

Dublin schools report \$7 million deficit in October

By RODNEY MANLEY  
Staff Reporter

The Dublin City Schools finished the month of October with a \$7 million deficit, according to a monthly financial report approved by the school board Monday night.

"This is mainly because none of the property taxes have come in," financial consultant Laura Jenkins told the board. "Once that starts flowing in, that should wipe away some of that deficit."

The report shows the system began the fiscal year in a huge hole, with a \$5.6 million general fund deficit as of July 1, 2025. However, the monthly report indicates some progress toward reducing what state officials have projected to be a \$13 million deficit by the end of the current fiscal year.

The district finished the month of October with \$381,544.73 in revenue over expenditures. It received \$3 million in revenue – almost entirely state QBE funding – and spent \$2.6 million.

The report reflects some of the cuts – including more than 50 positions – made by the board as part of its deficit reduction plan filed with the state.

"It does not show all of the cuts because some of the cuts are coming in December," Jenkins said.

Dublin City's most recent financial troubles came to light in late August after the Department of Commu-

DUBLIN SCHOOLS  
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McRae parting message to board: 'Make sure this never happens again'



JoAnna Glover (standing) consoles fellow school board member Regina McRae during her goodbye at Monday's meeting, McRae's last on the board /RODNEY MANLEY

By RODNEY MANLEY  
Staff Reporter

Set to leave office at the end of the year, Regina McRae bid an emotional farewell to the Dublin City Board of Education on Monday, urging fellow board members to take steps to prevent a repeat of the district's current financial crisis.

"I urge the board to ensure that we have policies in place that create a checks-and-balances system that clearly defines the roles of the financial director and the (human resources) director, and how they interact, and that we examine, evaluate every program and determine if we are getting a return for our investment," McRae said at the board's final scheduled meeting of the year.

The Dublin school district is mired in a cash crisis, with the state at one time projecting the system will finish the current fiscal year with a \$13 million deficit.

That was before a series of cuts that included the elimination of 51 jobs, including about a dozen teaching positions.

Board members have said they were unaware of how bad finances were until contacted in August by the state about the system owing \$6 million in overdue payments to the State Health Benefit Plan, after not having paid for an entire year. The controversy led to the resignation of finance director Chad McDaniel, the early retirement of Superintendent Fred Williams and possibly McRae's defeat in November's election.

"If after months and months of daily news cycles, regular articles in The Courier Herald, weekly letters from the state superintendent about Dublin City Schools, your only question is, 'Where is the \$13 million?' I'm not sure you're getting it," she said. "Here

McRAE  
Continued on page 10



Tanna Rae Herring, who will star as Clara, rehearses a scene with other cast members/PAYTON TOWNS III

Stage set for 21st 'Nutcracker' at Theatre Dublin

By PAYTON TOWNS III  
Senior Reporter

The stage is set, the tickets are disappearing and the dancers are ready to perform in the 21st annual "The Nutcracker" at Theatre Dublin.

Cast and crew are excited about this year's show, said Robin Middleton, who returns as the executive director and choreographer of the show, which will be performed Saturday, Dec. 13, at 2 and 7 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 14 at 2 p.m. A performance is scheduled for local schools on Friday, while tickets for the three shows are disappearing faster than magician Herr Drosselmeyer can perform tricks. There still may be a few left for this annual Christmas tradition.

"This has just become a Dublin tradition," Middleton said. "For me, this is what kicks off the holidays. Some people come every year. Some people have family in it. When those kids are grown, they just contin-



Director Robin Middleton works on a costume during Saturday's practice at Theatre Dublin/PAYTON TOWNS III

ue coming back."

And while some in the cast are veterans returning to dance across the stage, there are some new faces making their debut. That includes this year's Clara - Tanna Rae Herring.

"She caught my eye during auditions with her acting," Middleton said.

"She's a great dancer. Her acting and performance quality is what really caught my eye. I'm really excited to see her on stage this year."

This was Herring's first time auditioning for anything for "The Nutcracker." She was waiting for pizza when she found out she was cast as Clara.

"We were getting pizza from Pizza Hut for our small group and we were waiting for (the list) to be posted," said Herring, fifth grade student at Northwest Laurens Elementary School.

They received an email and she opened it up and saw that her name was linked to Clara.

"I get to be in all of the parts and I have made a lot of good friends," Herring said. "I like the show because it is so entertaining. I like that we are able to use our facial expressions and how people act. Some are funny and some are serious. It feels exciting because a lot of people will be coming to watch the show."

This year, Drosselmeyer will not be played by Middleton's husband, Jared. The Middleton's moved to Sandersville, and since Jared is a pastor, they knew it was going to be tough for him to preach and make practices

NUTCRACKER  
Continued on page 10

Teenager killed in East Dublin shooting

STAFF REPORTS

The Laurens County Sheriff's Office is investigating the fatal shooting of a teenager in the area of Kaitlyn Court early Sunday morning.

According to a sheriff's office press release, deputies found Javian Smith dead when they arrived. Two other people were also shot and transported to Fairview Park Hospital with non-life threatening

injuries.

Laurens County Coroner Richard Stanley said Smith was pronounced dead at 2:40 a.m. Sunday. His body was transported to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab in Atlanta.

The investigation is ongoing. Anyone with information on this case is asked to notify the LCSO at (478) 272-1522 or by calling 911.

Man sentenced to life, 110 years for child sex charges

By PAYTON TOWNS III  
Senior Reporter

A man received a life sentence – plus 110 years – after a Laurens County jury found him guilty on seven charges of abusing his daughter and stepson.

Thomas Henry Blanks, 38, was found guilty on two counts of enticing a child for indecent purposes, two counts of aggravated child molestation, incest, aggravated sodomy and rape during a trial that ended last week.

Laurens County District Attorney Harold McLendon was happy with the outcome.

"I wish people would have been there to hear (the daughter's) victim-impact statement," McLendon said. "She had been trapped inside her body and she can't get out of it. The statement went on and on and on and she put in the adjectives to make you feel it. It was very touching. She should be applauded for actually staying with it and going through it. The jury gave a verdict, so at least they know what happened to her."

Emily Brookshire, executive director of Stepping Stone Child Advocacy & Sexual Assault Center, was grateful for the work done on this case by Macie Griffin, assistant director and forensic interviewer at Stepping Stone.

"For those who may be unaware, one of Stepping Stone's primary roles as a child advocacy and sexual assault center is to provide forensic interviews to children and teens who have been the victims of abuse," Brookshire said.



BLANKS

"This process allows our team to gather information that can be used as evidence during trial while also ensuring the comfort and well-being of the child victim. I am very proud of my incredible staff who conduct these interviews and gather these traumatic narratives while, at the same time, ensuring that victims feel heard and respected."

She was also thankful for the work accomplished by Kelly Weathers, chief assistant DA, Eric Burgamy, investigator with the Dublin Judicial Circuit, and Ebony Blake with victim assistance.

"Harold has assembled an incredible team," Brookshire said. "Stepping Stone is pleased to work so closely with the Dublin Circuit District Attorney's Office and help secure justice for victims in our community, especially as seen in the recent Thomas Blanks trial."

"All victims deserve to be represented with the professionalism, ferocity and compassion that this team possesses," she added. "I, as well as my team, am thankful for their efforts and are proud to be a part of serving justice in Laurens County."

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Dancers prepare for this weekend's run of 'The Nutcracker'/PAYTON TOWNS III



OBITUARIES



Bobby Baker

Funeral services for Mr. Bobby Baker, 76, will be held on Thursday, Dec. 11, 2025, at 1 p.m. at the Greater Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church, 1824 Claxton Dairy Road in Dublin. Rev. E. Neal Dixon will deliver the eulogy. Interment will follow in the Williams Chapel Mission Cemetery.

Bobby Baker was born on Wednesday, Feb. 9, 1949, Dublin, Georgia. He was the beloved son of the late Sidney and late Josephine Johnson Baker.

Bobby graduated from the B.D. Perry High School in 1967. He later went on to serve his country in the United States Army from March 1969 until March 1971. After returning home, he was employed with Mohawk Industries. Once he left Mohawk, he began a long and dedicated career at the Dublin Veterans Administration Medical Center. He started in the kitchen in April 1984 and, through hard work, he through hard work and commitment, later he transitioned into the Transportation Department. Bobby faithfully served the veterans and the staff for nearly three decades before retiring from the Carl Vinson Veterans Administration center in 2012.

Mr. Bobby Baker, 76, entered into eternal rest on Friday, Dec. 5, 2025. He was preceded in death by his parents, and by his sister, Betty Jo Baker Waters.

He leaves to cherish his memory one son. Tshombe (Kendra) Baker of Uvalda, Georgia, one daughter, Crystal T. Martin of Atlanta, Georgia, grandchildren, C. J. Watson, Tyra Baker and Makayla Baker, all of Dublin, seven great-grandchildren of Dublin, brother-in-law, Willie T. Waters, and a host of extended family and friends who loved him dear-

BIRTHDAYS

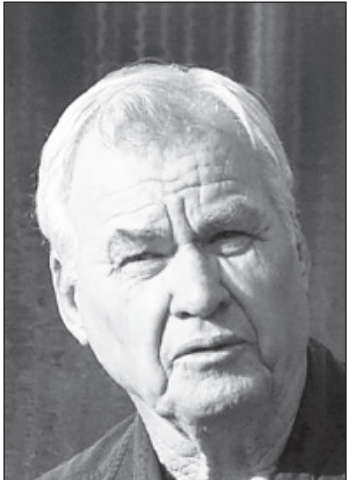
Dec. 11  
David Craig  
Landen Edwards  
Lytic Jordan  
Lisa Snell

Dec. 12  
Jaden Edwards  
Debie Sams  
Barbara Smith

ly. Bobby will be remembered for his gentle spirit, his quiet strength, and the love he held for his family.

Please post your condolences at ServicesbyDudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations.



William Hardy Smith

William Hardy Smith, a beloved family patriarch, treasured veteran and respected community member, passed away peacefully on Dec. 4, 2025, in Macon at the age of 89. Born on January 1, 1936, in Soperton to Hardy H. Smith and Lillian Crumley Smith, William's journey through life was marked by an unwavering dedication to his loved ones and his country.

William grew up in a lively household with siblings whom he loved deeply; though Wilmer Smith, Elaine Allgood, Gary Smith, and Darrell Smith have predeceased him, their bond remains an unbroken circle of familial love. He leaves behind his devoted siblings, Linda O'Connor (Roy), Wendrell Smith, Ronald Smith, and David Smith (Paula), who's shared memories will continue to honor William's rich legacy.

His heart belonged to his beloved wife of 66 years, Elsa Cauley Smith, with whom he built a beautiful life until she passed away earlier this year on May 13, 2025. That day also saw the loss of his son, Wendell Smith, whose memory will forever be cherished by those he loved.

William served his nation with honor in the United States Army, a reflection of the courage and patriotism that defined his character. After his service, he returned to his community, where he was not only known as a reliable neighbor and friend but also a man of steadfast principles and kindness.

He is survived by his loving daughters, Patricia Howard (Dan) of Gray, Ga., and Ellen Clifton (Steven) of Dublin, who will continue to uphold the family virtues instilled by their father. His daughter-in-law Wendy Smith of Montrose, Ga., remains a testament to the strength and resolve of the family. William's legacy

acy will live on through his cherished grandchildren, Scott Howard (Samantha), Madison Howard, Jackson Smith, Carson Smith, and Caroline Smith, and his adored great-grandchild, Jude Howard, all of whom brought immense joy and pride into his life.

Funeral Services will be held at 1 p.m. on Dec. 13, 2025 in the Mary Whitaker Townsend Memorial Chapel. Rev. Dwayne Clements and Rev. Byron Smith will officiate. William's family will receive friends one hour prior to service time on Saturday, December 13, 2025 at Townsend Brothers Funeral Home. Scott Howard, Jackson Smith, Carson Smith, Heath Smith, Steven Clifton and Dan Howard will serve as pallbearers. Burial will be private.

Please visit [www.Townsendfuneralhome.com](http://www.Townsendfuneralhome.com) to sign the online memorial registry.



Henry Albert Carswell

Funeral services for Mr. Henry Albert Carswell of Miramar, Florida, will be held on Friday, Dec. 12, 2025, at 11 a.m. at the graveside in the cemetery at the Macedonia Baptist Church, 4195 U.S. 80 West in Montrose, Georgia. Minister Debra Newkirk will deliver the eulogy.

Henry Carswell was born on Tuesday, April 9, 1935, to Willie and Cora "Doll" Carswell. He was a loving brother, uncle and friend.

Albert attended Dexter High School. He worked and retired from Shaw's Construction Company in Miami, Florida. Albert always kept a job and worked hard to maintain his independent lifestyle. His greatest attributes are family and self-love. Albert's dignity goes far beyond that of human expectations. Albert was the protector of his family and those he loved most. He was a believer of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Mr. Henry Albert Carswell, of Miramar, Florida, departed this life on Sunday, Nov. 23, 2025. He was

preceded in death by four brothers, three sisters including Ivey Jean Knight and by two nieces and three nephews.

Albert is survived by his brothers, Carl Carswell of Dublin, Georgia, Johnny Charles Carswell of Ohio, sisters, Susie Tucker and Carrie Bell of Dublin, Georgia, Judy (Jamie) Graves of Miramar, Florida, and Clara Boyer of Maryland. He is also survived by 26 nieces, 10 great nieces and 10 great-niece, 18 nephews, 12 great nephews and 18 great-nephews and a special friend, Boosie Purse.

The family will receive friends at the home of Gregory Tucker, 503 Hawkeye Way in East Dublin on Thursday, 5 p.m. - 8 p.m., and for the repast on Friday starting at 1 p.m..

Please post your condolences online at ServicesbyDudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations



Benny "B.J." Brantley Jr.

Funeral services for Mr. Benny "B. J." Brantley, Jr., of Dublin, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, December 12, 2025, at 12 p.m. in the C. D. Dudley Memorial Chapel at the Dudley Funeral Home, 617 East Jackson Street in Dublin. Reverend Dr. Hayward Cordy will deliver the eulogy. Interment will follow in the Dudley Memorial Cemetery.

Benny Brantley, Jr., was born on Sunday, March 9, 1980, in Swainsboro, Georgia, the son of Rev. Benny Lee and Marie Brantley. A proud graduate of East Laurens High School (Class of 1998), he excelled academically and participated in football and track and field. He was a dedicated and valued employee of Garbett Construction Company.

Mr. Brantley passed away on Sunday, December 7, 2025, at Memorial Medical Center in Savannah, Georgia.

He leaves to cherish his memory: his beloved wife, Crystal Oneal-Brantley;

children, Zalen Brantley of Dublin, Georgia, Jarcara Stanley of Macon, Georgia, Zyshonne Holliman of Dublin, Georgia, and Zama-ni Williams of East Dublin, Georgia; parents, Rev. Benny Lee and Marie Brantley; sisters, Renee (Derrick) Surrey of Dublin, Georgia, Natasha Brantley of Peachtree City, Georgia; Bridgette Brantley of Pooler, Georgia; like-a-daughter, Monique Brantley-Young of Pooler, Georgia; mother-in-law, Mary Payne Oneal; brother-in-law, Wesley (Lakeisha) Oneal; sister-in-law, Chastity (Joe) Willis of Dublin, Georgia; special nephews and niece, Christian, Quay, and Miranda; beloved aunts, Annie Kate Knighten of Belton, Texas, Mary Lois White of Lakeland, Florida, Charlie Mae Price of Augusta, Georgia; beloved uncles, Rev. Dr. Hayward Cordy of Wrightsville, Georgia, Rev. Kenneth (Yvette) Cordy of Augusta, Georgia, Elder Jasper (Vickie) White of Plant City, Florida, Henry (Pamela) White of Plant City, Florida, James White of Plant City, Florida; and a host of cousins, nieces, nephews,

family and friends.

Please post your condolences at ServicesbyDudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.

Esther Walker

Ms. Esther Walker of Dublin, Georgia passed away on Monday, December 8, 2025. Funeral arrangements are incomplete at this time.

[www.ServicesByDudley.com](http://www.ServicesByDudley.com).

Benny Brantley Jr.

Mr. Benny Brantley Jr. of East Dublin, Georgia passed away on Sunday, December 7, 2025. Funeral arrangements are incomplete at this time.

[www.ServicesByDudley.com](http://www.ServicesByDudley.com).

Katie Marie Wright

Ms. Katie Marie Wright of Wrightsville, Georgia passed away on Monday, December 8, 2025. Funeral arrangements are incomplete at this time.

[www.ServicesByDudley.com](http://www.ServicesByDudley.com).

MOMENTS IN TIME

\* On Dec. 22, 2001, the world's first cloned cat, appropriately named CC, or Copy Cat, made her debut in a Texas biomedical lab. She lived for 18 years, possessed all the attributes of a normal cat, and her birth jumpstarted a pet-cloning industry around the world.

\* On Dec. 23, 1982, the Missouri Department of Health and the federal Centers for Disease Control told residents of Times Beach, Missouri, that their town was contaminated by the chemical dioxin sprayed on its unpaved roads, with the unfortunate result that the town would have to be demolished. By February, the federal and state governments had spent \$36 million to buy all the town's houses, with the exception of one that the owners refused to sell, and the city was officially disincorporated.

\* On Dec. 24, 1801, British inventor Richard Trevithick took seven of his friends for a test ride in his "Puffing Devil," aka "Puffer," the first steam-powered passenger vehicle.

\* On Dec. 25, 1971, Garo Yepremian punted a 37-yard field goal in the second overtime of an AFC playoff game, giving the Miami Dolphins a 27-24 victory over the Kansas City Chiefs in the longest game in NFL history: 82 minutes and 40 seconds.

\* On Dec. 26, 1946, mobster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel opened the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Singer/comedian Jimmy Durante headlined the entertainment, with music by band leader Xavier Cugat. The opening flopped, however, due to bad weather that kept away many Hollywood guests, and as gamblers didn't have rooms at the hotel, they took their winnings and gambled elsewhere. The casino lost \$300,000 in its first week.

\* On Dec. 27, 1935, Regina Jonas became the first woman ordained as a rabbi. After many male rabbis fled Germany during World War II, she stepped into the void, though synagogues, at least, would not welcome her. She died in Auschwitz.

\* On Dec. 28, 1917, writer/satirist H.L. Mencken published a history of the bathtub, including a claim that bathing was unlawful in Boston between 1845 and 1862. The story, which was a spoof designed to test reader gullibility, was widely shared by newspapers and historians.

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**Dublin Police Department**  
- Dominique Marquis Primus, 33, was charged with driving while license suspended or revoked on East Garner around 9:09 a.m. on Nov. 11.

An officer was traveling east on East Garner when a Ram pickup truck pulled out in the road in front of him, causing the officer to slam on brakes. The officer made a traffic stop. After talking with the driver, the officer checked Primus' information through GCIC and it came back suspended for a failure to appear.

He was transported to the police department and released on two citations for failure to yield right away.

- On Nov. 12, around 8:17 p.m., an officer was dispatched to a wreck on Highway 257.

An investigation led to Holton James Darley, 29, being charged with DUI less safe-alcohol and following too closely.

- Martha Snell, 55, was charged with driving while license suspended or revoked at the intersection of West Mary and Elk around 2:35 p.m. on Nov. 11.

Snell was stopped driving a white 2014 Honda Pilot for driving at a speed not normal for a residential area.

- On Nov. 10, at 8:37 a.m., an officer responded to the intersection of West Mary Street and North Decatur Street in response to removing a person in a car who would not pay and refused to get out.

The officer met with a man who worked for Candice Transportation and had picked up a passenger, Carla Wright Johnson, 51. The man said Johnson refused to pay up-front as per the taxi cab policy. He began to drive while asking for the money, and she started yelling at him. He told her he was going to return her to where he picked her up



POLICE BEAT...

and she said she would get out.

After cursing and saying she would not get out, the officer informed Johnson she would go to jail. She stated, "take me to jail." The officer pulled Johnson out and handcuffed her. She was charged with criminal trespass, disorderly conduct and obstruction of law enforcement officers.

- Rogers L. Allen, 54, was charged with possession of amphetamine, possession and use of drug related objects and possession of firearm by convicted felon on East Jackson Street around 12:27 a.m. on Nov. 16.

An officer saw a cyclist crossing both lanes of travel with no front light or rear light as required by Georgia law. The officer met with Allen who was acting nervous and kept pushing down on his pockets after being told to keep his hands away.

Allen told the officer he had some marijuana in his backpack. The officer found a quantity of marijuana, a firearm and a several items and pipes commonly used to ingest narcotic substances. The firearm was cleared by dispatch, however it was discovered that Allen was a convicted felon. He was transported to the sheriff's office.

The crystal substance was tested at the police department and was positive for amphetamines.

- On Nov. 17, around 6:50 p.m., an officer stopped a small motorized bike operating on the road near West Mary and Central Avenue. The bike did not have any lights.

The officer met with the driver, identified as

Markeith Evans. The investigation led to the discovery of 25.3 grams of marijuana, a gold digital scale and multiple bags. Evans, 36, was transported to the sheriff's office.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- Around 1:25 p.m. on Nov. 13, a deputy talked with a woman on the telephone in reference to her 2002 Ex Go golf cart being stolen from her yard on Oconee Church Road.

- A deputy responded to the sheriff's office in reference to being scammed out of \$550 between Nov. 9 and Nov. 13.

- A pistol was stolen from a truck on Creekside Drive on Nov. 13.

- A deputy made contact with a man on Highway 117 in Cadwell in reference to a threat on Nov. 15.

- On Nov. 13, around 8:15 a.m., a deputy responded to Creekside Road in regard to an entering auto.

- On Nov. 14, a deputy went to a location on GB Lindsey Road in reference to a welfare check.

*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.*



**Dublin-Laurens County needs** to be the ninth county in Georgia to consolidate government to create equality and become more efficient.

**Madison Street is so** beautiful now! I hope we're all making an effort to support the businesses there just a little this holiday season.

**Dublin football boosters can** pay the full salaries to bring back three fired football coaches, but teachers are required to "volunteer" to work at games with no compensation. Shows priorities.

**At least for the** remainder of 2025 can we stop focusing on Dublin City Schools and focus of what is really important. That is spreading the great news that God sent his precious Son for us.

**I heard that the** three people they were trying to re-hire, or the person who is going to pay for, are the three coaches (Dublin City Schools) cut loose. They are going to pay their salary out for the end of the year to see what happens.

**I got a letter from** Meals on Wheels because they need money to continue giving free meals to senior citizens. Instead of building a new senior citizen's building, why not take that money and give it to the senior citizen's fund instead of building a new one that a lot of people are not interested in. It is funny that extra money makes some people want to spend it at no cost or help to the senior citizens. I'm 80 years old and I think that a new building is crazy. Put

the money where it counts.

**You can look straight** at the Dublin City School Board and it is mighty strange how John Bell got moved over as chairman for all of those years for somebody else to take the blunt force of people talking about them. I wonder why?

**Why couldn't the** county school superintendent close school after 12 - which makes a full day of school - and let the youngsters go to the football game up in Jefferson. Now they'll be trying to get

out of school and flying up there in a vehicle. If one of them has a wreck, and gets hurt, it's going to be on him.

**People are really mad** about the funds that is placed for three people to be hired by the (Dublin) board of education. They are laying off others. It is unfair to the teachers. They should get rid of the IGA. If this is to keep the coaches on the staff, they need to fire all of the coaches because it will be the same thing next year where they'll be requesting big money.

NEWS DIGEST

The Dublin City Council will hold its next meeting at 4:30 p.m. in the International Room at City Hall on Thursday, Dec. 11, followed by its meeting at 5:30 p.m. in the Henry "Bud" Hicks Jr. Memorial Chamber. The agenda follows:

- Call to order
- Invocation and Pledge to Flag
- Special presentations
- Approval of city council meeting minutes
- Approval of bills over \$15,000
- Approval of purchases over \$15,000
- Second reading and public hearing on ordinance #25-17 to rezone parcel D10C 169 from R-1 (single family residential) to P (professional)
- Second reading and public hearing on ordinance #25-18 establishing administrative variances
- Second reading and public hearing on ordinance #25-19 to revise zoning changes regarding area,

yard, height requirements and R-5 development standards

- Discussion and action on resolution #25-59 to authorize an encroachment on a easement to Laurens IS24 LLC

- Discussion and action on resolution #25-64 to approve and accept the terms and conditions of the 2025 SEID Grant

- Discussion and action on resolution #25-65 to approve a memorandum of agreement with Georgia Department of Community Affairs participating in a Plan First program

- Discussion and action on travel for council members Bennie Jones and Christopher Smith

- Discussion and action on board appointments (if needed)

- Citizens comments

- Council comments
- Executive session if needed to discuss real estate, pending litigation or personnel
- Adjournment

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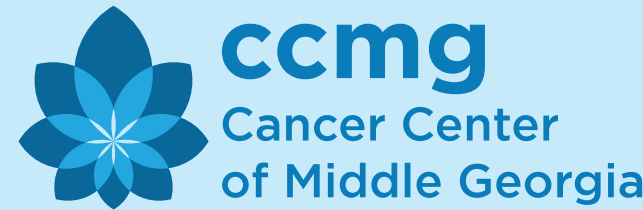
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# Futures ABA



# 1925: More of this and that

ROWDY IN SCOTTSVILLE - A boiling crowd on a warm September evening in the Scottsville community in 1935 ignited a near riot. Somewhere between two and three hundred people gathered around when a passenger in a passing car threw a tear gas bomb into the burgeoning crowd. The crowd had gathered around the Silver Moon restaurant to listen to the foot stomp-in' sounds of an electric piano. For the most part, the Dublin police found that they were behaving themselves despite the size of the crowd. The tear gas agitated the crowd so much that the Silver Moon proprietor, Gaines Lott, called both the police and the sheriff's office to prevent what Lott feared would become a riot. Law enforcement officers returned and dispersed the disappointed music lovers. Although Chief E.C. Pierce found no suspects, he did believe that the culprit was

a white man. Mac. Tel. Sept. 24, 1925.

NO SUPPLY PROBLEM - COL. JAMES D. BARNETT - of Dublin graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1925. While at the Point, Barnett was awarded a Gold Medal for being the best athlete in his class. Col. Barnett served mainly in ordnance and supply units. Colonel Barnett of the Quartermaster Corps was awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the United States as the commander of the 77th Ordnance Group from 1944 to 1945. Mac. Tel.,3.31.22 Atl. Con., 12.1.1945.

AND THE ANCIENT PASSED - Billy Horned died at the age of 115, having lived nearly all of the 19th century and a quarter of the 20th. Hannah Washington was born about the year 1818.

She lived as a slave of the Howard family for almost fifty years. Her life spanned five wars and tremendous changes in lifestyles. Hannah was somewhat of a legend in the Montrose community where she lived on the farm of G.N. Ross. Mrs. Washington died at the age of 107 in April 1925. Mac. Tel. 2.3.25, 4.29.25.

I HAVE A PINE TREE IN MY STOMACH - Willie Bryant was one lucky man. Bryant and his twelve-year-old son went out to gather some firewood. Bryant chose a tree and began to cut it about eight feet above the ground. There was a two to three-inch pine sapling in Bryant's way. He cut off the top of the sapling about six feet above the ground. When the bigger tree began to fall, Bryant lost his balance and fell to the ground. He fell directly on the top of the base of the smaller tree and was impaled in his stomach. Bry-

ant could not extricate himself until his son was able to cut down the impaling rod. The boy pulled the tree out of his father's stomach area and took him for treatment. Miraculously, Willie Bryant survived. Macon Telegraph, Nov. 2, 1925.

WRITHING IN THE DARK - Emmett Adams was traveling one night from Marie Baptist Church when one of his tires went flat. Adams pulled off the road near a swamp and began the laborious task of changing a tire in the dark. All of a sudden, Adams felt a strong tug on his pants. Before he could turn around, the teeth of an attacker cut into his ankle. Adams grabbed the closest weapon and fought back with a vengeance. His nemesis stunned, Adams took a closer look and iscovr that he had been bitten by a large racoon. For his safety, Dr. Ovid Cheek conducted an examination of the attacker to determine if he was rabid. Atlanta Constitution, May 25, 1925.



## PIECES OF OUR PAST

By SCOTT B. THOMPSON SR.

THE SADDEST TRAGEDY - Amy Lee Oxford, a native of Dublin, was a promising, highly popular nurse at the Georgia State Sanitarium in Milledgeville. On a typical late summer morning, Miss Oxford was walking through the hospital grounds. She saw a male patient, thought to be harmlessly insane, working on the ground. The deranged man, known as Willie Sims, charged toward her and slammed the sharp end of his pickaxe into her skull, killing her instantly. On

the early morning of September 21, 1925, a vicious mob rushed into the hospital gate, threatened the guards, kidnapped Sims, and took him to Wilkinson County, where they beat him to death while he was chained to a tree. Amy Oxford led the development of the therapy section to new heights in caring for her patients. In 1928, the hospital named a ward of the therapy building in her memory. Macon News, 4.7.1928, Atlanta Const. 1.23.1926, Macon Telegraph, 9.23.1925.

### DID YOU KNOW ...?

## Did two airline CEOs settle a dispute with an arm-wrestling match?

By JACK BAGLEY  
Georgia Trust for Local News

Time for that honored tradition, my annual letter to Santa Claus!  
Dear Santa,  
To tell you the truth, I don't want anything special for Christmas this year. I know, based my past history, that's pretty amazing, but at my age ... well, I already have everything I need and a great deal of what I want.  
So if you had anything specific for me, please leave it under the tree of a deserving soul who could use it better than I.

If you stop by anyway, I'll leave out the milk and cookies.  
Love,  
Jack

Now, on to the trivia!  
*Did you know ...*  
... you may have practiced stultiloquence? We all have, I'd guess. Stultiloquence means silly or senseless talk, or babble. (Sounds like the language of most politicians, if you ask me.)

... when a French queen got married, her husband wasn't even there? Marie Antoinette (1755-1793) was part of an arranged marriage to the man who would become King Louis XVI of France (1754-1793) as a way to seal the union between her native Austria and France. The wedding took place on April 19, 1770, but Louis wasn't there; rather, Marie's brother Ferdinand (1754-1806) stood in for the groom in a proxy wedding in Vienna. Louis and Marie held a ceremonial wedding on May 16 of that year at Versailles. (But which day was their anniversary?)  
... a President of the United States was an honored guest at a circus wedding? On February 10, 1863, circus dwarf "General Tom Thumb" (born Charles Sherwood Stratton, 1838-1883) married another circus dwarf, Lavinia Warren (1842-1919) in a production staged for the "Greatest Show on Earth" by circus promoter Phineas T. Barnum (1810-1891). More than 2,000 guests attended the wedding, including

President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), his wife Mary (1818-1882), and Lincoln's entire Cabinet. The ceremony was dubbed "The Fairy Wedding" by the press. (No word on what the couple called it.)  
... two airline CEOs settled a dispute over an ad slogan with an arm wrestling match? In 1992, both Southwest Airlines and Stevens Aviation were using the same advertising slogan: "Just Plane Smart." Rather than having to resort to lawsuits or other messy means of settling the dispute, the chief executive officer of Stevens, Kurt Herwald (born 1954), playfully challenged the CEO of Southwest, Herb Kelleher (1931-2019), to an arm wrestling match. The event took place in Dallas, and Herwald beat Kelleher in a two-out-of-three match. However, Herwald gave the slogan to Kelleher anyway, in exchange for a \$5000 donation to Herwald's favorite charity and the dropping of any legal challenges. (Beats pistols at ten paces any day of the week.)  
... popcorn became a

popular movie snack because of World War II? During the war, sugar shortages made candy hard to come by and expensive, sometimes too expensive for theater owners. So the owners turned to popcorn, which was cheaper, easier to prepare, and apparently sold like hotcakes – so much so that popcorn is now the best-selling movie snack. (Now, with the price of butter ...)  
... Eve (of Adam and Eve) is depicted as having blonde hair for a reason? During the Middle Ages, women with blonde hair were viewed with suspicion, and by the middle of the 14th Century that suspicion had even worked its way into paintings set in the Garden of Eden. Eve

was given flowing blonde locks that marked her as an evil temptress. (They don't print enough money to make me comment on this.)  
... the kiss at the end of a wedding ceremony has a historical precedent? People who study such things have said that the kiss comes from ancient Rome, where tradition had a kiss used to sign a contract. (Hard to take that back.)  
... some of the sets of a classic science fiction movie are now a tourist destination? In the desert of Tunisia, in Africa, the sets of the planet Tatooine from Star Wars (1977) were built, used, and then abandoned after filming was complete. But the desert preserved the sets, and now they are a popular tourist destination

in that country. You can even stay the night in Luke Skywalker's home. (The Force may, indeed, be with you.)  
... the movie Jaws inspired a widespread fear and hunting of sharks? The 1975 film, which (if you didn't already know) was about a monster great white shark attacking swimmers at a New England beach resort, caused such a backlash against sharks that they have been intensely hunted ever since. Several nations have, in fact, enacted steps to protect sharks. Additional trivia note: In a stunning twist of irony, the man who wrote the novel Jaws, Peter Benchley (1940-2006), was a strong supporter of shark conservation.  
*Now ... you know!*

# Nutcracker

## 21st Anniversary

# 2025



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December 14<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m.

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OUR TAKE...



Executive director Robin Middleton gives instructions to actors during a recent practice at Theatre Dublin /PAYTON TOWNS III

Setting the stage for 'The Nutcracker' at Theatre Dublin

The sounds of Tchaikovsky will be heard as the tunes from “The Nutcracker returns to Theatre Dublin this weekend.

This annual production of this Christmas classic will be back on stage at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. As of early this week, tickets were going fast.

Robin Middleton returns to direct the 21st production of the show. As usual, work for this show began with auditions in August. The cast has been working for a long time to get ready for their performances.

No matter how many times one views “The Nutcracker” at Theatre Dublin, each one brings something new – either new actors or new choreography. In other words, there is something different every year.

This version of “The Nutcracker” is made possible by not just our community participating but also with people from the other counties and areas around Laurens County. It is indeed a blessing to have a venue like Theatre Dublin to hold such an event.

The cast and crew have been working hard on this year's production. The costumes are about to be donned, and the music is ready to begin. The stage is set, and the curtain is ready to rise.

And the good thing is, you will not have to travel far to see a good production of Tchaikovsky’s famous Christmas ballet. Hopefully, you and your family have tickets to see the local performances of this traditional holiday show.

– Payton Towns III

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

*"There is nothing more admirable than when two people who see eye to eye keep house as man and wife, confounding their enemies and delighting their friends."*

- Homer, The Odyssey

DAILY SCRIPTURE

*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

- John 1:14

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

- Dec. 11, 2025 is...
- National App Day
  - UNICEF Birthday
  - National Noodle Ring Day
  - International Mountain Day

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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.

Merry Christmas to millions kids, the Dells

I got the opportunity to take an unexpected vacation last week. A friend’s unused reservation couldn’t be moved to a new date but the cruise line would allow for a new traveler’s name to be substituted. I spent last week in various spots in the Caribbean, blissfully tuning out the political noise of the day.

Now I’m back. The unseasonable warm and dry weather I left seems to be on a vacation of its own. I was only reminded of the current season when leaving a north Florida restaurant upon my return and being a bit surprised when the hostess gave me the exit salutation of “Merry Christmas!”

No, this won’t be the annual installment ranting against those who rant against “Happy Holidays”, though I will note Hanukkah begins on Sunday evening, Dec. 14. Our friends in Israel will celebrate their first Hanukkah in peace – tenuous though it is, as it always is there – since 2022.

Instead, today we’re going to talk about gift giving. Tis the season, and all.

One of the more substantive news stories from last week came from the business section. “Billionaires” Michael and Susan Dell have decided to give away more than \$6 billion to America’s children.

The gift is unique in that it’s not a pledge to give away the money when they die and thus no longer need it. Many of the uber-wealthy give themselves awards and dinners when they very publicly sign away their es-

By CHARLIE HARPER

tates – often to foundations run by heirs.

It’s also not to an NGO or other nebulous bureaucracy that pledges to address children’s issues while perpetuating itself on its newfound capital. Nor is it to get a wing named after themselves on a prominent building nor research institution bearing the Dell name.

Instead, they’re going to give \$250 directly to as many as 25 million children under the age of 10 to start their first investment account. The only stipulations appear to be that the child be a U.S. born citizen, both the child and parents have valid social security numbers, and the child live in a zip code where the median income is less than \$150,000 – about three quarters of the country.

This gift is designed to scale up a program in the recently passed reconciliation package that authorizes \$1,000 to children born

after Jan. 1 of this year and will continue with current funding through 2028. Proceeds will be invested in stock based index funds so that children can be invested – literally – in our capitalist market system.

The hope is that more will pay attention to these accounts and learn from the ups and the downs. Markets, after all, involve risks. America was built and still thrives by the risk takers.

For years, even decades, we’ve been fed a steady diet of stories about wealth gaps. Too many now believe that there is no intersection of Wall Street and Main Street. Some would have us believe you can’t even get from one to the other.

The hope for both the “Trump Accounts” and those made possible by the Dells is that these accounts are just initial investments. They want parents, friends, employers and eventually the children themselves to add to the accounts over time.

They want the lessons of patience and compounding to take hold before consumerism takes over. Our instant gratification society has normalized getting a \$10 fast food meal delivered for \$30, and prioritized that over saving even a small fraction of each paycheck to first fund rainy day expenses, and eventually to build a real wealth nest egg.

America is the wealthiest country on the plant. Americans are among the worst developed nations when it comes to financial litera-

cy. These two facts cannot peacefully coexist for an extended period of time.

We have dedicated groups and networks who wish to make our country a socialist nation. They love using terms like “late stage capitalism” to pretend that the fall of capitalism is near.

Michael Dell is famous for realizing while in college that he had the opportunity and skills to hustle a bit, and sell some computers from his dorm room. Too many on campuses these days would spend entire seminars explaining why and how he’s somehow the bad guy in American culture. Note I put the term “billionaires” in scare quotes above because these very folks now use his hard earned title as a pejorative.

A very select few Americans will ever become billionaires. Every one of us has that path open to us, though few will even select it. Those who do will need skill, luck, timing, and even a bit of help along the way to get anywhere close. But all of us have the opportunity to save a little, invest a little, and defer unnecessary expenses to put a bit aside for ourselves.

It is hard? Anything worth doing is.

Sometimes, the hardest part is just getting started or even knowing where to start. Michael and Susan Dell are taking care of that for millions of kids, as a no-strings gift. Even the biggest haters of billionaires should be able to appreciate that.

Yet another age of strongmen rulers

Once again, the world is faced with the rise of strongman rulers. Some by lawful means gained power and position. Others emerged through force, intimidation and sham elections. Their regimes are a growing menace to America, to the West and to democratic institutions everywhere.

Following the Allies' victory in World War II, civilized life burst free of them: tyrants, dictators and despots responsible for mass murder, unprovoked warfare and the massive destruction of property. Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Mussolini, Tito, Tojo and others left behind destroyed cities, displaced people and a suffering humanity.

Thereafter, during a period unique in history, civilization advanced. Absent worldwide wars, markets and economies grew and expanded. As the wealth of nations rose poverty receded. The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis lessened the nuclear threat. And, when the Cold War closed in 1991, upon collapse of the communist party in Russia, further peace and relief prevailed.

America was among the beneficiaries. At turn of the century, reports "The Economist," America was mightier than all her enemies and friends put together.

Other improvements appeared. Commentator Gideon Rachman writes in, "The Age of the Strongman," that across the globe in 1945 there were only 12 democratic states; by 2002 that number has grown to 92. For the first time, adds Rachman, democratic states outnumbered the "autocracies" (nations with leaders of unlimited power).

Then, starting in 2012, two fateful developments. In China, Xi Jinping became ruler for life. Russia soon followed with election of Vladimir Putin. The entrenchment of these two autocrats is credited with encouraging others, including: Erdogan of Turkey, Poland's Kaczynski, Bolsonaro and Amlo in Latic America, Diaz-Canel of Cuba, Lukashenko of Belarus, Maduro of Venezuela, to say nothing of Mullahs in Iran, even Modi of India - and numerous lesser lights.

The rulers are not identical, but as Rachman points out, they have similarities. He describes how they promote a cult of personality; they display contempt for the rule of law; they claim to represent the people versus the elites and upper crust. All encourage fear.

President Putin, himself, is said to have no political ideology, no party, and

no politics. However, his regime exemplifies methods increasingly common among autocracies: Political agitation and free speech are suppressed; opponents are arrested, imprisoned, often poisoned and murdered.

Typically, the strongmen often rely upon a ring of oligarchs (rich men with political influence) who manipulate the country's financial structures while enriching themselves. In addition, they utilize media technicians trained in surveillance, propaganda and disinformation.

A closer description of the autocratic state appears in Anne Applebaum's informative book, "Autocracy, Inc." She maintains the driving forces at work in autocratic regimes are two: The rulers' accumulation of wealth; their naked determination to remain in power. Vladimir Putin is believed to have accumulated \$40 billion for himself.

Moreover, his long-term goals are unmistakable. He seeks to undermine NATO and its trans-Atlantic security guarantees, to divide the West and to weaken consumer-consumed America.

To greater and lesser extent, other strongmen adopt salient features of Russia's poisonous propaganda, to wit: The degeneracy of democracy, its instabilities and the evil of the United States.

How the West, the U.S. in particular, has and will respond to these ominous trends is yet to be firmly established. Although at times President Trump appears headed in the right direction. For certain, military strength, skillful diplomacy and the determination to preserve human freedom are all called for - whatever the cost.

Writer's note: Sources are "Autocracy, Inc.," A. Applebaum; "The Age of the Strongman," G. Rachman; "The Man Without A Face: Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin," M. Gessen; "The Economist" Oct. 4, 2025, p. 11

Jim Thomas is a retired attorney and lives in Atlanta. He is a former Dublin resident.

GUEST COLUMN

By JIM THOMAS



# EL squads off to 2-1 starts in sweep of JoCo, splits vs. Tattnall County, Hancock Central

By J. ROY ROWLAND IV  
Correspondent

After securing two season-opening wins over Johnson County earlier in the week, East Laurens tipped off its home season in a split with Tattnall County last Friday night.

The Falcon boys, who topped Johnson County 88-69 Wednesday night in Wrightsville, took the 67-58 win over the Battle Creek Warriors. The East girls, after rolling 67-17 in Wrightsville, were defeated 45-33.

Both went on to play Hancock Central Saturday at the “Tasha Tough” Basketball Classic at Baldwin High School, where the Lady Falcons bounced back to win 51-22 and the boys suffered their first loss 66-52.

**Boys...**

In Friday’s first quarter action it was a slow start,

with only six points hitting the board for each team.

East Laurens would score the first six points of the game and take an early 6-0 lead before Tattnall hit a 3-pointer by B.J. Sanders at the 3:27 mark.

Senior Kelvion King had two baskets, and Skyler Snead would add two more points in the quarter.

Tattnall County took the opening basket to take a three-point lead, 9-6, before King went to foul line and hit one of two free throws.

Major Floyd added a free throw, and Snead added another to give East Laurens a two-point advantage, 11-9. It was the visitors that took a short lead 14-11 a few minutes later, but the Falcons were able to rebound after several back-and-forth lead changes to take a 24-19 lead into the locker room.

East Laurens would come out of the half and set the tone in the third and

fourth quarter, keeping Tattnall at bay.

The Falcons controlled the third quarter and led 48-32. Nineteen points hit the board in the fourth.

Four East Laurens players scored in double digits: Floyd had 16. King and Zion Dixon had 13 and Skyler Snead added 10. Anthony Pounds also had nine.

Dixon added 10 rebounds for his first of two-straight double-doubles. He’d put up 18 points and 15 boards for another Saturday against Hancock, but no other Falcon surpassed 10 in either category.

Josiah Ingram scored 34, and Najee Reynolds 14, to help the Bulldogs dominate the second half.

In Wednesday’s win at JoCo, Dixon was the leading scorer with 18 points. Bryson Hazley (16), Jeremiah Rozier (14), Skyler Snead (13) and Major Floyd also made double figures. Floyd

(13) and King (10) led in rebounds.

**Girls...**

Against Tattnall, the Lady Falcons got off to a hot start, scoring the first six points of a 10-2 run to start the game.

After the Battle Creek Warriors ook a timeout at the one-minute mark, East Laurens hit two free throws and Tattnall hit one to give the home team a 14-5 advantage after one.

The visitors would take the opening basket of the second quarter and claw their way back into the game, to trail by only one, 17-16, at the half.

But Tattnall would take its first lead of the game at the 6:24 mark with a 2-pointer.

Five lead changes took place in a back-and-forth effort by both teams during the third quarter, but Tattnall breezed through the

fourth to take the game by 12.

Jameria Bing scored 13 points and Deanna Lowther eight to lead the Lady Falcons. Both players, and Zahmaria Robinson, had nine rebounds apiece. Robinson and the Lowther sisters combined for 12 of the team’s 15 steals.

Bing and Lowther led the way with 16 and 14 respectively at Johnson County, Lowther with 10 rebounds for the double-double, plus eight steals and four assists. Robinson had eight boards.

DeAndrea Lowther blocked two shots and stole four passes.

**Next...**

The 2-1 teams were back in action against Southwest Macon Tuesday night at home, and go on the road Friday to challenge ACE Charter before hosting Treutlen Saturday afternoon.

## SCOREBOARD

**GIRLS HOOPS**  
**Monday**  
Trinity 62, Twiggs Co. 14

**Tuesday**  
East Laurens 66,  
Southwest Macon 29  
Northeast Macon 67,  
Dublin 45  
West Laurens 56,  
Howard 30

**BOYS HOOPS**  
**Monday**  
Trinity 58, Twiggs Co. 54

**Tuesday**  
Southwest 70, EL 59  
Northeast 55, Dublin 47  
Howard 59, WL 46

## PREP SCHEDULE

**BASKETBALL**  
**Friday**  
Aquinas at West Laurens /5 p.m.  
Dublin at Southwest Macon  
East Laurens at ACE  
Tattnall Square at Trinity /6 p.m.

**Saturday**  
Dublin at WL/4 p.m.

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# Trinity sweeps Twiggs, splits with FPD/JMA as teams turn corner into December stretch

By CLAY REYNOLDS and  
JEREMY PAYNE

You could call the Trinity Crusaders St. Patrick, because they drove the snakes out of Dublin in a home sweep of the Twiggs County Cobras Monday night.

Both their clubs out-battled the visitors from Jeffersonville, the girls by a lot to take their win streak to three with a 62-14 final score. Trinity's boys hung onto a late second-half lead in a much closer one to prevail 58-54 and end their two-game losing streak.

A pair of wins and losses, for each, led into this week's first of a two-game homestand as the Crusaders continued non-region action over the weekend against First Presbyterian and John Milledge.

Their girls defeated FPD 56-42 Friday, and JMA 56-46 Saturday. The boys fell in both contests, losing a close one 59-57 to the Vikings and falling 56-43 to the Trojans.

**Forward steps...**

Jamarion Ricks still has plenty of developing to do, but the young center showed once again Monday just how impactful his presence inside can be for a Trinity lineup that has come to life since the start of December.

The 6-foot-3, 225-pound junior, who transferred from Dublin earlier this year, had 14 points and rebounds for his second double-double of the season as the Crusaders outplayed Twiggs County to pull back to a game above .500 with their fourth win in the last six.

His rebounding, defense and post play, each night that goes by, are looking more and more like the key ingredients that have catalyzed the recent breakout for a Trinity lineup heavy on spot-up shooters, as well as a John Williams offense sharing some heavy similarities, largely in its preference for working inside-out, to the Crusaders' offensive identity during their 2023 state title run his last season in charge.

Ricks' reach around both panes of glass was instrumental in their heavy rebounding advantage over a Twiggs lineup that, positions 1-5, was quite long, but had no player with the height or physicality to match.

On the offensive end, the



**A TREE BETWEEN TWIGGS:** Jamarion Ricks goes strong after losing a Cobra defender, who went down attempting to draw a charge on this drop step, to score an easy one late in Monday’s second half. Ricks had 14 points and rebounds for his second double-double of the season against a Twiggs County squad that was overshadowed by his size on both ends of the court/CLAY REYNOLDS

Crusaders weren't at all shy about tossing the ball his way near the low blocks, where the mismatch created outside shooting opportunities for teammates. And they converted on eight 3-point opportunities to stay on a recent hot streak from deep.

Anytime Twiggs left him isolated 1-on-1, Ricks usually found a good look at the basket. It was only a matter of putting it in.

For now, finding and keeping that touch around the rim is about all that's separating him and the Crusaders from really taking off.

They had a few chances to do so in Monday's match-up, though Twiggs was able to recover and stay within striking distance thanks to a few of those droughts – the biggest coming midway through the second quarter when Trinity went the better part of four minutes without a score, and the Cobras climbed from a decent-sized hole to grab a brief lead before halftime.

But Ricks' solid footwork and ball-handling around the paint had him in position to score, or at least get to the line, far more often than not. And he'd find the groove again after the string of empty possessions ran its course.

Picking up the slack to keep the offense going was another player coming into

his own in point guard Jagger George, who's scored in double figures every time out, and put up 25 Monday to finish just two off his season best.

The sophomore showed some command of the court and shot-making skills to rival those of his older brother Will as he attacked the hole and pulled up to nail three triples.

He'd pour in eight of Trinity's 15 points in the last quarter to put away the victory.

The Cobras, led by the 18 points of Terrell Coley and 15 of Demontrez Brown, were unable to get much working inside, and had to mostly live and die by the 3.

A few fell late, including a deep swisher by Brown after a Trinity shot clock violation left the door cracked with about 20 seconds to go, and Twiggs cut the Crusaders' 57-51 advantage to three.

But George knocked down one of two free throws on the other end to get the lead back to four to close the book on the Cobras' chances.

Twiggs narrowed the gap to two a handful of times in the fourth, but George kept splitting to goal for key baskets.

Ricks hit an and-one, and converted a free-throw shooting situation later and George hit a 3 from straight at the top to keep the Cru-



**MOVES LIKE JAGGER:** Twiggs County’s Terrell Coley made a stab at blocking his shot from behind, but Jagger George alertly shifted the ball to his left hand to go reverse on this layup out of a singlehanded fast-break for one of his multiple key baskets – with the help of some smooth drives – that helped Trinity hold off the Cobras in the fourth quarter/CLAY REYNOLDS

saders two possessions in front for the duration of the last four.

His last rip to the bucket came with a minute to go to put the Crusaders up by the commanding number of 57-51.

Twiggs hit six 3-pointers, but was 6-of-14 at the line.

Trinity missed only four of its 16 free throws.

The Lady Crusaders forced what seemed like a million turnovers in their thorough rout of the Lady Cobras, dropping nine unanswered points – including a Maddy George 3 – in the first two minutes of the contest.

The home side read 18, with nearly six minutes off the clock before Twiggs County's first point on a free throw by JaMiyah Glover.

It was an 18-3 spread after one, and a 39-5 count at halftime would shorten both the third and fourth quarters to six minutes each.

**Over the weekend...**

After struggling on Tuesday against Stratford, the Lady Crusaders looked to get back on track against FPD on Friday evening.

The game was close in the first half as the score was tied 14-14 after one period, and FPD held a slight 23-22 lead at the half.

Trinity came out of the locker room on fire, exploding for 21 third-quarter

points while holding FPD to just eight to take a 43-31 lead after three.

They would never let the Lady Vikings get any closer as they pulled away.

Maddy George led the way with 15. Brinley Vinson and M.G. Alligood added 14 each.

Elcee Leslein led FPD with 15.

The John Milledge game saw Trinity lead 12-11 after one quarter, but the Lady Crusaders used a big second quarter to break it open.

They would outscore JMA 21-9 to take a solid 33-20 lead into the locker room.

The second half was mostly a stalemate, but Trinity held on for the double-digit win.

Vinson led Trinity with 14. George and Chloe Rozier added 12 each. The Lady Crusaders hit seven 3s in the contest.

Pierce Moore led JMA with 25.

The boys faced off against a physical FPD squad and went toe-to-toe with them throughout.

The Vikings led 14-11 after one quarter and 30-24 at the half.

Trinity would cut into the deficit a bit in the third, but still trailed 47-42 going into the fourth.

The Crusaders continued with the comeback in the fourth, but came up just a bit short.

George led the offense with 27. Jamarion Ricks finished with 14 points and 18 rebounds. Will Foskey added 11 and dished out five assists. The team hit nine 3s in the contest.

Breck Griffin led FPD with 15. Sam Clarke had 13 and Gavin Wilson added 11.

Saturday's game against John Milledge was close early as Trinity trailed 17-13 after a quarter.

Unfortunately, the Crusaders went ice cold in the second as the Trojans outscored them 16-6 to make the score 33-19 at the half.

Neither team could muster much offense in the third as John Milledge outscored Trinity 9-8 to make the score 42-27 going to the fourth.

The Crusaders finally found the shooting stroke again in the fourth, but the deficit was too big as they fell 56-43.

George led the way again with 20.

Luke Elliott led John Milledge with 18.

Trinity was set to be back on its home floor Monday in a non-region game against Twiggs County, before hosting Tattnall Square on Friday, Dec. 12.

**Next...**

Trinity returns home Friday to host Tattnall Square.



# Laurens County 4-H'ers compete at district competition

By MORGAN HINZ  
Laurens County Extension

Seven Laurens County 4-H'ers competed in the District Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging Competition on Friday, Nov. 6, in Toombs County.

Students tested their knowledge of consumer trends and presented a short commercial or advertisement for cotton to a panel of judges. Participants were Caroline Smith (WLMS), Graydon Mullis (WLHS), Juan Henderson (Homeschool), Kardyn Kyzer (IGA), Lilly Brown (ELMS), Lorelei Mullis (WLHS), and Sophie Shepard (Homeschool).

4-H Consumer Judging is a competitive judging contest where 4-H'ers gain skills in making rational decisions when purchasing goods and services while maximizing resources.

They then have to give verbal reasons for their decisions. The Georgia Cotton Commission sponsors Cotton Boll, a contest where 4-H'ers learn about cotton as an agricultural commodity in our state and promote cotton through commercials or advertisements.

Juan was awarded third place for his Cotton Boll Commercial, Kardyn was awarded second place for her Cotton Boll Commercial, and Caroline, Sophie,



Laurens County 4-H Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging participants/SPECIAL PHOTO



Laurens County 4-H Junior Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging 1st place district team/SPECIAL PHOTO

Lorelei, and Lilly were awarded first place for their Cotton Boll Commercials. Caroline was named Second High Junior Individual in the competition, and the junior team of Caroline, Lilly, Lorelei, and Sophie was named the first-place junior team.

Morgan Hinz is the Laurens County 4-H Agent with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. Her telephone number is (478) 272-2277 and email address is morgan.hinz@uga.edu

# Local 4-H'ers compete at district event

By MORGAN HINZ  
Laurens County Extension

Georgia 4-H Project Achievement empowers young people with skills for a lifetime.

Students choose a project area of interest, research the topic, and write and present a presentation in front of their peers and judges. Through this, 4-H'ers develop leadership, creativity, self-confidence, and public speaking skills. Project Achievement is an annual event for 4th-12th graders.

On Saturday, Nov. 15, four 4th-6th-grade Laurens County 4-H'ers traveled to Toombs County to compete in the District Cloverleaf Project Achievement.

Approximately 250 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade 4-H'ers from across Southeast Georgia competed in this event.

Representing Northwest Laurens Elementary was Suganitha Dinesh Kumar. Suganitha competed in the Food for Health and



Laurens County Cloverleaf Project achievement participants/SPECIAL PHOTOS

Sport and placed first. Representing Trinity Christian School was Carter Reese. Carter competed in the Outdoor Recreation Project and placed first.

Representing East Laurens Middle was Grace Jones. Grace competed in the Computer Information Technology and Data Science Project and placed first.

Representing the Irish Gifted Academy was Asher Powers. Asher competed in the Engineering and Mechanics project and placed second.

We are so proud of all of our 4-H'ers who competed in this event and look forward to increasing our participants next year.

The mission of Georgia 4-H is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. If you would like to find out more about the Laurens County 4-H program, call Morgan Hinz at 478-272-2277.

Morgan Hinz is Laurens County Extension Agent – 4-H with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. Her telephone number is (478) 272-2277, and her email address is morgan.hinz@uga.edu

# Immaculate Conception Catholic Church group surprises waitress



Immaculate Conception Catholic Church Mah Jongg group enjoyed their Christmas lunch at Longhorn Steakhouse. They surprised their waitress with a large gift basket. Afterwards they exchanged cookies, played Mah Jongg and gave the extra cookies to Firehouse Subs' employees and the Firehouse on 441 North/SPECIAL PHOTOS



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PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

WHEN YOU PUT ON SOCKS AND SHOES, DO YOU GO LEFT SOCK, LEFT SHOE, RIGHT SOCK, RIGHT SHOE?

OR... DO YOU GO LEFT SOCK, RIGHT SHOE, RIGHT SOCK, LEFT SHOE?

DOESN'T EVERYONE DO THE LATTER?

YES! AND ITS... NOT... THE MOST... EFFICIENT WAY...

CRACK CRACK

AND I DON'T EVEN WEAR SHOES.

BY STEPHAN PASTIS

GARFIELD

ONE OF THE DRAWBACKS OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS THE UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATERS

BLINK! BLINK! BLINK!

I MEAN WHAT COULD BE WORSE?

YAAH

BY JIM DAVIS

OVERBOARD

ONE OF THE DRAWBACKS OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS THE UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATERS

BLINK! BLINK! BLINK!

I MEAN WHAT COULD BE WORSE?

YAAH

BY CHIP DUNHAM

DEFLOCKED

HI MOM. I'D LIKE A TRUST FUND.

GOOD LUCK. ALL I HAVE TO MY NAME IS A BROKEN-DOWN HOUSE, A THIRTY-YEAR-OLD CAR, AND I'M ALSO \$2.00,000 IN DEBT.

EVER HEAR OF A "MISTRUST" FUND?

BY JEFF CORRIVEAU

ZIGGY

SURE, DOGS ARE 'MAN'S BEST FRIEND' BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO ADMIT THAT, IN HIS CASE, THAT'S A PRETTY LOW BAR!

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PLUGGERS

Thanks to Dolly Eiswerth Williamsport, Pennsylvania

1984 BY GEORGE ORWELL

Pluggers still use the original hand-held device.

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Date change of Funeral leads to death of friendship!

DEAR ABBY: I had a friend, "Mylene," for many years. We swapped dog-sitting to offset the cost for each other. I helped her when she was sick and broke her foot. I walked her dog whenever she needed me. If a funeral, wedding or family emergency came up, I was always there for her.

An aunt of mine in another state passed away. I would have had to drive there, but her daughter was making the funeral arrangements while in the hospital herself. The funeral was delayed until the next week because my aunt's body had to be shipped to another state for the funeral.

When I told Mylene, she said she'd keep my dog, but when the date changed, she said she couldn't do it. "I have to work," she said. Abby, her dog stays at home while she works, so why is there a problem? I reminded her of everything that I have done to help her out when she needed it, but she didn't want to help me. (This was two days before I was to travel for the funeral.)

I have tried many times to apologize to Mylene, but she refuses to make amends with me. All she does is send emojis, which I find disgusting. Can't she call and talk to me like a grown adult to straighten this out? I paid her several times to help her, and this is what I get? What do you think



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

about this? -- DISAPPOINTED IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR DISAPPOINTED: You have done plenty for Mylene, but the time to remind her wasn't when she said she couldn't take care of your dog. (Is this why you "have tried many times to apologize"? Mylene may have sent emojis instead of calling because you embarrassed her. When we do favors for others, we shouldn't do them with the expectation that we will be paid back. What do I think about this? I think you should find another dog-sitter immediately.

DEAR ABBY: Our daughter and her family live an hour from us. We are both in fair health. Our daughter got a late start on marriage and children. Their girls are 10 and 8. The little one is sweet and shy, but the 10-year-old is a nightmare to be around.

She's very smart but also manipulative. She lies, cheats and steals. She is rude and seems to always do exactly the opposite of what an adult tells her to do. If her parents see her being sassy or ugly, they will put her in timeout for 10 minutes, but nothing ever changes.

None of their neighbors wants this child at their home. To make matters worse, she has begun early puberty. We can't stand being around this 10-year-old because it wears us out. We love our daughter and would like to have a good relationship with the whole family. Please advise on how we could help or what we should do. -- EXHAUSTED GRANDPARENTS IN OHIO

DEAR GRANDPARENTS: A 10-minute timeout is not enough discipline for a 10-year-old's consistent bad behavior. Without further intervention, that girl is headed for big trouble. Please suggest to your daughter that she consult a child psychologist about how to get her obviously troubled daughter heading in the right direction before things become worse.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips.

Thursday, December 11, 2025

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES

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THE MIRAGE

East-West vulnerable, South deals

NORTH

WEST

EAST

SOUTH

The bidding:

Opening lead: Jack of ♠

South won the opening spade lead with the ace, cashed the king, and ruffed a spade in dummy. He ran the nine of hearts, winning the trick as West withheld his king. South led another heart, planning to repeat the finesse, but he rose with his ace when East discarded the seven of

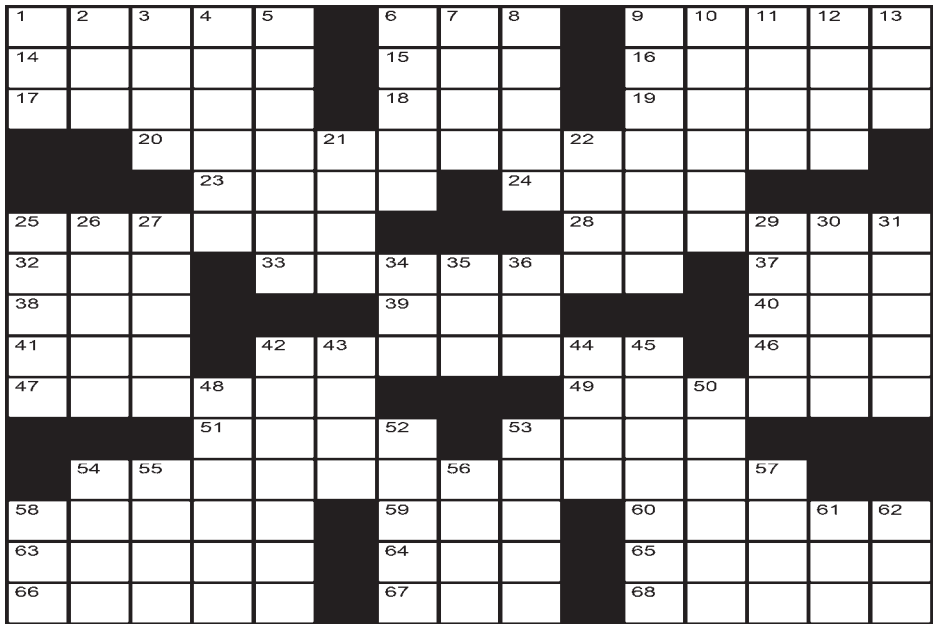
diamonds. Hoping to discard two diamonds on dummy's clubs before West could ruff, South cashed the ace of clubs, led a club to the king, and discarded a diamond on the queen of clubs. Sadly for him, West ruffed with the eight of hearts and South had to lose two diamond tricks and the high trump for down one.

The spade ruff was a mirage. South did not need to ruff any losers in dummy. The club suit would provide all the discards he needed. What he needed to do was to maintain trump control. He should have led the queen of hearts from his hand at trick two. West should not take his king, so South should continue with the jack of hearts. The contract easily makes if West takes his king, so West should duck again. Now South can cash the king of spades and ruff a spade. A club to his ace allows him to cash the ace of hearts before starting on clubs. He will still lose two diamond tricks, but only one trump and 10 tricks would be his.

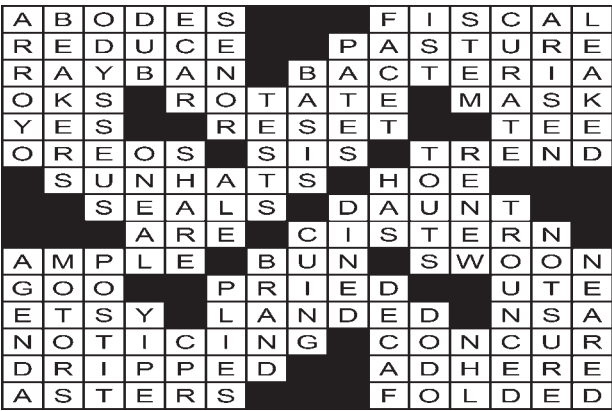
(Bob Jones welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this newspaper or to Tribune Content Agency, LLC., 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, TX 75001.)

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS
- Invoice amount
  - Blouse or polo shirt
  - The Pine Tree State
  - "Below Deck" network
  - Egg cells
  - Creepy
  - Threaded fastener
  - Agent, for short
  - Magician's feat
  - PR document: 2 wds.
  - Small jazz band
  - Very funny person
  - Group within a group
  - Citrus soda brand
  - Actress Merkel
  - Ten-year periods
  - Honda product
  - Aliens: Abbr.
  - Jorja Fox show, once
  - Salt\_\_\_pepper
  - Trash-talk
  - Place for dirty plates
  - Fish eggs
  - Noted Hebrew prophet
  - Glossy fabric
  - Singer Tori
  - Thin coin
  - Rewording
  - Remove errors from, as code
  - Have for dinner
  - Sounded like a sheep
  - "Hello" singer
  - Expert
  - Opening words
  - Tastes of food
  - Strawberry's color
  - Sports starters
- DOWN
- Network with MLB games
  - Fantasy novel monster
  - Baseball field covering
  - Wards off
  - Brought down
  - Trunk of the body
  - All done
  - Rock, \_\_\_, scissors
  - Shooting stars
  - Add bubbles to
  - Van Gogh flower
  - Pleasant
  - "Oh no!"
  - Location
  - The meaning of \_\_\_
  - Napped leather
  - Up through
  - Low-voiced singers
  - Frighten
  - Boat on a lake
  - Elizabeth of cosmetics
  - IV units: Abbr.
  - Light blonde shade
  - Quick swim
  - Lawsuit awards
  - Breakfast chain
  - With no changes: 2 wds.
  - Botswana neighbor
  - "Put It on Me" rapper: 2 wds.
  - Lessee
  - Shave sheep
  - No longer current
  - Mani\_\_\_
  - Illegally help
  - Marathon or 5K
  - Garden entry
  - Bit of lotion
  - Historical period
  - \_\_\_ Pérignon champagne

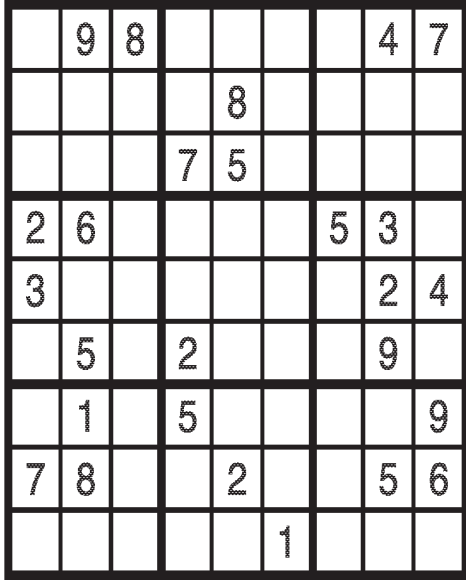


Created by Stella Zawistowski



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SUDOKU



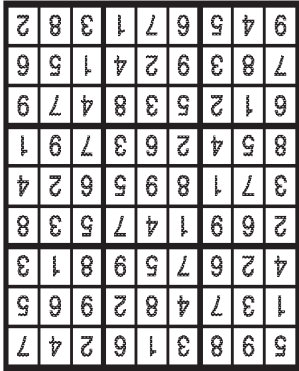
Fun By The Numbers

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!

Level: Intermediate

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:



DUBLIN SCHOOLS

Continued from page 1

nity Health, which administers the State Health Benefit Plan, alerted state School Superintendent Richard Woods and his office that the district had not paid its employer contributions for the entire fiscal year 2025 and owed more than \$6 million. State officials looking into those overdue payments found other "operational deficiencies" that included the system not having completed an audit since 2021.

Dublin interim School Superintendent Marcee Pool told the board that the state has agreed to its repayment plan with the Department of Community Health and the schools will begin paying on the overdue amount in February.

In the meantime, she said, the system is up to date on employee and employer payments to the state health plan since August.

"I think we should ask that

every month," said board member Regina McRae, who leaves office at the end of this year. "I won't be here, but it needs to be asked."

"I believe I did, but got the wrong answer," added board member James Lanier.

Board members have said they were unaware the state benefit contributions were not being made and were misled into believing the system's finances were in better shape. However, financial reports for fiscal year 2024, approved by the board, showed the system in a deficit every month that year.

The school's finance director, Chad McDaniel, who replaced Christy Thublin in 2024, resigned in late August. He was followed by Superintendent Fred Williams, who stepped down in October to take an early retirement.

The school system has borrowed at least \$3 million of next year's state funding to make ends meet, so board members

are concerned about this year's late property tax collections. The property tax digest was finalized several months late, then the school board did not roll back its millage rate enough to offset a tax increase, which delayed the process further while required public hearings could be held.

Pool said she spoke with city officials and was told tax bills should be sent out next week, if not Friday, with taxes due 60 days after. McRae asked if \$400,000 owed to the city of Dublin for property tax appeals would be due before the system can start collecting revenue.

Pool said she was not sure, but added, "We have started paying them back for those appeals."

Also Monday, the school board approved a request by the Dublin High class of 2026 to hold its graduation outside in the Shamrock Bowl, rather than in the gym.

McRAE

Continued from page 1

are some other questions to consider.

"Where are the results of this special examination assembled by the state legislators? After three outside entities, including the state, taking a look under and over, why haven't any criminal actions been taken? How did the State Health not know about missing payments? I could go on and on, but what matters now is moving forward."

McRae was seeking her first full term in the at-large seat on the board when she lost a close election in November to former Laurens County Commissioner Jeff Davis. She was appointed in late 2023 after Nelson Carswell IV resigned, then won a special election later that year.

She reminded the community that board members "volunteer their time and they make sacrifices with no expectation of getting something in return."

"I think we all believe in accountability, this board included, but I

want to remind us that accountability doesn't justify mean, hateful and vicious attacks against one another. In all we say and do, we must remember that we are modeling and teaching our children how to behave. So by all means, let's hold each other accountable, but let's never forget the dignity and respect for one another.

"August 2025 was perhaps the biggest gut punch that I have ever experienced, and from that day to this, it's still painful. I'm not sure if I will ever get over the disappointment. The anger is also apparent in our community, and rightly so. However, we have to do something productive with it. We've got to make sure this never happens again."

McRae said she was "grateful for this opportunity to serve and to advocate for Dublin City schools."

"I strongly believe that every child should have access to a quality education. Public education is one of the vehicles that can change the trajectory of a life – regardless of gender, race or socioeconomic status – and we must officially protect it."

NUTCRACKER

Continued from page 1

this year. The suggestion for the new Drosselmeyer came from Callyn Lausch. All she did was go home and tell her father - Adam.

"My daughter had been in the last two Nutcrackers and they were looking for party parents and a possible Drosselmeyer," Adam said. "My daughter walked up to them and told them, 'You need Big Jule.' She comes home and told me she would like for me to do this show with her and she had already told them I would do it. That's how I got involved."

A month before the August auditions for "The Nutcracker," Adam had played Big Jule in Dublin Community Theatre's production of "Guys and Dolls." Adam did not have a lot going on, he was just staring in "Over the River and Through the Woods" (Dublin Main Street Players production that was held in October) while also preparing for a small role

in "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever," (where he was also the stage manager) that hit the stage in November.

"Adam has been amazing," Middleton said. "He has picked things up real quick. He has brought some new things to the character that we have not seen."

Adam said participating in "Guys and Dolls" prepared him for "The Nutcracker." He did have to learn how to do some lifts with Herring.

"I don't dance," Adam said. "Tanna Rae is a great, great dancer. If (their scene) looks good, it is all because of her."

Professional ballet dancer Raul Peinado will return as the Snow King and the Cavalier while professional ballet dancer Elsa Kusky will perform as the Sugar Plum Fairy. Other performers in the cast will include Caleb Middleton (Nutcracker), Hadley Woods (Rat Queen), Mary Thomas Smith (Snow Queen) and Emmie Davis (Dew Drop).



'Nutcracker' cast members (above, below) rehearse their scenes/PAYTON TOWNS III

Not everyone in the cast is from Dublin. Middleton said they have some from the surrounding counties, Sandersville and Macon.

"We always have new

girls come in," she said. "We have people from new cities. We are a little bit up in the number on stage at 100 this year. That is always good."

No matter how many

times the show is done, Middleton promises new surprises each year.

"We do have some new costumes that are exciting, and some new choreogra-

phy and some parts have changed," Middleton said. "If you have seen for the past few years, you might see something different this year."



Fulton prosecutor to testify about Trump case, despite effort to fight subpoena

By TY TAGAMI  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — The Georgia Supreme Court heard oral argument Tuesday in a dispute over the extent of the Georgia General Assembly's authority to compel testimony, but the case may become irrelevant next week now that Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has agreed to testify.

Willis, who has been fighting efforts by a Senate committee that wants her to appear under subpoena, has agreed to talk with them on Dec. 17, her lawyer, former Gov. Roy Barnes, said at the hearing.

The dispute stems from Willis' decision to pursue criminal charges against Donald Trump and his allies after they disputed the outcome of the 2020 election.

Republicans in the legislature issued two subpoenas, once last year and again this year.

A lower court ordered Willis to comply, but she appealed to the state Supreme Court, prompting Tuesday's hearing.

Republicans say they want to explore what led Willis to prosecute Trump before he became president for a second time.

Democrats have derided the Senate's work as a political stunt, an assertion that Barnes, a Democrat, repeated outside the courthouse.

He noted that several members of the Senate Special Committee on Investigations are running for statewide office.

"They're putting out fundraising [that] says 'we're going to go after Fani Willis, and you need to send me \$100.' I mean, that's ridiculous. It is in bad faith," he said.

Five of the committee's members are running for higher office. The Chairman, Sen. Bill Cowsert, R-Athens, wants to be Georgia attor-

ney general.

Four others, also Republicans, are running for lieutenant governor, although one of them, Sen. John F. Kennedy, R-Macon, announced hours before the court hearing that he was resigning immediately to focus on his campaign.

Sen. Greg Dolezal, R-Cumming, serves on the committee and is also among those running for lieutenant governor. He attended the hearing and said afterward that the Supreme Court would not have had to listen to the lawyers argue about subpoena power if it were not for Willis' "stonewalling" the committee.

"I think the question for her is how much of this is political," Dolezal said. He said Willis benefitted politically from the media coverage.

"The case was unfounded from the very beginning," he said. "It was rooted in its core in a scheme of prosecu-

tion for personal profit and we need to ensure that lady justice indeed keeps her blindfold on."

Willis indicted Trump and 18 co-defendants.

Four took plea deals, but the rest were cleared last month when a special prosecutor dismissed the case after Willis was sidelined due to an ethical issue.

The courts removed her from the case because she had employed a romantic partner to help prosecute it.

Barnes downplayed that.

"If they disqualify every member of the General Assembly that has a romantic relationship with a secretary or a lobbyist," he said, "you're not going to be able to have a quorum next session."

Lawmakers return to the Capitol to conduct another round of state business on Jan. 12, though some will be back next week to hear Willis testify.

Member of state House pleads not guilty in federal unemployment benefits case

By TY TAGAMI  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — A metro Atlanta lawmaker accused of theft of government funds in connection with COVID-19 relief pleaded not guilty in federal court Monday.

Rep. Sharon Henderson, D-Covington, walked into the courtroom in downtown Atlanta wearing ankle cuffs, after she was arrested at her home in the morning.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Justin S. Anand made her surrender her passport but allowed her to go free on a \$10,000 unsecured bond.

Henderson, who represents an area around Covington in southeast metro Atlanta, faces a dozen criminal counts.

Anand said she was accused of two counts of theft of government funds and 10 counts of making false statements.

The Department of Justice said Henderson had sought federal pandemic unemployment benefits, filing eight weekly certifications that she was an employee of Henry County Schools even though she had not worked there since 2018 when she served briefly as a substitute teacher.

"It is shocking that a public official would allegedly lie to profit from an emergency program designed to help suffering community members," Theodore S. Hertzberg, the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia, said in a statement.

Henderson's constituents may have no representation in the legislative session that starts Jan. 12 because she could be suspended by then.



A HISTORIC YEAR IN REVIEW: SNAPSHOTS FROM A MEMORABLE WEST LAURENS FOOTBALL SEASON

West Laurens’ storybook football season came to an end with last Friday’s loss at Jefferson in the state semifinals. Though 14 chapters was all she wrote (a 15th to chronicle a final step in the journey to Mercedes-Benz Stadium and the state finals didn’t come to fruition), each were filled with action, drama and history as the Raiders carried a long unbeaten streak further and deeper into the playoffs than any team in their program’s history. Here’s a look back at some of the moments, memories and magic that made their 2025 run one for the books...



TROPHY HUNTING: The Raiders hit the mark they were shooting for by finishing a perfect 10-0 in the regular season. Their 27-3 win over Westside Augusta clinched a fourth region championship in school history, and the program’s first since 2019/DANNY SCARBORO



TY’S THE LIMIT: Ty Cummings’ weekly performances defied many laws of physics, and redefined a lot of what was previously thought possible. An unreal night against Baldwin, as he rushed for eight touchdowns on 615 yards to break a state single-game rushing mark, wasn’t the half of his record-breaking exploits. The Georgia Southern commit now owns every school rushing record – game, season and career – after finishing with just over 6,000 career yards and 64 touchdowns in his four years/DANNY SCARBORO



‘SLEEP WITH ONE EYE OPEN’: Metallica’s “Enter Sandman” became an unofficial anthem of the season as the Raiders debuted a pregame intro patterned after the long-running tradition of Virginia Tech, which takes the field to the hard-hitting track. A collaboration of band, cheerleaders and senior players, who were given the honor of leading the team out with W-L-H-S and American flags (Jayce Blash, Hunter Castellaw, Zorian Willis and Evan Williams in this series of photos), did its part to get The SHU fired up as kickoff neared each Friday/DANNY SCARBORO



MAKING HIS OWN MARK: Fourth-year West Laurens head coach Kip Burdette comes from a line of legendary football coaches, his grandfather Dan Pitts one of the greatest in Georgia history (with 346 wins at Mary Persons that make him the state’s fourth winningest all-time). Much like the 2024 season, in which the Raiders turned a corner with their 8-3 finish to get back to the playoffs after just three wins in the two before, this one went a long way toward elevating his head coaching profile to a place among Georgia’s best young names in the profession/DANNY SCARBORO



A SEASON OF FIRSTS: This 54th West Laurens team broke every preexisting barrier that had been hit in seasons past with its long unbeaten streak and scoring total of more than 500 points. Their quarterfinal win over Jenkins – which began to set in here as Juvon Hill and Jeremy Brownlee celebrated with fans in the end zone after a touchdown to go up 11 – gave the Raiders 13 wins and a berth in the state semifinals for the first time ever/DANNY SCARBORO

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SHARK-INFESTED WATERS: Members of the West Laurens defense, and the Raiders' team as a whole, adopted the shark as an informal mascot. The motif, actually originating from an acronym created by secondary coach Brandon Edmond as a reminder of keys to their defensive technique, stuck throughout the season as players began flashing fins after big plays and victories. During the recent run, a costumed shark was seen trotting along with the team during an elementary school visit while a shark-themed Christmas tree also popped up in the school lunchroom/DANNY SCARBORO






DEFENSE WINS CHAMPIONSHIPS: Some top plays by the Raider D throughout the season... Left: A tackle for loss by Ethan Cason-Guyton, Maxx Chafin and Keith Walker vs. Jenkins; Bottom left: Hunter Castellaw separates a Jenkins ball-carreir from his helmet. Below: Two interceptions, the topmost a first of three on the season by J.D. Hogan vs. North Clayton, and the return of a fifth



of six on the fall by Jayce Blash against Oconee County (he now holds a school career record of 11)/DANNY SCARBORO



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HIGHLIGHT FACTORY: Playmakers like Branden Brooks, shown (above) on a screen pass that went over 60 yards for a touchdown against Hephzibah, and Ty Cummings, who hurdled an Oconee County tackler (below) in the second round on one of his nightly displays of athleticism, made any Friday night a can't-miss, as you never knew what amazing feat you might possibly see/DANNY SCARBORO



A LOT ON THE LINE: The Raiders' rushing success, totaling over 4,100 yards (8.7 yards per carry) and 55 touchdowns, began up front with an often ultra-heavy offensive line made up of Rashod Dixon, Grady Howell, Christian Rozier, Tramel Tobler, Trey Williams, Michael Dasher and Jonathan Toney, backed by "sniffers" Evan Holmes and Evan Williams/DANNY SCARBORO



SALUTE!: After touchdowns, quarterback Cason Pollock made a tradition of throwing a salute the direction of his dad, Coach Jody Pollock (an accomplished high school QB himself), whether in the form of a gesture to the stands or a high five that the two got to exchange as he observed this rushing score against Baldwin from steps away in the end zone. The senior, with 14 passing and four on keepers, had a hand in 18 TDs over the course of the fall/DANNY SCARBORO


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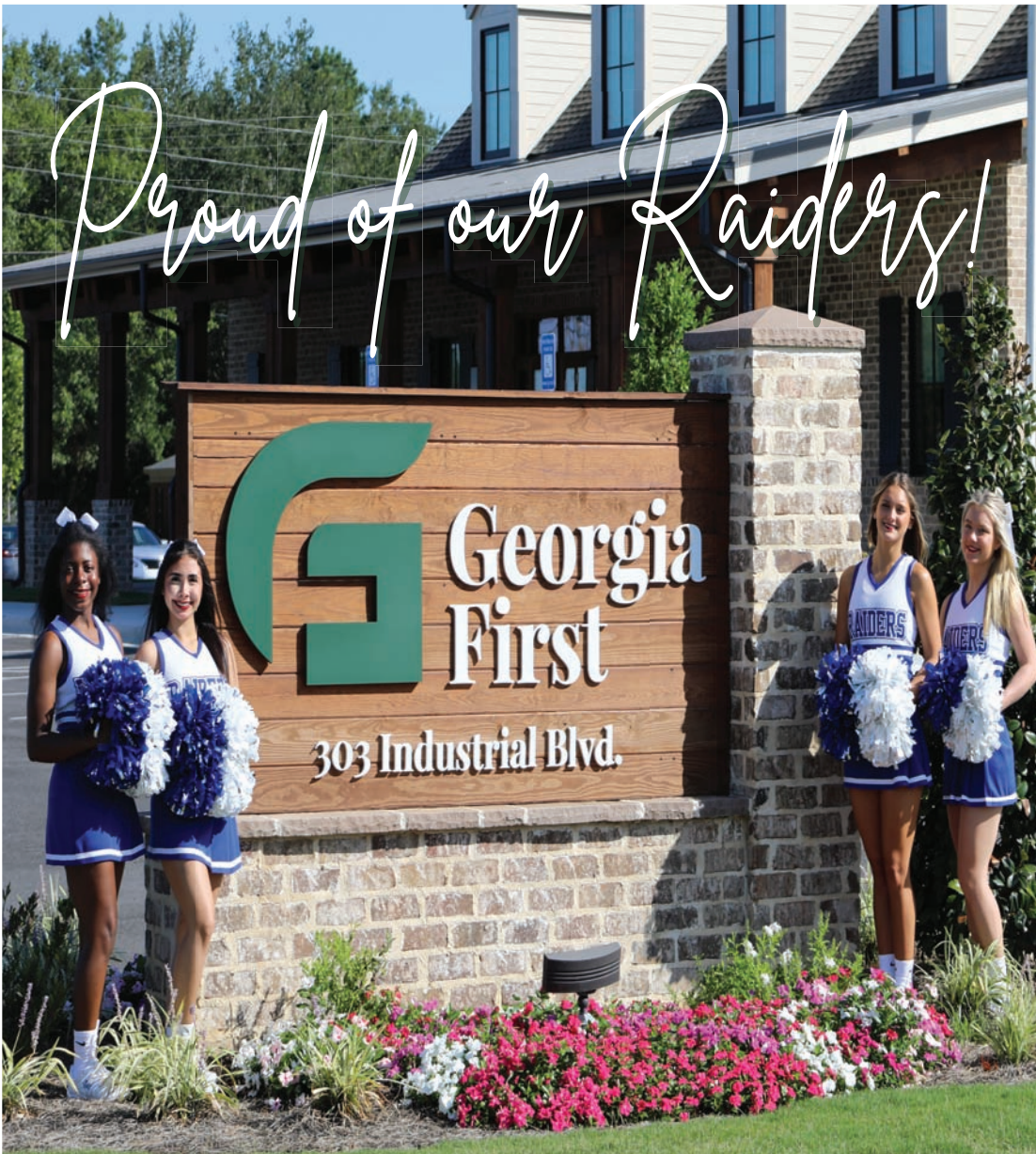


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