

Noah's Ark charts new direction after bird flu outbreak, B1

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

It's Worth Knowing What's Really Going On.

LOCAL IN-DEPTH AJC PEACHTREE ROAD RACE

Father-daughter team makes Peachtree history



"I feel very, very grateful to have someone with a disability in my life," said David Glass, speaking of his daughter. "Everyone needs a Darden in their life." JASON GETZ/JASON.GETZ@AJC.COM

Duo prepares to compete Tuesday in AJC road race. Read their inspiring story

By Helena Oliviero
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Twice a week, David Glass and his teenage daughter, Darden, run eight miles together at a scenic trail hugging the Chattahoochee River near their home in Sandy Springs. They take it all in — the spectacular water views and a bevy of wildlife — white-tailed deer, soaring blue herons, toads, owls, not to mention Darden is also on the lookout for dogs and babies. With Darden doling out words of encouragement every step of the way, they go fast. "Good job, Daddy!"

ON AJC.COM
» Listen to David Glass talk about why running the AJC Peachtree Road Race with his daughter is so special.

On a whim, Glass and Darden, who has Down syndrome, registered at the last minute for a road race that could qualify them for the competitive push-assist division of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Peachtree Road Race. At that February race in Smyrna, with Darden flying ahead of her father in a push-assist race chair, they aimed

Glass continued on A14



David Glass began running with Darden, who has Down syndrome, when she was about 5. "It's kind of their special time together," said mom Betsy Glass. COURTESY

AJC INVESTIGATION UGA FOOTBALL

UGA rallies for players accused of sex assaults

Football athletes often remain on team despite allegations, but program defends its handling of legal matters.

By Alan Judd
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In a single weekend, a 16-year-old University of Georgia football recruit broke curfew, drank with potential teammates in an Athens bar and ended up in a police station, under investigation for sexual assault.

Georgia signed him, anyway. The school's response to Jamaal Jarrett's misadventures during a campus visit last year illustrates how its national-champion football program rallies to support athletes accused of abusing women, an investigation by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution shows. In case after case, the newspaper found, strong on-field performance appears to excuse bad off-field behavior.

When a top defensive player was jailed on a rape charge, head coach Kirby Smart let eight players go to court to seek their teammate's release, the player's lawyer said. This show of solidarity occurred even though the alleged victim worked part time for the football program.

A player charged with recording a sex act with an unconscious woman remained on the roster for a full season until he transferred. Others have stayed with the team while accused of transgressions that ranged from threatening or attacking

UGA continued on A16

OUR REPORTING

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution has examined off-field issues in the University of Georgia's football program since January, when offensive lineman Devin Willock and recruiting analyst Chandler LeCroy died in a high-speed car crash.

Stories have revealed a permissive culture that enabled reckless, often lawless behavior that endangers football players as well as the public at large.

Officials with the university and its athletic department have declined repeated requests for interviews with the AJC.

AJC STORYTELLERS ORIGINAL. EMOTIONAL. UNFORGETTABLE.



THE DANCER

"WE FELT SO HELPLESS BECAUSE WE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO REACH HIM. HE JUST FADED AWAY."
Lonnice Davis, dancer who performed with Gerard Alexander in Kansas City

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARY PAT HENRY

SECOND OF TWO PARTS

An unexpected finale

By Matt Kempner
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Mary Pat Henry had heard the rumors. But over the nine years that Gerard Alexander performed with the Williams/Henry Contemporary Dance Company, she had never seen signs of his drug abuse. If anything, he often seemed more poised than others.

Henry, the company's co-founder and artistic director, remembers when a choreographer had an unusual idea. It involved dancers incorporating big exercise balls into a performance.

In rehearsals, dancer after dancer crashed to the floor, bashing knees and elbows, while attempting to gracefully glide from atop one ball to the next. Not Gerard. He looked like a swan floating over the balls, Henry said. "It was so easy for him and so hard for everybody else."

He did that often.

Dancer continued on A8



OUR COMMUNITY. OUR VOICE.
POLITICAL INSIDER: MAYOR IN SMALL TOWN UP FOR CHANGE

The AJC's Patricia Murphy chose Metter as the first stop on her Georgia politics road trip. "If you're not going forward, you're going back," the city's 71-year-old leader told her. B1

METRO, B1
Marietta preparing young kids for reading

Its unique approach with the community's help is hailed as a model for others to follow.

INDEX

Business	D1
Classifieds	H2
Crossword	E6
Dining	E9
Inspire	E4
Sports	C1
Travel	E14

Volume 75, Number 183



LOCAL IN-DEPTH AJC PEACHTREE ROAD RACE



David Glass and his daughter Darden train at the Cochran Shoals Trail along the Chattahoochee River. Glass and Darden, who has Down syndrome, became the first competitive push-assist team to qualify for the AJC Peachtree Road Race on their first attempt, with a time of 43:01. PHOTOS BY JASON GETZ/JASON.GETZ@AJC.COM

Glass

continued from A1

to finish in under 50 minutes. They completed the race in 43 minutes, 1 second — an impressive pace of 6 minutes, 56 seconds per mile.

"People kept saying 'You should do it. You should do it,'" said Glass about signing up for the qualifying race. "It's kind of like our own special thing. It's going to be an honor to compete in the Peachtree."

Not only was it the first time a competitive push-assist team has qualified for the Peachtree on their first attempt, on Tuesday there will be another first: The Glasses will also be the first father-daughter duo to race in the division.

The Glasses will be among 10 competitive push-assist teams competing in the Peachtree Road Race. Another seven push-assist teams will participate in the open division with general runners.

Glass and Darden, a petite redhead only 4 feet, 11 inches tall, and her dad will take off about 6:30 a.m.

The race is 10 kilometers, or 6.2 miles, long with an estimated 50,000 runners signed up this year. In the past couple of years, participation slipped and has still not quite returned to pre-pandemic levels of about 60,000 runners, but organizers say it's still the world's largest 10K race.

Running partners

While the Peachtree Road Race will turn 54 years old this year, the push-assist division is a relatively new addition to the race, going back to 2013.

The nonprofit Kyle Pease Foundation has helped more than 400 wheelchair athletes cross the finish line at not only the Peachtree Road Race but the Boston Marathon, the NYC Marathon and the Public Atlanta Half Marathon. The organization coordinates all of the push-assist teams and provides all of the necessary equipment for athletes to participate.

The push-assist division is open to any athlete with a physical or intellectual disability, and the athlete doesn't need to be wheel-



Darden Glass shows her mother, Betsy Glass, a page in her high school's yearbook. Darden takes special education classes at her local high school and will likely graduate in the next couple of years.



Darden, 18, who loves art and dance, dances one afternoon with her younger sister, 16-year-old Anna, at their Sandy Springs home to Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off."

chair dependent to participate.

Competing in the push-assist division requires not only physical strength and endurance but also mental toughness. As teams move deeper into the miles of the race, Zach Watson, operations manager of Kyle Pease Foundation, said runners must get through mental walls. That's when a teammate like Darden can play a critical role in sup-

port and positive encouragement.

Competitive push-assist teams train for months or even years before qualifying to participate in the Peachtree Road Race. In reality, the Glasses have been training for the race for several years. They just didn't realize it.

An avid runner from his youth, David Glass was Georgia's 1989 high school state champion in

cross country, running a 5K course in 16:56. Now age 50, Glass has continued to run six days a week, and some days, he'll squeeze in a couple runs, running about a 7:30 pace per mile.

Glass and Darden have been going out for runs from time to time for years, starting when Darden was about 5 years old. They first used a jogging stroller with a maximum weight capacity of around 60 pounds.

Darden, 18, doesn't enjoy running solo, but loves running with her dad. She rides in a jogging stroller, except for races when she's in a sleek push-assist chair designed for speed.

"She loved being with her dad, he loves being with her and having her as a running partner," said mom Betsy Glass. "It's kind of their special time together."

Mobile entertainment

David and Betsy Glass, who both graduated from the University of Georgia, met through mutual friends and married in 2001. They always knew they wanted to have a family and moved to a large brick Colonial home in a quiet neighborhood not far from Chastain Park.

In 2005, Darden, their first child, was born. The extended family had gathered at the hospital, full of anticipation. Shortly after Darden's birth, David Glass was approached by the nurse and told the doctor wanted to talk to him. That's when he and Betsy learned Darden had Down syndrome. It was a stunning emotional blow.

David Glass said hearing the news was like "the sky is falling." The reality, he said, has been "the opposite."

"Looking back, you just kind of hear something's wrong, not really understanding why you think something is wrong. But since that time, you really come to understand that having a child with a disability is a natural part of the human condition and there is nothing wrong or bad about it. It's been wonderful," he said.

The couple committed themselves to helping Darden thrive, connecting with support organizations, and enrolling Darden in occupational and speech therapy. Fortunately, Darden doesn't

have any heart defects, which are common among people with Down syndrome. She takes special education classes at her local high school and will likely graduate high school in the next couple of years.

Darden has a sunny disposition. She doesn't complain. She's a hugger. She loves art and dancing.

On a recent afternoon, Darden plays cards with her dad, helps package pies with her mom — the family has a pie business called Darden's Delights — and dances with her sister, Anna, to Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off."

Early during the pandemic, tired of being cooped up at home, Glass and his daughter turned to running more regularly to connect, get exercise, and enjoy the outdoors. That's when they got more serious and focused on running. They pushed the weight limits of a jogging stroller intended for children until Glass recently received a new one for his birthday that better fits Darden.

"My dad goes very fast," Darden said with a wide smile.

On a recent day, as the family approaches the time of the day when late afternoon turns into early evening, Darden gets ready for a run with her dad. She packs a snack — a hummus wrap. She carefully reviews the music on her dad's iPhone to play during their outing: a Spotify list simply called "Racing," which includes such varied songs as Taylor Swift and Rihanna, along with traditional Irish music and Jorge Quintero's "300 Violin Orchestra." She plays the music directly from the iPhone. Sometimes, and especially during races, she'll hold a portable speaker.

"She does the music and it's our little mobile entertainment experience," said Glass.

Glass said he feels grateful to have this opportunity to run the Peachtree — and with Darden every step of the way.

"I feel very, very grateful to have someone with a disability in my life. It really gives you a perspective," said David Glass.

Sitting together at the dining room table he looks at Darden and smiles.

"Everyone," he says, "needs a Darden in their life."

TRAFFIC

U.S. pedestrian deaths are at highest level in 41 years

Most are after dark without sidewalks. Author cites 'real crisis'.

c. 2023 The New York Times

The number of pedestrians who were struck and killed by vehicles in 2022 was the highest it's been since 1981, according to a report based on state government data.

At least 7,508 people who were out walking were struck and killed in the United States last year, said the report, published Friday by the Governors Highway Safety Association, a nonprofit that represents states' safety offices. The report used preliminary data from government agencies in 49 states and Washington, D.C. (Oklahoma had incomplete data

because of a technical issue and was the only state to not provide data, the association said.)

The findings for 2022, and an accompanying analysis of federal government data from 2021, showed that pedestrian deaths in the United States have continued to rise over the past decade.

From 2010 to 2021, pedestrian deaths increased from 4,302 to 7,624, a 77% rise, according to the federal data. In the same period, other types of traffic fatalities increased 25%.

The report identified several factors that could have contributed to this increase, including more risky driving during the coronavirus pandemic and a lack of awareness and enforcement of laws meant to keep pedestrians safe.

"This is a real crisis that's sort of flown under the radar," said Angie Schmitt, the author of "Right of

Way: Race, Class, and the Silent Epidemic of Pedestrian Deaths in America."

The United States is a global outlier in roadway deaths. In recent years, other comparable developed countries have done more to reduce pedestrian, cyclist and motorcyclist deaths, researchers say. Those safety measures have included lowering speed limits, building more protected bike lanes and requiring vehicle design safety measures that better protect people outside of a vehicle.

The report's analysis of pedestrian deaths in 2021 used data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which is not directly comparable to the state data sets because they use different criteria for pedestrian deaths. Some states, for example, may include deaths that occurred

30 days after the crash in their count, while the federal government numbers do not.

The federal data included specific information about crashes, such as light conditions, driving speeds and road types. It did not include other data that researchers say could be useful for studying crashes, such as if the victim was homeless or the driver was texting.

In 2021, most pedestrian deaths happened after dark and on roads where there were no sidewalks; a passenger car was the striking vehicle in 35% of deaths, and an SUV or pickup was the striking vehicle in 40% of deaths, the report said.

People of color are typically overrepresented in pedestrian fatalities, but the 2021 data on race and ethnicity in these crashes was not included because of delays in processing death certificates.

Schmitt said the number of pedestrian deaths has been steadily increasing since about 2009. The increase in deaths reflects changes to the nature of the suburbs, where more people are walking in neighborhoods designed for cars, as well as the impact of an aging population, since older people can be more vulnerable to accidents and the resulting injuries, she said. Most importantly, she added, there has been an increase in the number of sport utility vehicles and large pickup trucks on the road.

Schmitt's book about pedestrian deaths was published in 2020 and she expected safety to improve. Instead, during the coronavirus pandemic, roads became less safe. She attributed that to less enforcement and more aggressive driving.