

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

# AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 131



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BAKE,  
SHARE,  
*indulge*

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## Front of Tear Out Card 1



### MASTER THE KITCHEN: *Baking Conversions*

Baking is a science, and like all sciences, numbers play an important role. If your baking soda is off by even one teaspoon, you'll wind up with a real mess!

**Keep this guide of common baking conversions on hand to bake like a pro.**



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## Back of Tear Out Card 1

### *Spoons & Cups*

c.	fl. oz.	tbsp.	tsp.
1/8 c.	= 1 fl. oz.	= 2 tbsp.	= 6 tsp.
1/4 c.	= 2 fl. oz.	= 4 tbsp.	= 12 tsp.
1/2 c.	= 4 fl. oz.	= 8 tbsp.	= 24 tsp.
1 c.	= 8 fl. oz.	= 16 tbsp.	= 48 tsp.

### *Grams*

oz.	g
2 oz.	= 57 g
4 oz.	= 113 g
6 oz.	= 170 g
8 oz.	= 227 g
16 oz.	= 454 g

### *Extras*

1 stick butter	=	1/2 c.	6 oz. choc. chips	=	1 c.
1 lemon	=	1-3 tbsp. juice	1 c. honey	=	12 oz.



## AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Dear Bill and Judy,

Giving back often coincides with the holiday season, but there are plenty of organizations making an impact in the lives of others year-round. This issue of American Lifestyle profiles one such group, the Gary Sinise Foundation, which aids active-duty military members, veterans, and first responders; offers a guide to other charities to consider supporting; and profiles an organic clothing brand that proves fashion can do good and feel good.

Actor Gary Sinise has dedicated most of his life to helping current and former service members through his nonprofit, the Gary Sinise Foundation. Inside, you'll find an interview with its senior vice president of programs, who shares the foundation's history and some of its most important work.

Whether you're passionate about children's issues, animal rights, or supporting aging adults, there is a charity out there for nearly every cause. The article in this issue explores four national organizations you could consider giving back to this season and beyond.

Clothing should make you feel good and feel good on your skin, but a lot of items manufactured today are made from or treated with unhealthy chemicals. Q for Quinn founder Melita Cyril is changing the game with her brand of organic and sustainable socks and undergarments for kids and adults. Learn about her journey to creating the company and how it gives back in more ways than one.

How will you make a difference for others this season? As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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# A Well-Insulated HOME

Written by **Bonnie Joffe** / Photography by **Getty Images**

Creating a comfortable, energy-efficient, and healthy living space requires installing proper insulation. This guide explores its importance and walks you through the key initial steps of adding it to your home.

## What are the benefits of insulation?

In addition to moderating the temperature in your home, insulation provides various upsides—some of which may be unexpected.

### *Reduces energy costs*

Proper insulation helps lessen the amount of hot or cold air that seeps into your attic, basement, or crawl space, which ultimately helps to make your home more energy efficient.

### *Helps conserve water*

Insulating your pipes can raise the temperature of running water by 2 to 4 degrees. This, in effect, reduces heating time, conserving energy and water in the process.

### *Acts as a sound barrier*

Effective insulation can help absorb noises from appliances and electronics, which are transmitted through your walls and floors.

### *Provides moisture control*

Inadequate insulation can cause moisture from cooking and bathing to accumulate within walls, which can lead to mold and mildew growth. Conversely, well-insulated homes are less prone to moisture problems, resulting in better air quality and a healthier living environment.

## Getting started

Here are the key factors to consider when determining your home's insulation needs:

- The best type will largely depend on two factors, the first being where you want to add it. Examples include roll insulation for attic joists, batting for crawl spaces and walls, and spray foam for basements, pipes, wires, and window frames.
- In addition, your local climate will impact the insulation thickness (R-value) you'll need—the higher the R-value, the more protection you'll have against heat entering or leaving your home. For example, the highest R-values are generally recommended for attics, basements, and crawl spaces in northernmost states.

Instead of reaching for your thermostat, evaluate how well-insulated your home is and make improvements as needed. Consider consulting a professional for more complex tasks like adding blown-in insulation, which may be required for certain types of attics or uninsulated rooms.



# Cheerfully Chic HOLIDAY TABLESCAPES

Written by **Andre Rios** / Photography by **Getty Images**



**D**ining tables are where the greatest memories of the season are made, whether you and your loved ones are indulging in platefuls of beloved dishes, toasting to good health in the upcoming year, or gleefully reminiscing about the past year. If you're looking for a spark of inspiration as you prepare to play host, check out this assortment of unique decorating schemes. Bold yet charming, any of these concepts can transform your tablescape and add an extra touch of magic to your celebrations.

## **Scandinavian winter**

Borrow white winter motifs from people who are all too familiar with snow. To achieve a stylish Scandinavian scene, dress your dining table in a white tablecloth and mark the center with a vase full of pine or juniper branches. If you have a long table, choose a plush, white runner to resemble a track of snow, then dot the scene with charming accents such as pine cones, tiny ceramic houses, and wooden serving boards with rims of authentic bark.

As for the table settings, lean wholly into Scandinavian minimalism, which favors natural materials and colors—think textured ceramics in a range of neutral shades, including some walnut-brown objects to offset the white expanse. Finish the look with simple glassware and matte utensils, and your colorful holiday meal will pop amid all the natural luxury.



### Enduring elegance

Who says your table must feature the anticipated festive imagery of trees, stars, and snowflakes? Houston-based interior designer Bilal Rehman recommends an alternative: decorating your dining table in simple sophistication that's suitable for any season. "If you're hosting for Thanksgiving, don't use a serving dish that's in the shape of a turkey or that says, 'Happy Thanksgiving,'" Rehman suggests. "Instead, choose a beautiful crystal dish. You can then use that same dish on Christmas because it will blend seamlessly."



hug, by all means, utilize festive decor! But you can still honor the holiday and defy expectations; just embrace your inner child and dream up some DIY ornaments.

For inspiration, try this holiday garland idea by UK designer Annie Sloan: Tie green leaves and dried orange slices onto long strands of twine, then suspend them from a real tree branch. Hang it above your dining table for a thoughtful centerpiece that features seasonal elements in a surprising way. Sloan finishes the look with strings of golden lights layered over the table's surface and dinnerware in white and olive colors.



The key to achieving this evergreen look is curating dinnerware and decor made with elegant materials that work with the rest of your interiors. Look for pieces that borrow colors from the surrounding walls, furniture, and other elements to ensure they mesh well in the space. You may expect your guests to call you a grinch as they grumble about the lack of typical holiday scenery, but as they settle into their dining chairs, they'll understand that you've found a special way to dignify the gathering.

### Crafty and creative

Then again, if you feel that surrounding yourself with seasonal colors and motifs is like being wrapped in a warm

Get creative with other homemade goods such as table runners, place mats, and vase dressings. To craft the most attractive pieces, though, remember that quality is king. Filling your dining room with tinsel and plastics just won't feel as palatable as working with a few high-quality materials or even elements sourced from nature.

### Old meets new

Traditional decor has achieved classic status for a reason: you can't go wrong when combining pieces like bone china, stemmed crystal wine glasses, and holly wreaths because they never go out of style. However, if you still want to surprise your guests, aim for a more transitional look, which balances timeless with contemporary. You merely need to throw in some new and fresh finds from home-decor retailers like CB2 and Target or local artisans.

"If you have vintage china plates that are a little bit older and more ornate, place them next to some contemporary wine glasses or a beautiful pair of clean-lined and simple silverware," Rehman suggests. "That juxtaposition of old and new will make your tablescape feel curated and collected."

When you shop for decor, select pieces with simple silhouettes and little to no pattern. As for the color scheme, balance seasonal hues with neutral shades or opt for muted colors like merlot red and olive green. Such a contemporary color palette will form the perfect backdrop for savoring holiday flavors and making festive memories with those who matter most.





# Design *Discipline*

Interview with **Melissa Fields**  
Written by **Matthew Brady**  
Photography by **Mallor Hewitt**

In her living room, we barely changed the colors—she preferred adding touches of blush, gray, and beige. This extended to the contemporary decor and furniture we added like the chic round nesting tables and plush shag rug.



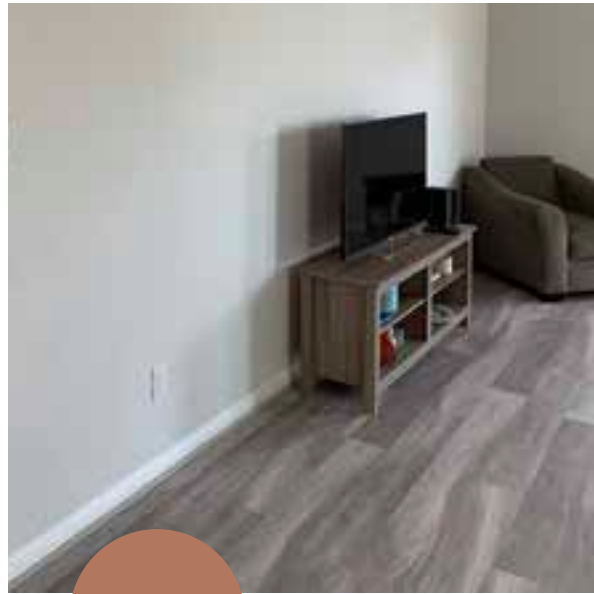
Military veteran-turned-interior designer **Melissa Fields** explains how her Air Force experience benefits her clients and discusses a project in St. Hedwig, Texas.

## **Tell us about your military career:**

I served in the Air Force for twenty years, starting as a medic and then becoming a warranted contracting officer when deployed to the Middle East. Later, I got my MBA in acquisition and contract management and, when stationed at the Air Force Academy, was tabbed as the speechwriter and deputy staff director for Lieutenant General Michelle Johnson, the first woman to

lead a service academy. Eventually, I became the chief of contracting inspections for the Air Education and Command inspector general and was traveling every month.

By that time, though, I was a wife and mom, and having a military career was putting a huge strain on my family. I would never get too comfortable at home because I might have to leave again in an instant. So I decided to retire as a major at the start of 2018.



before



after



**Was your transition to interior design a smooth one?**

I had been talking to my husband about doing design well before my retirement. Whenever we would travel, I'd be fascinated by how the hotel lobbies and rooms were laid out, and I'd soak in the design and decor of model homes whenever I could. I've also designed every house we lived in;

it always felt effortless to me, and I absolutely loved it.

So in 2016, I founded Shades of Gray Design. It was a home staging and redesign company at first, but after a year, I knew I wanted to create spaces for homeowners who would stay in their homes, enjoy them, and get a return on their investments.

**How did your firm's name come about?**

It was my husband's idea. At first, I thought he was joking. He hates the *Fifty Shades of Grey* movies, and that's what people would immediately think of. Also, I didn't want people to get the wrong impression. [Laughs] But I was sold on his reasoning. The color has so many different shades—subtle and light, dark

and moody, and everything in between—and it provides a great backdrop for any style. Like the many shades of gray, there are many different design styles.

**You call your design approach "military inspired." Would you elaborate?**

My experience gives me a somewhat unique take on design. In the military, details can be a matter of

life or death, so I am extremely organized and detail oriented. I also have a ton of project-management experience and worked with many different personalities in my military career, making it easy for me to juggle my clients' various needs for their homes.

**How would you describe your design style?**

I lean more toward modern and contemporary vibes, but I don't force either on my clients. It's their money and their home, so their preferences matter most, though I encourage them to keep an open mind. I like to say, "Let us show you what's possible" because it's truly a collaboration.

**Your website emphasizes your credentials and has up-front pricing. Is authenticity a big part of your business?**

Yes. I love transparency—it allows people to know who I am and what they can expect if they work with me. I debated up-front pricing for a few years but ultimately found that when I didn't have it, I got more calls yet fewer follow-ups after discussing the cost. It's a way to weed out those who are not my ideal clients.

I also like to be honest about how I work. If you're calling me to mimic a picture from Pinterest, I'm not your designer



because I don't want to copy what somebody else has done. Your design should reflect *you*. If you're interested in that, then we can talk. I've had so many people tell me that I'm the exact same in person as I am on Instagram; it's almost like they already know me. That means everything.

**How do you determine your color choices?**

Number one is the feeling the client wants evoked in the space—for a bright, open, and airy room, I won't consider darker colors. Second is how the client plans to use it. For example, if we're working on a creative area, I'll want the design to inspire them and get their ideas flowing, so I

might suggest bold colors that make them feel happy or a fun pattern that sparks joy. I'll also have a baseline and ask them to show me their inspiration. All those considerations help me put the color scheme together.

**Tell us how the St. Hedwig project came about:**

We did the living room first, and a year later, the client asked us to update her master bedroom and bathroom. She didn't want to do a complete bathroom remodel, so we did some small updates, such as replacing the builder-grade fixtures. These changes really made a huge difference in that space, which was originally very vanilla.



In her bedroom, we went dark with the walls, trim, and doors, added a fireplace, and kept her bed and window coverings light.

**Did your client want you to continue the style of the living room design in the bedroom and bathroom?**

In her living room, we barely changed the colors—she preferred adding touches of blush, gray, and beige. This extended to the contemporary decor and furniture we added like the chic round nesting tables and plush shag rug.

When she was ready to update her bedroom, she initially wanted the same scheme. Instead, I created two mood boards: one that was very similar to her living room and another that was bold with darker, moody colors. When I showed them to her, she immediately pointed to the dark one and said, "That's what I want." She explained that it looked very high-end, like a luxurious hotel, and had a glam vibe.

**The bedroom and bathroom seem to complement each other. Tell us about that design decision:**

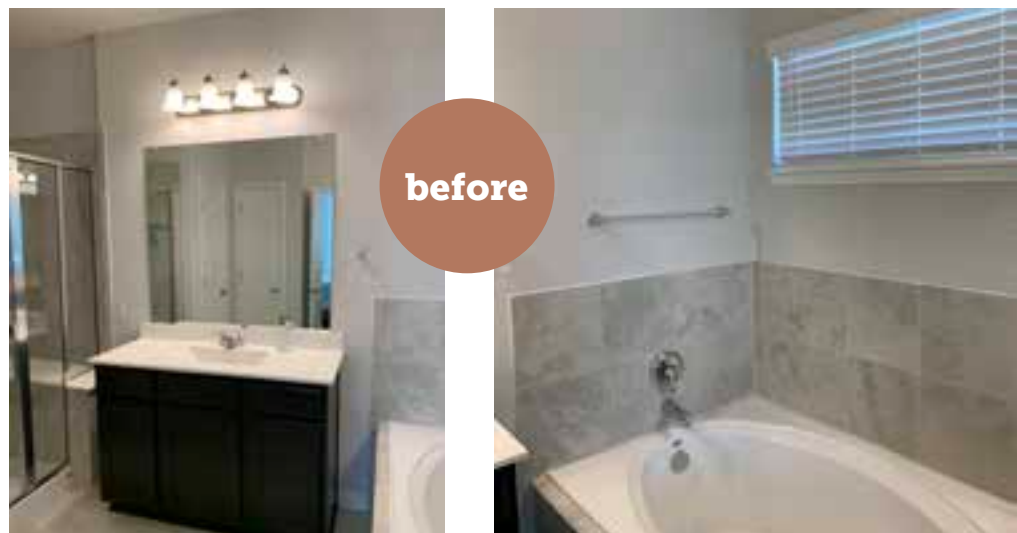
In her bedroom, we went dark with the walls, trim, and doors, added a fireplace, and kept her bed and window coverings light. However, she already had dark cabinetry in the bathroom, so it would have ended up very cave-like if we had carried the bedroom scheme into that space. Instead, we flipped it, keeping the walls and flooring light by retaining the original color.

**How did you incorporate the fan in the living room and the fireplace in the bedroom into the respective designs?**

She wanted to keep a fan in her living room, so my first dilemma was how could we glam it up within the functionality of the space. I found this cool fan with a little crystal chandelier, which was eye-catching but not over the top. For her drapery hardware, we went with finials that were crystal-like to match the chandelier. Keeping her drapery light, having a nice cordless Roman shade, and layering it with floor-length curtain panels created a luxe feel.

The fireplace is mostly for ambiance. That said, we do sometimes experience cold nights in Texas, so it's nice to have a little heat and coziness. She spent good money on that room: her bed and drapery rods were custom-made, and the accent wood paneling was very specific. All that gave her exactly what she wanted—something very unexpected.

For more info, visit [shadesofgraydesign.com](http://shadesofgraydesign.com)





# a seasonal SPREAD

Recipes by  
**JACK HALLOW**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHUTTERSTOCK.COM AND ALAMY.COM



RECIPES FROM *OH MY GOURD!*  
BY JACK HALLOW. SMITH STREET  
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Get the rest of  
the recipes here.

## pumpkin HUMMUS

This silky hummus is prime for the dipping. Whether your weapon of choice is pita bread, fresh falafel, any manner of veggie stick or even the humble human finger, hummus is universal.



Makes  
about  
2 cups



Preheat the  
oven to 350°F.

### INGREDIENTS

14 oz. peeled and cleaned pumpkin (winter squash), cut into 3/4-in. cubes

1 tablespoon olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 head garlic

14 oz. tinned chickpeas, drained and rinsed

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1/3 cup tahini

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1/2 teaspoon chili powder (optional)

1 tablespoon toasted peanuts

2 sage leaves, thinly sliced

### INSTRUCTIONS

**1/** Preheat the oven to 350°F.

**2/** Place the pumpkin in a roasting tin and drizzle over the tablespoon of olive oil. Break up the garlic head and toss the cloves in the tin, then season everything with salt and cracked black pepper. Roast in the oven for 20–25 minutes, until the pumpkin is soft. Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly.

**3/** Place the pumpkin into the bowl of a food processor. Squeeze the garlic flesh from the skins, and add to the bowl, along with the chickpeas, lemon juice, tahini, salt, cumin and chili powder, if using. Turn the processor on, then with the motor running, slowly add up to 1/2 cup cold water. Check the texture as you go, stopping when it reaches your desired texture.

**4/** Transfer to a serving bowl and garnish with the toasted peanuts, sliced sage and a drizzle of olive oil.



# *pumpkin* RISOTTO

Load your guests up with this carb-loaded bowl of pumpkin, rice and parmesan. A few artfully placed sprigs of rosemary on top does more than look classy, this pop of flavor really puts the OH in risotto.



Serves 4



Preheat the oven to 340°F.

## INGREDIENTS

1 lb. 5 oz. butternut or kent pumpkin (winter squash), peeled and cut into ¾-in. chunks

2½ tablespoons olive oil

5 cups vegetable or chicken stock

2¾ oz. butter

1 onion, finely chopped

2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 bay leaf

2 thyme sprigs

1½ cups arborio rice

½ cup dry white wine

½ cup finely grated parmesan

A few rosemary sprigs

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1/** Preheat the oven to 340°F. Line a baking tray with baking paper.

**2/** Put the pumpkin in a large bowl. Drizzle with 1½ tablespoons of the olive oil, sprinkle generously with sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper and toss to combine. Place on the lined baking tray and roast for 30 minutes, or until golden.

**3/** Pour the stock into a saucepan and bring just to the boil. Turn off the heat.

**4/** In a large shallow saucepan or deep frying pan, heat the remaining olive oil and a third of the butter. Cook the onion over low heat for 5 minutes. Add the garlic, bay leaf, thyme sprigs and rice, stirring to coat the rice in the oil.

**5/** Stir in the wine. Gradually add the hot stock, a ladleful at a time, stirring until the stock has been almost absorbed. Keep adding the stock gradually, cooking over low heat.

**6/** Stir in the pumpkin with the last addition of stock, mashing about half the pumpkin lightly with a fork as you add it. Remove the bay leaf and thyme sprigs, discarding the bay leaf, and stripping the leaves off the thyme and adding them back into the risotto. Taste the rice to ensure it is cooked then stir through the parmesan and remaining butter. Serve garnished with rosemary sprigs, if you like.



# *pumpkin* SOUP

The fountain of youth and the place I most want to dip my crouton: pumpkin soup is the GOAT of the Stew Culinary Universe. When served in a hollowed-out gourd, everyone's favorite starter takes on a whole other dimension. Come on in, the soup's fine.



Serves 6



Preheat the oven to 350°F.

## INGREDIENTS

3 small pumpkins (winter squash), such as sugar or pie pumpkins  
2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for rubbing  
1 onion, roughly chopped  
2 garlic cloves  
1 teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon chili powder (optional)  
2 lb. 3 oz. pumpkin (winter squash), peeled and cut into chunks  
3 cups stock of your choosing  
½ cup cream  
Pumpkin seeds, chili flakes and thyme, to garnish

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1/** To make a pumpkin bowl, preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking tray with baking paper. Slice the pumpkins in half lengthways through the stem. Use a spoon to remove the seeds. Depending on the size of the cavity, you might need to hollow out a bit of the flesh.
- 2/** Transfer to the baking tray, cut-side up—if the pumpkins don't sit flat on the tray, slice off a small slice to ensure they sit evenly. Rub a little olive oil inside each cavity, then transfer to the oven to cook for about 15 minutes—they should be tender but not so soft that they collapse. Set aside and keep warm.
- 3/** Meanwhile, heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 to 6 minutes, stirring often, until translucent but not browned. Add the garlic, cumin and chili powder (if using) and cook for a further minute, then add the pumpkin and stock and bring to the boil. Boil for 15 to 20 minutes, until the pumpkin is completely tender.
- 4/** Use a stick blender to puree the soup, then stir in the cream.
- 5/** Transfer the pumpkin halves to plates, ladle some soup into each half, then scatter over the pumpkin seeds, chili flakes and thyme. Serve immediately.



# SERVING THOSE WHO'VE SERVED

Interview with **Jim Ravello** / Written by **Matthew Brady**  
Photos courtesy of **the Gary Sinise Foundation**



**JIM RAVELLA**, senior vice president of programs for the Gary Sinise Foundation, discusses how the actor's nonprofit honors and serves our nation's heroes.

### Tell us about Gary's history of helping others:

Gary has been honoring veterans since the early eighties. After his portrayal of the wounded Vietnam Veteran Lt. Dan Taylor in *Forrest Gump* in 1994, his connection with disabled veterans was deepened. The Disabled American Veterans Foundation (DAV) reached out, and that relationship allowed him to start supporting wounded veterans. After 9/11, he went on several USO Celebrity Handshake Tours and, in 2003, he created the Lt. Dan Band to entertain the troops at home and abroad in addition to his frequent visits to the VA hospitals. In 2004, he cofounded Operation Iraqi Children, which provided school supplies to our deployed military units to hand out to Iraqi youth and, eventually, other countries in need.



He created the Gary Sinise Foundation in 2011 to expand on these efforts, support military members, veterans, first responders, and the families of our fallen heroes, and ensure their sacrifices

are never forgotten. His motto is “While we can never do enough for our defenders and their loved ones, we can always do a little more.” Gary’s life passion is to give back to those who serve.

**How does your organization make a difference?**

We help in several ways. For example, through our RISE program—Restoring Independence Supporting Empowerment—we build specially adapted, mortgage-free smart homes for severely disabled veterans and first responders, modify existing homes, and supply mobility devices and vehicles. We also offer financial aid, serve meals to military personnel around the world (over one million to date), and help with mental wellness. Through First Responders Outreach,



we provide funds, training, and equipment such as ATVs, rescue boats, fire gear, and Jaws of Life for first-responder units, mainly for volunteer fire departments.

In addition, our Snowball Express program takes fallen heroes’ surviving spouses/guardians and children to Walt Disney World every December. The holidays can be hard for these families, so we aim to give them a fun five days while also setting up a Remembrance Garden to honor each of their lost loved ones. It’s all about connection: families who share this unique loss form bonds there. Throughout the year, we do other community events where we bring them together so they can maintain those relationships.



**What inspired the Soaring Valor program?**  
Gary’s two uncles served in WWII: his uncle Jerry was in the Navy, while his uncle Jack was a B-17 navigator who flew thirty missions over Europe. He was able to build a strong relationship with his uncle Jack when he took him to the National WWII Museum. After he passed at the age of ninety, Gary received his uncle’s oral history of his service from the museum. Inspired by their visit together and the video recording, he decided that every veteran of the “Greatest Generation” should have a chance to visit and be honored. From there, our Soaring Valor event was born. A few years into it, we started partnering with high schools to pair students with veterans who visit the museum together. It’s an incredible experience for all who attend.

In addition to sponsoring the event, we sponsor an oral historian at the WWII Museum, who records our nation’s WWII veterans’ stories at the museum or their house. It’s critical that these veterans’ stories are told and archived forever.

**How do your foundation’s efforts impact the recipients?**  
It’s life-changing in many ways. For example, if a veteran or first responder is severely injured, they can’t function the way they did before, nor can their family. Building them a specially



adapted house can help them move more easily in the wider hallways, access their kids' rooms to say goodnight, and use the bathroom and kitchen—essentially anything in the house. As a result, they feel like a person, not a burden, and the whole family gains independence. We also connect them with their community by highlighting what we're doing to help. It brings neighbors together to honor these families and, hopefully, build connections and deeper relationships.

Only 1 percent of people serve. Because of this, the rest of the population tends to be somewhat detached. At the Gary Sinise Foundation, we connect those who have sacrificed so much in the defense of our country and communities with those who want to thank them and remind them they are not alone. As a twenty-seven-year Air Force veteran myself with stepchildren who lost their father, I can tell you from firsthand experience that it matters.

**How have people responded to Gary's mission?**

The American people enable us to do all this. When they're aware of a need, they're very generous and supportive. That's probably the greatest joy of my job: watching fellow citizens respond and thank our heroes. It means so much to the thousands of families who serve.

For more info, visit [garysinisefoundation.org](http://garysinisefoundation.org)



“Building them a specially adapted house can help them move more easily in the wider hallways, access their kids' rooms to say goodnight, and use the bathroom and kitchen—essentially anything in the house.”





# CRAFTING CLEAN CLOTHING

Interview with **Melita Cyril** / Written by **Allison Gomes** / Photography by **Q for Quinn**





**Melita Cyril**, founder of the organic clothing brand Q for Quinn, discusses her company and why her products are a healthier and more sustainable option for both children and adults.

**Tell us about Q for Quinn:**

My idea for the business formed in 2017, when my son, Jacob Quinn, was about ten months old. He suffered from eczema, and though organic clothing was becoming more prevalent, I still struggled to find organic cotton socks for him. So I decided to make some myself. I started brainstorming ideas and searching for potential manufacturers, eventually finding one in Sri Lanka, where I'm from. Q for Quinn launched in 2018 with a few patterns of socks, eventually expanding into adult socks, merino wool socks, and underwear.

I started the company with the simple goal of getting socks for my son, but as I did more research,

I found that many clothes often contain chemicals and toxins that are harmful not only to our skin but also to the workers and the environment. As a result, I made it my company's mission to create clean clothing. We like to think of ourselves as a health-and-wellness company that just happens to make socks and underwear.

**What makes your products unique?**

A lot of things come together to make us different from the rest. I think the little details, like not having a tag or seam, make our products stand out—but it's also the comfort. When we design, we want each item to be perfect for us and our customers. We need it to be better than everything else that's out there. Yes, our items are healthier options, but ultimately there's no point in developing a healthier item that's not comfortable to wear.

Additionally, an important part of our business is our commitment to giving back with every pair of socks and underwear we sell. We've donated more than 200,000 meals to some of the world's poorest children through an organization called Mary's Meals. It offers kids a meal at their place of education, which encourages them to go to school and gives them the chance to get out of the poverty trap.





**“When we design, we want each item to be perfect for us and our customers. We need it to be better than everything else that’s out there.”**



**Why is it important for consumers to know what’s in their clothing?**

We’re not a scientific body and don’t make any claims, but some research indicates that what you wear can greatly impact your health due to the chemicals and dyes used in clothing. For instance, one study a few years back found BPA in baby socks. You don’t want your child to be exposed to that because it’s a hormone disruptor that can have a long-term impact on their well-being. And since babies are always putting their feet in their mouths, you need to give them different socks.

That’s why we’re so focused on making sure our products are clean and made of very high-quality and natural materials. In fact, a few years ago, we became Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certified, which is the highest global standard for natural textiles like cotton, wool, linen, and hemp. By having that certification, we signal to our customers that each product is truly clean and that all the parties involved in making them, from the farms to us as a brand, are clean as well. This means everything we offer is traceable and tested for hundreds of different chemicals and GOTS-prohibited substances, offering transparency to our customers about what goes into each item. We’re not the only ones making organic clothing, but we’re doing it at the highest possible standard.

**“We’re not the only ones making organic clothing, but we’re doing it at the highest possible standard.”**

**What’s your favorite Q for Quinn product to wear?**

I have lots of them! I think my favorite, especially this time of year, is our merino wool socks. They’re so comfortable, and they have a midweight terry cushion, making it feel like you’re wrapping your feet in a warm towel. They’re also great because the wool helps regulate your temperature and dries quickly. So if they get wet when you or your kids play in the snow, for instance, they won’t stay wet all day.

**What’s next for you and Q for Quinn?**

We want to expand our offerings because we feel like there isn’t a lot of natural material clothing that is high-quality but still comfortable. Socks and underwear are obviously our focus, but we’re considering looking into other garments like tank tops. All these items are worn against the skin, so we want to create clean alternatives to help our customers feel comfortable in everything they wear. But, in the end, it’s not about just selling as many items as possible. It’s about sustainability and looking after the environment and the people who live in it.

For more info, visit [qforquinn.com](http://qforquinn.com)



# A SEASON OF GRATITUDE *and Generosity*

Written by **Bonnie Joffe** / Photography by **Getty Images**

**T**aking opportunities to positively impact the lives of those in need is important no matter the time of year, but during the holidays, the spirit of giving becomes even more profound. Donating your time or money to charities embodies the true essence of the season—compassion, generosity, and togetherness. Here are just a few examples of worthy charities to consider.



## **Impact100 Global**

Recognizing barriers limiting women's impact in philanthropy, Wendy Steele, founder and CEO of Impact100, created a platform uniting them to collectively fund solutions to vital global issues. The organization has established over sixty chapters globally since 2001, and it has granted over \$120 million to other nonprofits in five key areas: arts and culture, education, family, health and wellness, and environment, preservation, and recreation. One such recipient is a parent-empowering charity, RaiseUp Families, which was selected in 2023 to receive a \$100,000 grant from Impact100's Houston chapter.

To learn more, visit [impact100global.org](https://www.impact100global.org)

## **Friends of the Children**

With its revolutionary approach, Friends of the Children provides long-term mentoring programs specifically for children ages four to six who have already faced adversity. The nonprofit is distinguished by its commitment to establishing enduring, nurturing relationships with adult figures that last until the child graduates from high school.

For more info, visit [friendsofthechildren.org](https://www.friendsofthechildren.org)

Whether you donate to a charity that supports a cause you care about or volunteer your time at a local soup kitchen, homeless shelter, or animal-rescue organization, every act of giving can make a difference this season, no matter how small.

To find a charity that resonates with you, visit [volunteermatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org)

## **National Disaster Search Dog Foundation**

Founded in 1996, the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation (SDF) rescues dogs who have been abused or abandoned and trains them to help firefighters and other first responders find buried people in disasters. In addition, once they're taken in by the SDF program, these canines are taken care of for life, regardless of whether they complete the program. Currently, there are ninety-four SDF disaster search teams across the country.

To find out more, visit [searchdogfoundation.org](https://www.searchdogfoundation.org)

## **Justice in Aging**

Nearly half (45 percent) of Americans aged sixty-five and older struggle to meet their basic needs, such as health care, food, and housing. For more than fifty years, Justice in Aging is a beacon of hope for these individuals, transforming the lives of countless seniors. Through strategic litigation, policy advocacy, and legal education, it empowers low-income adults—particularly those in marginalized groups—to overcome systemic barriers to help ensure economic stability and the ability to age with dignity.

To learn more, visit [justiceinaging.org](https://www.justiceinaging.org)

VACATION IN THE

# GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

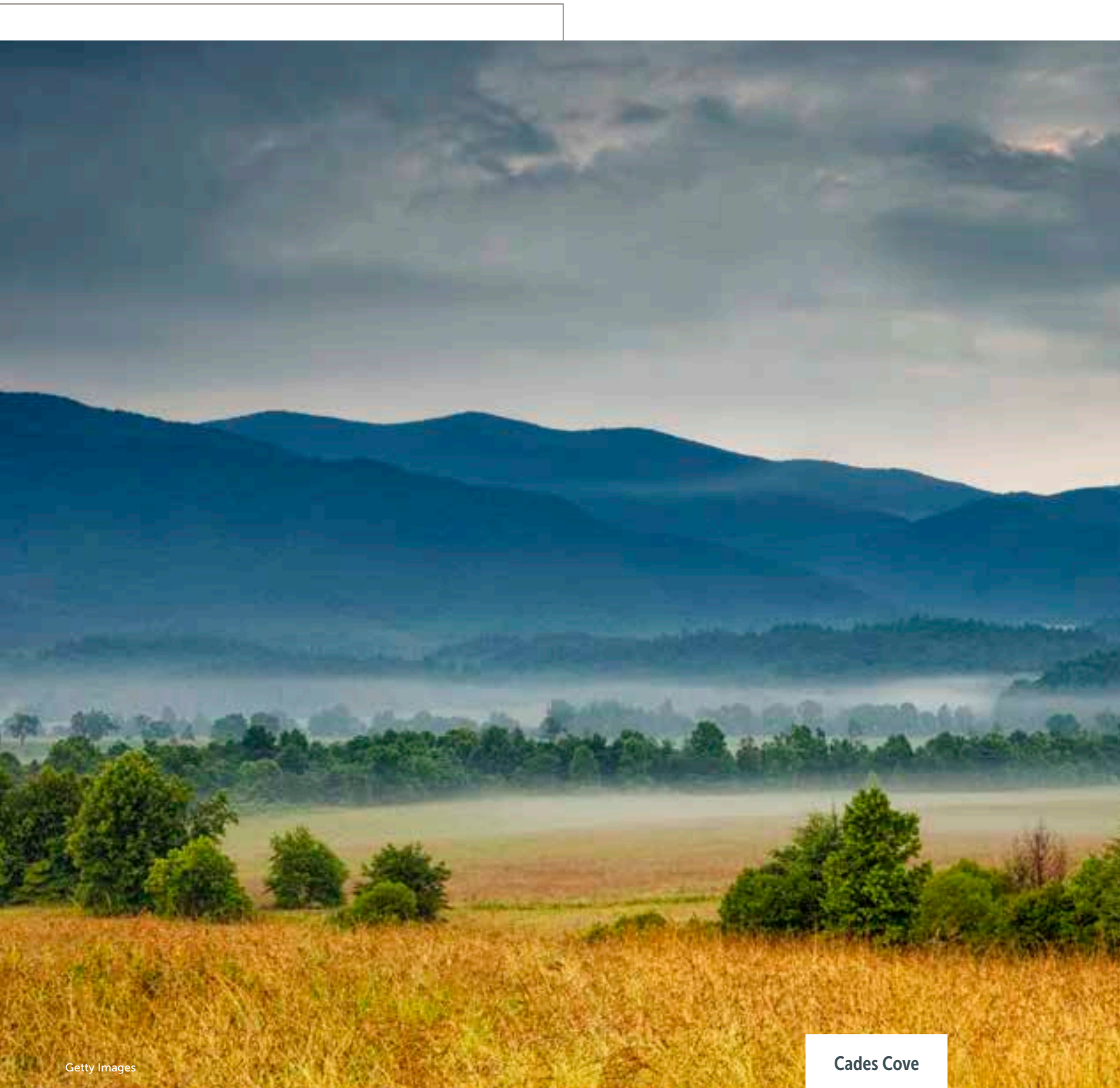
Written by **Lauren Kim**  
Photography **as noted**

Nestled high in the Appalachian region, the Great Smoky Mountains are a magical place. Here, lofty peaks look postcard perfect whether lightly covered in their natural blue haze or accentuated with colorful fall leaves or bright, snowy peaks. No matter the season, this southern region can provide an ever-shifting kaleidoscope of sights to see and activities to enjoy.



Great Smoky Mountains

Getty Images



Getty Images

Cades Cove

### MUCH OF THIS LOCATION'S

allure is Great Smoky Mountains National Park—the most popular destination in our country's National Park System—which encompasses more than a half million acres in North Carolina and Tennessee. Visit the park in fall to survey a stunning autumn tapestry of colors, or travel there in winter to take in the quiet beauty of the season, such as the whispery sounds of snow falling or melodic symphonies of bubbling mountain streams. For those who prefer a metropolitan ambience, the area abounds with charming towns bustling with shops, restaurants, and activities to entertain visitors of all ages.

### Scenic drives

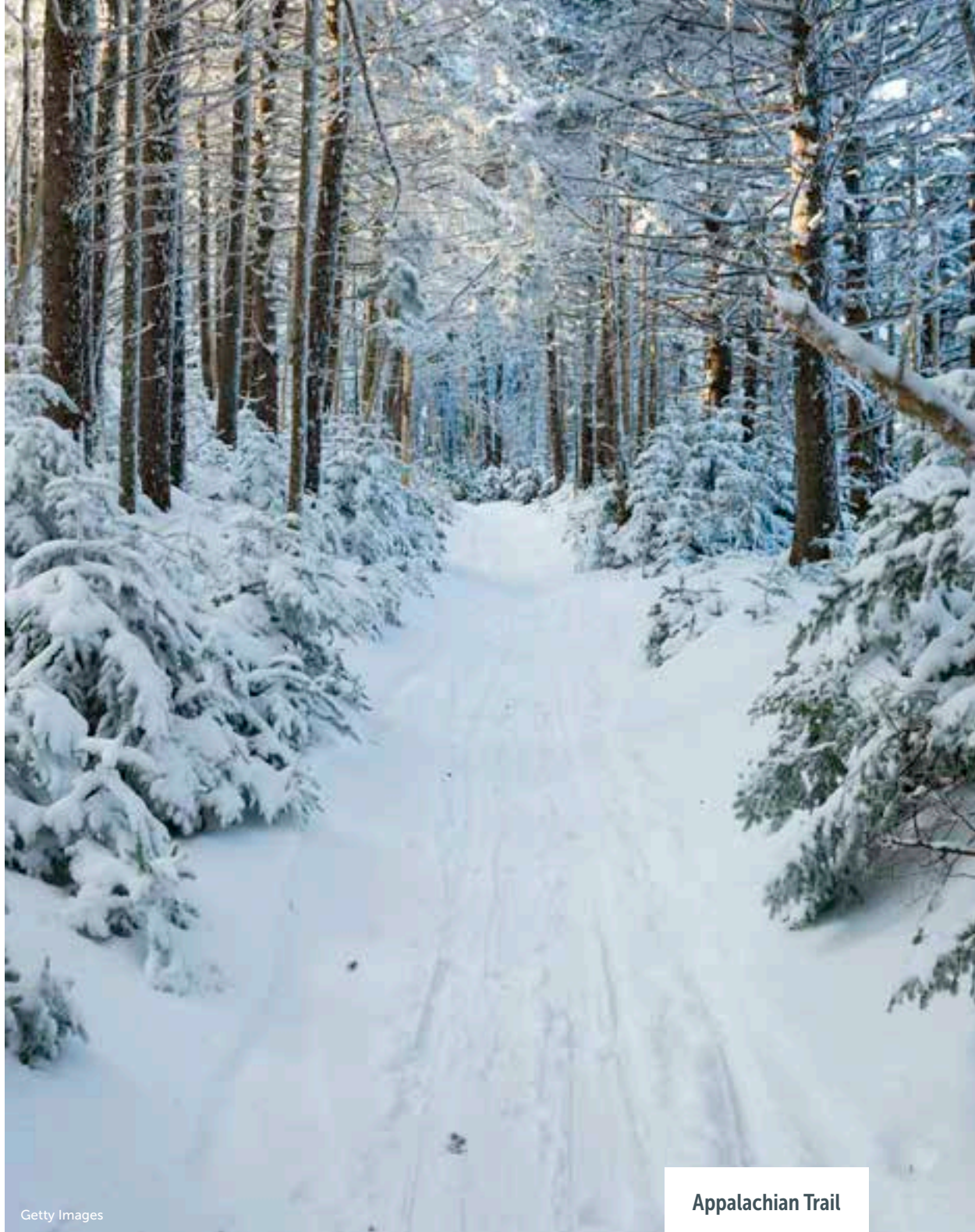
There are many amazing views in the Great Smokies, and one of the best ways to see them is by touring its scenic roadways. Especially popular is Cades Cove Loop Road, located southwest of Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Along the eleven-mile route in the park, you can gaze at the spectacular valley from the comfort of your car, perhaps even catching glimpses of coyotes, wild turkeys, and black bears. If you park at one of the pullouts to explore on foot, you'll find several restored buildings you can check out, including cabins, churches, and a gristmill. The road is open from 8:00 a.m. to sunset year-round, but call ahead in case it's closed for inclement weather. You can purchase maps, souvenirs, and other items at the Cades Cove Visitor Center, located farther along the road. Reserve two to four hours for your drive, especially if you plan to make some stops.

Another picturesque drive to consider is Newfound Gap Road, which runs from Gatlinburg to Cherokee, North Carolina, through forests and past lofty summits and gurgling streams. This overlook-dotted byway climbs 3,000 feet before peaking at 5,046 feet at Newfound Gap. The summit may be significantly cooler than the surrounding lowlands and receive more snow, so dress accordingly and check weather conditions before departing. If you begin the tour at the Tennessee end, you can purchase a Newfound Gap Road tour booklet and other items at the Sugarlands Visitor Center, where you can also peruse a small museum.

If you park at one of the pullouts to explore on foot, you'll find several restored buildings you can check out, including cabins, churches, and a gristmill.

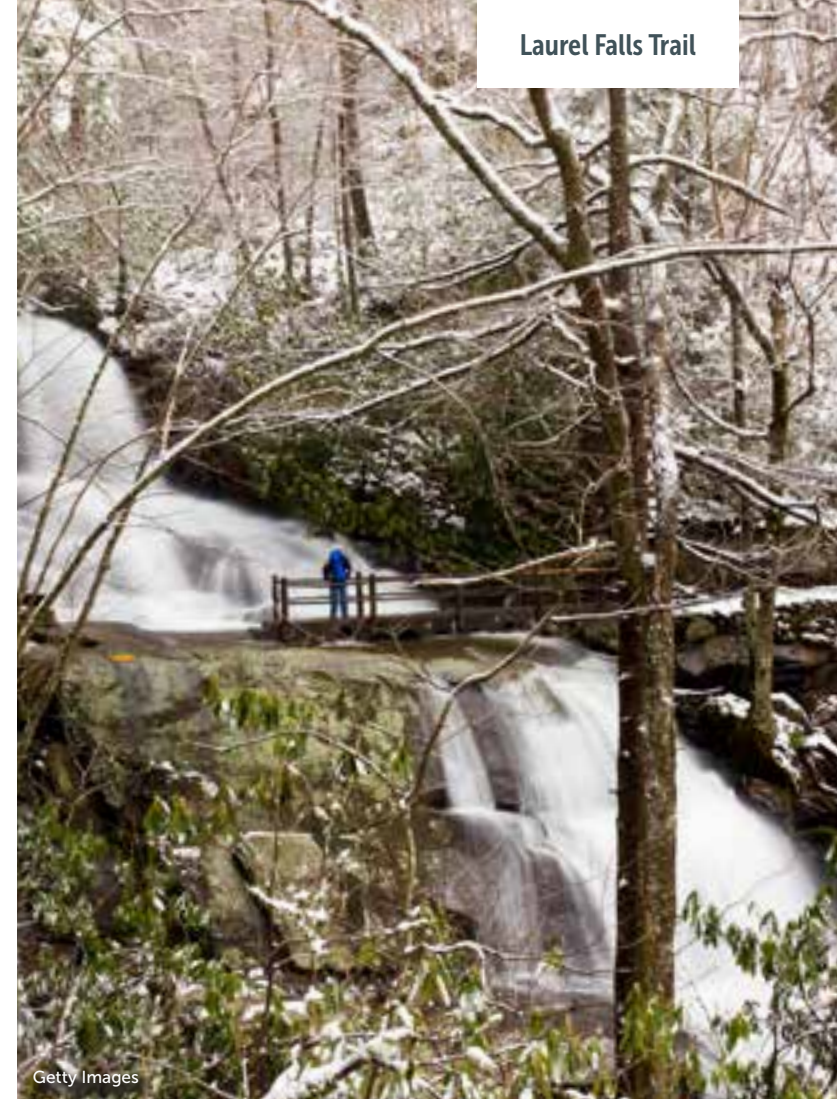


Cable Mill, Cades Cove



Getty Images

Appalachian Trail



Laurel Falls Trail

Getty Images

Laurel Falls Trail, a 2.6-mile trek, offers a relatively easy paved path with stunning views of the eighty-foot falls.

**Hiking**

If you're feeling adventurous, you can hike any of the 850 miles of trails in the national park, including approximately seventy miles of the Appalachian Trail. However, novice hikers might want to stick to shorter and more level trails during particularly cold or snowy weather later in the season. For instance, Laurel Falls Trail, a 2.6-mile trek, offers a relatively easy paved path with stunning views of the eighty-foot falls.

Another relatively flat trek is Porters Creek Trail, which takes you by the creek, an old cemetery, and Fern Branch Waterfall, which cascades forty feet and is known to sometimes freeze in winter. Meanwhile, Andrews Bald Trail, a 3.5-mile round trip about a mile above sea level, is an easy hike near Bryson City, North Carolina, that yields expansive vistas from the highest "bald," or treeless area, in the Great Smoky Mountains.

### Dining and entertainment

Gatlinburg is very close to the park and abounds with fun offerings.

One not-to-miss attraction is the 700-foot-long Gatlinburg SkyBridge, the longest pedestrian cable bridge in North America. Perched 500 feet above the city, it's lit with sparkling seasonal lights for much of fall and winter. Another spectacular place to see the skyline is the 407-foot Gatlinburg Space Needle, where a glass elevator will take you to an outdoor elevation deck with 360-degree views.

Fans of handmade goods should spend some time downtown shopping at a variety of local Gatlinburg stores, offering everything from jewelry to pottery to hand-poured candles. Shoppers can refuel at any of the city's many restaurants, such as Calhoun's for Tennessee barbeque, brews, and burgers or Red Oak Bistro for small-plate cuisine.

### Winter sports

With winter right around the corner, sports enthusiasts can head to any of the ski resorts in the Smoky Mountains, like Ober Mountain Adventure Park and Ski Area in Gatlinburg and the Cataloochee Ski Area in Maggie Valley, North Carolina, for exhilarating fun. Another option is the seven-mile Clingmans Dome Road in Great Smoky Mountains Park for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. (Note that this road is closed to vehicles in winter and not plowed; to get to the top, you

can either hike along the road or drive on NewFound Gap Road.) Afterward, you can ascend the half-mile trail from the parking lot to the observation tower at Clingmans Dome, the highest elevation in the park at 6,643 feet.

### Celebrate the holidays

The holiday season is an ideal time to visit the Great Smoky Mountains region. You can get your fill from early November through mid-February, when both Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge are blanketed in millions of sparkling holiday lights. Don't miss Gatlinburg's Fantasy of Lights Christmas Parade, typically held in early December, and the New Year's Eve Ball Drop and Fireworks show. You can also head to world-famous Dollywood for holiday shows, amusement park rides, lights, and fireworks—but be sure to visit before the holidays are over since the park is closed from early January through mid-March. For a thoroughly festive visit, reserve a room at Pigeon Forge's Inn at Christmas Place, a Bavarian-style lodge that

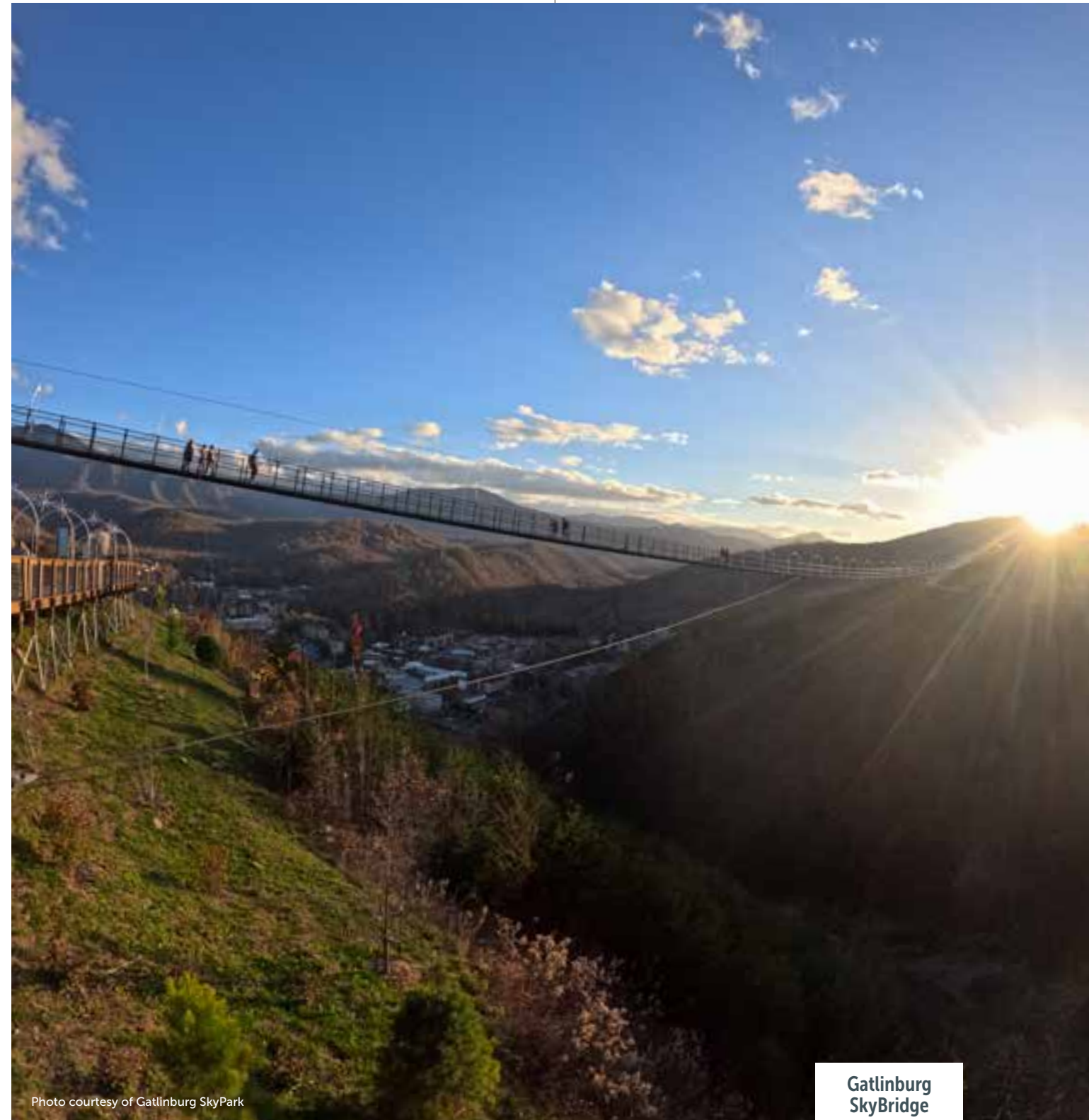


Photo courtesy of Gatlinburg SkyPark

Gatlinburg  
SkyBridge

One not-to-miss attraction is the 700-foot-long Gatlinburg SkyBridge, the longest pedestrian cable bridge in North America.

celebrates the holiday year-round. Depending on when you stay, you might even receive a visit from Santa himself.

Whether you travel to the Smokies to watch the leaves transform into brilliant autumnal colors, trek through its many trails, or partake in holiday festivities, you'll have more than enough to see and do. You might even want to return again and again to this vacationer's paradise.

For more info, visit [nps.gov/grsm](https://nps.gov/grsm)



# SHINING A LIGHT *on veterans*

Written by **Lauren Kim**

**E**very Veterans Day at 11:11 a.m., sunlight streams through the ellipses on five tall marble pillars, casting a bright solar spotlight on a glass-mosaic rendering of the Great Seal of the United States. Both the seal and the pillars, the latter symbolizing the five service branches of the United States military, are elements of the Anthem Veterans Memorial in Anthem, Arizona.

This award-winning engineering marvel rests atop the Circle of Honor. It consists of 3,000 brick

pavers, some 750 of which are inscribed with honored veterans' names, and is surrounded by five park benches representing family members waiting for their loved ones to return. Anthem resident Renee Palmer-Jones designed the monument so that the white pillars and red pavers would blend with the blue sky, and fellow resident and engineer Jim Martin used precise mathematical calculations to guide the sun's rays, allowing them to hit their mark at the same time each year. Dedicated on November 11, 2011, the monument has become a



unique place where Americans can gather to solemnly honor those who gave all.

Photos courtesy of Anthem Community Council



## LESS IS MORE THIS *Holiday Season*

**Balance modern simplicity with classic holiday joy using these easy decorating tips.**



### GO MONOCHROME

A neutral color palette featuring white, black, and tan can help create a serene atmosphere. Shop for festive decor in these shades for a perfectly compatible color scheme. You can then choose a single accent color, such as red or blue, for your ornaments, throw pillows, and other decor to make them pop.



### WRAP GIFTS IN BROWN PAPER

Go the old-fashioned (and eco-friendly!) route by using brown paper and twine to wrap presents. This look is simple yet classy and will make your tree stand out when all the presents are under it. This minimalist choice is easy to personalize, too, and the receiver will be instantly charmed by the extra effort.



### CONSIDER NATURAL ELEMENTS

Holiday decorations don't have to come from a store. Feature natural elements like pine cones, evergreen branches, and holly for their soothing seasonal sights and pleasant natural aroma. Incorporate these pieces into wreaths, garlands, table centerpieces, or empty vases.



### HONE YOUR FOCUS

For the ultimate minimalist design, choose only a few holiday pieces for your decor and let those be the focal points of your home. Switching out your everyday sofa pillows for holiday-themed ones or placing winter plants in the corners of your home can help you achieve stylish simplicity.

## Front of Tear Out Card 2



### pumpkin chocolate cheesecake bar



**Stacey Shanner**

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## Back of Tear Out Card 2

**MAKES 16 BARS**

- ½ c. plus 2 tbsp. butter
- 2 c. chocolate crumbs
- Two 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese, full fat
- 1 large egg
- ¾ c. canned pumpkin
- ¾ c. granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 c. dark chocolate chips

Excerpted from *Butter Celebrates!* by Rosie Daykin. Copyright © 2016 by Random House. Excerpted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House LLC.

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In a small pot over medium heat, melt ½ c. of the butter. Pour it over the chocolate crumbs in a medium mixing bowl and use a wooden spoon or spatula to combine and evenly coat the crumbs.
3. Press the chocolate crumbs firmly into a buttered 9- x 9-in. pan, lined with parchment paper, to create the base. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside.
4. In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, blend the cream cheese until light and fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and add the egg, pumpkin, sugar, spices and salt. Beat again to combine until smooth. Scrape down the sides of the bowl at least once during this process.
5. Pour the batter over the chocolate base and return it to the oven to bake for another 30 minutes, or until the filling is firm to the touch.
6. Remove the bars from the oven and allow them to cool completely.
7. Meanwhile, in a double boiler over medium heat or a small heatproof bowl set over simmering water, melt the chocolate chips and the remaining 2 tbsp. butter. Pour the melted chocolate over the top of the cooled pumpkin layer and use a small offset spatula to help spread it evenly. You can give the pan a light tap on the edge of the counter to help settle the chocolate in one smooth layer.
8. Place the pan in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes so the chocolate hardens.
9. Once the chocolate has set, run a knife along the edges of the pan that aren't lined with parchment paper. Use the parchment handles to carefully lift the slab from the pan in one piece. Then use a large chef's knife to cut the slab into 16 bars.

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ECO-FRIENDLY

# FESTIVE LIGHTS

Holiday lights add sparkle to the season, but they also consume significant electricity. According to the Department of Energy, strings of holiday lights burn up to 6.6 billion kilowatt hours nationwide—approximately the amount of power that 500,000 homes use in one month. Try these eco-conscious options to be festive and more planet friendly.

## Get LED lights

Putting up LED lights instead of traditional incandescent ones uses 90 percent less energy. Plus, they come in just about as many styles and applications as other lights.

## Use a timer

You can reduce your energy consumption by utilizing a timer on your holiday lights. New string lights often have built-in ones so you can set them and forget them.

## Go solar

Solar-powered string lights aren't plugged into an outlet but instead draw energy from a solar panel. Place them in a sunny spot during the day, and they will power on at night.

## Recycle them

If you purchase new lights this year, don't toss your old ones. Your township or municipality might recycle them for you, and some retailers even offer coupons for trade-ins.

## Try unique alternatives

For a quirky option, place rechargeable votive candles along your walkways and railings. You can operate these faux flickering lights via a remote control and recharge them in their own base.

**When you add a little more green to your holiday decor, you'll cut your energy costs, reduce your impact, and still create style that sparkles.**