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Patrons of the Athens Farmer's Market mingle at the tables of the outdoor courtyard of Creature Comforts Brewing Company in Athens, Georgia on Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025. PHOTO/GABBI SANTEIRO

Finding community Through uncertain times, third places persist in Athens

Gabbi Santerio

The outdoor courtyard at Creature Comforts Brewing Company hummed with conversation on the evening of Sept. 24. The Athens Farmers Market (AFM), which sets up here every Wednesday between March and November, saw everyone from University of Georgia students, to locals and families. Patrons weighed vendors' offers and savored the brewery's pours in a social space outside the confines of work, school and home.

Tabling at the market for R&R Secret Flowers was Ella Blakely, who works for the floral farm and design studio. Long before her job required her to table at AFM, she was a regular visitor, finding joy in the free public space.

"I love being at the farmers market because I see people I already know in the community," Blakely said.

It's not just the farmers market that attracts a rotation of regular visitors in Athens, though. When Blakely worked at Hendershot's, a cafe and bar in Athens, she saw plenty of the same customers on a weekly, and, at times, daily basis. It brings to mind the ease with which six friends met every day in the fictional Central Perk cafe in "Friends," a rhythm rooted in the human impulse to gather in shared spaces.



Ella Blakely tables for R&R Secret Flowers at the Athens Farmers Market at Creature Comforts Brewing Company in Athens, Georgia, on Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025. PHOTO/GABBI SANTEIRO

“ Without community, you kind of just see other people as bots.

ELLA BLAKELY | R&R SECRET FLOWERS WORKER

In 1989, sociologist Ray Oldenburg proposed that, while home acts as a first place and work as a second place, the "third place" captures an expanse of spaces in between. They exist for "informal public gathering," fueling community and democracy by "creat[ing] habits of public association." These spaces are, according to Oldenburg, a common thread between great civilizations.

Oldenburg understood that the existence of regular patrons who know one another is crucial to a third place. Blakely considers the regulars of spaces where she has worked a reminder that everyone is just leveling with one another as people.

"Without community, you kind of just see other people as bots," Blakely remarked.

Regardless of whether a lack of community explains why the American Psychiatric Association found that, in 2024, 30% of Americans reported experiencing loneliness on a weekly basis, Oldenburg's image of the third place is one that combats loneliness through a sense of belonging.

Nationwide challenges

If human loneliness means people need third places, high rents, prohibitive zoning and social stratification make them harder to find.

For one, online platforms are said to create social exclusion. According to a video from writer and content creator Elliot Sang, algorithms encourage users to tailor their communities narrowly to likeminded individuals, making an increasingly online generation uncomfortable interacting with others outside of a neatly fenced-off circle.

Sang suggested that online content, such as overly niche Reddit threads, create a limited version of community building, discouraging the diversity of thought often found in real-life social interactions.

Charlene Woodham Brickman, owner of Recess & Play, LLC and a scholar of play and recess policy, calls modern social stratification and third places the band-aid to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Brickman, the isolation of the pandemic brought harm to a society that glorifies a "60 hour work week."

SEE THIRD SPACES PAGE A3

Increasing accessibility

Fire station 5 to move to Old Lexington Road

Gracie Howard

Fire Station 5 is finally set to move to its new home at 4730 Old Lexington Road after several years of contention and controversy surrounding the location change. The new fire station is projected to complete construction in winter 2027.

Built in 1974 and sitting at the corner of Whit Davis Road and Cedar Shoals Drive in Athens, Fire Station 5 has been in the same place for over 50 years.

Moving the current station will allow it to serve around 800 more people in Athens-Clarke County. The relocation will also reduce the redundancy between Fire Stations 5 and 7, which currently have around a 75% overlap in coverage area, according to Carol Myers, District 8 commissioner. Myers noted that the move would improve emergency response times for residents in areas including Bob Godfrey Road, Nellie Maes Drive, Old Lexington Road, Blue Heron Drive and Robert Hardeman Road.

"When it comes to life saving things and fires, minutes make a difference," Myers said.

Six out of nine ACC commissioners voted to use \$437,000 — \$50,000 less than the originally proposed amount — to purchase approximately 7.5 acres of land for the station's relocation. Approximately \$6 million in Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax funds has been designated for replacing the station, which includes land acquisition, design, construction, a fueling station, equipment and other costs.

Myers also proposed a plan to minimize the footprint of the new station in response to concerns for neighbors' quality of life. The plan includes following ACC's lighting ordinances, waiving sidewalk installation requirements and minimizing the project's visual impact with things like buffers, which are used to separate distinct spaces and land uses, and berms, which are mounded hills of soil. The proposal also ensures that the site's fuel and material storage is managed to lessen impacts to neighbors and wildlife.

"I'm hoping the community can ... pull together to make this the best it can be, considering the circumstances where [the station is], not on the surface, being welcomed by its immediate residence," Myers said. "I'm trying to ... think about the needs of the people close by, the immediate neighbors ... about the community benefits to all the people who are in the service area for this fire house."

Despite positive promises from the ACC Mayor and Commission, many community members have expressed worries that moving the fire station to a more rural area would disturb neighboring residents with noise pollution, loud sirens and extra traffic, while slowing down firefighter response times to more urban areas.

"Everyone agrees that our firefighters deserve this new station, but this decision will impact public safety for generations," Athens local Sabrina Ward said at the Oct. 7 Mayor and Commission regular session meeting. "We can't let fatigue or pressure to just pick a site lead to a short-sighted choice."



Fire Station 5 is seen in Athens, Georgia, on Nov. 3, 2025. The new Fire Station 5 is planned to be at 4730 Old Lexington Road.

PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

SEE FIRE STATION PAGE A3

EDITORIAL: A timeless rivalry

Thank you to our readers and donors

Katie Guenthner

For six years, The Red & Black and The Independent Florida Alligator have held a friendly competition alongside the Georgia-Florida game — The Rivalry Issue. For the two weeks leading up to kickoff, each newsroom does its best to raise more money in donations than the other, all while creating a joint paper published and distributed in both Athens and Gainesville, Florida.

Our newsroom anxiously awaited results before the challenge closed at the kickoff of the Georgia-Florida game. And you, our readers, showed up. In a single day, we closed the gap with over \$5,000 in individual contributions, adding up to over \$14,000 in total donations,

securing another for The Red & Black in our undefeated record. I'm so grateful for every one of our supporters who invested in us up until the last minute.

We're honored to have been able to participate in this tradition again. As two independent student-run newsrooms who receive no financial support or editorial oversight from the universities our students attend, we rely on donations to provide our audiences with quality, reliable reporting.

It's not every day that The Red & Black gets the opportunity to share a tradition like this with a sister paper, so we treasure this friendly rivalry. The Alligator's masthead will be red instead of blue in one of their upcoming papers to commemorate the outcome of the challenge. At the end of the day, though, we're thrilled that both of our newsrooms were able to raise over \$13,000 each — donations that will pay student stipends, help cover away games and so much more.

I want to give a huge thank you to our readers, our counterparts at The Alligator and everyone at The Red & Black who works to make our journalism worth supporting. Here's to next year's competition!



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A dream come true

Why Khamari Brooks was born for Georgia football

Nick Hasnain

Georgia football legend Horace King made history as one of the "First Five" African American scholarship athletes in school history in 1971, but his legacy will not end there.

His grandnephew, Khamari Brooks, is now a four-star defensive end out of North Oconee High School committed to play for Georgia next season.

"I hope I'll be able to go there and just keep that legacy going," Brooks said.

Brooks was born into a family deeply rooted in Athens. Specifically, his mother's lineage holds a rich history for Georgia's football program. Brooks is related to multiple notable Bulldogs, including the aforementioned King, as well as Charles "C.J." Junior — Brooks' step-grandfather who played on the 1980 national championship team.

With football in his blood, Brooks was first introduced to the sport at age 3. From there, he fell in love with the game. Raised as a Georgia fan, he frequently attended games at Sanford Stadium, hoping to one day play on the same field he watched from the stands.

Brooks first viewed college football as a real possibility when he was given the opportunity to start as a freshman at North Oconee, which has recently become a football powerhouse in Class 4A. At 6-foot-4, 185 pounds as a freshman, Brooks made it hard for head coach Tyler Aurandt to keep him off the field.

"He's one of the best leaders that I've been around because he can challenge kids and they respect him," Aurandt said.

Brooks' strong leadership and dominant play were paramount last season when the Titans went a perfect 15-0, winning their first football state championship in school history. He stepped up for his team in its 14-7 win against Marist in the state championship, posting eight tackles, 2 1/2 tackles for loss, 1 1/2 sacks and even a receiving touchdown.

"Seeing their faces, seeing them happy after that game was very exciting for me and a very cool thing to see because I've known a lot of these guys for a very long time," Brooks said of his teammates.

Aside from football, Brooks was also a standout on the basketball court his first three years of high school, winning back-to-back state championships in 2024 and 2025. Brooks won those titles alongside four-star guard Justin Wise, who has offers from Georgia and several other Division I schools.

Brooks received his official offer from the Bulldogs in October 2024 in the midst of North Oconee's undefeated championship run. With Georgia and Alabama as the front-runners for his commitment this past June, Brooks ultimately chose the university down the road that he had been watching games at his entire life.

"I grew up a Dawgs fan," Brooks said. "You could definitely say it's a dream come true."

"To see him go through the process and handle it as maturely as he did, it speaks a lot about his character," Aurandt said of Brooks' recruitment.

Brooks credits his official visit, the school's reputable academics and his talks with Georgia linebackers coach Chidere Uzo-Diribe as the main reasons behind his final decision.

Brooks will reunite with a familiar face when he joins the Bulldogs next fall: previous teammate and longtime friend Landon Roldan. Now a freshman wide receiver at Georgia, Roldan was a major part of North Oconee's title-winning roster and has been teammates with Brooks since middle school. Brooks said the two still talk regularly and even play video games together.

"We've known each other for a very long time, and it's just insane that we're going to be able to do that together," Brooks said.

Brooks' motivation comes from his desire to support his family, particularly his mother.

"My main goal is to retire them and make sure they don't have to work," Brooks said. "That's my biggest goal and what I really pride myself on working hard for."

Brooks said his final goal before graduating from North Oconee was to win one last state championship. However, following a home game against Madison County earlier this month, he announced that he fractured his hip and will miss the rest of his senior season.

"Loved the journey these past 4 years," Brooks said on X. "Though my season is cut short I can't do anything but thank God for giving me the opportunity to play this sport I love and to play this sport in college."

Brooks finished his shortened season with 56 tackles, six sacks, five tackles for loss and a forced fumble through seven games. He was featured as a tight end on offense, recording 12 receptions for 246 yards and four touchdowns.

North Oconee is still undefeated this season, and it will attempt to win that final state title that Brooks covets before he graduates. In the meantime, Brooks will watch from the sideline and rehabilitate his hip before his freshman year between the hedges — the same place his relatives made history generations before him.



North Oconee senior Khamari Brooks (5) waits for a snap during the North Oconee vs. Jefferson football game at Jefferson Memorial Stadium in Jefferson, Georgia, on Friday, Sept. 12, 2025. North Oconee won 35-0. PHOTO/GABRIEL OBLETON



Georgia commit and North Oconee senior Khamari Brooks (5) catches a touchdown pass during the North Oconee vs. Jefferson football game at Jefferson Memorial Stadium in Jefferson, Georgia, on Friday, Sept. 12, 2025. North Oconee won 35-0. PHOTO/GABRIEL OBLETON

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Portrait of the Massey family (L-R: James Massey, Chris Massey, Tara Massey and Ava Massey) at Fox Den Third Space in Athens, Georgia, on Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025. Tara Massey is the owner of Fox Den Third Space. PHOTO/GABBI SANTEIRO

THIRD SPACES FROM PAGE A1

The third places that would close these social gaps and bring people out of their work bubble could face geographical and economic barriers.

In 1997, Oldenburg penned a feature titled "Our Vanishing 'Third Places'" where he wrote that third places were least common in residential areas. In what he described as the "anti-community character of the postwar suburban landscape," many zoning codes restricted the development of third spaces like coffee houses in neighborhoods. He stated that many suburbs in desperate need of a "place on the corner" lacked the independently-owned spaces that could facilitate community outside of the home.

Some areas in Athens are zoned for workspaces rather than third spaces. Tara Massey, the owner of Fox Den Third Space, a no-cost recreational and educational area for kids and teenagers in Athens, said in the early search for a building, Fox Den was rejected from multiple areas where complexes were zoned exclusively for offices.

Beyond geographical complications, rising rents impact small business owners in the U.S. whose ventures serve as third places. Owners of bars, cafes, bookstores and markets have to contend with inflation to maintain their spaces.

Affordability of third places is obstructed for both business owners and patrons. While the nationwide median household rent has modestly decreased over the past couple of years, at \$1,394 as of last month, it stands 22% higher than it did at the beginning of 2021. Although below the national average, Athens' median rent is not far behind at \$1,248.

While owners of third places in America need to keep the lights on, potential visitors need to contend with an increased cost of living.

Implications for Athenians

As the afternoon light poured in through the windows of Fox Den Third Space, Massey prepared for another weekly Friday Movie Night on Sept. 19. The space, which has a library, a makerspace, a bouldering wall and a Dungeons & Dragons game room opened in August.

In Fox Den's infancy, many of the clientele have been pre-teens, something Massey is proud of. She finds that as kids get older, there are not typically as many third places for them, and Athens is no exception.

"Movie theaters are not allowing teens to go anymore," she said. "At night, they have to be with a parent. There are no more malls. This has to be done now, because my kids need it, and I know other kids need it."

Even for adults, it is difficult to find a space that is not paywalled. Oldenburg found that the costs of a third place should not be prohibitive. However, free spaces like AFM have recently had to reach out to the local community for external support in the wake of inflation and decreased grant funding.

Sofia Cannon, a bartender at The World Famous on Athens' Hot Corner, identified a barrier to third spaces within the city; many free spaces, like the Main Library on UGA's campus, are reserved more for students than for locals.

"I think that just the way that America is today, everything costs money, and you kind of have to pay that price if you're looking for a third space," Cannon said, noting that even students who have free third spaces had to pay tuition and campus fees to study at UGA.



Dancers from UGA Ballroom Performance Group dance to the live music of Big Band Athens at Hendershot's in Athens, Georgia, on Thursday Sept. 25, 2025. PHOTO/GABBI SANTEIRO

Cannon, 23, observed that generational differences in patrons add to the economic pressures on third places in Athens. She divulgued that when the COVID-19 pandemic hindered Generation Z's social lives, it also helped create a phone-heavy culture that was not built for socialization. She remembered once posting an inquiry on a private Instagram story asking whether it was "weird" to sit at a bar by herself having been told it is an "old man thing."

"Old men might be onto something," Cannon said. "That's how you make friends."

Third spaces in Athens

The evening of Thursday, Sept. 25 brought the musical sensibilities of Big Band Athens to Hendershot's. The band's renditions of 1940's hits were accompanied by dancers from the UGA Ballroom Performance Group.

Between songs, dancers went back into the crowd, mingling amongst themselves and with bartenders. They got back up and danced across the space between the crowd and the band every time a new song began. Then the cycle repeated, giving the feeling that this was not their first time there.

During the Big Band's intermission, UGA ballroom dancers and mathematics Ph.D. candidates Casia Siegel and Sayan Chattopadhyay sat at the tables outside of Hendershot's. Siegel confirmed that they attend Hendershot's Big Band performances and SaBaCha Dance Social every month to dance.

Chattopadhyay remarked that Athens as a city, with events of this nature, are ripe with community and respite from the fast pace of a daily workload.

"Having grown up in a city where there is some sense of alienation ... a small town and the community that it brings

in these small events is a nice change of pace from the fast life that is work and school," Chattopadhyay said.

Kendra Posey, a bartender at Hendershot's and a UGA psychology and sociology student, said that she is partial to the rotation of regulars in the space, whose names she remembers. She added that Hendershot's is a reliable fixture and a consistent third space for musicians to perform and build an audience.

Beyond bars, cafes and music venues, third places in Athens are an amalgamation of its culture. Free art galleries like the Lyndon House Arts Center, naturescapes like the State Botanical Garden of Georgia and educational spaces like Fox Den and the Athens-Clarke County Library persist in the city.

At Fox Den, the only barrier of entry is an app download for parents to sign up for a time to bring their child. When Massey discussed what Fox Den could look like a year from now, she described a staple spot to which children can de-fault, one that will always be there for them.

Brian Strickland, the director of AFM, finds that the slower pace of a town like Athens creates a social space for children and adults alike. The farmers market accommodates them all, yet it is one of many spaces in the city that offer such easily paced flexibility.

"There's plenty of places that can be a third space, depending on what you're looking for in life," Strickland said. "You can walk into a place and not think it's a third space for you, but then be there for more than five seconds or five minutes and find community, or find something that makes you feel like you're home."

Even with the economic challenges that inundate third spaces, these places are what one makes of them, and they exist throughout the Classic City.



Fire Rescue Engine 4 sits inside the Fire Station 5 garage in Athens, Georgia, on Monday, Oct. 27, 2025. There are plans to sell this engine in an auction. PHOTO/AMELIA DURDEN

FIRE STATION FROM PAGE A1

At the same meeting, ACC Fire Chief Nate Moss said that the new station location will provide better services to less-densely populated areas of Athens by having just one truck and an average of around three calls a day, with an estimated 60% of those calls being for medical emergencies.

"How do we meet the needs of the densely populated area of Athens? More trucks and more people," Moss said. "Station location is independent of that based on the fact that we need to continue to provide services to those less populated areas, and we need to reduce the overlap of coverage and increase coverage to areas that are underserved or not covered."

With Fire Station 5's old age, lack of some services for women — including a women's restroom and privacy in its living area — and proximity to neighboring Fire Station 7, Myers deemed the relocation to be more effective than a renovation.

Out of over 100 properties within the search area for Athens' new fire station, Old Lexington Road was one of only nine properties that met all of the site selection criteria, Myers explained when talking about the choice for the new location.

The station's new location will allow it to better serve its service area of southeastern ACC, which currently lacks adequate coverage. The existing Fire Station 5 provides coverage to 24,000 people within a 2.5 mile radius, and the new station will service a total of 7,620 residents, including the 800 who were previously not covered.

"The bottom line is, Fire Station 5 is inadequate," Moss said in the meeting, reading a letter from Emily Alger, president of Athens' chapter of the International Association of Fire Fighters. "Athens-Clarke County urgently needs a Fire Station 5 within the identified service area to maintain strong fire protection and medical services for southeastern Athens."

OPINION: Not an isolated incident

Nazi assailant in Athens follows national trends

Elijah King

On Thursday, Oct. 23, a man dressed in a black uniform with a swastika armband, was arrested for breaking a University of Georgia student's nose with a glass beer mug.

In a statement to The Red & Black, Grace Lang, the student who confronted the man and was subsequently assaulted, recounted the experience saying the man was allegedly "grinning ear to ear the entire time, including while assaulting me."

Several major news media outlets have picked up the story, including NBC, CBS, USA Today and the New York Post, leading to an outpouring of both disgust and support online. On The Red & Black's Instagram post reporting the story, one user commented "Total hoax" while another under a separate post regarding Cutters' statement said, "They shot Charlie Kirk, I don't care about a costume tbh."

These comments aim to detract from the larger issue at hand. The assault in downtown Athens is not an isolated eruption of hatred, but something generated from years of subtle bigotry.

Similarly, the New York Post reported the assault with the headline: "Bozo clad in Nazi attire breaks woman's nose outside bar and gets busted." What is striking about this headline is its framing of the act as stupidity instead of moral wrongdoing. Dressing as a Nazi is not just dumb or in bad taste; it invokes symbols of hatred, genocide and fascism.

This incident is particularly reminiscent of the Young Republicans' group chat leak. Young Republican leaders across several states were exposed for making flippant jokes about gas chambers and sexual assault, and saying slurs in more than 28,000 posts obtained by POLITICO. Vice President JD Vance minimized the actions labeling the offenders as "kids."

Whether it is a news media outlet or the vice president, it has become clear that American institutions and leaders have become inefficient in condemning abhorrent

behavior. When the White House posts ASMR videos of undocumented people being deported, when an elected representative has an American flag deformed into a swastika and when supporters make light of and make merchandise of inhumane immigrant detention facilities like "Alligator Alcatraz," it signals not only desensitization, but moral decay.

The man in the Nazi uniform dressed in that way to get a reaction: he wanted a fight. And when our institutions at the top become smug and unrepentant in their actions, it trickles into our cultural zeitgeist. It teaches people that dehumanization can be funny, that fascist imagery can be a costume and that moral outrage is just a "woke" overreaction.

Elijah King is a sophomore political science major at The University of Georgia



GRAPHIC/RYLEE TOOLE

Reader Feedback Survey

Please take a few minutes to contribute to our annual reader feedback survey. Reader feedback is important for The Red & Black to continue bringing free, reliable and timely news to Athens-Clarke County and to continue as an independent, student-run, award-winning nonprofit newsroom.

Have questions for us? Reach out at editor@randb.com



Miembros de diferentes organizaciones, incluyendo La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc. y Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc., posan para una foto después del club de lectura en la Universidad de Georgia, en Athens, Georgia, el lunes 27 de octubre de 2025. Las organizaciones latinas se reunieron para discutir el libro "The Undocumented Americans" de Karla Cornejo Villavicencio.

FOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

Tradición, Caballerosidad, Para Siempre

La vida griega latina de UGA trasciende las barreras culturales para hacer el bien

Bianca Orfila-Molinet, Traducción: Nathan Valles

Los estudiantes latinoamericanos en la Universidad de Georgia son pocos y dispersos. Según datos de 2023, los estudiantes hispanos o latinos representan apenas el 5.8% de los estudiantes de pregrado y el 5.6% de los de posgrado en UGA. A pesar de esto, los estudiantes de origen latinoamericano dejan su huella en el campus de muchas maneras.

Una de ellas es a través de la vida griega. Para 2023, de los 31,514 estudiantes de pregrado en el campus, casi 10,000 participaban en la vida griega (32%). La vida griega puede considerarse central en UGA: los estudiantes involucrados han recaudado 1.6 millones de dólares con fines filantrópicos y han contribuido con 108,474 horas de servicio mediante voluntariado.

Para algunos estudiantes latinoamericanos, este es el lugar donde encuentran comunidad. En el campus existen tres organizaciones griegas latinas: La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc., Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. y Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc.

"Traemos un poco del casa para muchos de estos estudiantes que a veces se sienten alienados en la Universidad de Georgia", dijo Bryan Acevedo Sierra, coordinador de eventos del capítulo Beta Tau de LUL en UGA. "Parte de lo que hacemos es intentar unirlos".

La cohesión cultural y la representación son uno de los enfoques principales de las organizaciones. Las recaudaciones de fondos, los eventos comunitarios y las iniciativas filantrópicas suelen ir acompañados de reconocimiento, apreciación e inclusión de la cultura latinoamericana. Acevedo Sierra mencionó una recaudación de fondos que incluía conchas, un dulce mexicano, como ejemplo de cómo la cultura se entrelaza con los esfuerzos de la fraternidad.

"Puede que estés lejos de casa, pero luego puedes doblar una esquina en Tate y vernos con conchas y comidas típicas latinas", dijo Acevedo Sierra.

La filantropía es importante en las organizaciones griegas latinas de UGA. Las tres tienen enfoques nacionales y regionales únicos, que incluyen terminar con la falta de vivienda, fomentar el acceso a la educación superior e investigar el cáncer infantil. Una organización local que apoya, Casa de Amistad, enseña inglés a residentes del área de Athens, mientras proporciona un espacio seguro

para las voces hispanas.

"Estas personas que suelen aparecer, puedes ver que sus rostros están cansados, y a veces parecen que no quieren estar ahí, pero saben que quieren aprender este idioma", dijo Jorge Luis Escalera Valenzuela, miembro del capítulo Gamma Epsilon de Lambda Theta Phi en UGA. "Saber que están allí me motiva aún más a querer ayudar".

Una nueva iniciativa de LUL, que comenzó este año, se centra en proporcionar acceso a la literatura y a historias latinoamericanas. El LUL Book Club, dirigido por Ivan Mendoza, busca fomentar la conciencia cultural.

El establecimiento de redes profesionales para estudiantes latinoamericanos también es un objetivo importante de estas organizaciones.

"No hay muchas personas que se vean como yo en el área financiera, y puede ser un poco intimidante", dijo Escalera Valenzuela. "Esa es una de las razones por las que me uní a [Lambda Theta Phi], porque vi a muchos de los miembros de la comunidad, especialmente a los exalumnos, que ya están en los campos y empresas en los que quiero estar".

Más allá de la filantropía y las redes, estas organizaciones sirven como conexiones cruciales entre estudiantes de UGA que de otra manera podrían sentirse excluidos. Se enfatiza la creación de vínculos dentro de su cultura.

"Una de las cosas más importantes que realmente valoro, y que es un verdadero núcleo de las creencias de nuestra sororidad también, es formar relaciones genuinas", dijo Elizabeth Lora, vicepresidenta del capítulo Delta Alpha de LTA. "Sí, tenemos la hermandad, pero también nos preocupamos genuinamente unas por otras".

La filantropía, el intercambio cultural y la conexión son los principios de estas organizaciones. Esto se refleja en sus lemas: "Latino por tradición, no por definición", "Caballerosidad sobre uno mismo" y "La Unidad Para Siempre". Más allá de las conexiones sociales que surgen en estos entornos, también fortalecen a los latinos profesional y académicamente, según Acevedo Sierra.

"Solo queremos promover la educación. Queremos que los latinos se gradúen. Queremos que los latinos vayan a la universidad", dijo Acevedo Sierra. "Queremos poder prosperar en estos espacios donde antes no habíamos estado".

To read the English version of this article, visit redandblack.com

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CORRECTIONS

In the Oct. 23 print edition, on page A7, there was an error regarding the title of a source. We regret this error and it has since been corrected online. As a student-run news organization with the mission of training journalists, we know that mistakes happen and we do our best to correct them as quickly as possible. If you spot a factual error, please let us know by sending a correction to editor@randb.com. Corrections to items in print editions are published in the next possible print issue. Corrections for online-only articles are posted at redandblack.com/corrections.



Izzy Marler, baker and CEO of Three Dogs & a Girl Bakery, poses for a portrait in Winterville, Georgia, on Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025. The bakery operates out of Marler's kitchen and provides experience and work opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. PHOTO/JOELLE ERWIN



Izzy Marler, baker and CEO of Three Dogs & a Girl Bakery, poses for a portrait in Winterville, Georgia, on Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025. PHOTO/JOELLE ERWIN

Three Dogs & a Girl Bakery

Izzy Marler's journey to overcoming challenges

Jessica Ryan

Through doughy treats and warm pastries, Izzy Marler is paving the way for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities to learn real-world skills and overcome fears at Three Dogs & a Girl Bakery.

Marler, graduate of Destination Dawgs, a career development program for students with intellectual disabilities at the University of Georgia, and CEO of Three Dogs & a Girl Bakery, bakes breads, muffins, cookies and treats for customers while teaching others who endure similar challenges how to bake and grow their skills.

After graduating from UGA in May 2025, Marler spent the summer learning how to bake. By September 2025, she opened her bakery with the goal of creating treats that reflect both quality and purpose.

The bakery strives for inclusion and opportunity, inviting others with disabilities to work alongside her. Marler hopes to provide them with a meaningful job that builds self-confidence in their abilities.

"I wanted to have a job and I wanted to hire people like me," Marler said. "People like me have intellectual disabilities, they can do anything, but I got to teach them how to cook, how to bake, everything."

Marler said her time in Destination Dawgs helped her overcome her struggles and become more outgoing.

"I like UGA, to be honest I learned everything from it," Marler said. "[Like] talking a lot better, as I was scared at first."

Before starting her bakery, Marler worked at Bitty & Beau's, an Athens coffee shop that prioritized inclusion. When the shop closed down its Athens branch in May 2024, she shifted her focus to baking.

Tania Marler, Izzy Marler's mom, said it has been great watching her daughter thrive.

"My sister sent us a sourdough kit over the summer, and I started doing it and I'm like 'Oh this is fun,'" Tania Marler said. "Then she started asking questions and, little by little, it just kind of grew to what it is now."

Tania Marler said that opening the bakery has advanced her daughter's cognitive and practical skills. She explained that Izzy Marler used to be unable to understand measurements, but through baking she learned concepts like teaspoons and cups.

"Doing multiple steps is really hard because of her cognitive disability," Tania Marler said. "So following a recipe and

actually sticking to and doing it was huge."

Tania and Izzy Marler are waiting to open their bakery until they find a place that feels right to them. Tania Marler said they are looking for something that is "quaint."

For now, their bakery will operate out of their home kitchen. Izzy Marler continues to learn new skills and overcome challenges each day.

"She can totally do the cookies totally by herself, she can totally do the muffins totally by herself," Tania Marler said. "Doing the actual sourdough bread is a little bit harder because there's a lot of technique that goes into it, so that's something that I still help out with."

Tania Marler said that it is incredible watching her daughter take on the role of the baker and the CEO of the business. She explained that the bakery has allowed others to see Izzy Marler demonstrate skills she's always had, but that often go unseen because of her shy nature.

"It's been the most amazing thing, not just for, like I said, the actual learning of the math skills," Tania Marler said. "But also, for the social part, she's always struggled with social skills ... and this has really helped her come out of her shell."

Tania Marler said Izzy Marler's success

is worth more than any monetary gain they receive from the business.

"I think any parent that has a kid that has a disability would understand the mission of just really wanting to learn and thrive," Tania Marler said. "We want it to be a teaching place, not just for her, but for other kids like her."

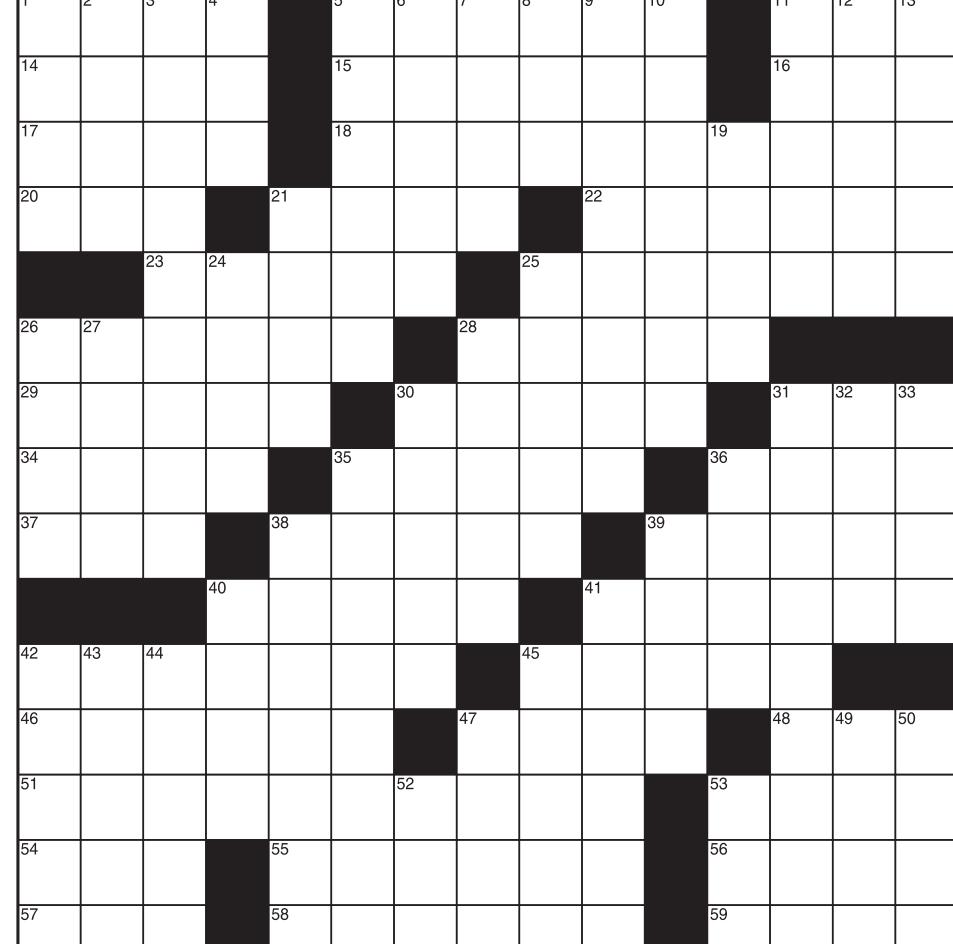
Tania Marler said she thinks that society sometimes sees disabilities as a setback rather than understanding that not everyone has to live under the same conditions to succeed.

"Just because you have a disability doesn't mean that you're doomed," Tania Marler said. "We've learned so much from her as an individual, she truly lives, 90% of the time we call it, in Izzy's world, because she's always happy."

Tania Marler emphasized the value of individual uniqueness and how it has made her daughter who she is.

"It's just the most amazing thing, and really being able to understand that they are all unique in their own way, that not everybody fits in the box," Tania Marler said. "We don't really call it a disability. We call it an exceptionality, because it really does make her to be such an amazing person."

Thursday Crossword - Answer Online FRIDAY, Nov. 8



ACROSS

- Beatles' affirmative
- Area south of the Atlas Mountains
- Baba ingredient
- Like beds, at times
- Bakery enticements
- What bars draw
- Critical point
- Mail-in payment
- A or E, but not I, O or U
- Object to keep in sight
- Helpless?
- Machines in delicatessens
- Making devilishly full?
- Those with visions
- Patsy of Nashville
- Give a start
- Backstage guest
- Crazy way to run
- Does a laundry chore
- Damsel's rescuer
- Forbid
- Board game pieces
- Difficult matters
- Moisten in the morn
- A woman's bow
- Makes moonstruck
- "La Traviata" composer
- Settles on, in a way

DOWN

- 1978 disco hit
- English peer
- Flattery
- Case of bad spelling?
- Java wrap
- Glacial formation
- Directive to James
- Friend in France
- Dangerous varmints
- "Top Hat" tapper
- Cowboy's milieu
- Worrier's risk, it's said
- Shakes hands with
- Compass doodles
- One little piggy's amount
- Web site offering
- Accommodates, as a theater
- Settles on, in a way
- Introduce to solid foods
- Bucolic call
- Don Corleone and others
- Skeet shout
- Abbr. that saves keystrokes
- Do roadwork
- Colonnade trees
- Afternoon spot
- Left unharmed
- Money of Mexico
- Mrs. Hitchcock
- Thing with a thread
- Pumps have them
- Entryway
- Raises ire
- Flower shop purchase
- Nimby dodge
- High on the Mohs scale
- Exam issuers
- Change one's ways?
- Imitate a bronco
- Brought to a halt
- Calais cap
- Make joyful
- Hajji's destination
- Spice of life
- Result of use
- Help for the poor
- What's more
- Eco-friendly org.
- Kind of rally or talk

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Highlights from the 2025 Wild Rumpus Halloween Parade & Spectacle



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Highlights from the Athens Rock Lobsters 2025 home opener



PHOTO CREDIT: ETHAN GREENE

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Owen McDaniel

Sports Editor

How has your coursework at Grady College prepared you for your role at The Red & Black?

My coursework in Grady has prepared me in many ways for my role at The Red & Black. I did not know a single thing about AP Style when I started taking Grady classes in my sophomore year, but taking Reporting I taught me the basics of journalistic writing and the core news values, which I use every day in my job at The Red & Black. The more advanced courses I took in Grady, such as Feature Writing, helped me hone my writing skills even more and become a better journalist.

What has been the most rewarding part of serving in a leadership role at The Red & Black?

The most rewarding part of serving in a leadership role at The Red & Black has been learning how to manage a team of writers. I had never served in a leadership role in any organization before The Red & Black, so this opportunity allowed me to learn basic management and interpersonal skills in my interactions with my writers.

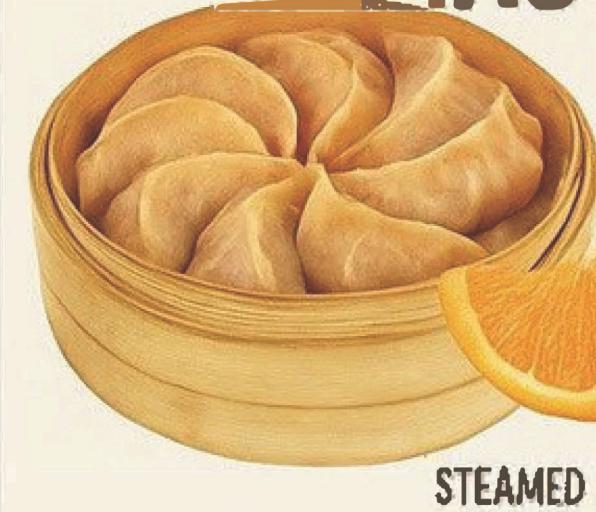
*At Grady College, we are proud of our students who learn the core values, ethics and skills of journalism in our classrooms, then apply them to writing and visualizing features in The Red & Black.
This is one in a series of profiles about our student leaders who serve The Red & Black.*





EST. 2024 IN GA

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115 Hickory St
Athens, Georgia

Alpharetta
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Decatur
470-270-8850

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-  Crystal Boba
-  Lychee Jelly
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MOST BEST AWARDS 2025

EAT

DRINK

SEE

DO

MOST BEST WINNERS

2025 READERS' PICKS

EAT

BEST WINTERVILLE RESTAURANT

Little City Diner

135 Cherokee Road

Little City Diner is a cozy breakfast, brunch and lunch spot known for its fresh, locally sourced Southern fare. Run by Matthew and Deenan Scott of Big City Bread fame, the diner serves made-from-scratch breads, pastries and hearty comfort dishes in a welcoming small-town setting. Its friendly service and homey atmosphere make it a favorite weekend brunch destination just east of Athens.

BEST BAGEL

Ideal Bagel Co.

815 W. Broad St., Suite B

Just off Broad Street, Ideal Bagel Co. serves up fresh, flavorful bagels with a local twist. They offer everything from classic cream cheese spreads and smoked salmon bagels to creative breakfast sandwiches like the "Cadillac." With early morning service, quick counter ordering and a spot that draws students and locals alike, it's a go-to for a hearty start to the day.

BEST NEW RESTAURANT

Tres Amigos Athens

350 E. Broad St.

Tres Amigos brings bold, flavorful Mexican cuisine to the heart of the city. Known especially for standout items like birria tacos and hearty burrito bowls, it's already earning praise for both portion size and flavor. With late-night hours Thursday through Saturday and a vibrant, casual atmosphere, it's a strong pick for dinner out or a post-game bite.

BEST POP-UP

Athens Mini Pancakes

Food truck, location changes

If you're craving something sweet on the weekend, Athens Mini Pancakes delivers fun, flavor-packed mini pancake stacks topped with everything from Nutella and condensed milk to fresh fruit and ice cream. Adding a Mexican twist to Athens' food truck scene, their tres leches pancakes are a standout favorite. What began as a small pop-up has grown into a beloved weekend destination, now serving on Fridays and Saturdays and catering special events across the area.

BEST PLACE TO GET A SWEET TREAT

Andy's Frozen Custard

2180 W. Broad St.

Craving a cold treat? Andy's Frozen Custard offers rich, velvety, frozen custard made fresh every hour, with options ranging from classic cones and sundaes to signature "Concrete" desserts packed with mix-ins. With its casual, drive-through-friendly setup, it's a favorite Athens stop for an after-hours game dessert or late-night indulgence.

BEST TACOS

Taqueria Del Sol

334 Prince Ave.

Taqueria Del Sol brings bold, creative Mexican-inspired cuisine to Athens, with a focus on fresh ingredients and approachable flavors. The menu features standout items like brisket tacos, fish tacos and even inventive cross-cultural enchiladas. These dishes help the restaurant earn local and regional recognition. With its relaxed counter-serve format, outdoor seating and full bar, Taqueria Del Sol is a favorite for casual weekday lunches and lively weekend dinners. It's a go-to spot for University of Georgia students, locals and visitors alike looking for flavorful foods in a welcoming atmosphere.



Taqueria Del Sol's secret menu item, the fried chicken salad, is served in a crispy taco shell bowl and filled with lettuce, pico de gallo, a scoop of guacamole and a sprinkle of cheese. The salad is topped with fried chicken fingers and comes with a side of ranch.

PHOTO/ELLA PINE

SEE & DO

BEST PLACE TO GET GAMEDAY ATTIRE

The Red Zone

186 E. Clayton St.

Right across the street from the UGA's campus, The Red Zone is one of the closest off-campus options for gameday wear. From classic sweatshirts to tried-and-true baseball caps, Bulldog fans can stock up on all the essentials they may have forgotten to bring to Sanford Stadium.

BEST MUSIC VENUE

Akins Ford Arena

300 N. Thomas St.

The largest music venue in Athens opened its doors late last year, starting strong with an inaugural B-52's concert in December 2024. Since then, the arena has hosted plenty of concerts, acts and performances, in addition to serving as the home stadium for the Athens Rock Lobsters.

BEST LOCAL FITNESS

Classic City Cycling

230 W. Clayton St.

Located in downtown Athens, Classic City Cycling has quickly become a fan favorite for locals looking for a fun and motivating workout. Whether you are just starting or have been going for a while, each class leaves you feeling sweaty and refreshed. The studio offers everything from rhythm-based to high-intensity and fun cardio workouts, creating a fun and high-energy atmosphere for all.

BEST ART GALLERY

Georgia Museum of Art

90 Carlton St.

Offering exhibitions, events and more, the Georgia Museum of Art is the perfect place to experience the vibrant art scene of UGA and the broader state, as it's the official Georgia state art museum. From guided tours of the museum to private events, online exhibitions and yoga classes, the museum provides something for everyone to enjoy. Visitors can even stop by the museum shop and grab a souvenir on the way out.

BEST ACTIVITY

The Rook & Pawn

294 W. Washington St.

The best place for a book, game, coffee or drink, The Rook & Pawn truly has it all. Step inside and you're instantly transported into a world of games galore. This cozy coffee shop offers an extensive food and drink menu, including everything from hot and cold sandwiches to pizzas and other shareables, making it the ideal hangout spot for any time of day—or year. As one of the first board game cafes in the Southeast, The Rook & Pawn is a hub for not just food and drink, but also birthday parties and private events.

BEST BLACK-OWNED LOCAL BUSINESS

Dawg Gone Good BBQ

224 W. Hancock Ave.

Looking for a good BBQ spot in Athens? Dawg Gone Good BBQ has you covered. This local favorite serves authentic, Southern-style barbecue that hits the spot every time. With a wide variety of meats from brisket to fall-off-the-bone ribs, chicken and pulled pork, every dish is packed with flavor and perfectly smoked. Not to mention the creamy coleslaw, delectable mac 'n' cheese, baked beans and squash casserole that serve as perfect sides to round out your plate.

DRINK

BEST BOBA SHOP

Bubble Cafe

247 E. Broad St.

From matcha and fruit-based blends to milk teas and seasonal drinks, Bubble Cafe's range of offerings caters to both the boba enthusiast and first-timers alike. In 2020, they moved to their current downtown location, gaining popularity for their signature sweet beverages and savory poke bowls, rice bowls and ramen. After grabbing a drink or bite to eat, many sit down at tables to chat with friends or to work and study in the cozy, garlanded shop to fight the mid-day lull.

BEST COFFEE SHOP

Hendershot's

237 Prince Ave.

Nestled in the heart of downtown Athens, Hendershot's began in 2010 as a vision of Seth and Jennifer Hendershot to combine artisan coffee roasting, a lively bar and live-music venue under one roof. By day, it's a welcoming cafe and roastery. By night, it transforms into one of Athens' most distinctive gathering locations with live jazz music, open-mic nights or drag comedy shows. Whether you're craving a meticulously brewed espresso or settling in for an evening of art and music, Hendershot's offers a memorable Athens experience.

BEST CRAFT COCKTAIL

Hidden Gem

625 Barber St., Suite 140

Step into Hidden Gem, a bar whose atmosphere embodies its name with a rustic, relaxed ambiance. Surrounded by random antiques and tchotchkies, inside the four, wood-paneled walls, customers can enjoy beer, wine or one of their cocktails, such as their gin-based namesake with raspberry syrup and lemon. In addition to its unique, dive bar-esque environment and carefully crafted drinks, Hidden Gem hosts music release and dance parties – a perfect spot to unwind.

BEST WINE BAR

Bar Bruno

1664 S. Lumpkin St.

For those wanting a brief getaway to Italy, Athenians don't have to go far to reach Bar Bruno. Right off of Lumpkin Street in the heart of Five Points, patrons can indulge in tapas-style plates like savory burrata, baked ziti and arancini to sweet brioche gelato, affogato and lemon olive oil cake. Bar Bruno also serves a variety of wines by the glass and bottle, cocktails, spirits, mixed drinks and more.

BEST ROOFTOP BAR

Hybar

412 N. Thomas St.

Hybar's picturesque rooftop seating offers 360-degree views of Athens atop the Hyatt Place Hotel. Start off the night with appetizers like brisket nachos, a meat and cheese board and a fried green tomato caprese, along with one of their beers, wines, cocktails, mocktails or spritzes.



Two members of the Morning Mindfulness group examines a painting during the Morning Mindfulness Workshop at the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Feb. 23, 2024. The workshop does an exercise where members are encouraged to browse the gallery and connect with various pieces. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

MOST BEST WINNERS

2025 EDITORS' PICKS

EAT

BEST ITALIAN FOOD

ZZ & Simone's

1540 S. Lumpkin St., Suite 4

When it comes to Italian food, there's no better place than ZZ & Simone's – known for their classics like pizzas and rigatoni alla vodka, cocktails and warm atmosphere. The restaurant recently expanded to include space for private events and now hosts Sunday brunch. With plenty of indoor and outdoor seating and located near Five Points, ZZ & Simone's is perfect for a celebratory dinner.

BEST PLACE TO TAKE PARENTS

Chuck's Fish

220 W. Broad St.

High quality seafood can be hard to come by in Athens. Chuck's Fish is widely known for its seafood, sushi and lively indoor atmosphere. The food can be pricy, making it a great place to take parents, but the quality makes it worth every cent.

BEST HEALTHY EATS

Maepole

1021 N. Chase St. and 1850 Epps Bridge Parkway

The crown jewel of Athens' ever-growing roster of customizable bowl restaurants, Maepole offers a plant-forward menu. Start with a base like sweet potato or seasoned quinoa, then add sides like mac and cheese and roasted vegetables. Top it with sauce and tofu, marinated in tamari and tossed in nutritional yeast to create a savory, smokey flavor.

BEST SPOT TO GET GROCERIES & A MEAL

Birdies

497 Prince Ave.

Birdies is a gourmet grocery store with a deli and coffee bar. Get a sandwich, soup, salad or latte and grab a seat at a table, on the patio or at the counter with a beautiful view of Emmanuel Episcopal Church. The products at the grocery and deli are truly unique, with dozens of cheeses and freshly-cut cured meats to choose from.

BEST TACO TUESDAYS

El Camino Real Super Market & Taqueria

401 North Ave., Suite 2

This taqueria, tucked away in a small grocery store, serves \$1.90 street-style tacos on Tuesdays, which are a steal for anyone eating on a tight budget. Each taco is served on a corn tortilla with onion, cilantro, lime and your choice of chicken, chorizo, steak, carnitas, al pastor or barbacoa.

BEST HIBACHI/SUSHI

Tiger Sushi

440 E. Clayton St.

Newly opened in December 2024, Tiger Sushi offers a la carte or all-you-can-eat sushi off of a massive menu. From classic rolls and nigiri to unique roll combinations and hibachi, Tiger Sushi has something for everyone, all while ordering through iPads for a state-of-the-art experience.

BEST KEPT SECRET

Tacos Los Plebes

675 Danielsville Road

Tacos Los Plebes, quietly located in north Athens, serves a wide array of Mexican street food. From beef tongue street tacos to menudo, or cow belly soup, this hidden food spot is full of various tacos to try. The restaurant also serves burritos, quesadillas and more.

BEST ON A BUDGET

The Taco Stand

670 N. Milledge Ave.

The Taco Stand on Milledge Avenue has been serving its "original ATH-MEX" cuisine since 1977. With tacos starting at \$3 and tostadas, quesadillas and burritos all starting at around \$4, this Athens staple is guaranteed to have something to satisfy those Mexican food cravings on even the tightest of budgets.

BEST MARGARITA

Poquitos

195 Prince Ave.

Located in downtown Athens, Poquitos brings authentic Mexican cuisine and with that comes their classic margarita; the drink is made with care, delivering a perfectly balanced taste. With daily happy hour specials on margaritas, sangria and piña coladas, Poquito's offers the ideal spot to unwind, celebrate and enjoy a night with friends.

BEST MOCKTAIL

Trappeze Pub

269 N. Hull St.

Trappeze Pub is known for bar food classics and craft beer, but also for handcrafted mocktails. The mocktails stand out as a solid choice for a non-alcoholic alternative to a fun drink. From their sun-shine spritz offering orange flavors, to their mint refresher featuring blueberry syrup, to their fauxloma, their take on a paloma mocktail, Trappeze offers creative options, delivering all the fun of a cocktail with no alcohol needed.

BEST WINE BAR

Bar Bruno

1664 S. Lumpkin St.

Tucked away in Five Points, Bar Bruno offers an extensive list of Italian wines and cocktails. Their spritz flights, where you can pick between any three spritz flavors, from limoncello to Aperol, are a local favorite. Their wide selection of wines by the glass and by the bottle delivers a true taste of Italy to Athens.

BEST MATCHA LATTE

1000 Faces Coffee

510 N. Thomas St.

1000 Faces Coffee, located at the edge of downtown, is a staple location for an expertly made matcha latte, which stands out for its smooth and perfect balance of earthy to milky tastes. Whether you prefer your matcha pure or paired with other flavors, 1000 Faces makes every sip an experience worth savoring.

BEST VIBEY COFFEE SHOP

Buvez

585 Barber St., Suite A

Buvez offers an ambience that keeps customers coming back. Its spacious setup, complete with tables and outside seating, makes for a perfect study spot or a space for a nighttime cocktail. From breakfast and coffee to cocktails served at night, Buvez effortlessly transitions from a calm morning vibe to a nighttime buzz, keeping the vibes good throughout the day.

BEST SMOOTHIE

Arden's Garden

184 College Ave.

Nestled in downtown Athens, Arden's Garden is a refreshing haven for juice lovers and health-conscious locals alike. The bright, modern shop offers a vibrant menu of cold-pressed juices, acai bowls, smoothies, wellness shots and vegan snacks, all made from fresh ingredients. Whether you're stopping in for a morning boost,

a post-workout refuel or a quick pick-me-up between classes, Arden's Garden makes healthy eating easy and delicious in the heart of the Classic City.

SEE & DO

BEST DANCING BAR

Tropical Bar

251 W. Clayton St., Suite 116

Known for its lively energy and packed dance floor, Tropical Bar is Athens' ultimate destination for a night out on the town. With its vibrant lights, pulsing music and atmosphere that demands you get on your feet, it's a favorite for students and locals looking to dance the night away. Whether you're a seasoned dancer or just there for the vibes, Tropical delivers an unforgettable evening.

BEST CREATIVE FITNESS

Canopy Studio

160-6 Tracy St.

Canopy Studio takes fitness to new heights — literally. This community arts center specializes in aerial dance, blending strength, movement and creativity in a way that's both challenging and empowering. Whether you're soaring on silks or trying an intro class for the first time, Canopy offers a welcoming space to explore movement from an entirely new perspective. It's fitness reimagined: expressive, artful and full of joy.

BEST SUNDAY IN ATHENS ACTIVITY

Sunset picnic at the State Botanical Garden

2450 S. Milledge Ave.

For a peaceful Sunday evening, there's nothing quite like a sunset picnic at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia. Spread out a blanket, bring your favorite snacks and enjoy nature's beauty as the sun dips below the horizon. With its scenic trails and open greenspaces, the gardens provide a sense of serenity away from the business of campus life.

BEST HAIR SALON

Washington Square Studio

253 W. Washington St.

Washington Square Studio combines expert styling with a sleek, welcoming atmosphere, making it the perfect spot for Athenians looking for a fresh cut or color. With talented stylists, the salon is known for crafting personalized looks that make all clients feel confident walking out the door. Whether you're going bold with a new style or just in for a trim, Washington Square Studio has you covered.

BEST PLACE TO BUY JELLYCATS

TREEHOUSE Kid & Craft

585 Barber St., Studio G

For anyone obsessed with Jellycats, TREEHOUSE Kid & Craft is a dream come true. Tucked away on Barber Street, this whimsical shop is packed with adorable plush toys in every shape and size. Beyond Jellycats, the store also offers creative toys, books and craft supplies, making it a favorite for kids and adults alike.

BEST ESCAPE ROOM

Escape the Space

540 Hawthorne Ave.

Looking for a challenge that's part puzzle, part adventure? Escape the Space is one of Athens' top destinations for team-based fun. Gather your friends and family, pick a themed room and race against the clock to solve clues and escape. With creative storylines and clever puzzles, Escape the Space is the perfect activity for birthdays, group outings or anyone who loves a good mystery.

HALL OF FAME INDUCTION



Founded by brothers Nick and Peter Dale, Condor Chocolates brings a taste of Ecuador to Athens with its bean-to-bar chocolate. Using ethically sourced cacao from Ecuador, the shop crafts everything from truffles and bars to sipping chocolate and gelato. With locations in Five Points and downtown Athens, Condor Chocolates has become a favorite among locals and visitors, blending Southern hospitality with Ecuadorian flavors.



Known for its fast, flavorful meals, Ahi Hibachi & Poke offers customizable poke bowls and hibachi-style plates that keep Athenians coming back for more. Guests can build their own creations with sushi-grade fish, grilled proteins and a variety of sauces and toppings. With a relaxed atmosphere and a focus on quality, Ahi Hibachi & Poke has earned a reputation as one of Athens' go-to spots for satisfying, healthy dining.



A well-known and beloved Athens staple since 1990, Cecilia's Cake Shop delights residents with beautifully crafted cakes and pastries made from scratch. Family-owned, the shop specializes in custom orders for weddings, birthdays and milestone events. They are known especially for flavor, artistry and heartfelt service. Whether you're celebrating a big occasion or grabbing a treat, Cecilia's offers a slice of sweetness for everyone.

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