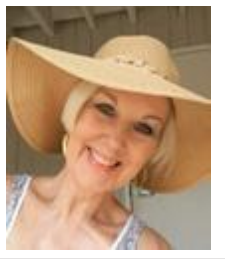


Editorial page

Nolia's Notes

Dropped the Ball

by NOLIA BIGGERSTAFF



During my lifetime I have heard the phrase, "Dropped the ball."

For example; "I dropped the ball when I didn't study for the test."

"We dropped the ball when we didn't plan for bad weather during the party."

The phrase is used when there is a pivotal moment in a situation. I think this phrase is very appropriate for our society.

There was a time when each public school day began with a Bible verse and pledge to the flag. This was done from first grade until graduation. There was a King James Version of the Bible on the teacher's desk and each morning the teacher would select the student of the day to read a passage if the students were able to read, if not, the teacher would read a selection.

There was an American flag on a wall bracket in the front of the classroom beside the chalkboard. All the children would stand and place their right hand over their heart and say the pledge to the American flag.

True, some children pledged for "witches stand" until they got older and realized the correct phrase was, "for which it stands."

At a very early age, American children knew that the American flag was important. They were taught to respect the flag and the Bible. It never occurred to any public school student to not participate in this ritual to start off the school day.

Somewhere, along the way, it did occur to a parent. A parent or some adult decided that they did not like this procedure. This adult went to the school board and expressed their dislike for the pledge and

Bible reading and just like that; this procedure that had worked just fine for years was ended.

Now, right here, let me say that I respect everyone's rights in this country until they interfere with the rights of everyone else. When that parent went to the school board to complain, there should have been a hundred parents supporting the morning ritual. At that moment we dropped the ball!

When I visit someone who is not a Christian, I respect their right to worship or not worship in this country as they please, however, that does not diminish my Christian faith. When they come to our house, we still say a blessing over our food. We keep a manger scene out all year and it is not removed when visitors come over.

When you think about it, the Bible contains the only words of right and wrong some people will ever hear. The Bible was removed for fear of hurting someone's rights while hurting the rights of many.

The Ten Commandments were removed from public buildings. I wonder how many folks walked into court houses and read the Ten Commandments for the first time because they did not attend church.

When man decides what is right and wrong, we are in big trouble.

I have read recently that the Bible is not a suggestion; it is God's word, God's law. You can disagree, get up a group to disagree and pass laws that disagree, but the Bible is still the Bible, unchanging, everlasting.

It really doesn't matter who disagrees, it is there for all to read for themselves. We dropped the ball when we dropped the Bible!

This weeks tips from the BBB

If you are planning a getaway this spring or summer, BBB recommends the following tips to minimize the risks.

- Understand the risks and delay plans if possible. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) points out that "COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are extremely high across the United States." Since travel increases your risk of infection, CDC recommends delaying unnecessary travel plans to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. In addition, if anyone in your household or at your travel destination is at high risk of infection, everyone in the household should act as if they, themselves are at increased risk of infection.

- Research travel restrictions. Travel restrictions vary by state and country and are constantly changing. Visit the U.S. State Department's "Know Before You Go" page and the CDC Travel Planner to get up-to-date information on COVID-19 related travel restrictions as you plan your trip and as your travel dates approach.

- Take precautions before and after your trip. During the 14 days leading up to your trip, avoid situations that could put you at risk for infection, such as attending large group events or using public transportation, recommends the CDC. Then, get tested with a viral test 1-3 days before you travel and keep a copy of your negative test results with you. After your trip, get tested again 3-5 days after arriving home and make plans to self-quarantine for 7 days after travel, regardless of your test results. The CDC also advises getting vaccinated, if eligible, and waiting until two weeks after your final vaccination dose to travel.

- Pack a "pandemic bag." Condé Nast Traveler recommends stocking up on pandemic essentials before you head out. Pack a bag with COVID-19 prevention staples including "hand sanitizer, face masks, disinfecting wipes, health insurance cards, a thermometer, latex gloves (for one-time use in public spaces), and hand soap."

- Make flexible travel plans. Flexibility is key during the pandemic. Be willing to pay extra for fully refundable flights, car rentals, and accommodations. Your plans may change last-minute due to an unexpected lockdown or infection.

- Understand what travel insurance

covers. Many experts remind travelers that purchasing travel insurance is wise, but it may not cover every situation. Read the fine print or work with a travel agent to understand how your policy works. Most travel insurance will cover medical expenses if you get sick during your trip or the cost of your trip if you must cancel due to illness, but they may not cover the cost of your trip if you need to cancel because a state or city goes into lockdown unexpectedly. Read BBB's tips on buying travel insurance.

- Opt for a road trip instead of a flying. Waiting in security lines and sitting on crowded flights could increase your risk of infection. If you, or anyone you'll be in contact with, is in a high-risk group, it's best to drive. Road travel carries risks too, but it's much easier to mitigate them from within a smaller space you and your family control. Read BBB's tips on renting an RV and buying camping gear.

- Book accommodations that make it easy to follow COVID-19 guidelines. Speak directly with the hotel or host before you book a stay. Find out what precautions and sanitary measures they are taking in between guests. Inquire about shared facilities, such as gyms, pools, spas and restaurants. In many cases, such facilities could be shut down until further notice. Make sure you are comfortable with the precautions any hotel or vacation rental has in place ahead of time.

- Wear a mask and social distance. To protect yourself and your family, CDC advises travelers to wear a mask, avoid crowded areas and stay at least six feet away from others whenever you are in a public space.

- Enjoy the great outdoors. Hiking and camping at state and national parks are a great way to enjoy warmer weather since they don't involve sharing indoor spaces with others. If you want to stay a few days, book your campsite well in advance. Parks have become a popular pandemic vacation option and spaces are limited.

Get more advice by reading BBB Tip: Adapting Travel Plans for Coronavirus and BBB Tips on COVID-19.

Stay informed about travel restrictions and the spread of the virus by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's travel page and the U.S. Travel Association.

Go to BBB.org to look up online marketplace business profiles, file a complaint, or write a customer review. Visit BBB Scam Tracker to research and report scams.



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: I have been approached about teaching children how to ride using my own horses. Do I have to have a license to do this?

A: Yes, you will need a stable license. Please contact our equine office at 404-656-3713 for complete information.

Q: I have trouble peeling boiled eggs. I have been told not to use fresh eggs. Is it true that fresh eggs are difficult to peel?

A: Extremely fresh eggs can be difficult to peel, so it's best to hard cook eggs that have been in the refrigerator for several weeks. Hard cooked eggs will be safe in the refrigerator for seven days. For more information, contact the American Egg Board (847-296-7043) or the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline (1-888-MPHotline or 1-888-674-6854).

Q: Moss is killing my grass. What can I do?

A: Moss is not killing your grass. Moss is growing because conditions are right for it and not right for your grass.

Moss likes damp, acidic soil. Liming will help make the soil less acidic. Aerating will allow more oxygen into the damp soil and encourage grass roots to grow. Moss thrives in shady conditions, but grass needs sun. Shady areas stay moist longer than sunny areas. Allowing more sunshine and air circulation by pruning trees and hedges will help by providing the sunnier, drier areas grass needs. If your moss is in a sunny area, perhaps you are watering too much.

If you are having a constant battle with moss, consider letting it take over and having a lawn of just moss. The Japanese have cultivated moss gardens for hundreds of years. Moss looks and feels like a carpet of green velvet – and it doesn't need mowing.

Q: I saw a sign at a grocery store that the salad bar containers were made out of bulrushes. What are bulrushes?

A: Several marshland plants such as reeds, sedges and cattails are sometimes referred to as bulrushes. The most famous plant referred to as a bulrush is papyrus. The containers

you saw were made from cattails.

Q: Is "Buddy" on the spay/neuter license plate based on a real dog?

A: Yes. Georgia artist Carolyn Ritter painted the popular yellow Labrador retriever based on her observations of a real dog. After seeing Ritter's depiction, Commissioner of Agriculture Tommy Irvin called the dog "Buddy," and the name stuck.

The artwork for the license plate was chosen partly because of the noble expression Buddy wears. Interestingly, Buddy's intense stare has a story as well. Ritter's subject was an assistance dog, and she observed him mainly while he worked. She captured the loving and dedicated gaze of a loyal helper.

Buddy and the other two spay/neuter license plate designs can be issued at any county tag office in Georgia. Proceeds earned from the sale of the license plates directly benefit spay/neuter procedures performed by licensed and accredited veterinarians in all 159 counties. All Georgia residents may participate in the Dog and Cat Sterilization Program and receive spay/neuter subsidies for their pets. Full program information and a list of veterinarians may be found at www.agr.georgia.gov.

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.

City council meetings

The Lincolnton City Council meeting dates for 2021 are as follows: April 6, May 4, June 1, July 6, Aug. 3, Sept. 7, Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Dec. 7. All meetings are held at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

Super Crossword

Answers

M	A	T	I	C	R	O	M	E	R	O	S	I	L	K	R	O	W
E	D	I	N	A	E	C	O	C	A	R	E	D	I	E	I	R	A
W	H	A	T	M	I	G	H	T	H	E	Y	N	A	M	E	P	L
L	I	O	N	D	O	R	S	G	I	U	S	A	P	P	E	A	L
S	C	I	A	L	E	R	E	H	O	N	O	R	E	A	N	N	A
A	N	E	W	O	M	A	N	T	I	C	O	M	E	D	I		
A	C	T	S	I	R	I	S	C	U	B	D	O	S				
T	H	A	T	T	E	L	L	S	T	H	E	T	A	L	E	O	F
T	A	N	A	D	U	L	T	S	B	I	U	N	S	C	A	L	E
E	R	I	G	I	C	C	A	N	O	E	S	C	A	L	L		
S	L	O	B	A	C	O	W	B	O	I	N	D	A	E	V	E	N
T	I	E	R	S	I	M	E	A	N	E	S	E	V	A			
S	E	D	A	T	E	N	A	W	T	H	O	M	A	S	R	A	M
G	O	W	O	I	R	L	W	H	O	A	P	P	E	N	T	O	
A	I	D	A	L	E	T	A	T	I	R	S	S	E	I	S		
H	E	R	E	T	I	N	A	F	E	Y	A	U	T	U	M	N	S
A	D	I	D	A	S	D	U	I	W	I	T	H	A	Y	E		
M	A	I	C	S	L	E	P	L	E	S	I	N	S	A	D	D	L
E	T	A	H	E	R	I	N	O	R	L	L	E	G	A	R	O	M
O	F	E	N	W	E	I	S	R	E	J	I	L	L	A	M	E	N

Update from the State Capitol

By: Sen. Lee Anderson
(R - Grovetown)

Week seven marks one of our most productive yet with the Senate passing the most bills to date this session, and committees holding meetings early in the morning and late into the evening to ensure all bills are heard before Crossover Day. Crossover Day is the last day for legislation originating in the Senate to pass chamber in order to be eligible to become a law, and vice versa with the House. With only 16 legislative days remaining this session, I will continue to keep you updated on major pieces of legislation that have the potential to touch every Georgian.

Legislation that I'm incredibly proud to support passed out of the Senate this week. Senate Resolution 28 and Senate Resolution 29 would both push for a convention of the states to amend the U.S. Constitution to require a balanced federal budget, as well as limit the terms of members of Congress. Back when the Constitution was written, there was no such thing as a career politician. Right now, we have several members of Congress who have too many fundraising advantages because of their ties to interest groups. Term limits would promote new ideas, and in exchange, would create a simpler government. Additionally, SR 29 would create a balanced budget, which would tackle the debt the U.S. has. I am looking forward to continuing to follow the progress of both SR 28 and SR 29.

Last week, we passed Senate Bill 116, the Maternity Supportive Housing Act. This bill would create

a maternity supportive housing residence, in which nonprofit organizations may house up to six pregnant woman at any one time during their pregnancy, and their minor children for up to 18 months after childbirth. Additionally, this bill would require that all maternity supportive housing residences apply with the Department of Human Services and pay an annual registration fee of \$250.00. This legislation will provide expectant mothers and their children with a safe and healthy environment. Many of the moms that would use this service would be moms in need of safe housing, such as those needing to escape from a negative home life due to poverty or violence. These homes would provide a safe area for women to enjoy their pregnancies. Stressful environments can cause maternal and infant mortality, so this legislation is a step in the right direction to move the needle forward in terms of addressing this issue.

As mentioned before, we will continue to stay busy over the coming weeks working on reviewing and passing key legislation. If I can ever be of assistance or you have questions regarding legislation, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office. I am always happy to help.

Sen. Lee Anderson serves as Chairman of the State and Local Governmental Operations Committee. He represents the 24th Senate District, which includes Elbert, Hart, Lincoln, Oglethorpe, Taliaferro, and Wilkes counties and portions of Columbia County. He can be reached at 404.656.5114 or via email at lee.anderson@senate.ga.gov.

Consumer Ed answers questions

Dear Consumer Ed: How much of a surcharge are merchants allowed to charge you for paying with a credit card?

Consumer Ed says: Each time a customer pays with a credit card, the merchant must pay a transaction fee to the company that issued the credit card. Instead of merchants absorbing this expense, they are permitted to pass the transaction fee along to the consumer, which is considered a "surcharge". Importantly, restrictions exist to ensure consumers obtain clear, transparent, and up-front disclosure about surcharges.

Credit card surcharges are usually presented as a fee or percentage of the transaction, though the amount of the surcharge cannot exceed the amount the merchant pays to accept the card. This amount is generally two to three percent of the purchase price. If customers instead opt to pay by cash, check, or debit card, merchants are permitted to offer a discount equivalent to the credit card surcharge that may have been factored in to the regular advertised price, as long as that discount is offered to all customers.

In any case, merchants who add a credit card surcharge onto their customers' bills must post a sign at the point of entry to the business notifying customers. Merchants must also disclose the exact amount of the surcharge at the point of sale and on customers' receipts. A note of caution: for online purchases, merchants are only required to disclose this surcharge on the first page where the potential customer is prompted to enter in his or her credit card information.

Regardless of the method of payment, merchants are not permitted to mislead customers, whether by deceptively advertising a lower price than they actually charge or by

concealing any differences between credit, debit, and cash prices. If a merchant fails to clearly and conspicuously disclose what it charges for the transaction, including any additional fees, that may violate Georgia laws prohibiting deceptive or false advertising.

Additionally, there have been reports of merchants assessing Covid-19 surcharges. Depending on a variety of factors, the collection of Covid-related surcharges or fees may be permissible. However, at a minimum, any price representations must be truthful and not misleading. Businesses need to provide notice of their policies and other material information before the consumer makes a decision to purchase. The failure to include the surcharge or fee in an advertised price could be considered an unfair or deceptive practice, and potentially be a violation of Georgia law.

If you believe a merchant is improperly charging fees, failing to disclose what it is charging, or otherwise engaging in false or misleading sales practices, you can file a complaint with the Georgia Department of Law's Consumer Protection Division by visiting consumer.ga.gov or by calling 404-651-8600.

Brought to you by the Georgia Department of Law's Consumer Protection Division.

Remember... We do not give legal advice. Always consult a lawyer about legal issues.

Planning, zoning meetings

The City of Lincolnton Planning & Zoning Board meetings for 2021 are scheduled as follows: March 30, April 27, May 25, June 29, July 27, Aug. 31, Sept. 28, Oct. 26, Nov. 30, Dec. 28. These meetings will be held in City Hall at 5:30 p.m. each month if there is an agenda.

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