



THE CARROLL COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES CENTER RECOGNIZES SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

SAMIRA BARNETT

Contributing Writer

The Carroll County Mental Health Advocates (CCMHA) is a non-profit organization that is committed to providing support, resources and education to individuals and families impacted by mental illness and addiction in Carroll County.

“One of our six components and services to the community is awareness and education,” said Jodie Goodman, Executive Director of the Mental Health Advocates Center. “That includes suicide prevention and awareness.”

This month, the organization has partnered with other organizations to raise awareness about suicide in the community. The first which was held, Saturday, Sept. 10 in Coweta County with their local pathways, the community service board.

“They were doing a suicide prevention awareness walk and coping skills fair,” said Goodman. “The theme is no one walks alone.”

The organization is planning an annual event that will continue to raise awareness about mental illnesses.

“We are gearing up for our biggest fundraiser of the year which is our masquerade ball,” said Goodman. “It is masking mental illness which is our annual event.”

The Masquerade Ball will be hosted Oct. 1, 2022. The Carroll County Family Connection, a partner agency, also offers a QPR (question, persuade and refer training) education class, to help those who may be afraid to reach out on their own. It is a 75-minute training to help individuals recognize the warning signs for someone at risk for suicide and how to respond.



Image courtesy Carroll County Mental Health Advocates

“It is a very powerful class of training,” said Goodman. “It teaches you to ask the really hard questions.”

This will be held Sept. 29, from 4 to 7 p.m. at City Station. It is open to all individuals. To register, visit Carroll County Family Connection on Facebook and scan the QR code, or send an email to youth@ccyouthmentalhealth.org.

An SOS survivors of suicide loss support group is also held at the Center. This is held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. It can be found at their office, 118 S White St.

“It is open to anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide,” Goodman said. “You don’t have to sign up, you just show up.”

If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988 or 911 in an emergency.

“Just know that you are not alone,” said Goodman. “Call someone no matter what the problem is. Nothing, nothing, nothing is worth losing your life over. We can talk about it; nothing is that great that we can’t work through it.”

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SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH: WAYS TO SPREAD AWARENESS AND GET INVOLVED

BRITTANY MERSFELDER

Editor-in-Chief

September is known nationally as Suicide Prevention Month. Across the nation, many organizations, such as the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), hold events that break the stigma of suicide. These events are hosted online, on college campuses and locally.

AFSP has a mission to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide. In one way or another, many Americans have been affected by suicide. Some may have lost a family member or friend while others have contemplated thoughts of suicide. The topic is not an easy one to talk about for most. AFSP wants to make it easier for all of us to heal and discuss what shouldn’t be considered shameful.

Education on the topic is key to helping those we

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Image Courtesy of The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

love. AFSP runs a virtual program that aims to prevent suicide.

“Talks Saves Lives is a rudimentary program around understanding the signs and symptoms of suicide and how to prevent it,” said Kristen Petillo, the area director for the Atlanta, Ga. chapter. “It is a complimentary program. Its to understand the commonalities and how someone may be at risk for suicide.

“If someone’s speech or behavior has changed, [the program teaches] how to speak safely about suicide and how to reach out to someone you may be concerned about,” continued Petillo. “It wraps around what it looks like and how to have that conversation in an empowering way to express that you care about someone.”

AFSP also hosts walk events

called Out of The Darkness walks. AFSP will be partnering with the Cranford family once again by hosting a walk locally in Carrollton. This will be the second annual Out of The Darkness walk in Carrollton. The walks were started by Carrollton local Olivia Cranford with the help of her mother, Becky Cranford.

“When I was nine years old, my brother died by suicide,” said Olivia Cranford. “That’s had a big impact on our lives.”

Olivia began looking for ways to connect and create a safe space for others affected by suicide in Carrollton.

“She found AFSP online,” said Becky Cranford. “She had started a blog called Hide and Seek and she wrote it for AFSP. After that she really wanted to find more ways to have an impact.”

AFSP has helped the Cranford family reach a larger than expected audience for their walks. Last year, over 400 attendees came for the first inaugural walk. This year they are expecting over 500 attendees.

The walk will be held on Oct. 30.

AFSP is always looking for volunteers to help spread their message about suicide prevention. If you are interested in volunteering, please head to <https://afsp.org/> and fill out the form online. If you or a loved one are experiencing suicidal thoughts, please dial 988. This number will direct you to the suicide hotline.

NEWS

PROJECT SAFE TO HOST EVENTS TO BRING AWARENESS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

ANNA ROBERTS

Contributing Writer

Project Safe is a non-profit organization working to end domestic violence in Athens, Ga. and surrounding areas through various supportive services, system change advocacy, prevention and education. Founded in the late 1970s, Project Safe began as a volunteer enterprise with individuals setting up hotlines in their homes with some even opening up their homes as shelters. Today, Project Safe has expanded to having their own emergency and confidential domestic violence shelter, 24/7 hotline and teen textline, housing assistance, a thrift store, legal advocacy and financial assistance available. Project Safe is able to keep costs low and continue to provide assistance by utilizing volunteers, student interns and seeking donations of goods and services along with monetary ones. Each month they post on their so-

cial media a list of much needed items that range from toilet paper to phone cards, depending on what survivors need the most. They are excited to be reintroducing their annual events, some of which they haven't done since before the COVID-19 pandemic. "We're very excited to be hosting our 'Groovy Nights' event in the next few months," said Aysha Joyner, a Youth Educator and Advocate for Project Safe. "On Sept. 24th, we will be hosting our 'Groovy Night,' a lip-sync battle performed by local community leaders! We have seven teams signed up to compete and are really looking forward to getting the community together to have fun, while also bringing awareness to domestic violence." Along with the many supportive services available, Project Safe focuses on domestic violence prevention and education as well. "Our emergency services focus primarily on getting victims out of abusive situations, and aiding during that transition period that can be extremely difficult for some," said Joyner. "The program I oversee is Breaking Silence, which is focused on domestic violence prevention. I go to schools in our service area and do presentations focused on healthy and unhealthy relationships, boundary setting and what those things look like. We go to schools and discuss with students as young as fourth grade and as old as college students." Project Safe will be hosting their Jessica Nowell Memorial



Image courtesy of Project Safe

Stomp Out Domestic Violence Step Show again this December which hosts step teams from schools all across their areas of service who compete and win prizes based on who raises the most money, all of which gets donated back to Project Safe and their programs. *If you, or anyone you know is struggling with domestic violence please reach out to the Project Safe hotline: (706)-543-331 or teen textline: (706)-765-8019.*



Image courtesy of Atlanta Pride

ATL PRIDE IS NEXT MONTH: HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT

BRIANNA WELCH

Contributing Writer

After two long years, ATL Pride is finally back and ready for newcomers and returners to enjoy the festivities. The festival will have performances, food and plentiful activities for all ages. ATL Pride is one of the largest LGBTQ festivals in the country and it is the oldest LGBTQ organization in Georgia. Steven Igarashi-Ball is the Director of Equity and Engagement for the ATL Pride Committee. His role is to ensure everyone under the LGBTQ+ umbrella feels welcome, seen and heard in their program and in the festival and parade. "We have a family fun zone, so it's a family friendly event," said Igarashi-Ball. "There'll be things like

face painting, we'll have inflatables, bounce houses, games for kids to play." There will be spaces for seniors that they refer to as "Gray Pride" where older LGBTQ members can relax with others in their age range. Other activities include drag queen story hour, concerts, drag shows, cultural displays, performances from theaters, international and upcoming musicians and choruses, the parade, a marketplace for vendors and art displays. The line-up of artists performing will be released sometime in the next week on ATL Pride's website. "We try to cater to the full community," said Igarashi-Ball. "It's a broad and diverse community so I think our festival reflects that." "We always try to bring a diversity of performers who are both well-known and up and coming," continued Igarashi-Ball. "I think that we'll deliver on that again this year." The parade will begin at noon on Sunday, Oct. 9 at Piedmont Park and will last roughly three hours. Registering for a float in the parade is no longer available due to the high volume of applicants but guests are welcome to watch the parade from the sidelines.

Pride events will be occurring throughout the week of ATL Pride and the committee will inform potential partygoers of ATL Pride events via their website. There will also be events thrown by bars and clubs outside of the committee for partygoers. The festival will be between Oct. 8-9 at Piedmont Park in Atlanta, and the hours are 10 a.m.-10 p.m. on both days. ATL Pride is also hosting an official kickoff party. It will be held at the Atlanta Contemporary and will be headlined by RuPaul's Drag Race alumni Silky Nutmeg Ganache. Attendees can expect performances from drag queens and DJ's. The event occurs on Oct. 6 at 6 p.m. for VIP tickets and 7:30 p.m. for general admission. Tickets are on sale for this on ATL Pride's website and will stop selling at midnight on Oct. 1. "We are as excited for the festival to return to in-person as they are," said Igarashi-Ball. "We are just really looking forward to being able to celebrate in person, to see old friends and supporters of the community as well as to make new friends and hopefully to welcome some people who never had the opportunity to experience Atlanta Pride."



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NEWS

BEAR CREEK NATURE CENTER TAKES OFF

JANNETTE EMMERICK
Feature Editor

On Sept. 10, Bear Creek Nature Center (BCNC) in Palmetto, Ga. held their second annual Bat Fest, an event that not only educates the public about bats but also excites the community for Halloween and fall season. Despite the location and drive, visitors from all parts of West Georgia from Atlanta to Douglasville dropped by to appreciate bats and support the local wildlife center.

“Bat Fest was definitely a success,” said Norma Lewis, BCNC’s director and lead naturalist. “Despite the day being gloomy and misty. Lots of compliments from visitors as they were leaving. Many visitors came at 2 p.m. and stayed until 8!”

The event included a tractor pulled hay wagon, canoes and hiking along with crafts, face painting, and balloon animals. Additionally, BCNC offered an introductory felting workshop taught by a local artist.

“[We also had] a food truck, which was still new to us,” says Lewis. “When I tell people there’s a food truck, they say ‘oh, we’ll come just for the food truck.’ So obviously, food trucks are pretty popular right now. We invited Jalapeno Express.”

The special programs included live bat encounters, talks and exhibits presented in partnership with Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), USDA Forest Service and the Georgia State Museum.

“Trina from Georgia DNR [brought] a heat sensitive camera and an Anabat [Walkabout Active Bat Detector] to set up near the dock in the evening,” says Lewis. “Anabat lets you see the echolocation on the screen and the heat camera lets you see the heat of the bats as they fly through.”

“Some students from the University of West Georgia who are doing graduate research on bats also came,”



Photo Courtesy of Bear Creek Nature Center

Lewis continued. “They set up a demonstration net and work with Trina too.”

This upcoming spring, BCNC plans to host Pollinator Day, a day of education surrounding pollinators including hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and other vital critters in every flora ecosystem.

In December of 2021, BCNC hosted their first Reptile Rally, an event celebrating reptiles and educating the public about reptiles in partnership with other wildlife organizations including Quail Forever, the DNR, and reptile rescue organizations. While the event was a success, the cold weather and slow reptiles prompted BCNC to hold the event again in June.

“What surprised us is how the events have taken off,” said Lewis. “Pollinator Day in May was a fairly small turnout, as was expected for a first time event. But for Reptile Rally, that was an event that Cochran Mill Nature Center—the previous nature center—did for many years in conjunction with Georgia Reptile Society and Georgia Herp Association and Rescue. We were shocked that we had over 600 interested on Facebook.”

Reptile Rally successfully served close to 450 people, which surpassed not just BCNC’s expectations, but also surpassed the records held by Cochran Mill Nature Center which shut down in 2017.

BCNC opened in 2020 and received a slow start with the pandemic. However, thanks to funding from

patrons, the county and the community’s support, BCNC was able to hire a part-time employee after only having one full-time employee since opening.

“Now that Covid restrictions have been lifted and schools can take field trips and things like that, suddenly, business has exploded,” says Lewis. “So we’ve been pretty busy with programs with home school groups as well as school groups, and we’ve had a lot of scout groups also for badge work programs.”

From ecology skills to meeting animal ambassadors, BCNC offers an educational environment for all guests with more additions to the family underway.

“Right now, [the volunteers] are rearranging shelving because we’ve got some new animals coming in from the University of Alabama,” says Lewis. “They’re from their teaching collection in medical research— They weren’t used in research, they were education animals.”

The new exhibits arriving before 2023 will include tree frogs, aquatic turtles, a black snake, a king snake and an amphiuma which is a snake-like amphibian, all of which are native Georgian species. BCNC also recently adopted two axolotls which have become instant visitor favorites.

For more information or to find out when their new animals arrive, visit their Facebook page or their website bearcreek-naturecenter.org, additionally they can be

CONSISTENCY CREATES ARTISTIC OPPORTUNITY

CHRISTIAN JAMES-LATTORE
Contributing Writer

Clarence Heyward, a highly respected artist based in Durham, North Carolina, paved a way for his art to be seen and connected through the lens of society. Heyward’s contemporary portraiture style has been discussed on podcasts, in local newspapers and displayed at art fairs. To do what he is most passionate about for a living, his consistency and relationship building is how he introduced his art to the world.

“My experience with art dates back to coloring in coloring books with my mom at the age of two,” said Heyward. “This eventually led to me drawing the pictures to color myself once there weren’t any pages left in the coloring books. That progressed into comic book characters and eventually art programs in school.”

Heyward was immersed into art as a child which kept a burning desire to deepen his knowledge about art well after his early childhood. “I went to a performing arts high school where I majored in art and later college where I majored in art education,” said Heyward.

While serving as a student teacher at C.C. Spaulding Elementary in Durham, North Carolina, Heyward learned the starting salary was extremely low and he opted out of the profession.

“I became a truck driver for about 12 years before I realized that money couldn’t buy happiness,” said Heyward. “I began drawing and painting again and decided that I’d give being an artist a serious try. I built a portfolio of work and applied for a year-long artist residency.”

Heyward cemented his first residency at Anchorlight in Raleigh, North Carolina and was determined to maximize his opportunity. By doing so, he found himself sleeping in the studio most nights to get his work completed.

“I worked from sunup to sundown,” said Heyward. “Four years later and my formula is the same, just make the work.”

As depicted in movies and shows artists make their names known by having some sort of big break.

“The idea of the ‘Big Break’ is a myth,” said Heyward. “There isn’t one moment where everything changes.”

Heyward recalls his career pivoting once he gained institutional support. Museums acquired Heyward’s work for their permanent collections. Exhibiting in museums such as CAM Raleigh and prominent spaces helped Heyward gain support from collectors who would have never known about his work.

Heyward did not have the ideal movie-esque come up; instead, he consistently worked on his craft until an opportunity presented itself for the taking.

“Consistency may be the most important of all,” said Heyward. “There will be times where you may not feel like be-

ing in the studio but go anyway. Find ways to stay motivated.”

Belonging to a community of artists, curators, art administrators, and gallerists can be beneficial because these are the people who get you into exhibitions. These relationships stand the test of time when constructive criticism is put at the forefront. They also speak on the artist’s behalf when they are not present themselves.

“Having your work critiqued and having conversations about it only makes the work stronger,” said Heyward. This played a role in Heyward’s success, but he is aware that everyone has different paths.

As for this up-and-coming artist from North Carolina, Heyward shows no sign of slowing down but yet continuing to be inspired and create art that connects the masses.

“There is no blueprint or one way to become a successful artist but these are examples of what has helped me along my way,” said Heyward.



Image courtesy of Clarence Heyward

ENTERTAINMENT

EXIT 9 DROPS THE BASS FOR FESTIVAL SEASON

ALANNA KING
News Editor



Photo Courtesy of Demar Brown

Dubstep DJ Exit 9’s sound can only be explained as deep, beautiful bass with enough wobbles and wubs to keep your head spinning faster than a turntable. As the artist approaches nearly ten years in the industry, he’s proving he’s just getting started.

While Exit 9 has become one of Atlanta’s gems, the New Jersey native landed in Georgia by accident during his time in the military.

“My last duty station brought me to Ft. Benning, Ga.,” says Exit 9. “I loved the music scene here so much. I used to go to Iris most Saturdays, Quad and Kingdom Rave. I decided to stay in Georgia after I finished my service since I was getting a lot of bookings in the southeast and I was working on throwing my own events, putting experimental, weird bass music in the spotlight.”

The artist has deep roots in DJing, going back to his father’s teachings during his adolescence. While his father wanted him to eventually work for his DJ and dance company, Exit 9 saw rapping as his future

and grew a passion for writing lyrics.

“I ended up going back to DJing because I’d go to parties with friends and I’d always be controlling the music while everyone else got intoxicated or flirted with girls,” says Exit 9. “I was always at the stereo playing music I had on CD or mp3. Then eventually I decided to purchase DJ equipment and put the aux cord down for good.” Exit 9 then went on to DJ college parties and bars, growing more and more serious about the profession.

His love for the dubstep sub genre was also a gift from the military. “I didn’t get into dubstep until one of the other soldiers in my unit introduced it to me while we were in Iraq,” says Exit 9. “My next combat tour, one of my soldiers played me drum & bass, old dubstep and Bassnectar and that was it. Dubstep, gangster rap and metal were our soundtracks while on missions or working out. I was hooked!”

As festival season rolls around this year, Exit 9 proclaims his excitement for upcoming Imagine festival, an annual EDM festival thrown in Georgia on Sept.

15-18. The festival features primarily dubstep DJs but has house, trap and melodic artists on the lineup as well. While the festival regularly hosts EDM legends such as Excision and Subtronics, local artists like Exit 9 are supported as well.

“Everyone just needs to go to Imagine or you’re doing yourself and your life a great disservice,” says the artist. Exit 9 is playing a silent disco set at Imagine this year and has been returning to the festival every year since its inception.

“I know the hard work these people put into making it happen every year because I have worked closely with them and been behind the scenes as well...It’s one of the tightest knit groups I’ve ever been a part of and it’s only going to continue getting better!”

Exit 9 has events lined up for the remainder of 2022, including playing support for Space Wizard, G-Space and Smith at Believe Music Hall this fall. He’s hosting bi-monthly events at Aisle 5 with longtime friend and partner Ployd. Be sure to check him out at Imagine’s 2 a.m. campground set this Saturday.

UWG STUDENT IVAN “THE RUNNING MAN” MARKHAM SETS SIGHTS ON BOSTON MARATHON

DOUGLAS SALTER
Contributing Writer



Photo: Douglas Salter, *The West Georgian*

University of West Georgia Student Ivan Markham better known as “The Running Man” has received the opportunity of a lifetime; he has a chance to qualify for the Boston Marathon.

Markham is known as the Running Man because he runs across the West Georgia campus and Carrollton area every single day. However, it took Markham a long time to reach this milestone. Ivan went through ups and downs all the way to being able to qualify for the marathon.

Before starting to run, Markham was in a different situation.

“I was 300 pounds in my senior year of High School. I wanted a change. I wanted to become healthier,” said Markham. “I went from being an offensive lineman to a long-distance running star. I do long distance running every day.”

“I do something special after losing all that weight and just inspire people,” continued Markham. “I always find

that people do not like long distance running and it is very uncommon and with that it amazes people.”

The more Markham ran, the more endurance he gained. He went from going on runs to preparing for marathons.

“The biggest marathon I have run is 26.2 miles and the most I have run around campus is 24 miles,” said Markham.

Not only did Markham improve his running, he feels he has become a legend on UWG’s campus. However, this past year was a struggle for Markham. He almost gave up running all together and everything in his life came to a complete stop.

“I had looked into qualifying for the marathon a year before I registered. I was going to do the qualifier in March of this year but I got a DUI in January and I had to drop out. After that I let everything get past me,” said Markham. It took time for him to return to running.

“I had to tell myself, ‘you cannot let one mistake define who you are.’

I promised myself you will not see another guy who cares about running then me,” said Markham.

Markham has now registered for the qualifier with no signs of stopping. “I have two shots to qualify, Sept. 24th and Feb. 28th, 2023. I need to run 26.3 miles in a 3-hour span,” said Markham.

Most runners have a dream or goal they are looking to accomplish, for Markham the adventure is still out there and for now he is striving for greatness.

“I always will run with professionals, so it is hard to label a goal to accomplish,” said Markham. “I do want to do an Ultra Marathon which is running 50 miles in a day. No matter what happens though, this will be one of the greatest comeback stories ever and that only fuels my fire.”

Markham has lived through struggles but ultimately he has been able to pull through. He won’t be remembered for just his talent but for his comeback and dedication to being “The Running Man.”

ENTERTAINMENT



**WOLVES
FOOTBALL SEASON
KNOCKS OUT
CARSON-NEWMAN
IN 2022 OPENER**

SAMIRA BARNETT
Contributing Writer

Photo: Samira Barnett, *The West Georgian*

The Wolves completed their season opener for the 2022 season with a 38-7 blowout win against Carson-Newman. This is their tenth consecutive season-opening victory.

Many friends, family, students and alumni came to support the Wolves as they head into the new season with high expectations.

Tailgating began at 5 p.m. where many organizations and UWG fans gathered before kick-off. There was music, food and games to enjoy.

“What we are experiencing just in pregame, in the Wolf Walk, where the band, cheerleading and football team come together is the best our community has to offer,” said Dr. Brendan Kelly, President of the University of West Georgia. “It is a positive energy and that is so important.

“2020 was rough; it was a time of us undeserving of your needs and expectations,” Kelly continued. “We have been trying so hard to bring back and make better what college can be.”

There is a positive outlook on the season

as the team finished the 2021 season in the second round of the Division II NCAA playoffs. They were ranked among the top 15 in the country and 10th nationally in the annual preseason Division II football poll.

“It’s the first game of the season, it’s always a big rush,” said Peter Debick, UWG alum. “People are like, ‘my favorite season is spring or summer.’ My favorite season is football.

“It’s going to be a litmus test for this team,” Debick continued. “Hopefully we come in, take care of business and show you what we can do this year.”

The Wolves finished 2021 with a 9-3 season, while Carson-Newman went 1-9, failing to win multiple games.

“I couldn’t be more excited for this game,” said Kelly. “Coach Dean is so excited about this football team, which makes me excited to talk to so many of the players.

“They are hungry to be back on the field,” Kelly continued. “After last season, which was so successful with

the NCAA experience, let’s go get it again.”

In the first half, the Wolves built a 10-0 lead. There were no other points scored in the first half but with quarterback Harrison Frost and his teammates working hard, the Wolves quickly built a large lead.

Number 13, Tay Huff, brought the score to 17-0 with a 39-yard touchdown pass.

Darius Clark scored the game’s final touchdown with less than three minutes remaining in the third quarter, bringing the score to 38-7.

“Since we opened up RA-LIN field here, you can count on one hand how many games I missed,” said Debick. “It’s basically in my backyard now.

“The games are fun and exciting, the team is fun and exciting,” Debick continued. “It is just always good to support West Georgia.”

The Wolves are now 2-0 with their recent win against Morehouse on Saturday, Sept. 10 with a score of 42-0. Their next matchup will be Saturday, Sept. 24 against West Alabama.