

Your union shopping list

- By AFL-CIO
- Apparel and accessories

- * American Roots
 - * Custom Leather Canada
 - * Eyewear: Ray-Bans, Varilux lenses, Kodak, Eyezen+, BluTech eyewear
 - * Housing Works thrift stores
 - * Joseph Abboud
 - * Macy's
 - * Majestic Athletic
 - * Naturalizer shoes
 - * Nunn Bush shoes
 - * Red Wing Shoes
 - * Timex watches

Big spender

- * Harley-Davidson motorcycle
 - * A stay at a union hotel (go to www.fairhotel.org)
 - * Steinway & Sons piano
 - * A union-built car or truck (go to uaw.org)

Books, stationery stores and subscriptions

- * ACCO Brands
 - * Book Culture
 - * Comic books: Seven Seas Entertainment, Image Comics, Tender Claws
 - * Crane & Co.
 - * Goods for the Study
 - * Greenlight Bookstore
 - * Housing Works Bookstore
 - * McKay's Books
 - * McNally Jackson
 - * Politics and Prose Bookstore
 - * Roaring Spring Paper Products
 - * Union newspaper subscription from The NewsGuild-CWA member newspaper
 - * Yours Truly, Brooklyn

Beauty products

- * Avon
 - * Caress skin care
 - * ChapStick
 - * Dove beauty products
 - * L'Oréal
 - * Old Spice

Games and toys

- * Barrel of Monkeys
 - * Battleship
 - * Billiards accessories: Mizerak, Minnesota Fats, Lucasi, PureX, Rage, Players
 - * Candy Land
 - * Chutes and Ladders
 - * Clue
 - * Connect 4
 - * Darting: Unicorn, Accudart, Arachnid, Nodor, Winnau
 - * The Game of Life
 - * Game tables (hockey and soccer): Atomic, American Legend, Redline, Triumph
 - * Hi Ho! Cherry-O
 - * Monopoly
 - * Mouse Trap
 - * Noble Knight Games (store)
 - * Operation
 - * Outdoor games: Zume Games, Pickleball Now, Onix, Viva Sol, Triumph
 - * Paizo (Pathfinder and Starfinder role-playing games)
 - * Pictionary
 - * Risk
 - * Scrabble
 - * Sorry!
 - * Taboo
 - * Twister
 - * Woodplay or ChildLife play equipment
 - * Yahtzee

Homemade gifts

- * Ornaments using recycled boxes and Trait-tex® yarn
 - * Peanut butter blossoms with Hershey's Kisses
 - * Peppermint bark using Ghirardelli chocolate kisses or Hershey's Kisses

* Pies with Sara Lee frozen pie crusts

Kitchenware

- * All-Clad
 - * Anchor Hocking Company
 - * Corning
 - * Cutco
 - * Fiestaware
 - * O-I Glass

Sports equipment

- * American Athletic (Russell Brands)
 - * Archery: Bear Archery, Trophy Ridge, Whisker Biscuit, Cajun Bowfishing
 - * Baseball: Louisville Slugger
 - * Basketball goals: Goalrilla, Goaliath, Silverback, Hoopstar, Goalsetter
 - * Fitness equipment: The Step, US Weight, Lifeline Fitness, KettleWorx, Natural Fitness, PER4M
 - * Golf: MacGregor Golf clubs, Standard Golf, Callaway golf balls
 - * Indoor table games: Escalade Sports
 - * Table tennis: STIGA US, Ping-Pong, Prince

Stocking stuffers

- * Bennington Potters pottery
 - * BIC lighters
 - * Ghirardelli chocolates
 - * Hershey's chocolates
 - * Jelly Belly candies
 - * Klear Vu home textiles
 - * Laffy Taffy
 - * Natco Home furnishings
 - * Ornaments/small gifts: B-Line Engraving, Wendell August Forge, Seagull Pewter
 - * Rabble-Rouser Chocolate & Craft Co.
 - * Rayovac batteries
 - * See's Candies
 - * Tootsie Pops

Tickets

- * Meow Wolf immersive entertainment
 - * Plane travel from union-staffed airline
 - * Ski passes: Loveland Ski Area; Breckenridge, Telluride, Crested Butte Mountain, Park City Mountain
 - * Sporting events: Major League Baseball Players Association, NFL Players Association
 - * Theater and live performances: Broadway, national tours and local Actors' Equity Association (Equity) theater, Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular

Wine, beer and spirits

- * August Schell Brewing Co
 - * Bud Light
 - * Budweiser
 - * Budweiser American Ale
 - * Bulleit whiskey
 - * Busch
 - * Captain Morgan rum
 - * Charles Krug
 - * Chateau Ste. Michelle
 - * CK Mondavi
 - * Columbia Crest
 - * Gallo of Sonoma
 - * Icehouse
 - * The Lion Brewery
 - * Michelob
 - * Miller High Life, Miller Genuine Draft, Miller Lite
 - * Milwaukee's Best
 - * O'Doul's
 - * Palmer Vineyard
 - * Paumanok Vineyard
 - * Pindar Vineyards
 - * Red Dog
 - * Rolling Rock
 - * St. Supéry
-
- Annual Christmas party**
Location: Al Sihah Shrine Center
222 Mecca Drive, Macon
Date: Friday, Dec. 20
Time: 6–11 p.m.
Respond NLT Dec. 10.
RSVP 478-922-5758, Ext. 21
- # Top 10 AFGE victories in 2024
- By AFGE Leadership

1

AFGE's membership is on the rise

In 2023, AFGE grew by 5.5%, making our union the fastest growing large union in the U.S. AFGE is continuing the growth we saw in 2023, and as of the end of October, we're up to 302,400 members.

2

AFGE reached a new milestone of 300,055 members in February!

AFGE's membership stood at 300,055, reaching the 300,000-membership mark for the first time in years. A net increase of 1,397 pushed the union to the finish line at least a month early.

3

AFGE defeated a congressional attempt to eliminate workplace protections for 32,000 National Guard dual-status technicians

An amendment offered by Rep. Austin Scott, R-Ga., to the FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act would have reclassified National Guard dual-status technicians as military personnel, not federal civilian employees. Under the amendment, the dual-status technicians would be employees of the National Guard under the authority of the governors, not the civil service. That would mean the loss of collective bargaining rights for the technicians. The amendment, however, was not voted on because of AFGE's active outreach to House members of both parties explaining the reasons for its strong opposition. The amendment would have effectively reversed the ruling of the Supreme Court, which last year found that dual status technicians are more civilian than military.

4

15,000 blue-collar workers are slated to receive a raise, thanks to AFGE's success in merging locality pay maps

AFGE's two-decade fight paid off when the Office of Personnel Management took a huge step toward aligning the locality pay maps for employees on the Federal Wage System and General

5

AFGE, TSA signed a new contract with unprecedented workplace rights for nearly 50,000 TSOs

This new seven-year contract comes after years of hard work by the members of AFGE TSA Council 100. The new contract was agreed upon on March 5 after months of collective bargaining between the agency and the union. Leaders of TSA local unions nationwide ratified the contract on March 11. The new contract features several crucial new rights for TSOs, including a negotiated grievance and arbitration procedure to make it easier to resolve cases, new language to protect our members from unfair discipline, new uniform rights and higher allowance, better leave conditions, and the ability to bargain over local issues. It represents the farthest TSA officers have come in the fight for Title 5 rights.

6

AFGE formed DHA council to represent workers under a new master agreement

AFGE earlier this year formed the Defense Health Agency (DHA) Council to improve working conditions for 38,000 bargaining unit

7

More federal employees voted to join the AFGE family

Federal employees working for the U.S. Army at two locations in Germany voted to join AFGE, part of a continuing effort to expand AFGE's representation of federal employees working in Europe. In the first election, information technology employees at the Army Enterprise Service Desk, 2nd Signal Brigade, located at Kaiserslautern, Germany, voted to join AFGE, extending representation under labor statutes to 36 employees in the bargaining unit. In the second election, employees at the U.S. Army's Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, voted to join AFGE, extending representation to 163 non-appropriated fund (NAF) employees at the resort who serve in various hospitality jobs. A few months later, Inter-American Foundation employees overwhelmingly voted to join AFGE as they seek to have a voice in the workplace. The election took place on Sept. 11, and 33 employees out of 34 eligible voters voted to form a union under AFGE.

8

The House rejected an attack on official time at DoD, thanks to AFGE

Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., was leading a union-busting effort at the Department of Defense by trying to attack the official time federal workers use to work with management to fix issues at their facilities, including understaffing and morale. He offered an amendment to the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act on the House floor to require the Department of Defense to report on the use of official time, the decades-old practice that's often misrepresented to slander unions and federal workers. Thanks to AFGE's efforts educating members of

9

Biden issued an executive order creating labor-management forums

President Joe Biden issued an executive order creating labor-management forums at federal agencies to promote better relationships between management and front-line workers. The EO had a real impact as a month later, USAID and AFGE Local 1534 signed a charter establishing USAID's Labor Management Forum to foster labor-management collaboration.

10

A House committee approved an AFGE-backed bill allowing VA employees to challenge paycheck errors

At the urging of AFGE, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee approved H.R. 6538, the VA Correct Compensation Act, which would allow Title 38 employees to challenge payment errors. The bill was needed because for over 30 years the VA has often refused to correct payment errors in the paychecks of Title 38 employees – physicians, dentists, podiatrists, registered nurses, physician assistants, optometrists, chiropractors, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries. These employees may be required to work extra hours but may not receive overtime pay, shift differentials, and other payments they're entitled to. Federal pay rates for VA employees are not subject to substantive negotiation. The law enacted in 1991 was originally intended to prevent employees and federal unions from negotiating or filing grievances over the salaries paid to Title 38 employees. But because of the way the VA broadly interprets its authority under Title 38 Section 7422, it can preemptively deny an employee's grievance challenging a simple payroll error.
- Did you know?

If you recruit a new member, you get \$50 and the new member gets \$150. Sign up on your own and you get \$200. (Note: Restrictions apply if you got out of the union; i.e. you had to have been out for at least a year.)
- Volunteers are still needed for the following committees:

YOUNG

Stewards

Resolution

Training and Education

Grievance/Arbitration

Publicity

Fair Practice

Retiree

Women's

Entertainment

Veterans

Call Union Hall at 478-922-5758 for more information or to sign up.



Capt. Elizabeth Lee, 78th Medical Group physician assistant, right, provides medical treatment to a triaged patient during a mass casualty decontamination exercise conducted at Robins Air Force Base Nov. 20. This real world-based scenarios allowed Airmen to put their emergency medical training into action in a rapidly changing and robust simulated environment. (U.S. Air Force photo by Jerry Foltz)

78th Medical Group conducts mass decontamination exercise

By **JERRY FOLTZ**
78th Air Base Wing
Public Affairs

The 78th Medical Group conducted in-place patient mass decontamination training Nov. 20 at the base medical facility located at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia.

The three-hour long training evolution tested both the facility and staff for an emergent crisis.

“Today’s scenario involved a simulated water treatment facility exploding, which housed chlorine,” said Mike Daniel, 78th MDG medical emergency manager. “Patients exhibited all kinds of mock medical emergencies from chlorine, gas fuel and sulfuric gas inhalation to burns, shrapnel, cuts and scrapes.”

Medical personnel assumed the roles of disoriented and incoherent patients, touting pre-fabricated lacerations, gouges, burns and blisters. Makeup artists were on hand to apply finishing touches, consisting of cocoa powder, red dye, gum paste and cornstarch, to give performers a gruesome appearance.

The added realism presented a more profound sense of medical urgency.

As the exercise commenced and alert given, patient decontamination team members converged outside, inflating a decontamination wash-down tent. For full setup, staff needed to have water heaters hooked up and four personnel suited up in Powered Air-Purifying Respirator gear within 15 minutes. The remainder of the team had to gear up five minutes after to receive critically injured patients.

As patients approached the decontamination tent entrance area, they were assessed by priority, washed off, and decontaminated in the shelter area to prevent further cross contamination.

After decontamination, manpower and security team members transported the injured to the waiting triage area located inside the 78th MDG building. There, Airmen had to quickly access, triage, and process patients in a high-paced emergency environment.

“Patients will walk in, and

we’ll have to triage them to see who get seen first. We treat their wounds and pass them over to higher responsive care,” said 1st Lt. Tyrell Brown, 78th MDG Medical Readiness Office flight commander and training evolution supervisor.

“There were a lot of moving parts,” said Airman 1st Class Danalee Rivera, 78th Medical Group aerospace medical technician. “I was a little overwhelmed, but I just followed my training. I focused on the patient in front of me by providing the clinical care they needed for their particular injury.”

“It was a little chaotic, which could happen in a real-life situation,” said Brown.

Exercises like this allow Airmen to put their emergency medical training into action in a rapidly changing and robust simulated environment. Although the exercise was in preparation for annual certifications, the focus of staff was patient well-being.

“The more we prepare, the better we’ll be should the need arise,” said Brown.



78th Medical Group Manpower team members transport a patient from the decontamination wash down tent to a nearby triage area for medical treatment during the mass casualty decontamination drill. This real world-based exercise allowed Airmen to put their emergency medical training into action in a rapidly changing and robust simulated environment. (U.S. Air Force photo by Jerry Foltz)

461st Operations Support Squadron inactivates

By **PATRICK SULLIVAN**
78th Air Base Wing
Public Affairs

The 461st Operations Support Squadron, under the 461st Air Control Wing, inactivated at Robins Air Force Base Nov. 15.

The 461st OSS was the final squadron of the 461st ACW that once supported the E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System mission, which retired in late 2023.

“Without exception and without hesitation, Airmen and Soldiers from Team JSTARS left their families to deploy forward and operate within contested airspace and over hostile terrain,” said Col. Michael Lynch, 461st Operations Group commander, during the inactivation ceremony. “To the men and women of the OSS, you were instrumental in ensuring



Col. Michael Lynch, left, 461st Operations Group commander, receives the 461st OSS guidon from Lt. Col. Richard Holt, 461st Operational Support Squadron commander, during the 461st OSS inactivation ceremony at Robins Air Force Base Nov. 15. (U.S. Air Force photo by Patrick Sullivan)

BBB: Use caution before clicking on shopping surveys

We’re in the midst of the holiday shopping season, and you may see offers for the best deals yet. It can feel even more exciting if you see a claim that as part of a holiday deal, the “company” is offering a free product, discount, or gift card to anyone who completes a short questionnaire or survey. Unfortunately, some of these offers are fake and you will need to use caution.

Real businesses use surveys to understand their customers or get feedback on their products and service. However, phony surveys have become a very common way for scammers to phish for personal information.

These schemes typically come via text messages and emails containing links that could even lead to the theft of valuable account information from unsuspecting victims.

Why do scammers use surveys? Most people like to give their opinions – especially if there’s a discount or other reward on offer. While someone might put up their guard during a sales pitch, surveys can seem harmless, meaning it’s easy to accidentally share information that a scammer can use.

How it works:

Typically, these messages will falsely claim to be from a well-known chain store to try to add authenticity. They also usually push for quick action.

If you click on the provided link, you won’t go to the store’s official website. Instead, it will take you to a third-party website where you’ll be asked to fill out a form that asks you for personal information, such as your full name, address, email, and more.

Even if you don’t provide your details, just by clicking the link you could be downloading malware - including spyware - onto your device. Spyware is software used by scammers to monitor the information you’re typing. This means they could capture your login information and passwords to gain access to your online accounts, including bank accounts.

You can identify and avoid fake surveys,



Kelvin Collins

using these tips:

Watch out for rewards that sound too good to be true. Remember that legitimate businesses run surveys to understand their customers. They may offer a modest discount to encourage participation, but the reward is not the focus.

If someone offers you a valuable product or gift card in exchange for completing a two-minute survey, it’s probably a scam.

Limited time offers could be a red flag. Scammers often use a sense of urgency to get their victims to hand over valuable information without thinking. Be careful if a text message says something like, “If you complete this survey in the next 10 minutes, you’ll win a prize!”

Don’t let yourself be pushed into action without really examining the message first.

Remember that scammers conceal their identity. Many scam surveys are very vague about their purpose and who is running them. If you can’t figure out who or where the survey is coming from, don’t take it.

Watch for typos, bad grammar, and incorrect company logos. Scammers can easily copy a brand’s name, but awkward wording and poor grammar are typically a giveaway that the message is a scam. Other times, scammers might not use the right company logo.

Hover over URLs to reveal their true destination. Typically, the hyperlinked text will say one thing, but the link will point somewhere else. Make sure the links actually lead to the business’s official website, not a variation of the domain name. But don’t click on it to find out. Simply hover over it to see what site it shows is associated with the link.

Do some research. If you aren’t sure about a survey, do an internet search to find out more information. Look for links to the survey on a business’s official website. You can also

See SURVEYS, page 3

Medal of Honor spotlight Army Sgt. 1st Class Sammy Davis

By **KATIE LANGE**
DoD News

When a huge wave of Viet Cong troops threatened to overwhelm Army Sgt. 1st Class Sammy Lee Davis’ battalion at a small fire base in Vietnam, he jumped into action to fight back.

Despite suffering several injuries, Davis traversed a river to save three of his comrades and did what he could to stop the onslaught. He received the Medal of Honor for his efforts.

Davis was born on Nov. 1, 1946, in Dayton, Ohio, to Robert and Bonnie Davis. Due to his father’s job, his family moved around a lot, and he was raised mostly outside of Stockton, California.

Davis went to Manteca High School in Manteca, California, where he played football and was on the diving team, according to a 2010 article in the town’s local newspaper, the Manteca Bulletin. When his family moved to Indiana in his senior year, he decided to enlist in the military. So, in September 1966, after graduating from Mooresville High School, he joined the Army just as the war in Vietnam was escalating.

At the time, Davis said he felt like he needed to do his



Photo courtesy defense.gov

Army Sgt. 1st Class Sammy Davis

part because everyone else in his family had. His father served in World War II and his grandfather served in the Spanish-American War. One of his three brothers, Buddy, served in Korea, while another brother, Darrell, was already serving in Vietnam, he told the Manteca Bulletin.

Davis became a cannoneer and was assigned to Battery C of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Artillery, 9th Infantry Division. In March of 1967, his unit was sent to Vietnam.

By November 1967, the enemy had extended the Ho Chi Minh Trail south from North Vietnam through Cambodia and Laos so they could attempt to enter far South Vietnam along the Mekong Delta, an

area known for its vast maze of rivers, swamps and islands surrounded by rice paddies.

On Nov. 18, Davis was in that area at a remote support base, Firebase Cudgel, located among a reed-filled plain with little islands toward its middle. His battalion had been charged with trying to find enemy units hiding in the area.

Around 2 a.m., the base came under heavy mortar attack. About 30 minutes later, a Viet Cong battalion of about 1,500 troops launched a fierce ground assault. They managed to push in close enough, with only a small river about 35 meters wide separating the enemy from the fire support base.

According to Davis’ Medal of Honor citation, Davis grabbed a machine gun and blasted it at the enemy to cover for his artillery crew as they tried to fire their howitzer. In the middle of that attempt, an enemy recoilless rifle round landed a direct hit on the howitzer, causing a blast that blew the gun crew away from the weapon and tossed Davis into a foxhole about 8-10 meters away.

The blast caused dozens of injuries to Davis’ back and legs and it knocked him out. He woke up when other U.S. soldiers fired a beehive round, which contains thousands of smaller projectiles that look like small arrows that expand outward when fired. The round was meant for the enemy, but it struck Davis, too, because

See HONOR, page 3

THE UNION ADVOCATE

Published by the American Federation of Government Employees Local 987, Warner Robins, Georgia.

Contents of The Union Advocate are not necessarily the official view of AFGE Local 987, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of the Air Force or The Document Company.

The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts, does not constitute endorsement by The Union Advocate, AFGE Local 987 or the Department of Defense.

Printer
Houston Home Journal
Editor/layout and design
Don Moncrief

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Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by AFGE Local 987. Submitted news and editorial content/photographs are welcome - applicability to AFGE Local 987’s mission to be determined by the discretion of the editor and/or president.

Please submit articles, photos, etc to don.moncrief@afge-local 987.org. For questions about story content, to pass on story ideas or to request coverage, please contact the aforementioned.

5 Tips to Upgrade Your Sleep



FAMILY FEATURES

Good sleep isn't just about waking up feeling rested and ready for the day. Quality sleep, and plenty of it, is important for your overall health. While you sleep, your body naturally recharges itself, which puts you at lower risk for cardiovascular problems and chronic conditions like diabetes, as well as improving your immune system.

Sleep also contributes to better brain function, memory, concentration and lower stress. According to the National Institutes of Health, most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep every night to achieve maximum health benefits.

If you're falling short of the recommended amount of sleep, you may be able to make some adjustments that help you reap the health benefits of better rest. Learn what you can do to improve your sleep with these tips from the experts in safer, healthier sleep at Naturepedic.

Reduce Light Exposure

Your body's natural circadian rhythms are closely aligned with light and dark. When your body senses light, it sends signals to your brain that it's time to be awake. Light also suppresses your body's production of melatonin, a hormone linked to sleep. Cutting back on bright lights and avoiding devices at least an hour before bed can tell your body it's time to wind down, and sleeping in a dark room promotes better rest.

Invest in the Right Mattress

Your mattress plays a major role in your comfort through the night, so making sure it fits your needs is an important step toward getting better rest. Take control of your comfort with a quality mattress such as Naturepedic's EOS (Ergonomic

Organic Sleep) mattress, which is hand-crafted and made without polyurethane foam, formaldehyde, flame retardants or fiberglass. The breathable layers of certified organic cotton, wool and GOTS-approved latex ensure better temperature regulation while naturally contouring the body. An added feature is the ability to customize each side of the bed by opening the zippers and adjusting the layered components for the perfect comfort combination.

Find the Right Sheets

Sheets that are too stiff, scratchy or otherwise unpleasant make it nearly impossible to settle in for a good night's rest. Higher thread counts tend to be softer, higher quality sheets. However, you may need to experiment to find which material suits you best.

Set a Comfortable Temperature

When you're too hot or cold, your mind tends to focus on those sensations rather than allowing you to slip into a slumber. Set your thermostat at a comfortable temperature, adding fans or adjusting the layers of bedding as necessary to achieve the perfect level of cozy comfort.

Use a Sound Machine

If you're a light sleeper, noise can wreak havoc on your rest. Many people find sound machines offer two key benefits: They provide a soothing sound, such as rain or ocean waves, that allows you to relax and ease into slumber and constant background noise, so additional sounds are less disruptive.

Find more solutions for achieving better sleep at Naturepedic.com.

Sleeping in Separate Beds

Sleeping in separate beds or rooms is a choice made by many couples, but results show it has less to do with the health of the relationship and more to do with quality sleep.

According to a survey by Naturepedic, more than 40% of couples who share a bed reported that sleep issues have caused them to question their relationship. Snoring, conflicting sleep schedules and different temperature preferences were frequently cited as concerns. However, motion transfer and mattress comfort were also reasons people said they miss having their own beds.

A bed that allows each person to customize their comfort can alleviate those problems. For

example, Naturepedic's EOS mattress allows you to adjust the layered components inside to achieve the perfect comfort combination on each side.

That's potentially good news for couples who sleep apart, as 33% of respondents reported having different mattress firmness and softness preferences, which ultimately led to their decision.

"When it comes to sleeping together, these survey results bring to light how critical personalized mattress comfort is," said Barry Cik, founder and technical director of Naturepedic. "Luckily, you don't have to choose between having a good relationship or a good night's sleep."



SURVEYS

From page 2

do a search using the survey name and the word "scam" to see if there are any reports about it being a fake. Feel free to call your BBB at 800-763-4222 for assistance as well.

While the holidays can be a peak time for these messages, you should stay alert for similar survey scams all year round. For more information, check out BBB's signs of a fake survey, which includes real examples of fake surveys. If you've spotted a survey scam, please report it to BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report can help others avoid falling victim.

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Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus. The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: 1-800-763-4222, website: BBB.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org

HONOR

From page 2

his fellow soldiers didn't realize he was still alive.

Davis struggled to his feet and went back to the damaged, burning howitzer from which he had been blown away. Despite taking on continued enemy fire, he rammed a beehive shell into the gun and fired. The artillery piece rolled backward and knocked Davis to the ground again, breaking his third lumbar vertebra, according to his first-person interview with the Indianapolis Star in 1988.

Davis got back up and returned to the weapon, firing again just as an enemy mortar exploded within 20 meters of him. Davis suffered more painful injuries, but he kept going. He loaded and fired the howitzer four more times.

Soon after, Davis noticed a U.S. soldier across the river waving his arms and asking for help for himself and others. Davis knew his injuries left him unable to swim, but he disregarded that thought and looked around to find something to help him across. When he found an air mattress, he struck out across the river to rescue his wounded comrades.

As enemy troops aimed at Davis, he hopped into the water and held onto the air mattress until he got to the wounded men. Davis told the Indianapolis Star that he

threw the most seriously injured man over his back and carried the other two in his arms as he started to wade back across the river. He said as the enemy fired at them, he had to continually stop his progress to take his gun and shoot at them before he could try to move forward again with the three men.

Finally, they made it back to the fire support base side of the river. Davis handed off the men he helped, but instead of getting medical attention himself, he tried to aide a fellow soldier with a massive chest wound before joining another howitzer crew. That team continued to fire at the Viet Cong forces until the enemy finally fled around daybreak.

Davis told the Indianapolis Star that he helped load all of the injured and fallen men into helicopters to be evacuated. It wasn't until someone pointed out his awful leg injuries that he, too, realized he needed help. Davis was one of 42 soldiers at the base when the fight began. Four hours later, only 12 were left alive.

In December 1968, Davis married Peggy Jo Martin, whom he met while home on leave from Vietnam. They settled down in Illinois, her home state, and had three children.

In the decades since receiving the Medal of Honor, Davis has been an advocate for Vietnam veterans, fighting to gain compensation and medical assistance for those affected by Agent Orange.

INACTIVATES

From page 2

this happened on timelines to support combatant commanders around the globe."

Under the JSTARS mission, members of the 461st OSS supported over 3,000 combat sorties providing 27,000 hours of command and control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance coverage, and orchestrated the deployment of 8,000 members.

The unit also provided direct support to over 7,000 home-station sorties and 715 large force exercises, while providing SERE training, or Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape, in addition to life support training and altitude chamber courses, to over 26,000 aircrew.

As the 461st ACW mission evolved over the last year, the 461st OSS was a key player in getting the wing's new mission moving quickly and effectively.

"As the JSTARS mission sunset and the new Battlespace Control Center mission stood up, the OSS was pivotal in getting the first ever active duty BCC crews out the door to support efforts in the U.S. Central Command region again, but in a far different roll," said Lynch.

As the 461st OSS inactivated, its members transitioned to key roles across the 461st ACW, continuing to provide support to the wing's rapidly changing mission.

"Today we have inactivated the 461st OSS but make no mistake, the slogan you see on that patch in front of you, 'Emitte Lucem et Veritatem,' means that Aquila Nation will continue to send forth light and truth from wherever the Air Force sends us," said Lt. Col. Richard Holt, the 461st OSS commander.



JOIN AFGE IN 4 EASY STEPS

STEP 1:

Go to www.joinafge.org



STEP 2:

Select your Agency and Local Number



STEP 3:

Fill out the one-page membership form and click "Join"



STEP 4:

If you're a new member, select a rebate campaign and fill out the brief form (local participation may vary)



Ecommerce in 2025



Photos courtesy of Shutterstock

5 trends shaping the future of online selling

FAMILY FEATURES

Thanks to the explosion of ecommerce over the past couple decades, consumers can find virtually any product or service they can think of online. In fact, the consumer ecommerce market is expected to approach \$6 trillion by 2027, according to the International Trade Administration, up from roughly \$4 trillion in 2024.

A diverse collection of product segments is driving this growth, including everything from fashion and furniture to food and beverage. While major marketplace retailers still lead the category, ecommerce has become commonplace among small businesses, too. In fact, by the end of 2023, an estimated 80% of small businesses had at least basic ecommerce capabilities, according to a report by Digital Commerce 360.

However, small businesses are grappling with challenges such as inflation, supply chain issues and keeping pace with major retailers, among others, that are driving a variety of ecommerce trends in 2025 and beyond, including:

Video Content

Spurred by social media, video content is in high demand on ecommerce sites, too. Videos that explain how to use products, offer tips for using them and demonstrate projects that were completed using a product all earn favor with shoppers. In addition, videos that highlight product features, video reviews on social media and “live shopping events” on the social channels of ecommerce retailers can provide a more appealing interactive experience for shoppers.

Inclusive of the “live shopping events” trends, livestreaming is often popular among consumers as it can create a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out), leading to enhanced brand loyalty and engagement. Short-form videos sweeping social media also drive engagements and offer a quick, appealing way to demonstrate new or popular products.

Personalized Products

Ecommerce provides opportunities for shoppers who appreciate buying products that are uniquely their own. Online buying platforms that allow for customization of products such as shoes, clothing and drinkware can create buyer engagement and earn loyal shoppers who know they can purchase the items they want exactly to their own specifications. In fact, a survey by McKinsey Insights found 80% of loyal customers prefer shopping with brands that offer tailored choices and personalized experiences. From color selection and accessories to performance variations, custom options can help

create a highly personalized shopping experience that allow buyers to interact more directly than they would for a standardized transaction.

Beyond the initial purchase, customized reports and shipping notifications are also becoming the norm. Shippers can alert customers to their products’ delivery status – including any delays or changes – via email, text, video message or, in some cases, a customizable dashboard where consumers can view incoming shipments tied to their account or address, request a different delivery time or location, pre-sign for packages and more.

Micro Purchasing Moments

You may think phenomena like impulse buys or convenience purchases are reserved for brick-and-mortar stores, but micro-purchasing trends suggest otherwise. These purchases are typically made by someone looking for a quick solution or information in a hurry from a mobile device, such as comparing two or more similar products and clicking a “buy now” link, ordering and paying for food ahead of time to skip the line, making a hotel or excursion reservation while traveling or looking up movie showtimes and purchasing tickets from the same page. Ecommerce sites that can establish themselves as a resource, make information easy to digest and simplify the purchasing process are earning customers (and revenue).

Flexible Payment Options

Online purchases were once limited almost exclusively to credit card purchases, but over time, businesses have granted greater flexibility to shoppers when it comes to collecting payment. While this trend has been growing for several years, many contemporary ecommerce sites now accept credit or debit cards, online checks, digital wallet and mobile payment services, cryptocurrency and even installment payments via third-party providers. By 2029, the third-party payment market is expected to almost double from \$62.5 billion in 2024, according to findings from Mordor Intelligence.

Simplified Shipping Options

Evolving technology isn’t just improving the browsing and purchasing side of ecommerce; shipping operations are also seeing enhancements. For example, ShipAccel, a digital platform designed by Pitney Bowes, simplifies and enhances shipping operations with advanced ecommerce technology. The platform empowers early ecommerce brands to ship like larger companies with access to discounted carrier rates; more than 80 integrations including leading marketplaces, data and insights to

help make smarter shipping decisions; branded tracking; and return capabilities. It features a collection of apps, widgets and application programming interfaces to easily configure new workflows and seamlessly meet the demands of business growth.

“As ecommerce becomes a mainstay, shippers must take a technology-first approach, utilizing platforms that can grow along with the business and partnering with providers who offer

deep expertise in the segment,” said Shemin Nurmohamed, president of Sending Technology Solutions at Pitney Bowes. “As a result of using technology like ShipAccel, ecommerce shippers can save money, enhance operational efficiencies and delight customers – all of which support the business’ bottom line.”

Find more shipping support for your ecommerce business in the coming year at shipaccel.com.



Easy ECommerce Shipping Tips

Whether you’re a buyer or a seller, getting smart about shipping can help improve your ecommerce experience.

Be cost-conscious. Buyers obviously benefit from lower costs, but as a seller, managing shipping costs means more revenue. Volume discounts and options for lower prices with longer shipping times can make a bigger impact than you might expect. A shipping partner that has pre-negotiated discounted rates with carriers can deliver significant savings to your business, too.

Reduce package sizes. Using boxes or padded envelopes that closely fit the product being shipped can reduce weight and therefore the cost to send it to the customer. Also avoid excess packaging that adds bulk, which adds cost and waste.

Utilize advanced tracking tools. Keep tracking information for everything you ship or buy so you can monitor its safe delivery or, if problems arise, promptly identify and correct the issue. An option like ShipAccel uniquely provides branded tracking updates so your business stays front and center with your customer from click to porch.



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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

What do you call a cow that won't give milk? A milk dud.

My friend memorized all of the amphibians. Now he has toadal recall.

In Your Closet

SSBI EYENOMSTNEMURTSNIE
REMOKGYBRANPILLSPULHUS
EVYSRGEZSHHEDSLJCJNAJH
TOSROLASETUPFPAOETABBO
ALJ RTHVMEJARBLDUBAXBUE
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SWEATERS

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HATS
JEANS
MOVIES
ROBE
SHOE RACK
TIES

BOXES
GLOVES
INSTRUMENTS
JEWELRY
PILLS
SCARF
SHOES
WALLET

A little humor ...

Adam and Eve began to argue with each other almost immediately after the fall. In fact, for supper Adam came to Eve quite upset saying, "You've messed up again Eve, you've put my pants in the salad!"

Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible, and he picked it up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed in between the pages. "Momma, look what I found," the boy called out. "What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked. With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered: "I think it's Adam's

STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

THEME: HAPPY HOLIDAYS

ACROSS

1. F, unit of electrical capacity
6. *Buche de Noël, e.g.
9. What influencers do?
13. Yemeni's neighbor
14. Another word for Tokyo
15. Singer Ross of "Where Did Our Love Go" fame
16. Laundry room fire hazard, pl.
17. Much of it about nothing?
18. Furnish with a fund
19. **A Bad Moms Christmas" actress Bell
21. *Tiny Tim creator
23. Tibetan ox
24. Khrushchev's domain
25. *Goo on real Christmas tree
28. Sketch
30. *Poinsettia's motherland
35. "_____ Good Men", movie
37. Brussels' org.
39. Plant fungus
40. Reluctant
41. Klutzy
43. **"It's beginning to look _____ like..."
44. Domains
46. Bog down
47. Oxen connector
48. Under epidermis
50. Mums' mums
52. Over, poetically
53. Alleviate
55. _____ Mahal
57. *Tanne in "O Tannenbaum" (2 words)
61. *It is feliz to Feliciano
65. Radioshow host: "Hello, you're _____"
66. Knot-tying vow (2 words)
68. Dispatch boat
69. Carthage's ancient neighbor
70. *Egg____
71. Oil lamp dweller

DOWN

72. Fishing poles
73. Bigheadedness
74. Painter Degas
1. Lore people
2. Mideast ruler
3. Hindu princess
4. Jittery
5. Farthest from point of origin
6. Ground beef description
7. Like Lemmon and Matthau together
8. Merchandise
9. Swim's alternative
10. Dwyane, once of Miami Heat
11. Any day now, to Shakespeare
12. Swerves
15. King's order
20. Increasing
22. Philosophy ending
24. Undo, as in strings
25. Green side
26. Before, in the olden days
27. J.M. Barrie's Pan
29. "Howdy, _____!"
31. Internal picture
32. Meltable home
33. Singer Sam of "Twistin' the Night Away" fame
34. Weasel's aquatic cousin
36. **"Last Christmas" band, with !
38. Edible pod
42. Busybody, in Yiddish
45. Mountain range
49. Certain fraternity house letters
51. Cruel
54. Île de la Cité river
56. Tripped the light fantastic
57. *Number of ghosts in "A Christmas Carol"
58. **"He's Just Not That _____ You", movie
59. Police's surprise
60. Habitual twitches
61. Not happening (2 words)
62. Minor bumper damage
63. "Heat of the Moment" band
64. Opposite of talker?
67. *The Grinch's Max

CROSSWORD

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STR8TS

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Previous solution - Medium

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How to beat **Str8ts** – Like Sudoku, no single number can repeat in any row or column. But... rows and columns are divided by black squares into **compartments**. These need to be filled in with numbers that complete a 'straight'. A **straight** is a set of numbers with no gaps but can be in any order, eg [4,2,3,5]. Clues in black cells remove that number as an option in that row and column, and are not part of any straight. Glance at the solution to see how 'straights' are formed.

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You can find more help and strategies at www.str8ts.com along with more puzzles, Apple apps and books.

In visiting members of his church one afternoon, a clergyman knocked at the door of a church member but received no response. He was annoyed because he could hear footsteps and knew the mother of the family must be there. The pastor left his calling card, writing on it: "Revelation 3:20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." The next Sunday, as the congregation filed out of the church after the service, the woman who had refused to answer the door greeted the pastor and handed him her card, with "Genesis 3:10" written on it. Later, the pastor looked up the passage and read: "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

When God asked Adam why he had eaten from the forbidden fruit, man blamed it on the woman, the woman blamed it on the serpent, and the serpent was left without a leg to stand on!

Most people would learn from their mistakes if they

weren't so busy trying to place the blame on someone else.

A little boy was asked to name the first man. He promptly answered, "Adam." Then, he was asked to name the first woman. He pondered long and hard and finally suggested, "Madam."

Children's Church teacher:

Class, what do you know about Adam's wife, Eve?" Children's Church student: "I think her first name is really Christmas, you know, Christmas Eve."

The Children's Church teacher asked her class, "Does anyone know who lived in the Garden of Eden?" I do, Madame," said little Jewel, "It was the Adams Family."

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Classic Desserts That Combine Christmases Past and Present



Coconut Cake
Recipe courtesy of “Cookin’ Savvy”

- 1 vanilla or white cake mix
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup coconut Greek yogurt
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 3 eggs

Frosting:

- 1 stick butter, softened
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- 5 cups powdered sugar
- 2-4 cups shredded coconut

Heat oven to 350 F.
In mixing bowl, mix cake mix, flour and sugar. Blend in yogurt, milk, butter and eggs.

Grease two 8-inch cake pans with butter. Pour half the mixture into each pan and bake 45 minutes. Cool on rack before icing.
To make frosting: In mixing bowl, mix butter, cream cheese and heavy whipping cream. Slowly blend in powdered sugar.
Ice cake then pat shredded coconut gently into icing.



Coconut Cake

FAMILY FEATURES

If holiday gatherings have started to feel more overwhelming than celebratory, it’s time to go back to the basics with seasonal desserts that are easy yet elegant. Wow your crowd this year with a mouthwatering Hummingbird Cake or Coconut Cake that call to mind holidays past without requiring hours spent in the kitchen (like grandma used to do). Or for a classic take on an old favorite, these Christmas Cinnamon Cookies can even let the kiddos get involved – just make the dough then have your little helpers use their favorite cookie cutters to make festive shapes before the oven does the rest of the work. Find these recipes and more from “Cookin’ Savvy” at Culinary.net.

Hummingbird Cake
Recipe courtesy of “Cookin’ Savvy”

- 1 spice cake mix
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup banana cream Greek yogurt
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup crushed pineapple
- 1 cup crushed pecans
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons melted butter

Frosting:

- 1 stick butter, softened
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- 5 cups powdered sugar
- 1 package pecans (optional)

Heat oven to 350 F.
In mixing bowl, mix spice mix and sugar. Blend in yogurt, eggs and pineapple. In separate bowl, mix pecans, flour and butter then add to cake mixture.
Grease two 8-inch cake pans with butter. Pour half the mixture into each pan then bake 45 minutes. Cool on rack before icing.
To make frosting: In mixing bowl, mix butter, cream cheese and heavy whipping cream. Slowly blend in powdered sugar.
Ice cake then decorate with pecans, if desired.



Hummingbird Cake

Christmas Cinnamon Cookies
Recipe courtesy of “Cookin’ Savvy”

- 1 2/3 cups self-rising flour
- 2 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon cloves
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons water (optional)
- 1 cup powdered sugar (optional)

In mixing bowl, combine flour, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, sugar, brown sugar and egg to make dough. If dough is too dry to form into ball, add water. Form into log and wrap in parchment paper. Refrigerate 1 hour.
Heat oven to 350 F.
Roll dough out and cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Place on cookie sheet covered in parchment paper and bake 8-10 minutes. Let cool on rack then dust with powdered sugar, if desired.



Christmas Cinnamon Cookies

