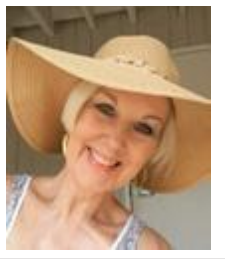


Editorial page

Nolia's Notes

People put in your path (part two)

by NOLIA BIGGERSTAFF



I wish Kathy had met the scarecrow! Kathy was a beautiful 40ish lady with dark brown hair that fell to her shoulders in soft curls and was swept up by dark sunglasses. She had a good figure and a bright smile that crinkled her dark eyes. Our daughter had introduced me to her when we were looking for property in south Florida.

Kathy worked for a real estate firm down there and I often spoke with her about possible properties and I got to know her a bit. She was married and had two sons. Every time I saw her she was upbeat. She had a bounce in her walk and she never shared much more about her personal life.

One day, I invited her over for lunch. It was a typical south Florida day, sunny, breezy, hot. I had prepared chicken salad and had fruit to go with it. I knew she liked diet Coke, so I had that, too.

She was on time and cheerfully sat down at the kitchen table. We ate and had a typical conversation about the weather, etc. Toward the end of lunch, her sparkling eyes became dim and glassy. "I am sick," Kathy said in a quiet voice.

She began to explain her diagnosis. It was something I had never heard of but from her tone it wasn't good. She said that the doctors did not give her long to live. In my mind, I could not believe what I was hearing. Here was a young woman, in her 40's, so beautiful, with a lovely family. How could this be true?

I told her there must be some mistake! Did she get a second opinion?

"No mistake," was her answer. "I am getting a divorce, too, no mistake about that either."

I am not sure what I said after that, but I am sure I told her how sorry I was to hear that and such. Her lunch hour was up and she had to get back to work.

I walked her out to her car and I told her that if she needed to talk, I was available. I told her that I would love to talk to her again, soon. She said, "Fine, as long as you don't say anything about God or the Bible, I don't believe in that." She pulled out of the driveway and that was the last time I saw her.

A few weeks passed and I got a

phone call from a lady at the real estate office. The lady said, "Kathy had your name and phone number on her desk, so I am calling you. Kathy died yesterday." I asked if there would be a service. The lady told me the time and place.

I passed the funeral location several times. It did not look like the typical locations I was used to. It was a very nondescript small cinderblock building in a strip mall, on a very busy highway. I parked the car and entered a very stark room. The walls were cinderblock and there were brown folding chairs set up in small rows indicating the front focal area where there would be a speaker.

There were a handful of people there and I did not know anyone. A lady came up to me and I recognized her from a picture in the real estate office indicating that she worked there. She introduced herself and took a chair by mine. I thanked her for her call, otherwise I would have not known.

There was a speaker who spoke mostly of Kathy's sons. He mentioned her parents and shared his condolence for the family. There was no music or flowers or anything of notice.

I spoke briefly to Kathy's parents. There was so much pain in their faces but they said they appreciated my being there, a total stranger who knew their precious daughter. It was over. It was all over. Kathy's short life on this Earth was over.

I remember once I was dressed as a scarecrow, doing a fall program for a church. Children came up in a hay wagon and I had to do a brief lesson with them. I asked them to feel their heartbeat in their chest. I told them that that was Jesus knocking on the door of their heart. I told them that he would not come into their heart unless he was invited. I told them they could invite him in right now and then I prayed with them to invite Jesus into their heart.

I know Jesus knocked on Kathy's heart. I pray that she answered the door before it was too late. I will never know.

Her words still haunt me from time to time. I wish she had lived long enough to have a conversation with the scarecrow.

This weeks tips from the BBB

With Valentine's Day just days away, the Better Business Bureau advises people looking to start new relationships to watch out for romance scams. This is a scheme wherein unscrupulous individuals look to defraud people by pretending to be a love interest and playing on emotions for their own financial gain. This type of scam usually occurs via email or social media but can also happen through established online dating services. Romance scams are a double whammy, they hit victims financially and emotionally, and the consequences are often devastating.

Romance schemes can target anyone, but often target older individuals, those who are new to the Internet or not as tech-savvy. The relationship generally develops online or over the phone, when people either respond to fake online profiles or are contacted by a scammer in response to an ad they posted. Conversations begin online and things can progress quickly, which is why it's important to take things slow. Scammers prey on emotion and they're good at telling people what they want - or hope - to hear.

A huge red flag for people seeking relationships online is any request for funds. Sometimes scammers who have struck up virtual relationships will ask for money to buy an airplane ticket, so the couple can "finally" meet. However, these requests are nothing more than a gateway to further requests, as the scammer comes up with reasons they can't make the trip, such as an illness, a sick relative or supposedly losing their job. A good rule is to never send money to someone you've never met in person. Another good rule is to remember that someone who cares about you will not ask you to place yourself in financial jeopardy for them or put you in a difficult position.

People going online or using online dating services to meet romantic interests should be leery of:

- Pressure to leave the dating site. They want you to leave the dating site immediately and use personal e-mail, text or IM accounts.
- Hasty expressions of love. They

express instant feelings of love, although they have very little knowledge of you.

- Claims of citizenship. They claim to be from the United States, but currently are overseas, deployed or on assignment elsewhere.

- Sudden major expenses. They ask for money to pay for travel, medication, hospital bills, recovery from a temporary financial setback or expenses while a big business deal comes through.

- Change of plans. They plan on visiting, but unexpectedly are prevented by a traumatic event or a business deal gone sour. Some may also say they have been called out of the country for business or military service.

- Requests for money. They make multiple requests for more money. They may even test you and ask for a little at first and then continue to ask for larger amounts.

For those in search of love online, BBB offers the following tips:

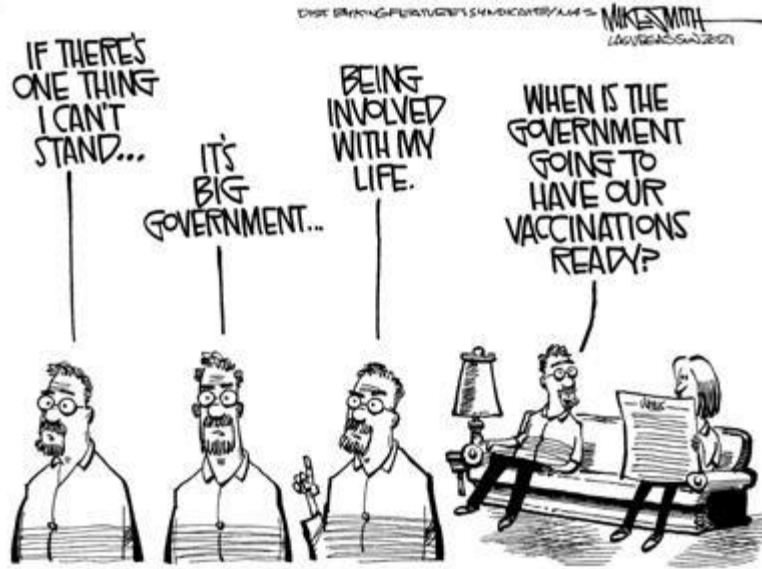
- Never wire money or send gift card account numbers. It is difficult to impossible to get money back from people who may be misrepresenting themselves once it has been sent.

- Put safety first. Remember that all personal information provided will be made available for all those on the site to see. Avoid putting too much personal information on your profile, such as home address, work information or telephone number.

- Take the time to research individuals. If you see any red flags in your communication with someone, search his or her name through search engines and on social media sites. Copy and paste portions of your emails into search engines to see if they have been associated with past scams.

Many romance scams never get reported because of the victim's embarrassment but it is important to remember that these scammers have been perfecting this con for many years and over time, they have gotten very good at their trade.

Read more about Romance Scams in BBB's study "How Scammers Use Impersonation, Blackmail, and Trickery to Steal from Unsuspecting Daters."



Consumers get answers from Ga. Department of Agriculture

Consumer Q's is a weekly question-and-answer column by Arty Schronce at the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Please share your thoughts, questions and suggestions with him by phone, mail or email.

Q: How is passion fruit used? I want to serve it on Valentine's Day.

A: The sweet and tangy flavor of passion fruit is showing up in many products now. You may have also seen the leathery, often wrinkled, maroon fruits in the produce section of grocery stores. The fruits are cut open and the juicy pulp around the seeds is used in juice blends, iced tea, alcoholic drinks, sorbets, yogurts, baked desserts and even salsas and vinaigrettes.

The "passion" in passion fruit has its origins in theology, not romance. It refers to the passion of Christ. Structures of the flowers and plants reminded 15th and 16th Century Spanish missionaries of elements from the story of Jesus' crucifixion.

Even though passion fruit wasn't named for the passion you hope to ignite on February 14th, your valentine will think you are creative and clever if you serve a passion fruit daiquiri, a refreshing passion fruit sorbet or vanilla ice cream with passion fruit topping - at least she or he will know you are trying. For maximum effect, be sure to do the dishes yourself.

Q: Are brown eggs more nutritious than white eggs?

A: No. It is a common misconception that brown eggs have more nutritional value than white ones. In reality, both have the same nutritional value.

Q: Are there any chocolate-scented flowers?

A: Yes. Your best bet is the chocolate flower (*Berlandiera lyrata*), also known as the chocolate-scented

daisy. It is native to the Southwest and has yellow flowers with maroon centers. The chocolate fragrance is reportedly strongest in the morning. It likes full sun and well-drained soil. It is easy to grow from seed, which is available from various seed catalogs and some garden centers. Another option is the chocolate cosmos. This cosmos is sterile (does not set seed) and is available only as plants from garden centers, nurseries and mail order suppliers. Its fragrance is usually not considered to be as strong as that of the chocolate flower although its maroon flowers have more of a chocolate appearance. Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) has a bitter chocolate fragrance. All three provide a way to enjoy chocolate without going off your diet. However, do not think you can "kill two birds with one stone" on Valentine's Day by offering your wife a packet of seeds instead of a box of candy and a bouquet of flowers.

Q: What is the forsythia I see blooming now (February 1)? It has dark green stems and is more of a mounding shrub than other forsythias.

A: It is not forsythia; it is winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*). Winter jasmine is a popular plant for the winter landscape because it brings bright yellow blooms on even some of the coldest days. It does look like forsythia, but its green stems and mounding, almost weeping habit are distinguishing features. It is a good shrub to choose for cascading over a wall or down a bank.

If you have questions about agriculture, horticulture, food safety or services or products regulated by the Georgia Department of Agriculture, write Arty Schronce (arty.schronce@agr.georgia.gov) or visit the department's website at www.agr.georgia.gov.

Carr warns Georgians not to post vaccine card online

Georgians who have received their COVID vaccine are being urged not to share the news by posting their COVID vaccine card to their social media apps, as doing so could lead to identity theft warned Attorney General Chris Carr.

"I strongly encourage all Georgians to get vaccinated for COVID at the appropriate time but cannot discourage them enough against the posting of their vaccination cards on social media," Carr said. "This new trend of doing so, however well-intentioned, could lead to their full names and birthdates falling into the wrong hands."

COVID vaccine cards contain the recipient's full name and birth date. This information might help someone to apply for a loan or credit card in your name or hack into your accounts if you have used your birthdate as a password or PIN. A safer way to share about your vaccine on social media would be to update your status or to post a picture of your vaccination sticker.

The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division offers the following tips about staying safe online and reducing your risk of identity theft:

- Avoid listing the following information publicly: date of birth, hometown, home address, year of your high school or college graduation, primary e-mail address.

- Only invite people to your social network that you know or have met, as opposed to friends

or friends and strangers.

- Never, ever give out your Social Security number or driver's license number.

- Consider unique user names and passwords for each profile and don't share them with anyone.

- The longer the password is, the stronger it is. Using a mix of letters, numbers and special characters also makes a password harder to crack.

- Check your credit card and bank accounts regularly for any charges you do not recognize. Notify your financial institution immediately if you see an unauthorized transaction.

- Monitor your credit reports regularly to look for any accounts you don't recognize. To access your free credit report, go to annualcreditreport.com. To prevent someone from opening a new account in your name, consider placing a credit freeze with each of the three credit reporting agencies (TransUnion, Experian and Equifax).

- Look out for phishing emails, texts or links that ask you to provide your Social Security number, birth date, financial account information, user name or password. Scammers may be posing as legitimate businesses or acquaintances of yours to try to steal your money.

- If you think you have been the victim of identity theft, visit identitytheft.gov to report it and get a recovery plan.

For additional tips and resources on identity theft, visit consumer.ga.gov

What's the Scoop: Composting

By Robyn Stewart
Lincoln County Extension Service

Over 20% of the waste brought to landfills comes from landscaping waste such as leaves and grass clippings. An alternative to handle yard and kitchen waste is to consider composting waste into organic matter. This organic matter can then be added to soil to help improve texture, drainage, nutrition, and overall productivity. Composting can be economical and convenient for any homeowner.

The process of composting is where bacteria and fungi decompose or digest the provided waste material, producing a uniform organic matter. Good things to compost include grass clippings, leaves, vegetable materials, twigs, wood chips, and more. You should note, some materials should not be composted as they can be a health risk or attract pests. Things like human or pet waste, diseased plants, meat, grease, dairy products, inorganic materials, or plants treated with pesticides should all be omitted from your compost pile.

In order to develop a compost pile, there are a few rules of thumb to follow. You can purchase pre-made composting bins, make your own composting bin, or even compost in a pile on the ground. More important than how you compost is where you place it. The best location for the pile is in an area protected from wind and water runoff that receives partial sunlight.

Making compost depends on three things - correct layering and turning, correct moisture, and a healthy fungi and bacterial population.

A good compost pile is layered, and each layer should be moistened as you add it. Do not overwater the pile, but understand that moisture is key for bacterial and fungi growth. If you do add too much water, the compost pile will smell foul. To correct overly moist compost, turn the pile more frequently and add more woody materials.

When layering your compost pile, the base layer should contain bulkier items like wood chips or twigs, as they will decompose faster as the bottom layer. The other thing bulky items do is allow for air movement, which is essential for maintaining proper temperature throughout the compost.

After this first layer, add eight to ten inches of lighter waste like leaves, grass, and plant trimmings, followed by a one-inch layer of soil or completed compost. The addition of soil or completed compost is essential as that is what provides your starter bacteria and fungi to the new compost pile.

If you do not have any completed compost on hand, you do not need to purchase a commercial compost in order to start your pile - normal soil and organic materials will contain sufficient microbes to get you started.

Next, you should add a nitrogen source to your compost pile on top of the soil/compost layer. Nitrogen is essential for the rate of decomposition of the materials you compost, and a great source of nitrogen is livestock manure. If you choose to use manure, layer 2-3 inches of it - but beware not to use manure if the animals have grazed on herbicide treated pastures. If you don't have manure, a nitrogen source such as 10-10-10 fertilizer can be applied at one cup per 25 sq. ft. of composting area. Complete this layering sequence until you complete the pile.

Once your pile is established, be sure to turn or mix the pile at least once a month. This helps to ensure even decomposition and reduces pests and pathogens. A good active compost pile should be between 130 and 160 degrees in the middle for optimum decomposition. The compost is done when the pile is around half of its original size and appears uniform in composition, anywhere from 2-4 months to a year, depending on season and management.

If you have questions on composting, let us know at uge3181@uga.edu or 706-359-3233!

Super Crossword

Across

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The Lincoln Journal

Established in 1893

The Official Organ of Lincolnton and Lincoln County
(USPS 313-660)

Published every Thursday in Lincolnton, Georgia
Peachtree Street, by Wilkes Publishing Co., Inc.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE

One year in Lincoln County - \$26.00
Wilkes, Taliaferro Counties - 26.00
Outside three-county area - \$41.00
(includes 8% state and local sales tax)

Periodicals postage paid at Lincolnton, Georgia
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The Lincoln Journal, P.O. Box 399
Lincolnton, Georgia 30817
706-359-3229

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