

Shoals

COMPLIMENTARY

# Living 50 Plus

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2023



## Pickleball enthusiasts

Pfluegers love social aspect of the sport.

## Taking a spin for good health

Lori McGuire finds her place and keeps moving.

## From a distance he chose woodworking

Metal was Charles Old's career, wood is his hobby.





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# Living 50 Plus

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### On the Cover:

Richard Pflueger stands on the court at Gattman Park in Muscle Shoals.  
Photography by Dan Busey.

# ADD SPICE TO YOUR LIFE WITH A HOBBY



The value of hobbies is undeniable. A 2014 study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* found that employees who engaged in creative hobbies outside of work were more creative on work projects and had a better attitude on the job, while a separate study published in *Psychosomatic Medicine* in 2009 reported that individuals who engaged in enjoyable leisure activities had lower blood pressure and a smaller waist circumference.

The myriad benefits of hobbies is good news for those with ample time for leisure activities. Whether you are retired or still working but free from the responsibilities of parenting, the following are some fun and engaging hobbies to fill that free time.

**Cooking:** A well-cooked homemade meal can provide a sense of accomplishment and affords an opportunity to control the ingredients in the foods you eat, which can be important for individuals with health-related dietary restrictions.

**Writing:** Many successful individuals have penned their memoirs after long, notable careers and lives. While individuals needn't follow suit with the goal of making their memoirs public, writing can be a great way to document your life and the lives of your family.

**Gardening:** Those looking for hobbies that get them out in the great outdoors need look no further than their own backyards. Gardening can benefit the body in myriad ways.

**Swimming:** Swimming is an ideal exercise, as it's low-impact but is still a great way to utilize the entire body. A 2007 study published in the journal *Quality of Life Research* found that water-based exercise improves older adults' quality of life and decreases disability.

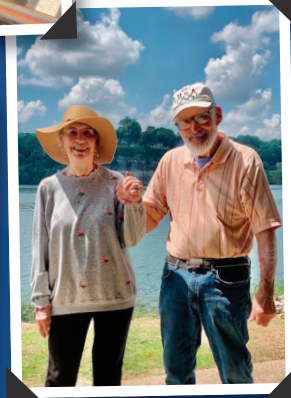
These are just a few of the many hobbies seniors can pursue as they look for positive and fun ways to spend their free time.



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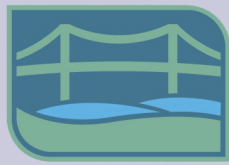
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# Relish THE MOMENT



From left, Richard Pflueger, Don McNutt, Jan Pflueger and Linda Orr bump paddles at the conclusion of their match at Gattman Park in Muscle Shoals. It is common sportsmanship to bump paddles at the end of a pickleball match. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



# Pfluegers love social aspects of the sport

By **Chelsea Retherford**  
Staff Writer

**R**ichard Pflueger amicably tapped paddles with his teammate, Don McNutt, and their two opponents, Pflueger's wife, Jan, and Linda Orr, following the final game of the day one hot Wednesday in June.

Richard had barely broken a sweat after alternating five or six friendly, yet competitive games



Richard Pflueger returns a hit as he plays a friendly match with friends at Gattman Park in Muscle Shoals. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

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with several other players throughout the morning at Gattman Park Gym 3 in Muscle Shoals.

He and Jan frequent the indoor courts at Gattman Park during the summer months to keep up with their fellow pickleball enthusiasts.

“Nobody here played pickleball five years ago,” Richard said, gesturing to the three full pickleball courts in the gym. “Routinely, we’ll have 20 to 25 players here three days a week. Broadway has 15 to 20 players two days a week.”

He and his wife were instrumental in getting the courts opened at Broadway Recreation Center in Florence in 2016. That was a first step in introducing the Shoals to the “fastest growing sport in America.”

When asked how he and Jan came across the sport, his reply is that it was inevitable because the sport has grown so pervasively in every state across the U.S.

“It’s everywhere. Just not here,” Richard said. “I mean, Huntsville has dedicated pickleball courts, and they play in six different community centers. Athens has dedicated pickleball courts.”

Jan said she and her husband started

# ALL ABOUT PICKLEBALL

By **Chelsea Retherford**  
Staff Writer

**W**hile Richard and Jan Pflueger are credited with starting the Shoals Area Pickleball league, and initiating conversations about adding public courts in Florence and Muscle Shoals, Richard said it was Don McBrayer who first introduced the sport to north Alabama students in the early 1970s.

McBrayer, professor emeritus of Physical Education at the University of North Alabama from 1972 to 2001, had picked up the game in 1965 not long after it was invented by Joel Pritchard, a congressman from Washington State.

“You still run into people who say, Don McBrayer taught me how to play,” Richard said.

Today, McBrayer can still be found enjoying a weekly game of pickleball in the gym at Woodmont Baptist Church, where he is a member. The Florence church hosts pickleball most Mondays and Fridays at 6:30 p.m.

The Pfluegers said anyone interested in playing can log on at [www.places2play.org](http://www.places2play.org),

or download the USA Pickleball Places2Play app to find courts in their area and around the world.

“You can do a search and they’ll tell you places to play wherever you’re travelling, what the hours are, and all that. I’ve met a lot of friends through pickleball,” Richard said. “Most every week, you have people who are traveling on business, for weddings or family reunions, you always take your paddle with you.”

## Pickleball origins

After a round of golf on Saturday during the summer of 1965, Joel Pritchard and his friend, Bill Bell, returned to Pritchard’s home on Bainbridge Island, near Seattle, Washington, to find their families sitting around with nothing to do.

According to [USAPickleball.org](http://USAPickleball.org), Pritchard and Bell found some badminton equipment, some ping-pong paddles and a perforated plastic ball, and the game that combines elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong came to life over the next few days.



“The following weekend, Barney McCallum was introduced to the game at Pritchard’s home. Soon, the three men created rules, relying heavily on badminton,” the official pickleball website says. “They kept in mind the original purpose, which was to provide a game that the whole family could play together.”

The United States Amateur Pickleball Association (USAPA) was organized in 1984 to see the new sport advance on a national level. In March of that year, the first rulebook was published, and by 1990, pickleball was being played in all 50 states.

## How to play

The objective is to hit the ball back and forth until a player makes a





mistake, otherwise known as a fault.

Pickleball can be played as doubles (two players per team) or singles, though doubles is most common. The game can be played indoors or outdoors on a badminton-sized court with a tennis net lowered to 34 inches.

The court is divided into five sections. Each opposing side has a left and right service lane as well as a non-volley boundary marked seven feet from the net and extending to both sidelines of the court. The non-volley zone is known as the “kitchen.”

Matches are played best two games out of three. Each game is played to 11 points, win by two; or some games can be played to 15 points, win by two.

The following is an abbreviated set of rules.

Official rules can be found by visiting [usapickleball.org](http://usapickleball.org).

### **The Serve**

- Each start of game begins with a serve where the server calls the score.

- A pickleball serve must be hit underhanded cross-court into the opposing team’s service court. The serve must clear the net and not land in the kitchen.

- Sometimes, the ball will hit the net but still land in the correct serving court. This is called a let and the server must redo their serve until they either serve correctly, hit the ball into the net, or hit the ball out of bounds. If the ball hits the net and lands in the kitchen, it is a fault.

- According to the double-bounce rule, the ball must bounce once on each side before either team may start volleying the ball in the air.

- The player returning the serve must let the ball bounce before returning it to the opposing team’s side in either service court.

### **The Kitchen**

- Volleying is prohibited within the kitchen, or non-volley zone, to prevent players from executing smashes from a position in the zone.

- It is a fault if, when volleying a ball, the player steps on the kitchen, including the line and/or when the player’s momentum causes them or anything they are wearing or carrying to touch the non-volley zone including the associated lines.

- It is a fault if, after volleying, a player is carried by momentum into or touches the kitchen, even if the volleyed ball is declared dead before this happens.

- A player may legally be in the kitchen any time other than when volleying a ball.

### **Faults**

- A fault is any action that stops play because of a rule violation.

- A fault by the receiving team results in a point for the serving team.

- A fault by the serving team results in the server’s loss of serve or side out.

playing several years ago while on vacation in Florida. When the couple approached the Florence Parks and Recreation Department about converting courts seven years ago, the movement in the Shoals started with the pair and a group of Jan’s tennis fellows.

“That’s really who started this — the Broadway tennis players,” Richard said.

He admits he isn’t quite the tennis player his wife is, and he’s grateful they have found an alternative they both enjoy playing together.

“Pickleball is a lot easier, and it’s a lot more fun because it’s more social,” Jan chimed in. “You play for about 12 minutes, and then you rotate. In tennis, you play for an hour and a half with the same four people.”

She and Richard suspect that’s why the sport is taking the place of tennis in some communities.

“You don’t have to be a real skilled player like in tennis where you need a two-handed topspin,” Richard said. “In pickleball, you just get out and play. It’s easier to learn, easier to play. The hardest part of pickleball is keeping score.”

After tennis courts were marked off to accommodate



Jan Pflueger replies back to a hit.  
[DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



pickleball players at the Broadway Center, Florence also added pickleball parameters to existing tennis courts on Royal Avenue that same year, Richard said.

As the game continued attracting new players in Florence, eventually courts were added at Veterans Park, and Muscle Shoals Parks and Recreation got on board as well.

“We would probably play with like 12 or 15 in the beginning, and now there are hundreds in the Shoals area, I’d say,” Richard

said. “Turtle Point has pickleball. The YMCA, they’ve got two or three indoor courts in their gymnasium. They play several days a week.”

Still, Richard adds that there are no fully dedicated courts to be found between Lauderdale and Colbert counties.

“We need dedicated courts,” he said.

“I mean, you see here, we have black lines for pickleball, and there’s red for basketball, blue for volleyball. Dedicated pickleball courts. It’s just a different game.

The experience of playing pickleball on a dedicated court is so much better.”

Without dedicated courts, Richard argues that the Shoals is missing out on tourism revenue generated by tournament play. Still, the recreational courts continue to attract casual players from all over northwest Alabama each week.

That is precisely how Richard and McNutt met.

McNutt, who said he learned to play at The Villages in Florida about six or seven years ago, spends





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Richard Pflueger  
replies back to a hit.

much of his time between the retirement community in Naples, Florida, and his home in Haleyville.

“When I came back home, I had to drive all the way to Huntsville to get a game. That’s an hour and a half for me,” he said. “Since then, we play at a little rec center in Moulton,

and we play in Florence, we play in Decatur.”

McNutt said he travels to Florence or Muscle Shoals about once a week to play with friends he has made through the sport, like the Pfluegers.

He agrees with his friends that he’s drawn to the sport, not only because it’s easy to play

and easy to learn, but mostly because of the fellow players.

“It’s the people you meet,” McNutt said. “You can walk on a court somewhere in Dothan and say, ‘Is this open play?’ They’ll say, yeah, come on. It’s just a friendly group. Everybody is smiling. Everybody is happy.”



Four players meet paddles at the conclusion of their match at Gattman Park in Muscle Shoals. It is common sportsmanship to bump paddles at the end of a pickleball match. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



McNutt, like the Pfluegers and several other players enjoying the games in Muscle Shoals that day, said he occasionally enjoys tournament play, but prefers to play “socially.”

“We play in a lot of different places with a

lot of different folks,” he said.

For anyone interested in learning a little more about the sport, all they need is to drop by and ask, he and Richard added.

“If you don’t have a paddle, everybody’s got an extra paddle. They’ll

teach you to keep score, where to stand and the rules of the game,” said Richard. “You should either come early or come later when it’s not so busy where there’s an extra court. Just ask somebody, and they’ll teach you how to play.”

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# TAKING A SPIN FOR GOOD HEALTH



Lori McGuire sits on a stationary bike at One Ride in Muscle Shoals.  
[DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



Lori McGuire, center, reacts to a missed shot as she plays corn hole with her family in Tuscumbia. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



## Lori McGuire finds her place and keeps moving

By **Chelsea Retherford**  
Staff Writer

At 53 years old, Lori McGuire said she feels more physically fit than she has ever felt in her life, but she couldn't say that two years ago.

A teacher, a caretaker, and a mom of three, she said she was used to putting everyone else's needs before her own for years.

"I am the reason that the airplane attendant teaches you to put your oxygen mask on yourself first," she said. "I will literally work myself into the ground taking care of everyone else."

McGuire, who taught for the Muscle Shoals School System for about 10 years before joining the Alabama Math Science Technology Initiative 20 years ago, is now the director of AMSTI at

the University of North Alabama.

She remains very active in ministry and mission, working with teens at Highland Park Baptist Church. She also serves on the board of directors of the Kruzn for a Cure Foundation, which aims to provide research funding for children diagnosed with Schimke Immuno-osseous Dysplasia, or SIOD, and other rare diseases.

Being a full-time working mom, and staying so active in her community, McGuire said she wore the term "self-sacrificing" like a badge of honor.

That mentality changed drastically in the spring of 2022 after she had attended an education seminar in San Antonio, Texas, that reframed her way of thinking.

"It was in that conference that it really hit me: If I truly love the people that I say that I love, and if I truly want to take care of them the way that I feel they deserve to be cared for, I had to start doing something differently. I had to care for myself," she said.

At that conference, she said there was one session that had flipped that switch within her.

"Tina Boogren was leading this session centered around educator wellness, because educators were leaving by droves because of burnout," McGuire said. "She discussed the mind gap — that space between being motivated to do something and actual activation."

McGuire said Boogren went over the 5-second rule technique created

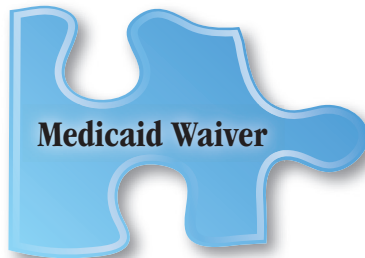
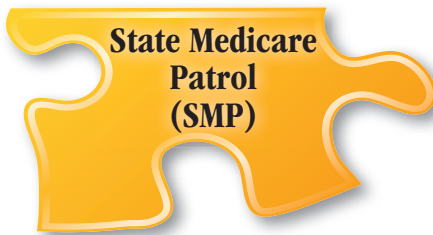




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by Mel Robbins to help those who hesitate or overthink, preventing them to act on tasks or ideas. The method is used to break a bad habit by having the participant condition themselves to act as soon as they reach the number one in a five-second countdown.

“It’s the idea that from the moment you’re given the initiative by your brain to do something, you have five seconds before your mind will give you an excuse not to do it,” McGuire explained.

McGuire, a stage 3 melanoma survivor who has also been living with lupus erythematosus — a chronic inflammatory disease commonly affecting the joints, kidneys, nervous system and skin — said she had a “laundry list of reasons” that had always prevented her from working on her physical fitness.

“I knew what I needed to do, and I’ve got so many people in



Lori McGuire looks to her husband, Greg, as he tries to give a definition of his word as they play a word guessing game as a family. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

my corner,” she said. “I have such an incredible support system. My husband is my biggest cheerleader, and my kids — we’re just a super tight family. I have incredible friends, and an incredible church family. “It was not a lack of people

believing in me. It was just me making constant excuses.”

Though McGuire has been cancer free for nine years, she had undergone surgery to remove all the lymph nodes from underneath her left arm after a tumor had



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From left, brothers Clay and Cade McGuire join their parents, Lori and Greg, on a dog walk. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



Lori McGuire plays corn hole with her family. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

spread from a spot on her back. The surgeries she had in 2014 left her with places of numbness along her left side.

“So, I used that excuse. The lupus was a good excuse. At the time, I was 52 years old and had never actively worked out,” she said. “I would start something, but with Lupus, there is a lot of inflammation and a lot of pain. A lot of real extreme fatigue. I would hit something and think maybe I had found my niche, but then I would push myself a little too hard. I would work myself into a flare and then I would crash. I would pay for it.”

McGuire said she had tried Zumba, a popular aerobic fitness program that features movements based on Latin American dance styles. She tried weight lifting,

which she enjoyed with her husband and two sons, but the workout did nothing to improve her cardiovascular health.

She said she attempted to walk on the treadmill, or just walking in general. She tried working out on a StairMaster, but those repetitive pounding motions would often cause her lupus to flair up, causing inflammation in her ankles, knees and hips.

“Water aerobics is something that a rheumatologist often pushes, and that works great for some folks,” she said. “It doesn’t work with my schedule, the times that water aerobics are offered in our area. So, I never even gave that a go.”

After leaving the education seminar in Texas, McGuire said she kept wondering, “Could this really work?”

Back in the Shoals, One Ride



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Lori McGuire partakes  
in a class at One Ride.  
[DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



Cycle had been open on Second Street in Muscle Shoals for about a week. McGuire said it took her a little longer to get her nerve up, but she finally booked a spin class.

"They told me I could rent my shoes there, and on my lunch, I had to go to Old Navy to get a sports bra and some leggings. I got the cheapest outfit I could find, because I knew in the back of my mind, I was never going to stick with this," McGuire said.

When she walked in for her first workout, she remembers telling her instructors about her lupus and about the numbness in her arm, and added, "If you make me hurt, I will not come back."

She was relieved when she found out the overhead lights were turned off during the 45-minute workout, and she chose to clip-in on a bike in the back of the room, but she was not immediately sold on that first experience.

"I had so little upper body strength that when I slipped — my feet didn't slip off the pedals, but I slipped down off the seat, and I didn't have enough upper body strength to push myself back up," she said.

After the class, she was honest with her instructor, A.B. Haggard, who

took her back into the studio and gave her some pointers.

"From that point on, they just kept telling me, 'Don't worry about what you look like. Don't worry if you're doing the arm movements just right. Don't worry over whether you're on time and in sync with everyone, just keep moving,'" McGuire said. "That's the goal, and that was the mindset I had."

She said it took several classes, at least five or six, before she could make it through a song without taking the seat on her bike.

"Cass (Thilman) was instructing, and I was still in the back, but I made it all the way through a song standing up," she said. "There's no shame in taking a seat, but the first time that I made it all the way through the song, at the end, Cass was up there saying, 'Great job,' and I yelled out, 'I freaking did it!'"

When McGuire reached her hundredth ride, she said Thilman handed her a note that read, "You freaking did it."

At One Ride Cycle McGuire said she has not only found a fitness regimen that works with her schedule or a routine that does not cause lupus flare ups, but she's also found a community that rides with

her and supports her on her journey.

"No, I don't know the names of every single person who is clipping in beside me, but once you clip in and those lights go out, you're on my team," she said.

McGuire said she tries to cycle at the studio at least three times a week, when possible. Now that she's been at it for over a year, she said she's been able to enjoy life more with her family.

"We just got back from the beach, and I was out doing the waves with my 20-year-old kids and holding my own right there with them," she said. "I'm going hiking, and playing with my great nieces and nephews, and the special kids in my life."

McGuire said her doctor has cut her lupus medication in half, and after a recent stress test, her cardiologist agreed she is in better shape than she was 10 years ago.

She admits she still goes through her highs and lows like anyone else. McGuire said there are days she can walk into the studio and give it her all with the ease of an experienced rider, but there are other days that "giving it her all" takes a little more from her.

"On my first spin after my mom passed away, I cried throughout





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Lori McGuire partakes  
in a class at One Ride.  
[DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



the whole thing. My 110% looked different that day than another day would," she said. "Whatever you bring into the building that day, you put it under your feet, and you just keep moving."

McGuire said her mother's illness served as another inspiration for her to keep moving. When her mother became bed-ridden in the last months of her life, McGuire said she was able to care for her only after slowly building the strength that she gained in the spin classes.

When she lost her mother, she said the One Ride Cycle community was also there for emotional support.

"My mom's last week of life was extremely hard. When I did my first few rides afterwards, they were coming off their bikes and putting their hands on mine, whispering, you've got this, we've got you. We're behind you. They truly make you feel like you're the most important rider in there. It's a special place."

McGuire said the studio has also become a very sacred personal space for her.

When she's there cycling, she said she isn't there to compete with anyone or push herself to her goals on anyone's schedule but her own. When she books a ride, she lets her family know, and she leaves her phone off or outside of the studio.

"This is the one place that for 45 minutes, it's all about me," she said. "My family knows what my ride schedule is for that week, and they know if anything goes down during that period of time, call your dad."

At one time, McGuire thought taking 45 minutes for herself two or three times a week went against her mantra of self-sacrificing for others she cared for.

"I kind of had it in my head that that self-care was selfish," she said. "My idea of self-care was going to get a haircut, but it's not selfish to

leave my phone for 45 minutes and do something to make myself stronger. As a matter of fact, it's the opposite, because I'm taking better care of my family now than I did five years ago."

McGuire said she knows a spin class may not be for everyone, but she encourages others who have plateaued in prioritizing their own health to bridge the gap between being motivated and taking the first step.

"Everyone can find their place. Find your thing. You've got to keep moving. Find what is going to work for you," she said. "When your mind starts making up the excuses and giving you all the reasons you can't, you've got to fill that mind gap and make the choice to do it."

"Wherever your place is, find your place and keep moving, but for me, my posse rides on Second Street."



# FROM A DISTANCE HE CHOSE WOODWORKING

METAL WAS CHARLES OLD'S CAREER,  
WOOD IS HIS HOBBY

---

By **Chelsea Retherford**  
Staff Writer

---

**T**hey say you can't teach an old dog new tricks, but Charles Spruell Old is here to prove the naysayers wrong.

At 64, Old has found a fairly lucrative hobby in woodworking, even as he readies to retire from

a 20-year-long career in pipe welding.

"Oh, four or five years ago, I decided to build a shop to get ready for retirement," Old said.

"I've got to stay busy. I've always got to be doing something."



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Woodworker Charles Old stands among his creations inside his work shop in Killen. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



“ *My wood is usually all natural; it's rough sawmill lumber. I never know what it's going to look like until I get out here and plane it.* ”  
Charles Olds, woodworker



At first, he considered continuing a small business in metalworking, but after some thought and realizing he was tired of the trade, he settled on wood.

“He had never done woodworking in his life,” Old’s wife, Camilla, said. “He taught himself, and I’m not saying this because he’s my husband. I think he’s done some very amazing work.”

Camilla is not her husband’s only fan. Charles said he’s had some success at craft shows, farmers markets, and even some juried art shows around the Southeast since he began selling some of his chopping blocks, charcuterie and decorative boards.

He’s become a frequent seller at Killen Farmers



Various projects and boards completed by Woodworker Charles Old hang inside his home. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



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Woodworker Charles Old makes a cut inside his work shop. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



Market on Saturdays. He can be found at a booth at Florence First Fridays. He sold boards at the Helen Keller Festival, and a few times, his work was included in the Northeast Alabama Crafter's Association (NEACA) Christmas Show, held at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville.

Next March, Charles hopes to be accepted into the Fairhope Arts and Crafts Festival in south Alabama.

"I came up with this idea when I was in Minnesota," Charles explains when asked how he developed his small side venture.

"I travel for work, and I'm gone a lot. I spent all winter up there right outside of Minneapolis and St. Paul. My plan was to build the shop when I retired," he said. "I'm like, 'No. As soon as I get back home and the weather breaks, I am building the shop.' So anyway, that's what I did."



In coming up with the name, because he was so far away from home when the inspiration came, Charles decided to call his designs “From a Distance Woodworks,” or FAD Woodworks.

“On my days off, I sat down and drew the plans up for that,” he said.

When the shop was built, Charles turned to Google and YouTube to learn the basics. Through trial and error, he began creating boards, trinkets, small jewelry boxes, and anything else he was commissioned or inspired to take on.

On his days off from work, he said he sets up a one-man assembly line in his shop to methodically cut, glue and finish more complicated

boards made from an array of colors and tree species.

As checkered and herring bone patterns dry, he gets to work on simpler boards or other projects.

“I really like working with cedar. I like the smell, of course. It’s a soft wood. It’s not good for chop blocks or cutting boards,” Charles said.

Most of his chopping blocks are made from planks of walnut, maple or cherry that he’s sourced from a local sawmill. Occasionally, he’s gotten to work with more exotic woods, like padauk or purple heart, if he’s made purchases at a woodworking shop while out of town.

“My wood is usually all natural; it’s rough sawmill lumber,” Charles said. “I never

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Camilla and Charles Old stand inside their home. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



Projects by Charles Old serve as a centerpiece at his dinner table. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



Charles Old shows the stamp used to burn his name into his creations. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



A custom mark is shown burned into a board. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



know what it's going to look like until I get out here and plane it."

While he is happy to take on custom projects from inquiring customers, he is still very humble about his work, and argues that anything too complicated is "out of my league, or it's something for on down the road."

Charles admits the new craft took some time to hone, but with a little practice, woodworking has proved to be a therapeutic escape from everyday stresses and his work life.

For anyone else hopeful of picking up a new skill or trade late in life, Charles' advice is simple: "Don't give up."

"Don't get frustrated," he said. "You may have a pile of scrap over there as you're trying to



Charles Old uses a meter to read the moisture on one of his completed boards. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

create something new, and it's just not working. Just keep at it."

Even if that new skill isn't woodworking, Charles said it's never too late to turn a new leaf.

"Go ahead and try it. It'll come around," he said.

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# *Friendships* **that last a lifetime**



Leawaiia Little, foreground, stands with her reunion group at McFarland Park. Pictured behind, from left, Charles Betts, Claudia Smith, Edwin Carter, Bullard Ricks, Paulette Mullins, Victor McCray, Edgar Abernathy, Paula Malone and Bobby Harris. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



# Deshler Class of 1972

By Chelsea Retherford  
Staff Writer

Leawaiia Little is proud to call several of her former high school classmates her closest friends. While most friendships tend to naturally dwindle as years go by, the Deshler Class of 1972 seems more tightly knit than ever.

Little will argue that at this season in her life, these close friendships mean more now than they did when she was a teenager.

“We appreciate each other more, and I really think we enjoy each other better now,” Little said, as she notes several members of her class continue to celebrate birthdays and holidays at least once each month.

“As we have aged, we have



Paulette Mullins, left, and Claudia Smith converse together as their group meets at McFarland Park. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

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From left, Victor McCray, Edgar Abernathy, and Bobby Harris converse together as their group meets. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

grown in wisdom,” Claudia Smith, a former classmate, chimed in. “The stuff we used to think was important, we know now that it’s not. Now, we realize family and friends are more important than materialistic things.”

For Pamela Thompson, that statement couldn’t ring truer. She regards many of her former classmates as family.

As members of the class reminisced on fun times spent together at concerts, eating out to celebrate a birthday, or planning trips together before the pandemic, Thompson recalled one particular meeting that meant more to her than all the rest. It was a meeting she had nearly missed because she had been weighed down worrying and tending to her very sick daughter.

“I said, I don’t think I’m going, but my daughter said, ‘Mama, you need to go,’” Thompson said a little tearfully. “So, I go, and they had money for me to help because her treatments were in Arkansas.

It’s not that I wasn’t expecting anything like that, but it’s like a family. I’ll never forget, I got calls and everything.

“My daughter passed away about three years ago, and they were there for me like family.”

“When it comes to all of us, if somebody is going through something, we’ve always been there for each other for support,” Little said.

She had gone through her own trials several years earlier as she battled cancer. Through it all, she knew she could count on her friends.

“Two things I took with me that I kept by my bedside during the three months I was in Birmingham was a family picture of my children and my grands, and a picture of my classmates that we had taken at one of our reunions,” Little said. “That was my family. They were my support.”

These members of the Deshler Class of ’72 began holding monthly “reunions” in 1990

following a class reunion for students who once attended the former Trenholm High School in Tuscumbia.

Trenholm High was closed for integration with Deshler in 1969, when Little and her classmates were in the ninth grade.

“This all started with the Trenholm Reunion. Of course, we were all always friends,” Paulette Mullins said.

Several in the group said starting at a new school their sophomore year likely cemented their friendship early on. When the former classmates began organizing smaller reunions and backyard barbecues in the 1990s, it was very easy for them to pick up right where they had all left off.

“It’s been a joy to get together whenever we can get together,” Mullins said.

The friends have been hosted so often by their classmate, Paula Malone, that now the Malone house is commonly referred to as “The Boom Boom Room.”



“When I retired, I wanted to do something to, you know, have somewhere for us to gather. Along the way it kind of filled up,” Malone gestured to a room full of birthday and other holiday decorations. She added with a laugh, “We have so much fun, sometimes our children crash our parties.”

Little said the friends frequently traveled together before COVID struck in 2020. She said one of their final trips was to the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson.

Though the pandemic halted meetings for the group for a couple of years, they stayed in touch and adjusted the way they gathered as public spaces began opening back up. They often met at a park with a sack lunch so they could visit with one another from a safe distance.



Pamala Thompson, left, and Leawaiia Little converse. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

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Paula Malone asks what the theme is as the group makes plans for a future parade. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

That practice continues today, but the group has also started to work in birthday celebrations and other get togethers each month.

“The fellowship is what is so important,” Smith said.

She and Little said the group consists of about 12 active members who participate in all the meetings whenever they can. Of course, they have lost members along the way.

“Harvey (Summerhill) died in 2020,” Little said. “He really took care of us when we were making our club. He was Mr. Hobby Lobby for everything.”

When the group was able to travel, they often took trips to visit another late classmate, Hollis Nall, who lived in a long-term care facility in Tennessee up until he recently passed.

“Harvey had a RV, and we would all go and see Hollis in the nursing home. That was another thing we did together several times,” Smith added.

Little said she is amazed at how well the group has cooperated when it comes to planning events over the years, especially following the pandemic when they were unable to meet as frequently.

“I can’t think of any time we’ve had disagreements,” she said. “If somebody throws out a suggestion and then someone else throws out something, we just take what’s best for the whole group. We’ve learned how to put our feelings aside.”

Thompson agreed, and said they each know that no matter what they’re planning to do, as long as the group is together it’s going to be a good time.

Victor McCray, another of the classmates, said each member of the group has talents they can lend to their gatherings and planning.

Over the years, the classmates have also found ways to give back to their community. For some time, the group has taken up class dues to fund a legacy scholarship, which

gets awarded to qualifying seniors in the Shoals area each year.

“We always try to do something for the elderly around Christmas time,” Smith added. “We would pick out a couple of elders in the community and go out and buy them things that they needed. Then two or three of the classmates would go out and deliver. They were so happy to have those items that we gave them. Just to be thought of in your older days is really a blessing.”

Little said organizing the scholarship, planning for Christmas and just enjoying time together each month “keeps us young.”

“As you get older, your kids are not there, your grandkids are not always there. When you can congregate with your friends, you just feel that love that flows from heart to heart,” Smith said. “You can just relax, laugh, and you know, if you want to cry, that’s O.K too. It’s a stress reliever.”



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# DATING LATER IN LIFE

People are living longer, a reality that can be traced to a number of factors, including advancements in medicine and greater dissemination of information regarding preventive health care. According to data from the United Nations Population Division, the average life expectancy in the United States is 81.65 for women and 76.61 for men. Canada has even higher life expectancies, at 84.74 for women and 81.15 for men. As people live longer, some may outlive their significant others and ultimately find themselves once again interested in sharing experiences with a special someone.

Older adults ready to re-enter the dating pool may find that things are quite different from what they experienced as naive teenagers or young adults.

Dating used to be about hanging out with friends and meeting people at

shared events, such as school dances or work parties or even while enjoying a night out with friends.

Nowadays, dating often begins in cyberspace. This can be confusing and anxiety-inducing for adults who didn't grow up with technology guiding their every move.

Here's what they may want to know before navigating twenty-first century dating waters.

**You're not in this alone.** While online dating may be portrayed as a young person's game, plenty of older adults are now finding connections online. In fact, many different dating apps are geared toward the senior set, including SeniorMatch, eHarmony, Singles50, OKCupid, and Silver Singles, among others.

**You have more time for fun.** If you are retired, you may have more time to devote to recreation and leisure. This can be a great opportunity to get out



and meet someone who shares your passions and interests.

**Online dating has its advantages.** While online dating apps and websites may have certain things working against them, particularly if their algorithms for pairing people are not fine-tuned, they also can be helpful. Online dating can expand social circles beyond local neighborhoods or even states, provinces or countries. You're casting your net over a much larger body of water. Furthermore, dating app profiles typically spell out exactly what another person is seeking, which can save people from having to revisit awkward dating moments from years past. Older adults may have to navigate new waters in modern dating. But with a good mindset and a little persistence, it is possible to find a special someone in cyberspace.



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# HOW TO BREAK INTO CONSULTING



**M**any older adults choose to trade in the regular hours of 9 to 5 when they retire to delve into a much more personally guided passion: consulting.

Generally, consulting is a term loosely given to providing business advice and sharing expertise without working directly for a company. Those unsure about how to get started in the field of consulting can consider this rundown of what it takes to pursue this option.

## Knowledge of key concepts

Consultants provide guidance in any

number of areas, but skills in these disciplines are highly desirable:

- data analysis
- project management
- management
- reporting
- ethics
- human resources/hiring
- finance and economics
- public relations and marketing

## Work your network

Getting started in consulting may just be a matter of picking up where you left off. Reach out to past employers who benefitted from your work to see if they might need consulting services. Even if there aren't any opportunities there, former employers may put you in touch with other businesses who need your services.

Also speak with friends, neighbors and other acquaintances to see if they may be able to help you find the right consulting opportunity.

## Get certified

While certification and extensive education, including master's degrees, may not be needed to get into consulting, they certainly can set you apart from others. Explore industry-specific certification, certified management consulting certification or project management consulting certification to refresh your skills.

## Polish your resume

Consultants are billed as experts in their fields or areas of concentration. Make sure your resume points to concrete examples of positive client outcomes and use it to emphasize your prior successes.

## Expect to be a problem-solver

Consulting requires figuring out what is missing and filling that void. That means staying on top of your industry and determining which solutions will fix specific problems the industry may be facing.

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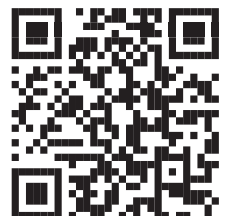
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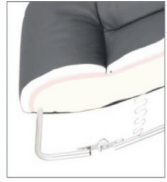
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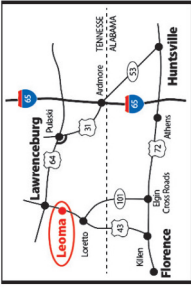
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