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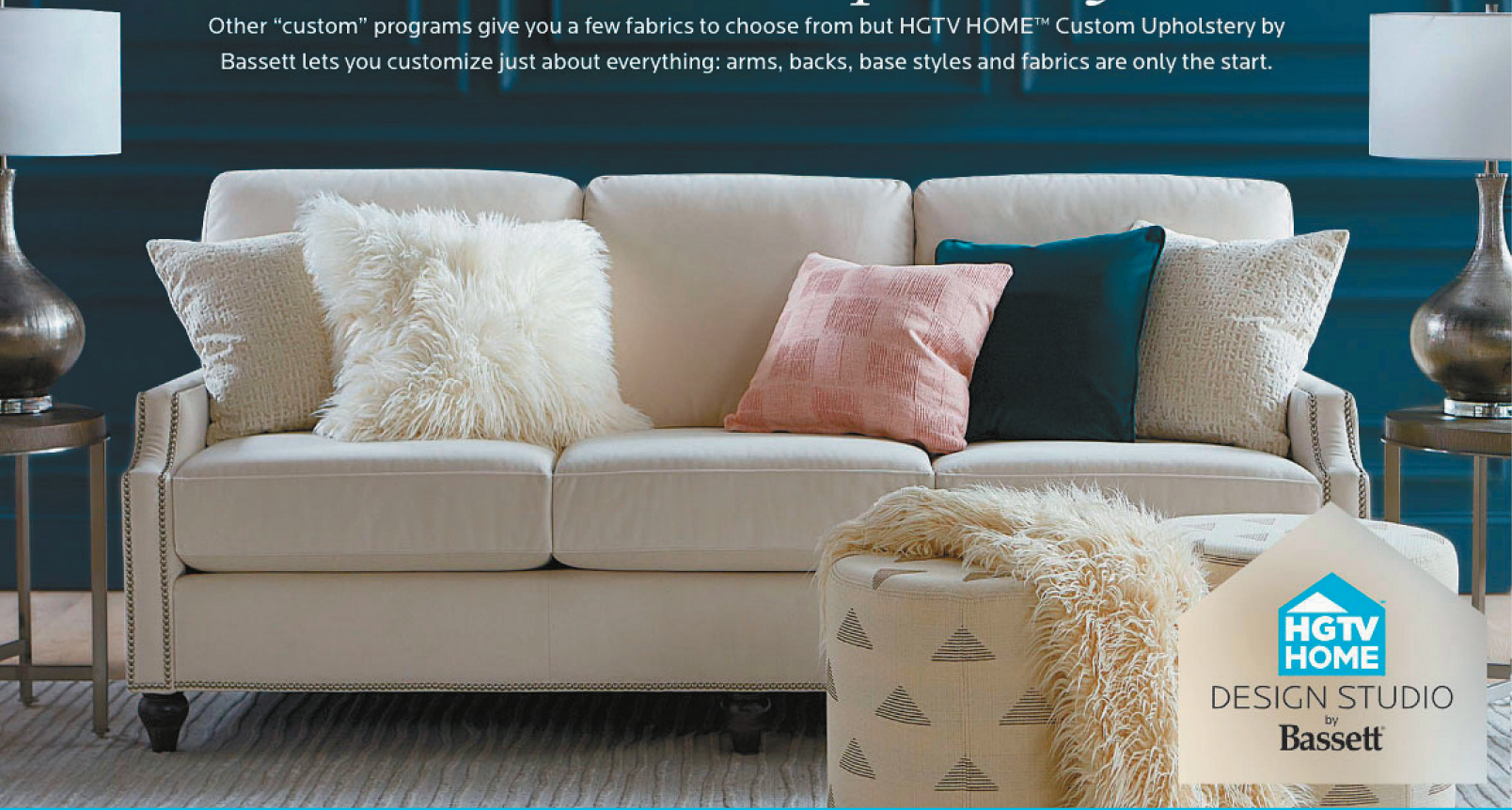
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Writer
Chelsea Retherford

Photographer
Dan Busey

Advertising Graphic Artists
**Rita Stricklin, T.J. Hildreth,
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Advertising Director
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Advertising Sales Representatives
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HOW TO REACH US

For story ideas
or comments:
Kevin Taylor
256-740-5732

For distribution
questions:
Walter Goggins
256-740-5784

For advertising
questions:
Renita Jimmar-Hall
256-740-5815

For website
questions:
Daniel Buford
256-340-2408

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On the Cover:

Jamie Lynch, left, and Gil Self stand with their bicycles at McFarland Park in Florence. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

HELP YOURSELF AND OTHERS BY BEING A MENTOR



Anyone can serve as a mentor, though individuals who accept that responsibility are typically older and/or more knowledgeable than their mentees.

The role of mentor is complex and sometimes vulnerable to misinterpretation. According to the employment resource Indeed, a mentor is an individual who acts as an adviser or coach for a less experienced person. Mentors often share their experiences and may even offer advice to their mentees. Anyone can serve as a mentor, though individuals who accept that responsibility are typically older and/or more knowledgeable than their mentees. Mentors may be athletic coaches, teachers, business associates, or esteemed family members.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

Many successful individuals credit mentors with helping them achieve their goals. However, mentors also walk away from mentoring having gained something significant. According to the caregiving company Seasons, mentoring can keep an aging mind sharp. Mentoring also may give seniors extra reasons to get up and go each day. A scheduled task like mentoring fosters social interactions and changes of scenery. Information published in Harvard Business Review indicates older adults who mentor young people may be three times happier than people who do not.

Seniors considering mentoring should go over what can make a good mentor-mentee relationship. The following are some characteristics of successful mentors.

- **Engage:** The mentor should show genuine interest in the mentee, asking about their goals and expectations. Conversation should come easily.
- **Participate actively:** It's important to make the time for mentoring sessions according to what the mentee can manage with his or her schedule. Lessons should be tailored to what the mentee hopes to gain from the relationship. Gauging success along the way and tweaking things as necessary can keep mentoring sessions on target.
- **Listen well:** Mentors recognize the importance of listening first and then responding to the questions and needs of the mentee.
- **Possess expertise:** A mentor needn't have an advanced degree or special certification, but he or she should have more experience in a given field or subject than the mentee. Mentoring is a consideration for seniors looking to remain active in their communities and share their knowledge with others.

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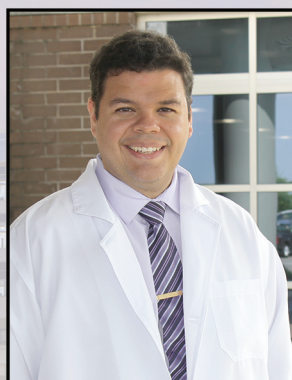
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Jamie Lynch, left,
and Gil Self ride together at
McFarland Park.
[DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

A photograph of two cyclists riding on a paved path in a park. The cyclist on the left is a woman wearing a yellow long-sleeved cycling jersey, a white and black helmet, and sunglasses. The cyclist on the right is a man wearing a white and yellow cycling jersey with "GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE" printed on it, a black helmet, and sunglasses. Both are riding road bikes. In the background, there are tall green trees, a red car parked on the side, and a white truss bridge over a body of water under a clear blue sky.

COAST *to* COAST IN STAGES

Jamie Lynch and Gil Self have cycled half way across the US

By **Chelsea Retherford**
Staff Writer

Jamie Lynch and Gil Self know they might seem a tad eccentric for the annual cross-country cycling trips they take. Some trips often stretch hundreds of miles in the summer heat, but the couple said it's a hobby that keeps them meditative, physically active, and young.

"It's a mindset. You have to be half crazy," Lynch said with a laugh. "It's so much fun. It's an adventure, and we can do this. We can do this, and we enjoy it."

Lynch began long distance cycling about 30 years ago when she completed a bicycle route from the Gulf Coast to the Canadian border.

She said she took on the challenge in pieces with a group of friends. After conquering that feat, she promised herself one day she would bike across the U.S. from the east coast to the west coast.



Jamie Lynch has her photo made in a cornfield during their travels. [COURTESY]

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Jamie Lynch, left, and Gil Self cycle together off Gunwaleford Road. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

She finally started making good on that promise after retiring as an educator amid the COVID pandemic.

“I started by myself, basically from the Potomac (River),” Lynch said. “I rode the C&O, which is the Chesapeake and Ohio Towpath, and then I went up the Allegheny Rail Trail to Pittsburgh.”

The two trails which cover over 300 miles across Maryland and Pennsylvania are popular among cyclists and hikers. After crossing off the first two states, while planning for her next cycling trip, Lynch said Self expressed an interest to tag alongside her.

“This was my deal,” she said with a laugh, admitting she was a little reluctant to share the experience she’d dreamed about for so long. “I wanted to do this

on my own, but I did not share that part with him. I thought, you know, great. He can come along with me.”

On the second stretch of the route, Lynch and Self started in Richmond, Indiana, and rode nearly 400 miles across Ohio to connect back to the point Lynch had reached.

Self, who has about 40 years of experience in long distance cycling, said he undertook the C&O and Allegheny trails earlier this summer to catch up with Lynch.

“Now, we’re both halfway across the United States,” Lynch said.

The couple’s most recent trip took them about 675 miles across the state of Missouri, which is about 75 miles over Lynch’s personal record for longest distance biked in a single trip.

Similar to their first trip together, Lynch and Self began their latest cycling adventure at their western goal — just outside of Kansas City, Missouri — and pedaled back east to where they had left off in Richmond, Indiana.

Lynch said the route included the Rock Island Rail Trail in Illinois and a portion of the Katy Trail, which follows Lewis and Clark’s historic expedition up the Missouri River. She said the pair averaged about 60 miles a day on the two-week trip.

This time, however, the two said they veered off cycling paths mapped out by the Adventure Cycling Association and opted for back country roads to avoid gaps in the trailways and higher trafficked metropolises.

“We have found Apple Maps is a wonderful tool,” Self said. “You



Gil Self poses with the world's largest mouse trap in Casey, Illinois. [COURTESY]



Gil Self playfully 'reads' from Abraham Lincoln's materials in Vandalia, Illinois. [COURTESY]



Jamie Lynch poses with the world's largest number 2 pencil in Casey, Illinois. [COURTESY]



Jamie Lynch and Gil Self's bikes with the marker for Katy Trail State Park. [COURTESY]

can put in your destination and hit the bike, and it will get you off the main pass. We did that a lot.”

He said change took them through small towns he might not have considered traveling through otherwise.

“I’ve seen more of this amazing country atop my bicycle seat than I ever have from a car window,” he said. “For me, that’s what it’s all about. It’s about the people, and it’s about Americana.”

He said his favorite stop on the cross-country trek was in Casey, Illinois, which boasts “Big Things in a Small Town.”

Self said the title is quite literal.

“We ride in and find the biggest mailbox you’ve ever seen,” he said of the tiny map dot that had a recorded population of 2,404 people on the 2020 census.

“It gets better,” he said. “I’ll

jump to the punchline. Some years ago, the town was dying like a lot of these Midwestern towns, and there was a guy who had grown up on a corner. He decides as a tourist attraction to build the world’s largest mailbox, and Guinness Book of World Records certifies it.”

The town covers less than three square miles, yet Casey miraculously fits 12 official World’s Largest items and dozens of other giant things, like the town’s towering golf tee or its colossal No. 2 pencil.

“It’s just hilarious,” Lynch said.

“I’d have never stumbled on that town had we not been on our bicycles,” Self added. “There were people everywhere, and it was fun. He built the world’s largest rocking chair, and then the world’s largest mousetrap, the

world’s largest twizzle stick, and the world’s largest car key. All this stuff. It was amazing.”

Another of the couple’s favorite stops was in Marthasville, Missouri, where Self said he noticed a local co-op lent out farm equipment on an honor system.

“It was beautiful. The store wasn’t going to be open over the weekend, so they just leave access to it. Farmers come by and get what they need and then settle up later,” he said. “Unfortunately, we hear all about the negative stuff going on around the country, but that’s not totally accurate. You come into these small towns, and they’re full of good people. They’re kind and they’re helpful. It’s refreshing, and it’s just good for your soul.”



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Gil Self, left, and Jamie Lynch pose for a selfie in Machens, Missouri. [COURTESY]



For Lynch, one of the most remarkable points of the trip was their stride across Martinsville, Indiana, when they rode up on a flock of Goldfinch feeding on the seeds of wild thistle along the side of the road.

“It was one of the most beautiful rides, and those bright yellow wings against the green of the corn and the beans,” she said. “I’m an artist, so I’m always looking at textures, colors and shapes. It took my breath away, but we were able to share that. And we were in it! We were just part of the flock.”

Both Lynch and Self said they thoroughly enjoyed taking in the sights and sounds of their time on the road.

“Gil was on his ride, and I was on my ride even though we

were together, you know what I mean,” Lynch added. “It was a good way to meditate and to just kind of reach in and do some soul searching.”

As peaceful as much of their ride was, Lynch said stretches of the trip could also be extremely arduous, especially on dangerous stretches of narrow road as they were traveling from city to city.

“You have to really organize. You’ve got to pack your tools in case something happens to your bike. You’ve got to take lots of water, but then you’ve got to have electrolyte packs, and you’ve got to have snacks,” she said.

Lynch added that she was grateful she’d agreed to let her partner tag along for the ride, as he often offered a second pair of eyes to help look out for traffic. The pair

also held one another accountable for staying hydrated and well-nourished throughout the trip.

Lynch said she and Self took breaks every 10 miles or so to stretch and snack to avoid bonking, a term athletes use to describe the condition when a body has depleted all its energy.

“Once you get to that level, you’re in a bad place. You can’t replenish what you lost,” Lynch said.

She and Self rode for 13 days, only taking a single break in Jefferson City, Missouri, for Independence Day.

“That’s a lot on our bodies, and we’re in our 60s. I hate to say that. We’re getting younger and younger,” Lynch said. “There is a lot of discipline. You have to be goal oriented, but it was really great to have that support. We were always checking in with one another.”

Lynch said she is also grateful to have Self help her navigate the grueling climbs of the Rockies as they continue planning their journey westward.

Next year, she said they plan to tackle a 500-mile ride across Kansas. Self said they might take two trips in 2024 to begin the long stretch into North America’s largest mountain range.

“I have a big respect for it,” Self said, quoting the film “Jeremiah Johnson,” as he told of one of his first excursions conquering summits along the Rockies.

“You can’t cheat the mountain, Pilgrim.’ We learned the hard way. You can’t,” he said. “You have to be prepared, because you don’t know what you’re going to find at the top.”

Self recalled the trip he took years ago with a group of fellow cycling friends to the summit of Colorado’s Bell Mountain, which peaks at 10,605 feet.

“When we got up there, it was sleeting and 32 (degrees). When we had left, it was 85, and you know, I’m dressed like this,” he said, gesturing to his dry-fit short sleeved top and biking shorts. “Several of the summits I have been up were pretty unpleasant, especially on a bicycle.”

Lynch, who said the ride through the Rockies will be a first for her, said she is up for the challenge.

The couple said they have no mileage goal in mind when it comes to completing the North American route. Their main concern is pedaling to the Pacific Ocean.

“I think we’re going to have to flip a coin to decide if we’re going to end in San Fransisco or if we’re going to head south towards San Diego or L.A.,” Lynch said, smiling.

Either way, she’s proud to fulfill her longtime dream with someone who enjoys the journey as much as she does.

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David and Cindy Hall gather for a portrait inside their home in Greenhill. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



Rolling WITH THE TIDE

Devoted fans David and Cindy Hall seldom miss a game

By **Chelsea Retherford**
Staff Writer

Any given Saturday from September to January, David and Cindy Hall can likely be found in Tuscaloosa, setting up for game day at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

If they're not found tailgating with fellow fans on what they consider sacred ground, they're most likely on the road following their favorite team to another stadium, or on occasion welcoming guests to a watch party at

their home in Green Hill.

Cindy, who grew up a die-hard Alabama fan, said she frequented Bryant-Denny Stadium as a child because she had cousins who held season tickets. While David had grown up cheering "Roll Tide" all his life as well, he hadn't yet been introduced to the experience of chanting the infamous "Rammer Jammer" jeer at the top of his lungs inside the stadium.

The couple said it only took one game to get David hooked on tailgating a little over 20 years ago.

They've since spent most of their marriage attending at least one game a year — sometimes two — as their schedules would allow. When David retired five years ago, the Halls became season ticket holders.

Now, they rarely miss a game.



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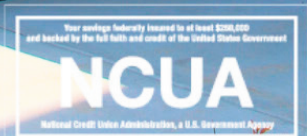
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"He loves it so much, and we have family and the people we love down there," Cindy said. I really can't imagine doing anything else on Saturdays."

The couple joke that "Roll Tide" was the first pillar of their relationship.

When Cindy met David, she was a fresh divorcee with two young sons, and felt very reluctant to start dating again. Still, a friend kept insisting that she meet "this railroad man."

"I wouldn't even call him by his name at the time," Cindy said with a laugh. "She begged me from the moment my divorce was final. She'd say, 'Oh, y'all are just alike. He would do



David and Cindy Hall discuss a play featured in a painting hanging in their home in Greenhill. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

anything for anybody. He loves church. I was just focused on raising my boys and I was happy."

Eventually, Cindy agreed to pass along her phone number, and the first night

David called, they chatted for hours until Cindy fell asleep on the line.

"We talked for two weeks just on the phone. Then we said, O.K., let's meet," she said.

"That night at 9, he was still here. One of his questions was, 'To make this relationship work, I need to know, who do cheer for on Saturday?' I said, 'Well,



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Foreground right, David and Cindy Hall gather for a picture with their tailgating group during their travels. [COURTESY]

it's Roll Tide always and forever.”

To that, David told her, “You pass the test.”

The Halls said they were freshly dating when they attended a couple of the last Alabama games held at Legion Field before their team played its final game at the Birmingham stadium in 2003.

Around this time, David and Cindy became close with another couple they knew through David's work. Jim “Bubba” and Darlene Lewis introduced the Halls to some of their favorite tailgating traditions, and now their close group has grown to include two more couples — Tommy and Roxanne Saffles, and Jim and Carol Whitlock.

When asked whether they share any quirky game day traditions, the pair say they aren't superstitious, but they will toast along with their tailgating pals who have made it a ritual before every home game.

“There are certain foods we will cook at certain games,” Cindy said. “If we're playing Arkansas, we're going to roast a pig. When we played LSU, we had gumbo cooked in a big pot.”

After David retired, and the couple became season ticket holders, they grew their fan circle with the people they'd spend most Saturdays with inside Bryant-Denny Stadium.

“For the last five years,

we've enjoyed every Saturday with this group of people,” David said.

Sitting 52 rows up from about the 30-yard line, the Halls said they are surrounded by fans who have held their seats for years.

“You never give up your tickets once you get them, and then some even transfer them to their children and so forth,” Cindy said. “There are four families around us, and the ones who sit in front of us have been going to the games for 50 years. They're close to 80 years old. They're like family to us now.”

Despite one nearly tragic experience at an away game early in the 2022



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The Halls show their fandom with this Alabama-themed Crock Pot. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

season, the Halls said they remain devoted to traveling for Alabama football.

The couple and their six tailgating friends had ridden together to Austin, Texas, for the game against the Longhorns last September. They made it into the city a day early to do some of their usual exploring, but that afternoon, the group was struck by a vehicle involved in a collision in the parking lot where they'd just eaten lunch.

"This car was going 85 miles an hour down the highway and swerved to miss a car that was turning into the gas station next to the Mexican restaurant," Cindy explained, recalling the traumatic experience.

The speeding vehicle instead struck a parked car that was then slung into their direction.

If it hadn't been for the owner's car parked in

front of the entrance, the five friends chatting near their van might not have survived the ordeal.

"Roxanne was standing beside David, and they both got hit," Cindy said. "She was hurt the worst, but within three days, everybody was back in Birmingham."

The Halls said four helicopters were flown to the scene and carried David, Roxanne, and the Whitlocks to two nearby hospitals. The Lewises were carried by ambulance to the same hospital where David and Roxanne had been transported, and the only two left physically unscathed from the accident, Tommy and Cindy, followed in their van.

"We'll go back to Austin," Cindy added. "After the accident, I was on the phone with his daughters,



The Halls show their sweet side with Alabama-themed candies. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

and they were like, no ballgame tomorrow. David said, 'I'm going to wait until the morning and decide.'"


They may have missed Bama's close win over the Longhorns, but they have a long list of other exciting experiences from games around the country.

Since David's retirement, the couple have also slowly been ticking away at an item at the top of

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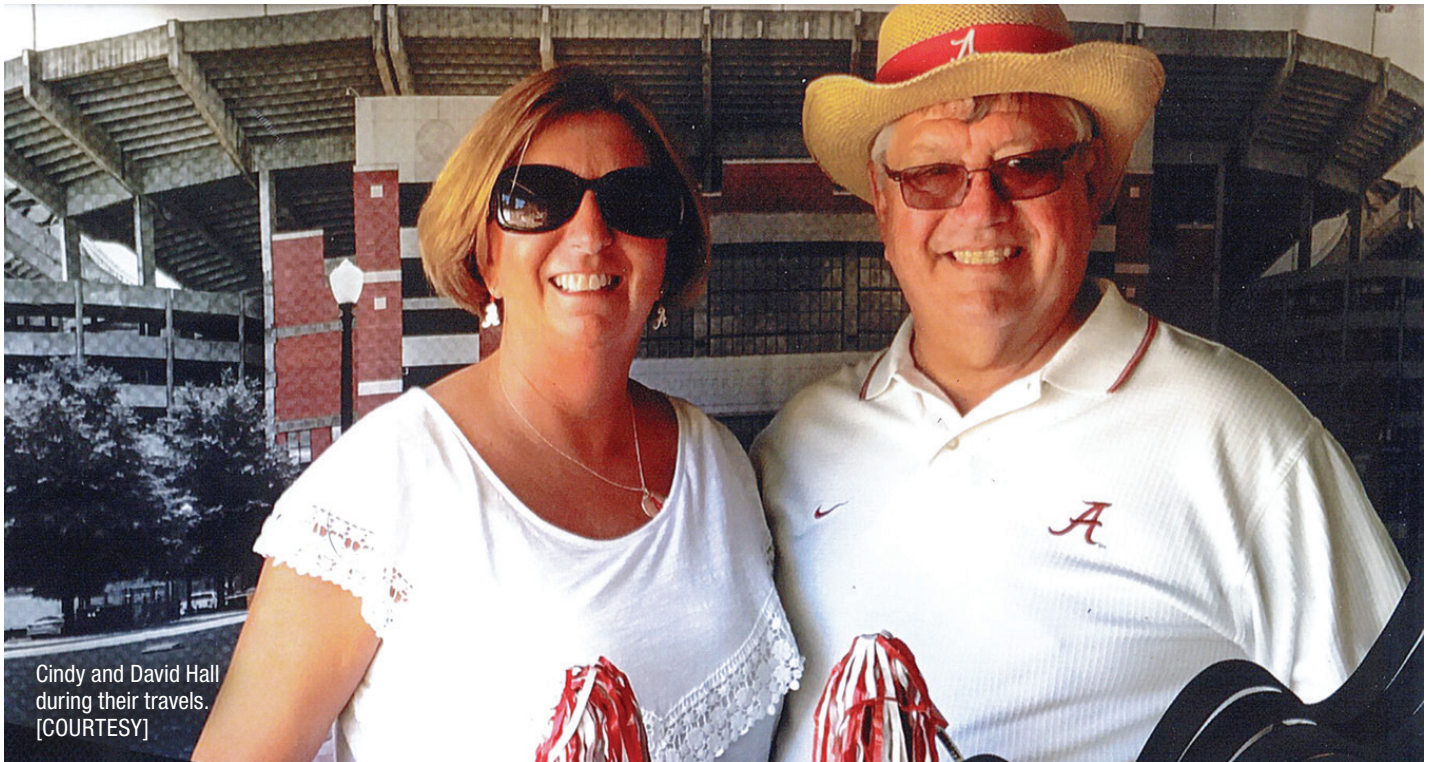
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Cindy and David Hall during their travels. [COURTESY]

his bucket list. David said he plans to attend a game at each of the 14 SEC stadiums at least once in his lifetime.

“We lack four,” he said, listing Vaught-Hemingway Stadium at Ole Miss, Georgia’s Sanford Stadium, Kentucky’s Kroger Field, and Faurot Field at Memorial Stadium in Missouri.

When the couple has traveled to another stadium, they make a point to see all the sights and experience some of their opponents’ game day traditions.

“We got to Arkansas last year, and the students were lined up in tents around the stadium. They’d camped out the night before, and that’s how they line up to get into the stadium the next day,” Cindy said. “We got to meet the cheerleaders,

and they had the big razorback hog. We got to see all that. Then a few of the students would say, ‘Hey! Glad y’all came down for the game! Hope you don’t beat us too badly!’”

In most cases, the couple said they’ve been welcomed warmly by rival fans.

“Even when Tennessee was not doing great, we went there and walked in while the cheerleaders were doing pyramids and practicing on their quad. This guy in half orange, half white came running by. ‘Hey! Glad y’all came for the game! Can I take that for you?’ He took our garbage and threw it away.”

Cindy and David said they’ve had great experiences with fellow fans aside from their only visit to Death Valley when

Alabama was hosted by Louisiana State University.

“We’ve had good experiences with everybody but LSU. They would come up and touch my nose to their nose and scream ‘Tiger Bait!’ spitting all over me,” Cindy said. “Texas A&M is top of the list. They’re like Alabama folks. They are just good fans.”

David said the stadium became a favorite of his after visiting a graveyard dedicated to Texas A&M’s canine mascots. He said he was also impressed with sections of sidewalk along campus that are engraved with the names of graduates.

“Every graduating class has a section of sidewalk, and it’s every name, like say 1,000 names,” he said. “Now, the first few years of the school in

the 1800s, they had small classes, but they still have them all listed. Every campus has something different. These are things I never knew until we got there. We started asking people, what do we need to see while we're here."

Despite Alabama's longstanding rivalry with Auburn University, David said Jordan-Hare Stadium is another favorite campus visit on his list of experiences.

Though Cindy had attended an Iron Bowl game at Auburn when she was young, the Halls checked the stadium off together last year when David visited for the first time with his grandson, Greyson, who chants "War Eagle" with pride.

"He's obnoxious. We can't carry him to a Bama game with us," David said with a laugh.

"He knows every single stat against every team they are playing against," Cindy added.

She said they'd taken their grandson to see Auburn play Arkansas on his birthday, and despite the loss that cost Coach Bryan Harsin his position as Auburn's coach, Cindy said Greyson was thrilled to be in the stands.

"We enjoyed it too. We did the Tiger Walk and all," she said. "I know Greyson was wondering what we were going to wear to the Auburn game. We wore navy. He was so worried we were

going to show up with all that Alabama red on."

Still, the Halls said they will always prefer their game day home at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

"It's the atmosphere down there. I love it," Cindy said. "You can just feel the electricity even though there is no electricity. All that energy — there's nothing like it."

David and Cindy said they will likely hold on to their season tickets until they physically can't travel to games anymore.

"We see people coming on their walkers, and I'm like, there we are. That might be us one day," Cindy said.

"We might make it there," David agreed with a smile.

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HELPING HANDS — AND — GIVING HEARTS

Lorraine Mills, an 80-year-old volunteer at The Help Center, said choosing to work for free three days a week is a little like hiking up a mountain. When asked what motivates her to continue the climb, her answer is simply “because I can.”

“There might come a day when I’m not able to do it,” she said. “Right now, I can. You know, you pick something simple to do every day and your body will keep going.”

Mills said she’s embraced a charitable outlook most of her adult life. She volunteered for various organizations and charities at her former home in Georgia, but the self-proclaimed “compulsive volunteer” admitted that she once bit off a little more than she could chew.

“Whenever I’m asked to help, I tend to say ‘yes,’” she said. “When I left Georgia, I said, ‘O.K., I’ve got to cut back.’ I knew it was too much when I put a cup of coffee to reheat in the microwave, and when I pushed 30 seconds, I heard myself say, ‘What can I get done in 30 seconds?’ That was too much.”

When Mills moved to Florence in 2019, she began volunteering again through her church, St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal



Volunteers spend their blessings at The Help Center

Church. Eventually, she also got involved at Common Ground Shoals and The Help Center, where she became clothing manager following the COVID pandemic when volunteers became scarce.

She said some of that desire to help others stems from her Christian upbringing, but Mills said she also knows how it feels to be on the receiving end of a helping hand.

“That’s why clothing is important,” she said. “I wore what people gave me. Here, people have a choice. A mother might come in, and I’ll ask, ‘What about this?’ She’ll say, ‘Oh, my kid wouldn’t wear that.’ I didn’t get a choice. If that’s what arrived on my doorstep, that’s what I went to school in.”

Part of her duties at The Help Center are sorting items in the donation bins, organizing items to keep by size, and discarding



Robert Robinson prepares to load a new donation of food into the freezer at The Help Center. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

items that aren’t functional, out of season, unclean or too worn.

“We only have a certain amount of space. I remind our volunteers that this is not a storage area,” Mills said. “We get some really

nice, good stuff, but then we also get trash. At this point, I am storing good, heavy coats for winter, but in August, we don’t have room for things like sweats and heavy shirts.”

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Connie Lard, background, talks with a patron as she works the front building. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

In September, she said the center starts rotating summer clothing out and sending excess items to an area thrift store.

“What’s really helpful,” said Lanier Nail, executive director of The Help Center, “are school clothes for the kids and work clothes for adults. Many folks who come through here need something to wear for an interview, and they need something for a job if they get it.”

Nail said providing people with work clothes that will help them sustain their employment is just one example of how The Help Center is striving towards a greater goal — helping others help themselves.

“It looks like the goal is to give people food and clothing. That’s what is happening on the surface, but the goal is to help,” he said. “If you give me food, that might help me eat for a day, but how does that help ultimately? Our goal is for the people who receive help here to also receive some hope.”

He said volunteers like Mills are “absolutely crucial” to that mission.



Robert Robinson works to unload a new donation of food at The Help Center. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

“You have to ask, how would it affect things without them? We’ve had 150 to 200 families who might have missed some more meals this week, which means maybe somebody is angrier. Somebody has less hope than they might have had,” Nail said.

“These folks are contributing

to the good, the peace, and the prosperity of our city. Even though you can’t say we produced or sold anything, I wouldn’t want to know what things would be like if people in the city weren’t doing this kind of work.”

Other than needing volunteers, Nail said the charity center

accepts canned goods and non-perishable food, monetary donations, clothing in good condition, and basic household and hygiene necessities to provide for people in need.

Something as small as making sure a family eats in a day, Nail said, can cause a ripple effect.

Many of the volunteers at The Help Center were once recipients of the organization's services.

Robert Robinson, 62, said The Help Center helped him get his life back in a rather unexpected way.

He said he had received a hand up from the organization when he was down on his luck, but the center actually saved his life after he committed to volunteering.

"Back years ago, I got into a little trouble," Robinson said. "If I got into trouble again, I was going to be facing felony charges, so I was trying to find something to do.



Connie Lard, left, and Lorraine Mills talk with a patron as they work the front building. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

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Connie Lard, left, and Lorraine Mills work the front building to help. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

Well, I came down here to see if I could volunteer, and I met one of the nicest ladies you'd ever want to meet. Cindy Young took me under her wings. You just don't know how much better off I am today."

Robinson said his work at the center has given him a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

He continues to work three days a week at the distribution center, and twice has been named Volunteer of the Year.

"This place gave me a second life," he said. "I needed something to get me out of the house. Somebody introduced me to The Help Center. The Help Center introduced me to Cindy. Cindy introduced me to the Church of the Highlands. The Church of the Highlands introduced me to 21 Days of Prayer. You don't want to know the kind of life I came out of, but now I have a reason to wake up in the morning."

Like Robinson, other volunteers like Bill Morrison, 86, and Connie

Lard, 70, are happy to pass their blessings on to others because they said it also gives them a sense of fulfillment.

Morrison and Lard each dedicate four hours every Monday to The Help Center.

"Some days it can get frantic around here, but most days it's not too busy," Morrison said.

"I just enjoy working with the people and meeting a lot of the people when they come through. We're fortunate to be on this side of the counter. I'm very fortunate to not have to ask for help."

Lard, who retired as a nurse practitioner from the Lauderdale County Health Department, said even volunteering one day a week fills a void that was left when her career ended.

"I became a nurse, obviously, because I wanted to help people. When you retire from that work, you feel kind of guilty when you're no longer doing some of that," she said. "I just come one morning a week, because I have

grandchildren and lots of other things too, but this is a very fulfilling place to be."

Lard, who helps coordinate the registration booth at The Help Center, said there is always a need for more volunteers, especially during the holidays when families may be feeling a little more strain amid the giving season.

"Many hands make light work," she said. "I've always heard that growing up, and it really is true. Volunteers are always crucial, but probably even more so during that time."

While volunteering to pass out food or clothing to the homeless and needy might seem like thankless work, Mills, Robinson, Morrison and Lard all agreed there are aspects of the job they love besides the sense of purpose it gives.

"When you volunteer, you always meet the neatest people. It's always a good experience, so it encourages you to volunteer again," Mills said.

Lard said she enjoys the sense of unity she feels when she's helping her community out through The Help Center.

"This is a unity effort between a lot of area churches," she said. "You get to know people from other denominations, and some have become very close friends."

Nail added that many people do not truly experience living until they are giving rather than receiving.

"That's the incentive," he said. "These people have a great time together. They joke around and play pranks on one another, they go out to eat together, you know, we have some social events throughout the year. I can't pay anybody money, but I can pay them appreciation, a good working atmosphere, new friends, and a new perspective."

For those interested in getting involved, Nail said potential



Robert Robinson, right, loads newly donated food into the freezer. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

volunteers and donors can contact The Help Center at 256-766-7663.

"If someone has a gnawing or an itch — if they feel like they need to be doing something, but they don't know what — this is

a great place to start," he said. "If you come volunteer for a while, you might discover this is not your calling, but my guess is that volunteering here will help you figure out how to spend your blessings."



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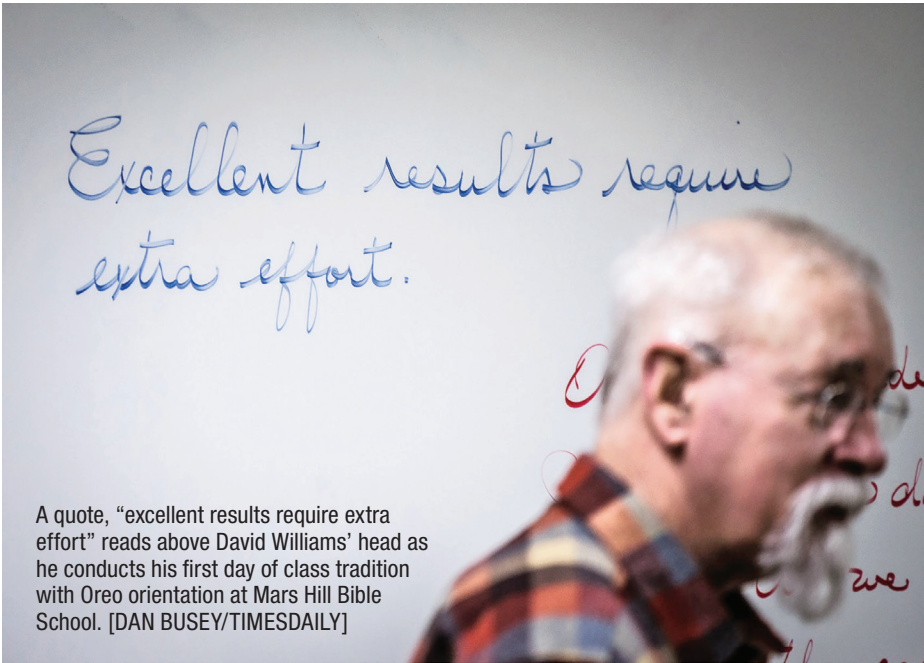
Teacher David Williams instructs his students about primitive arrows while they watch “Dances with Wolves” at Mars Hill Bible School in Florence. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]



HEAD OF THE CLASS

**David “Coach” Williams marks
half a century as a teacher**

By **Chelsea Retherford**
Staff Writer



"A couple of years ago I decided to go ahead and teach to year 50 as that just seemed like a good stopping point. I've joked that I just don't want to get in a rut," he said.

"I have other plans and things I need to do while I can still do them. Afterall, I am 72 years old though the only time I realize that is when I look in the mirror."

Williams's affiliation with the school goes even further back, all the way to 1957 when he was a first grader there. He attended all 12 years of school at Mars Hill.

He admits that he got his teaching degree in college "because I couldn't think of anything else."

A master's degree followed. A lifelong lover of the outdoors, he initially considered going to Colorado

When David "Coach" Williams stepped inside his Florence classroom on the first day of school in August at Mars Hill Bible School, he surveyed the scene with a little

different perspective from all the years past. This year marks Williams's 50th and final year of teaching at the school that he calls his second home.



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Students applaud Teacher David Williams as he remarks about celebrating 50 years at Mars Hill. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

to work as a ranch hand. His options here at home, at the time, were the Reynolds Aluminum plant or Ford.

Because he needed a job, he decided to give teaching a try.

He said he never intended to be a long-term school teacher.

“Life just fell in place for me as I went along,” he said. “Nothing in my life has worked out the way I thought it would, but everything has worked out much better than I ever expected.”

Both his children graduated from Mars Hill and his wife, Linda, is a long-time librarian there.

Williams spent 17 years coaching varsity boys basketball with stints as cross

country, and track and field coaching along the way.

Having not coached since 1997, the name “Coach” stuck and he said it’s ironic because his students now weren’t yet born when he last coached.

His sole focus for more than two decades has been in the classroom, teaching his beloved U.S. history to mostly sophomores and juniors.

His goal is to produce happy memories with his students and he’s perfected the art of it through annual projects like his “How to eat an Oreo” and his Charles A. Lindbergh Memorial Paper Airplane Flying contest.

Masterful at incorporating history into various hands-on

projects, Williams has held Wild West days where students learned about Dutch oven cooking over open fires, target shooting, period weaponry with muzzleloaders and bows and arrows, and life on long cattle drives.

In studying Native American life, his classes have even made canoes.

“The students will dress up on our western day and we learn about skills the people had back then, even do sing-alongs around a campfire,” he said.

He said the telltale signs of his longevity at the school are more apparent now as he’s teaching many children of his former students.



David Williams instructs his class they may ask for one to three cookies as he conducts his first day of class tradition with Oreo orientation. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

He's well aware of the record he's setting, though that was never his intention.

"When you're in a situation like I'm in, surrounded by bright students and wonderful co-workers, it's easy to just keep going with the years clicking by," Williams said. "This is a place where everybody cares for everybody else and it's been a major blessing in my life."

The school's principal of 15 years, Dexter Rutherford, said Williams will forever be spoken of in the same breath as Mars Hill Bible School.

"He's absolutely legendary and it's astounding to think of all the lives he's touched," Rutherford said. "He's the classic example of someone never working a day in his life because he so loves what he does."



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David Williams sits in his classroom.
[DAN BUSY/TIMESDAILY]

Rutherford said while Williams is certainly a Mars Hill icon, he's also seen all the changes in education.

"When you've been teaching 50 years you'd think it would be old hat, but he's always planning and changing and genuinely enjoying his students," Rutherford said.

One of the memories with Williams that's most etched in Rutherford's mind came about soon after Rutherford arrived at Mars Hill.

"As a school, we were transitioning into greater school safety and I didn't yet know all the activities Coach Williams did with his students," he said. "One day, we started hearing loud explosions and ran outside and he was firing off his muskets with his students. The SRO and I about had a heart attack. We've laughed about that a lot."

In his last year, Williams said he's going to make the most of it, enjoying his students and his work family.

"I may not have started out thinking I was going to be here 50 years, but now that I have, I'm going to continue to count every day on this campus as the gift it is."

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CLUES ACROSS

- Bay Area humorist
- Hurt
- Icelandic poems
- A taro corm
- Metaphorical use of a word
- It fears the hammer
- Excessively quaint (British)
- Laid-back California county
- Cook in a microwave oven
- Not late
- Go from one place to another
- Peoples living in the Congo
- Popular pasta
- Available engine power (abbr.)
- Popular musician Charles
- Angry
- Spelling is one type
- One who makes a living
- Indicates location
- Imperial Chinese dynasty
- Small water buffaloes
- Hungarian city
- Fabric
- Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
- Precursor to the EU
- Philly footballers
- Female sibling
- "When Harry Met Sally" actress
- Magnetic tape of high quality
- Insecticide
- Apparatus to record and transmit
- Some is considered "dog"
- Israeli city ___ Aviv
- Fencing sword
- Ottoman military title
- Wise people
- Cold wind
- Popular type of shoe
- Administrative district
- A way to reveal
- Cooked meat cut into small pieces
- Actress Zellweger
- Romanian city

CLUES DOWN

- Small town in Portugal
- Site of famed Ethiopian battle
- German river
- Christmas carols
- Cash machine
- Rough and uneven
- Rumanian round dance
- Widespread occurrence of disease
- A place to relax
- Feeling of listlessness
- Coat or smear a substance
- Wild mango
- Brews
- Belgian city
- Confined condition (abbr.)
- Swiss river
- Small amount
- Part of buildings
- Vietnamese capital
- Sailboats
- Shelter
- Terminated
- Discharge
- Snag
- Partner to cheese
- A container for coffee
- Spend time dully
- Satisfies
- Snake-like fish
- Consume
- Type of student
- Erase
- Instruct
- Girl's given name
- Jewish spiritual leader
- "To ___ his own"
- North-central Indian city
- Greek alphabet characters
- Weapon
- Amounts of time
- American Nobel physicist vital to MRIs
- Soviet Socialist Republic
- Witness

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By Metro News

Individuals work hard to save enough money to purchase their homes. And the hard work doesn't end there. Once homeowners settle into a new home, they may set their sights on renovations that suit their individual needs. And even when buyers find a home that needs no such work, maintenance requires homeowners' utmost attention.

All that hard work is perhaps one reason why older adults may be a little reluctant to downsize as they advance through their golden years. In addition to the sweat equity homeowners put into their homes, all the memories they've made within their walls can make it harder to put a home on the market. Older adults who aren't quite certain if downsizing is right for them

can consider three key factors to make a decision that's in their best interests.

• **Cost:** Perhaps no variable affects senior homeowners' decisions to downsize their homes as much as cost. No one wants to outlive their money, and downsizing to a smaller home can help seniors reduce their monthly expenses. Even homeowners who have long since paid off their mortgages can save substantial amounts of money by downsizing to a smaller home or even an apartment or condominium.

• **Space:** Many people love the extra space that single-family homes provide. But seniors can take a walk through their homes and see how many rooms they still use on a consistent basis. If much of the home is unused, seniors can probably downsize without adversely affecting their daily lives.

• **Market:** The real estate market is another factor to consider when deciding if the time is right to downsize. A seller's market can help seniors get the biggest return on their real estate investment, potentially helping them make up for meager retirement savings. For example, home prices skyrocketed across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, making that a great time for sellers to put their homes on the market. Seniors selling to downsize may capitalize on such spikes since they won't be looking to turn around and buy larger, equally expensive homes once they sell their current place. If the market is down and seniors can withstand the work and cost a little longer, it may be best to wait until things bounce back in sellers' favor.

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TAILOR-MADE GIFTS FOR THOSE ON THE GO

By Metro News

Older adults did not seem to get the memo regarding inflation. As the world continues to navigate a cost-of-living increase, internal data from Bank of America indicates that Baby Boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964) and Traditionalists (individuals born between 1928 and 1945) are spending more while younger generations are cutting back. Between May 2021 and May 2022, spending by Traditionalists increased by more than 5 percent while Baby Boomer spending rose by 2.2 percent. That uptick occurred while younger generations' spending fell by 1.5 percent.

Seniors seem to be on the go, and that's something holiday shoppers can keep in mind as they look for gifts for their aging parents, grandparents and others. With that in mind, shoppers can consider these gifts that align well with the lifestyles of older adults who are out and about and making the most of their free time.

• **Golf clubs or additional golf gear:** Data from the National Golf Foundation indicated that more than 34 million people in the United States played golf in 2019, and 15 percent of those players were 65 and older. A new set of custom-fit clubs can help seniors take their game to the next level. Such clubs can be expensive, so they make a great tandem gift from children and grandchildren who pool their resources. If new clubs are not necessary or too



Any number of gifts can make this holiday season even more special for modern seniors who continue to get up and go each day.

costly, a single club, such as a new driver or putter, makes for a great gift as well. Gear like a new golf bag, new spikes and new course-friendly attire also makes a great gift for seniors who love the links.

• **Travel gifts:** The 2023 AARP Travel Trends survey found that 85 percent of older adults rank travel in their top three priorities for discretionary spending. The appeal of travel has not worn off for modern adults, and shoppers can keep that in mind this holiday season. New luggage, travel miles earned through a credit card, unique experiences at senior travelers' next destination, air tags that can keep track of luggage, and a world travel adapter that can convert plugs in any country across the globe are just a few of the many travel gifts shoppers can give on-the-go seniors this December.

• **Exercise gear:** The National Council on Aging notes that adults who exercise after turning 65 continue to reap the same rewards that improve quality of life among younger men and women. In addition to boosting immunity, exercising after 65 continues to improve mood so long as you stay the course. Exercise gear, including attire and appropriate footwear, can reduce injury risk and help you feel more comfortable while breaking a sweat.

• **Spa session:** All that activity is good for the body, but so is a little post-activity rest and relaxation. A day at the spa, where you can get a massage, take a mental break and address minor aches and pains can be just the thing seniors need to recover in time for their next excursion.



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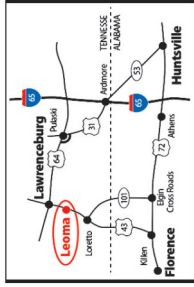
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