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The road to this year's Best Of Columbia was different than any year before.

COVID-19 has curtailed so many aspects of our lives in 2020. That includes the events, the restaurants, the bars, the music and the art that weave their way through so many of the categories that we ask our readers to parse as they vote for everything from Best Sushi to Best Charity to Best Escape Room.

But I would argue that this makes it a perfect time to get passionate about our city, proclaiming what we like about it, arguing those points, and celebrating the new ideas that those conversations generate.

I still believe that Columbia is a great place to live, and that we can get it back to where it was before coronavirus, and keep it growing from there. Let's use this survey of what *Free Times*' readers love (and some of what they dislike) about their home as fuel to drive us forward to better days.

And while our editorial staff plays no role in determining the results of our annual poll, we're not content to sit back and keep all of our opinions to ourselves. We offered some Writer's Picks in categories where we felt particularly strong disagreement with your choices.

Here's hoping we can sit safely at a bar or coffee shop and debate these opinions sometime soon. **JORDAN LAWRENCE**



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Dawn Staley (@dawnstaley) is Best Local Tweeter. Photo by John Carlos

Best Anchorperson – Judi Gatson (WIS)

Second Place: Darci Strickland (WLTX)

For a quarter century, Judi Gatson has been reporting the news at WIS, and she has long been a fixture in the community. She's an Emmy-winning journalist and has become one of the most trusted voices in the Midlands press corps. She also has a significant social media

following, and is known for interacting with viewers on Twitter. Gatson has often reported from home during the coronavirus pandemic, and hasn't missed a beat in doing so.

Honorable Mentions: Dawndy Mercer Plank (WIS), Alicia Barnes (WIS)

Best Local Instagram – COLAToday (@colatoday)

Second Place: Soda City Sites & Bites (@sodacitysitesandbites)

COLAToday uses Instagram as a conduit — to relay local news reports, to boost the images captured by its followers, to project a

positive image of Columbia to those who want it constantly reinforced. And it does it well.

Honorable Mentions: All Things Cola, SC (@allthingscolasc), Koger Center for the Arts (@kogercenterforthearts)

Best Local Radio Personality – Jonathon Rush (97.5 WCOS)

Second Place: Brent Johnson (93.1 The Lake)

For three decades, Columbia has been able to cut on the radio and hear the voice of Jonathon Rush. His tremendously popular show — The Morning Rush on WCOS — helps citizens get through their commutes in an ever-busy city. In many ways, he is the voice of Columbia.

Honorable Mentions: Sadie Black (Fox 102.3), Steve Varholy (WXY)

Best Local Social Media Influencer – All Things Cola, SC (@allthingscolasc)

Second Place: Chamal Mediwaka (@chamalthecamel)

“An influencer is someone in your niche or industry with sway over your target audience.” This is how SproutSocial defines an influencer on social media. In getting Best Of Columbia readers to vote it as the winner in this category, All Things Cola, SC, which seeks to support “all things local,” shows it's worthy of the term.

Honorable Mentions: Amanda Rollison (@valuemindedmama), Brittany Matthews (@thepromotionlady)

Best Local TV News – WIS Television

Second Place: WLTX News 19

There are reasons WIS seems to have a hammerlock grip on this category year after year. It has experienced, trusted anchors; a deep roster of reporters in the field; and its on-screen presentation is sleek and modern. If something noteworthy is happening in Columbia, WIS is there. And, yes, it is always ready with a First Alert on the weather.

Honorable Mentions: WACH Fox, ABC Columbia

Best Local Tweeter – Dawn Staley (@dawnstaley)

Second Place: Chris Trainor (@ChrisTrainorSC)

Dawn Staley is a local hero at this point. The head coach of the Gamecocks women's basketball team is a winner and exceedingly

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excellent at what she does. It just so happens she's excellent at Twitter, too, where she regularly fires off spicy tweets about the lack of attention to her team, or advocates for social justice.

Honorable Mentions: Wayne Cousins (@cousinwayne), phoebe wallow-bridge (@nastywomanatlaw)

Best Local Website – Music/Entertainment – Free Times (free-times.com)

Second Place: Koger Center for the Arts (kogercenterforthearts.com)

We love local music, arts and entertainment. We write about them a lot. We're glad you continue to read and appreciate our coverage. Cheers!

Honorable Mentions: SceneSC (scenesc.com), BINACT (butimnotacriticthough.com)

Best Local Website – News – WIS (wistv.com)

Second Place: COLAtoday (colatoday.6amcity.com)

WIS gets to stories fast, and they get to a lot of them. If you're looking to stay up to date

and aware of the many different developments impacting Columbia, this is a good source to include in your media consumption

Honorable Mentions: Free Times (free-times.com), WLTX (wltx.com)

Best Local Website – Sports – WIS (wistv.com)

Second Place: WLTX (wltx.com)

Columbia is a sports town, and WIS has, for years, been right there to help fans stay on top of the action. The news station's website keeps up with everything from the Gamecocks to local high school teams and players to national and regional sports news. The site is a one-stop-shop for those wanting to keep up with their favorite teams and players.

Honorable Mention: Front Porch Football (frontporchfootball.com)

Best Radio Station – 97.5 WCOS

Second Place: 104.7 WNOK

This station promises to deliver "your favorite country music all day." And its continued

good performance in Best Of Columbia shows that a lot of people think it's hitting the mark.

Honorable Mentions: WXY 99.3 FM, WNKT-FM 107.5 The Game

Best Sportscaster – Rick Henry

Second Place: Mike Uva

For more than three decades, Rick Henry has been patrolling sidelines, press boxes and the newsroom for WIS, and he's been the station's sports director since 1996. An Emmy winner, Henry is seemingly omnipresent on the sports scene in the Columbia area, covering the Gamecocks and Clemson, high schools and more. He has covered national and international events, like the Super Bowl, The Masters and the Olympics, among others.

Honorable Mentions: Reggie Anderson, Joe Gorchow

Best Weatherperson – Dominic Brown

Second Place: Tim Miller

Georgia native Dominic Brown does what all weatherpeople should do — he breaks

down the forecasts, the current conditions and all things weather-related. What's impressive is the amount of information he packs into his casts, where he details and blends information seamlessly together — from specifically what roads will be impacted to how broader weather systems play a role in our conditions.

Honorable Mentions: John Farley, Efen Afante

Biggest Media Hog – Donald Trump

Second Place: Dick Harpootlian

It says something that local readers gave the president the nod here, rather than a Columbia figure. Trump's nearly constant presence in the media — on TV, on news websites and, God help us, on Twitter — is seemingly impossible to turn away from. Many have forgotten what it's like to not have the president in our faces all day, every day. Honestly, it's exhausting.

Honorable Mentions: Steve Benjamin, Henry McMaster

the Columbia Museum of ART



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Organized by the Department of Exhibitions, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York, and curated by Ginger Gregg Duggan and Judith Hoos Fox of c²-curatorsquared.

“Retrospective of Black Is Beautiful” by Izms of Art

Thursday, August 20 | 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
YouTube

Live from the exhibition galleries, Izms of Art brings you “Retrospective of Black Is Beautiful,” a concert celebrating the themes in *Black Is Beautiful: The Photography of Kwame Brathwaite*.

Virtual Family Fun Night: Puppet Time Machine Theatre

Friday, August 21 | 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Facebook

Columbia's own Puppet Time Machine Theatre presents *It's About Time!* Tune in to Facebook at 6:00 to celebrate the exhibition *Design by Time* with songs and laughs that explore the concept of time.

ArtBreak: Architecture and the Choreography of Healthcare

Tuesday, August 25 | 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Facebook

The built environment of healthcare facilities not only provides the backdrop for the drama of life and death enacted there every day, it also shapes events in ways both direct and subtle.

FT2-1886814-1



Politics and City Life



Soda City Market is voted Best Outdoor Activity and Best Place to Take Out-of-Towners. Photo by Daniel Hare

Best Activist Group or Effort — Pawmetto Lifeline

Second Place: Special Olympics South Carolina

For many years, the nonprofit Pawmetto Lifeline has pushed for a no-kill animal community in the Midlands. Headquartered on Bower Parkway, the organization offers numerous services, including adoption, medical services, spay and neutering, vaccinations, day-care and boarding and much more. The nonprofit has been able to save more than 15,000 animals from euthanasia through the years.

Honorable Mentions: Congaree Riverkeeper, Planned Parenthood

Best Charity — Harvest Hope Food Bank

Second Place: Special Olympics South Carolina

Started in 1981, Harvest Hope is now South Carolina's largest food bank, providing more than 50,000 meals a week to people in need from the Upstate to the Midlands to the Pee Dee, distributing to food pantries, shelters and soup kitchens.

Honorable Mentions: Pawmetto Lifeline, MIRCI - Mental Illness Recovery Center Inc.

Best City or County Council Member — Tameika Isaac Devine

Second Place: Will Brennan

Devine, the first African American woman to ever be elected to Columbia City Council, is the second-longest-tenured member of the municipal body, behind only District 1 Councilman Sam Davis. She has long been viewed as one of Mayor Steve Benjamin's top lieutenants, and hasn't been shy about her own mayoral aspirations. She is extremely active and visible in the community, and is also an author, life coach and public speaker. Devine also is heading up the city's new affordable housing task force.

Honorable Mention: Daniel Rickenmann, Allison Terracio

Best Family Attraction — Riverbanks Zoo & Garden

Second Place: Soda City Market

Riverbanks has a zoo, housing giraffes, zebras, lions, tigers, howler monkeys, river otters and more, in addition to an Aquarium Reptile Complex. Riverbanks has a botanical garden, showcasing more than 4,200 species of native and exotic plants. Both aspects make it a fun and educational place to take the family.

Honorable Mentions: Columbia Fireflies, EdVenture Children's Museum

Best Green Business or Initiative — City Roots Farm

Second Place: Congaree Riverkeeper

This organic farm is actually located not far from downtown Columbia, in the Rosewood neighborhood. It has been a fixture in the Capital City for more than a decade, and serves communities throughout the South, including restaurants, chefs, farmers markets and others. It also is an agritourism destination that touts the benefits of sustainable farming.

Honorable Mentions: Rosewood Market & Deli, Palmetto Commercial Services

Best Local Business Leader — Phill Blair (The Whig, WECO)

Second Place: Lou Kennedy (Nephron Pharmaceuticals)

Phill Blair leads The Whig, Main Street's quintessential subterranean dive bar, a fixture of the area's nightlife culture before COVID-19. And while it's still closed right now due to the pandemic, his new business, WECO Bottle & Biergarten, with its ample outdoor space, fantastic beer selection and top-notch COVID safety measures, has become a fixture of our new (and hopefully not-

so-long-lived) normal, an oasis for those looking to be responsible but still get out.

Honorable Mentions: Mike Young (Palmetto Commercial Services), Sara Middleton (Main Course, The Grand, etc.)

Best Local Politician — Steve Benjamin (Columbia mayor)

Second Place: Henry McMaster (Governor)

Steve Benjamin has long been a popular mayor. He's been elected three times, and didn't even draw competition for his last campaign. He also has enjoyed a national profile in Democratic politics. But this year he has shown a different level of leadership, and has kept Columbia one step ahead of the state at seemingly every turn in regard to measures taken to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Honorable Mentions: Seth Rose (State representative), Chip Huggins (State representative)

Best Outdoor Activity — Soda City Market

Second Place: Riverbanks Zoo & Garden

The weekend market is the outdoor champion. You need a bite to eat? Soda City's got it. You need a unique gift? The market's got it. You need some local produce or meat? It's got it. Soda City Market is as much a part of Columbia at this point as anything else out there.

Honorable Mentions: Lake Murray, Riverwalk

Best Place to Take Out-of-Towners — Soda City Market

Second Place: Riverbanks Zoo & Garden

Soda City Market is a great time to see Columbia. You get to walk down the lively and attractive Main Street corridor without traffic. You get to sample from some of our best food and craft vendors. And you get to take in some of the best people- and pet-watching this place has to offer.

Honorable Mentions: Lake Murray, Columbia Museum of Art

Best Place to Work — University of South Carolina

Second Place: Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union

Year after year, readers have chosen USC as one of the top places to work in Columbia. More than 6,000 people work on campus, and jobs at the school are coveted. The school offers good benefits, and its campus is in the heart of the Capital City, giving employees close proximity to the amenities downtown has to offer.

Honorable Mention: Rosewood Market & Deli, Colonial Life

Best Small Business Owner — Amy Beth Franks (The Gourmet Shop)

Second Place: Phill Blair (The Whig, WECO)

Amy Beth Franks was already a fixture in Five Points, having led the neighborhood association and helped shepherd it's annual St. Pat's in Five Points Festival. So it made good sense that she'd reinvest in the community in a different way, buying the long-standing Gourmet Shop and keeping up its mix of fine wine, food and kitchen goods and reputation as a dining destination, particularly when it's nice enough to sit outside along Saluda Avenue.

Honorable Mentions: Mike Young (Palmetto Commercial Services), Greg Slattery (Curiosity Coffee Bar)

Best Troublemaker — Dick Harpootlian

Second Place: Lindsey Graham

Harpootlian, the state senator who formerly was a Richland County Councilman, the Fifth Circuit solicitor and the chairman of the state Democratic Party, has continued to be a hell-raiser in Columbia. He's fought back against what he sees as a party culture in Five Points, challenged the local airport commission for extravagant expenditures and has pushed for Gov. Henry McMaster to do more to combat the coronavirus. Harpootlian has a loud voice in the Capital City, and he's not afraid to use it.

Honorable Mentions: Todd Rutherford, Phill Blair

Best Use of Public Funds — Richland County Public Library

Second Place: Roads

If there's anything pure left in this world, it's libraries. The Richland County Public Library system does it better than most in a host of genuinely beautiful buildings with a host of helpful workers on its staff. Richland's library is more than just a book emporium, offering a range of community services.

Honorable Mentions: Main Street, The BullStreet District

Biggest "Our Dumb State" Moment — Reopening too soon during the coronavirus pandemic

Second Place: Nominating Joe Biden

In the spring, South Carolina had heavier quarantine and other measures in place to combat COVID-19, in hopes of "flattening the curve" of the virus. And for the most part, we did flatten it. And then Gov. Henry McMaster started reopening the state. After Memorial Day weekend, and across the summer, coronavirus cases across South Carolina have skyrocketed, leaving many questioning the state's strategy for fighting the virus. Textbook 2020.

Honorable Mention: Coronavirus response

Biggest Improvement in Columbia This Year — Main Street

Second Place: *Wicked* at the Koger Center

Main Street keeps doing well in this category even though it's looked pretty great, and pretty much the same, for a couple years now. But this last year was the first in which Columbians got to enjoy the beautiful renovations of Boyd Plaza, an essential gathering spot and event space on the street, so this win is earned.

Honorable Mentions: The BullStreet District, Boyd Plaza

Biggest Local "Hero" — Dawn Staley

Second Place: Leon Lott

Staley could probably win if she ran for mayor in Columbia. She led the University of South Carolina women's basketball team to another SEC championship in 2019-20, and the team finished No. 1 in the final season polls. (The NCAA tournament was canceled because of COVID-19.) She also has led charitable efforts in Columbia, and has been an ardent advocate for racial justice, including after the death of George Floyd at the hands of police in Minnesota.

Honorable Mentions: Kassy Alia Ray, Phill Blair



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Best Neighborhood is Forest Acres. Photo by John Carlos

Best Apartment Community – CanalSide Lofts

Second Place: Devine District

CanalSide Lofts offers its residents what few other apartment communities can — direct

proximity to the nightlife of the Vista and relatively close access to the Congaree River. With a host of up-to-date amenities, as well, it's a lovely place to live.

Honorable Mentions: Vista Towers, Indigo at Brickworks

Best Neighborhood – Forest Acres

Second Place: Shandon

Forest Acres has quiet residential streets with nice houses. It has a variety of fun and

tasty restaurants, and a bevvy of shopping options. All this would make it a nice neighborhood to live in, even if it weren't a quick drive away from everything that downtown Columbia has to offer.

Honorable Mentions: Earlewood, Rosewood

Best New Home Community – Saluda River Club

Second Place: Bluefield

This Lexington community has been popular with Best Of Columbia voters for several years now. The club has a number of different neighborhoods — Hillside, The Vineyard, River District and The Cottages — and a host of amenities. Some of those amenities include an outdoor center with pool, an amphitheater, community gardens, a fitness center, outdoor fire pits and a dog park, among others.

Honorable Mention: Timmon's Pond

Best Off-Campus Student Housing – Olympia and Granby Mills

Second Place: The Hub

Olympia and Granby Mills have nice places to eat — there's a Village Idiot pizza parlour and the Granby Grill diner concept right there in the building. And they're close to downtown and the University of South Carolina campus. And those repurposed mill buildings look mighty cool.

Honorable Mentions: The Retreat at Columbia, The Station at Five Points

Best Retirement Community – Still Hopes Episcopal Retirement Community

Second Place: Wildewood Downs

Still Hopes' staff will ensure you or your loved one are well taken care of in their golden years. With independent living homes and supportive living homes, the organization has the fit for a variety of needs and desires.

Honorable Mentions: Village at Southlake, Laurel Crest Retirement Community

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Hootie & the Blowfish at Colonial Life Arena is Best Concert. Photo by John Carlos

Arts, Music and Entertainment



Best Annual Event or Festival — Greek Festival

Second Place: Famously Hot South Carolina Pride

Different people have different reasons for going to the Greek Festival of Columbia. For me, it's the indulgent plates of keftedes (meatballs), which I grab for at least one lunch during the annual event. But it's the jubilant, inviting atmosphere at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral that fuses all of the food, crafts, dancing and more into something essential.

Honorable Mentions: St. Pat's in Five Points, Brew at the Zoo

Best Art Gallery — Columbia Museum of Art

Second Place: Tapp's Outpost

While our city has many excellent places to see visual art, there is no denying that the Columbia Museum of Art has no real peers. Thanks to its dramatically re-designed permanent collection along with fabulous special exhibition programming, the CMA always offers a generous experience along with its chic, modern and thoughtful layout. That it offers such a dizzying array of educational and enrichment activities alongside special performances and shows in its theater space is just (artfully designed) icing on the cake.

Honorable Mentions: City Art, 701 Center for Contemporary Art

Best Bar to See Live Music — Tin Roof

Second Place: New Brookland Tavern

Over the stage at the Vista outpost of this Nashville-based chain is a sign. It proclaims that the Tin Roof is a "live music joint." And so it is, mingling cover bands and DJs with

more occasional forays into originals from local bands and up-and-coming country acts. As its victory here would suggest, the shows draw enthusiastic crowds.

Honorable Mentions: Steel Hands Brewing, Art Bar

Best CD Store — Papa Jazz Record Shoppe

Second Place: Scratch N Spin

Yes, people still buy CDs. Quite a few people actually. And when you're on the hunt for music in Columbia, Papa Jazz Record Shoppe on Greene Street in Five Points has been a go-to destination for decades. With an attentive staff and a wide variety of genres stuffed into a cozy, funky store, this Five Points institution likely has what you're looking for.

Best Concert — Hootie & the Blowfish at Colonial Life Arena

Second Place: Elton John at Colonial Life Arena

It was a hell of a homecoming. Hootie & the Blowfish — the band that rocketed out of Five Points to Grammy-winning, platinum-selling success in the 1990s — had not played a ticketed show in Columbia in 18 years before it played a three-night stand at Colonial Life Arena in September 2019. Over the course of the sold-out shows, the band leaned into the nostalgia of its earlier works, peppered in some new tracks and showed they could still move the crowd in the Capital City.

Honorable Mentions: Fleetwood Mac at Colonial Life Arena, Post Malone at Colonial Life Arena.

Best Dance Company — Columbia City Ballet

Second Place: Southern Strut

Its *Dracula* and *Nutcracker* ballets are among the city's more cherished annual events. Its consistent churn of original programming — from *Beatles the Ballet* to one celebrating the work of South Carolina visual artist Jonathan Green — keeps things fresh and exciting. Columbia City Ballet is the real deal, and we're lucky to have them.

Honorable Mentions: The Dance Dept., Ann Brodie's Carolina Ballet

Best Dance Studio or School — Columbia Ballet School

Second Place: Columbia Conservatory of Dance

"The Columbia Ballet School is committed to helping students develop technical skills, artistry, discipline, self-confidence, and respect for themselves and others," reads the website for this year's winner. Under the leadership of founder and artistic director Anita Ashley, that commitment appears to be paying off.

Honorable Mentions: Columbia City Jazz Conservatory, The Dance Dept.

Best DJ — DJ Kevin Snow

Second Place: DJ Payne

There's a reason Kevin Snow keeps winning this award — he prizes the professionalism and polish of his craft as much as he does the dizzying party heights of his DJ sets. Primarily geared towards weddings, it's not unusual to see Snow behind the booth for all manner of corporate, community or late-night events as the consummate, do-it-all modern jockey that he is.

Honorable Mentions: DJ Carolina X, DJ BULL

Best Karaoke — Art Bar/CarraRock Entertainment

Second Place: DJ Kevin Snow

If you've ever been to Linda Carr's karaoke nights at Art Bar or elsewhere, you already know that she has a particular way of getting excited, uninhibited performances from the singers who take the mic. If you haven't been to one yet, you should go see for yourself.

Honorable Mention: Tsubaki Restaurant Lounge & Karaoke

Best Local Band — Tokyo Joe

Second Place: Prettier Than Matt

When you think of long-running local act Tokyo Joe, the word "versatile" likely comes to mind. While the group does have its own alt-rock catalogue, it is perhaps most known for its long, genre-spanning cover sets, and its frequent Rocketman charity tributes to El-

ton John. And, in non-coronavirus times, the band seems to work constantly. Tokyo Joe is truly a mainstay on the Midlands music scene.

Honorable Mentions: Villanova, Les Merry Chevaliers.

Best Local Comedian — Jenn Snyder

Second Place: DeWayne Nettles

If the best comedy comes from honesty, it's no wonder that Jenn Snyder took the Best Comedian prize. It's hard not to like someone who'll tell you she got into comedy because it helped her get out of schoolwork and that she stayed in it because she sucks at everything else. That honesty and a constant stream of new material make her a natural stand-up.

Honorable Mention: Patrick Fowler, Wayne Cousins

Best Local Comedy or Improv Group — The Mothers

Second Place: The Comedy Closet

Trustus' own sketch comedy crew has become not just a fixture at the Vista theater, but around town at all sorts of different events. They even mustered their own original play, *A Christmas Miracle at the Richland Fashion Mall*, a couple seasons ago.

Honorable Mention: The Busterscups, Tomorrowquest Theatre

Best Local Filmmaker — Chris Bickel

Second Place: Wade Sellers

Bickel is Columbia's maverick of exploitation cinema. The director of a number of shorts through the years, he is perhaps most known for helming the 2017 full-length indie masterpiece *The Theta Girl*, which dailygrindhouse.com called "a remarkably inventive, psychedelically captivating, micro-budget mind-banger." Film fans in the Capital City are anxious to see what the director comes up with next.

Honorable Mentions: Idris Pearson, David Axe

Best Local Hip-Hop Artist — Sky Martin

Second Place: Fat Rat da Czar

This is the second year in a row that internet upstart Sky Martin has stormed his way to a win in this category, stoking buzz with the kind of Auto-Tune-drenched glimpses of a lothario's emotional moments that have become so omnipresent in the Soundcloud era. He knows what the people want, and he's become increasingly proficient at giving it to them.

Honorable Mentions: H3RO, The Busterscups

Best Local Jazz or Blues Artist — Reggie Sullivan

Second Place: Mark Rapp

Sullivan — frontman of the Reggie Sullivan Band — is an interesting choice for this particular category. While he certainly can and does play jazz and blues, he also embraces the influences of a number of other genres, making him and his band one of the most sought-after live experiences in the Midlands and across the state.

Honorable Mention: Robert Gardiner

Best Local or Regional Museum — Columbia Museum of Art

Second Place: South Carolina State Museum

As the Capital City, Columbia has its share of museums, but the Columbia Museum of Art stands out for its consistently world-class approach. From the permanent collection to the special exhibits, the museum always balances sophistication and accessibility, something which carries through to their extraordinary range of programming, from Chamber Music on Main and Arts & Draughts to their extensive lecture series and literary partnerships.

Honorable Mentions: Edventure Children's Museum, Historic Columbia

Best Local Solo Artist — Mark Rapp

Second Place: Brent Lundy

Mark Rapp certainly has his own distinct individual talents — capable of wringing a wide array of energies and emotions from a trumpet, and building lush soundscapes with a didgeridoo — but he's also a leader within the local jazz scene, particularly through his ColaJazz group, which musters an annual festival, a summer camp and other efforts aimed at bringing more attention and interest to the local jazz community.

Honorable Mentions: Sky Martin, Kate Bankston



the Columbia Museum of ART

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Best Local Jazz or Blues Artist is Reggie Sullivan. *Provided*

Best Local Theater Company — Trustus Theatre

Second Place: Town Theatre

Trustus Theatre swings for the fences. It did it in its COVID-shortened 35th anniversary season, rearranging its main theater space into a round configuration, putting the audience's focus squarely on the acting work of its talented local casts. And it's this spirit — the one that pushes this modest theater company to try ideas both surprisingly grand and bravely intimate — that sets it apart.

Honorable Mentions: Columbia Children's Theatre, Workshop Theatre of South Carolina

Best Local Theater Production — A Streetcar Named Desire at Trustus Theatre

Second Place: *The Boys in the Band* at Workshop Theatre

Free Times theater critic August Krickel closed his review of this year's winning production thusly: "[Tennessee] Williams represents American drama at its Best — tinged with the eloquence of poetry — and *Streetcar* represents Williams at the very height of his skills as an artist. By embracing the raw emotions at the

core of the script and allowing them to play out with realism, however ugly and discomfiting, [Trustus has] scored an artistic triumph." Enough said.

Honorable Mentions: *Carousel* by Opera at USC, *Confessions of a Good Man* by WOW Productions

Best Movie Theater — Nickelodeon Theatre

Second Place: Regal Columbiana Grande

In the midst of this year's Best Of Columbia polling process, allegations of systemic racism were lobbed at the Columbia Film Society, which oversees the state's only independent arthouse theater, triggering an internal review along with the resignation of the leader of Indie Grits, the associated media education group that organizes the theater's annual film festival. It remains to be seen how the Film Society's response will impact public perception of the Nick, a beloved fixture where indie film lovers and casual viewers frequently flock.

Honorable Mentions: Regal Sandhill IMAX & RPX, AMC Harbison 14

Best Music Festival — St. Pat's in Five Points

Second Place: Jam Room Music Festival

While St. Pat's in Five Points is one of Columbia's most cherished events almost independent of the music itself, there's no denying that it consistently pulls down a great mix of national, regional and local talent while casting a net widely across country, rock, hip-hop, punk and indie music. That Five Points itself is so perfectly designed for a festival experience (as long as the crowd size stays manageable) and that spring tends to be our city's best season also works in the event's favor.

Honorable Mentions: ColaJazz Festival, Reggaetronic

Best Music Venue — Colonial Life Arena

Second Place: Township Auditorium

Post Malone, Jason Aldean, Alan Jackson, Ariana Grande, Five Finger Death Punch, Miranda Lambert, A\$AP Ferg, Carrie Underwood, Trey Songz, Hootie & the Blowfish — all of these artists performed at Colonial Life Arena in the last year, and that's with the venue being closed due to COVID-19 for pretty much all spring and summer. If seeing big acts in a big environment is your thing, our hometown arena has become quite the destination.

Honorable Mentions: The Senate, New Brookland Tavern

Best Musical Instrument Store — Sims Music

Second Place: Pecknel Music Company

Sure, you can go to a big box shop like Guitar World if you want, but Jerry and Debbie Sims have been providing locals with reliable instruments and music lessons since the 1970s. Plus, it is not like you're missing out — they have an incredible selection, an expert staff to walk you through it, and a trusty repair shop to keep your purchases in working order.

Honorable Mentions: Musician Supply, The Music Store on Devine Street

Best Place to Celebrate a Birthday — The Grand on Main

Second Place: Art Bar

Sure, you could celebrate your birthday at a bar. Or you could have a party at a casual dining restaurant. Or you could have a shin-

dig at a bowling alley. Why not do all three in one stop? The Grand on Main — one of a number of properties owned by the Middleton family on the 1600 block of Main Street — has become a popular spot for those looking for somewhere to hang out to celebrate special occasions, including birthdays.

Honorable Mention: Studio Cellar, The Joint @ 1710 Main

Best Store for Vinyl — Papa Jazz Record Shoppe

Second Place: Scratch N Spin

Papa Jazz is a crate-digger's paradise, its old-school Five Points digs filled with bursting with myriad records covering many genres. There's plenty of new titles to be found, and the store does a great job keeping up with fresh releases that you need to know about. But it's also one of the best places around for digging through used records to find that elusive score.

Best Recording Studio — Jam Room

Second Place: Archer Avenue Studio

For more than 30 years, the Jam Room has stood as not just Columbia's most reliable recording studio, but one of the best in the Southeast. Its heavy music bonafides are known far and wide — having produced records from the anthemic metal heroes in Baroness and local punk legends In/Humanity and Stretch Arm Strong, among many others — but it's become a favorite destination for indie rockers, folk and country purveyors, and hip-hop and pop artists alike.

Honorable Mentions: Seaboard Recording Studio, Saucewithspoons

Best Visual Artist — Blue Sky

Second Place: Chakalah Crawford

His work certainly catches the eye. For decades, Blue Sky has been creating art that piques the curiosity of locals and visitors alike. Some of his more notable works include *NEVERBUST*, a large chain sculpture between two buildings on Main Street; and *Busted Plug*, a giant fire hydrant that sits prominently along Taylor Street. Blue Sky is steadfastly linked to the concept of public art in Columbia.

Honorable Mentions: Trahern Cook, Darrien Holloway



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Food and Drink

Motor Supply Co. Bistro is voted Best Chef — Wes Fulmer, Best Restaurant — The Vista, Best Place for a First Date, Best 'Farm to Table' Restaurant, Second Place for Best Restaurant and Best Charcuterie Board and Honorable Mention for Best Brunch. Photo by John Carlos

Best 'Farm to Table' Restaurant — Motor Supply Co. Bistro

Second Place: The War Mouth

During its three-decade run in the Vista, Motor Supply has become known for a few key things. Among them are its excellent food and the local sourcing it utilizes to make it. A daily shifting menu often touts the local farms it worked with, providing a handy reminder of the culinary wonders local goods can lead to.

Honorable Mentions: Terra, Spotted Salamander Cafe and Catering

Best Asian Restaurant — Inakaya Japanese Restaurant (O'Neil Court)

Second Place: Miyo's / M Vista

This spot, one of two separately owned local restaurants with the name Inakaya, is more than just a good sushi joint. Sanma, tempura, shake, syoga-yaki and more are on the menu

for folks who want to dive into other elements of Japanese fare.

Honorable Mentions: 929 Kitchen & Bar, Duke's Pad Thai

Best Bang for the Buck — Cantina 76

Second Place: The Whig

This small chain, which has two locations in Columbia — one on Devine Street and another on Main — is a crowd-pleaser for those looking for tasty tacos and slurpable margaritas. It has a solid menu of Mexican offerings for reasonable prices. It's taco menu, in particular, is noteworthy, with a number of delicious offerings at an affordable cost. Look out for those happy hour specials, too.

Honorable Mentions: Cook Out, Fire and Spice Irmo

Best Barbecue — Home Team BBQ

Second Place: Little Pigs Barbecue

With its Five Points location, opened last year, Charleston-born Home Team BBQ has taken the city by storm. It's hard not to see

why. Beautiful brisket, juicy pulled pork and the near-revered smoked chicken wings draw in those who need to satiate their smoked desires.

Honorable Mentions: Shealy's Bar-B-Que, Hudson's Smokehouse BBQ

Best Barista — Greg Slattery

Second Place: Travis Hoyt

There's many things you could write about Greg Slattery, from his barista skills to his reputation among many as one of the purest souls in town. This is the best barista category, though, and it's rightful to acknowledge that Slattery's Curiosity Coffee Bar slings some of the most well-thought-out coffee drinks and provides a range of coffees that few can trump.

Honorable Mentions: Mia Blanton, Kam Kelley

Best Breakfast — Café Strudel

Second Place: The Devine Cinnamon Roll Deli

Most folks likely think of Café Strudel, which has locations in West Columbia and

Lexington, as a brunch spot. But you know you can also show up there earlier in the morning, right? And you're in for a treat if you do. The Hangover Hashbrowns are a long-acknowledged MVP, but the cinnamon pancakes might be the most underrated player on the menu. If the Hangover Hashbrowns are Michael Jordan, the cinnamon pancakes are Horace Grant.

Honorable Mention: Eggs Up Grill, Original Pancake House

Best Brunch — Cafe Strudel

Second Place: The Gourmet Shop

Brunch is a much-derided thing by chefs, or so Anthony Bourdain led us to believe. Chefs be damned, it's the people's meal. Who doesn't want an egg sandwich at 1 p.m.? West Columbia's Cafe Strudel knows the people demand it and do it as well as it comes.

Honorable Mentions: DiPrato's, Motor Supply Co. Bistro



Real Mexico is voted Best Mexican Restaurant and Best Burrito and Second Place for Best Taco.
Photo by John Carlos

Best Burrito – Real Mexico

Second Place: Cantina 76

Real Mexico, located in a small, unassuming spot along Bush River Road, remains one of the most popular spots in Columbia for authentic Mexican food. And the restaurant's burritos are certainly part of its well-earned reputation. The California burrito — with carne asada steak, avocado slices, pico de gallo, rice and beans — is, in particular, a stand-out.

Honorable Mentions: Moctezumas Taqueria, Moe's Southwest Grill

Best Caribbean Restaurant – Island Grill

Second Place: Fire and Spice Irmo

When Columbians are longing for a taste of the Caribbean Islands, they head to the bright yellow and red building on the corner of Harden and Taylor Streets. Inside, they find Caribbean spices on everything from chicken wings to the more traditional oxtails and goat meat,

and at very reasonable prices. Island Grill even features a humble vegetarian selection, a rare find for most Caribbean restaurants.

Honorable Mention: Legacy Caribbean Bar & Grill

Best Catering – Spotted Salamander Cafe and Catering

Second Place: Southern Way Catering

Before its cafe location was known as a go-to spot for creative Southern fare, Spotted Salamander made its name with equally impressive catering, able to thrill with something as standard-issue as Thanksgiving dinner and fixings or when adapting to whatever out-there party theme you can muster.

Honorable Mentions: Blue Marlin Signature Catering, Honey River Catering

Best Charcuterie Board – The Gourmet Shop

Second Place: Motor Supply Co. Bistro

There are so many ways to arrange sliced meats, cheeses, crackers and jam on a plate,

but there's just something about the way The Gourmet Shop arranges its charcuterie boards that makes it so appealing. Maybe it's the staff's extensive knowledge of fine cheeses and cured meats? It could be, which is why their charcuterie boards make the cut in Columbia.
 Honorable Mentions: Lula Drake Wine Parlour, Bourbon

Best Chef – Wes Fulmer (Motor Supply Co. Bistro)

Second Place: Jessica Shillato (Spotted Salamander Cafe and Catering)

While Motor Supply's long-time, well-regarded barkeep Josh Streetman departed earlier this year, the restaurant keeps humming along with Chef Wes Fulmer at the helm. The kitchen is as local and sustainable as ever and offers up some of the best bites in town.

Honorable Mentions: Mike Davis (Terra), Nelson de Hoyos (Halls Chophouse - Columbia)

Best Chinese Restaurant – Egg Roll Chen

Second Place: Miyo's / M Vista

Egg Roll Chen on Crowson Road has long been a local favorite. One look at the crowds during lunch and dinner attests to the spot's popularity. It has, for years, been dishing out appetizing favorites, like Mamasan's Taiwanese Beef Noodle Soup, which remains a crowd-pleaser. The House Fried Rice also is a heavyweight champ. Save room for some Taiwanese doughnuts for dessert.

Honorable Mentions: Sun Ming, Main Moon

Best Coffee – Drip Coffee

Second Place: Loveland Coffee

With a wealth of Counter Culture coffee beans, owner Sean McCrossin's Drip has a coffee for everyone. No joke, going to either the Five Points or Main Street location is a borderline global coffee vacation, with delicious selections from all over the world.

Honorable Mentions: Curiosity Coffee Bar, Indah Coffee

Best Deli/Sub/Sandwich Shop – Groucho's Deli

Second Place: No Name Deli

That first sandwich at Groucho's is a rite of passage for any Columbia newcomer, be it as a college student, someone who came here for a

job, or even someone from a more rural area who simply came into town. Once an STP is dipped, there's no going back to any other old sandwiches from any other old delis.

Honorable Mentions: Crave Market, Beezer's

Best Dessert – Kaminsky's

Second Place: Silver Spoon Bake Shop

This Charleston import has taken the Vista by storm since opening in 2015. With a horde of desserts — from cakes to ice cream — it's a sweet tooth's paradise. To wash them down, Kaminsky's serves up cocktails, too, including a number of dessert options.

Honorable Mentions: Ally & Eloise Bakeshop, Lita's Treats

Best Fast Food Chain – Chick-fil-A

Second Place: Rush's

There are plenty of reasons readers likely voted for Chick-fil-A as their favorite fast food joint. The chicken is juicy and flavorful, the waffle fries are tasty and the sweet tea remains a Southern favorite. But we're betting the service likely helped push it over the top. The staff runs that drive-thru line like a well-oiled machine, which has been a bonus in COVID-19 times.

Honorable Mentions: Bojangles' Famous Chicken 'n Biscuits, Cook Out

Best Fries – Five Guys

Second Place: The Whig

The grease spotted brown bag reigns supreme. The burger chain's hand cut fries are a well-fried, salty mess that pairs perfectly with the burgers. The quality is as good as it gets for a chain restaurant, and the quantity is just as impressive.

Honorable Mentions: Chick-fil-A, McDonald's

Best Fried Chicken – Zesto of West Columbia

Second Place: Bernie's Restaurant

The line of spaced-out people that snakes out from the interior of Zesto of West Columbia says everything it needs to, and the scent of fried chicken wafting down 12th Street says the rest. Nothing will stop people from near and far from getting their Zesto's fried chicken fix, pandemic or not. The popular fried



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Greg Slattery of Curiosity Coffee is voted Best Barista. Photo by John Carlos

chicken joint has a big white tent under its ice cream cone in the sky to facilitate customer orders in a safe manner.

Honorable Mentions: Kiki's Chicken and Waffles, Drake's Duck-In

Best Frozen Yogurt – Menchie's Frozen Yogurt

Second Place: Rita's

In this hottest season of the year, getting a frozen yogurt is one way to keep cool. And Menchie's is a great place to do it. It's always got a vast array of flavors, and you can choose one, or mix them up. It occasionally has a Cinnamon Frosted Flakes flavor that is spookily good. It's also got a wealth of sauces and other toppings to load on top of your yogurt.

Honorable Mentions: TCBY, Yogoluv: Frozen Yogurt and More

Best Greek Restaurant – Mediterranean Tea Room

Second Place: Grecian Gardens

The Devine Street Mediterranean restaurant has all the region's favorites. The falafel is flavorful and has crunch. The lentils are tender yet firm. The pitas are delicious. Don't let the busy lunch hour deter you — the kitchen staff has a way of getting the food out promptly.

Honorable Mentions: Zorba's Greek Restaurant, Taziki's Mediterranean Cafe

Best Grits – Blue Marlin

Second Place: Mr. Friendly's New Southern Cafe

The Blue Marlin grits are most famous for being paired with shrimp and tasso gravy, but try, if you haven't, the Salmon Pontchartrain, which finds the beloved base topped with a salmon fillet along with blackened shrimp and scallops, and a mornay sauce. The way the perfectly creamy grits balance the zest and spice of the rest of the dish is a testament to their earned reputation.

Honorable Mentions: The Devine Cinnamon Roll Deli, Cafe Strudel

Best Gyro – Taziki's Mediterranean Cafe

Second Place: Mediterranean Tea Room

The best gyro in town can be found at Taziki's Mediterranean Cafe, no matter if it comes in the chicken, beef, lamb or veggie variety. Each one is wrapped in an impossibly fluffy pita, encasing flavorful meats or vegetables, and is made to order, which makes the gyros a perennial favorite. Paired with chips and a healthy side to boot.

Honorable Mentions: Grecian Gardens, NoMa by Al Amir

Best Hamburger – Pawleys Front Porch

Second Place: Rockaway Athletic Club

Sometimes a burger is comfort food. That's certainly the case at Pawleys Front Porch in Five Points. Pawleys grinds its Angus chuck roast beef daily, and offers a number different twists on the American classic. A favorite is the Wadamalaw, which comes with chipotle

barbecue sauce, fried pickle chips, applewood smoked bacon, lettuce, tomato, red onion and cheddar cheese. Pawleys has got plenty of cold beer to wash it down, too.

Honorable Mentions: The Whig, Five Guys

Best Hot Dog – Rush's

Second Place: Jimmy's Mart

People who love Rush's, the classic Columbia fast-food chain, really love Rush's. In particular, the hot dog baskets are a beloved institution around town, and are as customizable as you could want. Chili, just ketchup, fried onions, or a scoop of slaw, Rush's will make it happen, fabulously and fast.

Honorable Mentions: Crave Market, Sweet Pea's Ice Cream Parlor

Best Ice Cream – Sweet Cream Co.

Second Place: Marble Slab Creamery

Many people fixate on the outside-the-box flavors — and, admittedly, Black Sesame Ginger, Sesame Seed Honey Pistachio and Orange Coriander are attention-grabbers. But this adventurous nature would mean nothing if the shop weren't delivering handcrafted creamy goodness each and every time out.

Honorable Mentions: The Baked Bear, Sweet Pea's Ice Cream

Best Indian Restaurant – 2 Gingers

Second Place: Delhi Palace

2 Gingers has long been a go-to for Columbians looking for fresh Indian cuisine. The Bush River Road spot has a diverse menu that includes seafood (the Tandoori Jhinga is a winner), Indo-Chinese fusions like the Chilli Garlic Fried Rice, and plenty of vegetarian options. It also has an intriguing wine program.

Honorable Mentions: Persis Biryani Indian Grill

Best Italian Restaurant – Alodia's Cucina Italiana

Second Place: Il Giorgione

With locations in Irmo and Lexington, Alodia's has increasingly been popular among Midlands residents looking for a top-shelf Italian meal. It has all your pasta favorites, like lasagna and baked spaghetti, along with some impressive seafood offerings (hello, tuna carpaccio), plus a whole lot more. Don't forget to save room for some cannoli for dessert. Also has an extensive wine list.

Honorable Mentions: Villa Tronco, Pasta Fresca

Best Japanese Restaurant – Miyabi Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Bar

Second Place: Inakaya Japanese Restaurant (O'Neil Court)

Sometimes a night out isn't a night out unless a chef in a tall hat is flipping a piece of shrimp into the mouth of someone seated nearby. For that kind of fun, look to Miyabi for your Japanese steak and sushi cravings, where it will feed and entertain with the chefs'



Halls Chophouse is Best Restaurant and Honorable Mention for Best Chef. Photo by John Carlos

deft handiwork chopping and sauteeing right in front of your table, plus their quick wit and true enjoyment of their craft.

Honorable Mentions: Inakaya Watanabe (St. Andrews Road), Camon Japanese Restaurant

Best Kid-Friendly Restaurant – Chick-fil-A

Second Place: Flight Deck Restaurant

It's perhaps not a surprise that readers would have given Chick-fil-A the nod for its kids' offerings. After all, chicken nuggets are probably as close as we'll come to a universal kids' food. But we all know the secret weapon for young folks at Chick-fil-A is that the restaurants will let you trade in the book or toy from your kid's meal for an ice cream cone.

Honorable Mention: Lizard's Thicket

Best Late Night Food – Waffle House

Second Place: The Whig

You can get a waffle. You can get a burger. You can get a biscuit. You can top it with gravy. You can get coffee. You can get a Coke. You can get them to make it raspberry. You can do any of these things at Waffle House any time of any day or night. And it is good.

Honorable Mentions: Cook Out, Bar None

Best Mexican Restaurant – Real Mexico

Second Place: Cantina 76

In a word? Delicious. Real Mexico has been a near-legendary outpost of Mexican cuisine for years, and it has kept the quality going year in and year out. From tacos to burritos to quesadillas, it has all the go-tos for Americans, and the frequent specials involve adventurous experiments.

Honorable Mentions: Moctezumas Taqueria, San Jose

Best Middle Eastern Restaurant – Mediterranean Tea Room

Second Place: Arabesque on Devine

Mediterranean Tea Room plays around in the space between Greek and Middle Eastern flavors. The result is some of the most distinct and addictive food in town.

Honorable Mentions: NoMa by Al Amir, Pitas

Best Milkshake – Rosewood Dairy Bar

Second Place: Cook Out

This long-running institution on Rosewood Drive has a lot going for it, including delicious burgers and fried chicken. But the milkshakes are a particular treat, especially during the blast furnace Columbia summers. It's got numerous classic flavors, and the key is the consistency: not too thick, not too thin. Milkshakes are supposed to be a balance between being ice cream and a drink. Rosewood Dairy Bar hits that balance perfectly.

Honorable Mentions: Rush's, Grill Marks

Best Mobile Food – A Peace of Soul Vegan Kitchen

Second Place: The Belgian Waffle Truck

A Peace of Soul is no longer relegated to its truck, returned once more to its brick-and-mortar location in Cottontown. But when it is out in its truck, slinging veggie burgers or Fried "Chicken" Sandwiches, that truck is dishing out some of the best mobile food you'll find. No matter how you get your Peace of Soul, it's worth seeking out.

Honorable Mentions: City Limits Barbeque (food truck), Rambo's Fat Cat Biscuits

Best National Chain Restaurant – Chick-fil-A

Second Place: Bonefish Grill

This year, Chick-fil-A also won for Best Fast Food Chain and Best Kid-Friendly Restaurant, and was nominated for Best French Fries and Best Sweet Tea. Add those winning components together, and you get the national chain restaurant that Columbian's like best.

Honorable Mentions: LongHorn Steakhouse, Olive Garden

Best New Restaurant – Home Team BBQ

Second Place: Black Rooster

Home Team BBQ replaced Harper's, an outpost of a small regional chain that had become a fixture for Five Points visitors looking for a reasonable sitdown meal. Which makes the Charleston barbecue favorite a fine fit in the space, as it brings delicious food that veers away from barbecue enough to please the non-smoked-meat crowd, has nightlife flare

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Peace of Soul Vegan Kitchen is voted Best Vegetarian Menu, Best Mobile Food, Best Veggie Burger and Second Place for Best Soul Food. Photo by John Carlos

for the college and young professional set (the beer selection is great, and the signature Gamechanger blended drink earns its name), and makes fine use of its center-of-the-neighborhood front patio.

Honorable Mentions: Market on Main, Il Focolare Pizzeria

Best Pizza – Village Idiot

Second Place: Mellow Mushroom

Village Idiot turned 30 this year. And it's thin New York-style pies remain a local staple, a foldable treat whether taken down with a craft beer at the bar in Five Points or taken

home to scarf while binge-watching. The selection of toppings is wide but universally good, and the white sauce pies are low-key excellent.

Honorable Mentions: Dano's Pizza, Il Focolare Pizzeria

Best Place for a First Date – Motor Supply Co. Bistro

Second Place: The Grand on Main

Motor Supply checks all the boxes for a solid first date spot: A great location in the Vista. A revered, clever bar program. A comfortable atmosphere that always leads you to want

to hang out a while longer. A seemingly ever-evolving menu that includes plenty of local ingredients. It'll give you a great environment and amazing service and food. Whether you make it to the second date is up to you, so don't blow it.

Honorable Mentions: Cantina 76, Lula Drake Wine Parlour

Best Place to Dine Outdoors – Liberty on the Lake

Second Place: The Gourmet Shop

The Liberty deck — at the end of a marina, overlooking a picturesque vista of Lake Mur-

ray — would be a draw even if the Irmo outpost didn't have top-notch modern bar food and a sprawling beer selection to match its downtown counterpart.

Honorable Mentions: Hendrix Restaurant, Tazza Kitchen

Best Restaurant – Halls Chophouse Columbia

Second Place: Motor Supply Co. Bistro

Halls Chophouse proves that steakhouses are still in vogue regardless of how much experimental or "New American" restaurants seem to be the thing now. Like any good steakhouse, it has a litany of different cuts and table sides, but Halls stands out. It is a celebration of everything a steak can be when served to impress.

Honorable Mentions: Terra, Mr. Friendly's New Southern Cafe

Best Restaurant – Devine Street/Shandon/Rosewood – Cantina 76

Second Place: The Devine Cinnamon Roll Deli

As a neighborhood spot, Cantina 76 is highly adaptable. A trio of yummy salsa, guacamole and chips with some margaritas is a recipe for a satisfying happy hour. A taco or two scarfed bar-side is a reliable option for a tasty off-hour snack. And sitting down for a dinner-time fest centered around a hearty chimichanga is sure to satisfy.

Honorable Mentions: Il Giоргione, Mediterranean Tea Room

Best Restaurant – Five Points – Mr. Friendly's New Southern Café

Second Place: The Gourmet Shop

This Five Points institution has been satisfying diners for decades. It focuses on fresh ingredients and simple preparations. Mr. Friendly's also has a formidable wine list. It's known for its wild-caught seafood and house-butchered cuts of meat. The Carolina Heritage Farms Bone-in Pork Chop is the kind of dish wars are waged over.

Honorable Mentions: Home Team BBQ, Saluda's Restaurant

Best Restaurant – Forest Acres – Tazza Kitchen

Second Place: Pasta Fresca

Tazza Kitchen is a chain outpost that has come to feel like a real neighborhood hall-



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Drip is voted Best Coffee. Photo by John Carlos

mark. The excellent wood-fired menu and insanely-cozy-for-a-strip-mall patio are big parts of this. So too is the restaurant's increasingly bold and tantalizing cocktail program.
Honorable Mentions: Tombo Grille, Bonefish Grill

Best Restaurant — Irmo — Alodia's Cucina Italiana

Second Place: The British Bulldog Pub

Housemade pasta, inventive Italian dishes and a fantastic wine selection — what's not to love about Alodia's Cucina Italiana? Located on the east side of Lake Murray, the dining experience far outshines what one would expect from a restaurant in a shopping center.

Honorable Mentions: Sun Ming Chinese Restaurant, Fire and Spice Irmo

Best Restaurant — Lexington — Alodia's Cucina Italiana

Second Place: Old Mill Brewpub

The Main Street corridor in Lexington has seen a renaissance in recent years, and now boasts a number of bars, restaurants and shops. Alodia's has been a part of that renewed action, and was a key part in the revival of the Icehouse building. It serves a host of delicious Italian dishes, along with seafood and other offerings, and has an impressive bar menu.

Honorable Mentions: Bodhi Thai Dining, Private Property

Best Restaurant — Main Street — Halls Chophouse Columbia

Second Place: Bourbon

Halls Chophouse revealed what Main Street Columbia was missing — an upscale steakhouse. With its nightly live music, a true steakhouse bar and its notoriously delicious

cuts of beef, it's shown itself to have a recipe for success in the booming area.

Honorable Mentions: The Whig, Hendrix Restaurant

Best Restaurant — Northeast — Solstice Kitchen & Wine Bar

Second Place: Travinia Italian Kitchen & Wine Bar

The northeastern corners of Columbia can feel a little like a chain restaurant wasteland, which is why Solstice is such a welcome addition to the food and wine landscape. Its wine list, seasonally changing menu of gourmet specials, and upscale indoor and outdoor space make it a natural choice for the best restaurant in Northeast Columbia.

Honorable Mentions: Julia's German Stammtisch, Pontiac House of Pizza

Best Restaurant — The Vista — Motor Supply Co. Bistro

Second Place: Blue Marlin

Just go. If you haven't yet been to Motor, one of the true beating hearts of the local restaurant scene, we're not sure what more *Free Times* can do to convince you. The cocktails are aces. The entrees are always amazing, particularly the fish, steak and pork preparations. The atmosphere strikes just the right balance between relaxed and refined. But we've said all this before. Seriously, just go.

Honorable Mentions: Cola's Restaurant, COA Agaveria Y Cocina

Best Restaurant — West Columbia/Cayce — Cafe Strudel

Second Place: Terra

There's a reason that lines form outside of Cafe Strudel on weekend mornings, and it's because everyone wants to have a chance to start the day off right. Perhaps the cafe's signa-

ture Hangover Hashbrowns are necessary, or maybe lingering at an outdoor table enjoying the bustle of those happy to score a spot makes you smile. Adjacent to the West Columbia Avenues, Cafe Strudel is popular for those who can walk there, and even those who have to drive across town.

Honorable Mentions: Black Rooster, D's Wings

Best Restaurant When Someone Else Is Paying — Halls Chophouse Columbia

Second Place: Motor Supply Co. Bistro

Halls serves a Tomahawk Rib Eye that is 34 oz.. It's dry-aged and presented with a beautifully arching exposed rib bone attached. It costs \$99. We want to try it. We hope somebody buys it for us someday.

Honorable Mentions: Ruth's Chris Steak House, Cola's Restaurant

Best Ribs — Home Team BBQ

Second Place: The War Mouth

This outpost of the Charleston-based barbecue chain has made quite an impression in Five Points, drawing crowds with its pulled pork, surprisingly good burgers and fully stocked bar. But it's quickly become known for succulent St. Louis cut ribs. If you don't go with the full rack, you're not doing it right.

Honorable Mentions: City Limits Barbeque (food truck), True BBQ

Best Salad — California Dreaming

Second Place: Spotted Salamander Cafe and Catering

Maybe it's the huge pile of salad with a plethora of textured toppings, or perhaps it's the honey butter glazed croissant on the side that makes Columbians rave about California Dreaming's salad. Whether you get it with a waterfall of bleu cheese dressing or signature hot bacon-mustard dressing, it's a

crowd-pleaser that keeps this former train station turned fine dining establishment packed for lunch and dinner.

Honorable Mentions: Crave Market, Groucho's Deli

Best Seafood Restaurant — Blue Marlin

Second Place: Oyster Bar Columbia

It's not easy to find good seafood inland, but Blue Marlin has been the go-to spot for seafood in Columbia for many years. It's best known for its shrimp and grits with lusciously thick tasso gravy, but the crab cakes, she-crab soup and Lowcountry shrimp creole are other popular options at the Marlin.

Honorable Mentions: Pearlz Oyster Bar, Bonefish Grill

Best Service — Halls Chophouse Columbia

Second Place: Loveland Coffee

The common refrain from players in the restaurant scene is that Halls is more than just a restaurant, it's an experience — and you pay for it. While the cooks dutifully do their part in the kitchen, that experience is tied together through their servers' utmost care and attention to your evening.

Honorable Mentions: Black Rooster, Cantina 76

Best Shrimp and Grits — Blue Marlin

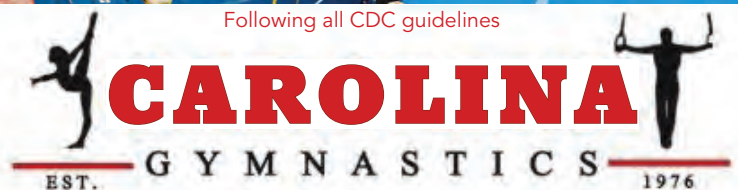
Second Place: Mr. Friendly's New Southern Cafe

There are several places that serve solid shrimp and grits in Columbia. But Blue Marlin has long been at the top of the list, offering a taste of the Lowcountry in the heart of the Vista. Made with Adluh grits, this savory dish has been a Capital City favorite for years. The tasso gravy is what sends it over the top into all-star territory.

Honorable Mention: Motor Supply Co. Bistro, Saluda's Restaurant



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Lula Drake Wine Parlour is voted Best Wine List and Honorable Mention for Best Charcuterie Board and Best Place for a First Date. Photo by John Carlos

Best Smoothie — Tropical Smoothie Cafe

Second Place: Tasty as Fit

Sometimes a smoothie is a meal replacement. Sometimes it's dessert. Sometimes it's just a way to cool down from the heat. No matter which type of smoothie day it is, all of those needs can be met at Tropical Smoothie Cafe, with an extensive selection of fruity, icy beverages that can also be pumped up with

protein powder and other powdered vitamin additions.

Honorable Mentions: Smoothie King, Good Life Cafe

Best Soul Food — Kiki's Chicken and Waffles

Second Place: A Peace of Soul Vegan Kitchen

Kiki's namesake includes chicken and waffles, which rightfully has its place in the halls of soul food. But Kiki Cyrus and her staff whip up much more than that. The wide-ranging

and excellent menu also has smothered pork chops, fried okra, fried whiting and more.

Honorable Mentions: Big Bull's Bang'n BBQ and Southern Comfort Food, Capital City Kitchen & Grill

Best Southern Restaurant — Lizard's Thicket

Second Place: Mr. Friendly's New Southern Café

The fact that Lizard's Thicket is named "Lizard's Thicket" and has the slogan "Y'all come" ought to let you know just how Southern this Southern restaurant is. It's been a

meat-and-three staple in the Midlands for decades, and it's the kind of spot where macaroni-and-cheese is most certainly considered a vegetable. Get the chicken fried steak, then thank us later.

Honorable Mentions: The War Mouth, Spotted Salamander Café and Catering

Best Steak — Halls Chophouse Columbia

Second Place: LongHorn Steakhouse

Halls Chophouse has made quite the impression since it opened on Main Street, near Gervais, in late 2018. It has become a popular spot for upscale dining, with the Statehouse and business crowd at lunch, and with folks celebrating special occasions in the evening. The restaurant is known for its exquisite steaks, cut from USDA prime beef and flown in from Allen Brothers of Chicago.

Honorable Mentions: Motor Supply Co. Bistro, Terra

Best Sushi — Inakaya Watanabe (St. Andrews Road)

Second Place: Inakaya Japanese Restaurant (O'Neil Court)

When you've got rich and fresh sashimi, adventurous but never too over the top rolls, a wonderful sushi bar experience, and a chef who makes you feel like preparing each meal came with a personal touch, you're running a truly exemplary sushi restaurant. And this Inakaya has it all.

Honorable Mentions: Camon Japanese Restaurant, Tsunami Sushi Restaurant

Best Sweet Tea — Groucho's Deli

Second Place: Bojangles' Famous Chicken 'n Biscuits

When you need to wash down that STP Dipper, accept no substitute. Groucho's sweet — like, extra sweet — iced tea is almost as much of an institution as the roster of sandwiches and the famed 45 Sauce. It's strong, but not overly so, and the signature crushed ice makes for a perfect concoction. Get a refill before you leave.

Honorable Mentions: Chick-fil-A, Lizard's Thicket

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Best Taco — Cantina 76

Second Place: Real Mexico

Cantina 76 tacos are not authentic. Nor are they trying to be. But that doesn't mean biting into a rich and smoky and perfectly meaty brisket taco isn't immensely satisfying. The rotating specials get even more adventurous, but for those seeking normalcy, the restaurant's take on a simple beef taco is also well-seasoned and satisfying.

Honorable Mentions: Moctezumas Taqueria, Tacos Nayarit

Best Take Out Food — Eggroll Chen

Second Place: Duke's Pad Thai

Though the competition for takeout food has gotten fierce in 2020, Eggroll Chen is the OG of takeout in Columbia, earning it top honors. The classic numbered menu serves up noodle, chicken, beef, seafood specials, and everything you'd expect from a Chinese restaurant, and more, which is why people love it so much, even bypassing closer Chinese

food options to seek out Eggroll Chen and nothing more.

Honorable Mentions: Cantina 76, Lizard's Thicket

Best Thai Restaurant — Mai Thai Cuisine

Second Place: Basil Thai

Mai Thai has all the great curries and stir-fries and noodle dishes you could want to feast on, along with several other tasty options to explore. But what really sets it apart is the fabulous thai bakery that's attached to its West Columbia restaurant, offering yummy treats to enjoy at your table or to take home.

Honorable Mentions: Duke's Pad Thai, Baan Sawan Thai Bistro

Best Vegetarian Menu — A Peace of Soul Vegan Kitchen

Second Place: Good Life Cafe

The longtime vegan and carnivore-favorite food truck reopened its brick-and-mortar spot in Cottontown this year and it's been an instant hit. Any changes outside of the space are hard to notice, as the Fried "Chicken" Sand-

wich and all the other favorites remain — and continue to please.

Honorable Mentions: Rosewood Market & Deli, The Whig

Best Veggie Burger — A Peace of Soul Vegan Kitchen

Second Place: The Whig

Veggie burgers are difficult to make well. They need to resemble ground beef in both taste and flavor, plus the patty needs to hold its shape when bitten into. And, above all, it needs to taste good — a tall order for a lunch item to take on. But the faux meat masters at Peace of Soul Vegan Kitchen have it down pat. Their version, served on a brioche bun, is meaty enough to please carnivores, but not so realistically beefy as to horrify real vegans.

Honorable Mentions: Rosewood Market & Deli, Good Life Cafe

Best Wine List — Lula Drake Wine Parlour

Second Place: Gervais & Vine

Lula Drake Wine Parlour owner Tim Gardner has said he wants to give people an expe-

rience with his globe-spanning wine list. It's hard to argue with him. A recent cellar sale showcased such a selection, with wines ranging from eclectic unfiltered bottles to exceedingly rare and valuable finds.

Honorable Mentions: Hampton Street Vineyard, The Vino Garage

Best Wings — D's Wings

Second Place: Publick House

This Cayce haunt actually has a diverse menu of tasty offerings, including seafood, burgers, pasta, steaks, ribs and much more. But the wings are still the show. Available in two dozen flavors, these meaty confections will have you coming back time and time again. If you're feeling adventurous, try them in the signature Suicide hot sauce. Just make sure to have something cold to drink close at hand.

Honorable Mentions: Carolina Wings, Wings & Ale

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Phill Blair, 2020's Best Local Business Leader, runs The Whig, which wins Best Bar or Club, Best Happy Hour, Best Neighborhood Bar: Downtown/The Vista and Honorable Mention for Best Beer Selection.
Photo by John Carlos

Best Bar or Club – The Whig

Second Place: Jake's

The Whig is a fixture on Columbia's night-life scene. The subterranean watering hole proudly states how often it cleans its taps, and those taps offer up some of the best craft beer varieties in town. The efficient and amiable bar staff make sure you're welcome, too.

Honorable Mentions: Art Bar, Tin Roof

Best Bar Service – Bourbon

Second Place: The Whig

Helmed by well-regarded bartender Kat Hunter, Main Street's Bourbon is a whiskey-drinker's delight. Depending on what you're asking for, Hunter's knowledgeable staff is as likely to break down their numerous whiskeys as they are to detail their numerous house-crafted cocktails.

Honorable Mention: Art Bar, Lula Drake Wine Parlour

Best Bar Trivia – River Rat Brewery

Second Place: Art Bar/Useless Trivia

Do you know random things? Do you have some friends who also know random things? Then get them together and take your asses to River Rat Brewery on Shop Road on Thursday nights for the best trivia night in town. Have a cold one or two (or three) while you're at it.

The Bohemian Pilsner pairs particularly well with imparting esoteric knowledge.

Honorable Mentions: Columbia Craft Brewing Company, The Grand on Main

Best Bartender – Nate Stephens (Henry's - Devine Street)

Second Place: Kat Hunter (Bourbon)

Columbia is a worker's town, and Henry's is the kind of no-frills, classic bar/restaurant that is emblematic of that. One person who was emblematic of that was Nate Stephens, who passed away last year. Known for his hospitable demeanor, Stephens helped shape one of the area's best bars and was well loved by many a Henry's patron.

Honorable Mentions: Josh Streetman (Motor Supply Co. Bistro), Kasey McKay (The Capital Club)

Best Beer Selection – Craft and Draft

Second Place: Steel Hands Brewing

The taps at Craft and Draft rotate so quickly and are curated so attentively that no matter what your beer preference, you'll find something new and up-your-alley to drink when you come in. And when you add in the even wider package selection, most of which is cold and ready to drink on-premise, you'll find at least four or five.

Honorable Mentions: The Whig, Cafe Strudel

Best Bloody Mary – Cafe Strudel

Second Place: The War Mouth

What's a great brunch without a great bloody mary? Strudel's variations are great, ably balancing savoriness and spice for a perfect hangover cure (or fine breakfast food accompaniment if you're not showing up worse for wear).

Honorable Mentions: Motor Supply Co. Bistro, Bourbon

Best Brewpub – Hunter-Gatherer Brewery & Alehouse

Second Place: Steel Hands Brewing

Hunter-Gatherer has been brewing beer in Columbia for 25 years, and has long been an institution on Main Street south of the Statehouse. It was the first microbrewery in Columbia. The food here is on-point (well, hello, baked macaroni and cheese), the dining room is as cozy as a hobbit's house and the beer is always fresh. The Hazy Grammar IPA is a favorite.

Honorable Mentions: River Rat Brewery, Old Mill Brewpub

Best Cocktail Program – Bourbon

Second Place: The War Mouth

The best cocktail program in town is being shaken up behind the bar at Main Street's Bourbon. The dark and sexy atmosphere is exactly the kind where you'd expect to find more

than 400 varieties of whiskey, and the list of seasonally changing cocktails highlights fresh and often local ingredients — not to mention the mind erasing offerings on tap during Tiki Week each winter.

Honorable Mentions: Motor Supply Co. Bistro, Tazza Kitchen

Best College Bar – Jake's

Second Place: Taneyhill's Group Therapy

Dogs plus a patio plus drinks make for a college bar haven. Jake's has all that, and it's nestled right in Five Points. With a food menu that's perfect to enjoy with drinks, it's a stand-out for college folks — and great for others, too.

Honorable Mentions: Pavlov's Bar, 5 Points Saloon

Best Craft Beer Selection – Steel Hands Brewing

Second Place: Craft and Draft

Apparently, *Free Times* readers really like Steel Hands beers. Because that's what Steel Hands serves at its brewery, a whole bunch of Steel Hands beers. And the time of this writing, the taplist ranged from familiar standbys like the Coffee Lager and Tropical IPA to bold one-offs like a Peach Iced Tea Ale and a Habanero Agave Tequila Lager.

Honorable Mentions: Columbia Craft Brewing Company, WECO Bottle & Biergarten



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Cantina 76 is voted Best Margarita, Best Taco, Best Restaurant – Devine Street/Shandon/Rosewood, Best Bang for the Buck; Second Place for Best Mexican Restaurant, Best Burrito; and Honorable Mention for Best Place for a First Date, Best Service and Best Takeout Food. *Photo by John Carlos*

Best Dance Club – The Woody on Main

Second Place: Carolina Western Pub

COVID-19 may have dampened The Woody on Main's reopening this year, yet the club maintains a strong reputation from its earlier location in the Vista. Known for its range of dance nights, it's sure to be a hit now that it's back swinging again.

Honorable Mentions: Skyline Club, Social Bar and Lounge

Best Distillery – Hollow Creek Distillery

Second Place: Crouch Distilling

Hollow Creek wants to give you what you want. You want a nice drink made with fine bourbon? It's on it with its High Cotton brand. You want a shot of something tasty and fun? It's there with an attentively crafted take on the cinnamon whiskey craze with its White Hot. Drinker's choice.

Honorable Mentions: Southern Essence Distilling, LLC

Best Gay Bar – The Capital Club

Second Place: PT's 1109

Some traditions never die. The Capital Club is the longest continuously running gay bar in the Southeast, and has been a mainstay in Columbia for four decades. A private club not far from the Statehouse, it's noted for its laid-back vibe. It has a venerable happy hour and is known for its drag shows on the weekends.

Honorable Mention: Vice Club

Best Happy Hour – The Whig

Second Place: Cantina 76

It's nice that the drinks are a little cheaper at The Whig right after work — not that they aren't cheap already, especially for those looking to sample fine craft beer. But what's really great is that it's a quiet, dimly lit oasis where the bartenders and the regulars are the kind that will strike up conversation if you want,

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Best Bartender in
Columbia, Nate Stephens

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FT11-1887411-1



Jake's is Best College Bar, Best Neighborhood Bar in Five Points and Second Place for Best Bar or Club and Best Outdoor Deck. Photo by John Carlos

and just leave you alone if you need a drink and some space.

Honorable Mentions: Bourbon, Tazza Kitchen

Best Local Brewery — Steel Hands Brewing
Second Place: River Rat Brewery

Not all breweries are conceptualized the same way. In 2018, Cayce's Steel Hands Brewing was born ready to please right out the gate. In the last two years, it's paired some of the best brews in town with a large canning production facility on site. The results? Its brand and quality flagship brews have spread far throughout the area, making it a quick favorite.

Honorable Mentions: Columbia Craft Brewing Company, Cottontown Brew Lab

Best Margarita — Cantina 76
Second Place: COA Agaveria Y Cocina

Margaritas can go one of two ways: very simple with fresh, real ingredients (never a mix!), or wild new flavors like a prickly pear margarita made with dragon berry rum. No matter which way your taste buds take you, the best margaritas in town are said to be at Cantina 76, with locations on Main Street for right after work, or on Devine Street for when you're already in the neighborhood.

Honorable Mentions: Publico, Moctezumas Taqueria

Best Neighborhood Bar — Downtown/The Vista — The Whig
Second Place: The War Mouth

If there's one thing we've missed most during this godforsaken pandemic, it's The Whig, which has been closed due to COVID-19. The subterranean dive bar at the corner of Main and Gervais streets is known for its wide selection of craft beers, it's delicious food (what's up, Whig Chicken Sandwich?) and it's dimly lit, relaxed atmosphere that draws a diverse crowd of regulars. Come back soon, Whig.

Honorable Mentions: Art Bar, Bourbon

Best Neighborhood Bar — Five Points — Jake's
Second Place: Bar None

Jake's is where the two sides of the Five Points nightlife coin most come together these days. It's spacious patio helps it remain a reliable draw among the college set, but the fact that it comes paired with a beer selection, vibe and quality food menu that appeals to young professionals — particularly during Yappy Hour, for those who want to bring their furry best friends — means they also come out in droves.

Honorable Mentions: Goat's, Publico

Best Neighborhood Bar — Harbison/Irmo — The British Bulldog Pub

Second Place: Craft and Draft Irmo

The British Bulldog is one of those oddly placed places that makes you want to believe that we live in a computer program, and you're experiencing a coding error. This authentic English pub has the devoted but welcoming crowd associated with such spots on the other side of the pond, filling it out with ridiculously tasty English fare, and augmenting it with a robust selection of local and national American craft beer. That it sits in the middle of a Harbison shopping center isn't a glitch in the Matrix, but a welcome respite for bar goers who need a break on a mall day.

Honorable Mentions: Hemingway's, Lucky's Burger Shack

Best Neighborhood Bar — Lexington — Keg Cowboy

Second Place: O'Hara's Public House

Keg Cowboy, located on Lexington's increasingly vibrant Main Street, has a saying: "No Crap On Tap." And they stick by it. The bar offers a diverse and seemingly ever-evolving menu of craft beers. It also has a unique and ambitious food menu. It's certainly the only place on Main Street in Lexington that regularly offers a duck panini.

Honorable Mentions: The Casual Pint, Hazelwood Brewing Company

Best Neighborhood Bar — Northeast — Henry's Northeast

Second Place: Random Tap

Each of Henry's three locations is a favorite neighborhood bar for the neighborhood it resides in. And that's definitely true of the Northeast outpost, where the reliable mix of tasty bites, well-stocked bar offerings and friendly service keep people coming back.

Honorable Mentions: Top Dawg Tavern, Racks Restaurant & Sports Bar

Best Neighborhood Bar — Shandon/Rosewood/Forest Acres — Craft and Draft

Second Place: Henry's


Craft and Draft is a great place to go get nerdy about craft beer. With such well-curated, rapidly cycling taps and adventurously stocked shelves and coolers, how could it not be? What's more remarkable is how it's grown into the kind of welcoming neighborhood hangout that draws in folks who just want light beers and good times with familiar faces.

Honorable Mentions: Nightcaps, The Cock N' Bull Pub



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Brewmaster Doug Smith at Steel Hands Brewing, which wins Best Local Brewery, Best Craft Beer Selection and Coldest Beer and comes in Second Place for Best Brewpub and Best Beer Selection. Photo by John Carlos

**Best Neighborhood Bar — West Columbia/
Cayce Steel Hands Brewing**

Second Place: WECO Bottle & Biergarten

Steel Hands Brewing doesn't fit the mold of the classic neighborhood bar, but the tasty beer makes for a swell coupling with the spacious interior and fantastic outdoor space, which frequently has live music.

Honorable Mentions: New Brookland Tavern, Henry's Restaurant & Bar

Best New Bar or Club — WECO Bottle & Biergarten

Second Place: Craft and Draft Irmo

Attaching a large and comfortable outdoor space, including a spacious covered patio, to a bottle shop and beer bar that emphasizes a quickly rotating selection of American craft beers and a reliable stock of European favorites has resulted in a new hotspot on Meeting Street.

Honorable Mentions: The Woody on Main, Carolina Western Pub

Best Place to See Live Comedy — The Comedy Closet

Second Place: The Comedy House

Since the Best Of Columbia polling process started, one of the co-owners of The Comedy Closet stepped away due to accusations of sexual misconduct. Before that, many in town were excited by the stout selection of touring and local comics the new club was bringing in. How the recent controversy and the club's response impact that popularity remains to be seen.

Honorable Mention: Art Bar

Best People-Watching Bar — Art Bar

Second Place: Jake's

From robots to Christmas lights, Art Bar has the setting to draw an eclectic crowd. Pre-COVID, its various event nights, from karaoke to trivia, made for one the best spots to cozy up to its bar and just gaze out on the cast of characters.

Honorable Mentions: The Woody on Main, The Whig

Best Outdoor Deck — Liberty on the Lake

Second Place: Jake's

Liberty on the Lake has a lot going for it in the traditional sense. A solid food menu — the shrimp and grits is pretty special — and a well-stocked bar make this a respectable casual dining experience. But the deck, with gorgeous views over Lake Murray, especially in the evening, is what elevates this particular location. Dinner is good. Dinner and a view? Even better.

Honorable Mention: Steel Hands Brewing, Hendrix Restaurant

Best Sports Bar — Thirsty Fellow Pizzeria and Pub

Second Place: The British Bulldog Pub

Maybe y'all voted Thirsty Fellow as the best sports bar because there are often ballgames playing on their many TVs as you enjoy their delicious pizzas and partake from the bar's deep selection of drinks. But we're guessing you are likely giving it a nod as a sports bar in a more direct sense: Thirsty Fellow, situated just steps from Colonial Life Arena, has become a go-to spot for basketball fans before and after University of South Carolina men's and women's basketball games.

Honorable Mentions: Village Idiot, Hickory Tavern

Coldest Beer — Steel Hands Brewing

Second Place: The Whig

Not every beer is meant to be consumed frigid. So in awarding this honor to Steel Hands, we're in no way suggesting that it does its beers a disservice with the temperatures at which it serves them. But that eminently crushable Punch Clock Pilsner does go down mighty fine when ice cold, and it's been that way every time we've grabbed one at the brewery.

Honorable Mentions: Thirsty Fellow Pizzeria and Pub, Columbia Craft Brewing Company



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The Whig

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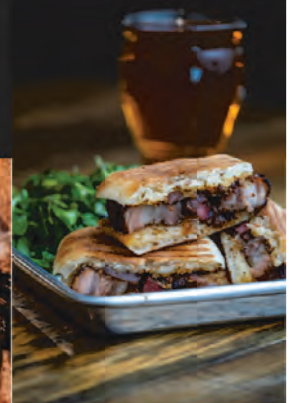
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Scratch N Spin is voted Best Place to Buy Comic Books. Photo by John Carlos

Best Adult Store – Nancy's Nook

Second Place: Lion's Den

Do you need a 5-Piece Hog Tie and Cuff Set? What about a Booty Call Booty Glider? A Dr. J Prostate Massager? A Clone-A-Willy Kit? A Colt Multi-Speed Power Pak Silver Bullet? Hot and Spicy Party Dice? Japanese Drip Candles? A Lock N' Play Remote Panty Teaser? You do need those things? Well, Nancy's Nook can help you out.

Honorable Mention: This Is It Video & Lingerie

Best Alternative Clothing – Sid & Nancy

Second Place: Loose Lucy's

It's not the cult classic film, it's the best dang alternative clothing store in Columbia. Located among Five Points merchants, Sid & Nancy may be in the college neighborhood, but it's got enough spunk and diverse stock to draw in alternative folks of all ages.

Honorable Mentions: Revente, Urban Outfitters

Best Antique Store – Old Mill Antique Mall

Second Place: Re-Find

Old Mill is the best distraction available when you're waiting for a brunch table in the State Street area of West Columbia, eyeing various trinkets and oddities — and perhaps going home with one — before you dig into mimosas and French toast. But it's also a packed depot of antique furniture that has op-

tions for pretty much anything you could be looking for. Either way, it's a local institution.

Honorable Mentions: Reinvintage, The Red Lion

Best Bakery – Tiffany's Sweets, Eats and Meeting Place

Second Place: Silver Spoon Bake Shop

Tiffany's recently took its cozy cafe and bakery and blew the concept up into a much larger place with a bigger capacity and a much bigger dessert case. The dazzling display of decorated cakes, cookies, petit fours, macarons, brownies, fruit pies and more is the first thing tempting customers upon their arrival. The scaling up has only made everything better, including a new bar area and drink menu, and an expansion of the food menu.

Honorable Mentions: Blue Flour Bakery, Ally & Eloise Bakeshop

Best Beer Store – Green's Beverage Warehouse

Second Place: Craft And Draft

Green's has two locations throughout the Columbia area and has libations for everyone between its local craft beer to its sprawling variety of spirits. Its South Carolina bred and its well-loved status in the Midlands and elsewhere reflects that.

Honorable Mentions: Morganelli's, Bottles Beverage Superstore

Best Bridal Store – David's Bridal

Second Place: Jo-Lin's Bridal & Formal Wear

Planning a wedding can stress you out so much that you don't want to actually *have* the wedding, so why not leave the wedding gown and bridesmaid dresses to the experts at David's Bridal? It's the go-to name for wedding threads that will make you look beautiful while you suffer through the best man's embarrassing toast.

Honorable Mentions: Evelyn's Bridal, New York Bride & Groom of Columbia

Best Butcher Shop – Ole Timey Meats Columbia

Second Place: Ole Timey Meat Market Lexington & St. Andrews

Sometimes you've just got to tend to your carnivorous side. When that's the case you



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want to go with a high-quality cut of meat. Ole Timey Meats Columbia can take care of you in that regard. It offers top-notch beef, pork, chicken and more, all minimally processed and without preservatives.

Honorable Mentions: New York Butcher Shoppe, The Royal Butcher.

Best Children's Apparel – Once Upon A Child

Second Place: Duck Duck Goose

Look, your kid probably grew another inch or two while you were reading this. Does it really make sense to buy new children's clothing every two weeks? Rather than going broke for baby, consider the gently used kids' duds at Once Upon A Child. The clothes, shoes and other baby gear are all rigorously inspected and cleaned up before they go out for sale, and every member of the staff is trained to make sure these clothes are 100 percent safe.

Honorable Mentions: The Children's Place, Marigold Modern Kids

Best Consignment Store – Revente

Second Place: Roundabouts Consignments Inc.

Revente is a mainstay of Saluda Avenue in Five Points. For years it has been a go-to shop for stylish consignment. It sells women's boutique and designer clothing, shoes and accessories. Aside from consignment offerings, it also sells new jewelry and accessories.

Honorable Mentions: Sid & Nancy, Messie's Closet

Best Convenience Store – Circle K

Second Place: 7 Eleven

Convenience is at least 50 percent of the convenience store experience, right? When you need some chips, a tank of gas, a soda and a lighter and you need them all quickly, there are Circle K locations all over Columbia to help you get in, out and on with your day.

Honorable Mention: Shiv Mart

Best Cycle Chop – Outspokin' Bicycles

Second Place: ColaTown Bike Collective

For nearly 40 years, Outspokin' has been a hub for bicyclists of all ages and skill levels. It's a great place to purchase new bikes or gear, or have your current ride repaired. Outspokin'



Mad Platter is Best Pottery Studio. Photo by John Carlos

carries a number of noted brands, including Trek, State Bicycle Co., Bontrager, Saris and Garmin.

Honorable Mention: Cycle Center, Summit Cycles

Best Furniture Shop – Whit-Ash Furnishings

Second Place: Stroblor Homer Furnishings

You need new furniture? Whit-Ash has furniture. Like, a 40,000-square-foot showroom full of it. From sofas and chairs to tables, beds and mattresses, Whit-Ash can help you

reinvigorate your home with new pieces. It has been a trusted store in Columbia for five decades, and is located right in the heart of the Vista. Ready for a change in your house? Whit-Ash will help.

Honorable Mentions: ReinVintage, Marty Rae's of Lexington

Best Gamecock Store – Addam's University Bookstore

Second Place: Barefoot Campus Outfitter

This fall is probably going to look a little different in terms of Gamecocks sports, considering the pandemic. But when you are ready to purchase new gameday gear, Addams Bookstore is the place to be. The shop on Assembly Street is absolutely stuffed with USC paraphernalia of all types. If it's garnet and black



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Rosewood Market is voted Best Natural Food Store and Honorable Mention for for Best Place for Fresh Produce. Photo by John Carlos

and has the USC logo on it, you can probably find it at Addam's.

Honorable Mentions: Miss Cocky, Todd & Moore

Best Gaming Store – Firefly Toys & Games

Second Place: GameStop

With a cavernous space that allows for many visitors to play tabletop games, along with a sweet, pinball-heavy arcade (featuring nifty cameras and screens that display the action to those standing behind you), Firefly

is more than just a place to buy games. It's a place to get immersed in the community and the culture surrounding them.

Honorable Mention: 2nd & Charles

Best Gift Shop – Uptown on Main

Second Place: Non(e)Such

Open since 2008, Uptown on Main is a great catch-all shop for those looking to pop in and grab a gift on a downtown workday. The selection lands at the intersection of local flair

and fine homeware, emphasizing local food producers, particularly in the store's custom gift baskets.

Honorable Mentions: The Shoppes on Main, Gibson's

Best Gun Shop – Palmetto State Armory

Second Place: Shooter's Choice

If you're looking for a firearm, Palmetto State Armory can get you one, get you the parts you need to keep it in tip-top shape, sell you the ammo and get you a holster to put it

in. It's a one-stop shop for all your gun and gun accessory needs.

Honorable Mentions: Barron's Outfitters, The Gun Vault

Best Hardware Store – Lowe's Home Improvement

Second Place: Boland's Ace

Sometimes you get yourself into a big project, like building a new deck onto the back of your home, or tearing out and totally remodeling a bathroom. But sometimes you just need something small, like an air conditioning filter or some line for your weed trimmer. For a big purchase or a little one, Lowe's will have what you need for work around the house.

Honorable Mentions: The Home Depot, South East Ace Inc.

Best Jewelry Store – Sylvan's Jewelers

Second Place: Unforgettable Fine Jewelry

Around longer than any of us can remember, Sylvan's Jewelers was founded in 1897 and there's a good reason it has stood the test of time. From Rolexes to repairs, Sylvan's has the gems and metals to make your partner's heart melt or make you the envy of your colleagues.

Honorable Mentions: Dems Fine Jewelers, Sugar & Lola

Best Liquor Store – Morganelli's

Second Place: Green's Beverage Warehouse

Morganelli's is more than just a liquor store, offering one of the city's most attentively stocked selection of beer and wine in the space adjoining its spirits outlet. But as a liquor store, it shines just as brightly, with stores that range from excellent budget options to more rare and expensive treats — and a friendly staff shows no judgement or condescension as they guide you through it.

Honorable Mentions: Bottles Beverage Superstore, Total Wine & More

Best Marine Store – West Marine

Second Place: Marine 360

If it's something you need for a day on the water, West Marine probably has it. From anchors to navigational electronics to safety gear to fishing gear to all of the sailing rigs you need, it's all there. Or, since it also sells small boats, you could just go ahead and get a boat

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so that you have something to use all those accessories for.

Honorable Mentions: Mountain Top Marine, Xplor Boatworks

Best Men's Clothing — Granger Owings

Second Place: Brittons of Columbia

Need to look sharp? Granger Owings can take care of you. From custom suits and sport coats to business attire, sportswear, dress shoes, accessories and more, this shop has all you need to look fresh and fashionable. Granger Owings also offers in-store fittings, so you can make sure everything looks just right.

Honorable Mentions: Belk, BP Skinner Clothiers

Best Natural Food Store — Rosewood Market

Second Place: Whole Foods Market

A Columbia staple, Rosewood Market can help you with every new health food trend that comes up, from dragon fruit powder to CBD, which continuously earns it the title of Best Natural Food Store. Besides the trendy items and everyday health food necessities, it faithfully stocks local produce, local meats and dairy, and serves up three meals a day at the deli, using the same produce and other items for sale in the store.

Honorable Mentions: 14 Carrot Whole Foods, Garner's Natural Life

Best Place for Fresh Produce — Soda City Market

Second Place: South Carolina State Farmers Market

Fresh produce keeps you healthy, and it's got to be picked up often, so why not do it weekly at the city's best spot for getting fruits and vegetables, and more? It's become a weekly ritual for many in the Midlands to start their weekends with a trip to Soda City, for breakfast, local crafts and, of course, a big haul of fresh produce to last for the rest of the week.

Honorable Mentions: Cayce Farmer's Market, Rosewood Market & Deli

Best Place To Buy CBD Products — Charlotte CBD at Five Points

Second Place: Rosewood Market & Deli

Got something that's bugging you, either physically or mentally? There's a CBD oil for that, and Charlotte CBD at Five Points proba-

bly has it. Or you could just check out its selection of creams, concentrates, capsules and vape products. It's even got herbal relief on hand for your pets, up to and including horses!

Honorable Mentions: Garner's Natural Life, 14 Carrot Whole Foods

Best Place to Buy Comic Books — Scratch N Spin

Second Place: 2nd & Charles

Scratch N Spin sells much more than just comics. It's one of the area's last true record stores, and it also specializes in movies, video games and toys. But comics are definitely one of the big draws, a nice spot to buy local as the number of shops in the area dwindles.

Honorable Mentions: Heroes & Dragons, Cosmic Rays

Best Place to Buy Used Books — 2nd and Charles

Second Place: Ed's Editions

If you are looking for a place to lose a few hours on a weekend afternoon, look no further than 2nd and Charles. It has tons to offer, including records, CDs, movies, posters, comic books and toys. But the books are still the show. Thousands and thousands of used books, stacked on shelves deep into the store. If you love to read, and you still prefer to do it with an actual book (rather than a device), this is your spot.

Honorable Mentions: The Book Dispensary, Odd Bird Books

Best Place to Buy Used/Vintage Music Instruments — The Music Store on Devine Street

Second Place: Guitar Center

The Music Store on Devine Street is very much the opposite of your big-box instrument shopping experience. Featuring mostly instruments on consignment, there's a charming local feel and expertise that comes from shopping here. Plus, you can score the instrument you want and the price you can afford.

Honorable Mention: Barnyard flea market

Best Pottery Studio — The Mad Platter

Second Place: Columbia Art Center

As welcoming to adults as it is to kids, Mad Platter is a lovely paint-your-own pottery stu-

dio. The helpful staff will happily direct artistic neophytes and experts alike as you paint at their tables. After a handful of days, they will have your creation ready for pick-up in all its glossy glory. It's a wonderful idea for a special occasion or just a fine spot to spend a weekend afternoon exploring your creative side.

Honorable Mentions: Pitter Platter, Southern Pottery Workcenter & Gallery

Best Shopping District — Harbison Boulevard

Second Place: Devine Street

Yeah, we know the traffic in the Harbison Boulevard area can be a pain, especially during the holidays. But it remains the Columbia area's key shopping district, with amenities such as Columbiana Centre mall, Walmart, Sam's Club, Best Buy, Target, Old Navy and many, many other national outposts and big box offerings. Brave the crowds, and maybe you'll find that new TV you've been looking for.

Honorable Mentions: Trenholm Plaza, Five Points

Best Smoke Shop — High Life

Second Place: Tobacco Merchant

If you've got the urge to burn one, High Life has you covered. Whether it's vapes, hookahs, e-cigarettes, or something more exotic, High Life doesn't just have the products, it's got the experienced and knowledgeable staff on hand to make sure you've got what you need.

Honorable Mentions: Seven Sense Intl., Maduro Room

Best Sporting Goods Store — Academy Sports & Outdoors

Second Place: Todd & Moore

Are you looking for a new hunting rifle? What about some gear to go kayaking? Or perhaps your kids have been bugging you to put up a basketball hoop out in the driveway? If you need something in the realm of sporting goods, Academy likely has it. From equipment to apparel and everything in-between, this big box can take care of your sporting desires.

Honorable Mentions: DICK'S Sporting Goods, Sportsman's Warehouse

Best Sporting Goods Store — Goodwill

Second Place: 4 Paws Thrift Store (Formerly St. Paws Thrift Store)

What else is there to say about Goodwill? The omnipresent thrift store has clothes, home goods and so much more. It's known for its "hidden gems," but regardless of what you're looking for there's value to be found. A nonprofit, it does more than shell out used goods, it gives back to the community, too.

Honorable Mentions: Palmetto Thrift, Oliver Gospel Thrift Store

Best Vaping Store — High Life

Second Place: Palmetto Vapors

High Life celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. And in that time, the shop has done well changing with the times, maintaining a satisfying selection of vape products and accessories for those looking to inhale.

Honorable Mentions: Essential Vapors & CBD, Jay's

Best Wine Store — Total Wine & More

Second Place: The Gourmet Shop

It's all in the name: Total Wine & More is all about the wine. It stocks more than 8,000 varieties of wine, and the in-store wine experts can help anyone select the right bottles for any occasion. It also offers classes and tastings to help even the most novice wine drinker become more knowledgeable about their grape juice of choice.

Honorable Mentions: Morganelli's, Bottles Beverage Superstore

Best Women's Clothing — Copper Penny

Second Place: Just the Thing

There are plenty of options for women's clothing in Columbia, but the most stylish women all head to Copper Penny boutique for the latest trends. From glamping up in fun garnet and black rompers to stylish cocktail dresses for a night of dinner and dancing on Main Street, this Devine Street shop is the place to find the best dressed women in town perusing the racks for their next big retail score.

Honorable Mentions: Pink Sorbet, 2G's Clothing

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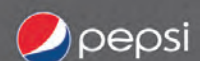
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Columbia Martial Arts and Fitness is voted Best After-School Program and Best Martial Arts School. Photo by John Carlos

Best After-School Program – Columbia Martial Arts and Fitness

Second Place: Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands

Columbia Martial Arts and Fitness offers a host of classes and programs across several disciplines, for adults and youngsters alike. But its afterschool program for kids has proven particularly popular. The program allows kids to learn the core martial arts tenets of respect, discipline and perseverance, in a fun setting. It gives kids a physical outlet after a

day in class, and offers an active alternative to video games and computers.

Honorable Mentions: East Point Academy, Legacy Martial Arts

Best Bank – Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union

Second Place: Founders Federal Credit Union

Credit unions took first and second place with our readers for a reason: They're customer-owned, service-oriented institutions that have big bank capabilities with a small-bank

feel. Everyone who banks at Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union has a share in the institution, and that promotes a family feel that other banks can't provide.

Honorable Mentions: First Community Bank, First Citizens Bank

Best Charter School – SC Whitmore School

Second Place: East Point Academy

The SC Whitmore School was doing virtual learning long before it became a buzzy idea

amid COVID-19. The school has been around since 2011, and offers students flexibility in their education. And the results are there: More than \$1 million in college scholarships were doled out to the school's graduating class in 2018. And, as a charter school, there is no cost to attend.

Honorable Mention: Timmerman School

Best Cleaning Service: Palmetto Commercial Services

Second Place: Heavenly Scent Cleaning Service

Not to bring anybody down, but it's *really* important that your business stays clean right now. And Palmetto Cleaning Services offers an array of ways to do that, from janitorial services to carpet and hardwood care to allergen reduction and deep cleaning. If you need a good scrubbing for your business, Palmetto Commercial Services can throw on the rubber gloves and get to work.

Honorable Mentions: Heather's Helping Hands, Cleaning To Perfection

Best Continuing Education Institution – University Of South Carolina

Second Place: Midlands Technical College

The University of South Carolina is the biggest education brand in the Midlands, and it's dominant in this category, too. Continuing education options include personal interest courses, professional education and certificate programs and test prep. Keep learning.

Honorable Mentions: Columbia College, Mota Enterprises Crosslinking Business Center

Best Credit Union – Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union

Second Place: AllSouth Federal Credit Union

Palmetto Citizens took two top prizes this year, and it's because they offer great customer service and provide a community bank feel with big-bank muscle. There's a lot of stiff competition credit-union-wise in our area, and Palmetto Citizens has risen to the top of the heap by putting people first.

Honorable Mentions: Founders Federal Credit Union, SC State Credit Union

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City Roots is voted Best Farm. Photo by John Carlos

Best Dry Cleaner – Tripp’s Fine Cleaners

Second Place: \$2.50 Cleaners - Main St.

Some clothes need extra special attention, like dry cleaning, and those clothes are often the extra special ones themselves. Not every dry cleaner is worthy of handling such items, but Tripp’s Fine Cleaners is the only certified master dry-cleaner in the Midlands, so why trust anyone else? Attention to detail, friendly

service, plus free delivery nets them the designation as the best.

Honorable Mentions: Eagle Cleaners, Ben’s Cleaners

Best DUI Law Firm or Attorney – J. Taylor Bell

Second Place: Randy Hough

Ok, let’s be really clear up front here by saying that you *should not drink and drive under any circumstances*. However, if you’ve gotten yourself into a DUI pinch, J. Taylor Bell is

the lawyer to call. A DUI offense has serious consequences, so you’ll need a good attorney to help you out, and our readers think Bell is the best.

Honorable Mentions: Dayne Phillips, Judah VanSyckel

Best Electrician – Creations Electric

Second Place: Mr. Electric of Columbia

Shocked that your home’s electricity is on the fritz? Give Creations Electric a call. The Blythewood electrician will rewire your

house, repair lamps and chandeliers and handle any electric work you may need.

Honorable Mentions: Easy Electrical Solutions, Sunrise Electric

Best Escape Room – Escape Plan Columbia

Second Place: Escapology Escape Rooms Columbia

Do you feel like taking control of a pirate ship? Fancy investigating a hotel where strange activity has been happening? Want to go back in time and into legend to save the famous wizard Merlin? You can choose any of these adventures at Escape Plan Columbia, where solving the puzzles also means choosing your own adventure.

Honorable Mentions: The Final Door, The Great Escape

Best Event Venue – 701 Whaley

Second Place: Koger Center for the Arts

The lovingly restored early-20th-century events space has long been the go-to for a wide variety of functions thanks to its deft blend of historic charm and industrial chic that allows it to split the difference between traditional and modern, corporate and arty. That the space also has plenty of adaptability and parking while being minutes from downtown just seals the deal.

Honorable Mentions: Twelve Oak Estate, New Brookland Tavern

Best Farm – City Roots Farm

Second Place: Goat Daddy’s Farm

Columbia’s urban farm carefully nourishes microgreens and root vegetables it later turns into pickles. Along with being a well-regarded restaurant supplier, the farm itself is a frequent locale for farm-to-table dinner events and slings its goods to the public, too.

Honorable Mentions: Heritage Field Farms, Freshly Grown Farms

Best Florist – Blossom Shop

Second Place: Tim’s Touch Flowers and Gifts

This Five Points fixture has been serving up blooms for Mother’s Days, anniversaries, funerals and apologies at the corner of Saluda and Devine for many years. Its reliable service and floral knowledge has kept Columbia homes and businesses in bloom, which is

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Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union is Best Bank and Best Credit Union. Photo by John Carlos

why it's been trusted time and again to bring a smile to its recipients.

Honorable Mentions: Fern Studio Flowers, Something Special Florist

Best Funeral Services Provider – Greenhaven Memorial Gardens

Second Place: Myers Mortuary and Cremation Services

Greenhaven Memorial Gardens doesn't just provide top-notch funeral services for your loved ones. It also focuses on after-care for those left behind, offering information on grief recovery classes and other educational services that can help you get through one of the most difficult times of your life. And it's been doing it for nearly 30 years.

Honorable Mentions: Dunbar Funeral Home, Thompson Funeral Home

Best Golf Course – Cobblestone Park Golf Club

Second Place: Forest Lake Club

Fore! Cobblestone boasts a 27-hole golf course that is one of the most picturesque in Columbia, known for its rolling hills, soaring trees and clever course layout. It offers golf lessons for adults and kids. Cobblestone also lets you play for free on your birthday. The club debuted a new clubhouse five years ago, which includes the restaurant Alexander's.

Honorable Mentions: Timberlake Country Club, Oak Hills Golf Club

Best Gymnastics/Cheerleading School – Carolina Gymnastics Center

Second Place: ACX American Cheer X-Treme

If you are looking for a place to get your kids into gymnastics, look no further. Carolina Gymnastics Center has offerings for gymnasts at various skill levels, and prides itself on instruction that teaches participants the correct

fundamentals and skills they'll need to continue progressing in the sport.

Honorable Mentions: Lake Murray Gymnastics, Soda City Gymnastics

Best Heating and Air Service – Cool Care Heating and Air

Second Place: Cassell Brothers Heating & Cooling

Who doesn't love that cool yellow dog smiling in the Cool Care Heating and Air ads? Besides the mad marketing finesse, Cool Care services HVAC systems all over the Midlands for people who need a little heat in the winter, and a lot of cooling in the summer. With reasonable pricing and quick service, it's no won-

der they are the top pick for HVAC servicing of any temperature.

Honorable Mentions: Cola Bear Heating & Air, 2nd Wind Heating & Air Conditioning

Best Home Builder – Mungo Homes

Second Place: Callaway Construction Co.

We're not saying that Mungo Homes can provide you with the perfect home anywhere in South Carolina, but we *are* saying that they can do it in Columbia, Charleston, Greenville, Spartanburg and Myrtle Beach, which is a pretty good spread. Speaking of good spreads, Mungo Homes has a variety of beautiful floor plans for your new home.

Honorable Mentions: Great Southern Homes, Essex Homes by Stanley Martin Homes

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Best Hotel — Hotel Trundle

Second Place: Aloft Columbia Downtown

This spiffy downtown hotel starts off your stay with a glass of wine or beer and the accommodations don't end there. An amiable, helpful staff is there to ensure your stay is restful, which, with the modern, chic rooms, make it stand out getaway.

Honorable Mentions: Hilton Columbia Center, Marriott Columbia

Best House of Worship — The Brook

Second Place: St. Martin's In-the-Fields

This church on Parklane Road in Columbia is led by pastors Simeon and Nikki Moultrie. It has ministries for children, teens, men, women, couples and singles. It describes itself as a "life-giving ministry with a desire to change lives for Christ's sake."

Honorable Mentions: Midtown Fellowship, Elevation Church Columbia

Best Insurance Company — State Farm

Second Place: Powers Insurance Experts

Despite the weird alternate-timeline commercials where there's a different Jake and Chris Paul is Carlton from *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, State Farm is still the people's choice for home, vehicle, life and pretty much every other type of insurance. Apparently, no matter who Jake is, he's still the go-to name in the insurance biz.

Honorable Mentions: Giles Insurance Agency, Beckett Financial Group

Best Landscaping Company — KB Landscaping

Second Place: ProScapes

Do you want to be out there in the heat on Saturdays, trying to mow your lawn and trim the hedges? No, you do not. So why not give KB Landscaping a call so it can get your turf looking terrific and then provide the regular maintenance you need to keep it that way. That afternoon nap is callin', so put away the mower and pick up the phone.

Honorable Mentions: Trifecta Lawn Care, Michael Wayne's Landscaping & Tree Service

Best Law Firm — LawyerLisa, LLC

Second Place: The Jeffcoat Firm

In addition to having a name that's really fun to say, LawyerLisa, LLC is a constant contender for the top spot in our Best Law Firm category. And that's because it offers a wide variety of legal services, including real estate closings, estate planning, wills, trusts, probate litigation and pretty much anything else that you'd need a lawyer for.

Honorable Mentions: McDonnell & Associates Law Firm, The Stanley Law Group

Best Local Insurance Agent — Jeremy Powers

Second Place: Craig Giles

The name's Powers, and he's got it when it comes to insurance. The owner of Powers Insurance Experts will get you the coverage and guidance on insurance everyone needs. Let's face it, we could all use a little more insurance insight, and Powers is your guy.

Honorable Mentions: Laurie Griner, Larry Lucas

Best Martial Arts School — Columbia Martial Arts and Fitness

Second Place: Capital Karate

When you need a workout and a good sense of how to kick ass, martial arts may be the answer. "Train with confidence" is the tagline for Columbia Martial Arts and Fitness, and confidence is exactly what these highly skilled martial arts masters instill into their students, beginning from tiny dragon classes at age 4, all the way to the adult classes, which include fitness kickboxing, muay thai, jiu jitsu and more.

Honorable Mentions: Legacy Martial Arts, TNT Martial Arts & Fitness

Best Mortgage Lender or Broker — First Community Bank

Second Place: Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union

Getting a mortgage doesn't have to be painful, which is a concept a lot of lenders seem to have forgotten. Not First Community Bank, though. Our readers have chosen them as the best people to see when it's time to take out a mortgage, and they even beat out the always-highly-rated Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union.

Honorable Mentions: Guild Mortgage Company, Mortgage Network, Inc.

Best Moving Company — Soda City Movers

Second Place: Two Men and a Truck

In our experience, Soda City Movers are quick, courteous and careful with your stuff — which is pretty much everything you want from movers. Equally great is the fact that their exemplary services come at a cost that won't break the bank.

Honorable Mentions: The Moving Squad, Gamecock Moving

Best Outdoor/Camping Gear Retailer — Mast General Store

Second Place: Half-Moon Outfitters, Inc.

Mast General Store has a lot of things. Candy. Soda. Gamecock clothing and souvenirs. Books. But it also has a deep inventory of apparel, equipment and other gear you would need for camping or venturing out into the great outdoors. From backpacks and coolers to knives and tools, Mast has what you need to get out in the wild.

Honorable Mention: Sportsman's Warehouse, River Runner Outdoor Center

Best Pest Control — Clark's Termite & Pest Control

Second Place: Modern Exterminating Company, Inc.

If you're one of those folks who likes to scoop up a bug and gently deposit it outside, that's fine. But if you're like us and want to obliterate pests and insects from your home and from the very Earth, Clark's Termite & Pest Control is there for you with an arsenal of bug-killing tools.

Honorable Mentions: Cayce Exterminating Company Inc., Ledford's Termite & Pest Control Columbia

Best Photographer — Crush Rush

Second Place: Henry Jones

As visitors to his ongoing digitally Tiny Gallery hosted by The Jasper Project will see, Crush Rush has a keen eye for teasing out the distinct beauty of our corner of South Carolina. But he's also an honest and expressive documentarian, as his vivid and moving im-

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ages from this summer's Black Lives Matter protests commandingly attest.

Honorable Mentions: Joshua Aaron Photography, Southern Stitched Photography

Best Place for Music Lessons – Columbia Arts Academy/Lexington School of Music/Irmo Music Academy

Second Place: Freeway Music/Sims Music

The Columbia Arts Academy prides itself on being South Carolina's largest music school, teaching more than 1,300 students from ages 4 to adult everything from drums and guitar to singing and ukulele. Plus, with state-of-the-art LED monitors that can bring the large, highly qualified staff of teachers directly to your mobile device, it's COVID-ready to boot.

Honorable Mention: Transience LLC

Best Place to Get Alterations – Jackie's Tailoring-Alterations

Second Place: Nick's Tailoring

Stuff doesn't always come in the exact right size, and in those instances, the services of a professional tailor are necessary. Jackie's, with three convenient locations in Irmo, Forest Acres and on Two Notch Road, is where your mom, your neighbors and your mailman all take their duds for hemming and tailoring needs.

Honorable Mentions: Chong's Alterations, His & Her's Tailoring

Best Plumbing Repair – Meetze Plumbing

Second Place: Freedom Plumbing, Inc.

You don't have to tell us what you did to the toilet that made it stop working correctly. That's your business. But if you want to get it fixed, Meetze Plumbing is who you need to call. And that goes for any of your plumbing-related issues, in the kitchen or bathroom or wherever.

Honorable Mentions: Carolina Conditions, Superior Plumbing & Gas

Best Printing Company – Sun Solutions

Second Place: Apex Graphics

Need good-looking promotional brochures, booklets or other print material for your business? Sun Solutions has you covered. Need to physically or digitally deliver that material to your potential clients? Sun Solutions can do that, too. Need a brand analysis to see how you can improve your message? Yep, it can do that, too.

Honorable Mentions: Professional Printers, Perfect Printing

Best Private School – Heathwood Hall Episcopal School

Second Place: Hammond School

Heathwood Hall has been a top private school in Columbia for nearly 70 years. The Episcopal school has a rigorous academic curriculum and a competitive athletics program. Also offers a number of opportunities in the arts, including chorus, band, theater, creative writing and more. The school is known for producing well-rounded students who are prepared for the next step in life.

Honorable Mention: Cardinal Newman

Best Real Estate Agency – Home Advantage Realty, LLC

Second Place: The ART of Real Estate

Whether you're looking to buy or sell a home, you can get state-of-the-art help from

Home Advantage Realty, LLC. It's got the most up-to-date listings, customized video tours of homes, a social media strategy that will make your listing stand out, and it can even use social media to help you buy or sell, instead of using it to play Candy Crush Soda Saga. Oh yeah, we see you.

Honorable Mentions: Coldwell Banker, The Moore Company

Best Real Estate Agent – Sarah Bennett

Second Place: Jeff Lawler

A quick online search for real estate agent Sarah Bennett will get you a slew of five-star reviews and satisfied customers all around the Midlands. Whether you're buying or selling, Sarah will get you the best price, and she'll get you to that closing date faster than, well, something else that's really fast.

Honorable Mentions: Lisa Addy, The Boland Team

Best River Rental/Guide Company – Adventure Carolina

Second Place: Palmetto Experience

Columbia's three rivers are good for activities. You can kayak with varying levels of difficulty, or if you're feeling more laid-back, you can grab a tube (and a beverage) and float downstream. Adventure Carolina offers options for both of these pastimes, with a range of flexible tours and packages.

Honorable Mentions: River Runner Outdoor Center, JK Adventure Guides

Best Roofer – Crescent Construction, LLC

Second Place: Crosby Roofing & Seamless Gutters

Since the weather in Columbia seems to be a mix of searing heat and torrential rain, a good roof on top of your home or business is a must. Crescent Construction can handle just about any type of lid for your space, whether it's shingles, metal, cedar, slate or synthetic tile. So get your roof right with Crescent.

Honorable Mentions: Burgin Roofing Services, Premiere Roofing

Best Screen Printer – Graph-Itti Inc

Second Place: Mike Willis Promotions

Need a print made for your organization? Need some embroidery done for your club sport? Graph-itti Inc has got you covered. The Rosewood business even has a line of promotional products, and staff that will help you design what your organization needs.

Honorable Mentions: Image Ink, River Printing & Design Co.

Best Shooting Range – Palmetto State Armory

Second Place: Shooters Choice

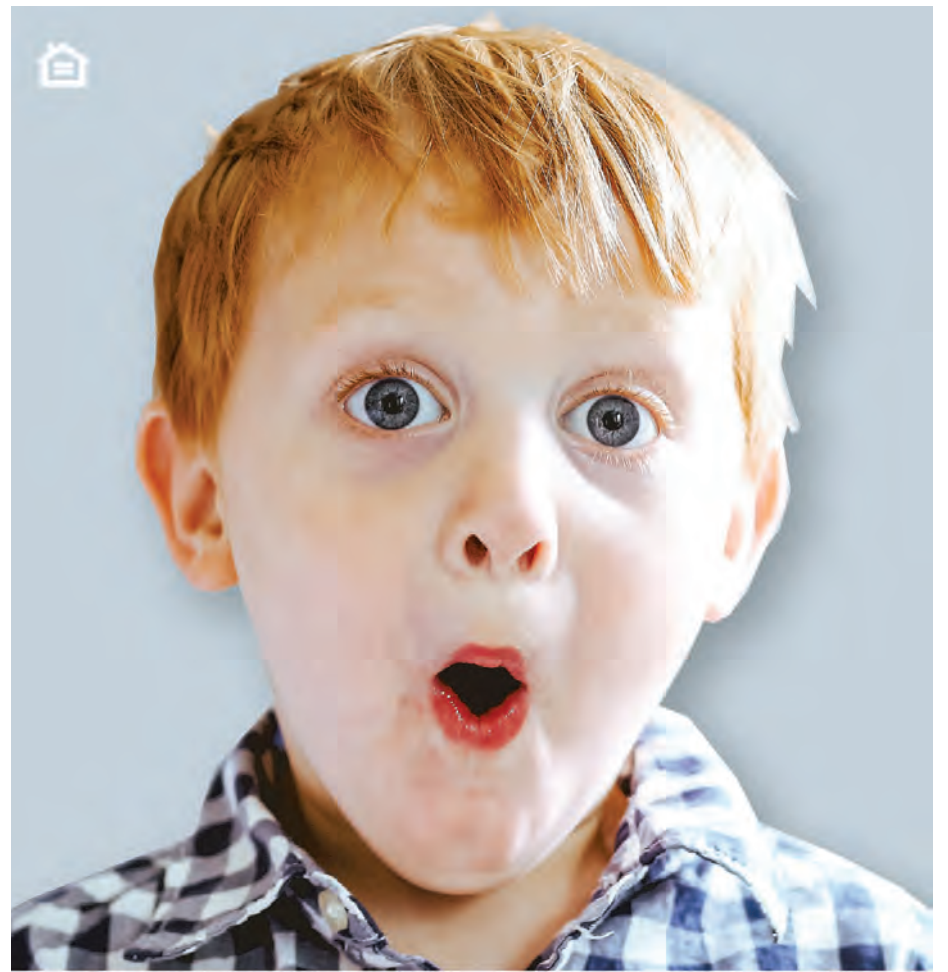
If you're going to own a gun, you should know how to responsibly use it. The range at Palmetto State Armory is a safe place for you to get to know your firearm.

Honorable Mentions: Sandhill Shooting Sports, Panteano Sportsman's Club

Best Smartphone And Computer Repair – Smart Phone Medic

Second Place: CPR Cell Phone Repair

We know from personal experience the distinctly modern sense of existential dread that comes with being cut off from your phone — and the anxiety of what kind of contract problems replacing that phone is going to cause with your cellular provider. We also know from personal experience that Smart



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Phone Medic can repair a phone you thought was *definitely* toast. Let them take a look at your phone or computer before you give up and get another one.

Honorable Mentions: Mr. PC, Genius Repair Solutions

Best Staffing Agency – Roper Staffing

Second Place: Creed Consulting Group

Whether you're a company looking for some help or a potential employee looking for a job, Roper Staffing has the rep and the resources to put the right people in the right places. It offers more than the typical temp services, handling direct hire and even a "try-before-you-hire" option, which is sort of like the Baskin-Robbins sampling spoon of staffing.

Honorable Mentions: Apple One, Find Great People

Best Travel Agent – Forest Lake Travel

Second Place: Cruise Planners Dan & Faith Ramsay

We're pretty sure every single person who's reading this could use a vacation, and so could we. And Forest Lake Travel is the place to go when you're looking to go places. Whether you need a solo trip, a romantic getaway or a corporate retreat, Forest Lake can get you there and back and help you travel in style.

Honorable Mentions: Ernie King, Two Sisters Travel

Best Upholstery Service – Kathy Nordan Foster Marine & Home Upholstery

Runner-Up: Hot Rod's Upholstery

It's not just that Kathy Nordan Foster Marine & Home Upholstery can furnish your home or get your current home décor looking better. It can do the same thing for your boat! You can leave your awesome-looking, tastefully appointed pad and hop on your equally tastefully appointed boat, and you can get both locales done with one phone call.

Honorable Mentions: Dynamic Upholstery, Gottlieb-Taylor Upholstery Inc., Furniture Barn

Best Videographer – Soda City Films

Second Place: Carters Creative

Need something videoed? Soda City Films can handle it. From documenting weddings and other events to commercial applications, they've done and can do it for you.

Honorable mentions: Nathan Crane Productions, Calebjustcaleb



Blossom Shop is voted Best Florist. Photo by John Carlos

Best Wedding Planner – Eventfully Chic by Parris

Second Place: By Invitation Only

Planning a wedding is hard. Most people's first time planning a wedding is their only time, so why not just hire a professional who has planned lots of weddings and other events? Details that the layperson would never think of are gracefully taken care of by Parris Balazs of Eventfully Chic by Parris. She offers full planning services to day-of-direction, and

everything in between, for weddings of all budgets, making her wedding planning services the go-to for Midlands brides.

Honorable Mentions: Alisha Millwood Alexandra, Madison Weddings

Best Wine and Paint Studio – AR Workshop Columbia

Second Place: Wine & Design

Wining and painting is still a hot pastime for groups of friends, book clubs and baby

showers. AR Workshop is a semi-newcomer to the game, and people love its offerings, which include welcome signs, lazy susans and other cute home decor items. Add in some wine and cozy in for a fun night with friends, where you leave with a little buzz and a piece of new painted artwork for your home that's useful, too.

Honorable Mentions: Studio Cellar, Canvases with Candace

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Planet Fitness is voted Best Fitness Club. Photo by John Carlos

Best Acupuncturist — Palmetto Acupuncture & Holistic Clinic

Second Place: Alison Beard

Don't get stuck with a bad acupuncturist — see what we did there? Palmetto Acupuncture & Holistic Clinic can help you handle pain and stress, and not just through acupuncture. It offers a variety of treatments, from facial rejuvenation to massage to herbal medicines. So trust founder Martin Herbkersman and company to get you feeling like yourself again. Or better than yourself, if that's what you're looking for.

Honorable Mentions: The Acupuncture Clinic, Noemi Martinez

Best Barber Shop — Soda City Barbers

Second Place: Gentleman's Quarters Barber Shop

Getting a fresh haircut can make you feel like a new person. It's the feeling you get when you leave Soda City Barbers, in Five Points. The barbers there blend an old-school aesthetic with new school style, and the shop on Santee Avenue has a comforting, welcoming feel.

Honorable Mentions: Circa Barber Shop, Frank's Gentlemen's Salon

Best Chiropractor — Max Living — Capital City Chiropractic

Second Place: The Joint Chiropractic

If you're one of those people who decided to lift with the back and not with the legs and now you're paying for it, head over to Max Living. It takes a comprehensive approach from adjustments to nutrition, mental health, and exercise programs. And seriously, just use your legs next time.

Honorable Mentions: Columbia Family Chiropractic, Dean McCaughan, Midlands Health Center

Best Counselor or Therapist — New Hope Counseling and Wellness Center

Second Place: Jill Smith & Associates, Jon Beaumont Counseling Services, LLC

We all need a little help sometimes, especially in 2020, and New Hope Counseling and Wellness Center is here to provide it. It offers counseling for eating disorders, trauma, addiction and general mental health, and there are even virtual session options. Oh, and it also has an adorable therapy dog named Hope, a chocolate lab who is a very good girl.

Honorable Mention: New Horizons Family Resource Center, LLC

Best CrossFit — CrossFit Soda City

Second Place: Carolina CrossFit

If you're one of the fitness warriors who loves the regimen/competition that is CrossFit, well, we applaud you from our comfy beds. But if you want to do it right, check out CrossFit Soda City. It offers both coach-led workouts and plenty of open gym time, and it does month-to-month fees instead of pesky long-term contracts. So get to crossfitting!

Honorable Mention: Cottontown CrossFit, Workhorse Fitness

Best Day Spa — OCCO Luxury Spa

Second Place: Urban Nirvana

If anyone's earned some pampering, it's, well, all of us. And OCCO Luxury Spa took the top spot this year by doing relaxation right, with an array of sumptuous spa packages (check out The Ultimate), hair, nail and waxing services and massage and body treatments. It will get you feeling and looking right so you can face the world.

Honorable Mentions: Beautique Skin & Nails, Metabolic Medical Centers & Spa

Best Dentist — 32 Dental, LLC

Second Place: Forest Drive Dental Care

Opening your mouth wide for strangers is no easy feat, so feeling comfortable with the

hygienists and dentists who help keep it clean is important. 32 Dental's services range from the necessary — tooth implants, extractions, crowns and cleanings — to the cosmetic, like tooth whitening. Friendly service and impeccable smiles all around helped it take the crown this year.

Honorable Mentions: Gee Family & Cosmetic Dentistry — Dr. Nicholas Gee, DMD Carolina; Children's Dentistry of Columbia

Best Dermatology Practice — Columbia Skin Clinic

Second Place: Carolinas Dermatology & Plastic Surgery

You gotta love the skin you're in, and Carolina Skin Clinic gives you the tools to take care of that skin through thick and thin. It offers skin cancer screenings and state-of-the-art treatment options and the best in clinical

care. Plus, if you need a touch-up, its aesthetic services will rejuvenate and revive that over-worked epidermis.

Honorable Mentions: Palmetto Dermatology, Northeast Dermatology

Best Eye Doctor or Group — Columbia Eye Clinic

Second Place: Devine Eyes

Look, everyone knows you've been squinting at that phone screen for a while, and it's not because the sun is out. It's time to get those peepers checked, and our readers tell us that Columbia Eye Clinic is the place to see and be seen. Exams, lenses, glasses — it's got it all. Now, how many fingers are we holding up?

Honorable Mentions: Eye On Gervais, Eyes On The Lake

Best Family Practice — Lexington Family Practice

Second Place: Palmetto Health - USC Family Medical Center

One thing you should know about Lexington Family Practice is that it isn't only in Lexington. There are locations across the Midlands, even in Richland County. Part of the Lexington Medical Center network, the practice has a deep roster of physicians and medical health professionals that can help get you well when you're sick, and work with you on preventative measures to keep you healthy.

Honorable Mentions: Main Street Physicians, Harbison Medical Associates

Best Fitness Club — Planet Fitness

Second Place: MÜV Fitness

You know the hallmarks of Planet Fitness — purple workout machines, lunk alarms, open 24 hours. But what you might not know if you haven't been to one of its Midlands locations is that they're also clean and well-appointed with friendly, attentive staff. So yeah, they're gyms. Good ones.

Honorable Mentions: Orangetheory Fitness, YMCA

Best Hair Salon — Studio O2

Second Place: Five Points Salon

On Studio O2's website, it lists a wall of accolades. Rather than cite many official awards, it's a seemingly endless spree of customer reviews — and they're glowing. From cuts to colors to spa services, O2 is a gem.

Honorable Mentions: process. A Hair Salon, Bombshell Beauty Studio

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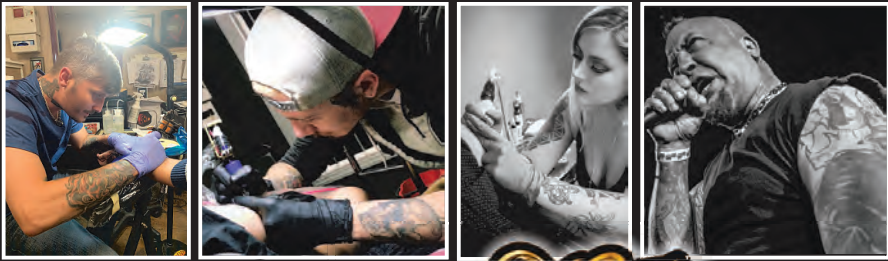
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**Best Hair Stylist – Mark Ziegler
(Five Points Salon)**

Second Place: Ashley Emmanoyhidhs (Sola)

Need a new 'do? Mark Ziegler, owner of Five Points Salon, is the stylist for you. Hairstyling is a family tradition for Mark, whose grandfather was a barber, and he's spent years making sure each cut is unique to the head he's giving it to. Trust your locks to Mark and you'll come out looking better than ever.

Honorable Mentions: Hannah DeLong (Urban Beauty), Zachary Oswald (Five Points Salon)

**Best Home Healthcare Service –
Meaningful Milestones**

Second Place: SC House Calls

Meaningful Milestones is relatively new to the Columbia area, which makes it all the more impressive that it took top honors in the Best Home Healthcare Service category. It provides first-rate ABA (applied behavioral analysis) therapy for children on the autism spectrum, giving families support and hope, though, so maybe it's not too surprising that it took the top spot.

Honorable Mentions: Senior Matters Extended Services, Always Best Senior Services

Best Hospital – Lexington Medical Center

Second Place: Prisma Health Richland Hospital

Lexington Medical Center continues to emerge as a healthcare force in the Midlands. The hospital system has recently completed a \$400 million expansion on its main campus, with a new 10-story medical tower. LMC has become a favorite with expectant mothers, and delivers more than 3,300 new babies each year. The hospital system also has been critical in the Midlands' fight against COVID-19.

Honorable Mentions: Prisma Health Baptist Parkridge Hospital, Providence Health

**Best Lactation Support – Columbia
Lactation Care**

Second Place: South Carolina Lactation and Newborn Wellness Center

"Breastfeeding/chestfeeding is one of the most natural interactions between a parent

and child," reads Columbia Lactation Care's website. "But that doesn't mean it's always easy. There is a learning curve for both parties. If you or your baby are struggling, we want to help." Their performance in this year's Best Of Columbia would indicate that people who have worked with them trusted them to help.

Best Massage Therapist – The Well LLC

Second Place: Desi Terry

Instead of getting one of those pinchy neck rubs from your spouse that you have to pretend to like, why not trust The Well LLC with your massage needs? Not only can the team ease your aching muscles, but they can teach you all manner of preventative techniques to keep your body running stronger.

Honorable Mentions: Elite Massage Therapy, Catherine Bailey

Best Nail Salon – Posh Nail Spa

Second Place: The Nail Barre

Getting your nails done can be a very different experience depending on which salon or spa you go to. It can be a relaxing time where you can close your eyes and simply enjoy being taken care of by experienced professionals, or it can be a ripped cuticle nightmare. The technicians at Posh make sure the experience is always relaxing and, well, posh. From the beautifully decorated interior to the straight-up artwork they can do to nails, the team at Posh is that, and more.

Honorable Mentions: OCCO Luxury Spa, Glowout

Best Orthodontist – Boyd Orthodontics

Second Place: Sims Tompkins

There's usually 32 teeth in the human mouth (wisdom teeth can have a say in this). Boyd Orthodontics is here to make sure they look the best they can, not to mention the rest of your lower face, too.

Honorable Mentions: Pitner Orthodontics, Davis Orthodontics

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City Yoga is Best Yoga Studio. Photo by Austin Price

Best Orthopedic Practice – Midlands Orthopaedics & Neurosurgery, PA

Second Place: Palmetto Health USC Orthopedic Group

Got pain or discomfort in your hands, neck, feet, back or all of the above? Got chronic pain in general? It's time to talk to the folks at Midlands Orthopaedics & Neurosurgery. They've got experts on staff to handle everything from surgery to physical therapy to pain management, and they offer a plethora of post-procedure recovery resources, as well.

Honorable Mentions: Southeastern Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine, Palmetto Bone and Joint-Chapin

Best Pediatric Care – Sandhills Pediatrics

Second Place: Palmetto Pediatric & Adolescent Clinic, PA

Sandhills Pediatrics has been leader in healthcare for children for nearly five decades. The organization has 19 pediatricians, all of whom are certified by the American Board of Pediatrics, and operates in five different locations. If your youngsters aren't feeling well, Sandhills will take good care of them.

Honorable Mention: Lexington Pediatric Practice, SouthernMed

Best Physical Therapy Practice – Vertex PT Specialists

Second Place: Pinnacle Physical Therapy and Personal Training

Whether you're recovering from serious injuries or trying to rehab your broken shoulder from when you tried to dunk a basketball, Vertex PT Specialists can get you moving again. Vertex can handle everything from concussion management to spinal manipulation, and they can even offer you some pointers on your jogging form and your golf swing.

Honorable Mentions: Carolina Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine, Drayer Physical Therapy Institute

Best Piercing Studio – RAW Body Piercing

Second Place: Immaculate Body Piercing

Feel like adding one more earring to your lobes, getting a nose or tongue ring or sprucing up, uh, somewhere else? Book an ap-



Thank you for voting for us!

Best Hair Salon, Runner Up
Best Hair Stylist, Mark Ziegler



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pointment at RAW Body Piercing for your hole-poking needs. Their pricing starts at \$10, and if you're happy with your current piercings, it can change out your jewelry as well.

Honorable Mentions: Knotty Headz Tattoo Factory & Body Piercings, The Piercing Parlor

Best Pilates – Fit Columbia

Second Place: Club Pilates

Fit Columbia offers stretch therapy, yoga, personal training and something called “bungee fitness,” but it's also the people's pick for best pilates. If you're the kind of person who loves this yoga-adjacent fitness regimen, Fit Columbia is the place to go. And we'll be cheering you on from the couch.

Honorable Mentions: Sunnyside Pilates, LLC, The Pilates Studio

Best Place to Be Born – Lexington Medical Center

Second Place: Prisma Health Baptist Parkridge Hospital

It's unlikely that any of the votes in this category were based on actually remembering the experience of being born. But Lexington Medical Center does deliver a lot of babies — 3,300 each year — and houses state-of-the-art delivery suites and nurseries, along with doulas, midwives and support for those interested in natural childbirth.

Honorable Mention: Prisma Health Richland Hospital

Best Plastic Surgery – Carolinas Dermatology & Plastic Surgery

Second Place: Lexington Plastic Surgery

Plastic surgery can help people heal from burns, who have lost weight, or people who just need to feel better about themselves. And when the decision to look into plastic surgery is made, Carolinas Dermatology & Plastic Surgery is where many folks in the Midlands go. Beyond plastic surgery, its dermatology team is top notch, too, solving issues with dry skin, rashes, skin cancer issues and more.

Honorable Mentions: Plastic Surgery Consultants; Palmetto Facial Plastics Helen A. Moses, MD

Best Tattoo Artist – Eddie Kane (Copper Finch)

Second Place: Wayne Munn (Tatway)

Kane is the lead artist at the Copper Finch Tattoo Company, which is a crew that prides itself on attention to detail. It only takes a brief glimpse of his hyper-realistic creations to notice his extraordinary attention to detail and take ultimate comfort in the fact that he's going to absolutely nail the vision you have in your head (or he has in his).

Honorable Mentions: Matt “Toto” Davis (Animated Canvas), Jeremy Lewis (Sickle and Moon)

Best Tattoo Studio – Copper Finch Tattoo

Second Place: Ophidian Tattoo

Tattooing is an art that gets little of the respect it deserves. Copper Finch Tattoo does its best to change that. With its host of supremely talented tattoo artists, it excels at drawing on your body in numerous styles.

Honorable Mentions: Tatway Tattoos, Animated Canvas

Best Urgent Care – Doctors Care

Second Place: Lexington Medical Center

Whether it's a sinus infection, a sprained ankle or that weird rash that won't go away, Doctors Care will get you in, get you fixed up and get you out with minimal fuss. And while we're grappling with COVID-19 and practicing social distancing, Doctors Care is offering virtual urgent care services, as well.

Honorable Mentions: MEDcare Urgent Care, Veritas Urgent Care

Best Yoga Studio – City Yoga

Second Place: Fit Columbia

The steadily increasing popularity of yoga in states means that there's a surfeit of options for the budding stretching enthusiast in town, but if you want the experienced vets, you go to City Yoga. The studio has been operating since 2003 and welcomes all skill levels and styles of practice so each practitioner can find their own bliss.

Honorable Mentions: Studio Fire, Bikram Yoga

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The Barking Lot at Saluda Shoals Park is voted Best Dog Park. Photo by John Carlos

Best Dog Park – Saluda Shoals Park

Second Place: NOMA (North Main) Bark Park

First of all, the dog park at Saluda Shoals Park is called “Barking Lot,” and that’s just plainly awesome. It’s also got amenities for your very good dog, including bone-shaped pools, an interactive fire-hydrant sprayer, and an agility course where your pups can work off those extra treats. Heck, *we’d* like to play at this place.

Honorable Mention: Sesquicentennial State Park

Best Kennel or Pet Boarding Facility – Pawmetto Lifeline

Second Place: Happy Trails Resort and Spa

Sometimes you need somewhere for your furry friends to stay while you’re at work or away on a trip. If that’s the case, Pawmetto Lifeline has long been a popular choice in the Columbia area. It offers doggy daycare and boarding options, and your pet will be well cared for and well fed, and they’ll get the medicine they need, if applicable.

Honorable Mentions: Wescott Acres Pet Resort, Shandon Wood Animal Hospital

Best Pet Groomer – Happy Tails Resort & Spa

Second Place: Mill Creek Pet Food Center

You can tell from the pics and testimonials on its website that there is no dog that Happy Tails Resort & Spa can’t make beautiful. Big, small, young, old, they’ll all come out looking like a hundred dog-bucks, and Happy Tails has a slew of awards and five-star ratings to prove it. So get that spot off of Spot or get your Shih Tzu looking brand new at Happy Tails.

Honorable Mentions: Groomingdales, Dale’s Pets



Pawmetto Lifeline is voted Best Veterinary Clinic. Photo by Austin Price

**Best Pet Supply Store —
Pet Supplies Plus**

Second Place: Mill Creek Pet Food Center

One member of *Free Times*' editorial staff got a bearded dragon this past year. And in figuring out all the different things they need — Heat lights! UV lights! Crickets to eat! Worms to eat! More worms to eat! — we became even more impressed with the selection and the prices at this low-key chain.

Honorable Mentions: PetSmart, Lazy Creek Pet Food Center

**Best Veterinary Clinic —
Pawmetto Lifeline**

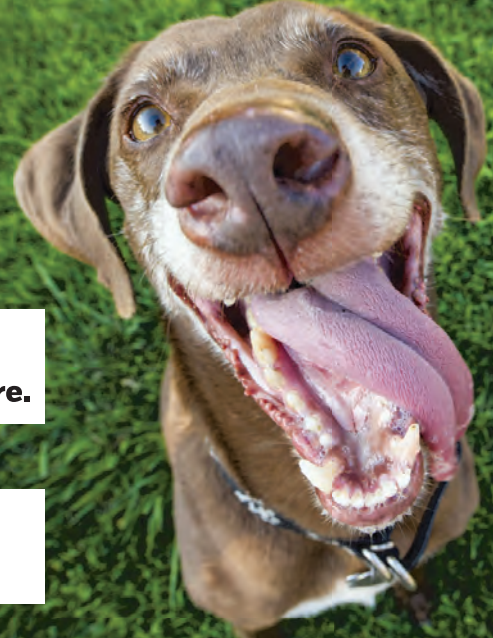
Second Place: Shandon Wood Animal Hospital

You can get your pet seen by Pawmetto Lifeline at its location in Harbison. You can get your pet seen for vaccines at the mobile Care-A-Van. All of this is given at low cost, sometimes free, to help potential pet owners, with love to give, find room in their lives for a new best friend.

Honorable Mentions: Four Paws Animal Clinic, Sunset Animal Clinic

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Thunder Tower Harley-Davidson is voted Best Motorcycle Store. Photo by John Carlos

Best Auto Repair — Complete Car Care

Second Place: Old School Automotive & Tire

Company names don't get much more accurate than Complete Car Care. It can do the basic scheduled maintenance stuff, sure, but it can also fix brakes, shocks and struts. It can check out your suspension after you hit that curb, and can service your engine, fix your A/C, and take care of whatever electrical problems you might have. That's why it's called "Complete." Duh.

Honorable Mentions: Whetzel's Automotive, Automotive Experts

Best Cab or Rideshare Service — Uber

Second Place: Lyft

Uber has become the go-to service for getting a clean, comfortable ride somewhere and getting it fast. Whether you're stuck without a car or you've had a few adult beverages and need to get home safely, your ride is just a few taps on your phone away. And please, tip generously. The drivers deserve it after your awkward attempts at conversation.

Honorable Mention: Capital City Cab

Best Car Wash — Frank's Car Wash

Second Place: Constan Car Wash

With 12 locations in the Columbia area, there's always a Frank's around when your car needs a wash. And with quick, friendly, thorough and effective service, you'll always want to take your ride there.

Honorable Mentions: Triple H Autos, Sparkle

Best Driving School — Baldwin Corporation Driver Training

Second Place: ABC Driver Training

It's not *just* that the experienced and qualified instructors at Baldwin Corporation Driver Training can get a novice driver trained behind the wheel, though that is the main thing they do. It's that they'll take you to school in style, with new, safe and stylish cars to teach folks how to rule the road. So pull over your Mom's station wagon, *put it in park*, and give Baldwin a call.

Honorable Mentions: Lexington Driving Academy, 911 Driving School

Best Limousine Service — Southern Valet

Second Place: J&L Enterprise

Big limos, smaller limos, new limos, classic limos, if you need to get there in style, Southern Valet will get it done. Whether it's the prom, a wedding, a corporate event or just a night out, you'll be the envy of everyone who had to get in their stupid regular car to go somewhere.

Honorable Mention: 5-Star Limousine & Sedan

Best Motorcycle Store — Thunder Tower Harley-Davidson

Second Place: Harley Haven

There are certain locations on the interstate that mean you're almost home. For many Columbia-area residents heading back to town along I-20, the Harley-filled Thunder Tower peeking out of the Pontiac Business Center is one of them. It's also a great place to grab that bike you've been thinking about, with new and pre-owned inventory to meet your joy-riding desires.

Honorable Mention: Capital City Cycles

Best New Car Dealership — Dick Dyer Mercedes-Benz & Volvo

Second Place: Jim Hudson Lexus of Columbia

If you are looking to ride in style, Dick Dyer Mercedes-Benz and Volvo can hook you up. Whether new or pre-owned, the Dyer dealership can help find the right vehicle for you, and can work with you on a trade-in or financing. The dealership prides itself on first-class service.

Honorable Mentions: Honda of Columbia, McDaniels

Best Oil Change — Express Oil Change & Tire Engineers

Second Place: Complete Car Care

Oil changes and busted tires are a boring part of life. They come around more often than you'd like, especially in a car-heavy and pothole-filled place like Columbia. So when you've got to get your oil changed or tires repaired that much, you want to make sure you've got folks under the hood that won't screw you over and are trusted by local residents, like Express Oil Change & Tire Engineers.

Honorable Mentions: Old School Automotive & Tire, Whetzel's Automotive

Best Tire Dealer — Nuttall Tire

Second Place: Discount Tire

"My family takes pride in serving yours!" proclaim the big, bold letters at the center of Nuttall's website. And for 36 years, Nuttall has done just that, providing conscientious service and fair prices to those who need new tires on their ride, as well as offering a range of other automotive services.

Honorable Mentions: Pope-Davis Tire & Automotive, Old School Automotive & Tire

Best Used Car Dealership — Jim Hudson Toyota

Second Place: Dick Dyer Mercedes-Benz & Volvo

You can't kill a Toyota. It's just a universally acknowledged truth. Those cars can take a beating and start up like they're brand new. And Jim Hudson Toyota has a lot full of these reasonably-priced, pre-owned gems waiting for you, along with a generous selection of Chevys, Acuras and other non-Toyota makes.

Honorable Mentions: Honda Of Columbia, McDaniels Automotive

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Fat Rat da Czar is Best Local Hip-Hop Artist according to Jordan Lawrence. Photo by Thomas Hammond

Writers' Picks

Free Times' writers choose their favorites

Local Media

Best Local Website – Sports – gogamecocks.com

The last time I checked, this was a Gamecocks town. And the best Gamecocks coverage in Columbia still comes out of *The State* newspaper and its gogamecocks.com banner. Whether it's football, men's or women's basketball, baseball or recruiting, the in-depth columns, stories and analysis from this site help USC fans stay on top of what's happening with the Gamecocks. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Politics and City Life

Best Family Attraction – Frankie's Fun Park

My daughter and I love going out to Frankie's on a Sunday afternoon. We'll play video games, blow too much money trying to get stuffed animals out of the skill-crane machines and try to build up enough "tickets" for her to get a few things from the prize redemption stand. But the best part is the

go-kart track. The need for speed is real, even if it's at a fun park go-kart track on a Sunday afternoon and you're competing against the attendees of a sixth-grade birthday party. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Arts, Music and Entertainment

Best Bar to See Live Music – New Brookland Tavern

The local music scene has slowed to a trickle of its normal self during COVID-19, and one of the most palpable ways I feel that is the continued lack of shows at New Brookland Tavern. More than any other room in town, this is where many threads of the music community meet. Punk, metal, indie rock, hip-hop, country, all have their nights (with varying frequency) at NBT, with crowds showing up to ring around the stage, there for the music and to keep the flame alive. Here's hoping we get to light it up again soon. **JORDAN LAWRENCE**

Best Local Band – Prettier Than Matt

This is a weird year to crown a best local band, as many of the avenues, particularly the live ones, through which Columbia musicians reach their audiences have been choked out by the continuing pandemic. So I'll just give it up to a group that has leaned into one of its strengths during this trying time, using live-streams through various outlets as a means for engagement and to make actual money during these trying times. And, with folk-pop that's sweetly melodic and consistently buoyant, Prettier-Than-Matt's vibe is a nice antidote for these anxious days. **JORDAN LAWRENCE**

Best Local Hip-Hop Artist – Fat Rat da Czar

We don't byline our writeups for our annual Power List of 50 people who get stuff done in the Capital City, but I feel the need to resurrect my anonymous points about Fat Rat da Czar from June 24:

"2020 was looking to be *the year*, or at least a *big year*, for Fat Rat da Czar and all that the local rapper, producer and leader of Love, Peace & Hip-Hop and its annual Hip-Hop Family Day block party has done for Columbia. Following a 2019 that brought two well-received records, one a double al-

bum that assembled much of South Carolina's best talent to pay tribute to the state's underrated hip-hop history, he curated an exhibit showcasing that history at the Columbia Museum of Art and booked the famed Rakim for his community-boosting festival. COVID-19 put Hip-Hop Family Day on hold, but the momentum Fat Rat has helped generate for Soda City hip-hop remains."

He's the best rapper in Columbia. And also more than that. Hail to the Czar. **JORDAN LAWRENCE**

Best Movie Theater – The Big Mo

Going to the movies has been a challenge in 2020. For the most part, traditional indoor theaters have been closed since March amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. That has thrown a bit of a spotlight on drive-ins, many of which have continued to operate in some capacity. Though its screenings have been limited this summer, The Big Mo drive-in in Monetta has given moviegoers an option, with concerts and special film series. And, pandemic or no, the three-screen theater has always been a charmer. There remains something special about sitting out under the stars and watching a movie. Long live the drive-in. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**



David Clarey chooses Camon for Best Japanese Restaurant. Photo by Anne Wolfe Postic

Food and Drink

Best Asian Restaurant — Duke's Pad Thai

In the last couple years, Duke's Pad Thai Street Food and Noodle Bar has quickly become one of my favorite places to eat in the Columbia area. The pad Thai — as you might imagine — is phenomenal, though my favorite item on the menu might be the Sweet and Spicy Ramen. This is the type of place that's so good that you are actually sad when all the food is gone from your plate. Get across the river to Duke's. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Best Taco — Go to a Taco Truck

If you haven't gone out and explored the Midlands' many great taco trucks, you're missing a treasure trove of meat-on-tortilla treats. From Taqueria El Jarocho Express to Los Chicanos to Tacos Doña Lucia to Tacos El Primo, the great mobile taco vendors in the Columbia area are many. Check them out. **JORDAN LAWRENCE**

Best Barbecue — True BBQ

You know you're in for a treat when you roll up to this hole-in-the-wall spot on D Avenue in West Columbia, because it's usually smoking meat on a big grill right out in front of the restaurant. True — a quirkily

decorated institution with a kind and helpful staff — is known for its hash, and it is, indeed, something to write home about. But don't sleep on the chopped pork barbecue. It's smoky, juicy and delicious, and the signature Pretty Lady sauce sends it over the top. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Best Fast Food Chain — Rush's

Rush's, a relatively small chain, still seems like a secret of the Columbia area. Let's keep it that way: small and special. I love everything about it, right down to the way they call the orders back to the kitchen on that old-school microphone. Many people laud the burgers here, and for good reason. But the chicken sandwich also is a winner. While everyone wants to fight over whether Chick-fil-A or Popeyes has the best chicken sandwich, I'll take Rush's version any day of the week. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Best Grits — Keg Cowboy

Keg Cowboy has been a key part of the reinvigoration of Main Street in Lexington in recent years, and its deep roster of craft beer and creative food menu keep it at the top of my list in town. But the grits here are on another level. Y'all, these grits will give you superpowers, I swear. OK, maybe that's a wild exaggeration. But they are damn good, and make an excellent side with the Keg's beef on weck. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**



Chris Trainor says Duke's Pad Thai is Best Asian Restaurant. Photo by Bach Pham

Best Hamburger — Home Team BBQ

When Charleston's Home Team BBQ set up shop in Columbia Five Points, I had an idea of what to expect from the barbecue and ribs, as I had visited the locations in the Holy City. But what I wasn't aware of before it landed in Columbia was how amazing the Fiery Ron's burger is. The two beef patties are typically cooked to perfection, and the slab of house-made bacon, along with harissa mayo and the requisite veggies, make for a perfect concoction on a King's Hawaiian bun. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Best Hot Dog — Jimmy's Mart

Before I moved to the Midlands six years ago, I was somehow unaware that there was a difference between the style of hot dogs here and those where I grew up, in the Upstate. The dogs here seem to utilize, for lack of better terms, a wetter, redder chili than those in the Upstate, where darker, meatier chili is more common. In Columbia, Jimmy's Mart is the closest I've found to my native favorites. The hot dogs — I take them with the wienie, chili, mustard and onion — are flavorful, and the camaraderie and people-watching in the always busy store is top-notch. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Best Japanese Restaurant — Camon

I'll admit my experience frequenting Japanese restaurants in Columbia is limited, yet since moving here last year I've been utterly charmed and thrilled with my trips to Camon near downtown. There's few dining memories I have loved more than watching Chef Kobayashi diligently slice and prepare sushi for me, before I experience it. **DAVID CLAREY**

Best New Restaurant — Il Focolare

Are restaurants political places? Can they be spaces where radical things happen? If one agrees that the state of the worker is indeed a political thing, then in an industry where wages and working conditions are notoriously harsh, Sarah Simmons, Aaron Hoskins and their staff are proving to Columbians that the answer is "Yes." They intentionally buck those poor conditions and push themselves and the oft-antiquated restaurant business model to do so. That alone is worthwhile, and with their Cottontown pizza shop, where they make what may be the best pies in Columbia, they show their worker-friendly business model can be scaled up. — **DAVID CLAREY**

Best Restaurant — The War Mouth

Truly rousing restaurants are fun. They achieve this through plates that make you raise your eyebrows, at times, blush at times, and, at others, wonder. Cottontown's The War Mouth checks these boxes in a way unlike others I've seen, where the staff, interior, drinks and food meld together beautifully. In my short few months living in the Midlands, I've grown quickly attached and gravitated to it. It's provided a reminder that restaurants should be, among many things, as fun as they are delicious and reflect the place where they reside. **DAVID CLAREY**

Best Restaurant — Lexington — Keg Cowboy

There are so many things to love about Keg Cowboy, the bar that is one of several restaurants and bars that have popped up in Lexington's Main Street corridor. It's got a laid-back vibe that makes you feel comfortable. The pizza — only available on certain nights — is the best in Lexington. The Cuban Refugee smoked pork loin sandwich



David Clarey makes a case for The War Mouth as Best Restaurant. Photo by John Carlos



Silver Spoon Bakeshop is April Blake's pick for Best Bakery. Photo by John Carlos

Writers' Picks, continued from C13

is delicious. The beer is *always* cold. And the fresh-baked pretzels are transcendent. Check Keg Cowboy out. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Best Wings — Transmission Arcade/Smokey Loggins

The first time I ate a Smokey Loggins chicken wing it came after much talk. Co-workers would ask in reverent tones if I'd tried them yet. And once I had, I knew why. There's few others in the area that have rivaled them — the wings are smoked gold. Yet, maybe most impressive is the consistent quality they've maintained throughout my handful of trips. **DAVID CLAREY**

Best Wings — Vella's Restaurant and Tavern

I'll admit this is a somewhat sentimental pick. Sure, the wings at Vella's in Cayce are quite good. Damn good, in fact. Meaty, flavorful and available in a host of different sauces. But my love for Vella's goes further: Its where I often meet my brother and our friends before USC basketball games, for a drink and a bite before we head to the arena. During COVID-19 I miss being able to gather with friends in a noisy old tavern after work, laughing and commiserating before we go to a crowded coliseum to see a ballgame. I want that again soon. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Bars and Clubs

Best Craft Beer Selection — One of Our Great Beer Bars

Steel Hands brews some good beers. But with the Columbia area having great, attentively curated beer bars like WECO Bottle & Biergarten, The Pizza Joint, Keg Cowboy, and two Craft and Drafts, among others, I would have liked to see this category celebrate a spot that showcases a variety of different local, national and international breweries. **JORDAN LAWRENCE**

Best Local Brewery — Columbia Craft Brewing Company

Delivering some of the best hazy IPAs in the Southeast as well as a selection of consistently satisfying sours, Columbia Craft is one of the most adventurous breweries in the area. It also offers one of the most reliable old-school IPAs available in Midlands grocery stores and a handful of extremely crushable traditional German lagers. It's not just the best brewery in Columbia. It's one of the best in the state. — **JORDAN LAWRENCE**

Best Neighborhood Bar — West Columbia/Cayce — WECO

Phill Blair diverted sharply from his more prominent and legendary bar The Whig when opening WECO in West Columbia.

Yet after opening late last year, WECO has captured much of the same magic and emerged as a true neighborhood haunt on the river's other side. In a year where life has been upended, its particularly taken on a vital role with its growing reputation as a well-attended yet safe spot to sate your thirst. **DAVID CLAREY**

Shopping

Best Sporting Goods Store — Todd & Moore

Sure, there are bigger places. But so many times through the years I've found just what I'm looking for at Todd & Moore on Huger Street, whether it was Gamecock gear for game day, soccer cleats for my daughter's

fall season or ping-pong balls for the table in the old *Free Times* office on Main Street (RIP). Shop local. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**

Best Florist — Boone Fox Farm

It might seem a little crazy for someone to start their own floral company where they grow and pick each flower by hand, but Brinton Fox has done just that, and successfully too. Her flower CSAs, with pickups at Craft and Draft's Devine Street location, are a genius way to get people in to pick up floral arrangements for the special people in their lives, especially with a built-in excuse to grab a beer. The farmer-florist is also always on hand to answer questions about her blooms and their care, or to offer a great beer suggestion. — **APRIL BLAKE**

Best Bakery — Silver Spoon Bake Shop

Nestled in a cute little house on Devine Street, everything about Silver Spoon Bake Shop is cute. The coffee station is cute, the macarons are cute, and the oversized "party fours" are cute. The cuteness carries over into its bubbly social media posts and delight to see each customer, not to mention its wildly popular Harry-Potter-themed day each summer. It's even maintained and upped its cuteness in responding to COVID-19 by going online-only and having weekly porch pick-ups to keep Columbians happy with macarons in hand. — **APRIL BLAKE**

Pet Services

Best Kennel or Pet Boarding Facility — A Paw's Paradise

When it comes to where you board your pets when you have to go out of town, you have to be comfortable with the facility you use. That's the way our family feels about A Paw's Paradise on Broad River Road. If we have to board our morkipoo, Ollie, while we are traveling, they always do an exemplary job of taking care of him, even providing photos of him playing with other dogs each day he is there. Ollie gets happy whenever we drop him off at A Paw's Paradise, and if he's happy, so are we. — **CHRIS TRAINOR**



WECO is David Clarey's preference for Best Neighborhood Bar — West Columbia/Cayce. Photo by John Carlos



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crossword

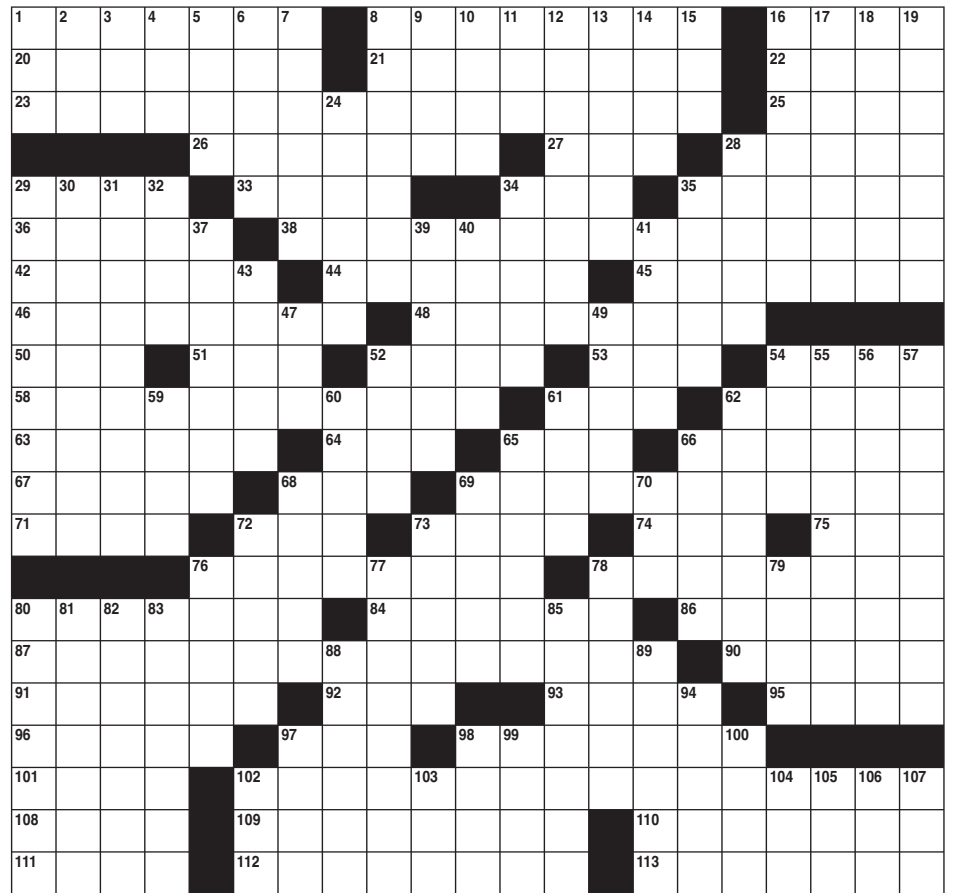
PUZZLIN'

By David Levinson Wilk
PUZZLES EDITED BY WILL
SHORTZ

ACROSS

- 1 What can fall off a shelf
- 8 Host of MSNBC's "PoliticsNation" beginning in 2011
- 16 Be profane
- 20 Something never seen at night
- 21 Beckoning words
- 22 For _____ amount of time
- 23 Nobody but the guy gettin' married on his feet?
- 25 Put up with
- 26 Captures
- 27 House vote
- 28 Gettysburg general George
- 29 Like screwball comedies
- 33 Pig food
- 34 Gish _____, novelist of "The Resisters" and "Typical American"
- 35 Sickly-looking
- 36 Olympic equipment weighing less than 770 grams each
- 38 Winter item you'll be wearin' for years?
- 42 Statistic tracked at census.gov/popclock
- 44 "Mixed Marriage" playwright St. John Greer _____
- 45 Reduced in rank
- 46 Receiver of an all-points bulletin
- 48 Longtime Yankees first baseman Mark
- 50 Simile's center
- 51 Row
- 52 God who becomes a goddess when an "r" is removed
- 53 Spam sender
- 54 James of "The Godfather"
- 58 Danger when walkin' in a silo?
- 61 One who delivers
- 62 Mansfield of old Hollywood
- 63 "Er, uh, that is ..."

- 64 Dada pioneer
- 65 _____ Paulo
- 66 Rock singers?
- 67 Hedge fund titan nicknamed "The Palindrome"
- 68 "Sorry, am _____ your way?"
- 69 Drivin' around the lot with pop-pop?
- 71 Overhead expenses?
- 72 Private Twitter transmissions, for short
- 73 "Absofruitalicious" cereal, in ads
- 74 Sponge alternative
- 75 Slangy possessive
- 76 What a pro bono lawyer provides
- 78 Very observant person
- 80 Shoulder blade
- 84 Pickup truck capacity, maybe
- 86 Detects
- 87 Sayin' "Look, here's the thing about dry land ..."
- 90 To-dos
- 91 Batting ninth
- 92 The Children's Defense Fund, e.g., in brief
- 93 Medical breakthrough
- 95 "Ish"
- 96 Boiling mad
- 97 West Bank grp.
- 98 Realize
- 101 Kind
- 102 What was causin' the doctor to check for joint pain?
- 108 Very consequential
- 109 The North Pole vis-à-vis the South Pole, e.g.
- 110 Go as low as
- 111 French/Belgian river
- 112 Apollo and others
- 113 "Understood"
- 2 Animal feared by an ailurophobe
- 3 "What's your _____?" (question to a guest en route)
- 4 Recycling container
- 5 Michael who wrote "The Neverending Story"
- 6 Restricts, with "in"
- 7 Washingmachinesetting
- 8 Windshield clearer
- 9 Certain earring
- 10 Singer Tori
- 11 "What's the Frequency, Kenneth?" band
- 12 Call of the wild?
- 13 One trading dollars for quarters
- 14 Paris suburb
- 15 French marshal in the Napoleonic Wars
- 16 Camila with the 2018 No. 1 hit "Havana"
- 17 Employ with regularity
- 18 Bird also known as a little auk
- 19 Scattered (about)
- 24 Blue Muppet with a pink nose
- 28 Obsidian, once
- 29 Aquarium creature with black-and-white stripes
- 30 Capital in the South Pacific
- 31 Teasing words when someone starts listing the digits of pi, say
- 32 Mythical creature seen on old Bhutanese stamps
- 34 Rock's Joplin
- 35 Hägar the Horrible's dog
- 37 Sure winners
- 39 Cross-country camping expedition, maybe
- 40 Treat as a bed
- 41 Hit the nail on the head, e.g.
- 43 Meager
- 47 Pope Francis' homeland: Abbr.
- 49 Modernlibraryborrowing

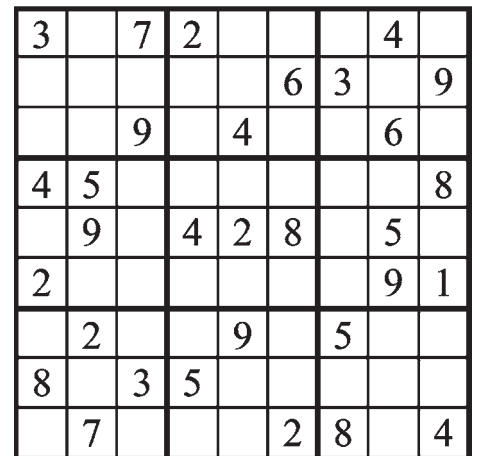
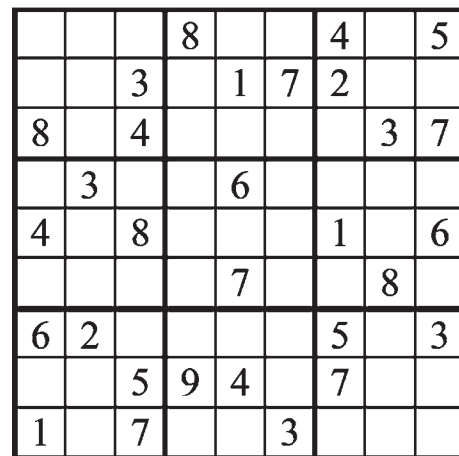
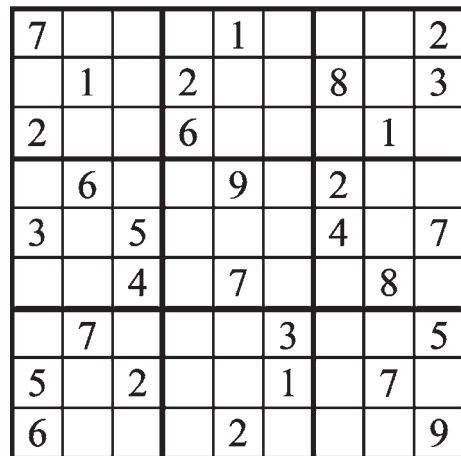
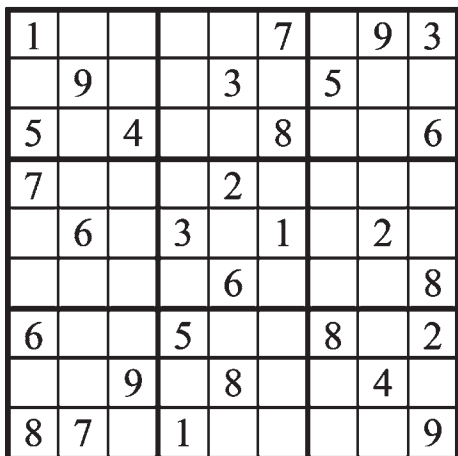


answers to last week's puzzle

- 52 Bring in
- 54 Longtime media columnist David
- 55 Mate's reply
- 56 Basketball Hall-of-Famer who was the first woman to sign an N.B.A. contract
- 57 Single-serving coffee brand
- 59 Landlocked Asian country
- 60 _____ Gorbachev, former first lady of the Soviet Union
- 61 His tombstone reads "Workers of all lands unite"
- 62 Moves like Jell-O
- 65 Told
- 66 Hiccups
- 68 Coming-out announcement
- 69 Buttinsky
- 70 Certain nest egg, for short
- 72 Blue-and-white earthenware pottery
- 73 Dramaticballroomdance
- 76 Two-time Best Actress winner Rainer
- 77 Eva of "Desperate Housewives"
- 78 Ho-hum feelings
- 79 Opposite of exo-
- 80 Soft and wet
- 81 _____ oxide (red compound)
- 82 Egg-carton spec
- 83 Special dinner order
- 85 Boo-boos
- 88 Home past curfew
- 89 Like the Met Gala
- 94 Online notice for a party
- 97 Phnom _____, Cambodia
- 98 "_____ to tyrants, and my country's friend" (words of Cato in "Julius Caesar")
- 99 Naval officer: Abbr.
- 100 Grandson of Eve
- 102 Budgetary excess
- 103 Make a decision
- 104 "There but for the grace of God _____"
- 105 Intel missions
- 106 Western native
- 107 About one inch of a foot

sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.



Rant and Rave

What's on my mind is Dick Harpootlian. He speaks for the state in the Senate. But does he know that DHEC does not have police? They go out testing. If you want to police anything, you ought to be policing all the illegal private vendors out there who have taken jobs away from the blind.

Why does the left-wing media have a news blackout on Joe Biden's mental state? The rest of us can see it plain as day, why don't they report it?

If Hillary Clinton had been elected president, we'd be in an economic depression right now, because she'd have locked everybody in their house.

This rant is against Jaime Harrison and some of his stupid ads running for Senate. Jaime, if Black lives really matter as much as you probably say they do, and if you are worried about the next generation coming up, why do you still support abortion?

I can't wait to try the new Cheetos mac and cheese.

He would like his face to be on Mount Rushmore but a better place would be on the side of a train car.

Please use extreme caution on COVID-19 if you are traveling to the USA. They've got a bad problem with it and they don't seem to be getting it under control. Deaths are at 160,000 people gone.

The State Fair this year is only going to be two days. I had wanted to ride the camel.

This is the Tax Dog. If you really care about what your taxes are paying, then you'd be in the city and county meetings. Every contract that comes through the door has to kick back to the procurement office of that public facility?

What is dangerous are people who are more devoted to order than to justice, and who prefer the negative peace, which is the absence of tension, to a

Views expressed are those of our readers, not us. Need to get something off your chest? Leave a message with your rant or rave at 765-0707 ext. 126 or email RANTandRAVE@free-times.com. Submissions will be edited for length and spelling but not grammar. Please limit emailed submissions to 100 words.

positive peace, which is the presence of justice.

The Big Orange says that the Dems, if elected, are going to take our guns. Never going to happen. Has not happened in over 200 years no matter how many times they say it. But Trump says if he is reelected he will defund Social Security. I would rather lose my gun than my retirement. And I am sure he will do it because it hurts the middle class and not the wealthy.

I live in Irmo. I like the area. Great shopping, great restaurants and all that. But, we have an HOA that is very crazy. Case

see RANT on page C19



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Notice of Application
Notice is hereby given that OM SAI AND JSK LLC intends to apply to the South Carolina Department of Revenue for a license and/or permit that will allow the sale and off PREMISES consumption of BEER AND WINE, at 1262 Main Street, West Columbia, SC, 29170. To object to the issuance of this license and/or permit, written protest must be postmarked no later than August 21st. For a protest to be valid, it must be in writing, and should include the following information: (1) the name, address and telephone number of the person filing the protest; (2) the specific reasons why the application should be denied; (3) that the person protesting is willing to attend a hearing (if one is requested by the applicant); (4) that the person protesting resides in the county where the proposed place of business is located or within five miles of the business; and, (5) the name of the applicant and the address of the premises to be licensed. Protest must be mailed to:
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Columbia, SC 29214-0907
Or faxed to: (803) 896-0110

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 ATTN: ABL; P.O. Box 125
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 Or faxed to: (803) 896-0110

Notice of Application
 Notice is hereby given that Kailyn's Palace LLC intends to apply to the South Carolina Department of Revenue for a license and/or permit that will allow the sale and off PREMISES consumption of LIQUOR AND WINE at 9300 Two Notch Road, Unit P Columbia, SC 29223. To object to the issuance of this license and/or permit, written protest must be postmarked no later than August 21st, 2020. For a protest to be valid, it must be in writing, and should include the following information: (1) the name, address and telephone number of the person filing the protest; (2) the specific reasons why the application should be denied; (3) that the person protesting is willing to attend a hearing (if one is requested by the applicant); (4) that the person protesting resides in the county where the proposed place of business is located or within five miles of the business; and, (5) the name of the applicant and the address of the premises to be licensed. Protest must be mailed to:
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SUMMONS
 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
 COUNTY OF RICHLAND
 IN THE COURT OF
 COMMON PLEAS
 C/A NO. 2020-CP-40-2243
 Byron Gipson, Solicitor, Fifth Judicial Circuit, Plaintiff,
 vs.
 One Thousand Two Hundred Ninety Seven and 00/100ths (1,297.00) Dollars US Currency, One Thousand Seven Hundred Forty and 00/100ths (\$1,740.00) Dollars US Currency, Seven Hundred Eighty Nine and 029/100ths (789.029) Grams Marijuana, and Roland Oliver and Quiendell Mack,
 Interested Parties, Defendants.
 TO: THE DEFENDANT ABOVE NAMED: QUIENDELL MACK AND RICHLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT,
 PERSONS KNOWN TO HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE DEFENDANT PROPERTY:
 YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and required to Answer the Complaint in this proceeding, a copy of which is herewith served upon you, and to serve a copy of your Answer to the said Complaint on the undersigned at 2229 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201 within thirty (30) days after the service hereof, exclusive of the date of such service, and if you fail to Answer the Complaint within the time aforesaid, judgment by default will be rendered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.
 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the original Complaint in this action was filed in the Office of the Richland County Clerk of Court on July 21, 2020.
 David W. Farrell
 2229 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201
 (803) 256-7011
 ATTORNEY FOR THE PLAINTIFF
 Columbia, South Carolina

SUMMONS
 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
 COUNTY OF RICHLAND
 IN THE COURT OF
 COMMON PLEAS
 C/A NO. 2020-CP-40-3325
 Byron Gipson, Solicitor, Fifth Judicial Circuit, Plaintiff,
 vs.
 Two Thousand and 00/100ths (\$2,000.00) Dollars US Currency, Thirty Eight and 492/1000ths (38.492) Grams Marijuana, One and 103/1000ths (1.103) Grams Methamphetamine, and Marquell Davis,
 An Interested Party, Defendants.
 TO: THE DEFENDANT ABOVE NAMED:
 MARQUELL DAVIS AND RICHLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT,
 PERSONS KNOWN TO HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE DEFENDANT PROPERTY:
 YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and required to Answer the Complaint in this proceeding, a copy of which is herewith served upon you, and to serve a copy of your Answer to the said Complaint on the undersigned at 2229 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201 within thirty (30) days after the service hereof, exclusive of the date of such service, and if you fail to Answer the Complaint within the time aforesaid, judgment by default will be rendered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.
 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the original Complaint in this action was filed in the Office of the Richland County Clerk of Court on May 12, 2020.
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LEGAL NOTICE

COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT,
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PUBLIC NOTICES

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RANT, continued from page C16

in point. A guy lives on my street who has broken every possible HOA rule for years. The cops come by and take pictures of his yard over and over, but nothing changes. **Rumors of drugs, meth lab.** You get the picture. Last year the city paid to have an open top put in his yard for clean up. Still a mess inside and out and just as bad as it was for years.

One of the most shocking events in history ended World War II, the dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan by the USA. President Trump said the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918, ended World War II (in 1945), because "all the soldiers were sick." **He is truly that uneducated and just plain stupid?**

If we doubted that our whole planet and all the people in it are connected, **COVID-19 has shown us reality.** The virus is GLOBAL. It is a small world.

When Trump loses the November election, I understand Putin is going to release Trump's pee-pee tapes and everything he has on Trump! Something to look forward to!

COMET is going to operate the buses for the University of South Carolina? They can't even do it right for the City of Columbia, so **why are they doing this?** Yeah.

Hey, I kind of like Mr. Biden. But **I really like his vice president choice.** She has fire in her belly.

Back in high school we lived about a mile from Peeler's Dairy in Gaffney, SC. I still have Harvey Peeler Sr.'s obituary that I cut out from the paper tucked into my Bible. When we were high school kids, they didn't lock the milk trucks at night and **we'd go help ourselves to some milk cartons.**

I'm getting old. **I got some bigger alphabet soup,** because the letters are a little bigger to see.

I just want to say the best thing about 2020 for me is that I now have 2020 vision. It is fantastic. **I want to thank the Columbia Eye Clinic for doing a fantastic job.** I can see clearly now.

Walmart put a lot of mom-and-pop shops out of business. Now they have nothing on their shelves. **I've been to three Walmarts today, and their shelves are bare.** What's going on, are they going bankrupt, too?

Kamala Harris is doing this for every little girl who ever had a dream to lock people up for low-level drug offenses and to keep innocent people on death row. **Intersectional feminist prison industrial complex.** Woke mass incarceration.

I just wanted to say that **South Carolina is proof that hillbillies can live on the coastal plains or in the Midlands** of a state, also.

I want to go to the beach this weekend. **I'll be a son of a beach.**

Why did Marcel Marceau imitate the Statue of Liberty? **He was in a New York state of mime.**

Yeah, first we have Jakie Knotts as a senator. Now we have **Katrina Shealy, who has supported the Lexington County procurement office.**

There are little things in South Carolina that I cannot believe goes on. Street signs and addresses, for instance. Where is your street address on your home or business? **What happened to most of the street signs?** And if they are going to steal them because they are metal, then make them out of wood.

So, Lindsey Graham. How much money is in your budget? Them commercials aren't cheap, now. Also, I see your sister has a job with the agency for the blind. How much money does she draw?

I just had a comment that **anyone even thinking about drinking sanitizer has to be a Trumpy.** They have been swallowing bulls#!t for four years and finally decided to wash it down with soap. Hallelujah. Belly up to the bar, boys. I'm buying.

It is my contention that **the internet and digital devices are inherently evil.** The problem is, the genie is out of the bottle. How do you ever put it back in?

In January 2021, when Biden is inaugurated as our new President, **Trump's title changes from White House president to jailhouse prisoner #00001.**

Ain't it sad that the same dimwits, dumbasses, and lazy morons who have had a gazillion chances to wear masks, social distance and do the right things now cry because of no football? Hey, s#!t for brains, **if y'all did right from get-go we'd probably have football,** school and everything else. You're like petulant children who cry, "I don't wanna eat my veggies!"

I can't believe Trump sucks up to the religious right by talking about God and waving Bibles around. And they are apparently buying it. He's about as religious as a pair of jockey shorts. He bragged about groping women. He had at least one affair with his next wife while married to another wife. He lies about EVERYTHING, even if the truth would work better. **Is it that Christians love a sinner?**

We are obese because we are diabetic. **We are diabetic because of chemicals now in our food and water** that screw up our metabolism. If you are resistant you are lucky. When I was growing up in the 1960s, Type 2 diabetes was rare. We ate Twinkies and Wonder Bread, drank Coke and we were skinny.

What kind of parents you have and **what kind of friends you hang around has more to do with your success or failure than your race.**

The president wants to cut payroll taxes. That's how he presents it. Now, he's a con man. **He's trying to cut Social Security,** which is already on wobbly legs.

I just saw an item on the news where someone said that, before the pandemic, the president was good for the economy. And a lot of people seem to be swallowing that hook, line and sinker. But **we've added trillions to the national debt.**

Poverty, slums, despair, trash, stupidity. Come to South Congaree, we have it all. And so much more.

You wonder if Mr. Mike Pence sees into the future and sees that he will be like Dr. Ben Carson, a man without a country.

What's on my mind is **why the Senate wants to pass a law against blind people?**

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