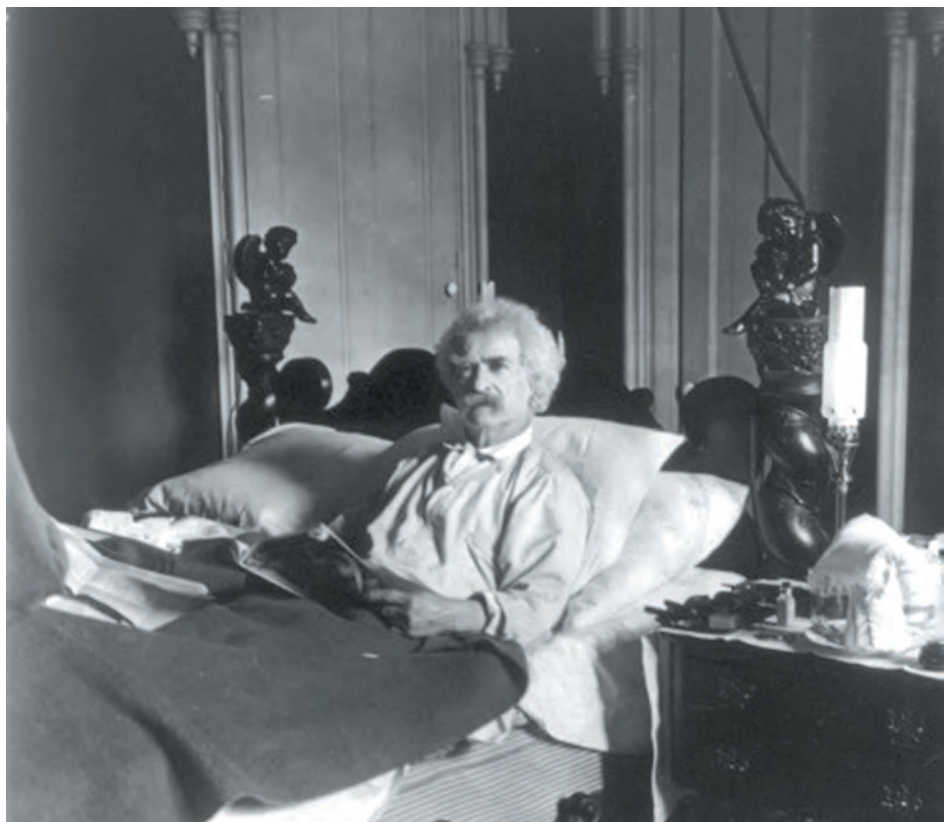
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Authors at Home

Whether writing in bed, in the bathtub, standing up, or in the nude, some of the world's most famous authors adopted strange habits in search of their muse.

STORY BY CHIP R. BELL AND BETTY LIEDTKE



“I became insane,” wrote Edgar Allan Poe, “with long intervals

for horrible sanity.” Poe comically captures the sentiment of many authors under the creativity-inducing spell of their muse. Authors are artists and artists can be strange, odd, and sometimes downright weird. Their playground is a world of magic and imagination where anything is possible. Their struggle is to find and open the door behind which a miracle is hiding.

Annie Dillard poignantly described the treasure-hunting process this way: “At its best, the sensation of writing is that of any unmerited grace. It is handed to you, but only if you look for it. You search, you break your heart, your back, your brain, and then—and only then—it is handed to you.” The feeling of creation is so exhilarating and intoxicating, writers vow to do whatever it takes to make it happen again.

And some writers go to great extents to find the door to the miracle.

Food and drink factored prominently in many famous writers’ rituals. Mystery writer Agatha Christie ate apples while in the bathtub as she examined photographs of murders and worked through the complex plots of her whodun-its. Apples were also important to Friedrich Schiller, a German poet and historian. Schiller often put apples in his desk drawer and left them there to rot, claiming the smell of rotting apples inspired him. Flannery O’Connor crunched vanilla wafers and drank coffee spiked with coke as she wrote.

Alcohol and caffeine fueled many writers in their work. Honoré de Balzac, the French novelist and playwright, is said

to have consumed up to 50 cups of black coffee a day. We'll leave it to you to decide whether the caffeine contributed more to his prolific output of more than 100 novels, plays, essays, and short stories, or to his premature death at age 51 due to gangrene related to congestive heart failure.

The names of famous writers who were alcoholics would take up more space than a magazine article. But the list would include many noteworthy names, such as William Faulkner, Eugene O'Neill, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway – four American authors who have each been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Hemingway claimed that he drank “to make other people more interesting.” Brendan Behan, who is considered one of the greatest Irish writers of all time, described himself as “a drinker with a writing problem.”

J. D Salinger, author of “The Catcher in the Rye,” wrote in the nude. George Orwell, Mark Twain, and Truman Capote were among the prolific authors who regularly wrote while lying in bed.

Writing while standing up was the preference of English writer and feminist Virginia Woolf, and French playwright and philosopher Albert Camus, as well as Hemingway. Woolf liked to write at a standing desk so she could stretch back to view her writing from a different angle. Hemingway's routine was to wake up at dawn, write at a fast and furious pace for several hours while standing at his typewriter, and then move on to a night of drinking.

Those who prefer to “get away from it all” in order to concentrate on their writing in solitude might follow the example of American poet Maya Angelou. Angelou regularly left her home early in the morning to go to a sparsely furnished hotel room, taking only a few supplies, such as a legal pad, a dictionary, a thesaurus, and her Bible.

Many writers had specific tools of the trade they insisted on. Some were a matter of practicality, others leaned more to the superstitious. James Joyce, the author of “Ulysses,” wrote in crayon because his eyesight was extremely poor, and crayons made it easier for him to read his own writing. John Steinbeck wrote his first drafts in pencil, and always kept exactly two dozen perfectly sharpened pencils within reach. We don't know how many pencils he went through on the way to writing classics such as “East of Eden,” “The Grapes of Wrath,” and “Of Mice and Men,” but his Nobel Prize in Literature, as well as a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award for Fiction, attest to the fact that his writing was as sharp as his pencils.

These stories barely scratch the surface of the rituals and techniques writers use to create the masterpieces we all enjoy reading. But before you decide to follow in their footsteps by adopting their writing habits as your own, remember the words of advice from English novelist and short story writer Somerset Maugham: “There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.”

The bottom line is this: If writing is your dream or your passion, the best techniques and rituals to follow are the ones that will work for you. Happy writing.

For information on upcoming events and workshops at the Georgia Writers Museum in downtown Eatonton, visit georgiawritersmuseum.com.



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| in the garden |

Artistry in Bloom

Local gardeners apply classic techniques of art through depth, contours, and texture on live canvases in their own backyards.

STORY BY JULIA OWENS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEN JOHNSON

Sally Wickland is an artist and an avid

gardener. It is her creative imagination that led her to undertake the major renovation of the backyard.

The real artistry of Wickland's garden is that it is bigger than what is exposed to a first impression. The sunny areas versus



Local artist and avid gardener, Sally Wickland, brings the same approach to her garden as she does her watercolors. She uses a combination of soft and bold colors throughout various planted areas of her expansive backyard, even including a whimsical fairy garden.

***“Gardening is my creative therapy.
It’s like painting with flowers.”***

shade areas have been expertly situated and planted. Distributing these areas throughout the garden, Wickland has revealed the created depth and contours of her live canvas – classic techniques of art.

She has added several patio areas from which to sit and relax. Her vista is flooded with zinnia, coneflower, black-eyed Susan, dianthus, Russian sage, several varieties of roses, herbs, groundcovers which barely grow above soil level, Japanese maples that she has grown from seed, and garden phlox, to name only a few.

A small plot of land has been deeded to the fairies who reside in her garden. Their abode is quite elaborate, and they do not seem to want for anything. A miniature clothesline, flowers, chairs, a wagon, a pond and several patios have been gifted to the tiny winged keepers of Wickland’s garden.

The heavy work of the garden: moving boulders, installing sod, and adding



“countless quantities of soil amendments” were done by a landscaper who had helped her with other garden projects. Wickland admits upgrades of this nature “added to her Visa bill.”

For Wickland, the expense, exhausting work, the heat and humidity, and warring with deer, rabbits, and chipmunks, is worth it.

“Gardening is my creative therapy,” she explains. “It’s like painting with flowers.” Ever the artist.

Like her garden, Wickland’s watercolor paintings are lovely and graceful. Her use of color is a combination of soft and bold with minute touches of daring – drawing an unsuspecting eye to that exact daring color.

As with her art, gardening is a constant endeavor.

“Nothing is perfect or finished,” she says. “A garden becomes a place of joy when there is a gardener to tend it.”

Trees, shrubs, flowers and, yes, even the fairies are tended quite well in Wickland’s garden.



Keith Rowell and Shelagh Fagan are quite at home in the Evan B. Ezell home in downtown Eatonton. Ezell built the Victorian home in 1887, where he and his wife, Anna Prudden, and their descendants lived for three generations. Sometime during the 1990s, Alice Ashurst bought the home and made significant restorations. In 1998, Fagan purchased the grand home. After adding copper guttering, the garden became the focus of reclamation and revival.

The three-story home is a showpiece that forms the backdrop for the incredibly artistic gardens that surround the home. When in spring bloom, the yellow Lady Banks rose covers the corner of the left side of the house. The tiny rosettes are the best reward any plant could bestow for having survived another winter.

More than 20 years ago, Rowell says he knew immediately that a formal courtyard would go well with the historic home. Rowell’s due diligence in research of historic homes and gardens led him to the perfect conclusion: an oval courtyard.

The oval is quite significant in relation to the historical home. Since there was





no longer an original garden attached to the house, according to Rowell, the oval garden omits confusion that the current garden could have been original to the house. Oval was not a design employed in the late 1800s – an important distinction to the buyers of Victorian homes. As a landscape designer, considerations such as these are at the forefront of Rowell's designs.

The green steel edging outlining the garden and 800 boxwoods, planted by Rowell and Fagan, became the backbone of the garden. Vegetables and boxwoods reigned supreme the first several years. Eventually, most of the vegetable gardens were edged out by Rowell's and Fagan's fondness for the variety of flower colors and scents.

Spring initiates the firework display: 400 Spanish bluebells begin the show, followed by drifts of showy primrose. A burst of blue star flowers (Iphion) blanket the grass areas with tiny light blue/lavender flowers. Iphions once covered large areas of downtown Eatonton. Their numbers have dwindled significantly over the years. Rowell now has one of the



Keith Rowell and Shelagh Fagan installed a formal courtyard at their picture-perfect Victorian home in downtown Eatonton. Grounded in shades of greens from 800 boxwoods, the garden is punctuated by bright colors of daffodils, morning glories, bluebells, and primrose.



largest plantings of the dainty flower. He is so passionate about the survival of this flower he uses no chemicals in the lawn.

The artistry of color in this garden flows from end to end. Primary colors red, blue and yellow are represented by blue morning glory, red crocosmia, and the clear yellow of daffodils. Passionflower bears the secondary color purple, black-eyed Susans thickly sway with orange. The third secondary color, green, runs the gamut in the garden: leaves, stalks, fronds, vines and Hosta. The varying colors of green – hunter green to chartreuse – bring a coolness to the garden.

Rowell created the garden so the walkway and the fountain of the parterre are aligned to the center of the kitchen windows.

“All these years later, I still enjoy the view,” Rowell says.

The lush views can be seen through the windows wherever he is in the house. He and Fagan are always privy to the constant movement of life in the garden: butterflies sipping nectar as they ride the swaying flower heads, bees having fallen asleep in the center of a trumpet flower, and birds helping themselves to the rich assortment of insects, particularly caterpillars, and seed.

“Work with nature,” Rowell advises. “Your best design will be a collaboration with the weather and the soil rather than a fight with it. You can win either way, but the former is more satisfying.”

Julia Owens is a freelance writer in Eatonton, Ga.

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RAISE *the* ROOF

Annual Lake Oconee Showcase of Homes
becomes a virtual 4-day event to raise funds for
Greene County Habitat for Humanity

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JARROD BROCK

At any other time, the popular Lake Oconee Showcase of Homes opens the doors to some of the lake area's most exquisite homes during an annual tour of homes each fall. This year, homeowners will still welcome the community into their homes, only they'll be doing so virtually during a special 4-day broadcast event.

The format of the 2020 Lake Oconee Showcase of Homes was modified so that proceeds could continue to support Greene County Habitat for Humanity in its mission to provide safe, affordable housing for families in need while keeping the community's health and safety in mind during the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds are raised each year through sponsorships, ticket sales, and an auction or raffle. This year will be no different.

The special "Raise the Roof" event begins Monday, September 14 and will be a 4-day virtual event featuring online broadcasts of personally and professionally guided tours of four private homes in Reynolds Lake Oconee along with the newly-redesigned Lake House

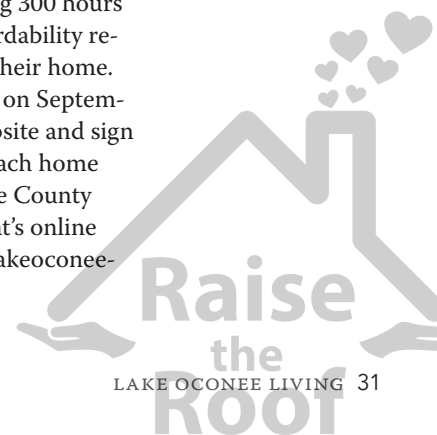
at The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Lake Oconee.


Discover a glimpse of each home on the following pages where we highlight features from a modern farmhouse to a rustic retreat.

The online campaign will include surprise appearances, an exciting auction, and a chance to help "Raise the Roof" for Greene County families in need of safe, affordable homes. Proceeds from the Showcase benefit Habitat with the goal of building a home for a deserving Greene County family in need.

Habitat homes are affordable to the family, they are not free; each family must meet specific requirements, including participating in mentoring programs, contributing 300 hours of sweat equity, and meeting affordability requirements, prior to purchasing their home.

To "attend" the 2020 Showcase on September 14-17, visit the Showcase website and sign up for emails to receive links to each home tour. You can also support Greene County Habitat by taking part in the event's online auction. Details can be found at lakeoconee-showcaseofhomes.org.



A photograph of a bright, modern kitchen. The focal point is a large, rectangular island with a thick, white marble countertop featuring grey veining. A large, spherical pendant light with a metal frame and multiple warm-toned bulbs hangs from the ceiling. The kitchen has white cabinetry with glass-fronted upper cabinets and a stainless steel refrigerator. The floor is made of light-colored wood. In the background, a staircase with a wooden railing is visible. The overall aesthetic is clean and sophisticated.

The Jones maximized the space in the kitchen with an oversized island and seamless top that keeps the space open and accessible to other living areas.

CASUAL SOPHISTICATION



Uninterrupted views of Lake Oconee is the hallmark of this home, from the upstairs deck and screened porch to the pool area below. Steve Jones says his favorite spot is sitting at the edge of the infinity pool, framed by two fire bowls.

Light wood tones and industrial textures come together to create a casual, yet sophisticated, aesthetic in this custom-built home of Steve and Cindy Jones.

With stunning views of Lake Oconee from nearly every room, these bright and



airy living spaces are punctuated with stark iron accents like the modern industrial staircase created by Stair South and subtle black brackets on the exposed beams. Fixtures and furnishings from Restoration Hardware also pull in the metal textures and balance the look of the light wood floors.

“Our floors are one of our favorite things about the house,” says Steve Jones. The light, wide-plank floors are part of Shaw Floors’ new hardwood collection, The Gallery. They are made from Castlewood Oak and stained in the color “Tapestry.”

The industrial aesthetic continues downstairs, at the terrace level, behind the bar and into the wine cellar. The cellar door, also crafted by Stair South, steals the show.

While Cindy was in charge of furnishing the home, Steve utilized his degree in architecture to scale the home’s living spaces to make them intimate for their family, while maximizing spaces to make them practical.

“We were looking for something in the right proportions,” he says. “So often



The Jones added textures throughout the house like the shiplap accent wall behind open shelving in the living room and wood tray ceilings in the master bath. The intricate iron door to the wine cellar (far right) was crafted by StairSouth.

you see homes that are ginormous, but I feel like this is a decent size without being gargantuan.”

Then, he says, it was all about the views.

The uninterrupted views of the lake are the hallmarks of this house. The Jones added more windows to the existing plan and made sure to situate their home offices to take advantage of the views.

Outside, the expansive deck offers plenty of outdoor living space. The screened porch off of the kitchen is enclosed with oversized screened windows that easily raise up on all sides to offer nice cross breezes in any season.

“It really is a four season room,” says Jones. “It’s a great space to sit and it



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feels great when all the windows are raised up and you've got something on the grill."

The terrace level below has another outdoor kitchen area and is framed by colorful landscaping. The space was designed to showcase the elegant pool system that highlights the already unbelievable view of the

lake.

Jones says his favorite spot on the whole property is sitting at the edge of the infinity pool, between dancing fire bowls, looking out over Lake Oconee. "Just look at these views," he says. "We pinch ourselves every day."



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RUSTIC REFINEMENT

When Bryan Combs of Artisan Built began working with the homeowners of this refined rustic home, they made it clear they want a lake house, not just a house on the lake. They wanted a true timber-framed home that would bring dramatic height and architectural detail to their main living spaces.

“So often times people want the look of a real timber frame without the hassle,” says Combs. “We do a lot of solid timbers in our designs, but they’re just decorative. Timber

frames add some time and expense to a project, but in the end, it’s well worth it.”

Artisan Built sourced the timber frames from a company in Tennessee that they’d previously worked with to build Gaby’s at The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Lake Oconee. The structures are held together with Mortise & Tenon joints in lieu of mechanical fasteners.

“I’ve probably built 100 homes now and this is only the second home I’ve built, other than the work at the Ritz, where we used the



Architectural details abound in this timber-framed home that is well-appointed with antiques in every space.





timber frame as part of the structure,” says Combs.

But the timber frame is not the only dynamic architectural feature highlighted in this home. The floors are wide-plank oak floors in a walnut stain that blend effortlessly with the natural stone of the fireplace and its stone mantle. “The fireplaces in this home certainly make a statement,” says Combs.

In the foyer, above the ornamental iron door, is a curved barrel-ceiling. From there, the eye moves to the exposed beams above the family room, detailed with intricate finials. The room is ap-

pointed with elegant antique furnishings and art, including a turn-of-the-century English sideboard and a prized butler’s desk that fits perfectly in a nook beside the fireplace.

The formal dining room just off of the foyer is set with the couple’s wedding china. A more casual dining area is part of the expansive kitchen next door.

The bright and open kitchen has double islands underneath two dormers. In the original house plan, there was attic space above the kitchen, but the homeowners couldn’t stand wasting the dormers. They eliminated the attic and

put the dormers to use pulling sunlight to fill the now 22-foot ceiling.

Shiplap was added to the ceiling for texture and interior designer, Jennifer Binion, opted for a herringbone pattern for the tile floor.

The keeping room, separated from the kitchen by a frame of solid timbers, is formal, yet comfortable and offers lovely views of the lake.

In the master bedroom, Binion used neutral colors for the big, bright, airy space and chose patterns and colors that complemented the owners’ antique watercolors that were used in the space.



In the downstairs bedroom that guests have dubbed the “Tommy Bahama room,” Binion used the owner’s antique rug for inspiration, pulling a soft orange and coral color from it to use in the color scheme.

The rest of the terrace level is unexpected and lovely. A formal library, complete with an original Chesterfield sofa from England, is tucked beside the downstairs kitchen with a marbled leather island. The living space holds more antique seating in front of the bar area and opens up to the pool with private views of the lake.





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MODERN MIX

The sleek, modern lines of the home of Susan and Roger Pitt, belies an eclectic mix of old-world antiques and fresh, updated pieces. Contemporary lamps shine next to 18th century chairs and modern figurative art hangs down the hall from Susan's mother's hummingbird prints.

You'd never know from the monochromatic exterior of the home, built by Jones & Jones Custom Premier Builders, that modern colors dance throughout the bright and open layout, appointed with sentimental pieces, old and new.

"We wanted something different than the woody, lodge look," says Susan Pitt. "We really wanted a more modern house with clean lines and a no-fuss look."

An elegant chest made with oyster wood sits in the foyer. It was the first piece Susan purchased from an antique store in Louisiana. While living in nearby Mobile, Alabama, when their three sons were young, Susan was able to make trips frequently to the antique stores – maybe too frequently, she jokes.

"We've got antiques like my hall piece that have followed me everywhere we have moved, old clocks, and glass top tables that have just



Antique and contemporary pieces come together in this home to create an updated classical look.



The home's exterior is monochromatic with sleek, modern lines. This aesthetic carries into other living spaces like the expansive master closet, above. Downstairs, an antique Brunswick pool table from the 1800s sits in front of a collection of various art.

always found a place with us," says Susan Pitt. "We've got a lot of different mixes, but they've just always fit together."

The keeping room off the kitchen, where the Pitts spend much of their time, opens onto an inviting screened porch, offering a lovely view of the lake. Susan built the design of the keeping room around its coffee table, a piece she's had since she was 30 years old. On the porch, she incorporated the family's old breakfast table into the outdoor living space.

The Pitts said they wanted everything in the house to stay bright and open in typical lake house fashion. They selected a light wood tone for the beams in their living room which was reminiscent of their home in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They chose white kitchen cabinetry with light marbled countertops and soft fabrics for the windows. Downstairs, Susan painted several pieces of existing furniture for the bedrooms to lighten the heavy woods, and she kept the bunk room bright and airy with pops of green as a dramatic accent.

"With this house, I tried to be more sleek and less traditional," says Susan. "I didn't want a completely modern look, just an updated classical look."

There is an eclectic mix of art throughout the home, from the collage downstairs in front of the pool table to the figurative pieces in the living and keeping rooms, but perhaps the most prized gallery is the one lining the back hallway leading to the garage. The Pitts have filled the walls with their three sons' art throughout the decades – bright, colorful clowns and sweet brown bunnies. Rogers says that you can see each of their personalities through their childhood art.

"Their art is just like everything else in this house," says Susan. "We find things we like and just put them together. If you love them, it works."



A spiral staircase connects the downstairs living area to the upstairs deck that offers lofty views of Lake Oconee.



FARMHOUSE CHARM

Within the walls of the exquisite seven-bedroom home of Connie and Roger Blythe is an unexpected charm and comfort of an old-fashioned farmhouse. The home was designed and built specifically around the things the Blythes hold dear – family, entertaining, and comfort.

With 33 immediate family members, the Blythes do a lot of entertaining and they wanted to create a comfortable environment for everyone to enjoy when they came to stay at the lake.

The Blythes worked with DreamBuilt to create practical spaces that fit their needs. The living room is open to the bright and airy kitchen and is accented by large weathered wood timbers to create a true farmhouse feel. The back wall of the room is made up of an expansive folding door system that opens completely onto the screened deck.

In keeping with the farmhouse details, the kitchen features white cabinetry, an apron sink, an oversized island, and sliding barn doors on the pantry. It's an ideal place to show off Connie's favorite collection of MacKenzie-Childs ceramics



The farmhouse kitchen with its white cabinetry, oversized island, and sliding pantry doors is an ideal place to display a collection of MacKenzie-Childs ceramics and home décor.





and home décor.

Interior designer Shane Meder of Black Sheep Interiors, used her collection as a launching point to surround the home in the same bright pops of color and florals. Connie says they developed the home's major color schemes from a set of her favorite placemats.

"That's the one thing I told him I wanted was a lot of color," says Connie. Together, they selected fabric to complement the kitchen patterns. The dining room chairs have colorful "birds on a wire." The window treatments above the sink are bold florals and the fabric colors in the living room were even plucked from the kitchen placemat palette.

Everything, including the custom-built dining room table, was designed with large-scale entertaining in mind.

"Connie loves to entertain and loves to cook and we had to reflect that in the way the spaces flowed together," says Meder. She often prepares huge Sunday dinners for family and friends and recently threw a party for her parent's 90th birthday. At her home in Fayetteville, she has a large "party barn" filled with tables and chandeliers that opens up for easy entertaining.

With such a large family, the Blythes created plenty of comfortable accommodations with two guest rooms above the garage, three on the terrace level and even an secondary master suite for their parents to enjoy when they visit.

The main master suite is an oasis of calming blues and grays. An oversized cabinet holds per-



Shane Meder of Black Sheep Interiors brought in bold colors and patterns to each living space. The home features six guest rooms to accommodate the owners' large family.



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sonal memorabilia from the Blythes' travels around the world.

Just outside the master suite is Roger's office with an elegant barreled ceiling and built-in bookcases.

Downstairs, his collection of Peter Lik photographs line a hallway off the great room and bar area. Enhanced by gallery lighting, the nature and landscape photographs give the impression of being illuminated from behind.

The terrace level also features a personal workout space, wine cellar, lavish theater room, and small "art gallery" just off the elevator hall. Even the pool table reflects the home's farmhouse style.

The entertainment spaces extend outside to the pool area which includes plenty of gliders and rockers for seating and a nearby outdoor kitchen. Directly above on the screened deck is an identical outdoor kitchen where you can find the Blythes most nights, relaxing and enjoying the sunset over the water.



DreamBuilt added architectural details like weather wood timbers in the living room to create a farmhouse feel.

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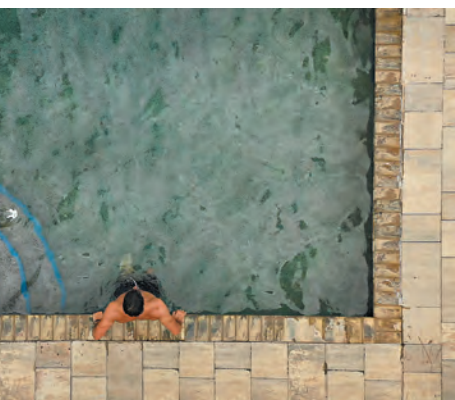
LUXURY REVISITED

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ROBIN BISH

The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Lake Oconee, a brand that is synonymous with luxury, recently unveiled a dramatic redesign of its signature Lake House. The exclusive three-story, four-bedroom cottage with its own private pool has been updated with a modern elegance that reflects the natural beauty of the cottage's surroundings.

The redesign, led by Shane Meder of Black Sheep Interiors, was driven by transforming the classic wood tones throughout the house into a lighter, more relaxing aesthetic. Meder chose a consistent white and richer graphite accent color to modernize the main living spaces and appointed each room with updated furnishings and modern accent pieces.

"Simply put, it goes from a lodge house to a lake house," says Ralph Vick, General Manager at The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Lake Oconee. "It is now light and airy and doesn't feel like you're in a log cabin anymore. It has kept some traditional Southern touches





The deep wood tones throughout the house were updated with a soft white and graphite color scheme.

while adding a few contemporary twists on it as well. I'm thrilled with the update."

Meder says he wanted a design that fit with the look of the surrounding community but didn't erase the elegant feel of the cottage.

"I didn't want to wash away the great history of this house, it was just time for a new, fresh approach to its design," says Meder.

He created relaxing spaces in the living room and adjoining dining room with new furnishings and polished accent pieces. The kitchen was completely updated with modern appliances and a stylish metal hood over the stove. The small prep island was replaced with a larger marble topped island with seating.

Meder opened up a bar area that was tucked away beside the kitchen by completely removing the dark wooden doors that closed it off from the entryway. It now serves as the perfect space for a personalized Cottage Concierge to curate the stay for guests at the cottage, arrange experiences, and assist with entertaining.

The more formal entryway was softened with a plush built-in banquette and sconce lighting.

"I wanted to make this area more



welcoming as you walk in," says Meder. He repurposed the space's previous chest and pair of lamps in the stairwell area nearby.

The elegant stairwell received a drastic new look. The floral carpet was removed and the stairs' dark wood was painted to match the main living area. The dark wooden spindles were replaced by StairSouth with an iron rail design of

branches to evoke the outside environment. Meder pulled in shades of greens and blues simultaneously and created a focal point collage of botanical prints on the expansive wall of the stairwell.

"We put more than 30 prints closely together on the wall to give the feel of wallpaper without the formality," says Meder.

The three bedrooms upstairs each



convey a different feel through Meder's use of color and texture.

"I like that the bedrooms are all distinctively different, but all fit together and work," says Vick.

One room features black and white "Americana-inspired" prints of country barns with pops of red, white, and blue. "It looks like these images could be found anywhere in Greene County," says Meder.

"This is probably my favorite bedroom because it's just nostalgic and feels like the lake."

Across the room, he used prints of old-fashioned fishing lures framed in a floating plexiglass overlay, to reflect the region even more. "I loved these nostalgic fishing lures but didn't want to put them in typical wooden frames," says Meder. "This is a contemporary way to feel like you've tied the old and new together."

The bottom level "retreat area" with its great room and game spaces was also completely transformed. Meder lightened the painted concrete floors, added barn wood accent walls for texture, and created various intimate seating clusters around the bar area, shuffleboard table, pool table, and even along the



The kitchen (top) saw major up-dates during the renovation, while some spaces (above) maintained touches of the house's original look. The new white oak dining table (left) is connected to the main living space and can seat up to 12 guests.



back of the sofa in the great room.

“We had to think about the in-house dining experiences of the guests so we created plenty of seating downstairs,” says Meder.

The great room opens out onto the private pool and spacious patio, where Meder once again added plenty of seating with wicker loungers, sofas, and chairs along with fire tables and oversized planters.

He knew this would be a space guests would enjoy and selected items to complement the breathtaking views of the lake that serve as a backdrop for the property – now a true lake house.

“I’m really proud of how it turned out,” says Meder. “To be able to have impacted a small piece of this lake’s history is surreal. For 15 years now, we’ve been driving by the resort and slowing down the boat because we heard so-and-so was staying at the lake house. The idea that I’d actually have a voice in what that house looks like and how those people entertain in it makes me feel really connected to this property. So now, when I’m an old man and we’re in the boat riding slowly past, I’ll say, ‘I wonder if they’re enjoying the kitchen, or the upstairs, or playing in the great room downstairs,’ and I’ll remember the honor I had of being the designer for this piece of the property’s new chapter.”

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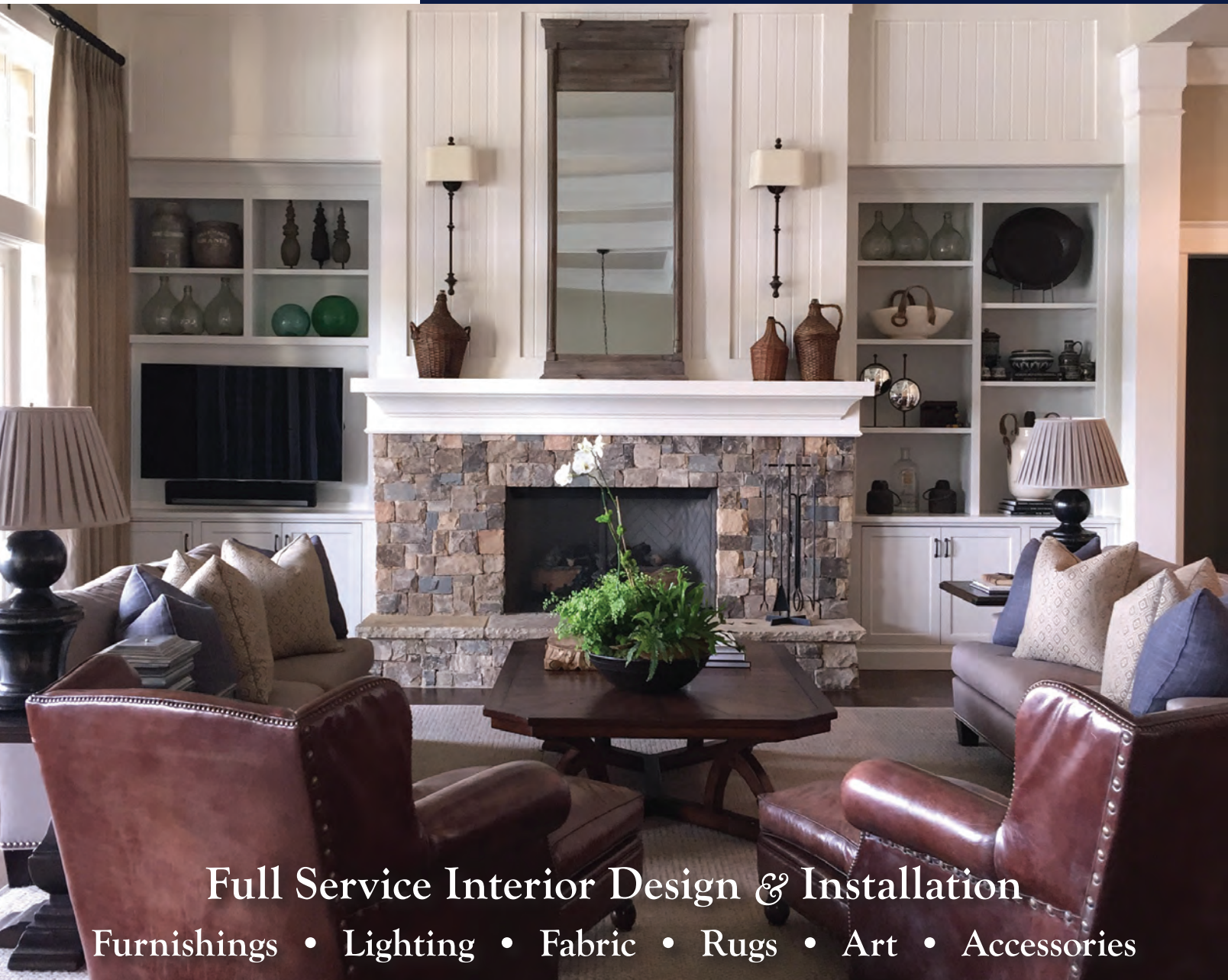


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Traditional style beckons guests to Cindy and Steve Jones' Lake Oconee home, featured on this year's Showcase of Homes virtual tour to benefit Greene County Habitat for Humanity (see page 30).

PHOTO BY JARROD BROCK



GATEWAYS

To our homes

STORY BY LEARA RHODES

Time spent in Oxford, England, gave me a new but negative look at my front door. There were so many intricately carved doors and arches and gateways in Oxford. I walked around staring as though I had never seen architecture before. I peered at many doors and made mental notes. Now, back home, I saw that my entry way was fine; it had a sturdy mahogany door with square panels of bas-relief wood and long glass panels running parallel to the door. However, I wanted something...some color, some energy, something magical.

My artist friends suggested stained glass, but I didn't want a cathedral look. I consulted Christie Moody, a fusion glass artist at the Blue Heron Glass Art studio, who has been creating whimsical and luminous fused glass art, inspired by her interaction with oceanic and riverine flora and fauna, for 30 years. We talked; I loved her work. The only request I made was that the design would tell a story. She designed "Bali Dream," an architectural installation along with wood artisan, Peter Bull, who used white oak for the accents that framed the glass. I have 22 white oak trees in my backyard. With the art glass on either side, now the door is the gateway into my home; one filled with art and collectibles from all over the world.

"Doors are certainly the gateway into the home," says Riezl Baker, a realtor with Luxury Lake Oconee Real Estate. The lake area is where she has worked for the past 20 years. "They provide the exclamation point to accession to the house."

Entries are important, that's why there are red carpet events and fanfares. In literature, doors symbolize beginnings, ends, or choices presenting an unknown path for a hero/heroine. They often metaphorically represent choices or emotional struggles like the famous door of Ebenezer Scrooge's in Charles Dickens' 1843 novel "A Christmas Carol," according to Famous Doors in Literature, 2016.

The Romans, however, made doors important when they named their most prominent god: Janus, the god

of doors and archways. Janus was the god of beginnings and transitions. Often depicted as a two-faced god, Janus has one face looking to the future and the other looking to the past, according to Wu Mingren in his article, "How Janus Became the Doorkeeper of Heaven and God to the Gods." A shrine to Janus in Rome, the Janus Geminus ("Twin Janus"), is bronze with double doors at each end. Legend says that during times of peace, the doors are to be closed; during war, the doors are to be left open, according to Stephen Buriek in "The History of Doors: A Travel Through Time."

Whether open or closed, doors have a storied history that has been influenced by philosophy and design trends over the years.

FIRST DOORS

Throughout the ancient world, doors were hides or textiles. Other materials were wood, stone, metal, glass, paper, and leaves. Then, based on its durability and strength, wood became the most used type of door. And according to Pompeiian murals, the door has not changed a lot. The wood paneled doors were constructed of stiles (vertical beams) and rails (horizontal beams) framed together to support panels and equipped with locks and hinges, according to Amy Tikkanan, an editor of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Egyptian doors are thought to be the first real doors dated at around 12,000 BCE when caves with a square entry were introduced, according to Annie Deakin in "History and Function of Doors." Her Articles Factory post cited that other first doors include King Solomon's temple doors made of olive wood and stone doors found in India which had pivots on each end and fit into sockets.

Once doors became a permanent part of a house, the door also became symbolic. Doors have been designed to honor people and gods. Throughout history inscriptions have been placed on doorways to invite guests in while making others unwelcome. Doors have been

intricately carved with lions, dragons, and deities to serve as both warning and greeting. During the 12th and 13th century in medieval times, “The Symbol at Your Door” was significant. Differing seals could stand for reputation, prestige, status and wealth, according to Buriek. These historical doors not only had inscriptions, some were even automated and others were full of ritual, according to the Qualified Hardware website on famous doors.

In Zanzibar, off the coast of East Africa (Tanzania), the door was traditionally the first part of a house to be erected, according to Chris and Susan McIntyre in their Bradt Guide. The greater the wealth and status of the house’s owner, the larger and more elaborately carved was the front door. The oldest carved door in Zanzibar, which dates from 1694, is now the front door of the Zanzibar Museum of Art.

INFLUENCE OF DESIGN

Whether inspired by fiction like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s 221B Baker Street, established by tradition like London’s 10 Downing Street, or created through sheer practicality like humankind’s first doors, design trends have been influenced by philosophy and craftsmanship.

Throughout recent history, famed architects including Greene & Greene and Frank Lloyd Wright have integrated nature into door design, especially during the Arts & Crafts movement. “Wright is relevant because he never gave up on the timeless,” writes Margo Stipe, the Director and Curator of Collections at the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. “He believed beauty, the arts, and communion with nature were vital to the well-being of people.”

Much of his work was shaped by this philosophy of nature, not unlike the concept of feng shui which dates back to ancient China and still finds popularity today. Baker says she had a client at Lake Oconee who was definitely looking for a house to fit her idea of feng shui.

This philosophy is a way of looking at living spaces and the working environment then striking a balance with the natural world. The Chinese words translate to mean wind and water, according to Anjie Cho in The Spruce. In feng shui, the front door is the gate through which chi – or good energy – enters the home, and certain feng shui techniques can help invite this energy and create good vibrations for everyone living there.

Chris Deziel also suggests in his article, “Feng Shui Ideas for a North-Facing Front Door,” that harmonizing the door with the direction it faces is important, because that invites energy in harmony with the surroundings.

The crafting of the door is as important as the design or placement.

Artisan Peter Bull, who worked with Christie Moody to create the glass art panels on either side of my home door, has been a woodworker for 43 years in restoration, furniture and traditional timber frame projects. He works with many types of wood, sourcing them through suppliers in different mills around Georgia.

The process of building a custom door is more than just determining size, hardware, wood type, and locking system. Creating a door is a collaboration between the artist and the owner, says Bull. A custom-made door takes about 20 weeks to create for a 3’x7’ door and can cost between \$3,000 to \$15,000 depending on

The intricate stained glass door of this thoroughly Arts & Crafts home in Madison is a replica of the famed Gamble House in Pasadena, Calif., designed by Greene & Greene architects.



FILE PHOTO

size, wood, and design, he says.

Though Bull often uses mahogany because it is a strong wood for exterior doors, Richard Kuehndorf, the owner of Carlton’s Rare Woods in Atlanta, confirms that both teak and mahogany are the strongest woods but can be pricy. The teak wood can cost \$30 per square foot and if it is two inches thick can be up to \$100 a square foot. He often uses Sapele mahogany, a dark hard wood from Nigeria because Kuehndorf finds it is a better wood when cut with a radial cut. He suggests that alder wood from western Oregon is good for people who want more knot holes for a cabin look. White oak is the next hardest wood after mahogany, says Kuehndorf. Kuehndorf gets purpleheart (Peltogyne) from South America, a dense and water-resistant wood that will last forever. The heartwood when cut, turns from a light brown to a rich purple color with a straight grain.

Custom built is one way to get an interesting door; another way is to repurpose antique doors. Ryan Miller, co-owner of Artisan Built with Bryan Combs, are custom builders for 19 years



Riezl Baker with Luxury Lake Oconee Real Estate has seen the trends in front doors change over the past 20 years, with more homes incorporating more glass into traditional wood and metal textures.

in the Lake Oconee area. Miller had a client that wanted character in his custom-built home. "I was looking around sourcing items and saw these doors. Two doors, antique doors with seven coats of paint on them but they had character and depth," says Miller. He worked in partnership with a local millwork





This custom made door, created by glass artist Christie Moody and woodworker Peter Bull, sets the stage for guests of writer Leara Rhodes as they enter her home filled with art and collectibles that reflect her travels all over the world.

shop to create the doors the client wanted. "It took about three weeks but that was good because the wood worker got all excited about the doors and wanted to own it and be part of it," says Miller.

Though custom builders and most people in the business of supplying doors for homes agree that mahogany is the strongest wood to use in a door, trends are changing.

"Clients are now preferring more glass on the front door," says Baker. Her own front door has a lot of glass, double doors, mahogany with a view straight through the house to the lake beyond. Another trend, according to Miller, "is more of a commercial look, steel doors with thin frames, slim lines and a minimalist material but with glass." The glass is either true divided light, where individual panes of glass are built into the door or simulated divided light, where the door has one pane of glass but with bars laid on top of it. Another trend, says Miller, is eight-foot-high double doors with transoms over the top to create a grand entrance. His home door is 3'x 8' Sapele mahogany with a true radius (arch top), a glass top, and wood bottom.

Doors may be the gateway into our homes, but with most lake homes with a view, the exits are often just as dynamic. Miller remembered a difficult but rewarding project. "We built ten-foot sliding pocket doors that when they were open it felt as though an entire wall was missing. The view was of the lake. Very rewarding aesthetically," says Miller.

History, philosophy, and craftsmanship may have influenced how doors have taken on meaning over and above just being a door, but it's the homeowner who ultimately controls how to make a door the gateway to a home. I did exactly that with my "Bali Dream" door. It is magical.



The glass of this oversized iron door in the home of Susan and Roger Pitt gives way to breathtaking views of sunsets over Lake Oconee. See more of the home during the 2020 Showcase of Homes virtual tour to benefit Greene County Habitat for Humanity.

PHOTO BY ROGER PITT

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the ART *of* BALANCE

STORY BY ANDREA GABLE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY LAMB,
NATIVE HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

Three years ago, Ashley Martin fell in love with Lake Oconee. After a birthday trip to The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Lake Oconee, the Orlando-based interior designer came home raving about the region. Her endorsement was so strong that a few months later, her parents, Keith and Amy Mahen, decided to see it for themselves. They spent five



days at the lake and by the time they got back to Florida, they had a contract on a house in Reynolds Lake Oconee.

Knowing the home would be filled frequently by their large family, Martin put her skills to work designing a comfortable retreat to be enjoyed by generations. She planned each room with purpose, creating a cohesive aesthetic with warm earth tones, varied textures, and pops of contemporary accents throughout.

She began with a blank canvas.

"I really feel like we had a great base to work with," says Martin. "The home already had gorgeous wood tones with the beams and mantle on the stone fireplace. The bones and structure of the home was a beautiful canvas to start working with, both interior and exterior."

The traditional home was bathed in neutral tones, which, for Martin, is always a good starting point.

"My general aesthetic is to go with a neutral palette and add calming colors with pillows and artwork and accents – things that add interest to the room but are easy to change out," says Martin. "I like filling



THE MAHENS COULDN'T RESIST THE TAXIDERMIED MOOSE WHEN THEY CAME ACROSS IT IN AN ATHENS ANTIQUE STORE. 'MARTY THE MOOSE' FOUND A PROMINENT PLACE IN THE LARGE LIVING SPACE AND EVEN WEARS A SCARF AT CHRISTMASTIME.



*I try to find a **BALANCE**. It's all about maintaining a classic feel with an **UPDATED LOOK** that can still stand the **TEST OF TIME**.*



a home with things that are easy to switch out without a huge investment down the road.”

Her goal was to bring in modern touches to the spaces without overpowering the classic feel of the home.

“I try to find a balance,” she says. “In some spaces the pillows may have a more contemporary pattern but the artwork is more traditional. Or if a room has contemporary lighting, I try to play off of that with something traditional. It’s all about maintaining a classic feel with an updated look that can still stand the test of time.”

From there Martin concentrated on creating focal points for each space, like the black pendant lights floating against the stark white kitchen. She incorporated more metals throughout the house with an iron canopy bed in the master, black iron console tables with mirrored tops, and classic iron beds in the guest room.

Rich textures were balanced by soft fabrics and leather details in every room – an ottoman in the living room, a bench in the master, and stools at the kitchen island.

“I tried to pull everything throughout the house so that when you walk through the space there is a consistency with the metal accents, blue colors, and textures like the leathers and upholstered beds.”

Martin infused subtle blues throughout the house with

fabrics, art, pillows, and accessories.

“Blue is never going out of style,” she says, “and it ended up being a key component in most of the rooms.”

Martin said there was very little lighting throughout the house when her parents moved in, so she went to work adding new fixtures in every space.

“This was one of the things that made a huge impact,” she says. “The custom lighting just really gives each room a unique feel.”

Knowing how her family would be using each space, she was able to design each room with purpose.”

The living room was already a large space, perfect for a large family. “There are ten of us now, so we knew we were really going to use this space,” she says. Martin maximized the seating with a large sectional, accent chairs, and oversized ottoman, where she says the younger kids prefer to pile up.

Seating was also at the forefront of the kitchen design. Martin added classic leather stools to the island area so that there would be enough room between the open kitchen and dining room.

With the bedrooms, Martin was really able to personalize the design of each space based on who would be using each room.

Upstairs, three white twin beds covered in lush pink bed-

MARTIN CREATED A COHESIVE AESTHETIC THROUGHOUT THE HOME WITH WARM EARTH TONES, VARIED TEXTURES, AND POPS OF CONTEMPORARY ACCENTS THROUGHOUT. SHE SAYS SHE LIKES STARTING WITH A NEUTRAL PALETTE AND ADDING CALMING COLORS AND INTERESTING ACCENTS TO A ROOM THAT ARE EASY TO CHANGE OUT WITHOUT MAKING A HUGE INVESTMENT DOWN THE ROAD.



ding were set up in a room for all three granddaughters. Across the hall, is the two grandsons' room with deeper tones and whimsical art.

The two other guest rooms are reserved for Martin and her sister and their spouses. Downstairs, Martin created an intimate "whiskey lounge." Upstairs, she created a playroom in the loft area off the two kids' bedrooms. Each room has a purpose. Each space has balance.

This balance of textures and touches of blue are carried through to the home's two outdoor living spaces; a large screened porch off of the family room and another, more intimate space with an outdoor fireplace off of the dining room. Even though the spaces aren't connected, they are still accessible to each other and Martin says she kept that in mind while selecting the furniture.

"I wanted the spaces to make sense next to each other without being too 'matchy,'" she says. She chose a mix of wood and wicker seating, punctuated by colorful drum tables. "Having both wood tones and woven textures really marries the spaces beautifully together."

Outside and in, each space fulfills its purpose and blends effortlessly together. Overall, the home paints a picture of life at the lake, personalized room-by-room for the family within.





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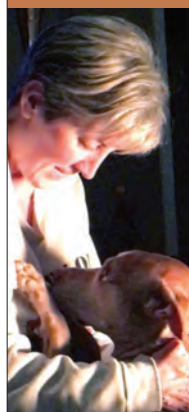
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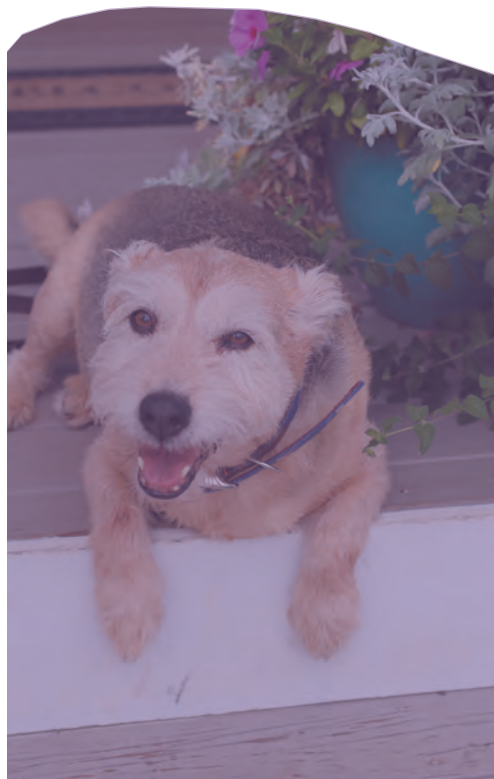
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DOGS IN BUSINESS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRINITY MARTIN



Over the past few months, many of us have found ourselves working from home, and while that may come with a newfound set of frustrations, our dogs couldn't be happier. Unaware of any pandemic, our four-legged family members are experiencing a golden age, spending uninterrupted work days with their humans.

But for many Lake Oconee business owners, things are "business as usual" since their dogs are by their side whether at home or in the office. Customers have come to expect the familiar furry faces at the local shops and offices at Lake Oconee and are happy to see the following dogs back in business.



WINNIE

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Diamonds may be a girl's best friend, but dogs are man's best friend. Just ask Greensboro Jewelers owner, Mark Blanton.

His heart was stolen, reluctantly, by a little dachshund named Winnie six years ago. Mark's wife, Susan, brought a tiny wiener dog puppy home from the Oconee Regional Humane Society. She says the only way she could sell Mark on keeping her was to promise to let him name the dog.

He came up with Winnie Palmer Blanton, named after Arnold Palmer's first wife, and immediately, Winnie had found her forever home.

She's since led quite the pampered life, surrounded by diamonds and pearls at Mark's downtown Greensboro storefront. But at home, she stays true to her instinctual roots, chasing chipmunks like any good dachshund. And, like any other proud father, Mark is there cheering her on to "take them out!"

But at work, this little huntress is only there to help customers find their new best friend, whether it be a top-quality diamond or a sweet rescue dog like Winnie.



RUDY



For a store that caters to the laid-back lifestyle of the lake, Rudy couldn't be a more perfect "employee" at Lake Country Outfitters.

The 11-year-old Terrier mix spends his work-days relaxing on his dog bed next to the register, and though he may be nearing retirement age in dog years, owners Holly and Preston Shaifer say he's essential to their staff.

"If we don't bring him in one day, people will fuss," says Holly.

"We have one customer who comes in a lot and he says the best thing about this store is Rudy," laughs Preston.

Rudy has become such a fixture in the store that people, especially children, seek him out for belly rubs and kisses while their parents shop, and almost all customers joke about his never-changing calm demeanor.

"He's always been an old man," says Holly.

Holly, Preston, and their daughter, Ann Hayes, adopted Rudy when he was eight weeks old. He was being fostered in Eatonton through the Oconee Regional Humane Society. Holly says they had picked out a female puppy from the litter, but ended up taking home the runt. "They kept telling us, 'This is the puppy you want,'" Holly remembers. "He's got the most personality. I know he's the runt and you didn't want a male, but I'm telling you this is the puppy you want."

They heeded this advice and Holly says it was the perfect decision for their family.

"He's always been this calm," says Holly. She admits she can't say the same for his sister, a yellow lab named Susie, who sometimes joins Rudy at the Shaifers' other business next door, Lake Oconee Ace Hardware.

"Susie is the opposite of Rudy and gets really excited when other dogs come in," says Holly. "Our Ace is very pet-friendly and we love it. We have our routine dogs that come in and they know they'll always get treats," she says.

Each register is stocked with treats for four-legged shoppers and the regulars know it. "It's funny to see them come in and head straight for the registers," says Holly.

But across the street, the sweetest treat you'll find at the register is Rudy, curled up in his comfy bed waiting patiently for a pat on the head from shoppers at Lake Country Outfitters.



KEKE

KeKe arrives to work in style.

With her perfectly coiffed fluffy hair and pink rhinestone collar, the Pomeranian mix pulls into Falanga & Chalker Law Firm at Lake Oconee in a sleek, black Corvette. Her custom car seat raises her up to eye level so she can see out of the window and flash her sweet smile – enhanced by a perfectly crooked tooth – at cars passing by.

Her owner, Robert Falanga says he enjoys the funny looks they get on the way in to work, but even more so enjoys the company that KeKe provides.

“I always wanted to have a dog of my own,” says Falanga. His wife had dogs, and while he enjoyed loving on them, it was apparent, he says, that they were attached to her. One day, his wife discovered KeKe online and suggested they pay her a visit. She was being fostered in a home in Atlanta and Falanga says as soon as their host let KeKe inside, he knew she was special.

“The lady opened up the screen door to the yard and she came running in, circled the couch two times, and jumped in my lap





and started licking my face,” says Falanga. “My wife said, ‘Well, I guess she’s yours. She picked you.’”

And that’s exactly how Falanga believes it works. “They say every dog picks their person, not the other way around, and I’m her person.”

KeKe chose wisely that day and has enjoyed a life of luxury ever since. The now eight-year-old travels back and forth with Falanga between his Alpharetta and Lake Oconee offices and spends all day getting doted on by her coworkers and clients. She sits in on meetings, snuggled into her favorite spot on Falanga’s desk, or greets clients with her crooked smile from her perch on the red leather sofa in the lobby.

“She’s truly the most spoiled dog in the world,” laughs Falanga, “but she loves everybody and everybody loves her.”

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BAILEY AND BRUNO

During the busy fall planting season, Todd Copelan, owner of Hickory Hill Nursery and Landscape Supply in Eaton, is typically outside helping customers, buzzing between the greenhouse and rows of trees and shrubs across the property. But inside, you can count on the office being “manned” by Bailey, the Copelan family’s two-year old Doberman Pinscher.

“She’s been coming with me to work every day for two years and hangs out in the office all day every day,” says Copelan. “People love her. She’s very friendly.”

Bailey loves attention, he says, from both people and other dogs that visit the nursery. “Other dogs can come in here and eat her food and play with her toys and she doesn’t care,” he says. “As long as they play with her too, she’s good to go.”

Bailey will soon have a full-time playmate and co-worker; her little brother, Bruno. Bruno has been able to enjoy the first few months of his life at home with Copelan’s wife, Julie, a local teacher, and daughter, Lily Beth. But now that school is back in session, Bruno will be hopping in the truck each morning and heading

to the office.

Copelan says that was one of the conditions of getting a new dog a few years ago when Julie and Lily Beth started hinting about puppies.

“I told them we had to pick from the top 10 smartest breeds, the top 10 most trainable, and they had to be able to jump in and out of my truck,” he says. “When we started researching, Dobermans were in the top five of both.” And there’s certainly no problem getting in and out of the truck for these four-legged staff members.



LAYLA



At Gatewood Schools in Eatonton, there's one girl who stands out as the big dog on campus.

Layla, a two-year-old Golden Retriever, has been attending Gatewood since she was ten weeks old. She comes in every-day with her owner, Amy Ferman, who serves as the school's media specialist. Layla spends her days in the library where students from preschool to high school love to pop in and visit.

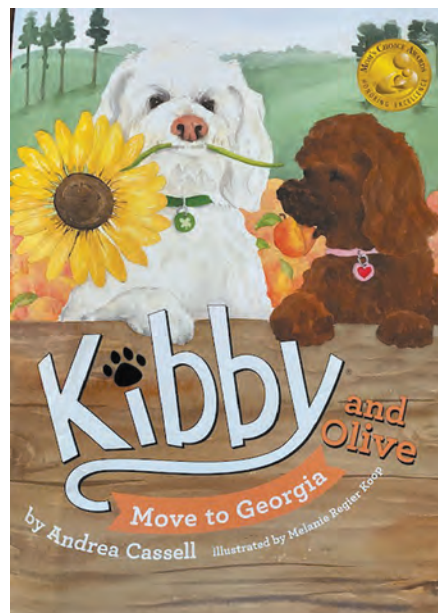
"Layla helps me out with my story times and she plays a big role with helping students with their independent reading," says Ferman.

Throughout the day, Ferman encourages students to read aloud to Layla to build confidence, because sometimes it can be intimidating to speak in front of humans. But Layla never judges.

Layla recently became a Certified Therapy Dog with Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Inc. Ferman says they will, of course, continue their work at Gatewood but will now also be able to volunteer in their community and surrounding counties.

"I am really excited to see what the future holds for us and to continue sharing smiles and love to everyone we meet" says Ferman. "I am so thankful to be on this journey with my favorite four-legged golden."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



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KIBBY

Kibby works hard as the star of an award-winning children's book series, but his mom, Andrea Cassell, works even harder.

The former Miami Dolphins cheerleader and former Mrs. Kansas is a professional vocalist, published cookbook author, and former host of her own weekly TV segment.

But it was her 30-year career as a special education teacher that inspired her newest endeavor; becoming a children's book author.

This journey began when Kibby, her precious miniature white Labradoodle,

had to get stitches and wear the infamous "cone of shame" to keep him from bothering them. Cassell says she noticed that people began to somewhat avoid Kibby in the cone, and she remembered that kids would often react the same way with her differently-abled students. She says this was the impetus for her first book, "Kibby the Space Dog," which teaches children about not judging others for the way they look or because they are different.

The book, which quickly received the international Mom's Choice Gold Award, opened her eyes to the possibility of sharing more heartwarming stories to inspire children. She followed with a second book, "Kibby Gets a Little Sister," which relates to children with new siblings. Then came, "Kibby Moves to Georgia," which follows

Kibby's real-life experience in moving to Lake Oconee, where he now lives with Cassell and her husband, Joe.

Cassell describes her series as "Children's life lessons as seen through a dog's eyes."

She says Kibby has brought so much joy into her family's lives and she loves sharing that love with others.

Kibby now has a busy book-signing schedule between playing frisbee with his dad and cuddling with his mom and bowl of popcorn.

Learn more about Kibby's adventures at andreacassell.com or pick up his books around town at 44 Marketplace, Greensboro Antique Mall, the Georgia Writers Museum, Paper Soiree, or online at Barnes and Noble, Target, or Mascot Books.

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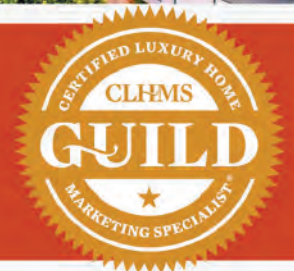
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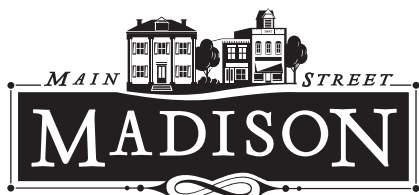
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Facebook - The Cotton Gin Festival

Fall 2020

From art classes and exhibitions to festival favorites like the annual Cotton Gin Fest, local events are getting back up and running this fall.



The 30th annual Cotton Gin Festival is held in Bostwick on Nov. 7, featuring arts and crafts, food, music, and the crowd-favorite; tractor parade.

September

Sept. 11

Grammy-nominated country music star Ty Herndon performs at Oconee Brewing Co at 7:30 p.m. with special guests Wes Robinson and Ronnie Pittman.

Oconeebrewingco.com

Sept. 14-17

The Lake Oconee Showcase of Homes, an annual tour of homes that supports Greene County Habitat for Humanity, is being held online during a 4-day virtual event. This year's "Raise the Roof" event features guided tours of some of Reynolds Lake Oconee's most exquisite homes,

surprise guest appearances, and an exciting auction.

Lakeoconeeshowcaseofhomes.org

Sept. 17 - Nov. 7

The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art in Buckhead presents "Elements: Expressions in Wood, Metal, and Stone," an exhibition honoring Thomas' roots as a sculptor. His works will be shown

| happenings |

alongside contemporary regional sculptors in wood, metal and stone. Steffenthomas.org

Sept. 9

The Artisans Village Art Gallery in downtown Eatonton hosts a Beginning Oil Painting workshop led by Gail Vail from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Class fee is \$45, supply fee is \$17 and includes everything needed to create a painting. theartisansvillage.org

Sept. 26

Hard Labor Creek State Park in Rutledge hosts its annual Cleanup Day from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Gastateparks.org

Sept. 26

The Artisans Village Art Gallery in downtown Eatonton hosts a Beginning Acrylic Painting workshop led by Linda Foster from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Class fee is \$45, supply fee is \$5 and includes paint, a special palette and two substrates. theartisansvillage.org

October

Oct. 2

The 9th annual Concert at the Corry House featuring Grammy Award-winning country music star John Berry is held in Union Point. The venue opens at 6 p.m. and concert begins at 7 p.m. Dinner, drinks, and desserts will be available for purchase along with handmade crafts and silent auction items. All proceeds benefit Global Samaritans Children's Home in Zambia. Tickets are \$25-\$40 and reserved tables are available. Globalsamaritans.org

Oct. 3

The Artisans Village Art Gallery in downtown Eatonton hosts an Advanced Photography workshop led by Ken Johnson from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Fee is \$45. Theartisansvillage.org

Oct. 6-8

Hard Labor Creek State Park in Rutledge

holds its Fall Jr. Ranger Day Camp from 9 a.m.- 1 p.m. Gastateparks.org

Oct. 10

Madison's annual Firefighters' Fall 5K and 10K is held in Town Park in downtown Madison. (706) 342-1953

Oct. 24

The annual 5K Gin Run, sponsored by Georgia Young Farmers, is held in Bostwick in conjunction with the annual Cotton Gin Festival on Nov. 7. Bostwickga.com

November

Nov. 7

The 30th annual Cotton Gin Festival is held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Bostwick. The popular event features live local music, local BBQ, and more than 75 artists and crafters. The tractor parade begins at 11 a.m. Bostwickga.com

Nov. 19 - Jan. 2

The Steffen Thomas Museum of Arts hosts "Kunstmarkt: The Virtual Holiday Market," an online series of events designed to mimic a European holiday market to showcase and generate support for local arts. Steffenthomas.org

Nov. 19th - Jan. 7

The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art in Buckhead presents "Unveiled: New Acquisitions from a Private Collections," showcasing a set of rarely-seen works by Thomas that were donated to the permanent collection by a private collector. Steffenthomas.org

Nov. 28

Downtown Madison holds its annual "Shop Small Saturday" featuring sales and specials throughout local businesses, just in time for holiday shopping. Madisonga.com

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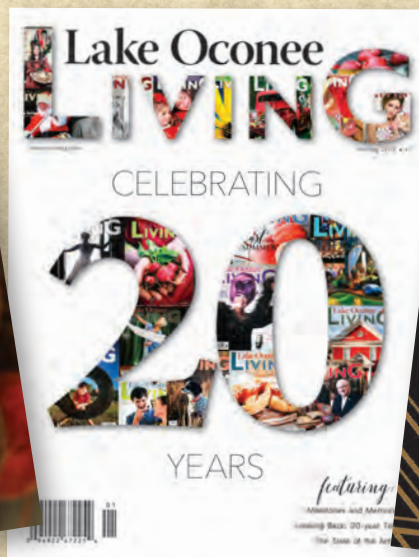
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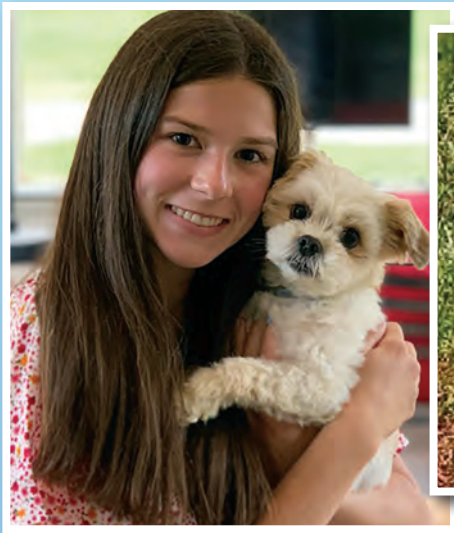
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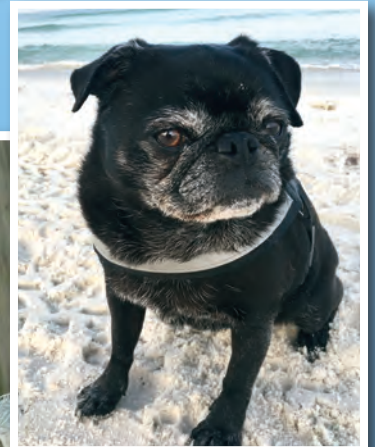
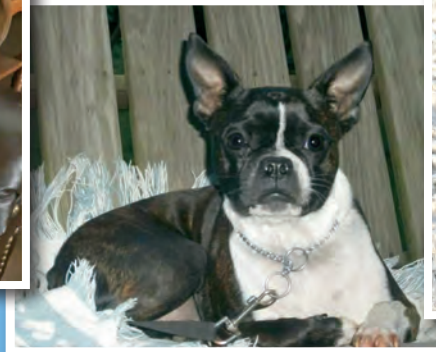
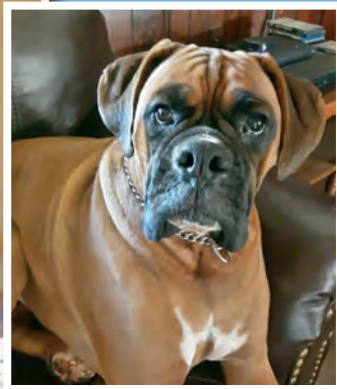


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