

METRO

UGA student group helps kids have a happy holiday

Nonprofit provides gifts, school supplies for those in need.

By Rachel Sandstrom
Covering Poverty

Children receiving gifts through a car window wasn't exactly how Kaimet Haile pictured her first "Shop with a Bulldawg" event. But with COVID-19 restrictions still looming during her freshman year at the University of Georgia, the student-run nonprofit was forced to get creative in order to deliver a successful day to Athens-Clarke County children.

After witnessing how much "Shop with a Bulldawg," known as SWAB, impacted these kids, Haile knew she wanted to be a part of helping the organization grow. Now, Haile, a senior majoring in economics and cognitive sciences, is executive director of SWAB, which provides children the opportunity to spend a day

shopping with two UGA students and enjoying fun activities.

The group partners each holiday season with the Clarke County School District to plan an event day where UGA students take children shopping with a budget of \$120 per child.

About 800 UGA students participated in 2023, meaning its volunteers shopped with about 400 children. The number for 2024 grew to 1,000 UGA students, allowing 500 children to shop for items they want or need.

"I feel like as students, sometimes we take advantage of (UGA), and I think that (SWAB) makes life way more real," Haile said. "I relate to it a lot more based off of where I came from."

Before UGA, Haile ran Amplexio Tutoring in her hometown of Clarkston; it's been referred to as the "Ellis Island of the South" because of the large number of immigrants, including her father from the



Senior Kaimet Haile is executive director of "Shop with a Bulldawg," which gives Athens-area kids the opportunity to shop with two UGA students. COURTESY OF RACHEL SANDSTROM

African country of Eritrea. The organization provided tutoring to students who struggled in school because of a lack of resources.

Haile uses these personal experiences as motivation to put on the best event day possible for the kids.

Donna Elder, executive director of federal programs for the Clarke County School District, said her favorite part of SWAB is witnessing the kids get paired with their UGA mentors. She enjoys seeing relationships form

so quickly between kid and mentor because once they're paired up, "they're going to be lifelong buddies," Elder said.

On event day, which was held earlier this month, children filled up their carts at Walmart with all kinds of toys, like Legos, race cars and stuffed animals. Once they were done shopping, each child received a backpack of school supplies. The children then got to wrap their gifts, grab a picture with UGA's costumed mas-

HOWTOHELP

For information on volunteering with Shop with a Bulldawg, contact executivedirector@swabuga.org. If you are a current UGA student, applications to be a part of SWAB's list of internal groups have closed for this year, but will open back up starting from late January to March 2025. You can apply on SWAB's website at swabuga.org/get-involved. To donate to SWAB, go to gagives.org/organization/Swab-2024.

cot, Hairy Dawg, and meet UGA football players like sophomore linebacker CJ Allen.

"I think my favorite part is seeing the impact ... how much it is worth doing, even though sometimes you kind of forget it when you're planning it," Haile said.

As executive director, Haile acts as "the firefighter," in which she supports each position in the organization. For instance, SWAB hosts a yearly donation drive of items to use

on event day. This year, it also hosted a school supplies drive, which at first was not gaining much traction. Haile met with her executive board and hashed out a plan that ultimately turned it into a successful event in which they took in around 1,600 donations, exceeding their goal of 1,000. This enabled them to provide three school supply items per child on event day.

Looking back on when the nonprofit started in 2009, Haile said it is "insane" to not just see how much it has grown but to see the amount of "heart and care" that has carried SWAB through the past 15 years. SWAB broadens the way students think about their university in relation to the Athens community and "pops the bubble we live in within UGA," she said.

"Don't forget to give back to where you live and to the people around you," Haile said. "That's a huge thing that I'm grateful I got to learn from an early age, and it's something I'll carry with me wherever I move to in life."



Sen. John Fetterman (left), D-Pa., had a stroke in May 2022 but has been transparent about it and how it has affected him. Not all public figures have been so forthright about their health. Former U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina retired at 99, but a former aide says he was cognitively impaired for at least a decade. TOM BRENNER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Murphy

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Tia Mitchell called and learned the congressman had been receiving treatment for an ailing back.

It's important to say here that there's nothing disqualifying about simply being old or infirm. With age comes tremendous knowledge and wisdom, two disappearing assets in Washington. And as for the wheelchair, I worked for five years for U.S. Sen. Max Cleland, a triple amputee who wheeled through the Capitol complex faster than most of his staff could walk to keep up with him.

Voters not only looked past Cleland's disabilities, many even connected with them. The problem for elected officials comes with trying to hide those health struggles, especially when they're affecting an official's ability to do their job.

President Joe Biden's fade from the national stage is only made worse by the overriding sense that, like Granger, he and his team never leveled with the American people about how quickly he declined after he was elected in 2020. Not until his debate against Donald Trump in Atlanta did it become clear that Biden was not all right — and that dozens, maybe hun-



Rep. Kay Granger, R-Texas, was largely absent from Capitol Hill since the summer. She was found to have moved into a facility for dementia care. ALYSSA SCHUKAR/NYT

dreds, of family, staff and fellow Democrats must have known that all along.

I think a lot about how Biden could have possibly decided that yes, he would run again in 2024 and that his entire staff would have gone along with the choice. But then I remember that Biden and his closest advisers came out of a Senate where U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond, a Republican from South Carolina, retired at the age of 99, a full 20 years older than Biden when he was mulling his reelection bid.

Watching Thurmond be gingerly guided through the Senate corridors by his staff on the way to a vote was like watching a team of museum curators move a Faberge egg. One former Senate aide told The New Yorker that for the last 10 years of his life,

"Strom Thurmond didn't know if he was on foot or on horseback."

As for how he would vote, Thurmond's chief of staff at the time was so well liked and knowledgeable, there seemed to be a gentleman's agreement among his colleagues, who would have included Biden, to leave the decisions to the chief and look away the rest of the time.

But in the age of social media and camera phones, the days of looking the other way are over. And there is a much better way to age or deal with illness and disability in office.

Pennsylvania Democrat John Fetterman had a serious stroke on his way to a campaign event before he was elected to the U.S. Senate. Fetterman was hospitalized at the time and again after he was

elected, the second time for depression that often follows a stroke. The difference between Fetterman and Biden or Granger is that we know all about it. Still struggling with cognitive processing issues, the senator tells reporters ahead of interviews that he'll be using an iPad's voice-to-text function so that he can fully understand their questions.

That's the kind of transparency voters expect now related to a leader's health and abilities. And no matter what kind of social-media environment we're in, it's the kind of transparency voters deserve.

Time will tell if President-elect Trump is able to keep the pace that he did on the campaign trail. At 78, he's now older than Biden was when he was elected in 2020. And Trump has been opaque about the reality of his own health and vigor, right down to his obvious spray tan.

If Trump does have to leave office before 2028, the line of presidential succession now includes Iowa U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley. As the Senate president pro tem, Grassley is third in line to the White House after the vice president and speaker of the House. Grassley, by the Strom Thurmond standard, has plenty of miles left on his tires. He's just 91.



Chad Etzel got the name for his app because the transit authority at one time used the slogan "MARTA is SMARTA." ARVIN TEMKAR/AJC

SMARTA

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MARTA has three apps currently. The On the Go app to track arrivals was created in 2010 for Apple and in 2016 for Android, and it has been updated incrementally since then. MARTA also has a See & Say app that riders can use to report safety concerns and the Breeze Mobile 2.0 app, which can be used to buy fares.

Fisher said MARTA wants to combine the features of all three apps into one. The

new app would also allow multimodal trip planning and support the new on-demand rideshare service that the agency plans to introduce next year.

Until then, Etzel's app is gaining downloads daily, and he said he hopes it gives MARTA ideas for what a new app could feature. Etzel said he's gotten nice feedback from users who've told him they've switched from the official app to his.

Etzel and his family only recently moved back to the metro area after living in California the last

15 years. He said creating the app has given him a new appreciation of how extensive MARTA's service is and also how difficult it is to keep buses and trains running on time.

Living in the northern suburbs, Etzel said he's mostly car dependent these days, but he likes to take MARTA when it's convenient. He relied on public transit more when he lived in San Francisco and said he's a big fan of both systems.

"It's nice to just hop on a bus and get where you need to go," he said.

Deputies' parade honors woman's 102nd birthday

As vehicles roll past, Lillie Mae Hightower waves.

By Henri Hollis
henri.hollis@ajc.com

Born at the beginning of the Roaring '20s, a Henry County woman celebrated her 102nd birthday Friday with pomp and circumstance as multiple law enforcement agencies paraded in front of her home.

A line of vehicles from the Henry and DeKalb county sheriff's offices rolled past the home of Lillie Mae Hightower in Stockbridge around midday. Surrounded by family and friends, Hightower braved the damp, chilly weather to wave happily at the deputies.

Hightower was born in 1922, the same year the Ottoman Empire was officially abolished and two years before former President Jimmy Carter. Celebrating the centenarian's

birthday with a parade has become something of a tradition after law enforcement officials surprised Hightower last year.

While Hightower's age is remarkable, she's still nearly 15 years younger than the oldest person alive, according to the Gerontology Research Group, which publishes a list of the world's longest-lived individuals. According to the group, Tomiko Itooka of Japan, born in May 1908, is verified as the world's oldest person at age 116.

In truth, those more than 100 years old make up one of the fastest-growing demographic groups in the country, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution previously reported.

Changes in life expectancy mean Hightower has plenty of company above the century mark. In 1950, there were only 2,300 centenarians in the U.S., according to a Pew Research Center analysis of Census Bureau estimates. Now, there are more than 100,000.



Lillie Mae Hightower waves at a member of the Henry County Sheriff's Office as a parade passes in honor of her 102nd birthday in Stockbridge on Friday. Hightower was born two years before Jimmy Carter. BEN GRAY FOR THE AJC

DAILY LAW JOURNAL

legal notices

The practice of Stephen M. Barnett, MD PC & Vein Therapy of Atlanta, at 105 Collier Road, NW Suite 1020, Atlanta, GA, 30309, is announcing its closure as of 12/31/24. Patients needing help finding a new physician may call Dr. Barnett's office at 404-351-2112, or may access Piedmont.org, the Medical Association of Georgia, or their health insurer for a physician list. With written authorization, a copy of the medical record will be available by calling 404-351-2112 until 01/31/25, and thereafter by mail to Stephen M. Barnett, MD 2870 Peachtree Rd, NW #307, Atlanta, GA 30305. 12-1,8,15,22,29-24

0000851810-01

articles/diss. of incorporation

NOTICE OF INTENT TO VOLUNTARILY DISSOLVE A CORPORATION Notice is given that a notice of intent to dissolve PHC Enterprises Inc, A Georgia corporation with its registered office at 215 Berry Glen Court, Alpharetta, GA 30022 has been delivered to the Secretary of State for filing in accordance with the Georgia Business Corporation Code. 12-22, 29-24

0000855430-01

legal name change

I changed my birth name from Bianca Denise Roberts to BeAnkha Cheki Ma'at Rah Anafiel Ali Bey. 12-15,18,22,25,29-24, 1-1,5,8,12,15-25

0000853700-01

legal notice to appear

NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS

All Creditors of the Estate of Jane Munday West, of Fulton County, Georgia, Deceased, Estate No. PC-2024-002572, are hereby notified to render in their demands to the undersigned. According to law all persons indebted to the said estate are required to make immediate payment.

This 29th day of December, 2024.

Jeffrey West and Susan Johnson, Co-Executors of Estate of Jane Munday West, Deceased, 527 Grassland Court, Lawrenceville, GA 30046-5518. 12-29-24, 1-5, 12, 19-25

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