

The Courier Herald

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2025

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State raises 'financial concerns' about Dublin schools System owes \$4.8 million to State Health Benefit Plan, years behind on annual audits

By **RODNEY MANLEY**
Staff Reporter

State officials have asked the Dublin City Schools to address "financial concerns" that include past-due State Health Benefit Plan payments, overdue audits and other "operational deficiencies," according to a letter from Georgia School Superintendent Richard Woods sent to system officials on Monday.

The school district owes \$4.8 million in employer contributions to the state health plan after failing to pay in for the entirety of fiscal year 2025. Also, the schools deducted employee contributions from workers' paychecks but

withheld payment for months. Woods' letter says the district had not paid toward employee contributions since March, until it was contacted by state officials Aug. 15 and wired \$780,512 to the state Department of Community Health.

School board chairman Kenny Walters said Tuesday that board members were unaware the state health plan payments were not being made.

"We were made aware of it last week," Walters said. "We've been in contact with the state and legal counsel, and there should be a statement coming out sometime today. We were made aware of it just last week, the state is aware of

it, and we're working diligently to resolve the issue."

The school system issued a statement later Tuesday afternoon, saying "information had been withheld" from both the board and Superintendent Fred Williams.

"We are grateful for the Georgia Department of Education's continued support of our district — specifically for providing tools, resources and opportunities that help us ensure the efficient and effective use of our environments and resources. This support has been a key factor in our ability to meet the needs of our students despite the challenges of a changing economic climate and the rising

costs of education," school officials said in the statement.

"Earlier this year, we developed a corrective action plan with the state, and that process remains in place. However, it recently came to our attention that information had been withheld from both the superintendent and the Board of Education by our financial department. This situation has been — and continues to be — addressed internally. We have an ongoing financial improvement plan with the state that is actively being implemented. As we have consistently done, we are working with the state financial review process and will continue to fulfill our obligations with the same commit-

ment and accountability."

The school board called a special meeting for 6 p.m. Thursday night.

The state also says the school system also must submit a "contingency plan" for any lost revenue due to property tax appeals. The city of Dublin, which collects taxes for the school board, already has refunded entitled property owners both city and city school taxes, but has yet to be reimbursed by the schools. The city has sent the schools an invoice for about \$197,000.

Woods' letter, which was

CITY SCHOOLS
Continued on page 10



FRIDAY-NIGHT SIGHTS: SCENES FROM THE STANDS AND THE SIDELINES AT THIS MONTH'S HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAMES

As the high school football season has kicked off this past month, our photographers have been keeping an eye out for more than just great moments in the action. Here's a look at some snapshots of the fun and pageantry around local stadiums during scrimmages, and week 1 and 2 regular-season games, over the past three weekends. Top left: Trinity Christian cheerleaders look to kick up the post-lightning delay energy on the home side of Cleve Warnock Field during Friday's game against Gatewood. Top right: A young fan twirls a strand of Irish green beads before a Dublin kickoff vs. Swainsboro. Bottom left: West Laurens cheerleader Brandi Bailey and Nova Steward, a participant in the team's recent youth mini-camp, perform before the Raiders' home opener against Groves. Bottom right: Tytiuna Page leads the East Laurens runout before the Falcons' Aug. 8 scrimmage at West Laurens. For more photos from recent Friday nights, see page 8/DANNY SCARBORO, CLAY REYNOLDS, HORACE AUSTIN, ZACH DAWSON



Carl Vinson VA to get infrastructure improvement funds

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

The Department of Veterans Affairs will realign an additional \$800 million this fiscal year as part of the Veterans Health Administration's Non-Recurring Maintenance program, which makes infrastructure improvements to health care facilities to ensure safe and effective patient care.

The extra funding means more resources to repair and update aging VA facilities and technology. The

extra money will be spent on a variety of improvement projects at various VA health care facilities across the nation, including the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center where the following improvements will occur:

- Renovate 5B north and east for specialty care (renovation of clinical/support space)
- Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) infrastructure data

VA IMPROVEMENTS
Continued on page 10

Two injured after truck spins out in rain on I-16

STAFF REPORTS

An Alabama woman's truck spun out and hit a vehicle on I-16 east last Friday sending two people from Swainsboro to the local hospital.

According to a Georgia State Patrol incident report, Cherri Ann Jacobs Parrish, 61, was traveling east on I-16 near mile marker 54 in the left travel lane, driving a gray 2019 Chevrolet Silverado 1500.

Stephen Johnson, 38, and a 9-year-old boy, both from Swainsboro, were traveling in a white 2025 Hyundai Tucson, also heading east in the right travel lane beside the Chevrolet.

The truck hit standing water in the left lane, which

caused it to begin rotating clockwise, striking the Hyundai in the left rear panel with its right front. The Hyundai left the roadway on the right side and traveled for approximately 50 feet before striking a ditch on the south shoulder and coming to an uncontrolled rest facing east.

Parrish said she hit water in the roadway and slammed on the brakes. She said her truck then began to spin to the right before hitting the Hyundai. She was not sure how many times her truck rotated.

Johnson and the juvenile both were transported by Laurens County EMS to Fairview Park Hospital with possible injury or complaint.

Trouble in God's Country: Mapping the death of rural Georgia

By **CHARLIE HAYSLETT**
Special to The Courier Herald

Editor's note: Charlie Hayslett is a former political journalist and public relations professional. He studies economic, political and health issues affecting rural Georgia and writes about them on his long-running blog Trouble in God's Country.

About a decade ago, still fairly early in my TIGC noodling, I came across an article about declining birth rates in rural areas in some other part of the country. Gee, I wondered. What's the situation in rural Georgia?

As it turned out, that was easy enough to figure out, thanks to an excellent public database operated by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). Known as OASIS (an acronym for "Online Analytical Statistical Information System"), it's a repository for a wealth of population health data, including the number of births and deaths for all 159 counties going back to 1994.

This was, as I recall, in late 2016 or early 2017. I downloaded all the county-level birth and death numbers from 1994 through 2015 (the latest data available at the time), dumped it all into Excel, and let the spreadsheet calculate the difference between births and deaths for each county and each year. That entire process probably took less than 10 minutes, 15 at the most.

The next step involved a bit of semi-manual data wrangling and took a few minutes longer. I wanted to know how many counties had reported more deaths than births for each year, but couldn't figure out how to get Excel to do that in one fell swoop and wound up having to do year-by-year counts. Even that wasn't all that difficult, but at first I thought I had gone down a rabbit hole that would prove to be a waste of time.

In 1994, only 12 counties reported more deaths than births; in '95, the number was 18; in '96, it dropped down to 9 counties and then bounced back up to 14 in '97. Not much

news here, I remember thinking. I kept going, though, and so did the boring little yawner of a trend I had unearthed. Over the first 15 years of OASIS's data, as the graph at right shows, the number of counties reporting more deaths than births hit 19 a couple of times but never got above that. But then, starting in 2010 (or maybe a year or two earlier, actually), something obviously happened.

The first time I can remember using this data was in an April 2017 presentation to the opening session of the Georgia House Rural Development Council, held down in Tifton. The latest data available on OASIS at that point was for 2015, and the number of counties reporting more deaths than births for that year was 60 — more than double the number from 2010 (and five times what it had been in 1994).

I used this data in my PowerPoint presentation and can remember getting a bit of a rise out of otherwise mostly bored House members; one went a bit bug-eyed and looked at me like I had put a gun to his head. Which, metaphorically, I sort of had.

But this situation has continued to deteriorate, and it's arguable now that much of rural Georgia is literally dying. The number of counties reporting more deaths than births rose steadily from 2010 on before spiking in the Covid years of 2020, '21 and

'22. In the last two years, the number has dropped to 92 and 94, back on its pre-Covid trajectory.

Map the data over time and you can't help but get the sense that you're witnessing the spread of some kind of socioeconomic cancer consuming more and more of the state.

The 1994 map shows the 12 counties that reported more deaths than births that year, and there's not much all that troubling about it. With median ages in the mid-50s, the three mountain counties highlighted on the state's northern border — Fannin, Union and Towns — were all in negative birth-to-death territory, but they have continued to grow steadily thanks to in-migration.

Ten years later, the number of counties reporting more births than deaths was only up to 15, but certain patterns that would soon become more significant were starting to take shape. Down in southwest Georgia — aka SOWEGA — Stewart County had joined Quitman and Clay, hard on the Alabama line, in reporting more deaths than births. And a bit to the northeast, Upson had joined Talbot in this unhappy club.

Over in east-central Georgia, Warren and Wilkes had joined Glascock and Taliaferro to form a growing subregion of im-

RURAL DEATH
Continued on page 10



INDEX

OBITUARIES	2	TELL IT! / POLICE BEAT	5
PIECES OF OUR PAST	3	SPORTS	7-8
EDITORIAL	4	COMICS	9

OBITUARIES



Matthew Richard McGhee

Matthew Richard McGhee, 50, entered the gates of heaven Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2025 at Ogeechee Area Hospice in Statesboro, Georgia, surrounded by family. After 12-plus years of courageously and heroically battling cancer, Matt is completely healed.

Matt was born in Dublin, Georgia, on Nov. 9, 1974. He graduated from Dublin High School in 1993 and Georgia Southern University in 1998 with a degree in business. Matt specialized in all aspects of the convenience store industry. He learned the ropes from his grandparents and father and worked in the family business until 2015.

In 2016, he began working and assisting in operations at Underwood Restaurant and Supply in Brooklet where he continued to work until his passing. Matt was an entrepreneur, business owner and the ultimate salesman. Matt was a longtime member of the Georgia Association of Convenience stores where he served as a member, an officer and trade partner over the years. He was a former member of the Statesboro Downtown Rotary Club and Sylvania Lions Club. Matt served as treasurer on the Screven Christian Academy Board of Directors until his passing. Matt and his family attend Jackson Baptist Church in Sylvania, Ga.

Matt loved the Lord, his family, his friends, life and the Georgia Southern Eagles. He met each day with enthusiasm, never met a stranger, and if you knew him, you loved him. When Matt was nearby, laughs were plentiful and worries scarce. Matt enjoyed spending time with family, especially Tate and his nieces and nephews. He was the "fun" one! On Saturdays in the fall, Matt loved tailgating with friends and family whether at home in Paulson Stadium or away. Matt had a heart of gold and was a

generous soul by nature. He loved helping others, preferably anonymously.

Matt was a devoted husband, loving father, beloved son, admired big brother, fun loving uncle and faithful friend. He was preceded in death by his maternal grandparents, George Hayward "Ned" and Blondell Robinson Snellgrove of Dublin, Ga.; his paternal grandparents, Billy Richard McGhee Sr. (Gibbretta) of Cleveland, Ga. and Eveline Smith Clark (J.B.) of Dublin, Ga.; his uncle, Bernard Snellgrove of East Dublin; and father-in-law, Thomas Burton Rahn Jr. of Springfield, Ga.

He is survived by his wife of 15-plus years, Janet Rahn McGhee, and his 13-year-old daughter, Tatum Olivia McGhee of Sylvania; his mother, Connie Snellgrove McGhee of Dublin; his father and stepmother, Ricky and Mickey McGhee of Fripp Island, S.C.; his mother-in-law, Jean Rahn of Springfield; his brothers and their families, Michael McGhee (Mandy), Tucker, Ben and Chase of Macon, Mitchell McGhee (Jennifer), Sloane, Micah, Quinn and Evie of Canton, and Alex McGhee (Jacey), Smith and Hampton of Statesboro; his brother-in-law, Brad Rahn (Kelly), Branton, Brady, Baylor and Kinzey of Springfield; his step sister, Amy Forehand (Ben), Kortlyn and Ryder Rankin, River, Hannah Johnston (Michael) and Averi of Sylvania; his step brother, Will Bohannon (Monica), Luke, Lily and Cade of Sylvania; and numerous uncles, cousins, and friends that were like family.

Special thanks to all of the many medical professionals that have provided him with above-and-beyond care. Exceptional thanks to Drs. Odom, Peter and Somaiah who have shared this journey with us from beginning to end.

The family received visitors Friday, Aug. 22, from 5 p to 7 p.m. at Joiner Anderson Funeral home in Statesboro (502 Miller Street Ext., Statesboro).

The funeral service was held on Saturday, Aug. 23 at 11 a.m. in the funeral home chapel with Pastor Ralph Dixon officiating. The family received visitors beginning at 10 a.m.

The interment was on Saturday, Aug. 23, at 2 p.m. at Jackson Baptist Church Cemetery in Sylvania (5554 Newington Hwy, Sylvania)

Pallbearers were Drew Busby, Josh Greeson, Chris Griner, Shannon Middleton, Brad Rahn, Leslie Teston, Richard Underwood, and Michael Yoke.

Honorary pallbearers were the employees of Underwood Restaurant and Supply.

The family requests that memorial contributions be made to Screven Christian Academy c/o Matt McGhee Memorial Fund (603 East Ogeechee Street, Sylvania, GA 30467), Jackson Baptist Church (5554 Newington Hwy, Sylvania, GA 30467), or MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX (gifts.mdanderson.org) Please designate your donation to "Other" and fill in "Sarcoma/Dr. Neeta So-

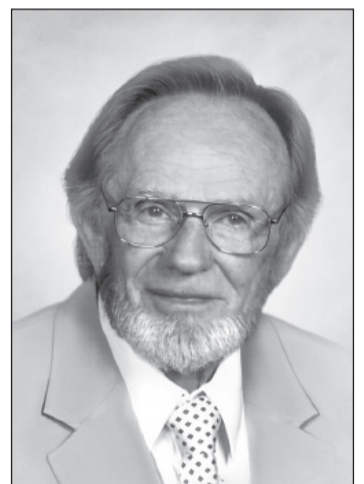
maiah" to fund GIST tumor research.

The family would be honored if you would scan the QR code below and share your words and memories as a keepsake for Tate in the years to come.



Friends may sign the online register book at www.joineranderson.com

Joiner-Anderson Funeral Home & Crematory of Statesboro is in charge of arrangements.



Clyde "Sonny" Lanier

Funeral services for Clyde "Sonny" Lanier Snell, 90, will be held at 11 a.m. Friday, Aug. 29, 2025, in the Richard N. Stanley Jr. Memorial Chapel of Stanley Funeral Home with interment to follow at Westview Cemetery. Rev. Sammy Hall will officiate.

Mr. Snell was born May 10, 1935, in Wrightsville, Georgia. He was the son of the late Clyde A. Snell and Ethel Smith Snell. He was a retired electrician for Raytheon-Catalytic. He received his 70-year service award for electrical workers from IBEW Local 756. He was of the Baptist Faith. Mr. Snell passed away Sunday, Aug. 24, 2025, at his residence.

Clyde and his late wife, Evelyn, enjoyed their retired years on their small farm in Wrightsville. They were avid animal lovers, spending time with their beloved cats, dogs and raising Boer goats for many years. He was a lifetime member of FFA, Young Farmers Association, and a supporting member of the Motorhome Club.

Mr. Snell is survived by his daughter, Monica Blanton (husband John); stepson, Samuel Swavy; two grandchildren, Daniel Blanton (wife Lauren) and Katy James (husband Brett); and two great-grandchildren, Addison James and Waylon

COMMUNITY NEWS



Credit union transforms storage room at NWLE

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

While students were on summer break, Georgia United Credit Union Foundation partnered with Georgia United Credit Union to transform a storage area into a parent/student resource room at Northwest Laurens Elementary School – before school reopens August 1. The Foundation's School Crashers® program provided grants to accredited K-12 schools statewide to improve learning environments for students, faculty, and staff.

Northwest Laurens Elementary is a Title I institution in rural Laurens County. Principal JT Dean and Instructional Coach Ashley Walker (who submitted the grant request) described their dream to convert an underutilized storage room between a parent conference room and the school's media center and transform it into a vibrant resource center for students and parents. During the summer, volunteers and the Laurens County

Schools facilities team replaced old flooring with new LVT flooring donated by Mohawk.

Ashley helped design the space and guide the project management team. She added, "We want to express our gratitude to Georgia United for supplying both grant funding and additional resources to make this project a reality. This initiative is crucial as it will enable us to provide a collaborative space for students and parents with valuable resources they can use at home, especially as parents often struggle to help their children learn grade-level material. We are excited to now have a comfortable and welcoming area full of hands-on games, flashcards, and grade level readers for parents to take home or check out."

Georgia United's Dublin Branch Manager Natasha Snellgrove described how much the local volunteers enjoyed helping repurpose the existing space into an inviting and collaborative environment where students could receive ad-

ditional tools, educational games and coaching to improve comprehension and reading skills.

Since 2014, Georgia United has impacted a total of 81 schools with improvement projects valued at almost \$3 million, made possible thanks to generous donors and volunteer involvement. The next School Crashers nomination period will open in mid-December to all accredited K-12 schools in Georgia. Schools interested will be asked to include a photograph along with a 250-word essay describing why their school deserves a makeover. In 2025, 212 schools applied for grants, and five schools were chosen to receive school improvements during the summer. NW Laurens Elementary joins Apalachee High School, Duluth Middle School, Clarkston High School, and Southeast Whitfield High School as this year's grant recipients.

To learn more about the School Crashers program and view photos of past School Crashers recipients, visit gucufoundation.org/schoolcrashers.

BIRTHDAYS

Aug. 28
Bill Holliman
Debra Jones
Mary E. Slaughter
Rose Rozier

Aug. 29
Candice Haynes
Daisy Tucker

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Paul Lancing Dixon Jr.

Mr. Paul Lancing Dixon, Jr. of Dublin, passed away on Wednesday, August 26, 2025. Funeral arrangements are incomplete but will be announced later.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home of Dublin servicesbydudley.com

Johnny H. Hall III

Mr. Johnny H. Hall, III of Dublin, passed away. Funeral arrangements are incomplete but will be announced later.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home of Dublin. servicesbydudley.com.

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The City of Dublin will be closed on September 1, 2025 for Labor Day.

Garbage route as follows:

Monday, Sept 1st, garbage route will be picked up on Tuesday, Sept. 2nd, 2025.

All other routes will stay the same.

The et cetera chronicles - vol. 114

THE NAVY TO THE RESCUE - Ensign Ullman, of the U.S. Naval Hospital in Dublin, was transporting 15 new Navy corpsmen to the Marine Base at Parris Island, South Carolina, when they came upon an accident near Savannah involving six African Americans in one vehicle and three white men in the other. The accident, which happened just minutes before the arrival of the trainees, was caused in part because of torrential rainfall in progress.

With no medical supplies except one first aid kit, the corpsmen set up a field hospital in an abandoned sawmill close by. Using discarded boards, they applied splints to broken limbs and used their uniform shirts for bandages and slings. The corpsmen waited with the victims until the ambulances arrived. The Gaffney, S.C. Ledger, Aug. 2, 1947.

YOU CAN'T FOOL ME, YOU TURKEY - Jordan Ellington was out in the swamps around Dublin seeking to shoot a fat turkey hen for Christmas. And so was Lee Davis, who heard the distinct call of the delicious bird. When Ellington uttered his realistic turkey call, Davis fired, striking Ellington, the turkey who got himself shot by another turkey right before Christmas. Greensboro, N.C. Daily News, Dec. 14, 1922.

FRANKLY, MY SON, I DON'T GIVE A D#M! - George H. Williams had plenty to be proud of his son, Gladstone Williams. Williams was an honor graduate of Harvard Law School and a talented writer for the Atlanta Constitution, the Miami Herald, and the McClatchy Newspaper chain. While he worked at the Constitution writing staff, Williams

developed a brief friendship with Margaret Mitchell. When Mitchell began to compose the character of Rhett Butler for her iconic novel, "Gone With The Wind," she often thought of the well-mannered, handsome, and well-spoken Williams.

All of Georgia was excited as "Gone With the Wind" became an international best-selling book in the mid-1930s, and even more proud of their state with the premiere of *Gone With the Wind* at Loew's Theater on Dec. 15, 1939. That is mostly everyone except George H. Williams.

In the days after the premiere, Williams told the members of the Dublin Rotary Club, "If it were my choice, I would destroy every copy and every film version of 'Gone With The Wind.'" "The book is doing more to rekindle hatred between the North and the South than since the end of the conflict," Williams told the Dublin Rotarians. It will also be noted that the elder Williams had a disdain for another Georgia icon, Coca-Cola.

WHERE ART THOU BROTHER? - The last time the Rev. A.E. Saunders heard from his brother, Edgar Sanders, was when he was out in Texas, nearly a decade before the turn of the 20th Century. It was just before Thanksgiving, while Rev. Sanders was attending the South Georgia Conference of the Methodist Church in Macon, when he was asked to pose for a photograph with three other ministers, who cumulatively totaled more than 203 years of service to the ministry of God.

Edgar had gone to Texas in the early as 1880s. Not a trace of him had been known since he moved until his son



PIECES OF OUR PAST

By **SCOTT B. THOMPSON SR.**

read in a Texas newspaper that his uncle was pictured in the paper.

The two began to correspond before they could be physically reunited. Macon Telegraph, Dec. 9, 1934.

"I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS" Jean Ellington, a 12-year-old Dublin girl, had spent all but two of her living years in a Philadelphia hospital suffering from the paralysis of her throat after a bout of diphtheria. As the autumn session of her school in Dublin progressed, so did Jean, both physically and academically. As the weather began to cool, Jean's thoughts turned to the best Christmas ever, for which she hoped to receive a pencil box, vanity set, fruit and a typewriter from Santa Claus. Macon Telegraph, Dec. 11, 1935.

DID YOU KNOW ...?

When was the last Old West-style train robbery?

By **JACK BAGLEY**
Georgia Trust for Local News

Look, there on the horizon! It's September!

That month is always special to me. Fall arrives, as does my birthday - and this year I chalk up 67 trips around the Sun. I was told not long ago (my high school reunion) that I haven't changed a bit since I graduated in 1975.

"I looked like this in high school?" I said. "No wonder I couldn't get a date."

Ah, the time flies. As does trivia ... so let's fly with some right now. Enjoy!

Did you know ...
... sharks find fish by hearing their hearts beating? (Well, what did you think sharks did ... bait hooks?)

... about 33% of the people in the world cannot snap their fingers? Additional trivia note: Snapping one's fingers is known as a filip. (So one-third of people will never be in The Addams Family.)

... doctors and nurses in some hospitals in North Korea do not use cutting edge medical equipment? Not because the equipment isn't there; it is, but the personnel have never been trained in its use. (Which brings up two questions - why haven't they been trained, and what do they do with it instead of use it?)

... you can easily tell if you're looking into a two-way mirror? To tell, just put the edge of your fingernail on the surface of the glass. If you can detect a space between the tip of your fingernail and the reflection, it's a normal mirror. If the fingernail tip meets its reflection directly ... well, don't do anything silly, because whoever is behind the mirror can see you. (And you never know who's watching.)

... bubble wrap was originally wallpaper? Invented in 1957 by Alfred Fielding (1917-1994) and Marc Cha-

vannes (1896-1994), the ubiquitous protective wrapping stuff was intended to be a form of three-dimensional wallpaper. Needless to say, it didn't sell, but the two engineers were not discouraged. They tried to market it next as a greenhouse insulation, but that fell flat as well. Finally, hearing that IBM was shipping a new computer model in 1961, the men offered their twice-rejected air-filled wrapping idea as a packaging material. It worked, and sales through the roof were quick to follow. (Glad it failed as wallpaper; popping those bubbles would mean re-papering the room over and over again.)

... a video game is on the market that makes you play it twice before you see the ending? Ghosts 'n Goblins is a very difficult game to play all by itself, but when you get to the end, you get a message saying that it was all just an illusion, and you have to start all over again. Once you get to the end a second time - which is much more difficult than the first - you get to see the real ending of the video game. (One can only hope the real ending is worth what you have to go through to get to it!)

... the writer of Alice in Wonderland created a word game? Author Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) came up with a word game called Doublets. In this game, players transform one word into an entirely different one - one letter at a time. The catch is, each step in the chain must be a legitimate word as well. (Sounds like a great game show idea!)

... the last Old West-style train robbery in the United States was in 1937? Henry Loftus (1915-1993) and Harry Donaldson (1910-1986) were passengers on a Southern Pacific railroad train out of El Paso, Texas, on November 24, 1937.

About an hour into the trip, Loftus pulled a gun on the conductor, and Donaldson began collecting valuables from the passengers. Then things began to go south - one passenger tried to intervene, a nervous Donaldson shot that passenger in the hip, and Loftus was tackled by a brakeman. During the ensuing struggle, the gun went off and the brakeman was killed, at which time some twenty passengers descended on the two would-be desperados, gave them a rather thorough beating, and tied them to their seats. When the train stopped in Deming, New Mexico, Loftus and Donaldson were transferred to the authorities. They were each found guilty of murder and train robbery and sentenced to 50 to 75 years in prison. Additional trivia note: Loftus and Donaldson later said they attempted the robbery because they were out of money, and never intended to harm anyone. (Didn't quite turn out the way they expected it would, did it?)

... Monaco will cease to be an independent country if the ruling family dies? The tiny principality of Monaco, on the Mediterranean coast of France, has been ruled by the Grimaldi family since 1297. Now a constitutional monarchy, the tiny nation is led by Prince Albert II (born 1958). Under the terms of a 2002 treaty between Monaco and France, if the Grimaldi family should ever be without an heir to the throne - male or female - the principality will become part of France when the last ruling prince or princess dies. (Job security.)

... a distillery has a unique method of getting around its county's laws? Located in Lynchburg, Tennessee, the Jack Daniels Distillery is prohibited by local law from selling alcohol - Moore County in

Tennessee is dry. So, to get around the prohibition, the distillery sells commemorative Jack Daniels™ bottles that just so happen to have whiskey in them. (Whatever works, I suppose.)

... you may be a sufferer of myrmecophobia? It's not uncommon; it's the fear of ants. (I've never had problems with ants. Uncles, on the other hand ...)

... the acid in your stomach is very powerful? A solution of hydrochloric acid, it is so strong it can dissolve a razor blade in less than a week. The only reason it doesn't dissolve you from the inside out is because of the lining of the stomach, which is strong enough to withstand the acid that it secretes. (Thank goodness!)

Now ... you know!

NOW HERE'S A TIP

By **JOANN DERSON**
King Features

* Line your pots and pans with plain paper coffee filters to reduce scratches. Replace as needed.

* To keep clothing on the hanger in your closet, try the thin, velvet-lined ones. If you can't find them, add strips of rubber shelf liner to the tops of your hangers, secured with a little duct tape or safety pins.

* If you have solar lights that stick in the ground, you're going to love this: Grab one right out of the ground and flip a flower pot over, stick it into the hole in the bottom of the pot, and you've got a nice little table lamp. It's great if the power goes out!

* Here's an easy and healthy way to add moisture and fiber to your burgers or meatballs: oatmeal. Add instead of package bread crumbs, which can include way too much unnecessary sugar or oils. The oats keep the meat nice and moist.

* Fruit salad can be frozen in small portions in the wells of a muffin tin. Press down and include juices. When frozen, it can be removed and the resulting frozen cups put in a freezer-safe bag for use in smoothies later.

* Tank tops or scarves can be stored on a hanger to which you've attached plastic shower rings. Simply thread the scarf or the tank straps through the ring. They make a nice presentation, and you can fit many on the same hanger.

Send your tips to *Now Here's a Tip*, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

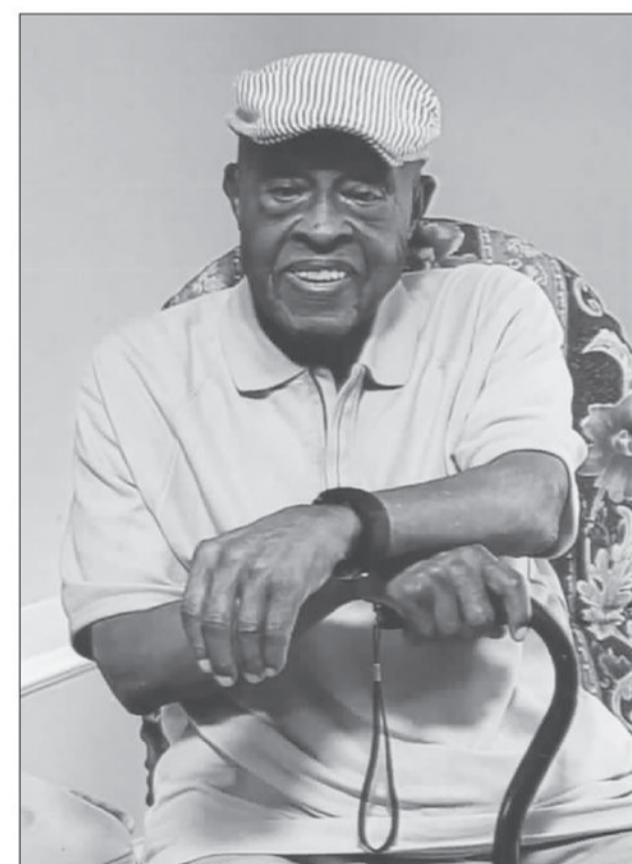
Who is a Centenarian?

Tommie Lee Beard - affectionately known as Tee, Tommie, Daddy, Granddaddy, and Papa - is turning 100 years young, a milestone worthy of celebration and gratitude.

For a full century, Mr. Beard has been a pillar of Dublin, where he has lived, worked, and raised his family. He began his early years as a farmer, a skill that he learned from his father and older brothers. With skill and dedication, he became one of Laurens County's most respected farmers. When Mr. Beard's sons grew old enough, he proudly shared his love of farming with them.

One hundred years provides the opportunity to live many chapters. In addition to farming, Mr. Beard has worked as a construction worker and kaolin miner. He was also the founder of two businesses. After retiring from the kaolin-mine, he became owner and operator of T&W Stop & Shop. T&W was a community convenience store that sold gas and groceries with an on-site laundromat. For forty-four years, neighbors and friends frequented T&W. Only in recent years did the store pass to new hands.

After the passing of his beloved wife, Mr. Beard took on new responsibilities such as housekeeping, cooking,



and laundry. He proudly declares that he irons better than most women. Well into his later years, he maintained his independence by making weekly trips into town and completing yard work.

Currently, Mr. Beard lives in the home where he grew up, surrounded by the care and support of family and friends. He still enjoys watching the news and weather, and he welcomes visitors to engage in political conversations. Mr. Beard remarks that his favorite scripture is

Psalm 23. When asked about the secret to his longevity, his reply is simple: "Keep God first, work hard, and mind your own business."

Today, as the oldest male member of Spring Hill Missionary Baptist Church, Mr. Beard gives thanks to God for blessing him with one hundred years of life. Surrounded by his church, community, and family, he joyfully celebrates this milestone on August 31, 2025. To God be the glory for the things He has done!

Fairfield
BY MARRIOTT

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OUR TAKE...



The University of Georgia Redcoat band will do a walk through practice at the Shamrock Bowl on Oct. 31/SPECIAL PHOTO

Redcoat band an example of musician's success

This Saturday, college football fans will be tuned in to a big slate of games starting at noon and lasting just about all day. And for those tuning in to the 3:30 p.m. broadcast from Athens, they will easily hear the sounds of the University of Georgia Redcoat Marching Band as it performs and cheers on the Bulldogs as they play Marshall between the hedges in Sanford Stadium.

The Redcoat band has a unique sound, especially playing the "Krypton Fanfare" theme just before the Dawgs coming charging onto the field to the familiar tune of "Glory, Glory."

On Friday, Oct. 31, the Redcoat band will be here in our community, making a stop at the Shamrock Bowl for a special rehearsal before they travel south to Jacksonville, Fla., where the Bulldogs will take on the Florida Gators on Nov. 1.

When the Redcoats make their visit, they will be bringing several students who graduated from West Laurens High School and Dublin High School. These students were just in our community a few years ago playing and cheering for their respective schools. They auditioned for a spot with in the Redcoat band, and now they are together, along with other students, representing UGA.

Their visit to the Shamrock Bowl will show local band students that they can also work hard and be a part of a major college band like the Redcoats. This practice will show them what it looks like to be a part of a marching band on the college level.

The success of the Dawgs under head coach Kirby Smart has allowed UGA's band to also travel all over the country to perform in other college and professional stadiums.

Hopefully, when Oct. 31 rolls around, we will be able to roll out the welcome carpet, welcome back our students, and watch as the Redcoat Marching Band prepares to make that trip to Florida.

And when they load up on that bus, fans can line up and scream out, "Goooooo Dawgs! Sic 'em!"

- Payton Towns III

DAILY SCRIPTURE

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me..."

- Exodus 20:5

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

"To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all."

- Oscar Wilde

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

- Aug. 21, 2025 is...
 - Crackers Over the Keyboard Day
 - International Read Comics in Public Day
 - Red Wine Day

The Courier Herald

LOCAL MATTERS



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This newspaper is committed to the idea that the press should tell the truth without prejudice and spread knowledge without malicious intent.

Nothing could be finer than to be in Carolina



By LORAN SMITH

Bluffton gets its name for the bluff that overlooks the 15-mile May River, which is located between Hilton Head Island and Daufuskie Island. Bluffton's nickname is "Heart of the Low Country," its motto, "State of Mind." That is the title of a handsome book photographed by Marge Agin who gleaned prose from several of her friends, such as "Oysters drink salt water, saltwater rusts metal tub; metal tub carries oysters."

And another: "May her pitch be slight and her roll be still, low country boil, pots to fill."

The one I liked best: "The oak and the palmetto are friends with the marsh. They may mingle, but they cannot marry."

When we arrived at the upscale Montage Hotel a few days ago, there was a short wait for checking in,

but there was no fuss. A nice young executive named Michael Simonetti ushered us into a well-appointed library with leather chairs and an active fireplace. Then he offered a drink that lifted spirits with warm alacrity. There are three ingredients: lemonade and sweet tea with a shot of Jack Daniel's Tennessee whiskey. I didn't care if the room was not ready until early evening. All the while you can monitor the comings and goings of a clientele bent on outdoor recreation, cuisine, and pristine marsh-side living.

Once you turn on May River Road and reach the Montage, you might be as lucky as we were to see an eight-point buck, three does, and twin fawns leisurely grazing amongst some picturesque palmetto stalks.

Seems that the homebuilders here prefer wood as their primary choice of construction. You can charm the hearts of homebuyers when you are creative with wood.

You also find a plethora of tin roofs, accented by white-frame clapboard construction. You find yourself inspired by wetlands, marshes, and oaks saturated with moss, with a solitary crane standing patiently in a creek awaiting his supper.

The Montage is pet friendly, and you see everything from a miniature poodle to a stud golden retriever. Little toddlers are eager to "pet the doggies," and the

owners are compatible with this mutual admiration society.

The service staff could not be more accommodating or self-effacing. Smiles permeate polite conversational demeanor and never is heard a discouraging word.

Zoltan Csik is from Hungary, and he makes residents feel comfortable in the congenial environment. In the Octagon Restaurant, you are fortunate if you connect with Kevee Soltau, who grew up in Kingston, Jamaica. She makes frequent trips back to her "Island in the Sun" but makes her livelihood here in Bluffton. The Montage personnel underscore service with an engaging smile and a helping hand, making you think "Encore!"

If you want to go off campus, head into Bluffton's Old Town, which is quaint, charming and lively. If you find your way to Captain Woody's Seafood Bar, you learn that the captain is a longtime and highly regarded fisherman in Beaufort County and has written a book, Where Have All the Shrimp Boats Gone?, co-authored with Laura Von Harten. It costs a little more than two platters of fried shrimp and all the trimmings plus a cold beer, requirements in the low country to enjoy your meal to the fullest.

Then to have Lisa Casini and Ashley Brahm provide low country conversation will make your day.



Georgia's future: Growth is a choice. Change is not

In my last column, I looked back at series from eight years ago which outlined the various political regions of Georgia. It was a public pivot to note what will be a recurring theme here in this space: The success of economic development efforts combined with other migration trends will continue to see coastal Georgia grow to resemble that of metro Atlanta.

No sooner had the piece hit the desks of my publishers than International Paper announced the closure of two paper mills, one in Savannah and another in nearby Riceboro. 1,100 Georgians will lose their jobs when the company ends its 88 year run as a major regional employer next month.

The overall premise remains intact. Savannah and the Georgia coast's growth will continue to influence the overall region for decades to come. The effects are spilling into counties that are not adjacent to the ocean. Much as "Metro Atlanta" is now nebulous and consists of much of if not most of North Georgia, the coastal region will spread out well into Southeast Georgia and voting trends will follow. Growth, itself, will be an issue and will become a fixture of debate and focus in the legislature.

So why am I again talking about growth in the face of a major employer closing down two paper mills? Because growth is a choice, at least in how it is managed. Change, however, is always

with us. It is important to separate the two.

I've had a front row seat to this process my entire life. I was born in what was "rural" Fayette County in the late 1960's. A decade later, our county routinely made the list of fastest growing counties in the country. We almost tripled in size during the seventies, and doubled our population again during the 80's. Growth was THE topic in local elections.

A few things were odd about this. Most of the successful candidates were the ones who seemed to be the most anti-growth. Sewer services would not be extended from cities into the county. Zoning requests would be denied. The rural character of the county would be preserved.

At best, growth was slowed a bit. But most importantly, change was not.

Change was happening all around us. Some was by the growth and other political decisions made by neighboring counties and cities. Some was just due to time itself. Looking back, it's clear that a lot of the political promises to stop growth were really empty appeals to those who feared change.

Whether conscious of it or not, most people fear change. It's uncomfortable. It's a big old bucket of the unknown. It's a risky trade from what we already know and have to what might be behind the curtain. People value certainty over opportunities they can't quantify. Fayette didn't stop



By CHARLIE HARPER

growth nor change. When Eastern Airlines grounded there was an outflow of population for a couple of years. Businesses that depended on growth suffered. My family's hardware store was one of them.

Eastern employees found that there were jobs available in an otherwise growing economy, but many found it difficult to replace their seniority and mid-career wages when starting over elsewhere. The folks at International Paper will likely have the same difficult transition. There are often very real, very human costs to these changes that statistics don't show us.

While I haven't lived there in a couple of decades, I'm aware that the county has embraced change and growth a bit differently in the wake of the great financial crisis and the housing collapse associated with it.

When growth stopped suddenly, change did not.

The county was left with a lot of expensive homes on large lots, with the oldest average age of residents in the metro Atlanta area. The kids who grew up there couldn't afford homes to move back to as adults. Worse, the available amenities made many who could not want to.

It took someone with the vision and stature to openly pitch county residents on a new vision, and that person was Dan Cathy, then CEO of Chick Fil A. He had already successfully brought a major movie studio and related residential village to the county. He successfully sold the City of Fayetteville on the idea that the area needed housing that younger folks could afford, and entertainment options they wanted close to home.

Not only did that bring in some younger folks, but the values of the big homes stabilized, then began increasing again. Planned growth, backed with a vision, seems to have trumped resistance to change.

As we look at what is happening across Georgia, we need to understand that the words are often about growth, but the fears are rooted in the uncertainty that comes with change. The opportunity we have as Georgians is to understand the implications of both, and deal with each as directly and bluntly as possible to unlock our future.

Dublin Police Department

- On Aug. 2, an officer responded to Skyline Drive in reference to a vehicle parked in the street. When he arrived, he saw a 2025 Toyota Corolla in the middle of Briarcliff.

The vehicle appeared to be running with the driver's side door open and no one was inside the vehicle. The officer met with the complainant who said the driver of the vehicle rang his door bell. The person then walked over to an enclosed trailer parked nearby. The person looked inside, heard the man from next door coming to the door and ran from the location, leaving the vehicle unattended in the middle of the road.

The man had a video from his security camera that showed what he described to the officer, who



POLICE BEAT...

then walked back to the vehicle and turned it off. He noticed that the vehicle was in drive, and shifted it into park. The vehicle came back registered to Jayden Page, who was found on Sherwood Drive.

Page was placed under arrest for loitering/prowling because he was in a place at a time or in a manner not usual for law-abiding people under circumstances. He was also charged with illegal parking and violation of license restrictions for driving. Page was transported to the LEC.

- At 12:15 p.m. on Aug.

5, an officer responded to Jones Village in reference to serving multiple warrants on Raymond Parks, 36, who was found hiding inside a closet in an apartment and was arrested without incident.

Parks had a total of 14 warrants for his arrest. Upon arriving at the jail, Parks was searched by jail staff and inside of his coveralls a clear plastic bag of multi colored pills identified as suspected methamphetamine were found. There were 13 whole pills and three half pills.

- Tokeyo Darrisaw, 45,

was charged with criminal trespass, public indecency and theft by taking around 9:49 a.m. on Aug. 8 on Oconee Street.

An officer responded to Johnson Homes about an individual urinating and taking the complainant's ring camera from her porch. The officer met with the complainant's friend to gather camera evidence. The officer was able to identify the suspect as Darrisaw who later admitted to the accusations.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- A deputy responded to Cardinal Lane in reference to a burglary that happened between July 29 and Aug. 5.

- A firearm was stolen on Timber Lakes Drive between July 28 and Aug. 2.

- Around 8:54 p.m. on

Aug. 4, a deputy responded to a location on Highway 80 in reference to a theft.

- A deputy responded to a theft on Ralph Keen Road in reference to a theft on Aug. 5.

- On Sunday, Aug. 3, around 1 a.m., a deputy responded to the intersection of Rex Miller Road and Nathaniel Drive for a vehicle collision with a tree. Eddie Charles Vickers Jr., 34, of Dublin, was charged with obstruction of officers and DUI-alcohol.

- On Aug. 2, a deputy talked with a man on Wayne Road in Dudley about illegal dumping at 12:58 p.m.

- On July 31, around 8 a.m., a deputy was notified by 911 dispatch of a stolen Penske truck that was turning onto I-16 heading west.

Mario D. Cowan, 38, of Chicago, Illinois, was charged with theft by receiving stolen property.

Editor's note: This information is public record and was taken from reports of local law enforcement agencies. These reports do not reflect guilt or innocence. An "arrest" does not always indicate incarceration. Readers are cautioned that people may have similar names. Police Beat does not identify minor children, victims of sexual assault, suicide attempts or medical conditions. Cases dismissed do not appear if the newspaper is notified before deadline.



TELL IT!

CALL 272-0375, EMAIL CHTELLIT@GMAIL.COM, OR TELL IT! AT COURIERHERALDTODAY.COM

The reason we can't attract good doctors in all specialties to Dublin is they don't want to come here with all the deer all over the roads or they don't want to deal with the prisoners at Fairview.

You know it's bad when our doctors are leaving our community due to high school taxes. We need some serious help from higher government to put a stop to this madness.

The county schools need to stay separate from the city. They all are taxing us to death these kids getting out of school cannot even count change back to you. The school board ought to be ashamed

End property tax!

The Eastside schools don't think they get treated fairly? Draw a line at the river and see how they can run things alone. Just sit back and watch.

Happy birthday Liver Lips!

Some time ago, when it was being talked about the city taxes, it was quoted as if the seniors would not have to pay taxes if that tax passes. But nothing has been said about that lately. I wonder if that was just swept under the rug?

It was quoted in the paper by a school official that they had cut back on the little people. That was their terminology. Now, I have not seen where any of the bigger people's salaries have been cut. Wonder why?

Finding or charging parents for their kids behavior is about as stupid as the law can get. But that's what happens when you put stu-

NEWS DIGEST

Dublin City Schools will hold a called board meeting at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 28. The agenda follows:

- Call to order
- Invocation/Pledge to Flag
- Approval of agenda
- Approval of minutes
- DCS board norm/protocol
- Public comments
- Superintendent comments/announcements
- Executive session
- A. Discussion of personnel
- B. Discussion of real estate
- C. Discussion of litigation
- Board member comments
- Adjournment

pid people in charge of governments.

Is anybody going to run against the tax to the max school board members?

You better watch shooting or killing deer in the hot part of the season which is out of season. They have deer ticks and you wind up with lyme disease.

I am asking that the city of Dublin please repair the brick sidewalks on Dublin. They are in horrible disrepair. People and pedestrians love to walk up and down Bellevue. Thank you.

So please enlighten me, how do you get boogers out of your nose. Only way I can figure without picking it is to get upside down in the shower and let the water run up your nose and then make another flip and blow it out through your drain hole.

Please quit wasting our tax dollars on schools that we do not need. The schools are good. We have spent more money on schools during the past 10

years and what has it got us?

Your 8/18 paper was so uplifting. So great to see positive news all over the front page and other pages. There's so many good things happening, the negative things do not need to smother them out.

The Laurens County Seniors Citizens Center, which is currently located in East Dublin, is very limited in space. The location doesn't have space for amenities such as walking track, swimming pool, fishing pond and pickleball. This senior citizen location doesn't have the room to expand. A new spacious center would provide gathering place for Seniors with the warmth of home.

I am so happy to see that my county commissioner is going to run next year. He most definitely has the people in his district uppermost on his mind and does everything he can to accommodate them. And he always answers his calls. We are very blessed to have him.

The money to remodel a senior citizen center that rundown and old, cost as much to remodel as a new one. The center only gets a fourth of the grant the rest is use for sewers systems for East Dublin.

I'm glad someone said something about the MGSU Dublin campus lights. We can't even see the stars from our house in the neighborhood behind there any more.

I agree the flashing sign at the Middle Georgia State University Dublin campus is too much all night. They should at least turn that thing off at 11 p.m.

To whoever is throwing their energy drink out on my lawn every morning on Bellevue we have set up cameras! May I remind you littering is illegal.

YARD SALE
Sat. Aug. 30th, 7 am - 1 pm
Power tools, antique tools, tillers, beds, dressers and other items.

Local 7-day Forecast:

The next 48 hours:

THURSDAY: 86° Partly sunny and pleasant. Sunrise: 7:04 a.m.

THURSDAY NIGHT: 67° Increasing clouds with a couple of showers. Sunset: 8:00 p.m.

FRIDAY: 81° Cloudy with a couple of showers. Sunrise: 7:04 a.m.

FRIDAY NIGHT: 66° Cloudy with a couple of showers. Sunset: 7:59 p.m.

Saturday 8/30 HIGH/LOW 81/66 Overcast with a couple of thunderstorms. Sunrise: 7:05 a.m. Sunset: 7:58 p.m.	Sunday 8/31 HIGH/LOW 82/63 Remaining cloudy with a couple of showers. Sunrise: 7:06 a.m. Sunset: 7:57 p.m.	Monday 9/1 HIGH/LOW 80/63 Less humid with decreasing clouds. Sunrise: 7:06 a.m. Sunset: 7:55 p.m.	Tuesday 9/2 HIGH/LOW 84/62 Plenty of sunshine. Sunrise: 7:07 a.m. Sunset: 7:54 p.m.	Wednesday 9/3 HIGH/LOW 86/61 Plenty of sun. Sunrise: 7:08 a.m. Sunset: 7:53 p.m.
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River levels...
Oconee (at Dublin) 14.47'
Ocmulgee (at Macon) 10.94'

TO THE PATIENTS OF:
Dr. Edward Hayes
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GOP candidate for governor holds first campaign event

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

FLOVILLA — Lt. Gov. Burt Jones held his first gubernatorial campaign event Tuesday at a state park south of Atlanta, touting his endorsement by President Donald Trump, his record in the Senate of promoting conservative legislation and his background as a businessman.

The evening event at Indian Springs State Park in Butts County featured several Republican state senators, and a former senator — Brandon Beach. Trump plucked him from Georgia earlier this year and made him U.S. Treasurer.

Beach made it abundantly clear that Trump had endorsed Jones, whom he described as a job creator.

Jones “loves Georgia, he loves his family, he loves and respects law enforcement, but what he really loves is capitalism,” Beach said, which elicited whoops and cheering. “He wants you, your kids and your grandkids to pursue the American dream.”

Jones, who lives in Jackson with his wife Jan and their two teenaged children, said state government would have a business-oriented “Chick-fil-A type” service mentality under his leadership.

He said he started businesses inside his family’s Jones Petroleum company after college, before entering politics. He used that background to knock his competition, saying he was the only candidate who had risked money to make money and who had signed employee paychecks.

“They have all been at the government trough their entire careers,” he said.

Jones is campaigning for the GOP nomination against

Chris Carr, the state attorney general, who is running on a tough-on-crime agenda.

Carr has aligned himself with Trump’s MAGA base and with traditional GOP orthodoxy, threatening the administration of then-President Joe Biden against any COVID vaccine mandate, joining other attorneys general from Republican-led states in challenging a Biden administration rule governing coal and gas plant emissions and siding with Republican Gov. Brian Kemp in a State Election Board dispute between Republicans and Democrats.

But Jones holds an ace card with the recent Trump endorsement, which seemed likely given Jones’ persistent support of the president and his assertions about election fraud. Jones was investigated for a possible criminal violation after he joined Beach and others as “alternate electors” after Trump’s 2020 loss, but a special investigator exonerated Jones.

Jones is also pursuing a traditional Republican line in vowing to eliminate Georgia’s income tax. He created a study committee that featured testimony this month from longtime GOP anti-tax advocate Grover Norquist.

Whoever wins the Republican primary next year will go on to face the Democratic nominee in the November election.

Former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms is running on a record of managing the city during the pandemic and is pitching Medicaid expansion. State Sen. Jason Esteves of Atlanta, a former Atlanta school board member, has made education, health care and housing top priorities. And former Georgia Labor Commissioner Michael Thurmond, the only Democrat in the race who has won statewide, is

campaigning on his relationships with lawmakers from both parties as a former state representative, saying he also wants to expand Medicaid.

The Georgia Democratic Party issued a statement ahead of the event accusing Jones’ leadership of putting rural hospitals in financial jeopardy due to high insurance rates and a tax code “that rewards billionaires, big corporations, and whoever the latest lobbyist was to buy somebody a steak and a bourbon. ... In Burt Jones’ Georgia, it’s Donald Trump and his billionaire friends first, Georgia families last.”

Jones countered at his event that bureaucratic rules make it difficult to open new hospitals, and he said he has worked against those rules as lieutenant governor.

Successful election campaigns cost money, and the Republicans came out of the gate with a major lead. Carr and Jones raised about \$3 million apiece — three times what Bottoms and Esteves each raised as of the last reporting period in early July. (Thurmond had not entered the race yet.)

But Jones has a tremendous legal advantage that allows him to pull in unlimited funds, and he loaned himself another \$10 million. Carr has made an issue of Jones’ use of his “leadership committee,” a special entity enjoyed by a handful of incumbents and primary winners under a 2021 state law.

As attorney general, Carr does not get a leadership committee, though he would if he were to win the Republican nomination. He recently sued Jones in federal court over the committee after losing a similar complaint to the State Ethics Commission.

Soperton City Council passes truck ordinance to preserve streets

By LOGAN REYNOLDS
For The Tri-County Connector

The Soperton City Council approved a new ordinance preventing large trucks from driving on city streets, during their monthly meeting on Aug. 18 in the Soperton City Hall.

The ordinance is designed to prevent further damage to the city’s aging infrastructure, including water and sewer lines, as well as road pavement on street corners. These infrastructures become damaged over time due to the strain of trucks with heavy loads passing over on a regular basis, with some roads requiring extensive work.

“It’s not intentional on the truckers’ part, it isn’t,” said Soperton Mayor John Koon. “It’s just part of it, you know.”

The ordinance will not take effect immediately, first requiring three readings in subsequent meetings before passing into law. Following the final reading in October, the law will also allow a grace period directly after, allowing truckers to adjust before enforcement begins.

A public information meeting will also be planned soon after the final reading to instruct citizens on the law’s aim. The city also plans to build a gated parking lot for local truckers to store their trucks in, and have begun looking at properties for construction.

The council also approved Cardinal Drive, Hyman Avenue, Bell Avenue Extension and the City Hall parking lot for the 2026 Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) projects, which will include pavement and repair efforts.

The city will also begin utilizing a rating system to determine future street projects, ranking streets from one to five based on factors such as the time since its last repair. Streets ranked higher will be given more priority for future repair efforts.

The council also approved \$3,000 for the purchase of a new extractor for the Soperton Volunteer Fire Department, at the request of Fire Chief John Johnson.

An extractor is a device similar to a laundry machine, which uses a combination of water, a citric acid base and centrifugal force to clean firefighter’s turnout gear of carcinogens and toxic fumes accumulated while in service. These chemicals cling to the gear at a molecular level and cannot be removed by a standard washing machine.

“It’s dangerous enough for our firemen to be able to go into a fire, but having those carcinogens come out and then getting on you, you know, after a period of time because they’re not clean, picking it up and things like that,” said Koon. “We’re trying to protect our firemen.”

The fire department previously owned an extractor, but the machine broke and the company which produced it had long since gone out of business, leaving repair impossible. Since then, firefighters have been shipping their gear to a cleaning facility in Atlanta with a two to three week turnaround time.

The Treutlen County Board of Commissioners have also approved spending \$6,000 for the extractor, as the extractor will be used by both the Soperton Fire Department and the Treutlen County Fire Department.

“We have a great working relationship with the county,” said Koon. “It’s unbelievable, I mean, we both have the same vision to make Treutlen County and the city of Soperton even better than what it is, so we appreciate them.”

The council also voted to move their September meeting to Monday, Sept. 8, as Mayor Koon would not be able to attend the original meeting date of Sept. 1. The meeting will see a work session followed directly by the main monthly meeting.

The council also moved the public trick-or-treat to Thursday, Oct. 30, as to not conflict with the Treutlen County Vikings football game on Friday, Oct. 31, or the Million Pines Arts and Crafts Festival on Saturday, Nov. 1.

MoCo tax official calls for end of mobile home decals

By LOGAN REYNOLDS
For The Tri-County Connector

Montgomery County Tax Commissioner Renee Wooten-Perry plans to continue to petition the Board of Commissioners to pass a resolution which would dismiss the requirement for the distribution of mobile home decals.

“I am passionate about it because I think it helps the county, it saves the county and it was not a good thing that our local officials [did not] enact it,” said Wooten-Perry.

According to Georgia state law, mobile home owners receive a sticker decal to denote taxes paid and permit ownership. However, due to Georgia House Bill 193, local counties can opt out of the requirement instead.

Several neighboring counties have discontinued the use of decals, including Bacon, Toomes, Jeff Davis, Dodge and Treutlen. The Treutlen County Board of Commissioners passed a motion to discontinue use of the decals during their January 6 meeting, though no official resolution was passed.

According to Wooten-Perry, the discontinuation of decals would provide benefits to both savings and manpower. The Montgomery County Tax

Commissioner’s Office spends approximately \$1,000 annually to produce and distribute the decals via mail, a price which will only increase as postage costs rise.

More importantly, employees of both the Tax Commissioner’s Office and the Tax Assessor’s Office would save much more time in their schedules. Each decal must be distributed individually and checked individually, and Montgomery County has between 1,400 and 1,500 fixed mobile home properties, as well as 352 mobile homes not affixed to the property.

In contrast, the Tax Commissioner’s Office, which distributes the decals, has only one tag specialist and a recent part-time hire, and the Tax Assessor’s Office, which checks mobile homes for decals, has only two employees in total.

“We have to get almost 1,400 – 1,500 or less mobile homes a decal, and then there’s this big book that we have to check off because the ones that are homestead, they are – we have to mail them out,” said Wooten-Perry.

Wooten-Perry also considers the decals to be an imperfect system for determining which mobile home owners have paid taxes. While the owners

are required by law to display the decal on the mobile home, many do not display them due to aesthetic preference, leading to misreporting by the tax assessors and drawn out court cases.

Instead, Wooten-Perry wishes to rely on the pre-existing forms and documentation created by the tax payment and permit application processes to keep track of mobile home owners.

The Montgomery Board of Commissioners first heard the resolution to opt out of the decals in their July work session, where they voiced concerns that discontinuing the decals would lead to poorer tracking and less collected taxes. So, the Board voted against the resolution unanimously in their main meeting.

“I think the concern was the tracking and accountability of paying their property taxes,” said Wooten-Perry.

The Board heard the resolution again during their August work session, and allowed the resolution to fail without a motion in their main meeting. Following the vote, Wooten-Perry spoke to the board during public comments, stating her intention to place the resolution on the board’s agenda every month until it was passed.

Crowded fields in Wilkinson County elections

By CHRISTIAN MCKEARNEY
For The Times Journal Post

It’s officially election season in Wilkinson County, as candidates last week qualified to run in four of the county’s municipalities.

Gordon is the county’s largest town, and it also has the largest crowd of candidates. Four candidates are vying for mayor – Aprill Smith, Terry Eady, Chancey Allen and Mary Whipple-Lue. Smith is the incumbent, first elected in 2021. Eady, meanwhile, was a long-time city council member who chose not to run for re-election two years ago. Allen is a former law enforcement officer who ran for sheriff last year. Whipple-Lue, meanwhile, was Gordon’s mayor between 2014-2017.

If no candidate manages to garner a majority of the vote in the general election (50 percent plus 1), the top two vote-getters then will take part in a run-off election.

The crowd of city council candidates is even more crammed. Nine candidates qualified for three available seats. The three incumbents – Barbara Towles, Rodney Evans and Harold Whipple – are all seeking re-election. Other candidates include: Yyacheeko

Veal; Victoria Whipple; Debra Horton Dupree; Pat Brooks Dupre; Kyle Swicord; George Wynn.

Gordon utilizes a “ranked choice” voting system. In other words, when Gordon residents go to the polls and view their ballot, they will be asked to choose their top three candidates, in no particular order. There are no run-off elections for city council, so the three candidates who are named the most on ballots will win a seat to the council.

Whichever winners emerge, they will face plenty of challenges once they’re sworn in. The city had to move money into a different bank account earlier this year in order to meet payroll. At different points during 2024, there was mold growing in the public library and mold in the visitors center, leading to the temporary shutdown of both. City Hall and Gordon Main Street had to scramble in the weeks leading up to the Fall Line Festival. None of the electrical outlets at MLK Park were working at the time, and “wires were showing.” Also, the grass at the park was overgrown for much of the summer.

Perhaps most pressing is the city’s rapidly aging water and sewer system. In late 2023, a consultant gave coun-

cil members a general overview and project estimates. The treatment plant on Papermill Road needs more than \$4 million worth of upgrades just to maintain the status quo, according to Greg Boike with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission. Then, there are the water/sewerage upgrades needed around downtown. The cost of improvements in the downtown area, which would include a new elevated storage tank, would cost an additional \$3 million, roughly.

Meanwhile, here are the candidates who qualified last week in Wilco’s other municipalities:

- Toombsboro – Vincent Smith (mayor), Joyce Denson (mayor), Bennie Roundtree (city council), Latasha Fordham (city council), Grady Landrum (city council), Phyllis Woodard (city council)
- Irwinton – Roger Bacon (city council), Harvey Curry (city council), Deborah Osbourne (city council)
- Ivey – Roland Youmans (mayor), Thomas Hatfield (city council), Clinton Hardie (city council)
- McIntyre – Jamesha Anderson (city council), Jerry Shinholster (city council)

Army Captain pleads guilty to stealing tractor, heavy equipment

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — An Army captain faces up to a decade in prison after pleading guilty to the theft of expensive equipment from Fort Stewart.

Jacob Suenkel, 32, of Richmond Hill, admitted in court that he stole skid-steer loaders, trailers, generators, a tractor and other

valuable equipment from late 2024 through May, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Georgia said Monday.

Suenkel then marketed the items for sale on social media, prosecutors said. The Richmond Hill Police Department assisted with the investigation.

“Suenkel betrayed not only the U.S. Army, but also

the trust placed in him by the American people,” said Ryan O’Connor, special agent in charge of the Department of the Army Criminal Investigation Division for the Southeast.

In addition to prison for theft and sale of government property, Suenkel’s sentence could include a quarter-million-dollar fine. He agreed to a discharge with

an adverse characterization of service, which will result in a loss of veterans’ benefits.

Fort Stewart was the site of a mass shooting earlier this month, when Sgt. Quornelius Radford, 28, allegedly opened fire with a personal handgun. No one was killed but five were injured before nearby soldiers tackled and subdued him.

MIDSTATE FOOTBALL ROUNDUP...

Dodge, Treutlen hang on to win week 2 thrillers at home

WACO shakes off slow start to get first win; Brentwood dominates Pinewood to start 2-0

From STAFF REPORTS

Dodge Co. 31, Bleckley Co. 29

Deciding factor: Like most recent battles in their rivalry, this one came down to the last couple minutes, with the Indians outlasting their longtime rival – on a Jeremiah Burns interception of a fourth-down shot on Bleckley's last play – to win a second-straight in the series. But the Royals, after trailing 24-7 at the break, came back to cut the Dodge lead to just two points twice in the second half. Penalties and turnovers haunted both sides, but Bleckley was done in a bit more during a long first-half lull that followed its early touchdown pass from Brody Fleming to Octavius Tate, and a Jonah Kelley PAT that was good for the lead at the end of one. A hobbled Fleming, who was 25-of-53 for two touchdowns, helped lead the second-half charge, with the help of top receivers Connor Cairney, with 10 catches for 80 yards, Tate, whose eight grabs netted 116, and Josh Stanley, whose two included one for a late score. The Royals were denied on a couple of fourth downs, and committed multiple costly giveaways, though Dodge did the same, holding its own in the shootout of turnovers (including Stanley interception) in the early second half, and bolstering a couple of Bleckley short-yardage bids with key penalties.

Pivotal moment: The Indians scored 18 unanswered points in the second quarter, in the bounce-back from a slow start that included a first quarter Kain Mincey-to-Jeremiah Burns touchdown pass that was called back on taunting, then a turnover on downs and a 7-6 deficit going into a first-half lightning delay. Dodge's defense got on the board when Terrance Fordham scooped a blocked punt on a 30-yard touchdown return, and its momentum carried through the long stoppage. On the other side, Mincey (8-of-17 for 257) hooked back up with Burns on a 65-yarder, then Jauriel Bray on another drive to go up 18-7, and Jamal Smith broke one from 54 to give the Indians a commanding halftime advantage of 24-7. The hole for the Royals, despite some valiant climbing, proved to be a little too deep to get out of after a second Mincey touchdown pass to Bray early in the fourth quarter.

Game ball: Bray had five catches for a team-high 155 yards, but took both his two biggest to the end zone to supplement the Indians' lead in either half.

Next: Indians at Central Macon; Royals vs. East Laurens

Treutlen 27, Wilkinson Co. 22

Deciding factor: The Vikings narrowly came out on the winning side of a wild Thursday-nighter, despite losing two different multi-score leads. Things were going well early, when Kavion Peeples found Zan Stokes to keep their early-season touchdown streak alive in the first quarter, and Christopher Meza-Avila punched in a 22-yard run to contribute to a 14-0 Viking lead at the half. But a late roller-coaster ride ensued after the Warriors capitalized on a defensive spark coming back for the third quarter, as Am-



TREUTLEN, UP TWO SCORES: Christopher Meza-Avila turns the corner on a sprint to the end zone that put the Vikings in a commanding 14-0 lead at halftime. The confident start had Treutlen feeling good, and though it managed to survive in the end, a Wilco comeback in the second half would prove the game was nowhere close to over/LOGAN REYNOLDS, GTLN

are Todd blew up a handoff to force a Treutlen fumble, and returned it 33 yards for a touchdown. On the next drive, Wilco picked off a Viking pass in the end zone and hit the big play they'd been looking for all night on a 42-yard toss from Quenterrion Sanford to Mahki Johnson to tie the game. Treutlen bounced back from a second-straight turnover to go back up on a short run by Peanut Tobler, then stood tall at the goal line on back-to-back possessions, with a breakup on downs and a Markel Hamilton pick to retain the 21-14 lead late in the fourth.

Pivotal moment: Then things got crazy. Facing a punt with 1:53 to play, the Vikings elected to concede a safety, kneeling in the end zone to cut their own lead to 21-16. And the decision immediately backfired as Wilco drove in a matter of plays to score on another Sanford-to-Johnson touchdown pass. The conversion was no good, but the Warriors now led 22-21 with 1:14 to go. Miraculously for Treutlen, Zion Brown carried back the squib kickoff 70 yards – with a Chris Davis-style tightrope up the sideline to stay in bounds – for a score to go back up. Wilco made great use of the remaining 60 seconds, and nearly punched in a game winner as Sanford darted for the end zone on a scramble, only to be brought down just shy of the plane with a good 20 seconds to go. But the Warriors couldn't recover after taking a Charvis Givens sack on the next snap, and after a spike to stop the clock, were left with just one more play that ended with another bat-down in the end zone.

Game ball: Brown, at three carries for 18 yards, had only a small share of a quality Treutlen rushing total of 214, but as up man on the kickoff, delivered the game-winning play on special teams when the ball rolled his way for a chance in the fourth quarter.

Next: Warriors vs. Jasper Co., Fri-



WARRIOR MENTALITY: Wilco's Terrelle Blount (7) and Mahki Johnson (1) celebrate in the end zone after the latter's second touchdown reception of the night to give his team a short-lived lead with under 90 seconds to go. The Warriors, in their valiant second-half effort, overcame the 14-point halftime gap to tie in the third quarter, then another of seven in the fourth to go on top. But they'd run out of time on a third comeback bid, after Treutlen's immediate answer to pull back ahead, on a final drive that came close to a game-winner/LOGAN REYNOLDS, GTLN

day; Vikings at Bacon Co., Friday

Washington Co. 29, Jefferson Co. 7

Deciding factor: The Golden Hawks snapped out of a first-half funk to score four unanswered touchdowns and run away with a game that, for a little while, had the forecasters prepared to issue an upset alert. Jefferson County, whose defensive line caused problems in the WACO backfield to the tune of 12 tackles for loss and three sacks, jumped out to the 7-0 lead that would hold to halftime on a 45-yard deep shot from R.J. Tennyson that found an open Zaylen Burton. But

ROUNDUP
Continued on page 8

WEEK 3 FOOTBALL OUTLOOK: MANY TOUGH GAMES, FEW EASY WINS AS TEAMS GET TO EARLY-SEASON CROSSROADS

Though there aren't many true marquee matchups, this week's high school schedule across the Heart of Georgia should pack some decent punch as teams go back to work against a set of opponents that it'd be unwise to overlook.

Everyone's out to continue gaining in competence, consistency and confidence, but most will likely settle for finding any way they can to get out of week 3 with a win.

Region play gets under way a week later than scheduled for East Laurens and Dublin, who opted to postpone their matchup last week until Sept. 12.

That'll prolong a season-opening road trip for the Falcons (0-1), who visit Bleckley County (1-1) before finally making their way back home to play Central next week. (In a special recognition, the Royals are set to retire the jersey of Amarius Mims, their all-state tackle-turned-Georgia Bulldog and now Cincinnati Bengal, in a ceremony between quarters 1 and 2).

East's secondary will likely face its biggest aerial test so far against the Royals' passing game, which has been productive even though it doesn't yet seem to have found its stride. The Falcons have struggled to stay with Bleckley in recent seasons largely due to turnovers. They'll probably need to avoid them and force a few themselves to feel good about chances in this matchup.

Dublin (0-1) likely needed the extra week to mend up some injuries from its week 1 game against Swainsboro, and will hope to be at its best in a return to the Shamrock Bowl against region 2-High A's upset specialist, Southwest Macon (1-1), albeit a likely shorthanded version that's expected to be handed suspensions of multiple players who were involved in an on-field altercation that cut short last week's game.

As fully constituted, the Patriots and their committee of quarterbacks tend to play fast and explosively, but had an issue last week with throwing the ball to a Northeast defense that's cut from a similar cloth to Dublin's. The Irish may get some of the same heat they're used to feeling in this typically-high scoring matchup that usually starts out in interesting fashion. But they won't have trouble keeping pace if they can get their offense up and running, and keep it there for the majority of the night.

After a fairly light warmup in week 1 vs. Groves, West Laurens (1-0) will close up non-region play at The SHU against a North Clayton team that looks significantly improved from the one the Raiders handled with no problem, winning 42-8, this time last year.

The Eagles' offense, in blowouts of both McDonough and Drew, looked polished in the passing game and stout on the line of scrimmage. So it'll be much more than the speed of dynamic duo Justin Murphy — a D1 target at quarterback — and Dre'Von Glass — the foremost of multiple weapons in a rotating arsenal at running back and receiver — that could make this matchup a handful.

But North Clayton, off of 35- and 40-point efforts its first two weeks, will likely have to keep West's variety of big-play threats under five touchdowns to stand any real chance of pulling a shocker.

With a major shot of confidence under its belt following win No. 1, Trinity (1-1) takes on a second defending state champion in three weeks' time as it goes back on the road to face back-to-back title game victor (most recently in class A, off a 2023 run in the AA division) Edmund Burke.

The Andy Woodard-led Spartans are much younger this season, after graduating most of the core that led both storybook seasons, but have looked just as strong on both sides of the ball in two wins over St. Andrew's and Robert Toombs that carried a 50-6 score differential.

In order to flip the script from three recent meetings that each got a little too far out of their reach early, the Crusaders will need to play as much of the stout defense they featured last Friday against Gatewood, and find a way to pick up points, or at least eat plenty of clock, while staying turnover free on most of their drives.

In a quick reschedule of the teams' weather postponement from last Friday, Wheeler County (1-0) will host Taylor County

FOOTBALL OUTLOOK
Continued on page 8



A LITTLE CLOSER TO FULL STRENGTH: Though unplanned, the extra week between games 1 and 2 was likely beneficial for Dublin in its efforts to heal up, after several players – notably top running back and DB Trav Bostic (4) – emerged from the Swainsboro opener nursing bumps and bruises/CLAY REYNOLDS

PIGSKIN PICKS



THE PANE...
Last week/OVERALL



RODNEY MANLEY 6-3/13-8 PAYTON TOWNS III 7-2/15-6 KYLE DOMINY 6-3/12-9 JEREMY PAYNE 5-4/13-8 JANICE BALLARD 4-5/10-11 RALPH JACKSON 6-3/16-5 DON GARSWELL 6-3/14-7 FORREST KILGEO 4-5/13-8

THIS WEEK'S MATCHUPS...

Southwest at Dublin
East Laurens at Bleckley Co.
North Clayton at West Laurens
Trinity at Edmund Burke
Johnson Co. at Warren Co.
Treutlen at Bacon Co.
Twiggs Co. at Portal
Washington Co. at Northeast
Perry at Houston Co.
Hawkinsville at Lanier Co.
Texas at Ohio State
LSU at Clemson

Dublin Bleckley Co.	Dublin Bleckley Co.	Dublin Bleckley Co.	Dublin at Bleckley Co.	Dublin Bleckley Co.	Dublin Bleckley Co.	Dublin Bleckley Co.	Dublin Bleckley Co.	Dublin Bleckley Co.
West Laurens	West Laurens	West Laurens	at West Laurens	West Laurens	West Laurens	West Laurens	West Laurens	West Laurens
Edmund Burke	Edmund Burke	Edmund Burke	Edmund Burke	Edmund Burke	Edmund Burke	Edmund Burke	Edmund Burke	Edmund Burke
Johnson Co.	Johnson Co.	Johnson Co.	Johnson Co.	Johnson Co.	Johnson Co.	Johnson Co.	Johnson Co.	Johnson Co.
Bacon Co.	Treutlen	Treutlen	Bacon Co.	Treutlen	Treutlen	Bacon Co.	Bacon Co.	Treutlen
Portal	Portal	Portal	Portal	Twiggs Co.	Portal	Portal	Portal	Portal
Northeast	Northeast	Northeast	Washington Co.	Northeast	Northeast	Northeast	Northeast	Northeast
Houston Co.	Houston Co.	Houston Co.	Houston Co.	Houston Co.	Houston Co.	Houston Co.	Houston Co.	Houston Co.
Hawkinsville	Hawkinsville	Hawkinsville	Hawkinsville	Hawkinsville	Hawkinsville	Hawkinsville	Hawkinsville	Hawkinsville
Ohio State	Ohio State	Texas	Texas	Ohio State	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas
Clemson	Clemson	LSU	Clemson	Clemson	Clemson	Clemson	Clemson	LSU

FOOTBALL OUTLOOK

Continued from page 7

at 7 p.m. Thursday night in Alamo. The Bulldogs will have their work cut out for them against an outside group of Vikings on the lines of scrimmage, but stand a good chance of grinding out a second victory if they can once again win the turnover and special teams battles.

Johnson County (2-0) heads on the road for the first (and also next-to-last) time this season, but to take on a **Warren County** program that's been its main non-region measuring stick over multiple seasons — last year in a loss after the Screamin' Devils won the battle at the line of scrimmage, and the last

three quarters after overcoming an early 14-point gap.

Can coach Steven Simpson's defense come up with some more ways to get them off track, or will the Trojans' seemingly well-oiled attack be too much to slow down?

The **Treutlen Vikings**, whose unbeaten record escaped a barnburner last Thursday, seem to be living right, but will need some more good mojo (preferably when it comes to avoiding turnovers) as they hit the road to **Bacon County** in search of a first 3-0 start since 2019.

Washington County (1-1) has a monumental task on its hands against defending state runner-up **Northeast**

Macon, but also an opportunity to prove itself a capable region contender, even with a strong showing that falls short of pulling off a significant road win.

Though the Raiders' new-look offense is still finding its way (it looked a lot closer to top form with 30 points in an abbreviated win over Southwest), their D — looking almost as strong and as sharp as 2024 in both early showings — still makes them a strong favorite.

Wilkinson County (0-2) fully expected an uphill battle against its loaded non-region schedule, but had hoped to be hitting on more offensive cylinders than it could early in slow starts against both Wheeler County and Treutlen the past two weeks. The Warriors' firepower

has been there, but they'll once again have to tap into it for four quarters to challenge another well-rounded **Jasper County** team visiting Bud Dupree Stadium.

Twiggs County, whose offense was lively but outmatched in its opener, comes out of a two-week layoff hoping to make enough plays to stay with a **Portal** team that's also 0-1, and hungry to find its stride.

In the taking-care-of-business department, **Brentwood** looks to go to 3-0 against **GMC**, **Dodge County** (1-0) aims to get a crooked number in the win column on the road at **Central Macon**.

— Clay Reynolds



NO WORSE FOR THE WEATHER: ACE running back Bryson Vincent tries to hang onto the ball on a run during the Gryphons' 35-0 win over Central, completed after a weekend-long weather delay Monday night. The Gryphons, who took a 7-0 lead on a touchdown by his younger brother Brayden before play was originally stopped Thursday, picked up where they left off and pulled away Monday with the help of Bryson's three touchdowns on 142 yards/**MARK S. POWELL**, for the **Macon Melody**



HUDSON HOUSE CALL: Peach County's Zion Hudson takes a pass 54 yards to paydirt in the Trojans' 27-6 victory over Perry/**CLAY BROWN**, **Houston Home Journal**

ROUNDUP

Continued from page 7

the Warriors, with only 75 net yards to compare to the Golden Hawks' 212, didn't have enough offense to stay in it the whole way.

Pivotal moment: WACO came out of halftime with some offensive answers in both dimensions, scoring twice in the third quarter, and twice again in the fourth to pull away. Mack May finished 10-of-25 for 101 yards and a pair of touchdowns to tight end Jordan Edwards. Rekevious Swint added a touchdown on 16 carries for the same number. Kam Shaw rushed for a fourth score.

Game ball: Edwards had all but three of his team's completions for the night, with seven catches for 87 yards in addition to the two key touchdowns.

Next: Hawks at Northeast Macon, Friday

Brentwood 36, Pinewood 10

Deciding factor: The Eagles' dominating offense and defense combined to take this one over almost just as quickly as they did their home opener the week before, utilizing big plays by both units to race out to a 36-3 lead by halftime. Their attack rolled up 295 total yards, while the defense forced three turnovers, added to the scoring on one of them, and didn't give very much ground. Baylor Cobb finished 4-of-6 for 93 yards, with a touchdown both passing and rushing. Tristan Robinson picked a Pinewood throw and carried eight times for 140 yards and two scores. Jacob Hooks' 11 total tackles led the way on defense.

Pivotal moment: The severity of Brentwood's early takeover hinged on takeaways, an interception by Robinson helping set up the first touchdown on Cobb's long connection with Abe Williams. After two Robinson house-calls from scrimmage (bookending the lone set of Pinewood points on a field goal), Jackson Bragg scooped a fumble and returned it to the end zone for a final touchdown of the half.

Game ball: Bragg joined Jaelan Johnson in logging eight tackles and a fumble recovery, but had

the distinction of converting his into the Eagles' only non-offensive touchdown.

Next: Eagles vs. GMC, Friday

ACE 35, Central Macon 0: The game was halted after a quarter on Thursday due to lightning, just after the Gryphons took the early lead on a 12-yard Brayden Vincent rushing touchdown. After wrangling over contingencies on both sides, the teams returned to finish it up Monday night. Brady Balkcom's 75-yard rainbow to a wide open Noah Syme broke it open seconds after the re-start. Bryson Vincent logged a hat trick of rushing TDs from there to help ACE pull away.

Bacon Co. 17, Telfair Co. 14: The Red Raiders were down 14-3 going to the fourth quarter, but scored twice in the next five minutes to regain the lead, then held on downs with Telfair knocking on the door of the end zone to snatch a first victory from the Trojans' grasp in McRae. An isolated first-half field goal by Isaiah Thomas proved to be the difference after the back-to-back Bacon County touchdowns on a throw from Scotland Hennesy to Santiago Bizzell and a run by Carter Chancey. Consecutive tackles led by Amar'e Ryals keyed the stop as Telfair threatened inside its 10 with four minutes to go. The Trojans, whose Cam Williams brought in a deep pass for the second of two first-half touchdowns, didn't get the ball back.

Baldwin 18, Northside 13: London Blash intercepted his second pass of the night off a favorable deflection, and returned it to the end zone for the Braves' go-ahead touchdown early in the fourth quarter. Corey Myrick took away a third from Northside backup J.D. Garman as the Eagles threatened in the red zone on what would end up being their final chance. Both phases of the Baldwin offense were clicking, with new quarterback Kamden Patterson a razor-sharp 18-of-22 passing for 203 yards and a touchdown to Jaylen King that tied the early second-half score at 6. The



HITTING A NERVE: Northeast's physical defense greets Southwest freshman wide receiver Jeremiah Sapp (37). Hard hits went both ways in the slobber-knocking game, which turned ugly as the teams began trading words, and eventually some actual blows in a third-quarter scuffle that brought the night to an early end /**MARK S. POWELL**, for the **Macon Melody**

Braves went up on an eight-yard Amari Watson touchdown run later in the third, before Northside ran back a punt for a touchdown to take it back late in the third.

Hawkinsville 34, Schley Co. 23: Martin McDonald rushed for 182 yards and three touchdowns on 14 carries to pace the Red Devils as they kept up with brisk early rate of scoring. Schley County rushing touchdowns by Antavian Hill and Jeremiah Johnson, part of a 285-yard night on the ground, helped the visitors jump out to a couple of first-half leads. Hawkinsville took a 28-23 advantage to the half, and — as both sides seemed to run out of offensive gas — put the game away with a 15-yard touchdown pass from Sebastian Clark to Nakivius Releford. The Devil defense, led by Releford's 12 tackles and one for loss, forced two fumbles and deflected six passes on the night.

Northeast Macon 30, Southwest 8: This chippy rivalry meeting was called early in the third quarter when a fight erupted after a questionable late hit to injured Southwest quarterback Chase Dupree. The Raiders, however, gained a pretty firm upper hand on the field and scoreboard in the two completed quarters. Kortnei Williams had two out of three interceptions that were among multiple other takeaways for the Northeast defense. The Raiders overcame their own turnover issues to carve up the Southwest defense through the air on three

touchdown passes from freshman QB Jordan Wiggins, two to Tavarus Tinsley Jr. Dupree hit Lavaris Harris for the Patriots' only score early in the first half.

Houston Co. 56, Effingham Co. 42: In a return to the BIG XII-style games that have been their norm in recent seasons, the Bears put up 569 total yards while allowing considerably less, 343, from an Effingham County team that matched its six touchdowns (without the aid of a turnover) between quarters 1, 2 and 4. Two unanswered for HoCo in the third quarter helped keep this one out of the Rebels' reach. The Bears' Ryan Maxwell completed 14 passes for 303 yards and four touchdowns, one each to M.J. Mathis, Colin Anderson, Jeffery Thomas and Joshua Pettigrew. Anderson also rushed 13 times for 195 yards and two more scores. Effingham County was led by Kris Swinney's six completions for 65 yards and a touchdown passing, and 13 carries for 60 and three scores rushing.

Peach Co. 27, Perry 6: The Trojans' defense limited the Panthers to just 159 total yards, and a couple of field goals in quarters 1 and 2 that had them up slightly at halftime. Perry's defense forced a handful of turnovers, and blocked a punt to set up one of the early kicks by John Levie, but its offensive frustrations continued throughout the second half. Peach scored all four of its touchdowns in the third quarter, twice on runs by Ashton Barton, and on sep-

arate touchdown passes from Caiden Ivory to Barton and Zion Hudson, to simultaneously crack the scoreboard, and crack the game wide open. Ivory was 9-of-18 through the air for 172 yards. Barton had a team-high 152 yards from scrimmage.

Swainsboro 27, ECI 13: An Aiden Foskey scoop-six late in the third, then a second rushing touchdown of the night by Ja'Bios Smith, helped the Tigers pull away from a tie of 13 points at the end of a defensive struggle. Kamarion Dukes (74 yards), Marco Danford (50, along with a 62-yard touchdown catch) and Joshua Gray (five completions for 100 yards and the aforementioned TD to open the first-half scoring) led the Swainsboro attack. ECI scored unanswered touchdowns, on 40- and 73-yard breakaways by Tyler Foreman in quarters 2 and 3, to tie and grab a brief lead before Smith's first trip to the end zone, two minutes after the go-ahead, initiated the late tie.

Toombs Co. 12, Dougherty 6: A Justin Powell interception and rushing touchdown (to tie the game at 6 after an early Trojans score), along with a 75-yard Alex Scott punt return score for the lead later in the first, were Toombs highlights early in an abbreviated game that would be called and declared final after lightning sent it into a long delay early in the second quarter.

Veterans 29, Statesboro 22: Trey Byrd's 67-yard touchdown strike to L.J. Moton in the last minute of action clinched the Warhawks a first win for their new head coach Steve Devoursney. Byrd also had two rushing touchdowns.

Other postponements/cancellations... Taylor Co. at Wheeler Co. (postponed to Thursday, 7 p.m.) Twiggs Co. at Greene Co. (postponed until Sept. 18) John Milledge def. Augusta Christian (forfeit)

Other midstate finals... Warner Robins 53, Fayette Co. 0 Clinch Co. 21, Wilcox Co. 13

SCOREBOARD

SOFTBALL
Monday
West Laurens 15, Johnson Co. 0
Central Macon at Dublin /PPD (9/4)
Tuesday
Dublin 17, Northeast 9
East Laurens 8, ACE 5
Robert Toombs 12, Trinity 3
WL 1, Perry 0 (8 inn.)

PREP SCHEDULE

SOFTBALL
Thursday
CCA at Trinity/4:30 p.m.
Dublin at ACE Charter
WL at Hephzibah/5:30 p.m.
Southwest Macon at EL /6 p.m.
Friday
Trinity at Edmund Burke /4:30 p.m.
FOOTBALL
Thursday
Taylor Co. at Wheeler Co. /7 p.m.
Friday
Southwest Macon at Dublin
East Laurens at Bleckley Co.
North Clayton at West Laurens
Trinity at Edmund Burke
GMC at Brentwood
Dodge Co. at Central
Johnson Co. at Warren Co.
Montgomery Co. at Atkinson Co.
Treutlen at Bacon Co.
Twiggs Co. at Portal
Washington Co. at Northeast Macon
Jasper Co. at Wilkinson Co. /7:30 p.m.

CONTACT US:
Email sports information to tchsports77@gmail.com, or call (478) 272-5522, ext. 403

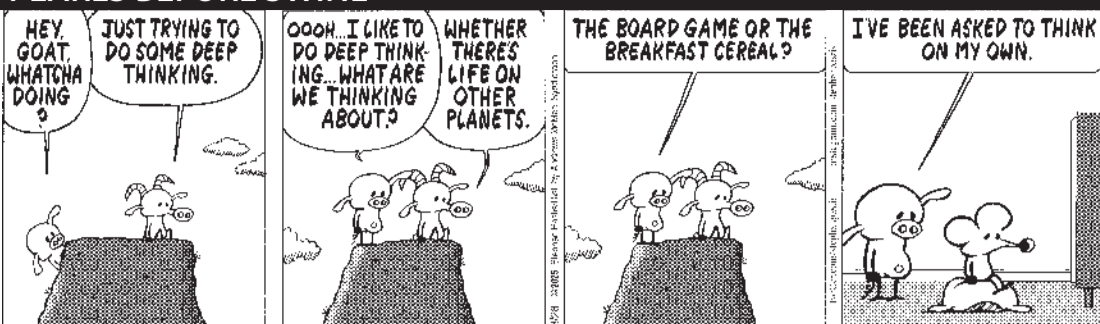
BULLETIN BOARD...

Dublin Pickleball's End O'Summer Slam Sept. 20-21
The Dublin Pickleball Association, in conjunction with Southern Pickleball, will be hosting the End O'Summer Slam at the Southern Pines Recreation Complex Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 20-21. The tournament will begin with men's and women's doubles action Saturday, followed by mixed doubles on Sunday. Registration cost is \$60, plus \$15 per event. Sign up online at pickleballtournaments.com.

Eastside Recreation opens fall football registration
The East Dublin Recreation Department has opened registration for its upcoming girls flag football and boys tackle football seasons. Registration forms can be picked up at East Dublin City Hall. Cost to participate in girls flag football (open to ages 5-18, as of September 1, 2025) is \$50, and \$100 in boys tackle (ages 6-12, as of the same cutoff date). The registration deadline has been extended to September 2. No late registrations will be accepted.

Crawford Co. 28, GMC 7
FPD 42, Marion Co. 7
Mary Persons 23, Jackson 10
Prince Ave. Christ. 43, Westside, Macon 22
Screven Co. 28, Vidalia 8
Briarwood 32, CFCA 14
Deerfield-Windsor 51,
Mount de Sales 10
Edmund Burke 20, Robert Toombs 0
Pacelli 28, Tattnell Square 6
Thomas Jefferson 27, Windsor 18
Westfield 28, Southland 0

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



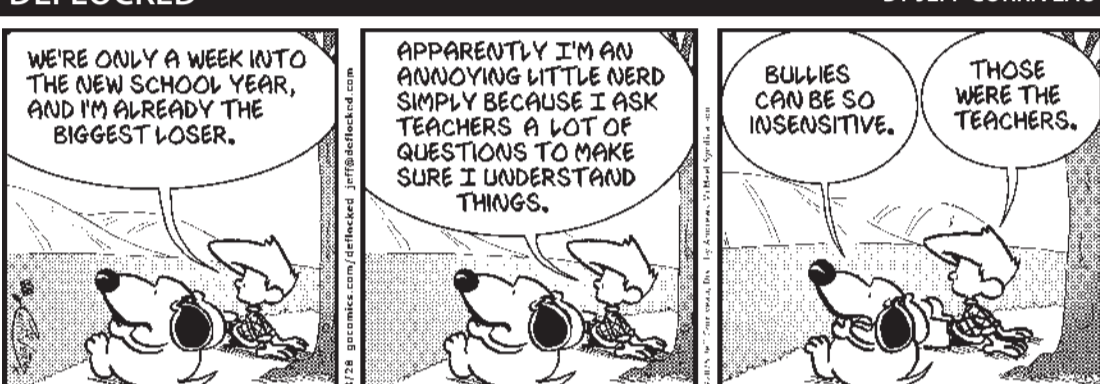
GARFIELD



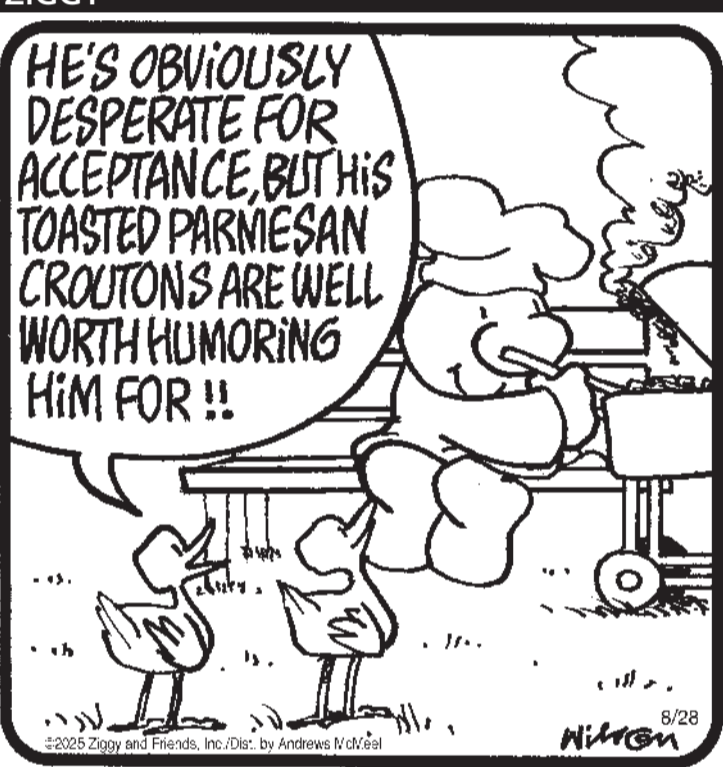
OVERBOARD



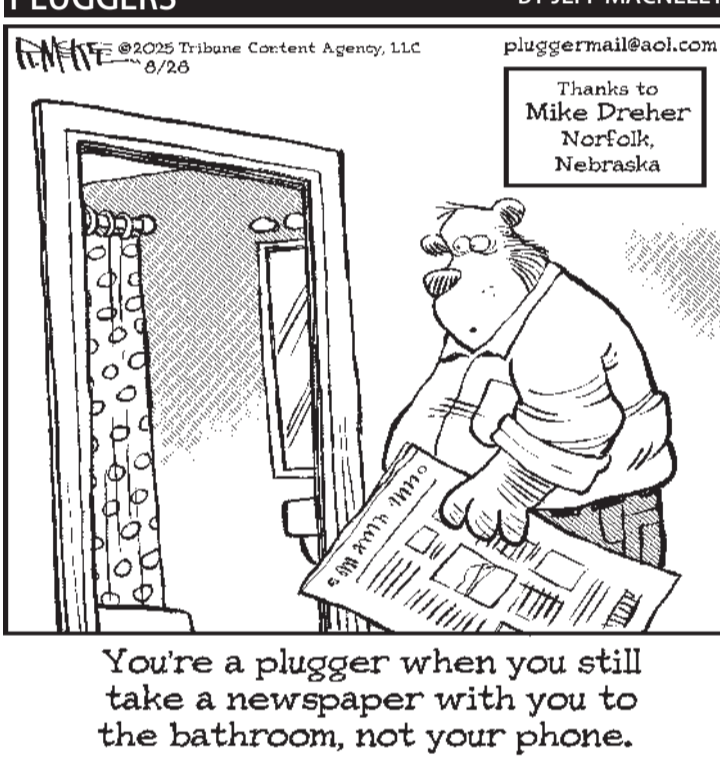
DEFLOCKED



ZIGGY



PLUGGERS



Mother-Daughter rift puts Dad in a tough spot!



DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren

DEAR ABBY: My daughter, "Violet," lives about two hours away. She and her mother (my wife) do not get along. Violet was always a rebellious, independent wild child, as well as the source of a lot of family problems. Violet and I also were estranged until we recently reconciled.

Yesterday, she sent me an email inviting me to lunch to celebrate my birthday. When I told my wife about the invitation, she responded, "Do what you want" in a tone and with a facial expression which said: "Go ahead, but if you do, you'll be sorry."

I have tried to reconcile these two women I love without success. My wife tells me she loves Violet but doesn't like her, although she would like to have a better relationship with her. Violet tells me she blames her mother for her PTSD (her unofficial diagnosis) and wants nothing to do with her.

So do I go to lunch with my daughter and incur the wrath of my wife for what she would consider a betrayal, or do I decline the invitation from my daughter and risk alienating her again? -- IN THE MIDDLE IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR IN THE MIDDLE: Your wife is wrong to attempt to use you to punish her troubled daughter. It would

benefit all three of you if Violet were properly diagnosed. Before having that birthday lunch, ask your doctor if he or she can give you the name of some doctors who specialize in diagnosing and treating PTSD. During the lunch, tell Violet you love her, but this split in the family isn't good for any of you, which is why you are giving her the names of doctors who can help her work through her trauma. An alternative to that might be family counseling for the three of you.

DEAR ABBY: I reconnected with my high school first love. Unfortunately, both of us were married. His wife didn't win her battle with cancer and passed away. I eventually got a divorce. All through this time, we were intimate, spending as much time together as we could. (We live in different cities.)

It has been eight months since we reconnected, and I'm ready for a relationship. I know he's nowhere near healed or close to ready to be in another relationship. This is the third time in our lives we have been brought together and couldn't "be" together. I don't know whether to let go or to wait. Please help. -- ONE WHO GOT AWAY

DEAR ONE: Perhaps the third time will be the charm because you are now both single. While you may have to wait for this man to finish grieving for the wife to whom he was unfaithful, it may be time for an honest conversation about your feelings for him and whether he's on the same page. It is important you both figure out whether this is the real thing or just another attempt to resurrect a teenage romance.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069

Thursday, August 28, 2025

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES
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DEFENSIVE GEM

Both vulnerable, East deals

NORTH
♠ A Q 10 3
♥ 4 3 2
♦ 10 8 7
♣ A 9 6

WEST
♠ J 6 5 2
♥ 9 8 6
♦ Q 6 4 2
♣ Q 7

EAST
♠ K 9 4
♥ 7
♦ 5 3
♣ K J 8 5 4 3 2

SOUTH
♠ 8 7
♥ A K Q J 10 5
♦ A K J 9
♣ 10

The bidding:
EAST 3♣ WEST 4♥ NORTH 4♠
Pass 6♥ All pass

Opening lead: Queen of ♣

one diamond discard and a diamond finesse would still be necessary. Declarer might rely on the success of the second spade finesse and play for the same opponent who held the queen of diamonds to have four or more spades. The ending he would be hoping for was this:

NORTH
♠ A 10 3
♥ Void
♦ 10
♣ Void

WEST
♠ J 6 5
♥ Void
♦ Q
♣ Void

EAST
♠ 9
♥ Void
♦ 5
♣ K J

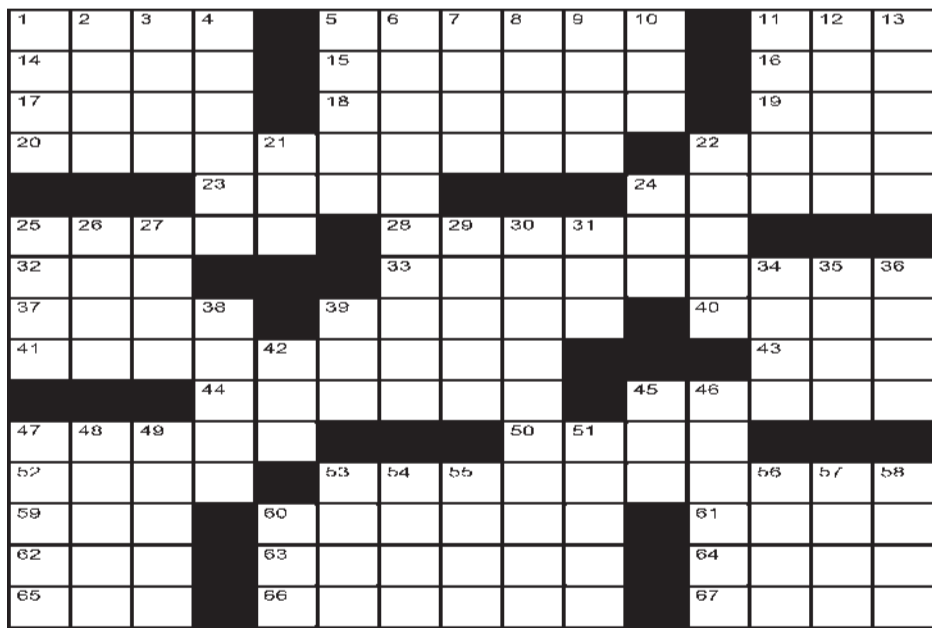
SOUTH
♠ 8
♥ 10
♦ J 9
♣ Void

South won the opening club lead with dummy's ace and drew trumps in three rounds. He led a spade to the queen, which would have given him 12 certain tricks if that held the trick. East won with the king, however, and had to decide what to do next. What would you do? Had East led a minor suit, as most everyone would, declarer might well rely on the diamond finesse and go down one. A spade to the jack, although more likely to succeed, would do South no good. It would only provide

Dummy would discard a diamond on the last heart and West would not be able to defend the position. Any discard by West would allow South, with the help of the spade finesse, to take the last three tricks. East was the great Polish player, Michal Klukowski, and he foresaw this possibility. To prevent this he made the spectacular return of the nine of spades into dummy's ace-10. That gave declarer an extra spade trick, but he still had to lose a diamond. Great play!

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS
- 1 Starter dishes, for short
 - 5 Magical incantations
 - 11 Cleaning cloth
 - 14 Business attire
 - 15 Like some domestic help
 - 16 Need to repay
 - 17 Leg joint
 - 18 Low-scoring tie
 - 19 "Ant-___ and the Wasp"
 - 20 Shortcake fruit
 - 22 Unclothed
 - 23 "The Simpsons" sister
 - 24 Hits the ground
 - 25 Roll downhill
 - 28 Salt and ___
 - 32 Upper limb
 - 33 Part of an essay
 - 37 Bit of bird food
 - 39 Author Horatio
 - 40 Currency in Spain
 - 41 Pollinating insects
 - 43 Casual top
 - 44 Gentlemen: Abbr.
 - 45 Sporty car roofs: 2 wds.
 - 47 Sag
 - 50 Positively claim
 - 52 Be entitled to
 - 53 Actors' pseudonyms: 2 wds.
 - 59 Kissing in a park, e.g.: Abbr.
 - 60 Fund-___ (charity event)
 - 61 Layer of paint
 - 62 "___ death do us part"
 - 63 Having title to
 - 64 Otherwise
 - 65 That guy's
 - 66 Fancy home
 - 67 Come across as
- DOWN
- 1 Inquires
 - 2 Fourth-down play
 - 3 Where ships dock
 - 4 Pillers
 - 5 Messy people



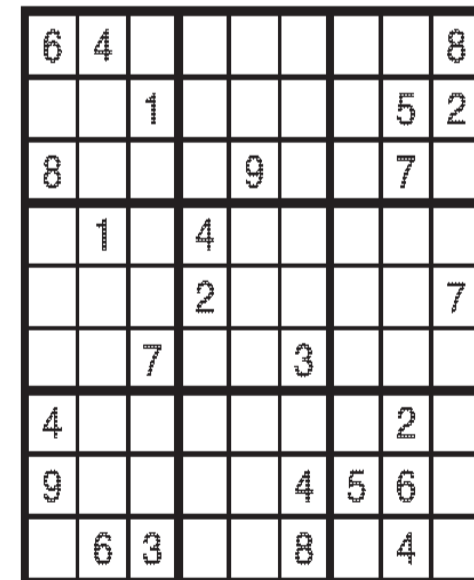
Created by Stella Zawistowski



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- 6 Upside-down-cake fruits
- 7 At any time
- 8 Shakespearean king
- 9 Easter flower
- 10 "Weekend Update" show: Abbr.
- 11 From Italy's capital
- 12 Oscar or Emmy
- 13 Chromosome parts
- 21 Clever humor
- 22 Ballet class support
- 24 Lower limb
- 25 Paper money
- 26 Nabisco cookie
- 27 Prayer-ending word
- 29 Enthusiastic
- 30 Publicity rep: 2 wds.
- 31 Golf standard
- 34 Car or truck
- 35 Get ready
- 36 Earth-turning tools
- 38 Evil spirit
- 39 Core muscles
- 42 "Uh-huh"
- 45 Midmorning hour
- 46 Slight amounts
- 47 Pool measurement
- 48 Diameter halves
- 49 Spoken exams
- 51 Precipice
- 53 Tools with teeth
- 54 Slight coloring
- 55 Cambodia's continent
- 56 Double agent
- 57 Make simpler
- 58 ___ the tide
- 60 Fish eggs

SUDOKU

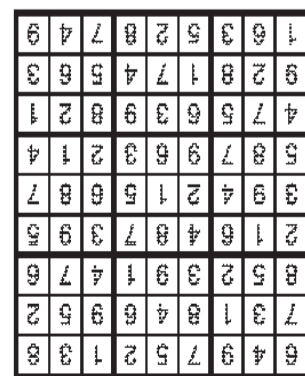


Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



ANSWER:

CITY SCHOOLS
Continued from page 1

emailed to Williams and school finance director Chad McDaniel, with Walters copied, lays out a timeline for the state's involvement.

Georgia Department of Education Chief Financial Officer Rusk Roam was notified Aug. 14 by the Department of Community Health that the Dublin City Schools had not paid employer contributions to the State Health Benefit Plan for FY25 and had not paid employee contributions since March.

"Further review also showed operational deficiencies that have yet to be reported, as the district has not yet completed audit reports for FY22, FY23 or FY24," the letter details.

The next day, Aug. 15, a meeting was held between Dublin City Schools officials and state Department of Education senior leadership. "During this call and through follow-up correspondence, a timeline was mutually developed and agreed upon to show progress on the outstanding financial items," Woods says in the letter.

The letter also outlines "progress made since the Aug. 15 meeting," noting the schools had:

- Wired funds in the amount of \$780,512 to the Department of Community Health to pay all outstanding employee

liabilities for State Health Benefit Plan.

- Provided documentation that the FY22 Audit Exit Conference was completed on Aug. 20, 2025.

- Submitted a deficit reduction plan to the Georgia Department of Education on Aug. 22, 2025.

- Submitted a cashflow statement, including proposed State Health Benefit Plan payments for prior and current liabilities, on Aug. 22, 2025.

The state is requiring a "financial improvement plan" from the schools, outlined in the letter. As part of the plan, school officials must:

- Resubmit a deficit reduction plan to include a balanced budget by FY27, along with a contingency plan for any lost revenues due to property tax appeals, to the state Department of Education by Aug. 29.

- Submit proof of State Health Benefit Plan approval of repayment plan, along with verification of continued benefits, to state Department of Education by Aug. 29.

- Provide documentation to the Department of Education that all FY23 audit pending documents have been submitted to accountants Mauldin & Jenkins by Sept. 22, 2025.

- Continue to meet the Department of Education Financial Review team as requested until all concerns are resolved.

VA IMPROVEMENTS
Continued from page 1

center upgrades

- EHRM infrastructure upgrades
- EHRM installation of NextGen wifi
- EHRM project support services

"This is another step forward in our efforts to make VA work better for the veterans, families, caregivers and survivors we are charged with serving," said VA Secretary Doug Collins. "Improved facilities, equipment and infrastructure help improve care for veterans, and these additional funds will enable VA to achieve that goal."

The additional funds will come from savings gleaned from various VHA reform efforts. The additions will bring total NRM program spending for fiscal year 2025 to \$2.8 billion — a nearly \$500 million increase from fiscal year 2024.

The improvements announced Monday are the latest in a growing list of VA accom-

plishments during the second Trump Administration, including:

- Since Jan. 20, VA has offered Veterans nearly 1 million appointments outside of normal operating hours. These early-morning, evening, and weekend appointments are giving Veterans more timely and convenient options for care.

- VA has opened 16 new health care clinics across the nation since Jan. 20.

- The President's fiscal year 2026 budget request would add billions to VA's budget.

- VA has made it easier and faster for VA-enrolled Veterans to access care from non-VA providers at the department's expense.

- VA has implemented major reforms to make it easier for survivors to get benefits.

- VA is processing record numbers of disability claims, reaching 1 million claims processed for FY25 on Feb. 20 and reaching 2 million claims by June — both achievements were done in record time.

RURAL DEATH
Continued from page 1

poverished rural counties that were upside down on births and deaths — as, a county or two to the south, was Johnson County.

By the mid-2010s, this particular socioeconomic cancer was approaching full bloom. When I made my aforementioned April 2017 presentation to the House Rural Development Council, with 2015 data, the number of counties reporting more deaths than births had quadrupled to 60, with two others at break-even — reporting exactly the same number of births and deaths.

More significantly, the regions only being hinted at in the 2004 map were pretty much fully formed — and still growing and metastasizing toward one another. Of the southwest Georgia counties on or near the Alabama line, only Early County was still producing more births than deaths. What's more, a chain of impoverished upside-down counties was forming in interior Middle and South Georgia — and beginning to connect to the growing cluster of equally upside-down counties in east-central Georgia.

This was basically a part of the state that the late George Berry, who served as commissioner of the Department of Industry, Trade & Tourism (now Economic Development) under Governor Joe Frank Harris, once described to me as a "crescent of poverty" whose problems he found unsolvable. Berry held that position through most of the 1980s, and things have only gotten worse since then.

Indeed, the number of counties reporting more deaths than births has continued

to climb since my presentation to the HRDC. By 2019, the number was up to 78 — and then exploded when Covid hit.

The peak came in 2021 when 124 of the state's 159 counties found themselves under water, with more burials than births. This particularly unhappy condition had with, with few exceptions, covered nearly all of rural Middle and South Georgia, crept up the state's eastern border with South Carolina, and all the way across its northern border with North Carolina and Tennessee.

Outside Metro Atlanta, only a handful of counties and regions dodged a direct hit from this public health hurricane.

As Covid largely passed after 2022, this trend seems to have settled back into its pre-Covid trajectory. It dropped to 92 in 2023 and 94 in 2024. But that's not exactly good news. By my math, that's about where it would have been without Covid.

The good news, of a sort, is that this situation can't get a whole lot worse — at least in terms of the number of counties with more deaths than births each year. Metro Atlanta's growth serves as a buffer against the trend north of the gnat line, and several important economic assets — Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, the new Hyundai plant in Bryan County, and the Savannah ports — seem to be holding off the grim reaper in southeast and coastal Georgia.

But for much of interior rural Georgia, this cancer seems terminal.

Back up in the top half of the story, I noted that "something" had happened around 2010 but never got around to explaining what. I'm working now to take a stab at that.

HIGHLIGHT REEL: MORE LOCAL FRIDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL SNAPSHOTS



Top: West Laurens cheerleaders lead the team onto the field vs. Groves. Above: Dublin head coach Roger Holmes huddles players before the start of the third quarter vs. Swainsboro. Right: Raider Brigade drum majors Ryan Jackson, Piper Schoen and Johnte Allen raise the U.S. flag during the Star Spangled Banner. Below: Johnson County cheerleaders parade the "JOCO" flags after an early Trojan touchdown against East Laurens. Bottom: Trinity players, assistant coach Christian Lane and son Koba share in a postgame word of prayer after Friday's win over Gatewood/HORACE AUSTIN, CLAY REYNOLDS, DANNY SCARBORO





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