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Get ready to plan your diner road trip! The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's first statewide dining guide is a celebration of diners throughout Georgia. The guide features nearly three dozen Peach State destinations that range from 24/7 eateries decked out in neon lights and chrome to homey dining rooms whose worn Formica counters and vinyl stools haven't changed since way back when. All of them serve hearty comfort food with a heaping helping of hospitality, and some nostalgia on the side. Find the guide now at AJC.com/dinersofgeorgia and in next Sunday's print edition of the AJC Food & Dining section.

HEALTH CORNER

Ready to stop smoking? Step one: Set a quit date

Then, write down your reasons for quitting and be sure to seek support.

By Avery Newmark
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With the new year fast approaching, now is the perfect time to take that first step toward a healthier, smoke-free life.

The statistics are sobering: Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, claiming more than 480,000 lives annually, the ACS says.

Although smoking rates have reached historic lows, about 34 million American adults still struggle with cigarette addiction.

Even more concerning is the rising trend among youth, with 2 million currently using tobacco products.

"These youth have become addicted to tobacco as a result of aggressive and deceptive marketing by tobacco companies," Dr. Bruce Waldholtz said in an email. "We want to make sure our communities do everything they can to support the young people who want to quit — especially combating the tobacco industry's efforts to keep kids addicted."

If you're ready to quit, here are three recommended strategies to help you succeed:

- Set a quit date and commit to it: This year's Great American Smokeout has passed, but you can pick your birthday, a holiday or any random Tuesday. The society's new Empowered to Quit program offers tools to understand cravings and build coping strategies.

- Create personal reminders: Write down your reasons for quitting. Research shows self-written motivations are particularly effective in maintaining commitment.

- Seek support: Two-thirds of smokers want to quit, but few succeed alone. Take advantage of available resources like the ACS helpline and email-based support programs.

The benefits of quitting begin almost immediately.

Within less than an hour, your heart rate and blood pressure normalize.

Within days, your sense of taste and smell improve.

Long-term benefits include a decreased risk of cancer, heart disease and diabetes, the ACS says.

So whether you're a long-term smoker or struggling with newer forms of nicotine addiction like vaping, taking that first step toward quitting could be one of the more important decisions you make for your health.

Concerts finding homes in Atlanta's religious spaces



In Buckhead, the Cathedral of St. Philip's longtime resident ensemble, the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, performs. COURTESY OF THE SINTOSES

Ahavath Achim Cultural Arts, other series offer a mosaic of music.

By Jeff Dingler
ArtsATL

In early November, a trio of top-notch classically trained musicians took to the stage in front of a full house. With William Ransom accompanying on piano, tenor Timothy Miller and soprano Bethany Grace Mamola performed soaring solos and dopamine-inducing duets, tearing through a program of rich operatic and Broadway classics. This wasn't at Spivey Hall or Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. It was part of a performing arts series at Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Buckhead.

Running for more than four decades, the Ahavath Achim Cultural Arts Series has always been free and open to the public and included a broad range from traditional classical music to jazz and even more modern



Bonaventure Quartet is among varied groups that have performed as part of the Ahavath Achim Cultural Arts Series, which was founded in 1980. COURTESY OF BONAVENTURE QUARTET

and fusion acts such as the local jazzy Bonaventure Quartet.

"I want to provide a mosaic of concerts," said Ivan Millender,

who manages the Cultural Arts Series. "It's not all just Mozart to Rachmaninoff.

"There was a need for it and

MEET OUR PARTNERS

ArtsATL (artsatl.org) is a nonprofit organization that plays a critical role in educating and informing audiences about metro Atlanta's arts and culture. ArtsATL, founded in 2009, helps build a sustainable arts community contributing to the economic and cultural health of the city.

If you have any questions about this partnership or others, please contact Senior Manager of Partnerships Nicole Williams at nicole.williams@ajc.com.



an interest in it," added Millender about the shul's series. It was founded in 1980 by the

Concerts continued on C4

Why Bathe Alone's 'The Avenues' makes her a bit uncomfortable

Singer's single explores painful epiphanies after infidelity and divorce.

By Lindsay Thomaston
ArtsATL

Sometimes, it hurts to be right.

Such is the case for the sophomore album of Bailey Crone, aka Bathe Alone. Released earlier this year, "I Don't Do Humidity" explores the painful epiphanies that follow in the wake of infidelity and divorce. The record's deluxe edition debuted Nov. 22, led by the striking new single "The Avenues."

ArtsATL spoke with Crone and close collaborator Damon Moon about the Share My Location feature, ripping off emotional Band-Aids and their decision to omit "The Avenues" — one of Bathe Alone's most wrenching tracks to date — from the initial record.

"The Avenues is an outdoor shopping mall in Cumming," Crone explains. "It got renamed the Collection about 10 years ago, but everyone around the area from back then still refers to it as the Avenues. Lyrically, the song is about how I was unfollowing my ex-husband on Shared Locations right after we separated, and I saw that he was at the Avenues at 3 in the morning."

"The Avenues" begins, sonically, as everyone imagines romance to begin: guilelessly dreamlike, softly suspended in the untarnished potential of cinematic meet-cutes, the kinds typically soundtracked by Slow Pulp



Singer Bailey Crone's, aka Bathe Alone, second album, "I Don't Do Humidity," turned out to be a divorce album. COURTESY OF ANNA GRIFFITH

or the Cranberries. Instruments swell, fade and cut out, until all we're left with is Crone's sobering realization, and then, the arm-pinch: reverie's fractured shards, crashing down in a liberatory burst of squealing guitar that Crone summarizes as a stomach-drop.

"It was surprising and confirming at the same time, and I wanted the chorus to come in just as surprising."

Tackling themes of desirability and violated trust, "The Avenues" is, musically and lyrically, one of Bathe Alone's heaviest

moments yet. Although its title is confessionally literal, it's the subtext of what isn't said that makes "The Avenues" so heartbreakingly impactful, particularly in the song's bridge, where guitar bends become bleep censors for fill-in-the-blank rhymes:

*Yeah, I'm feeling sick
But I get it, gotta wet that —, shh
It's just a game, a hunt
And to you, I'm a jealous little —, shh
Yeah, I remember the last look that you gave me*

Bathe continued on C2

Jack Black 'was born to play' Satan in 'Dear Santa'

Actor, Farrelly brothers came to Atlanta to make heartfelt holiday film.

By Rodney Ho
rodney.ho@ajc.com

For the fourth time, the Farrelly brothers have come to metro Atlanta, this time to give Paramount+ a sweet, heartfelt and funny Christmas film, "Dear Santa."

The movie, now available for streaming on Paramount+, reunites the brothers — known for classic comedy films like "There's Something About Mary," "Dumb and Dumber" and "Kingpin" — with Jack Black, who starred in their 2011 comedy "Shallow Hal."

An 11-year-old boy, Liam (Robert

Santa continued on C2

IF YOU WATCH

"Dear Santa" is on Paramount+

EDITOR'S NOTE



Suzanne Van Atten's Bookshelf column will return next week.

INSPIRE ATLANTA

Extraordinary people and uplifting stories that bring out the best in all of us

Shelter's long-term dogs finally get a home

Couple take lonely duo that bonded as each was repeatedly passed over.

By Sydney Page
Washington Post

Shelter dogs Rellie and Boone bonded in their loneliness. They both had been passed up for adoption many times.

Rellie — a 4-year-old retriever mix — arrived at the Greenville Humane Society in Greenville, South Carolina, last December, after she was transferred from another shelter. She was skittish when meeting strangers and took a while to warm up.

But when she did, shelter staff said she was a stand-out pup.

"Every single person on our staff fell in love with her," said Emily Zheng, a marketing manager at the shelter.

They could not interest any prospective adopters in the black pup with pointy ears and white patches on her snout and chest.

"It was hard to find somebody that was going to give her that time and patience that she needed," Zheng said.

Month after month went by, and Rellie was still not adopted.

Then Boone — a 6-year-old hound — showed up at the shelter in May. He had been surrendered by his owner.

"Boone was also just a fantastic dog. Incredibly smart, very calm," Zheng said.

As a deaf dog, though, he, too, had difficulty getting adopted. And so, in similar positions, Boone and Rellie spent a ton of time together. They went on walks together. They played together. Staff noticed they seemed to be happiest when they were in each other's company.

"They were our two longest residents," said Zheng, noting that, on average, dogs are adopted within 24 days of arriving at the shelter.

Daniel Boone and his girlfriend Graecyn Boyd had been hoping to



Boone (left) and Rellie (now Dakota) had become inseparable as long-term residents at a Greenville, S.C., shelter. A couple adopted them together and gave them a permanent home. COURTESY OF @BOONANDDAKOTA

adopt a dog, and kept their eyes out for pups. When they stumbled upon a post on social media about Rellie, they were intrigued. The post included a glowing letter written by someone who fostered Rellie during Hurricane Helene and it was addressed to "the family lucky enough to adopt Rellie."

"It took Rellie multiple days to warm up to us humans but she eventually did and has just been the sweetest dog," the person wrote. "I'm so grateful to have been able to foster Rellie because she is so sweet and will be a great addition to your family!"

Boone and his girlfriend thought Rellie could be a great fit for them.

"When we had seen that, we were like 'Rellie's probably the one we were looking for,'" said Boone.

HELP US INSPIRE ATLANTA

We recognize a big part of our journalistic mission is to shine a spotlight on wrongdoings and to hold our public officials accountable.

But we also understand the importance of presenting uplifting stories that celebrate our region's moments, milestones and people. We hope you enjoy our weekly feature, Inspire Atlanta, which appears in Sunday's Living & Arts section and our daily feature, The Uplift — a regular dose of touching stories from around the world.

Know someone who inspires you or makes metro Atlanta a better place for others? Email us at AJC-InspireAtlanta@ajc.com.

The couple went to the shelter that day to meet Rellie — who was shy and timid at first, as expected. Shelter staff told them that, given her skittish nature, Rellie would benefit from having a companion dog at home with her.

They had not planned to adopt two dogs, but when staff suggested Rellie's buddy Boone, it seemed meant to be. After all, Boone the

dog has the same name as Boone the human.

"One of the things that drew me to Boone is he has the same name as me," Boone said.

"When they got together, it was a night-and-day difference. We immediately saw a change in Rellie," Boone said, explaining that Rellie was more eager to interact with them when Boone

was around. "Rellie lit up; she was really confident ... Boone is her rock."

It was clear to the couple that Rellie and Boone were a package deal.

"They were really great together, and it seemed like Boone was helping Rellie come out of her shell," Boone added. Plus, "he has tons of personality."

Boone said he and Boyd were not deterred by Boone's hearing loss. Shelter staff trained him with a vibrating collar, and taught him sign language, too.

"No matter what dog we went with, they were going to require work," Boone said. "We were up for the challenge."

The couple decided to keep the doggie duo together. They adopted both dogs on Oct. 16, and staff was elated.

"That was one of the happiest days for our staff to see two of our long-term residents go home together," said Zheng. "We went out of our way to make sure this was going to happen for them."

So far, the dogs have been adjusting well to their new home — and they're still inseparable. The couple has started calling Rellie "Dakota," as they feel it suits her better. Both Boones have kept their names.

"They're constantly playing," Boone said of the dogs. "If Boone is feeling very rambunctious, Rellie matches his energy. If Rellie is wanting to be calm, Boone will accommodate her as well. They love cuddling together."

Zheng said that prospective adopters often overlook dogs like Boone and Rellie, who have had a longer stay at the shelter. She hopes this story inspires people to root for the underdogs.

"Consider the longer residents at your local shelter because they matter too and we love them," Zheng said.

Boone said he and Boyd couldn't agree more.

"It's very fulfilling," he said. "These dogs are rock solid."

Concerts

continued from C1

late Dr. Herbert and Hazel Karp, Sam and Harriett Draluck and the late Sidney Kaplan. The Dralucks ran the program from its inception through 2004, when Millender took over.

With a history degree from Emory University, Millender has been passionate about music his whole life, having played piano since childhood. He's also a longtime congregant at Ahavath Achim. Yet he crafts a secular program that doesn't cross over into its religious music and cantorial interpretations. So far, his direction of the cultural arts series has been a hit, with packed audiences and a flow of donations. One member donated a Steinway piano and another congregant, Marilyn Eckstein, put \$1 million into a trust for the series.

Ahavath Achim's secular musical offerings are by no means an outlier. A short list of other churches and synagogues in town that present professional musical concerts includes First Presbyterian on Peachtree Road, known for its Friday "Bach's Lunch" series; the Temple in Midtown; Emory's Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church; and the Cathedral of St. Philip, known for the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus' annual Christmas concert and performances by its longtime resident ensemble, the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra.

"The beautiful setting does attract many audience members," said Julie Andrijeski, artistic director and concertmaster of the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, which performed a nonreligious program there, "Dance Fever," in November. "Their hospitality toward us, from the dean to the sextons, has been extremely gracious over the many years we have been in residence, whether we are performing sacred or secular works."

The ABO has also performed at Ahavath Achim Synagogue and earlier this year presented the opera "Dido and Aeneas" at Glenn Memorial in collaboration with staibdance contemporary dance company.

On the more intimate side, Roswell's Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North has its Common Grounds Coffee House, a monthly café experience of live music from metro musicians, and, in October, All Saints' Episcopal



The pews are full as Rod Harris Jr. (left) on guitar and Andy Eulau on bass perform at All Saints' Episcopal as part of the church's Jazz at All Saints' series. PHOTOS COURTESY OF DUSTIN CHAMBERS



Pianist Gary Motley also performs at All Saints' Episcopal as part of the church's Jazz at All Saints' series.

Church launched a music series, Jazz at All Saints'.

It seems increasingly common these days to catch concerts of chamber and classical music and smaller ensembles not at performing arts centers or prestigious halls but in places of worship. But this begs the question: Why?

Part of the reason is — no surprise — money. Being tax-exempt with large donor bases and congregations, big religious institutions don't have to depend on exorbitant ticket prices to stay afloat or pay for these shows. All the music programs included

here are either free or offer tickets between \$15 and \$36. This is in comparison to the national average for popular concert tickets, which hit a new record this year at \$127.

But it's also more financially advantageous for the musicians. "I don't think that the flourishing chamber music concerts could take place if they were held in a venue where we had to pay commercial rent," said Millender of Ahavath Achim. "When you go here or to First Presbyterian, the concert promoters don't have to pay any rent."

'There's always the discussion: Is music entertainment, or is it more than that? Of course, I think it's both — but at its best and at its most central, it is a spiritual experience for me.'

William Ransom
Founder and artistic director of the Emory Chamber Music Society

vices, and, at the end of many of his compositions signed the initials "SDG," Latin for *Soli Deo Gloria* or "Glory to God alone." The same spiritual sentiments can be said of classical music's most popular composers from Vivaldi down to Dvorak, both of whom wrote sacred and secular music. Indeed, some composers' most popular compositions, such as Mozart's Requiem or Bach's Mass in B minor, are steeped in religious traditions.

"There's always the discussion: Is music entertainment, or is it more than that?" said Ransom. "Of course, I think it's both — but at its best and at its most central, it is a spiritual experience for me."

As for why it seems more of these classical and secular music programs are popping up in churches and synagogues, Ransom suggests that it might be the effect of more musicians. "Big conservatories are pumping out wonderful players every year," he said. "There are more of us now than any other time in history, and those players need somewhere to work."

Back at Ahavath Achim, Millender couldn't agree more. He's already planning next year's program and griping about scheduling around football season and the holidays. According to him, it's a rather simple answer why secular music remains so enduring in sacred spaces.

"Churches and synagogues are as much places of community gathering as places of worship," he said. "And as our current rabbi (Laurence Rosenthal) said, 'All music is spiritual in one sense or another.'"