


COBB in focus[®]

JULY/AUGUST 2024

A photograph of two men in suits standing in a living room. The man on the left is older with a white beard and is wearing a dark blue suit and brown shoes. The man on the right is younger with a dark beard and is wearing a dark grey suit and black shoes. They are both smiling. The background shows a bookshelf, a framed picture on the wall, and a lamp.

Yeomans Consulting Group

Enriching the lives of Cobb families

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Membership eligibility and \$5 minimum balance in Base Savings required. Federally insured by NCUA.





We are a well-rounded community alive with community spirit, a touch of urban chic and plenty of down-home natural charm.

Nestled among lush trees, you'll feel at home in our diverse neighborhoods. Residents and visitors enjoy access to indoor and outdoor amenities, from boating on the Chattahoochee, to biking, walking, or running along our trails, watching baseball at the Battery, or catching good vibes in our downtown.

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On the cover: Yeomans Consulting Group CEO, Randy Yeomans, (left) and President Nic Yeomans.
Photo: LaRuche Photo



From the very beginning of my career, I've been planning for retirement. I knew that few career paths provided pensions, and even 401(k) plans typically don't deliver enough savings and investment returns for your average person's retirement years. Plus, Social Security benefits certainly are not the safety net they once were. So, my wife and I have been working with professional financial advisors for our entire adult working lives. Retirement planning is crucial for everyone with even slightest means to save. As such, I am thrilled to present this issue's cover feature on Yeomans Consulting Group, because they (and other professionals like them) offer a valuable service. We all deserve a comfortable retirement!

As stated in our article, Yeomans has enriched the lives and futures of Cobb families for 40 years now. This family business not only knows their industry, but they also take great care of their clients and they extend their service-focused approach toward community outreach. Read about their mission beginning on page 20.

Speaking of serving the community, this issue also includes articles on two local organizations dedicated to bettering the lives of others. First, we profile LiveSafe Resources (pg. 16) about their mission to help the victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Then, we feature the Cobb County Safety Village (pg. 30), which was created with the specific intent of educating youth about important safety issues.

Additionally, we peek inside the newly formed government for the City of Mableton (pg. 26) with Mayor Michael Owens, and we profile local marketing agency, Play (and its founder, Brett Player), that has a lot of fun doing serious work (pg. 6). Finally, we turn our focus to Life University which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Join in that celebration beginning on page 10.

Contact Cobb in Focus

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Here's a snapshot of what's going on in your community.

Town Center CID Welcomes New Members and Officers

Town Center CID Board of Directors has appointed two new board members and elected four officers. Jo Ann Chitty was elected chair; Britt Fleck, vice-chair; Darin Mitchell, treasurer; and Tracy Styf, secretary (ex-officio). Chitty, chief operating officer at Selig Enterprises, has more than 35 years of experience in commercial real estate. She joined the Town Center board in 2016. Fleck has served on the Town Center CID board since 2018. She is the regional director of the metro west region of Georgia Power. The two new appointees to the board are Michael Davis, Post 4, and Nick Porter, Post 2. Both will serve three-year terms.



Cobb Family Advocacy Center Expands Staff

Cobb Family Advocacy Center has added a new executive director and a clinician. Executive Director Kimberly McCoy has been the director of the Victim Witness Unit for the District Attorney's Office in Cobb County since April 1999 and was the domestic violence training coordinator in that office from 1997-1999. Prior to that, she was the director of the VW Unit in the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit for five years. Clinician Melissa Cervantes-Oporta is a licensed professional counselor with a wealth of experience working with vulnerable populations. She has a robust background as a clinical director in a substance abuse facility.

Cumberland CID Wins National Award

The Cumberland Community Improvement District and its partner, Jacobs, won a National Recognition Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies for the Cumberland CID Autonomous Vehicle Study. The study led to the deployment of the Cumberland Hopper and will provide a blueprint for the operation of an AV shuttle network for the Cumberland Sweep in the future. Learn more at cumberlandsweep.org.

Coalition of Faith Organizations Hammer First Nails on 24th Build

This past June, the Cobb Interfaith Habitat Coalition (CIHC) and future homeowner Sandra hammered the first nails and raised the walls on the Coalition's 24th house located in the City of Marietta. Sandra will now benefit from affordable monthly mortgage payments that are not subject to major increases. This year's faith groups include 15 religious organizations and eight corporate partners. Learn more at habitatnwma.org.

Home Depot Foundation Awards \$235,000 to Habitat of NW Metro Atlanta

The Home Depot Foundation has awarded Habitat of NW Metro Atlanta a \$235,000 grant to provide 11 critical home repairs for veterans in Cobb, Douglas, and Paulding counties. "The Home Depot Foundation's commitment to honor veterans allows them to have better health and safety outcomes, and to live safely and age in place with dignity in the homes they know and love," says Jessica Gill, CEO, Habitat for Humanity of NW Metro Atlanta. "With their past grants, Habitat has been able to significantly improve the quality of many lives in our community."

ArtsBridge Foundation Students Participate in the Jimmy Awards

Two student artists from the ArtsBridge Foundation participated in this year's National High School Musical Theatre Awards (the Jimmy Awards). Hayden Poe is a junior at Dalton High School and a two-time Georgia High School Musical Theatre Awards (GHSMTA) nominee. He clinched the male lead category with his portrayal of Tevye in Dalton's production of "Fiddler on the Roof." Ivy O'Neal is a junior at Ringgold High School. She triumphed in the female lead category for her performance as "Peter Pan" in Ringgold's production of the timeless classic.



Hayden Poe



Ivy O'Neal

Join Chattahoochee Tech's Leadership Academy

Chattahoochee Tech is offering a Leadership Academy this summer that consists of four, 1-day sessions starting Friday, July 12 and running each Friday through August 2.

Each session is designed with relevant, interactive

training and a company project to take your skills to the next level, to improve the working parts of your organization, and to meet the challenges of today's business environment. Topics include communication skills, motivation and coaching, delegation, teamwork, performance management, management styles, goal setting, time management, problem solving, and more.

The Leadership Academy has four training sessions:

- Emerging into Leadership with Effective Communication and a Servant Attitude.
- Developing and Coaching a Winning Team While Leading by Example
- Encouraging and Developing Employees to be Successful
- A Strong Leader Manages Chaos and Creates Solutions

For more information, pricing, and registration scan the QR code or visit this link www2.registerblast.com/ctcedt/Event/EventDetailStep/500.



Cobb-Marietta Coliseum & Exhibit Hall Authority Announces Promotion and New Hire

The Cobb-Marietta Coliseum & Exhibit Hall Authority has promoted Artimesa Evans to the position of Director of Safety & Security. They also hired Dale Gustafson as the Director of Sales & Marketing for the Cobb Galleria Centre, Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, and Galleria Specialty Shops. In her new role, Evans will be responsible for overseeing public safety and security throughout the Authority campus. Gustafson will provide strategic leadership and execution of the company's sales and marketing efforts.

Artimesa Evans



Artimesa Evans

Dale Gustafson



Dale Gustafson

JULY

Editor's note: Due to evolving community needs, these events are subject to change or cancellation.

7/9 – 9/24 Food Truck Tuesdays



Join your fellow foodies at Taylor-Brawner Park in Smyrna from 5-9 p.m. for the best Food Truck event series around! More info: smyrnaga.gov

7/13 July Concert



Head to downtown Smyrna for a great night of dance music featuring All the Locals and Uptown Funk from 7-10 p.m. Admission is free. More info: smyrnaga.gov

7/20-8/17 M2R Fence Gallery



This curated traveling art installation will be on display throughout the Historic Downtown and Parkside Districts in Acworth. It is a partnership between Visit Acworth and the Marietta Arts Council. More info: Acworth.org

7/27 Bluegrass Concert

Acworth Cultural Arts presents a Bluegrass Concert on July 27 from 5-9 p.m. at Tanyard Creek Overlook. More info: acworthculturalarts.org



7/12-8/2 Leadership Academy



Chattahoochee Tech is offering a Leadership Academy consisting of four, 1-day sessions. Each session is designed with relevant Interactive training and a company project to take your skills to the next level. More info: bit.ly/4bjXgVT

7/13 Hydration Pop-up



The Hydration Pop-up at Bells Ferry Trailhead is presented by Town Center CID. More info: towncentercid.com

7/20, 8/17 Pop-In at the Marietta History Center



Pop-In's provide children and their families the opportunity to interact with the museum through themed activities and crafts. More info: mariettahistory.org

7/13-8/4 Art at the Avenue



The South Cobb Arts Alliance's national juried exhibit featuring all types of genre, medium, style, and technique in arts will be held at The Avenue West Cobb. More info: southcobbarts.org

7/15 Family Fun Safety Day



Cobb County Safety Village hosts Family Fun Safety Day on July 15 with exciting and educational activities from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. More info: cobbcounty.org/safety-village

7/26 Glover Park Concert Series



The Marietta community will be "dancing in the street" during the Glover Park Concert Series. The series features local and national acts on the last Friday night of every month through September. More info: marietta.gov

AUGUST

8/3 King Of Pops Giveaway



The King Of Pops Giveaway at Aviation Park is presented by Town Center CID. More info: towncentercid.com

8/17 First Responder 5K



This family-friendly event will include first responder vehicles and displays, field games with Atlanta Braves Blooper, and a performance from the Braves Heavy Hitters! More info: bit.ly/4caQOSg

8/22 Upbeat 2024



The Northeast Cobb Business Association's Upbeat 2024 takes place at Piedmont Church from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. More info: northeastcobbba.com

8/28 Golf Fore Heroes



Have a fun day on the greens at Creekside Golf Club to benefit Cobb, Austell, Powder Springs, Paulding, Haralson, and Polk first responders. More info: honoring-heroes.org/golfforeheroes

8/10 Hearing Children's Voices



SafePath's 21st annual Hearing Children's Voices event will be held at Truist Park from 6-10 p.m. This year's theme is "Champions for Children." More info: safepath.org

8/21 Stitch Above The Rest

Stitch Above The Rest welcomes design podcast host LuAnn Nigara to their showroom on August 21. More info: stitchabovetherest.com



8/24 2024 International Festival



The Cobb County International Festival is a celebration of our community's best traditional food, music, and art from around the world. More info: cobbcounty.org

8/24 Rescuing Hope, Inc. 7th Annual Gala



This year's gala will be held at the Cobb Galleria Centre beginning at 6 p.m. More info: rescuingshope.com

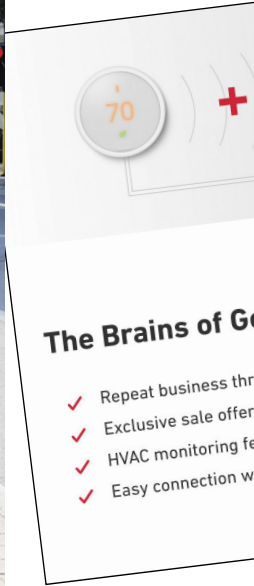
8/31 Fall Classic Car Cruise

The free event will be held from 3-7 p.m. at Logan Farm Park. A \$5 entry fee is requested for all vehicles in the cruise. More info: acworth-ga.gov

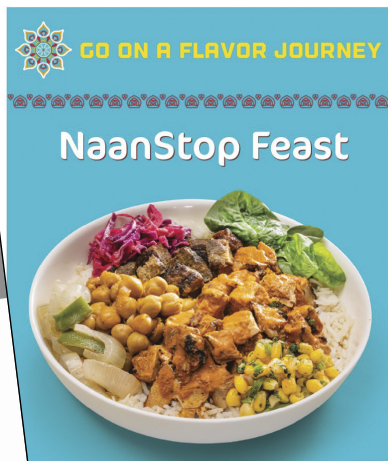


In Play

How Brett Player and his team are helping redefine today's ever-changing marketing landscape.



Examples of brand marketing created by Play.



By Michael J. Pallerino

When people hear the name “Play” for a company, they might not know what that company does. Do they produce games, toys, or playgrounds? But as their clients soon learn, they do something more fun than any of those. Play produces great ideas.

For instance, when Play was hired to update Zoo Atlanta’s brand and rework their website, they didn’t just think inside the box or inside the computer screen. “I was concentrating on Zoo Atlanta daily at that time,” says Play’s founder, Brett Player. “The Zoo had hired us only for our design work, but when my wife told me about another Zoo’s event, I couldn’t stop tossing it around in my head. So, I brought the idea of having a “Brew at the Zoo” event to the marketing team and they loved it. I mean, it is a great name, right?!” With wind in his sails, he then called a friend over at SweetWater Brewing and asked if they’d be interested in sponsoring the inaugural event and got an enthusiastic “Yes!” Play worked with the Zoo to brand and market the event.

What started as just a side thought today brings thousands of new visitors to the Zoo. “Brew at the Zoo” sells out often and features over 30 breweries, live music, and much more. It’s an Atlanta favorite and a huge success. In fact, Play, which was recently named a 2024 Cobb Top 25 Small Business of the Year by the Cobb Chamber, was excited once again to work with the Zoo to advertise the 10-year anniversary event just a couple of

years ago. “It doesn’t matter if we’re hired for only one project or a full marketing plan,” continues Brett. “We’re always looking for ways to better serve the client and brand.”

Serious Play

“We all approach life by listening to our head and our heart, and seeing where that takes us,” says Brett. Founded in 2003, Play serves both local and national clients. The award-winning firm, which handles advertising, brand development, consumer research, digital, marketing, media buying, PR and social, was created in the image of its founder’s forever-creative mind. As Brett puts it, “We take outcomes seriously, but not ourselves. We have fun doing what we do best, creating inviting and engaging marketing messaging.” At Play, each team member has over a decade of experience in their craft. “Whether it’s our print production manager or our UX designer, it’s fun working with smart people and playing off their ideas — pun intended.” says Brett. “This leads to well-thought-out marketing and branding for our clients.”

If you are looking to find the center of Play’s universe, it can be found in the four principles upon which it was founded:

1. If you get to know the people around you then everyone will play better together.
2. The more creative and diverse those people, the more interesting the end results.
3. In order to win, you need a good team.
4. And don’t forget to have fun.



“Whether working with an upstart or a brand with longevity, Play can partner to make each situation successful. That’s our secret sauce.”

—Brett Player



Play at Haigwood Studio

“By having a group of the right ‘players,’ you can customize your agency to each of your client’s needs,” Brett says. “It eliminates overhead and excessive man-hours, lowers costs, and provides excellent customer care.

The core of Play is their creative mindset. With all of them having worked at larger agencies and for large and small clients, they have formed a space where they could have an informal ‘think tank’ based on creative ideas and executions. “We feel that at other agencies, the end product is often wrapped up in undue layers of account management and overhead. This leads to a gap in the marketers and those actually creating the marketing. It’s this close collaboration and streamlined unity that leads to our success,” says Brett.

It’s that thought that has led to a diverse client base, as Play has worked with the likes of BMG Music, Cartoon Network, Clemson

University, Coca-Cola, Google Nest Pro, Kilpatrick Townsend, Phoenix Air, SW&A, Spanx, TBS and TNT, The Home Depot, and the list goes on.

“We don’t have a Rolodex of clients,” Brett says with a grin. “We choose to work with people and products we truly believe in. That’s why our clients trust us, and we trust them, year over year. Like Home Depot used to say, ‘We’re doers.’ We like to understand the problem, roll our sleeves up, put together a plan and ‘get ‘er done.’” Whether working with an upstart or a brand with longevity, Play can partner to make each situation successful. “That’s our secret sauce. We don’t bog ourselves down in months of research, layers of management, and meetings. We instead shorten that phase, take the necessary strategy and produce breakthrough creative that works. We measure and adjust as needed, constantly honing in on getting better and better.”

The measure of success

Over the years, Play has worked on many high-profile projects. Play has designed 50-plus packages and brands for Spanx, filmed basketball icon LeBron James for Coca-Cola, created successful websites for Atlanta tech entrepreneur John P. Imlay, and a full marketing program for Google.

Today, the Play team has been intentionally quiet about working with small-, mid-, and large-sized brands that lean on it for their success. “Qualifying success comes with understanding our clients’ goals,” Brett said. “With one client we need to see continued year -over



Play being honored as “2024 Top 25 Small Business of the Year” Cobb Chamber



Sara Blakely and Brett Player celebrating another brand milestone.



Where you can go to Play

Visit GoPlayDesign.com or
email Brett@goplaydesigns.com

of his team teach at the different marketing schools in Atlanta, which enables them to maintain a foundation of new knowledge for their clients and students.

In the end though, it's about a connection and not a trend. "We have grown steadily by adding one or two clients every year," Brett

says. "We look for great brands, marketing directors, and owners so we can establish a strong partnership. We want to make sure we stay true to who we are and have fun doing what we love to do. So, we'll take our time and grow organically with cool people and great relationships." ■

-year sales growth, which we measure ongoing. Another client may need a best-in-class website and marketing collateral to support their in-person events."

In a marketing landscape that continues to evolve — think artificial intelligence (AI) — finding a partner committed to innovative and fun ways to communicate is critical. This is where Play continues to make its mark. "Our industry is always evolving, which can lead to some really interesting ways to communicate. We've come up with unique websites, geo-targeted solutions, AI initiated solutions, and designed mobile recruiting events. What's important is that the strategy and message is natural for the customer, the brand, and the execution."

As Brett explains to all his new clients, "too many brands today rush to use a new technology or media just because it is trendy, but they forget about the human side of communication. All the new tools, apps, widgets, and open-source AI still have the same purpose of the Gutenberg printing press, which is to bring us together. Technology should always support that human experience. The goal of marketing has always been to build and strengthen the relationship with a customer or audience. As fast as the world of communications is evolving, we never forget that every project is still very personal for the individual we're trying to reach."

Forging ahead, Brett and his team plan to stay on the road that has led them here. That means continuing to educate themselves on an industry that can change on a dime. Many



Nikita Narvab
Client Experience Manager



**The best kind of
facial recognition
is face-to-face.**

A smiling face helps open your phone and, at Capital City Bank, it helps open lasting relationships. We're proud of our online banking and app, yet face-to-face is how we get to know you personally and match your financial needs with the best banking solutions. ccb.com.



More than your bank. Your banker.



Life University: A Beacon of Education, Compassion and Community Engagement in Cobb County

Celebrating 50 Years of Excellence

As Life University (Life U) celebrates its 50th anniversary, it stands as a testament to the vision and dedication of its founder, Dr. Sid E. Williams. Since its establishment in 1974, Life U has evolved from a small chiropractic college into a comprehensive institution offering a diverse range of academic programs and making significant contributions locally, nationally, and globally. This milestone anniversary is not just a time for reflection but also an opportunity to look forward to the university's promising future.

Economic Impact on Cobb County

Life U's economic impact on Cobb County is profound. According to a study conducted by a third-party contractor, Dr. Govind Hariharan, Life U contributes approximately \$230 million annually to the local economy. This substantial injection comes from various sources, including direct employment, student and visitor spending, and university-related expenditures on goods and services.

With over 600 faculty and staff, Life U is a major employer in the region. Additionally, the influx of students from across the country and the world supports local businesses, ranging from housing and dining to retail and entertainment. This economic activity creates a ripple effect that benefits the entire community, demonstrating Life U's pivotal role in driving economic growth and stability in Cobb County.

National and Global Impact

While Life U's economic contributions to Cobb County are significant, its impact

extends far beyond local boundaries. The university's alumni network of chiropractors and healthcare practitioners spans the globe, enhancing healthcare systems and communities worldwide. Life U graduates are known for their commitment to vitalistic healthcare, which is their recognition that the Universe is a dynamic system wherein living organisms are self-developing, self-maintaining, and self-healing. The concept of Vitalism is foundational to the entire concepts of health and wellness in humans. Our bodies work hard to express health, to maintain health, and to recover from illnesses or other conditions that threaten our health. This approach from Life U's graduates not only addresses immediate health issues but also promotes long-term wellness and preventive care.

The university's influence is further amplified through its innovative programs, such as the Chillon Project. This initiative, part of the Center for Compassion, Integrity and Secular Ethics (CCISE), provides incarcerated individuals in Georgia the opportunity to earn an accredited degree. By transforming the lives of participants and reducing recidivism, the Chillon Project has garnered national attention and serves as a model for prison education programs across the country.

Academic Excellence and Innovative Programs

Life U's academic offerings are diverse and comprehensive, catering to a wide range of interests and career aspirations. The university provides 12 undergraduate degrees, two





graduate degrees, and its flagship Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.) professional degree program. This variety ensures that students can pursue disciplines that align with their passions and professional goals.

Undergraduate Programs

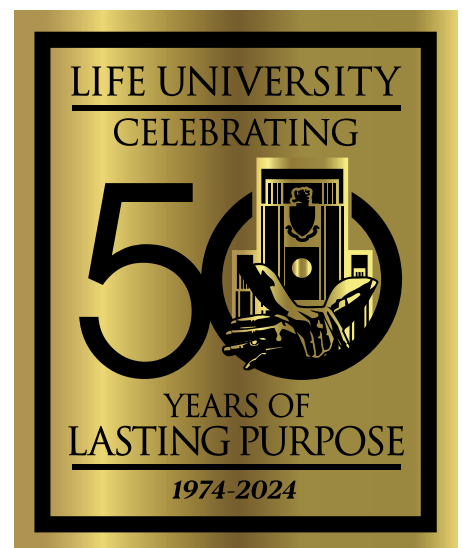
The undergraduate programs at Life U cover fields such as biology, business administration, nutrition, psychology, and exercise science, just to name a few. These programs are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in their chosen careers. The curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application, preparing graduates to make meaningful contributions in their fields.

Graduate Programs

Life U's graduate programs focus on advanced study in the areas of positive psychology and sport health science. These programs are tailored for individuals seeking to deepen their expertise and enhance their career prospects. The Master of Science in Positive Psychology, for example, trains students to apply principles of positive psychology in various professional settings, promoting mental health and well-being.

Doctor of Chiropractic Program

The Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.) program is the cornerstone of Life U's academic offerings. As the largest single-campus chiropractic college globally, the program is renowned for its rigorous curriculum and emphasis on



hands-on experience. Students are trained in the principles and practices of chiropractic care, preparing them to become skilled practitioners who can address a wide range of health issues. Graduates of the D.C. program are in high demand, known for their holistic approach to health and their commitment to patient-centered care.

Community Engagement and Annual Events

Life U's influence extends deeply into the community through various events and programs that foster local engagement and enrichment. One of the most anticipated annual events is the Lights of Life holiday light display that runs from Thanksgiving evening to New Year's Eve. This festive attraction draws thousands of visitors each year, transforming the campus into a winter wonderland adorned with millions of lights. The event not only spreads holiday cheer but also supports local charities, reinforcing the university's role in community philanthropy.

Also, in conjunction with Lights of Life is the university's annual Run the Lights of Life held in early December where participants complete a 5K or 1K fun run and then enjoy the Lights of Life right after where they can enjoy not only the lights, but a petting zoo, train ride or cup of hot cocoa in a winter wonderland.

Similarly, the Marietta Community Egg Hunt, hosted by Life U, is a beloved tradition that brings families together for a day of fun and festivity. This event underscores the university's commitment to creating inclusive and enjoyable experiences for residents of all ages.



Life Center for Seniors

In addition to events, Life U offers ongoing support to the local senior community through the Life Center for Seniors. This initiative provides seniors with access to the university's fitness facilities and self-improvement opportunities. By promoting physical activity and lifelong learning, the Life Center for Seniors enhances the well-being and quality of life for older adults in the region. The program embodies the university's holistic approach to health, emphasizing the importance of wellness at every stage of life.

Leadership Under Dr. Rob Scott

Since taking the helm as President in 2017, Dr. Rob Scott has led Life U with a vision of innovation, inclusivity, and excellence. Dr. Scott's leadership has been instrumental in guiding the university through a period of

significant growth and transformation. His commitment to upholding the university's core values while expanding its reach and impact has been pivotal.

In reflecting on his tenure, Dr. Scott stated, "Life University is not just an institution of higher learning; it is a community dedicated to the betterment of society. Our goal is to equip our students with the knowledge, skills, and compassion needed to make a positive impact in the world."

Under Dr. Scott's leadership, Life U has strengthened its academic programs, expanded its community outreach, and enhanced its global presence. His forward-thinking approach has ensured that the university remains at the forefront of chiropractic education and vitalistic health.

Foundational Value of Lasting Purpose

A cornerstone of Life U's philosophy is their foundational value of Lasting Purpose. This guiding value emphasizes living an inner-directed life and the importance of giving, doing, loving, and serving out of one's abundance. Life U believes that a willingness and desire to serve the community and fellow human beings are just as crucial as academic pursuits. This attitude stems from the recognition that everyone has unique gifts and, as a citizen of the world community, it is one's duty to share those gifts generously.

Dr. Scott often highlights this value in his communications with students and faculty, saying, "Our mission at Life University is not only to educate but also to inspire. We aim to cultivate a spirit of service in our students,

"Life University is not just an institution of higher learning; it is a community dedicated to the betterment of society."

— Dr. Rob Scott,
Life University President



encouraging them to use their talents and knowledge to make a difference in the world. This is what Lasting Purpose is all about.”

This philosophy permeates all aspects of university life, from curriculum design to community engagement initiatives. Students are encouraged to participate in service projects, volunteer opportunities, and programs that emphasize social responsibility. This holistic approach ensures that graduates leave Life U not only as skilled professionals, but also as compassionate, ethical leaders committed to making a positive impact in their communities.

Looking Ahead: A Vision for the Future

As Life U celebrates its 50th anniversary, it remains committed to its core values of Vitalism, Lasting Purpose, and Integrity. The university continues to expand its academic offerings, enhance its community programs, and explore new ways to positively impact its local community and beyond.

In the coming years, Life U aims to:

- **Expand Academic Programs:** The university plans to introduce new

undergraduate and graduate programs that align with emerging fields and industry demands. These programs will provide students with cutting-edge knowledge and skills, preparing them for the future job market.

- **Enhance Research Initiatives:** Life U is committed to advancing research in areas such as chiropractic care, positive psychology, and nutrition. By fostering a culture of innovation and inquiry, the university aims to contribute to scientific knowledge and improve health outcomes.

- **Strengthen Community Partnerships:** Life U will continue to build and strengthen partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies. These collaborations will enhance the university’s community engagement efforts and drive economic and social development in the region.

Dr. Scott articulates this vision succinctly: “Our future is bright as we continue to innovate and expand our reach. We are committed to creating a global community of learners and practitioners who are dedicated to making a difference in the world.”

Conclusion

Life University is a dynamic and integral part of Cobb County, offering unparalleled educational opportunities, fostering community spirit, and driving economic growth. Its unique blend of academic excellence, innovative programs, and community engagement makes it a beacon of hope and progress in the region. As the university looks to the future, it will undoubtedly continue to inspire and transform lives, both within its campus and in the broader community.

Celebrating 50 years of excellence, Life U stands as a testament to the vision of Dr. Sid E. Williams and the collective efforts of its faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The university’s commitment to excellence in the education of their students ensures that it will remain a leader in higher education and a force for positive change for many years to come.

In the words of Dr. Scott, “As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we honor our past and look forward to a future filled with promise and possibility. Life University is dedicated to making a lasting impact on our students, community, and the world.” ■

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2024 SPARK Workforce Awards Honor Chattahoochee Tech Top Alumni, Industry Partner, and Benefactor

This past May, the Chattahoochee Tech Foundation honored the college's top alumni, industry partner, and benefactor with the 2024 SPARK Workforce awards in a ceremony held at the Marietta Campus.

The Chattahoochee Tech Foundation initiated the SPARK Workforce Awards in 2019 to honor those who have supported Chattahoochee Tech students and college programs through significant and meaningful contributions that change lives and support workforce development. The SPARK Workforce awards also honor the significant impact that Chattahoochee Tech graduates have in serving local workforce development needs. This year's SPARK Workforce Awards event was sponsored by Atlanta Gas Light.

The 2024 SPARK Workforce Alumni of the Year award was presented to Paul Hardie, who serves as the water reclamation supervisor for the Noonday Water Reclamation Facility in Cobb County. Hardie was one of the first graduates of the college's Environmental Technology program in 2016. As a county water reclamation supervisor, he is now responsible for the purification of wastewater being returned to the water cycle.

Yancey Brothers, which is based in Cobb County, was recognized as the SPARK Workforce Industry Partner of the year. Since 2014, Yancey Brothers has contributed to the college's Diesel Equipment Technology

program, and in 2018 began sponsoring annual scholarships.

Dr. Anil Yadav of Prestige Medical Group received the SPARK Workforce Benefactor of the Year award. Dr. Yadav opened the first office of Prestige Medical Group in 2004 near the college's Appalachian Campus in Jasper, and just opened the fourth medical office in Roswell. For well over a decade, Dr. Yadav has provided the financial support needed by Chattahoochee Tech students in obtaining a workforce education.



Yancey Brothers, 2024 SPARK Workforce Industry Partner of the Year. Shown here (L-R), are Dr. Ron Newcomb, Jennifer Kozel, Jim Larson (Yancey Brothers), and Board of Trustees Chair Rick Kollhoff.



Paul Hardie (center) shown here with the finalists (L-R), Dan'elle Buchmueller, Marriah Harris, and Johnathan Tucker, along Board of Trustees Chair Rick Kollhoff, and Chattahoochee Tech President Dr. Ron Newcomb.

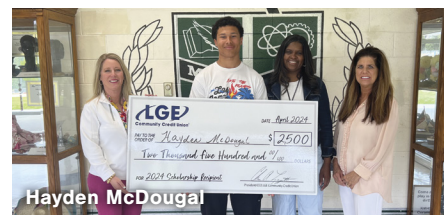


L-R: Chattahoochee Tech President Dr. Ron Newcomb, Dr. Anil Yadav, Dr. Monika Yadav, and Board of Trustees Chair Rick Kollhoff.

LGE Awards \$2,500 scholarships to Two Cobb County High School Seniors

LGE Community Credit Union recently announced that Hayden McDougal of Kennesaw Mountain High School and Sabrina Xing of Wheeler High School are each winners of a \$2,500 scholarship through LGE's 2024 Scholarship Program. These awards are designed to support educational opportunities for exceptional high school seniors from Bartow, Cherokee, Cobb, Douglas, Floyd, Fulton, Gordon, and Paulding counties.

"The LGE Scholarship Program reflects our commitment to supporting the education and development of the next generation," said Chris Leggett, president and CEO of LGE Community Credit Union. "We are proud to invest in the futures of these students as they pursue their academic and professional goals."



Cobb Chamber Names Small Businesses Of The Year

The Cobb Chamber recently named Yalo as the 2024 Small Business Of The Year. Yalo has been a 100-percent, minority-owned creative agency, delivering branding, digital ecosystems, and omni-channel advertising for its roster of clients. Last year, Yalo was named to the prestigious Inc. 5000 list for its 151-percent revenue growth over a three-year period.

Additionally, the Chamber celebrated the achievements of multiple local businesses, including the Top 25 Small Businesses Of The Year, Business To Watch Award, Minority-Owned Business Of The Year, Community Service Award, and Woman-Owned Business Of The Year.

Business To Watch Award

Wasserman Talent Solutions

Minority-Owned Business Of The Year

Perfect Image

Community Service Excellence Award

1885 Grill and The Alley Stage

Woman-Owned Business Of The Year

FruiTea Bubbles Café

Next Level of Excellence Award

AquaGuard

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A Story Of Hope, Community & Resilience





LiveSafe Resources helps and empowers victims of physical and sexual assault.

By Cory Sekine-Pettite

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, on average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. This equates to more than 10 million women and men per year. The organization reports that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner contact sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking with impacts such as injury, fearfulness, post-traumatic stress disorder, use of victim services, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, etc. Moreover, a report from the Council on Criminal Justice shows that domestic violence incidents in this country increased by 8.1 percent following the imposition of lockdown orders during the 2020 pandemic — and they’ve yet to decrease.

This article, however, does not concentrate on the negative. Instead, it shares a story of hope, resiliency, and organizational support for those impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault within our community. This is the story of a non-profit that, for the past 107 years, has served the citizens of Cobb County tirelessly — first as a civic organization providing different educational and social activities (mostly for women and children) during times of war, and then as an emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence in the State of Georgia. Today, this group still provides shelter, but they also offer transitional housing, healthcare, counseling, and more. This is the story of LiveSafe Resources.

Since first receiving its charter in 1917 as the YWCA of Northwest Georgia (YWCA), LiveSafe Resources has built a rich history serving citizens of Cobb, Cherokee and Paulding counties. They opened their first emergency shelter in 1978 — the first such facility in Georgia — and through 2007, the YWCA provided a variety of programs and services, including emergency shelter and

transitional housing options, the county’s first licensed childcare facility for preschoolers of homeless families, the Paulding County Early Learning Center and the onsite public swimming pool. In 2005, the YWCA established the protocol for response to sexual assault in Cobb County in partnership with Wellstar Health System, local law enforcement, and the District Attorney’s office.

Under new leadership in 2007, the board of directors made the decision for the YWCA to focus entirely on its mission to deliver programs and services, increasing awareness and reducing the occurrence of domestic violence and sexual assault. All other programs were relocated to other local organizations. Then, in 2016, the board changed the organization’s name. In January 2017, LiveSafe Resources was established with an updated mission: To provide safety and healing to those impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault by offering services, creating awareness, and fostering support within our community.

“We are looked to as a strong partner with the state and other agencies to provide not just core services, such as housing and stabilization in an emergency, but also programming that helps provide our clients and their families safety planning and next steps in their lives where they can move forward and establish themselves as independent,” said Lisa Mello, Chief Executive Officer for LiveSafe Resources.

Mello, who has spent more than 24 years working in the non-profit sector for organizations including the American Cancer Society and the Wellstar Foundation, said over the past year, LiveSafe Resources has served more than 3,500 individuals, and she expects that number to be larger this year. “This year, so far, from January first through May 31, we’ve served 1,935 individuals with over 13,000 different services,” she said. Those services range from hotel stays to counseling and forensic exams for assault victims.



said. “Annually, 60 to 80 percent of our clients are children. So, we focus on child advocacy, ensuring we have the appropriate child play therapy in place. ...Those services for us, from a health perspective, truly are a core service of LiveSafe Resources. And then on the other side of it, from our sexual assault programming, of course, we employ nurses.”

The organization has two staff nurses and 10 on-call nurses who run the sexual assault program (available to clients 24/7). In the program, advocates will sit with clients going through examinations, and they will work with law enforcement. “Our advocates help patients map out what’s next and what they may need because that need is sometimes safe shelter,” Mello said. “Depending on their circumstances, clients might need additional follow-up care, so we partner with Cobb Douglas Public Health for additional testing and things of that nature that go outside of our walls.”

It should be noted that LiveSafe Resources has additional healthcare partnerships with Wellstar Health System in Cobb and Paulding counties, as well as Northside Hospital System in Cherokee County. “It really does take all of us to be able to provide these services,” Mello said. “We offer them 24/7 for free, so that anyone who is experiencing these emergency situations can come to us, work through our crisis management program, and not receive a bill.”

As an independent 501(c)(3) organization,

LiveSafe Resources’ free counseling services for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and their family members are provided by licensed staff and contract counselors — a program the organization is working to expand with more full-time, onsite professionals; their solution-focused brief counseling approach includes 12 individual counseling sessions, group support and family counseling, and other therapeutic modalities that are tailored to address the client’s needs. Services also are available in Spanish. “We partner with organizations like with Ser Familia to provide culturally appropriate counseling for our Spanish-speaking clients ... about 15 percent of our clients are

Latino or Hispanic,” Mello said. “We want to make sure that we provide appropriate, culturally relevant counseling where clients will feel open to being able to work with the team.”

Mello shared the need for behavioral health and mental health services is on the rise among all age groups. From a domestic violence and sexual assault standpoint, she said specialized services, including suicide prevention, are needed not only for adult victims but for the children that they bring. “When you think about our clients, usually, if they are a single individual, that’s one focus area for our counselors. But on average, our clients bring four children with them,” Mello

“When you think about our clients, usually, if they are a single individual, that’s one focus area for our counselors. But on average, our clients bring four children with them.”

— Lisa Mello, Chief Executive Officer for LiveSafe Resources





LiveSafe Resources

Administrative Offices:

48 Henderson Street
 Marietta, GA 30064
 770.427.2902
livesaferesources.org

Temporary Protective Order Office:

770.528.8024

24-Hour Crisis Line:

770.427.3390

LiveSafe Resources' fundraising and development activities are supported by in-kind resources from corporate sponsors, grantors, and individual donors, as well as special events and fundraising campaigns. The organization is primarily supported by public and private grants, program income, and voluntary contributions. Current corporate partners include S.A. White Oil Company, Genuine Parts Company, Wellstar Foundation, Cobb EMC, Verizon, Atlanta Women's Foundation, and Georgia Power. "We have a lot of great partnerships in our community and beyond that really help support our core services," Mello said.

One of the goals of LiveSafe Resources is to increase awareness of the gravity and impact of domestic violence and sexual assault in Northwest Georgia. Anyone interested in

volunteering with the organization can do so in a multitude of ways, including as administrative or front desk volunteers or working in specific LiveSafe Resources programs such as the children's program, elder abuse visitation, shelter advocate, court advocate, and more. Volunteers go through 40 hours of state-mandated training, and they become so-called mandatory reporters because LiveSafe Resources works with children; the law designed to prevent children from facing further abuse. "Volunteering with us takes a special individual, and we actually are growing in our volunteer program, which is really nice to see," Mello said.

Additionally, donations can be made through the LiveSafe Resources website at livesaferesources.org/donate.

Mello said if there's one thing readers take

away from reading this article, it is that by supporting LiveSafe Resources, you can help to break generational trauma for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. "We help break generational trauma by focusing on these children and providing their parents the ability to stabilize, to seek jobs and schooling. Our partnership with Marietta City Schools allows us to keep those kids in school and provide that stability."

The majority of programs offered by LiveSafe Resources impact the children directly because their parents are working to break cycles and remain focused. "It breaks your heart, but it also gives you hope when you know that the programs that we have really do make an impact," Mello said. And they wouldn't exist without the community that is Cobb County." ■

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Fortified In Financial Security

For 40 years, Yeomans Consulting Group has enriched the lives and futures of Cobb families.

By Jennifer Morrell Todd

In 2024, an average of 11,000 Americans per day will turn 65 years old, according to the non-profit Alliance for Lifetime Income. That means a considerable number of people will need — and likely already need — retirement coaching. Planning for your golden years is not just for the wealthiest among us. In all actuality, financial planning is a service for any family that wants to protect and grow their assets, no matter the size and quantity of those assets.

Randy Yeomans is CEO of Yeomans Consulting Group, Inc., a financial advisory firm, who has just celebrated his 40th year in practice. Yeomans Consulting Group, Inc. will be

celebrating 30 years in 2025 as a small business in Cobb County. The firm's mission is to help investors create sound financial strategies and to achieve desired outcomes under the moniker of YourRetirementCoach™. The term represents the commitment of both Randy and his son and partner, Nicholas (Nic) Yeomans, to guiding clients toward success.

Sure, Yeomans implements personalized strategies to help clients achieve financial security, but the firm has a greater focus: community. Randy's journey toward helping Cobb residents fulfill their lifestyle goals and navigate the complexities of retirement planning came after attending Georgia State



L-R: Jeri Brown, VP of Operations; Jennifer Hart, Client Service Executive; Layla Vanderslice, Client Service Executive; Nicole Eastwood, Director of Marketing; Aaron Calhoun, Financial Planner; Randy Yeomans, CEO; Nic Yeomans, President; Roxanne Dimon, Financial Planner; John Richter, Jr., Financial Planner; Bryce Hart, Client Service Intern; Amber Nguyen, Client Service Executive; and Michelle Stevens, Director of First Impressions.

University and serving the community as a firefighter. Today, he has a passion for personal and community education.

Nic joined the firm in 2002, but his pathway into the business was not what you'd expect. Having studied public relations, advertising, business and Bible in college, he needed a couple of internships — one of which happened to be in marketing for a financial planner. There, he had an experience that changed everything.

"I was at an office, and the owner of the firm, Kevin, walked out of the conference room with his client — a widow who had just lost her husband," Nic says. "She looked up at

Kevin, squeezed him, and said, 'I really need you,' and she left. For the first time in my adult life, I had a sleepless night."

Nic could not get the powerful exchange out of his head. The next day, the same client reappeared with tons of freshly baked goodies for the firm. She'd been up all night, baking, and told Nic and the staff, "I couldn't think of any better way to thank you."

"I call it a 'God moment,' when I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to serve people like her," Nic said.

Nic called Randy after this exchange to talk about his future in the financial planning industry. Randy was about to attend an

industry conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, and invited Nic to join him. "He was already my wrestling coach, so I decided to look at him like a coach," Nic says. "I was going to be coachable."

More than a business

The owners and staff at Yeomans see themselves as more than just a business. They take a team approach to everything they do. "In my more than 22 years, we have never had a better team of professionals that serve our clients," Nic says. "We believe in team and we have an incredible one that understands what it means to care for our clients with a servant's heart."

“What we do is a calling,” Nic continues. “Our mission is to serve people with financial, tax, and estate advice, but really, we’re trying to serve them in a way that’s meaningful and impactful for generations.”

Nic asserts that two concepts come to mind: The Bible talks about a good man leaving an inheritance for his children and his children’s children. “The importance of legacy is about your values and your family name, and leaving them in a better place, not a worse place — not a world of chaos and confusion. So, if we can help people accomplish that, we feel we’re living out our mission and purpose.”

The second concept captures this idea: Whatever one does, it should be done all for the glory of God, serving people in a way that is God-honoring.

Do you need a retirement coach?

The short answer is yes. “You can start wherever you are, you know, because anyone can get traction, learn principles, and consume education,” Nic says. “We teach a lot of adult education classes at KSU that might be applicable to somebody in that scenario. As an example, reducing your taxes, basics of estate planning, and estate planning for second marriages.”

In fact, both Randy and Nic are passionate about teaching and educating the Cobb community. Nic is an instructor and teaches at KSU’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), providing continuing



“What we do is a calling. Our mission is to serve people with financial, tax, and estate advice, but really, we’re trying to serve them in a way that’s meaningful and impactful.”

—Nic Yeomans

education for adults. Attendees have described his classes as “exciting, enjoyable, and information-packed.”

For 26 years, Randy had taught at Enrichment Life Movement (ELM), unfortunately a victim of COVID. Now he is a teacher at SEL, in Roswell, an eight-week program that explores strategic approaches for minimizing tax liability estate planning concepts and strategies for increasing income for retirement. He teaches techniques such as reducing capital gains taxes; optimizing retirement account distributions; passing assets generationally with tax advantages; and asset protection.

“At the end of the day, we know people need what we do,” Nic explains. “Just spending time in our community and providing education helps people understand that we

are here to serve them — providing life-changing education and knowledge.”

The education and expertise are paying off for Cobb residents. “About three years ago, we were considering retirement and had saved some money to invest,” says Marietta resident Kaye (last name withheld). She and her husband, Bob, partner with Yeomans to ensure their financial future remains in check. “We had managed our finances, and while we had been successful, we decided a professional would be more effective. I was planning to leave a career in marketing, and my husband was hoping to retire from teaching.

“Our goal was not simply to retire comfortably,” Kaye continues. “We wanted to donate more to ministries and leave our children and grandchildren money for their futures. Yeomans’ approach moved us forward, helping us to invest wisely and creating a detailed financial plan. When we got ready to retire, we were confident we would be able to enjoy hosting family vacations, help with grandchildren’s expenses, give to nonprofits we support, and continue to live without the anxiety of daily financial pressure.”

Community is key

The importance of the role Yeomans plays in Marietta and the Cobb community cannot be over-emphasized. To be sure, the proximity to metro Atlanta is of value, but it’s about more than that. For example, Yeomans Consulting Group’s previous office location right on the Marietta Square meant a historic building, but no elevators for a more matured clientele. So, they relocated (for about 10 years) just off the square, one mile down near the Marietta Conference Center.

“God has great kindness,” Nic says. “We continued to grow and needed a bigger space. We found a place that we could grow into,



Dynamic duo: Nic and Randy Yeomans.



The Yeomans team works diligently with each client to maximize their retirement goals.

and we're back right off the square — look for the blue door! We feel like this area is home.”

The location near neighboring businesses provides a win-win benefit for all. “Marietta has a deep sense of community that you don't find other places, says Nicole Eastwood, Yeomans' director of marketing and events. “There is just an energy here; people who want to help each other. When I go to events, I meet neighbors who are some of the nicest people I've ever come across.”

The closely knit vibe radiating from Marietta and other amazing Cobb communities is palpable. “It feels like there's some type of higher power here, a community vibe that isn't coming from just individuals,” Nicole says. “It seems inherent, because of the way the square is positioned. We are in the day-to-day place where residents live and work with others who live here, bringing life to a smaller scale.”

To be sure, Yeomans strive to project a family feel to clients when they walk through the door, a warm and inviting environment. The location is central and not too far from

anywhere in Cobb County. Visiting clients often will enjoy surrounding restaurants, retail, and other attractions.

“Atlanta is a hub to many large firms, such as Lockheed, Delta, Home Depot, and Coca-Cola, which workers who, after twenty to thirty years, are often ready to retire,” Nic says. “Many times, their retirement eggs are all in this one company's basket. As you evaluate retirement, this is when a Retirement Coach can guide them to their best options for retirement success.

A wealth of strategy

Yeomans serves clients that would largely be considered “the millionaire next door.” Many of them even refer to themselves as middle-class millionaires. They saved well and made good decisions. They work with Yeomans to determine the next steps in their retirement journey.

Yeomans believes the concept of “wealth” tends to be subjective and highly personal, with perceptions about what it means to be wealthy varying greatly. “For this reason, we

seek to understand how our clients perceive their wealth,” Randy said. “Then, we share our perspective, which is defined by the Eight Dimensions of Wealth™. This unique map allows us to explore eight separate areas — dimensions — that can affect a family's wealth in a positive or negative way.”

“When a client says, ‘This is the kind of life I want, these are the things I'm concerned about, and this is how I want my retirement life to be,’ and then I see them doing things that would conflict with that, I can address those things in a Coaching relationship,” Randy continued.

Randy says the Yeomans approach, which heavily involves education, may take longer, with a more laborious amount of their team's involvement in collaboration with clients' CPAs, attorneys, and custodians. However, the longevity of maintaining a client relationship, investing heavily on the front end and learning about their circumstances as well as their opportunities, always proves beneficial.

“Having worked with Yeomans for over 15 years, I am consistently impressed with the level of care they take with their clients,” says Ritu V. Gordon, partner, KPPB Law. “They work hard to earn their clients' trust and, as a result, work with many generations of families to address their financial planning and security needs. I refer my clients to them often and without hesitation.”

Put me in, Coach

From the CPA to the attorney and the financial person, everyone should be communicating on behalf of the client. Yeomans proactively ensures that happens, and that's where Randy's coaching prowess comes into play. “The top athletes in the world have a coach,” he says. “The top business leaders in

“The top athletes in the world have a coach. The top business leaders in the world have coaches. Nic and I are versed in multiple disciplines of coaching, including entrepreneurship coaching, financial service industry coaching, personal development and business coaching.”

—Randy Yeomans





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the world have coaches. Nic and I are versed in multiple disciplines of coaching, including entrepreneurship coaching, financial service industry coaching, personal development and business coaching.”

In fact, coaching is in the Yeomans’ DNA. For years, Randy was as a youth wrestling coach for both McEachern and Harrison high schools. Now, Nic is going on his fourth season as the Head Middle School Wrestling Coach for Harrison. Of course, sports leadership may be slightly different from business management and client relationships, but some of the same principles apply.

Randy says that while the financial coaching process is different from salesmanship, accounting, or evaluation, the educational element is at the heart of an entrepreneur. “The great majority of our clients are still accumulating wealth or are right at that place where they’re about to now count on their wealth as providing them the necessary economics for their retirement life,” Randy says. “Coaching them on how to make that conversion or how to do something for the first time ... We put the client in a position of knowledge.”

Humans have an inherent desire to be coached and guided to a winning outcome, the Yeomans say. With a coach, an element of accountability exists to keep you on track and motivated. Your trusted retirement coach can give you the game plan to win and achieve success.

The long run

Whether it’s wealth, health or both, the Yeomans’ jobs as retirement coaches are to help clients optimize and maximize the great things that they’ve accomplished. The education-based approach works well because we live in what Randy describes as a “microwave life.”

“Everybody wants everything instantaneously,” he says. “We use the term ‘farmer’ to describe our mindset. Real success involves a farming mentality, not a microwave mentality. We want to work with people who want to make an impact in society, enjoy their own retirement, and leave a legacy to their children and grandchildren, and the organizations and causes they care about.”

Additionally, Yeomans has a tax focus. If clients pay less tax, they have more real return

on their money. It has nothing to do with financial markets, and clients keep more of their hard-earned money.

Retaining clients through high-trust relationships can lead to multiple generations of services to Cobb families. “I’m working in the third-generation in some circumstances with some clients,” Randy says. “That’s a wonderful feeling, because I think that’s how affluent people maintain the success of their money. It isn’t just Mom and Dad; it’s multiple generations.”

Nic points to the value of a good, solid checklist: “People like to know what’s expected of them, and they like the feeling of ‘checking the box.’ A Financial Action Checklist is almost like your personal financial playbook. We identify opportunities and strengths, as well as landmines and dangers.

Yeomans helps clients to check each box, until the very last box is checked. It’s all about helping people gain traction and see results. Says Nic, “I believe people would rather get stuff done than get a financial plan in a nice, 100-page, hardbound book that only sits on a shelf.” ■

Coffee With Your Retirement Coach

Yeomans hosts a bi-weekly podcast where they delve into the intricate world of financial wealth management. Join them as they demystify the complex topics that financial advisors navigate daily, guiding their clients towards prosperity and securing their financial future. coffeewithyourretirementcoach.libsyn.com.



Coffee With The Coach (CWTC)

Multiple times a year, Yeomans hosts virtual “Coffee With The Coach” events. At each CWTC, they share a market update, facts around financial news that can affect you, and are joined by a local guest who is an expert in their field. Past guests have included representatives from industries such as travel, personal safety, tax planning, estate planning, elder law, and elder care. Learn more about upcoming events at yourretirementcoach.com/coffee-with-the-coach.



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Get To Know The New Mableton

A Q&A with Mableton Mayor Michael Owens



Mayor Michael Owens

Edited by Cory Sekine-Pettite

Editor's note: This article was edited slightly for length and clarity.

Originally, the City of Mableton, Georgia was incorporated as a town on Aug. 19, 1912, before being disincorporated just four years later as a result of a flood overwhelming the city's sewer system. But in November of last year, Mableton was incorporated for the first time as a city following a voter referendum and approval from state legislators and Gov. Brian Kemp. *Cobb In Focus* sat down recently with Mableton Mayor Michael Owens to talk about the "new" city and his administration's plans for the next several years.

What was the original impetus (and timetable) for Mableton incorporating as a new city?

The first challenge was educating residents on the fact that Mableton wasn't a city and the things that they wanted for the area largely were not possible because we didn't have a local city government. The journey to incorporate Mableton began with a vision to empower our community with more localized governance. Residents sought greater control over zoning, planning, and community development, enabling us to address our unique needs and opportunities more effectively. The movement gained momentum over several years through community engagement and advocacy, culminating in Gov. Brian Kemp signing the bill to create the new City of Mableton in May 2022. The bill passed overwhelmingly, with a 134-2 vote in the House and a 55-0 vote in the Senate. This set the stage for a November referendum on whether to incorporate the South Cobb city.

How long did that process take from initial plans to voter approval?

The process from initial planning to voter approval took approximately six years. It involved extensive feasibility studies, community meetings, and collaboration with state legislators to ensure that incorporation was in the best interest of our residents.

A few other areas have incorporated recently as cities in metro Atlanta. Did these cities provide a roadmap or assist in your incorporation?

Yes, we closely studied the incorporation processes of nearby cities such as Brookhaven, Sandy Springs, and Peachtree Corners. Their experiences provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of cityhood, helping us to tailor our approach to fit Mableton's specific needs. However, the push for every city's incorporation is unique with different drivers, composition, and scenarios.

How many people now live in the City of Mableton?

Mableton now has a population of approximately 80,000 residents, making it the largest city in Cobb County.

What should Cobb County residents understand about "the New Mableton"?

The New Mableton is not the old Mableton. For more than 100 years, Mableton was defined as a Census Designated Place. After incorporation, the area is now a city. A city represents a vibrant and growing community with new leadership and expanded boundaries. We are committed to fostering economic development, enhancing public amenities, and maintaining a high quality of life for our residents. While we are still part of the Cobb public school district and rely on Cobb County for certain services, we are building our own departments for planning, zoning, code enforcement, parks, and sanitation.

New Mableton is defined by several key things:

- **New Leadership:** The city now has a Mayor and Council, and leadership staff, including a City Manager and City Clerk.
- **New Boundaries:** According to the 2020 census, the census-designated area of Mableton had a population of 37,115; now the population is almost 80,000, covering almost 36 square miles.
- **New Attractions:** The city now includes Six Flags, Dogwood Golf Course, along with existing attractions like the Silver



Comet Trail, the Historic Mableton House, and the Mable House Amphitheater.

- **New Opportunities:** Mayor Owens is leading a new vision of revitalization of major corridors, including Veterans Memorial Highway, Mableton Parkway, and Riverside Drive, attracting new businesses and bolstering existing businesses and entrepreneurs.

What services does the city provide to residents now and what services are shared with another city or the County?

Currently, Mableton is working to provide zoning, code enforcement, economic and community development, and waste management services to the people. The city charter provided two years to complete this (June 1, 2025). However, public safety services, including police and fire, remain under the jurisdiction of Cobb County. We continue to collaborate with the county to ensure a seamless transition and continued provision of essential services. Statements about the

City of Mableton is "breaking off" from Cobb county are misleading. Mableton is still very much part of the county.

Along those lines, are there services the city will soon be managing itself?

Yes, as we continue to grow and develop, Mableton will take over additional services as outlined in our Feasibility Study. These include expanded community development initiatives, more localized waste management solutions, and enhanced park services. By June 1, 2025, we aim to have at least three to four key services fully transitioned to city management.

What is the current state of cityhood plans, infrastructure, etc., that are already in place? And what are the city's immediate plans for continued/new development needs?

We have made significant progress in establishing our city's core administrative capabilities, including establishing initial working space at the Riverside Epicenter, appointing key leadership staff, and launching our initial website and online services. Our immediate plans focus on creating intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) with Cobb County and fostering economic growth through strategic zoning and planning initiatives.

What are the city's plans for future development and expansion? 5 years out? 10 years out?

In the next five years, we plan to further develop our commercial districts, enhance public transportation options, and invest in sustainable development projects. Looking ahead to 10 years, our vision includes becoming a regional hub for innovation and culture,



In Your Community

with thriving business sectors, green spaces, and robust community engagement.

The Mableton 2045 Comprehensive Plan is a critical blueprint for our city's future, aiming to foster sustainable growth and enhance the quality of life for all residents. This comprehensive plan encompasses several key elements:

1. Land Use Planning: Strategies for zoning, development, and the efficient use of land resources.

2. Transportation: Plans for improving public transit, road infrastructure, and connectivity within the city.

3. Housing: Policies to ensure affordable, high-quality housing options for all residents.

4. Economic Development: Initiatives to attract and retain businesses, creating a vibrant local economy.

5. Parks and Recreation: Enhancements to public spaces, parks, and recreational facilities to promote community well-being.

6. Environmental Sustainability: Measures to protect natural resources and promote sustainable practices.

7. Community Facilities and Services: Improvements and expansions of essential services such as schools, libraries, and emergency services.

The Mableton 2045 Comprehensive Plan will serve as a guiding document to navigate the city's growth and development over the next two decades.

Discuss the Tunnels to Towers development. Is this the city's first major development since incorporation?



“Mableton is a city on the rise, defined by its strong community spirit and forward-looking leadership.”

—Mayor Michael Owens

The Tunnels to Towers project is a significant development for Mableton and marks one of the first major outside investments since incorporation. Tunnel to Towers is partnering with elected officials and Home Depot to develop a new facility in Mableton that will offer safe and secure housing to more than 90 Atlanta veterans from across metro Atlanta.

The future Veterans Village, located on what once was the Wingate Hotel, will feature livable apartments equipped with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, and bathroom. Veterans will also have access to a community gym, business center, cafeteria, commercial kitchen space, and 24/7 support services.

The redevelopment of the hotel was much needed, and it's our hope that this area, adjacent to Six Flags and down the street from the \$33-million Riverside Epicenter, will be a catalyst for a second wave of redevelopment in the area.

Anything else you would like readers to know about Mableton and/or its government?

Mableton is a city on the rise, defined by its

strong community spirit and forward-looking leadership. We are dedicated to transparent governance, active citizen involvement, and sustainable development. Our goal is to create a city that not only meets the needs of today's residents but also provides a thriving environment for future generations. Mableton is home to a diverse and dynamic population that contributes to the richness of our community. We are committed to ensuring that every resident feels heard and valued, and we actively encourage participation in our planning and decision-making processes.

Our city is investing in infrastructure, education, and green spaces to enhance the quality of life for all. We prioritize sustainability, aiming to balance growth with environmental stewardship. Mableton is not just a place to live, but a community to belong to, with numerous opportunities for engagement, whether through volunteering, attending community events, or participating in local government.

We invite everyone to be part of Mableton's exciting journey. Together, we can build a bright and prosperous future and a place for everyone to work, live, worship and play. ■



2024 Mableton Golf Classic participants and sponsors.

Innovative Education:

Inside Cobb County's Safety Village



Miniature Marietta Square

By Anjana Kallarackal

At the heart of Cobb County, it turns out, is another, miniature Cobb County. It is a child-sized representation with scaled-down signage, streets, and traffic lights. It features a town square, a pavilion, and several of the buildings that you would see if you were you to drive around the area. Each element in the Cobb County Safety Village has been created with the specific intent of educating students about important safety issues.

Officially opened in 2009 and located on Al Bishop Drive in Marietta, the Safety Village (cobbcounty.org/safety-village) is conveniently situated in central Cobb County. This location allows it to be accessible to the 23,000+ students who come in from every part of Cobb over the course of the school year. While you may find Safety Villages in other parts of the United States, the Cobb County Safety Village is the only one of its kind in Georgia and the most expansive in the nation. Their primary objective is to offer comprehensive, interactive safety education to every kindergartner, second grader, and

fourth grader in the county, covering issues such as fire and electrical safety, as well as road, helmet, and water safety.

Origin

Allison Carter, Director of the Safety Village, explained that “The idea of prevention education began in 1978 when our fire chief at the time decided that we needed to provide safety education to our young people.” This was when Cobb County’s Public Fire and Life Safety Education division was founded. At that time, off-duty firefighters were sent out to schools to educate elementary school students on fire hazards and what to do if a student encountered a fire.

During the 30 years that followed, Cobb County doubled in size. It became difficult and costly to reach every student by the end of a school year. The fire chief at the time, Chief Rebecca Denlinger, studied the data of those previous three decades and found that while the population had doubled, the number of structure fires remained about the same and fire fatalities in youth had declined,

suggesting that the fire prevention education had been effective. But, because of the burgeoning population, more efficient solutions needed to be sought out.

This was when Chief Denlinger put together a group that surveyed how other regions were conducting safety training and then came across the idea of the Safety Village. The Safety Village concept originated in Canada and spread from there to several other cities in both Canada and the United States. Common features of these Safety Villages included creating a small, child-sized village that was representative of their local community where children could interactively learn about the different safety issues that they might confront in their day-to-day lives.

Program

The field trips to the Safety Village last around three hours and are separated into nine, 20-minute modules that each detail a different safety issue. Someone in uniform acts as the lead for each group so that students can become comfortable with people in uni-

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form and get a chance to hear their real-life, in-the-field stories.

Students also learn vital skills such as how to crawl to safety in case of a fire. A 911 call is simulated with an operator to help students become comfortable calling for help. They also learn what to do if approached by a stranger, are home alone, or find a gun in the house. These exercises, along with several other lessons, are central to Safety Village's philosophy: Tell me, and I'll forget; Show me, and I might remember; Involve me, and I'll learn for a lifetime.

Features of the facility

What impresses most kids upon arrival at the Safety Village's educational center is the full-sized house they see upon entering the building. This house is affectionately called Sparky's House. It is an interactive home that includes all kinds of fire and safety hazards for children to identify and correct. The couch lights up in plastic flames, and the room fills with simulated smoke. The children learn how to determine a family meeting spot and how to exit through a window using an emergency escape ladder. Children also learn how to identify hazardous household products.

The Safety Village is not only outfitted for children's safety education, but it also features a fire safety tour for seniors, which serves as a refresher course about fire hazards and the importance of habits such as not leaving a room when cooking or wearing long outerwear that could potentially catch fire when using a stove. The Safety Village also has developed a fire safety program for businesses to attend, and they host CPR classes for the community. Housed within the Safety Village complex is an auxiliary service hosted by Safe Kids Cobb County. Here, they offer free car seat checks to help prevent motor vehicle injuries and conduct safety workshops for the community.

The Safety Village Foundation

The Safety Village Foundation was established in 2007 to help support the efforts of fundraising and build relationships with potential sponsors that would fund the individual buildings within the village that would best represent the community. The Safety Village Foundation's mission is to serve as an advocate, to develop partnerships, and to secure resources in support of the Cobb



Kids can learn about electrical safety and much more at the Safety Village.

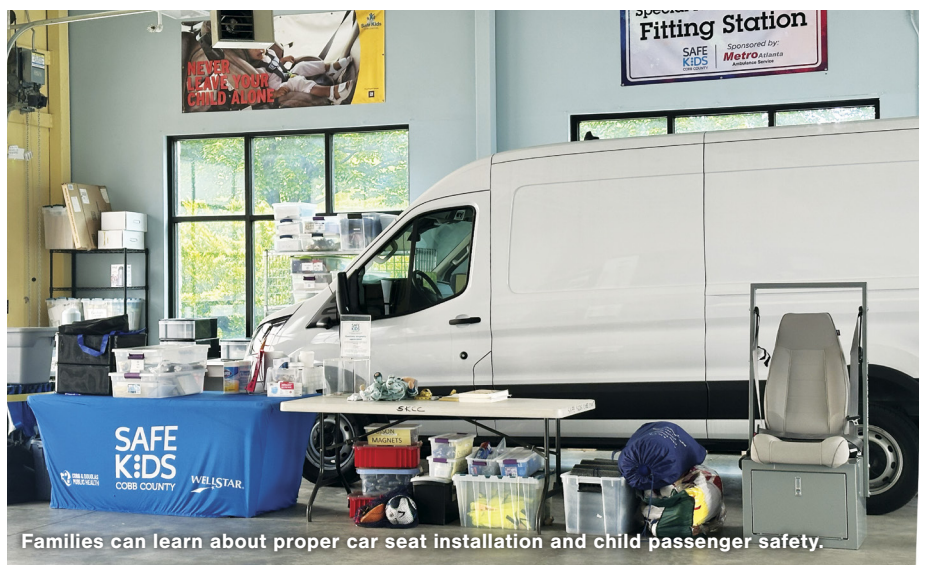
County Safety Village. The vision is a sustainable Cobb County Safety Village that builds a safer community through advocacy and education.

The Foundation, made up of different Cobb County community members, primarily seeks out the businesses and individuals who want to support safety education by sponsoring a building or safety events. The buildings are then maintained as part of a contract for 20 years. Carter credits the Safety Village Foundation as "a pivotal component at keeping the Safety Village operational." She applauds their responsiveness to the needs of the education team, whether it be to acquiring additional puppets for the safety puppet show, finding a grant for an electric fire extinguisher simulator or securing a major grant/sponsor for an innovative new teaching module or building. Carter

reiterates "having the Safety Village Foundation just makes that so much easier and to have that collaboration and relationship is amazing."

One of the most exciting elements of the village design is that it requires the collaborative effort of local businesses to sponsor buildings. Some of the earliest sponsors include Cobb & Douglas Public Health, Cobb EMC, and Wellstar Health System. Several of these sponsored buildings feature extensive interactive exhibits. Cobb EMC, for example, has highlighted issues around electrical safety through several interactive panels. Cobb & Douglas Public Health teach about proper handwashing and preparing home emergency kits.

Al Martin, Area Manager for Georgia Power Company says, "It has been my



Families can learn about proper car seat installation and child passenger safety.

Upcoming Events

Family Fun Safety Day 2024

July 15

Truck-a-Palooza

October 2024

If you would like further information about how to get involved with the Safety Village, reach out to Director Carter at Allison. Carter@cobbcounty.org.

privilege to represent Georgia Power on the Cobb County Safety Village Foundation board for over 10 years, including serving as the current Board Chair. At Georgia Power, our first and most important value is Safety First. We actively care about the safety and well-being of our employees, customers and communities. Our culture is built on safely approaching every job, every day, and this always comes first. In addition to safety on the job, helping our employees create a safe environment at home is very important. The mission of Safety Village ties directly to what we strive to do for our employees and their families every day. The Safety Village is a tremendous asset to our entire community.”

Recent updates

Recently, the Safety Village received a grant of \$275,000 through Cobb County ARPA (the American Rescue Plan Act), which was then matched by the Safety Village Foundation. This grant money is now being put towards building outdoor restrooms at the center of the Safety Village along with an outdoor gathering plaza.

Around the same time, LGE Community Credit Union also decided to become a sponsor and has proposed a building that could be used to help educate senior citizens about the newest financial fraud schemes occurring in the community. Chris Leggett, president and CEO of LGE Community Credit Union, said, “At LGE, we are committed to giving back to the communities we serve. We believe that safety education is essential for everyone, and we are proud to partner with the Cobb County Safety Village to help keep Cobb County residents safe.”

The Safety Village still has space for 10 new buildings. And, as the 20-year building contracts begin to expire, new opportunities will begin to surface.

Future hope

The Safety Village is a dynamic agency that is continuing to develop its curriculum and the physical village. They hope to continue to

build out safety education for senior citizens and further develop their education programs for young students on safety issues such as preparing for severe weather. They also envision creating a small-scale recycling center that would educate students about what items can be recycled safely.

Carter says they want to inspire other companies to join with them and sponsor a building and have their brand represented on campus for the next 20 years. “We would love to see a grocery store so we can talk about healthier [food] choices and portion control,” she said. “We would love to have a residential home focused on weather safety and critical storm conditions. We are in discussion with the Braves Foundation to build a small stadium that we can focus on year-long hydration and staying physically active. Honestly, we need a home improvement store as we discuss the use of working smoke alarms, carbon monoxide, and home escape ladders. My list of safety ideas is endless.”

If you would like further information about

how to get involved with the Safety Village, reach out to Director Carter at Allison. Carter@cobbcounty.org.

Community events

The Safety Village hosts three major fundraisers every year. They host Family Fun Safety Days where entire families come for fire and life safety education, meet with emergency personnel, see firetrucks up close, and tour the Village. And in October, the Safety Village hosts Truck-a-Palooza, which features dozens of safety vehicles including police cars, fire engines, and military vehicles. Also in October, The Safety Village partners with Safe Kids Cobb County for the Cobb Public Safety Golf Tournament. The funds raised from all events are then directly invested back into Safety Village’s education programs.

Takeaways

As Lisa Crossman, the Deputy Director of Cobb & Douglas Public Health, expressed, “I’ve been honored to work with the Cobb County Safety Village since its inception. Our innovative Safety Village staff effectively educates children and families on multiple safety topics. We’ve repeatedly seen kids use this vital information in crises, preventing home fires, following bike safety rules, and accessing 911, just to name a few. If a local business is looking for a meaningful way to make a difference in our community, investing in the Cobb County Safety Village is a perfect choice.”

Through the dedication of the Safety Village staff, foundation, and sponsors, both children and families are equipped with life-saving knowledge. As children integrate these vital lessons into their daily lives, they become catalysts for change within their families, initiating discussions on critical topics and recognizing safety hazards when they encounter one. And if a crisis emerges, the training that the Safety Village provides helps empower students with the knowledge, resources, and confidence to navigate any challenges they may encounter. ■



Plant Parenting Is Hard

By Cory Sekine-Pettite

A recent report from the home services provider Thumbtack declared that metro Atlanta homeowners have the best backyards in the country. In its 2024 Curb Appeal Trends Report, Thumbtack said Atlanta tops the list for the city with the best backyards, with a big focus on lawn care and landscape design. “Rather than focusing on amenities and flashy features, homeowners are prioritizing tidy exteriors as well as well-maintained lawns and gardens that require little upkeep throughout the summer,” the report states.

We certainly have many talented professionals to help us make our lawn and landscape dreams come true — just one example is Acworth-based Dreamscapes that we profiled in the January/February 2024 issue of this magazine. Of course, many of you may have the knack for creating your own appealing front lawn or backyard oasis. However, I do not possess these skills. For me, keeping plants alive is a losing battle.

Every once in a while — this past spring, for example — I get the yearning to see if my black thumb has turned green. This year, I wanted to try growing a few plants that supposedly deter mosquitoes. My place is treated by pest control professionals to keep these annoying vampires at bay, but we still find ourselves fighting off these bloodsuckers far too often. Anyway, with help of a friendly Pike’s Nurseries employee, I bought what I needed to start planting. You can guess where this story is headed.

It did not take long for my new plants to die on me. I read all the instructions on how to care for them; I bought the right planting soil and nutrient enhancer; and I watered them regularly — all while fighting off the nose daggers of those pesky mosquitoes. Being a plant parent just isn’t in the cards for me. There’s a definite art (and some science) to creating a lively and beautiful lawn, backyard, or garden. From flowering plants to herbs to fruits and vegetables, I’ve never been able to grow anything for too long. Heck, I’ve even managed to kill indoor cacti and air plants. As with any home improvement project, you must know your limitations and when to call in the professionals. ■

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