

## Congratulations to the Class of 2025



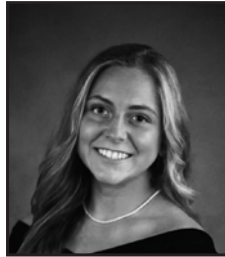
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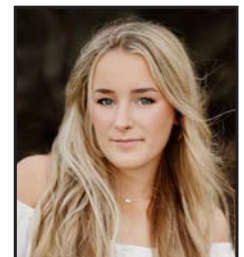
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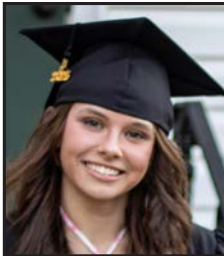
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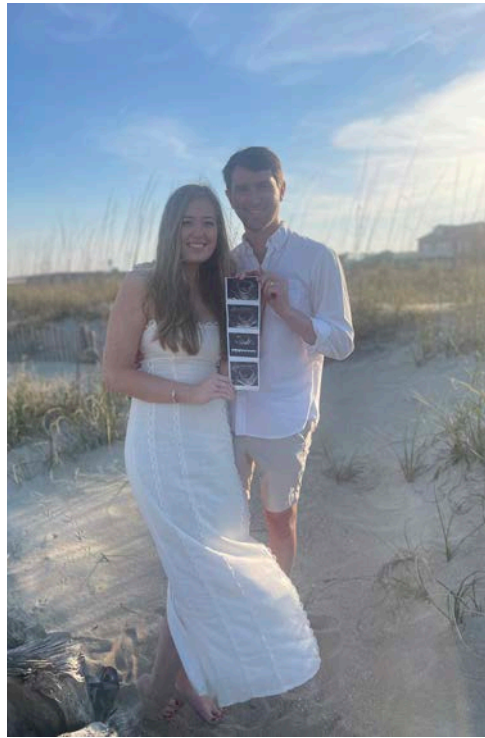
**EMILY  
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# Front Porch

BY CHRIS BRANTLEY, EDITOR



Welcome to the *Isle of Hope News*. We invite you to sit back with your favorite cold, hot, or adult beverage and give it a read.

The beautiful faces you see belong to our high school and college graduates. Congrats to all of you, your parents, and the village that helped get you to this point.

My final graduate earned his diploma from Georgia Tech this year. My wife and I graduated from Georgia, but we've somehow made it through with two boys who are Yellow Jackets and only one other Bulldog in the family, our daughter. No. I still have not worn a GT shirt or hat, yet. My wife can't say the same. But I have come to respect Georgia Tech as an Institute of Higher Learning—and I pull for them anytime they play a team other than Georgia.

That's not all the big news I received since our last issue. My daughter, Mary Grace, and her husband, Daniel, are expecting a baby boy in September. So I am in the middle of a postgraduate, pre-grandpappy rite of passage.

- Continued on page 14 -

## Isle of Hope News

It was started by Isle of Hope resident Ed Yannett in 2011 and mails to 2,400 residents in Isle of Hope, Dutch Island, and surrounding areas.

**The Isle of Hope News is a quarterly publication serving Isle of Hope area residents & advertisers.**

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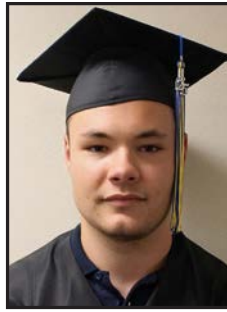




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SAVANNAH  
COUNTRY DAY



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# Jackson Garber, Valedictorian

## Benedictine Military School

Good afternoon Class of 2025, parents, coaches, and our honored and loved faculty. Before I take up more of your time, I'd like to ask everyone to bow your heads while I share my favorite prayer with you.

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference.*

This is the Serenity Prayer and it's given comfort and clarity to countless people, especially during challenging times. It's even made its way into support groups like AA—which is just proof of how deeply it resonates with people in life's toughest moments, but that's not the reason I chose it. While graduation is a HUGE milestone, we have to remember that it's never too late to change. We need to learn how to find peace in the things we can't control, have the courage to shape what we can, and embrace the wisdom that comes from understanding the difference. And it's not only in times of crisis that we need these words. There are moments throughout our daily lives when they can provide guidance. Whether it's before taking an important test, making a hard decision, or even before getting behind the wheel, these words can remind us to find peace in the things we cannot control, have the courage to change what we can, and embrace the wisdom to understand the difference.

To our parents: thank you. You were our first role models and for most of us, our biggest support system. You paid for our tuitions and drove us to early morning practices. Your sacrifices, love, and belief in us are the foundation of this achievement. We would not be here without you.

To our teachers and faculty: thank you for dedicating so much of your time and effort to our success. You did more than assign homework and hand out grades—you challenged us to think, to question, and in the end, grow. And we know you're not doing it for the money—because most of you are clearly smart enough to be making more elsewhere, especially Tvrđy because that guy's a genius and we really are grateful.

To our coaches: thank you for teaching us discipline, grit, and perseverance. Whether it was a morning workout or a tough loss, you were there pushing us to be better—not just as athletes, but as people. All 4 years in high school I wrestled and I couldn't have made it through this journey without its lessons in discipline and perseverance.

Now, there's a quote I've grown to appreciate: "The grass is greener where you water it." We live in a world that constantly encourages us to compare ourselves to other people. It makes it really easy to believe that success or happiness lies somewhere out there belonging to someone else just totally out of reach from us. But what we've learned in high school is the opposite. Growth doesn't come from envying what other people have and waiting for it to fall in your lap. It comes from showing up, putting in effort, and caring deeply about what is right in front of us. The graduates today who will go on to do great things aren't the ones who have the easiest paths. They're gonna be the ones who'll put in the work when no one's watching, the ones who stop at nothing to get what they want, who lift up their peers instead of stepping over them. They're gonna water their grass. And because of that, they'll bloom.

But as we worry about our futures, I want to remind you of something: don't work hard just to impress others or to meet someone else's idea of success. Work hard for yourself—for your own dreams, your own values, and your own fulfillment. Richard Feynman once said something that I think really puts this philosophy into perspective, "You have no responsibility to live up to what other people think you ought to accomplish." Think about that. God didn't place you on this Earth to live your life carrying someone else's weight. You're here to become who you are meant to be. Live on your own terms. Live with pride, not pressure put on by someone else. Measure success by your standards, not someone else's.

After we leave here, we're gonna have to make a lot of decisions, have a lot of opportunities, and face a lot of new distractions. The world is gonna try to convince you that there's always something better than what you have around the corner. That's not true. Your lives will be as rich as the effort you put into them. Water the relationships that matter. Water the dreams that speak to you. Water your own self-worth and well-being. This is when the grass will really be green.

To the Class of 2025: Let's move forward with serenity, courage, and wisdom. Let's live with intention and do it for ourselves.

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# Walking Through the Storm

## My Journey With Metastatic Breast Cancer and the Camino de Santiago

BY STEPHANIE MUEHLHER

Being diagnosed with cancer is no longer the automatic death sentence it once was. I never truly understood the full weight of that truth until I found myself living it.

I had always been diligent about my health. Since turning 40, I never missed my annual mammogram. For years, the results came back clear. No lumps, no warnings. But what many people don't know is that breast cancer doesn't always present itself as a lump.

It started with headaches—piercing, relentless—and a constant wave of nausea that wouldn't go away. I saw several doctors, searching for answers, until I was finally referred to an ENT specialist. She was the first to suggest an MRI. That scan turned out to be the turning point.

As I stepped off the MRI table, the ENT called me directly. His voice was urgent. "You need to go to the emergency room. Now." I barely had time to process the words before we were driving to the hospital, my heart pounding with fear.

Emergency neurosurgery followed. When I woke up, the neurosurgeon delivered the unexpected news: the tumor they had just removed from my brain wasn't what they initially thought. It was breast cancer that had metastasized to my brain.

That day marked the beginning of a new life—one that revolved around oncology appointments, scans, treatments, and uncertainty. I started chemotherapy almost immediately—eight grueling months of it—followed by several rounds of targeted radiation to the area in my brain where the cancer had taken root.

At the time, we were living in San Antonio, Texas. The pandemic was raging, and I lost my job. We decided to move back home to the Isle of Hope, Georgia—closer to family, and closer to peace.

There were setbacks. Cancer rarely moves in a straight line. Friends in Boston encouraged us to get a second opinion at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. It was one of the best decisions we made. I also started seeing an oncologist at the Nancy N. and J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion in Savannah. Between the two teams, they finally found the right combination of medications that helped me regain a sense of normalcy.

Now, I receive immunotherapy once a month and have MRIs every three months. I'm turning 50 this year—and I've been living with metastatic breast cancer for nearly six.

To mark this milestone, I knew I needed to do something big. Something that would show others—especially those living with cancer—that life doesn't stop with a diagnosis. After months of soul-searching and researching, I found my answer in Spain.

I walked the El Camino de Santiago.

Starting in Sarria, the six-night, five-day pilgrimage took me through rolling hills, ancient villages, and winding paths that tested my strength and spirit. Each day, I walked 14 to 18 miles, sometimes in rain, sometimes under the Spanish



Top: Stephanie on the Camino in Aruza, Spain. Bottom: Stephanie's husband, Eric Gould, walked the Camino with her.

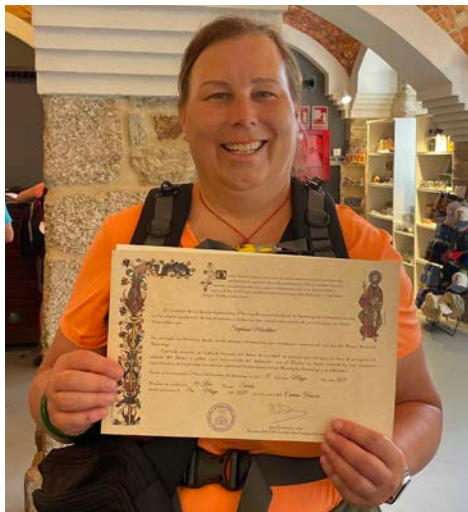
sun. It wasn't easy. The hills were steep, my legs ached, and my body—though strong—reminded me of all it had endured.

But every step reminded me that I was still here. Still walking. Still alive.

Reaching Santiago was more than just a physical triumph. It was a spiritual one. It was proof—to myself and others—that cancer doesn't define us. Despite it, you can live a full, beautiful, challenging, and meaningful life.

So yes, being diagnosed with cancer isn't always a death sentence anymore. Sometimes, it's the beginning of a different kind of journey. One that takes you through pain, perseverance, and eventually, to purpose.

And sometimes, it takes you all the way to Santiago.



Top: Stephanie received the Compostela, the official certificate of completion of the Camino de Santiago, which ends at the tomb of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Bottom: The Credencial del Peregrino (Pilgrim's Passport) - Walkers collect stamps at churches, hostels, cafes, and other stops along the route.

## St. James the Less Celebrates Jubilee Year 2025: Pilgrims of Hope



Join our St. James Parish family this year and be a pilgrim of hope! Visit Our Lady of Good Hope Chapel on Isle of Hope to pray and visit one of several special jubilee sites in the Diocese of Savannah.

The 150-year-old chapel was founded by Benedictine monks, and the community formed the nucleus of what became St. James the Less Parish. Through trials and setbacks, the community held on to hope that their community would survive and share the Faith with future generations. Today, Mass is celebrated at the chapel on the first Sunday of each month.

### Schedule for the Jubilee

March 2025 ~ January 2026

#### 1st Sundays

Mass at 8 a.m.

#### 2nd & 4th Saturdays

Mass at 10 a.m.

#### 3rd Sundays

Holy Hour & Vespers at 4 p.m.

Mass for Hope at 5 p.m.

Open for prayer: 10 a.m. ~ 1 p.m.

Docents will be available  
to answer questions

Note: Chapel will be closed March 22, April 12 and April 20

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# Ask?

## Mr. Ed

Straight From The Horse's Mouth



## From Pirate Ship and Swing Set to a Chicken Coop: A Lifetime in the Backyard



My oldest son is 22 now. But when he was two, I built him a swing set in our backyard. Not one of those pre-cut, color-coded kits—but a real one, built from scratch with guard towers, a rope ladder, two swings, a big slide and a little slide. It stood tall and proud like a monument to new fatherhood and backyard dreams.

By the time he was five and Charlie was turning two, Ed Beck asked if I could build him a “Death Star”—that ship from Star Wars. Well, I’m handy, but that was out of my league, so his second choice was a pirate ship. A big one. Twenty feet long, twelve feet tall, with lookout posts, a gangplank, and a second story that came a couple years

later when he was seven. We even had a bouncy chain bridge that connected the swing set to the ship. It bounced when kids ran across it. For them, it was magic. For me, it was joy. The two of them played on it constantly!

Over the years, that backyard turned into the heart of our home. We threw party after party—at least 20 of



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them. Birthday parties, end-of-school celebrations, graduations. Sometimes, more than 100 people would show up. Sixty, seventy, eighty kids would be racing across the bridge, climbing, swinging, sliding, and making memories that still live in the bones of that yard. My wife joked that we might want to have parents sign a waiver in case they got hurt.

That swing set and pirate ship held not just kids—they held time. They held joy. They held everything that made our house feel alive.

Now, two decades later, the kids are grown. The pirate ship no longer sails, and the swings no longer sway. But I

couldn't just let it all go. I couldn't haul those memories to the dump.

And then something unexpected happened—our younger son, Charlie, bought chickens for my wife as a birthday present. Just like that, a new chapter began.

So I took that old wood—the boards that bore the weight of childhood—and I built something new: a chicken coop. It's a simple structure, really. But it means the world to me. Because it's made from love, imagination, history—and the remains of something we built together. It's the next chapter.

That, to me, is what homeownership is all about. It's not just about square

footage or countertops. It's about watching life unfold in your backyard. About building things with your hands and your heart. About holding on to the past just enough to let it shape the future.

Our house has grown with us. And now, where kids once ran wild on pirate decks, chickens scratch beneath repurposed lumber. The laughter echoes in different ways, but it's still here. Because a home isn't just where you live. It's part of your soul, where your story is built—one swing, one party, one coop at a time.



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# Sandfly's Southern Soul

## A Q&A With Wayne Noha

What inspired you to open Sandfly's Southern Soul?

*I've always wanted to open a restaurant for as long as I can remember. I've been told by many don't do it. You'll work so hard for so little. But that didn't stop me. I know this sounds ignorant, but I wasn't doing it just for the money.*

What's the story behind the name?

*I've always loved Sandfly and the memories from being a child and going to Newton's Corner to buy groceries at the "Pig" (Piggly Wiggly). I can still visualize the layout of the store. Some of my first and largest real estate investments were in the Sandfly community. I always felt welcomed and enjoyed the rich, cultural history of the area.*

*The name really originated from the two people that I tried to emulate in our cooking style and quality. First, my mother Christine, who served some of the best southern food I've eaten. She was the cook and in charge of the kitchen at Ferguson Avenue Baptist Church for almost 40 years. I was alongside her for her last 10 years serving up to 160 to 200 people every Wednesday night with a full course meal at an incredibly inexpensive cost.*

*The soul side comes from a very dear friend, Miss Sula Bowens, who I wish I had watched and listened to more carefully. She would serve the best soul food out of her kitchen every Sunday in the Montgomery community. I couldn't wait to get out of church to go and get some of the best turkey wing, crab rice, potato salad and collards I've ever eaten. God rest their souls and may they continue to live on in me as I carry*

*on their memory.*

What's on the menu?

*Currently, we are open Monday through Friday from 11 AM to 3 PM for lunch. We're known for our amazingly crispy but juicy fried chicken, as well as our newest meat item, smoked chicken. We have chicken on the menu every day with Southern style mac & cheese, soulful collard greens, green beans, baby lima beans and white rice and gravy.*

*Meatloaf Monday is followed by Salisbury steak and spaghetti on Tuesday. Wednesday we serve our popular fried and smothered pork chop. We close out the week with beef pot roast, potatoes and carrots on Thursday and fried fish on Friday.*

Who else helped you to start this restaurant?

*I bounced the idea off of Robyn and Michelle Quattlebaum at Driftway Cafe for several years before taking the plunge. I think it was my exit from the fire service after 39 years of service that gave me the freedom to finally dive in. I would be remiss if I did not say that Charlie Lair's friendship and offer of a space didn't seal the deal. I've never met a landlord or a friend that is more giving than he and his family.*

What are some of your favorite dishes that you serve?

*If I had to pick one dish, it has to be the fried chicken. Richie Mills, a product of the Isle Of Hope community, has been on board since before we opened. His secret recipe for fried chicken has many people in the community saying it's the best fried chicken they've ever tasted and*



Feel Good Food

For more information:

8511 Ferguson Ave., Suite B  
Savannah, GA 31406  
sandflyssouthern@soul@gmail.com  
On Facebook: Sandfly's Southern Soul

For Daily Menu:



*definitely The best anywhere around Savannah. Many of the recipes are those of my mother; especially her Famous banana pudding. No matter the event, I always had to bring a large container of her banana pudding to fire department functions for as long as I can remember.*

Any advice from a family member that guided you on this journey?

*My mom and dad always encouraged me to step out and take chances whether it be with real estate or an occupation or venture like this. I know they are looking down saying I knew he could do it.*

What memories stand out to you about your first few months in business?

*The community support over the last five months has been amazingly overwhelming and encouraging, especially on those slow days. We continue to grow in sales and meals served every day month over month. We are extremely thankful and privileged to be another landmark*  
**(continued on page 12)**





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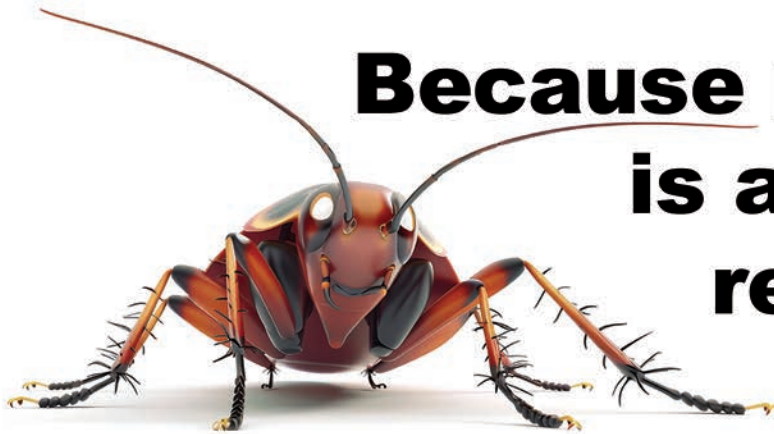
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## Volunteers from The Market at 3 West Ridge present checks for \$35,500 each to Horizons Savannah and Ferst Readers

St Peter's Episcopal Church is thrilled to announce a record-breaking year at The Market. Thanks to community partners like *Isle of Hope News*, our other sponsors, donors, hard-working vendors, and dedicated shoppers, the Market raised \$71,000 for children in the Coastal Empire. Horizons Savannah and Ferst Readers will put your contributions to good use, enhancing academic performance for our children, and opening their gateway to a more successful life.

## Sandfly's Southern Soul



Richie Mills Fried Chicken Noha's Mom's Famous  
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According to Noha.

*restaurant in historical Sandfly. Before we opened the very first day, with a crowd waiting to come in and enjoy, I said a prayer over the restaurant and for those that are part of our team and the community. My prayer was that people would come and enjoy a meal sitting across from their neighbors or friends at an economical price and that they would leave full and happy. That's why our slogan is FEEL GOOD FOOD.*



Feel Good Food

For Daily Menu:

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## Front Porch

What's next? Who knows? Many of you graduates may feel the same way.

Maybe these words from writer Ray Bradbury will help you as you take this next step:

"This is the kind of life I've had. Drunk, and in charge of a bicycle, as an Irish police report once put it. Drunk with life, that is, and not knowing where off to next. But you're on your way before dawn. And the trip? Exactly one half terror, exactly one half exhilaration."

Now, I'm not advocating drinking and biking, but I am championing being drunk with life. Doing something new can feel like one half terror and one half exhilaration. Or in other words, it feels like being alive.

If you need some inspiration on your journey read Stephanie Muelhers story about not accepting cancer as a death sentence or about Wayne Noha pursuing his lifelong dream of starting a restaurant.

I am sure they agree that living the life you want, facing challenges, and hurling yourself into the unknown is part terror and part exhilaration.

So as we all graduate to the next stage of our life, let us remember these words penned by the poet Rilke:

"Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final."

As you move forward, you'll have good days and bad days. That's just the way life works. So relish the good ones and know the bad ones won't last forever. Just keep on keeping on until you get where you want to go – and if you fall short follow Dorothy Field's advice from a 1936 song: "pick yourself up, dust yourself off and start all over again."

Congratulations and Happy Trails!





## You can always spot the student who spent their summer with Mathnasium.

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