

Yes, I am thankful....



In memory of Charles Gordy- By Debbie McClain

For many years, one of my favorite Thanksgiving traditions was reading Charles Gordy's annual column, taking in every word from beginning to end. Continuing that tradition is both a privilege and responsibility I hold dear. It gives me an opportunity to remember Mr. Charles while recognizing countless individuals, organizations, and businesses that make Thomaston and Upson County such a wonderful place to live.

In the rush of everyday life, we sometimes overlook little things that mean the most. Thanksgiving gives us a reason to slow down, reflect, and recognize God's goodness in our lives. Mr. Charles had it right when he reminded us, "We should give thanks more often."

And with that in mind, here are just a few of many reasons I am thankful, not just on Thanksgiving, but throughout the year.

EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

• Younger people stepping into leadership roles and giving us confidence in tomorrow.
• Pride, determination, and community spirit that continue to move us forward.
• Our hometown businesses, families who own them, and hardworking people who keep their doors open.
• Even the occasional complainers, because speaking up usually means someone cares enough to want better.
• Wonderful memories left behind by those we have loved and lost.
• Waking up to another day filled with opportunities for faith, hope, laughter, and love.
• Family and friends who stand beside us through life's challenges and share in its happiest moments.
• Those quick trips to the grocery store that turn into lengthy visits because you run into half the people you know.
• God's Word and faithful people who share its messages of hope, comfort, and encouragement.
• The incredible blessing of being a grandmother and belonging to that very special club.
• Our churches, their congregations, and the many ministries that make a difference every day.
• When cars and trucks pull off the road to honor a funeral procession and the family who lost a loved one.
• Mickey Thrasher, Dave Piper and WTGA, whose music, conversations, and wonderful stories are treasures to our community.
• Our library system and dedicated people who work tirelessly to encourage reading, learning, and discovery.

FIRST RESPONDERS & PROTECTORS

• Brave firefighters, law enforcement officers, and emergency responders who answer the call, regardless of the hour or circumstances.
• Sheriff Dan Kilgore, Chief Mike Richardson, and Chief Jeremy Walker for their leadership and commitment to public safety.
• Craig Stubbs who seems to be everywhere, handling the impossible during emergencies.
• Our 911 dispatchers and emergency medical professionals who remain ready to help around the clock.
• Our valued and professional Volunteer Firefighters.
• Hardworking men and women of AmeriPro Ambulance Service and the lifesaving care they provide.
• Air Evac Lifeteam and critical services that bring help when every minute counts.

ESPECIALLY ON THANKSGIVING

• That we never, ever eat chitlins.
• That rutabagas only seem to make their annual appearance in my kitchen once a year.
• The sense of togetherness that makes Thomaston and Upson more than just a community.
• God's amazing grace, His endless blessings, and comfort of knowing He is always near.

COMMUNITY SERVANTS & PUBLIC SERVICE

• Many city, county, and utility employees whose work often goes unnoticed but keeps our community running.
• Our linemen and utility crews with City of Thomaston, Upson EMC, Southern Rivers, Georgia Power, and private contractors who work through storms, long nights, and difficult conditions to restore services.
• Elected officials and public employees serving Thomaston, Upson, Yatesville, and The Rock.
• Interim Upson County Chairman Chris Biggs, Mayor J.D. Stallings, council members and commissioners for their dedication and service to our community.
• Volunteers who take a beating but still continue to service on boards and commissions.
• City and county managers Russell Thompson and Lonnie Joyce, along with clerks Jessica Jones and Taylor White, for responsibilities they carry each day.
• CPAs, CFOs Reshann Adams and Lacy Crain, and their teams for important financial work they do behind the scenes.
• Our GFL sanitation crews, who not only keep our neighborhoods clean, but also brighten children's days with a friendly wave or a honk of the horn.
• Postal carriers and many employees working behind the scenes to make sure our mail reaches its destination.
• Water department employees who keep essential services flowing, often under difficult circumstances.

COURTS & LEGAL SERVICES

• Superior Court Judges Ben Coker, Ben Miller, Scott Ballard, Rhonda Bender Kreuziger, and Matt McCord.
• District Attorney Mike Rogers, his ADAs, and office personnel for their dedication, experience, and distinguished service to Griffin Judicial Circuit.
• Clerk Teresa Meier, Tax Commissioner Andy Chastain, Magistrate Judges Hannah Arnette and Heather Rush, Probate Judge Muffin Gibson, and their hardworking staffs.
• Our elections team, including Pam Releford, Kelly King, Robert Haney, and many poll workers who devote their time to ensuring our elections run smoothly.
• Jamesan Gramme and the entire archives staff for their commitment to protecting and preserving stories of our past.
• City and county attorneys Johnnie Caldwell, Heath English, and Paschal English for their professional service - their jobs are not easy.
• Many attorneys and legal professionals throughout our community who help individuals and families navigate important matters.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS & RECREATION

• Natural beauty of Sprewell Bluff and efforts of Sarah Williams, her staff, and volunteers who help make it such a special destination.
• Our recreation department, Erik Foster, Kimberly Raines, and their staff for their many contributions making our recreation department thrive.
• Coaches, officials, young athletes, parents, and generous sponsors who make recreational sports possible.
• Employees who spend countless hours maintaining our parks, playgrounds, and athletic facilities.
• Thomaston-Upson Senior Center, Mandy Jackson, and activities and fellowship they provide for our seniors.
• Greatest Generation Park, Lake Thomaston, and many beautiful outdoor spaces we are fortunate to enjoy.
• Our city's dog park, where even our four-legged family members have a place to make friends.
• Our fields and courts that provide opportunities for fun, exercise, and friendly competition.

FAMILY & FRIENDS

• My wonderful husband, Bill, whose love, encouragement, and extraordinary patience are blessings that I occasionally take granted, and the fact that he just rolls with it, or rolls his eyes - it's always one or the other.
• My daughter Sydney, son-in-law Matt, and precious grandson Myles, who bring so much happiness into my life. Myles is my favorite.
• My much-loved stepchildren, Caitlin, Lawton, and Gavin, each of whom holds a very special place in my heart.
• My brother Gary, his wife Jodi, and my nephews and niece, Adam, Cam, and Sarah.
• My nieces Adrian, Callie, Laura and Danny, and our precious grand-nieces Avery, Mattie, Marlie, Mazie, Tatum, and Wynn, along with my nephews, Beau and little Danny.
• The Goldens, Littles, and Tinys, who make life even more exciting and enjoyable.
• Barry and Pam Lord and the blessing of a blended family that truly understands the meaning of loving and supporting one another. Myles is their favorite too.
• The special sisters and brothers God placed in my life, proving that family is not always defined by blood.
• The wonderful people I have been blessed to call my adopted parents in spirit: the late Betty "Yiffy" and Grady Lord, Maxine and Farrel Paulk, Bootsie Curry, Hazel Trice, Nita Brannon, and the late Mary "Mimi" Brannon.
• My business partner and dear friend, Bridge Turner, whose friendship and partnership mean more than words can express.
• All my in-laws and my kid's in-laws, all great people and are a true blessing.

VETERANS & MILITARY SERVICE

• Veterans Day and the opportunity it gives us to publicly recognize men and women who have defended our freedoms.
• Every veteran, active-duty service member, and military family whose sacrifices deserve our lasting respect and appreciation.
• Memorial Day, when we pause to remember those who gave their lives in service to our nation.
• Thomaston Fire Department and the City of Thomaston for faithfully honoring the memory of Sept. 11 each year and reminding us that we must never forget.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

• Sabrina Lancaster and staff of Thomaston Family Medicine, Hughston Clinic, and the many physicians, nurses, and medical professionals who care for our families.
• West Village Retirement Community and Thomaston Manor, and compassionate individuals who make residents feel valued and cared for.

UPSON REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

• Upson Regional Medical Center, its facilities, hospital authority, employees, and medical providers who make top-notch healthcare available close to home.
• CEO Dan Owens and his leadership team for their continued commitment to the hospital and people it serves.
• Our heart specialists, nurse practitioners, nurses, CNAs and support staff who care for patients facing some of life's most frightening health challenges.
• Emergency room physicians, nurses, and employees who work tirelessly to provide care when it is needed most.
• Remarkable advances in medicine and dedicated doctors, nurses, therapists, maintenance personnel, and housekeeping teams whose combined efforts make healing possible.

HOSPICE CARE & FUNERAL HOMES

• Amazing hospice professionals at Thomaston Hospice who bring comfort, dignity, and peace to patients and their families during life's most difficult moments.
• Our local funeral homes, Bentley's, Coggins, Fletcher-Day, and Trice, whose caring staffs help families through the heartbreak of saying goodbye.

LIFE & COMMUNITY

• Our many civic organizations and volunteers who give so generously of their time and talents.
• Paula Dawson, whose heart for children and commitment to helping others continue to make a meaningful difference.
• Our technology lifesavers, Brent King and Brad Temples of Flint River Technologies, who somehow manage to keep us connected and functioning when technology has other plans.
• Lasting influencers Mary Greathouse, Charles Gordy, Joe White, Terry Mathews, Ronald Barfield, Claudette Fagan, and Ruth Presley, who are no longer with us, but whose wisdom and lessons remain part of my life.
• Jim Fowler and more than three decades of sharing his thoughts, observations, and stories through his columns.
• Thomaston-Upson Sports Hall of Fame and its dedication to recognizing athletes and individuals who have contributed to our community's sports history.
• Our churches and ministers who never hesitate to answer the call when someone in our community needs help.
• Letters to the editor and the opportunity they provide for citizens to share their voices and opinions.
• Those willing to put their names on a ballot and accept responsibilities of public office.
• Gov. Brian Kemp and many individuals serving the State of Georgia.
• Sen. Brian Jack and everything he does for our community and so many others.
• Rep. Robert Dickey and Sen. Steven McNeel for their handworks and dedication.
• The House of Care and Community Thrift Store, whose efforts help meet important needs throughout our area.
• For Yatesville and The Rock, each contributing its own special character to Upson County.
• Collision repair shops and mechanics, because sooner or later, just about all of us are going to need them!
• The gift of second chances and the opportunity to learn, grow, and begin again.

THE SEASONS

• Beauty of spring, long days of summer, and that first wonderful hint of cooler fall weather.
• Winters that know when they have overstayed their welcome.
• Medical advances and the growing number of people who are winning their battles against cancer.
• Trice Funeral Home and its tradition of sharing Thanksgiving meals and kindness with others.

YULETIDE SEASON

• The glow of Christmas lights and the beautiful reminder of hope and joy this season represents.
• Christmas Lane and many festive activities that bring families and neighbors together.
• Fly for Tots and generosity that helps make Christmas brighter for children.
• Thomaston Housing Authority and services it provides to our community.
• Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, and Sprewell Bluff for creating holiday traditions and events that make this time of year so special.
• Our pharmacists, dentists, bankers, CPAs, veterinarians, orthodontists, orthopedic specialists, and optometrists who provide valuable services throughout the year.
• Adrian Releford and the animal shelter staff for their dedication to caring for animals and Peggy Ferrell and volunteers for helping them find loving homes.
• Ronnie Portwood, our very own hometown Santa, who brings Christmas magic and smiles to so many faces.
• Businesses that allow their employees to spend Thanksgiving at home with their families.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

• Thomaston-Upson Chamber of Commerce, Madison Ruttinger, Nicole McKinley, and many volunteers who work to support our businesses and strengthen our community.
• Thomaston's Main Street Association, Colleen Cook and Kaitlin Bertholf and Economic Development Director Taylor Smith for their efforts to promote downtown, City of Thomaston, encourage investment, and build a brighter future.
• Our garden clubs and individuals who devote their time to beautifying our community.
• Mimbs Taxi Service and transportation assistance it provides to local residents.
• New businesses, improvements, and investments that reflect continued confidence in Thomaston and Upson.
• Having organizations and agencies such as GHSA, GDOT, Upson EMC, and Georgia State Patrol headquartered in our community.
• The Gilmore Center, Upson County Health Department, American Heart Association, DAR, and DFCS for the many ways they contribute to well-being of others.

INDUSTRIES & BUSINESS COMMUNITY

• Thomaston-Upson Industrial Development Authority, Executive Director Slade Gulledge, his right hand, Susan Hill, and its members for their work to attract investment and create opportunities for our community.
• Mitch Ellerbee, Thomaston-Upson Airport Authority, and pilots and aviation enthusiasts who support our local airport.
• TenCate, Interfor, Chief Manufacturing, Crown Technology, Golden Star, Thomaston Mills, Dart Container, Criterion Technology, Ranew, and Dwellinz, for jobs and economic opportunities they provide.
• Skilled beauticians, barbers, florists, contractors, carpenters, plumbers, painters, electricians, mechanics, and pest control professionals whose talents and hard work make everyday life easier.

EVENTS

• Yatesville's annual Chitlin Hoedown and the tradition that continues to bring visitors and neighbors together.
• The chamber's Poker Float and concerts on the square that fill our community with music, fellowship, and fun.
• Main Street's Fourth of July celebration, Mule Days, and local fishing tournaments that give us even more reasons to celebrate.
• Countless other festivals, fundraisers, gatherings, and celebrations that make our community calendar so full.

SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

• Our school administrators, teachers, support staff, cafeteria employees, and bus drivers who play important roles in lives of our children.
• Dr. Trent Witherspoon, Dr. Jeff Kelly, and the board of education for their service to our school system.
• Our local Christian schools and additional educational opportunities they offer families.

SUPPORT & CHARITY

• Every charitable organization, civic club, and volunteer group working to make life better for someone else.
• S.U.P.P.O.R.T., Upson's cancer fund, and the tremendous comfort and assistance it provides to local families facing cancer.
• Generous individuals who give quietly, help without being asked, and never expect recognition or praise.

EVENT CENTERS & ARTS

• Our beautiful event destinations, including Bickley's Lake, Harper Pines, Xchelon, and Oak Hill Farms, where so many wonderful memories are made.
• Thomaston-Upson Arts Council, Carmen Ellerbee, and the commitment to encouraging creativity and showcasing artistic talent.
• Our locally owned restaurants and eateries, where good food and friendly faces are always appreciated.
• The Studio, A School of Dance, and Jensine Wilson for inspiring young dancers and sharing the joy of performing arts.
• Northside Superette, where quality of the meat is matched only by goodness of the people.
• Morning Star Lodge No. 27 and meaningful community projects its members continue to support.

SCOUTS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

• Our Boy Scouts and many young men who have worked hard to earn the distinguished rank of Eagle Scout.
• Our Girl Scouts, leadership skills they develop, and, of course, those wonderful cookies we look forward to every year.
• Our insurance agents, real estate professionals, butchers, dry cleaners, and hardworking UPS and FedEx employees who help keep our lives moving.
• Our farmers, dairy farmers, and local farmers market vendors who provide fresh products and help preserve our agricultural heritage.
• Our new, multi-use facility/farmers market downtown.
• Southern Crescent Technical College and Gordon College, along with their dedicated faculty, staff, and facilities that provide educational and career opportunities.
• Upson Historical Society and its tireless efforts to preserve people, places, and stories that have shaped our community.

AND FINALLY...

• Bridge and I are deeply appreciative of every reader, subscriber, and advertiser who believes in the importance of a locally owned newspaper. Your continued support allows us to do what we love while serving a community that means so much to us.
• Every employee and contributor, past and present, who has helped shape The Upson Beacon, and the friendship and partnership Bridge and I share as co-owners of a newspaper that proudly calls Thomaston and Upson County home.
• Celebrating 18 years of the Beacon this month. What a blessing it has been to tell our community's stories, celebrate its accomplishments, recognize our people, and accurately report news. We never take the trust placed in us for granted.
• Our wonderful office and delivery team — Luke Haney, Linda Smith, Sherry Holley, Roger Alverson, Jennifer Lyons and Andrew Carroll. Although Mrs. Della Jo Turner isn't working right now, her contributions and the love she poured into the Beacon are too big to count. Our dedicated contributors, Theresa Blasingame, Elaine Walker, Alan Landers, Chris and Jolie Benton, James Studdard, Mary Ann McCrary, and Jim Fowler, along with Phyllis Sanders, who faithfully helps keep me on track with birthdays and anniversaries each week. And our Fayette County News family — Jennifer Lyons, Dylan Shoemaker, Geneva Weaver, Elven Gallimore, and Daniel Stackhouse. Each has contributed something special to our newspapers, and we are grateful for the talents, hard work, friendship, and dedication they have shared. We certainly could not do it without them and really wouldn't want to.
• Those willing to overlook my mistakes and forgiveness for anyone I may have left off. This is a lot to write, but I mean every single word.

As I reflect on another year, I am reminded that our greatest blessings are not always the grandest things in life. More often, they are people who love us, that we love, neighbors who look out for one another, friendships that endure, and community that continues to feel like family.

There will always be challenges, disagreements, and difficult days, but there will also always be reasons to give thanks. Sometimes we simply need to look around and recognize them.

Our hearts are full, our blessings are many, and our love for God and community is beyond measure.

Happy Thanksgiving, Thomaston, Yatesville, The Rock, and Upson County! May your homes be filled with love, your tables surrounded by those you cherish, and your hearts overflowing with gratitude. May God's blessings find their way to your door, not just today, but throughout the coming year.