

Firm to fill in during search for new county attorney

By RODNEY MANLEY
Staff Reporter

The Laurens County Commission voted Tuesday to hire a Georgia law firm to fill in as the board begins a search to replace long-time county attorney Billy Kight.

more than 30 years. "We've got to do something as far as having some kind of legal representation on a temporary basis while we decide what to do about a county attorney," said County Administrator Bryan Rogers.

pen commonly down there at the jail where the sheriff might need some kind of legal advice." The firm, Tim Buckley and Associates, "comes and does this for counties when they are between county attorneys," Rogers said, noting that Buckley currently is handling two cases for the sheriff's department and has represented

the probate court here, as well. Commission Chairman Jimmy Rogers said the move will allow the board to avoid making an "overnight decision" on a new hire. "We need someone to be with us long-term," he said. Commissioner Gerad Mathis made the motion to hire Buckley,

and it passed unanimously. "This will give us plenty of time to look for a replacement who's going to work with the county," said Mathis. "We know that Mr. Billy is irreplaceable, with what he brought to the table with his expertise, but we've got to have someone in that role of interim."

Mallow reminds crowd at MLK Breakfast of 'sacrifices' of the past

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

The guest speaker promised he would not speak long and he was a man of his word. While he kept his promise, he did give an impactful 11-minute speech. State Sen. Derek Mallow was honored to speak during the Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast held last Monday. "I'm standing here before you today not only as a state senator but as a beneficiary of the sacrifices made by the generations before me," Mallow said. "I do not take this responsibility lightly. Many of you stood, marched, organized and prayed so that the doors could open wider for those who came after you. For that, I said thank you."

life and legacy, Mallow said people can see and hear his speeches that moved a nation. Mallow mentioned Claudette Colvin, who on March 2, 1955, Colvin was arrested when she was 15 for refusing to give up her seat to a white woman on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Mallow pointed out that this happened nine months before Rosa Parks. "(Colvin) was arrested, handcuffed and jailed," Mallow said. "She did not have a podium or bully pulpit. She did not have protection. She just had conviction. Her act of courage helped lay the legal groundwork that would dismantle bus desegregation and gave us the precursor to Rosa Parks. Yet for years, her name was pushed to the margins and fringes as an unknown, untold story of the Civil Rights Move-



Carol Carswell regales the MLK Breakfast crowd with a song/PAYTON TOWNS III

ment." Colvin's story showed that the Civil Rights Movement has not always been carried by the famous but from ordinary people who made, "extraordinary choices."

"Teenagers, laborers, domestic workers, sanitary workers, church mothers and young people who decided that dignity is non-negotiable," Mallow said. "The

night before his assassination Dr. Martin Luther King stood with striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tenn. He declared we've got to give ourselves to the struggle until the end. Noth-

ing would be more tragic than to stop at this point." King was trying to let people know that

MLK BREAKFAST
Continued on page 10



State Sen. Derek Mallow, was the guest speaker for Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast/PAYTON TOWNS III



A crowd of about 500 were fed during the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast/PAYTON TOWNS III

Dublin-Laurens Black History Festival to celebrate 50 years

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

The Dublin-Laurens County Black History Festival Community Committee Inc. is celebrating a milestone this year. The organization has already kicked off its 50th year with the Martin Luther King Jr. parade and breakfast held on Saturday and Monday. The breakfast, in fact, had more than 500 people attend on Jan. 19. "That is a good problem to have," said Fran Wells, president of the Dublin-Laurens Black History Festival Community Committee. "I was thrilled to see that big of crowd."



The Soul Food Expo is one of the festival's most popular events/PAYTON TOWNS III

began with five vendors and 30 people attending at Susie Dasher. It has grown

by leaps and bounds – both in terms of vendors and crowd wanting to eat some

soul food served up by local cooks. The admission for all the food, along with water or a soda, one can eat only costs \$15. "You can't go anywhere and eat for that price," Wells said. Wells and the Rev. Johnathan Lewis started the Soul Food Expo as a vision to bring people together in the community



A choir performs during the 2025 Youth Career Day event /PAYTON TOWNS III

through food. "Most people can come together over food," Wells said. "People will unite in food for some reason." Especially with selections of Southern cuisine. Local churches, businesses and individuals will bring out their favorite and best serving of whatever they want to serve. Even Wells has been known to bring neckbone soup, barbecue neckbones and one year she brought chitlins and rice. "It just depends on how I feel on what I cook," Wells

said. "There will be all kinds of chicken, all kinds of meat, cornbread, greens and desserts." The Paint, Punch & Butterfly event, for mothers and their daughters, will be held at 11 a.m. on Feb. 7 at Dublin High School. The annual Ministerial Program will take place a day later at 4 p.m. at Word of Harvest. Minister Keshawn Hurst will be the guest speaker.

BLACK HISTORY
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OBITUARIES



Louise (Babo) Shannon Foskey

Louise (Babo) Shannon Foskey, 98, of Dublin Ga. Went to be with her Lord on Jan. 18, 2026. Stanley Funeral Home and Crematory will conduct services at Minter Baptist church 1011 Pleasant Springs Church Rd, East Dublin, GA 31027. Visitation Friday Jan. 23 1 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. Service at 3 p.m.. Burial will be at Minter cemetery. Officiating will be Pastor Mark Davidson and David Smith.

Louise (Babo) was a lifelong resident of Laurens County and grew up in the CedarGrove community. Preceding in death was her husband, Ullis Foskey. Her parents, Willie and Mary Will Shannon, Brothers, John B. (Mary Jo) Shannon, Charles (Barbara) Shannon, Robert Shannon, Harold (Gamble) Shannon. Sisters, Mavis (Hugh) Wood, Ann (Herbert) Sheppard, Nina (Emmet) Lake, Carrie Bell (Ovid) Foskey, Mary Love (Richard) Dominy. She is survived by her brother, Oscar Shannon and her dear sister-in-laws, Christine and Phyllis Shannon that were like sisters to her. She is survived by two daughters, Ava Smith of Tennessee and Ellen Hill of East Dublin.; grandchildren, Lance (Nicole) Padgett, Dawn (Kenny) Snow, Andrew (Jemmie) Smith, Stephanie (Dominic) Silvani and David (Shannon) Smith; great-grandchildren, Spencer Coile, Morgan Brown, Elaina Ross, Austin Padgett, Brittny Hood, Mikaelyn Smith, Kaleb Smith, Jura Smith, Zea Smith, Sylvan Smith; and great-great-grandchildren, Hadley Kate, Knox, Memphis, Maverick, Juliet, Ivey, Isaac and Braxton. She served as a second mama to her many nieces and nephews.

Louise spent all of her life singing gospel music and was a member of the Shannon Sisters Trio. She also sang in a quartet with her brothers and sisters til she was 85 years old. Music and singing was her passion! She loved traveling all over middle Ga. in local churches carrying her love for Jesus in song. Louise was a faithful member of Union Baptist Church until she was unable to attend. Previously she was a faithful member of Minter Baptist Church where she raised her children. She will be greatly missed by the community.

Pallbearers will be Lance Padgett, Andrew Smith, David Smith, Kaleb Smith, Spencer Coile, Reese Foskey and Phil Gay. Honorary

BIRTHDAYS

Jan. 22
Dennis Dobbins
Georgianna O'Neal

Jan. 23
Willie Leon Smith

Pallbearers...Kenny Snow, Dominic Silvani, Cregg Dominy, Stan Sheppard, Russell Sheppard, Denver Shannon.
Rather than sending flowers, the family would be deeply grateful for contributions for a family memorial.
<https://venmo.com/u/ava-smith57>
Stanley Funeral Home and Crematory/Dublin Chapel has charge of funeral arrangements. To sign the Online Register Book please visit www.stanleyfuneral-home.com.



William "Bill" Arthur Smith

William "Bill" Arthur Smith, 95, of Waynesville, North Carolina, passed away peacefully Jan. 14, 2026. Born on Sept. 17, 1930, in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, Bill lived a life marked by service, devotion, and love for his family and friends.

Bill proudly attended Maggie Valley Baptist Church, and his faith was a guiding light throughout his life. He was married to his beloved wife, Barbara Smith, for 58 years. Together, they raised their son, Jason Smith, and welcomed daughter-in-law Amy Smith into their family. Bill was a cherished grandfather to Avery, Braydon, and Colton, and his loyal dog Sophie was always by his side.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents Edward and Gladys Wrecker Smith, along with 11 siblings: Dean, Carl, Leonard, Harley, Don, Gladys, Margelyn, John, Shirley, Wayne and Edward. He is survived by his youngest sister Jackie Larkin of East Dubuque, Illinois. Each of his siblings held a special place in his heart.

He served his country honorably, retiring after 20 years in the Air Force, and later continued his dedication to service through his work in civil service at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia.

In retirement, Bill found joy in spending time with his family, listening to gospel music, tending to his yard and flowers, and enjoying the companionship of Sophie. His warmth, kindness, and steadfast spirit will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m., Friday, Jan. 23, 2026 at the Mary Whitaker Townsend Memorial Chapel of Townsend Brothers Funeral Home with burial to follow at Walnut Creek Baptist Church Cemetery.

The family will receive friends from 12:30 p.m. until funeral hour at the funeral home

Please visit www.townsendfuneralhome.com to sign the online memorial register.

Townsend Brothers Funeral Home has charge of the arrangements.



Dorothy Defendieffer Hartman

Dorothy Defendieffer Hartman of Cadwell, Ga. passed away Jan. 20, 2026 at the age of 96 and a half. Dorothy was born on July 18,1929 in Struthers, Ohio, the fifth of six children born to Ross and Anna Jackson Defendieffer.

She graduated from Struthers High School in 1947 and was the Queen of her senior prom. Dorothy worked as a secretary for a law firm, insurance company and for General Motors. She met her future husband, Charlie Marshall Hartman while vacationing with her friends in Miami Beach, Fla. On Dec. 17, 1955 they got married and first lived in Miami, Fla. but moved to Atlanta, Ga. where they lived until 2005 when they moved to Cadwell, Ga. They were married almost 52 years.

Dorothy was a wonderful wife and mother. She was Marshall's secretary for his Exercycle business, but her family was her priority and she always made time to listen to her daughters and anyone else who wanted her listening ear. She cared deeply for people. Reading the Bible was a priority as well as listening to sermons. She loved to sing hymns. She was always careful to remember and celebrate birthdays and appreciated sending & receiving letters & cards. She loved to work in the yard and to bake, and her specialty was Apricot Kolaches. No matter what she did or where she was, she was a picture of contentment.Though she was a petite beautiful lady, she had a quiet unmatched inner strength.

Dorothy was predeceased by her parents, all five brothers and sisters and her husband.

She is survived by two daughters: Marsha Reed (Jeff) of S.C., Pam Bedingfield (Jimmy) of Cadwell, Ga.; six grandchildren: Sheryl Hollis (Derek), Chereese Rowe (Jonathan), Jenna Roberts (Daniel), Audrey Gray (Kurt), Weston Bedingfield (Gracie), Olivia Mitchell (Jake); and 13 Great-Grandchildren: Preston Hollis, Ellie Rowe, Graham Hollis, Eva Rowe, AnnaleeRoberts, Nathan Hollis, Nathan Rowe, Rhett Roberts, Blake Gray, Lilly Gray, Micah Hollis, Witt Roberts, and Bo Bedingfield.

On Jan. 31, 2011 Dorothy was stricken with blindness. The family would like to thank the special ladies who helped us love and care for Dorothy in her home for 15 years: Joyce Burney, Kay Holland, Sally Erck, Alice Grinstead, Jean Wilkes, and in this last year the wonderful staff of Addington Place under the direction of Brandon & Adrian Thomas and the staff of Georgia Hospice Care.

Funeral Services will be held at 3 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026 at Cadwell Baptist Church with private family burial to follow at the Bedingfield Family Cemetery, Beasley Rd., Cadwell. The family will receive friends at

Georgia taxpayers will now get more back form K-12 private school contributions

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Georgians now have another way to give away money and get it all back when they support private school students in Georgia after Gov. Brian Kemp signed onto a federal tax credit program.

The credit, established under President Donald Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act last year, gives federal taxpayers up to \$1,700 back for each dollar they give to authorized K-12 scholarship-granting organizations.

Kemp announced at the state Capitol Tuesday that he had signed the necessary IRS form to opt Georgia into the federal program.

"That's probably the happiest I've ever been signing an IRS document," he quipped.

His action means people and companies will "be able to donate more of their hard-earned dollars" toward private education in Georgia, said Lt. Gov.

2 p.m. until the funeral hour at the church.

In lieu to flowers, donations may be made to: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association at billygraham.org or send to Cardwell Baptist Church.

Please visit www.townsendfuneralhome.com to sign the online memorial registry.

Jane Elizabeth (Bennet) Selp

Jane Elizabeth (Bennett) Selp, 67, of Eastman, Ga., died on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026.

Funeral services were held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 21, in Southerland Funeral Chapel, with interment in Parkerson Cemetery.

She is survived by her sister – Mattie Bennett Heath; numerous nieces and nephews including, Buddy, Kelvin, Candy, Rita, Richard, Valerie, Stevie, Lisa, Billy, Rodney, Terry, Little Bud and Robert; and many great-nieces and nephews.

The family received friends in Southerland Funeral Chapel from 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 21.

Stokes-Southerland Funeral Home of Eastman has charge of arrangements.

Jesus Justo Gonzalez

Jesus Justo Gonzalez, 55, of Eastman, Ga, died on Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026.

A funeral mass will be held at 3 p.m. Friday, Jan. 23, at St. Mark Catholic Church.

He is survived by his daughters – Nayeli Justo Liborio (Leobardo) and Maria Justo; grandchildren – Leobardo and Sophia; and brothers and sisters – Noe Justo Gonzalez, Hilario Justo Gonzalez, Magnolia Justo Gonzalez and Maria Justo Gonzalez.

The family will receive friends and family in St. Mark Catholic Church from 2 p.m. - 3 p.m. Friday, Jan. 23.

Stokes-Southerland Funeral Home of Eastman has charge of arrangements.

Burt Jones, a Republican running for governor, who attended Kemp's press conference.

Critics contend that such programs divert government funding available to support public education.

But House Speaker Jon Burns, R-Newington, called Kemp's decision a step towards "educational choice and freedom for students and families" and said "more resources will flow directly to students who need them the most."

The federal program is limited to families earning under 300% of an area median income. The median income in metro Atlanta was about \$82,000, according to U.S. Census data through 2023, which would have placed the qualifying threshold at under \$246,000 in annual earnings.

The federal tax credits will augment a state tax credit program.

The Georgia Qualified Education Expense Tax Credit gives individuals up to \$2,500 back on their state taxes for every dollar they contribute to an authorized student scholarship organization. The organizations then award scholarships to students.

Married couples can get up to \$5,000 in state tax credits. Companies can contribute significantly more and get the money back in tax credits.

The total state credits

are capped at \$100 million per year. They cost the state \$88.8 million in fiscal year 2025, according to a recent report by state auditors.

"The credit merely shifted education expenditures from public to private schools, with no impact on the state economy," the auditors said in a summary.

The state and federal tax credit programs are not the only government-backed support for students who want to attend a Georgia private school.

State lawmakers established a direct taxpayer funded program called the Georgia Promise Scholarship in 2024, and students first started receiving money last fall.

Enrollment was far below anticipation, with about 7,700 students participating, Christopher Green, president of the Georgia Student Finance Commission, said at a budget hearing Tuesday.

His agency, which oversees the state tax credit program, traditionally referred to as a voucher, is slashing the budget request for the scholarships in the amended fiscal year 2026 budget.

Last year, the General Assembly and Kemp earmarked \$141 million for the vouchers in the fiscal year 2026 budget, but Kemp now wants to return \$86 million of that allocation to the general fund because demand amounted to only \$55 million.

MOMENTS IN TIME

* On Feb. 2, 1925, musher Gunnar Kaasen and his 13 dogs successfully delivered an antitoxin serum to Nome, Alaska, which was dealing with a widespread diphtheria outbreak, in a relay spanning 674 miles in five and a half days and in temperatures as low as 85 degrees below zero.

* On Feb. 3, 1780, Barnett Davenport murdered Caleb Mallory, in whose house he was a boarder, along with Mallory's wife, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren, in their home. One of post-Revolution America's most famous crimes, it contributed to a change in the way the country viewed lawbreakers.

* On Feb. 4, 1703, 47 samurai were forced to display the ultimate act of loyalty to the regional Japanese lord they had followed by committing seppuku -- ritually disemboweling themselves -- for the crime of killing the official who had ordered the forced suicide of said lord.

* On Feb. 5, 2003, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a speech to the United Nations outlining America's case that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and making an argument for the invasion that would take place the following month. Unfortunately, some of his talking points were either incorrect

or misleading, and Powell later described the speech as a blot on his record.

* On Feb. 6, 1998, a judge reinstated schoolteacher Mary Kay Letourneau's suspended sentence and returned her to prison for seven years after she was caught violating a no-contact order with her former student, Vili Fualaau, when she was found in a parked car with the boy.

* On Feb. 7, 1984, Navy captain Bruce McCandless II became the first human to perform an untethered spacewalk while in orbit 170 miles above the earth, maneuvering freely with a jet pack of his own design after exiting the Challenger space shuttle.

* On Feb. 8, 1994, actor Jack Nicholson approached Robert Blank's car while they were stopped at a red light in North Hollywood, accused Blank of cutting him off in traffic, and then bashed Blank's roof and windshield with a golf club. Charges were dropped after Nicholson apologized and the two reached an undisclosed settlement that included a reported \$500,000 check from Nicholson.

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OUR TAKE...



A local pup looks confused by the snow during this week’s winter storm/SPECIAL PHOTO

Stay safe and warm

The streets of Dublin have been a cold place lately. No, there hasn't been a recent uptick in crime; we're talking literally. It's cold outside. For the second year in a row we've seen measurable snowfall. This week's winter storm paled in comparison to the blizzard-like event experienced last year which brought several inches of fresh powder to the mid state and, to the delight of local kids, closed schools.

A snow day is a once-in-a-life-time event around here.

The weather we experienced this past Sunday was the closest thing to perfect we could ever hope to see - a magical snowfall, which forced us to leave our fast-paced lives, followed by an afternoon of warmer temps and sunshine. By evening in most places, you couldn't even tell that it had snowed.

Current forecasts are calling for the potential of more wintry weather this weekend, this time icy rain with the risk of overnight freezing. Not the winter wonderland we want.

Be careful out there. Check on your friends and family. And don't forget to wear a big coat.

– Kyle Dominy

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

"I never set out to be weird. It was always other people who called me weird."

- Frank Zappa

DAILY SCRIPTURE

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

- Philippians 2:15

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

- January 22, 2026 is...
- National Hot Sauce Day
 - National Polka Dot Day
 - Celebration of Life Day
 - Answer Your Cat's Questions Day
 - Clashing Clothing Day
 - National Sanctity of Human Life Day

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LOCAL MATTERS



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GEORGIA TRUST

— for Local News —

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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.

More trains means more trucks on the roads

Georgia needs to have a long and detailed conversation about trucks. Instead, we're at least briefly distracted by trains.

There have been quite a few news stories in circulating in the last few weeks about Georgia "getting serious" about passenger rail. "They're" talking about this in Chattanooga, Birmingham, Charlotte, and Savannah. "They" are looking at making Atlanta's role as a rail hub great again.

Who are "they"?

They are the consultants and transportation entities that received funding to study "high speed" rail corridors for passenger rail throughout the country from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. \$8 million was appropriated from the federal government to study routes in Georgia with Atlanta as a hub city. Their reports are coming in, and not surprisingly they all give a full and unconditional green light to...another round of studies.

If you haven't figured out where this track is headed, consider the weather. We didn't need a round of weekend snow flurries mixed with rain to throw cold water on this story that has been recycled more times than Chattahoochee river water flowing south out of Atlanta.

We've seen these studies before. They're almost always initiated with federal funding. They always suggest more studies. But the crucial element is that they're always tied to funding for propping up existing rail service or funding bigger boondoggles elsewhere.

The same act that Georgia's Senators brag about securing \$8 million for us gave California another \$3.1 Billion for their attempt at high speed rail construction. If California getting almost 400 times more money than Georgia seems unfair, consider that there is equality in the outcome. Both states will have zero new miles of track in operation because of these expenditures.

Speed is an issue here, both for the trains and for the process in which the federal government "helps" move a project along by mandating endless studies that make actual construction impossible. Note that a law to facilitate this was passed five years ago. We're just now seeing the first set of studies of many that would be required if the will and funding to build these rail lines actually existed.

Environmental reviews alone, under federal requirements known as NEPA, can take a decade or longer. Construction of major infrastructure can somehow take even longer still. Note that the rebuild of the I-75/I-16 interchange in Macon has had its tenth

GEORGIA POLITICS

By CHARLIE HARPER

birthday, and will likely be old enough for a driver's license by the time it is completed.

Then there's the speed of the trains themselves. Advocates point to Europe and Japan as the model, with their Eurostars and bullet trains that can hit speeds of 200 miles per hour. While Amtrak's DC to New York Acela train is now capable of reaching 160 mph, most of the track it operates on limits speeds between 105 and 110. This is despite spending \$2.5 billion over the past decade to upgrade the train which somehow now operates slower than the older model.

The track problems are even more of an issue in Georgia. In many of our urban areas the existing track has to contend with sharp curves that severely limit speeds. Fixing those would be expensive and messy.

Eminent domain would have to be used extensively. In addition to taking land to straighten out curves, almost every existing corridor would have to be widened. Most of Georgia's railroads are "single tracked", with freight trains running one

direction for a while, then pulling to a siding to wait while trains going the opposite direction get their turn. It's a well-choreographed ballet that keeps freight moving with planning and patience.

The result of this design is that a "high speed" freight train moves from Savannah to Atlanta in about 12 hours. A drive along I-16 and I-75 starts at about 3.5 hours, plus whatever time the drivers in Henry County decide to add for congestion.

The expectation of passenger rail would be to make this trip faster, not slower. To accommodate this, new tracks would have to be added parallel to existing tracks, and trains would have to be able to bypass existing junctions and switchyards.

All freight traffic would have to become a secondary priority to passenger trains. By definition, this would then make the movement of freight by train even slower. More logistics companies who need their goods to move to or from Georgia's ports would then decide trucks are a better option than freight rail.

We started by saying we need to talk about trucks. Most of us like the idea of trains. They get a bit more questionable when we start to see the real costs vs the real benefits. But they become a real problem when we realize that for every car they take off our freeway, they're likely to add several tractor trailers to our interstates. That seems to be lost in all of these self-perpetuating studies of trains that will likely never happen.

Traveling during the holiday, by air and by road

For years, we have spent the holidays on the road which has been brought about by having family anchoring's in Dallas and Charlotte. We need an assist from Delta to get to one destination and Heyward Allen Motor Co. to get to the other.

While there is hassle in air travel today, it is made easier by the good folks with my favorite airline like Sabrina Cornelius who is as passionate about Auburn football as her many Georgia friends are about the Bulldogs. We have come to giving her a robust thumbs up for the holidays.

When we drive to Charlotte, we usually find that Steve Middlebrooks, and his staff led by Ken Evans (he's a Dawg) and Tracy Collins (she's not) allow us to make our sojourn with confidence that it will be pleasant and uneventful trip.

On our western swing from 35,000 feet up, we see on the flight tracker towns we have motored though over the years—Montgomery, Jackson, Stuttgart, Little Rock, Fayetteville, Ft. Smith, Paris, Texarkana, McKinney, and into the DFW Airport.

Every locale has a special memory from having had breakfast with the governor and speaker of the house

at the Governor's mansion in Montgomery to visting Graceland at Memphis, bringing down mallards and pintails at Stuttgart, to the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, founded by the Walton family at Bentonville, Ark., to having breakfast with Lee Trevino near the DFW Airport.

With our son's connection we got a much-appreciated discount for a short stay at the Ritz Carlton at Las Colinas, also near DFW Airport. With early morning rising habits, dating back to my days down on the farm, I enjoy the solitude of our hotel lobby before daybreak. Nice comforting Christmas music wafted about as I am first to take advantage of the complimentary coffee stand and segueing into a perusal of the Dallas Morning News and the New York Times.

There is coverage of killings, ambushes, accidents, political threats and insults, with which I give a parting glimpse but lock in with the features that hold sway with the hopes that we will have the good sense to save the glaciers, the polar bears, and the Okefenokee Swamp. Even a million miles from this most valuable swamp, people are sensitive to its survival.

I always enjoy the columnists who get published

By LORAN SMITH

in the Times. I may not agree with some opinions but appreciate the varied viewpoints and the excellent writing. I hope the Times will be diligent in keeping the new mayor of New York on his toes. The Times has always taken issue with loose cannons and Mamdani may be the newspaper's biggest challenge yet.

A drive to Charlotte offers a similar opportunity to reflect as one's route slides by Clemson where Dabo Swinney has brought national fame to Tigerland. Crossing the Savannah River, you realize you are near Petersburg, once a bustling community following the Revolution-

ary war but now submerged neath the placid waters of Clark's Hill Lake.

When you pass the exits to Spartanburgh, you reflect on the small-town life of Charlie Bradshaw (Dublin, Georgia and Wofford, S. C.) and ask that the man upstairs to send more executives, who are given an extra helping of humility and modesty when they rise to the top of their profession—like Charlie.

Crossing the Palmetto state border into North Carolina, you reflect on the appeal of the two Carolinas—to the South, the low country which is one of the most pleasant areas on the Eastern seaboard; and to the north the equally charming and emotional stirring from visiting the "Outer Banks."

Travel—even if it is retracing old steps—reconfirms what a great country this is. You just can't get enough of America if you appreciate what there is to explore and enjoy.

It makes you hark back to the lyrics of the theme song of the old Dina Shore commercial. "See the USA in your Chevrolet, America is asking you to call. Drive your Chevrolet through the USA, America's the greatest land of all."

That is one of the great commercials of all time.

TO THE EDITOR

After reading Stacy's article and then seeing Sen. Ossoff's statement, I think it is time to point out a couple of things.

First, no Republican voted for the ACA health insurance. Second, it came out most people couldn't use it because they could afford the deductible or find a doctor that would accept it. Third, Ossoff and Warnock voted under Biden to end paying the subsidies on the ACA policies at the end of December 2025, not Republicans or Trump. Fourth, Ossoff and Warnock voted against the big bill. But no one says a thing about the Standard deduction which Trump got passed as permanent.

If it had failed you would lose \$14,000 in deductions for a married couple when you file taxes this year. Also they voted against the \$6,000 or \$12,000 for a couple age 65 on social Security. They would have to pay additional taxes on \$28,000. This year at 10% that would be an additional \$2,800 they would pay this year. No one mentions that or the tax that is taken away from tips or overtime.

Also the cost of groceries went up under Democrats, so it takes time to come back down but inflation was at 9% under Biden and the democrats so far it has stayed at 2.7% all year under the Republicans and that is with the tariffs, that didn't raise inflation so

lets give some credit where it belongs.

Democrat policies made this economic mess and Republican policies are bringing it down. It just takes time to undo the damage that has been done.

Republicans are looking to lower costs for you at the state level and Trump is lowering them at the federal level. Not one Democrat for all the blaming voted to lower any of your burden they just want more tax money for their welfare system and illegals, but no one admits that.

Have a good day.

Ronald Schwartz
Dublin, Ga



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There is one council-woman at-large who is always cleaning up her district. How about the whole city help out and clean around your own back doors?

All that we are aware of about the wrongdoing with taxpayer dollars needs to be prosecuted. The ones that benefited from this by credit card misuse, inflated salaries and other taxpayer abuse need prison!

Don't stop with the audit. The liars and crooks need to "pay the piper" to start regaining the trust of the taxpaying citizens. Trust needs years to acquire and just one breach like this to lose.

“So far, McLendon said there is no proof that any crimes were committed. He said he wants the GBI to handle the case to avoid a possible conflict of interest.” That is a quote from WMAZ. No proof of crimes. Really? Where did McLendon go to law school? \$13 million stolen from taxpayers. Not a crime? Trips with families for non-educational reasons on our tax money. Not a crime? Funneling government COVID funds into non-COVID programs and salaries, not a crime? Theft by deception? Theft by conversion? Racke-teering? Fraud? Not crimes. Interesting interpretation of the law.

(Editor's note: The much-quoted \$13 million is a PROJECTED deficit, meaning an expected cash-flow shortage at the end of the fiscal year, and not missing funds.)

Kudos to the volunteer committee and our community for putting on a St. Patrick's celebration now for 61 years!

Well folks, the audit is finally out. We can see that criminal activity definitely took place. Those perpetrators should be arrested and convicted of those crimes. Someone needs to hire an attorney so that we don't have to pay the tax payments until this stuff is straightened up.

When is the city going to wake up and realize there are other parts of Dublin besides downtown and the Southside. We need help in other areas.

Council members need to ride around Dublin and see how bad our streets are. All of that money spent on speed signs and speed bumps should have gone to fixing streets in Dublin.

Enough about Dublin City Schools. We need to know when the case of the ex-Dublin city clerk is going to go to the grand jury for stealing from her church. She stole almost \$500,000.

I'm glad the DA's office is getting involved in the Dublin City Schools business. There should be some lawsuits and jail time because of this.

To Mr. James Lanier, in your response given on your WMAZ interview, “I’ve been asking questions for several years, not comfortable with some of the things that have been going on in the school system.” You must not have been asking very loudly. Sounds to me like you are running for cover.

Just wondering, if the city board of education officials are convicted of any criminal activity, will they get to keep those heavy retirement packages?

Is there any realistic chance of Dublin City surviving? Can they operate once the advancements are over? I wish the board would speak to the taxpayers about real steps and a specific plan.

Local 7-day Forecast:

The next 48 hours...

THURSDAY:
66°
Sunny.
Sunrise: 7:32 a.m.

THURSDAY NIGHT:
46°
Cloudy.
Sunset: 5:55 p.m.

FRIDAY:
63°
Cloudy with brief showers likely.
Sunrise: 7:31 a.m.

FRIDAY NIGHT:
46°
Mostly cloudy.
Sunset: 5:56 p.m.

Saturday 1/24
HIGH/LOW
51/38
Intermittently rainy.
Sunrise: 7:31 a.m.
Sunset: 5:57 p.m.

Sunday 1/25
HIGH/LOW
45/30
Intermittently rainy.
Sunrise: 7:30 a.m.
Sunset: 5:58 p.m.

Monday 1/26
HIGH/LOW
46/21
Partly sunny.
Sunrise: 7:30 a.m.
Sunset: 5:59 p.m.

Tuesday 1/27
HIGH/LOW
47/27
Very sunny.
Sunrise: 7:29 a.m.
Sunset: 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday 1/28
HIGH/LOW
49/31
Cloudy with a chance of a drizzle.
Sunrise: 7:29 a.m.
Sunset: 6:01 p.m.

River levels...
Oconee (at Dublin) 3.8'
Ocmulgee (at Macon) 6.2'



POLICE BEAT...

Dublin Police Department

• Johnie Scaggs, 37, was charged with criminal trespass and obstruction of law enforcement officers around 11:33 p.m. Jan. 1 on Helen Drive.

An officer responded to the location in reference to removing a subject. The officer met with two men in the kitchen. Officers found out that Scaggs did not live there and the other man did not want him in his house. Scaggs was told to leave the location or he would be charged with criminal trespass.

The man said he would call a cab for Scaggs because he was intoxicated. Scaggs refused the cab. Scaggs was told that if the police gave him a ride, it would be to the jail. Scaggs continued to imply that officers should take him home at his request due to him paying taxes. Scaggs eventually decided to walk home, but was told he could not because of how intoxicated he was. He was arrested after he refused all legal and alternative options for transport.

Scaggs resisted arrest, and it took multiple officers to get him handcuffed.

• Takeshia Dupree, 40, was charged with theft by shoplifting, giving false name, address or birthdate to law enforcement, disorderly conduct and simple battery around 9:30 a.m. on Jan. 1 at Piggly Wiggly on Bellevue Avenue.

A 911 dispatcher advised that a person had left the location wearing a brown jacket. An officer saw a woman and asked if she went to Piggly Wiggly. She said no. He asked the woman her name, and she said her name was Laksin Stanley. When the officer asked her what her date of birth was, the woman became belligerent, yelled, screamed and cursed.

The officer received a picture of Dupree from the county. She was then taken into custody. Later, Dupree kicked the left rear doors of the patrol car. When the officer opened the door to ask if she would stop kicking the door, the woman attempted to kick him. She was transported to the Laurens County Detention Center and turned over to booking.

A store employee showed the officer a video of Dupree placing items into her jacket. When confronted by an employee, Dupree started throwing them from her pockets, and from the shelf.

• On Dec. 30, around 5:18 p.m., officers were dispatched to the area of Hop In on East Jackson Street in reference to shots fired. While en route, officers were advised that a man was shooting out of the passenger seat of a gray sedan heading towards East Dublin.

Officers were able to find shell casings in the parking lot between the gas pumps

LOCAL MATTERS

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STATEWIDE CLASSIFIEDS FOR THE WEEK 1/18/26

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Democrats criticize Georgia U.S. Senate challengers for end of health insurance subsidies

By MARK NEISSE
Capitol Beat

ATLANTA — Georgia Democrats blamed Republican U.S. Senate candidates for the expiration of Affordable Care Act health insurance subsidies Tuesday, an opening 2026 salvo in the critical Senate race.

The Democratic attack targeted the three Republicans in the race — U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter, U.S. Rep. Mike Collins and former football coach Derek Dooley — for opposing bills that would have renewed the subsidies and held down insurance prices. They're trying to unseat Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff in this fall's election.

Republicans said the health subsidies are an expensive cost to taxpayers that support a broken health care system.

Georgia House Minority Whip Sam Park, D-Lawrenceville, said the elimination of subsidies priced many families out of health insurance coverage. Enrollment in Georgia's health exchange declined by more than 190,000 this year, according to the Georgia Of-

fice of the Commissioner of Insurance.

“Republicans like Buddy Carter and Mike Collins voted to end the tax credits that made health care coverage affordable, and every single day they fail to restore those credits, more Georgians are losing access to life saving health care because they can't afford it,” said Park during a press conference at the state Democratic Party headquarters.

Average monthly premium costs rose \$862, to a total of \$1,307, in Georgia for a 60-year-old with a \$62,800 income on a benchmark plan, according to the health research organization KFF.

Georgia Republican Party Chairman Josh McKoon said Democrats approved temporary health insurance subsidies during the COVID-19 pandemic without a long-term plan.

“The subsidies are financially unsustainable and point to how broken Obamacare has been from the beginning,” McKoon said. “President Trump and Republicans have offered sustainable solutions to increase access and afford-

ability for all Americans, but Democrats would rather play politics.”

The Democrats' attack accompanied billboards purchased by the Democratic Party of Georgia highlighting votes by Carter and Collins against extending Affordable Care Act subsidies. The billboards also cite Dooley's opposition to the subsidies.

Nora Pullen, a small business owner featured at the Democrats' press conference, said the cost of her health plan would have nearly tripled. Instead of paying extra, she decided to invest in her business rather than paying so much more for health insurance.

“I realize I rolled the dice. My family realizes that. But what choice do most people have? We're middle class,” said Pullen, who lives in Fayetteville and runs a wellness facility. “I truly hope that we can vote for people who have our interests.”

Georgia voters will decide on the Republican candidate during the primary election May 19. The winner will face Ossoff during the general election Nov. 3.

Life is a dance for Dublin After Five Women's Connection

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

Dublin After Five Women's Connection cordially invites all ladies to join us at the Dublin Country Club on Thursday, Jan. 29 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. for an evening filled with fellowship, music and inspiration.

Speaker Kae Childs of Isle of Palms, S.C. was inducted into the Charleston Shaggers Hall of Fame in 2022. Childs, a shagger since her High School days, is a popular shag instructor at the University of South Carolina. Shag is the official state dance of South Carolina and Kae has been teaching people to shag for more than 30 years in clubs, churches and schools across the state.

Childs instructs new shaggers with tips on proper shag etiquette. "Shagging is a six-count dance and the counting is all you need to nail the basic steps to get on the dance floor," says Kae Childs.

Childs is also a retired counselor at the University



Kae Childs, of Isle of Palms, S.C., will be the guest speaker at the Dublin After Five Women's Connection and the Dublin Christian Women's Connection /SPECIAL PHOTO

of South Carolina. Childs' talks center on personal stories of faith, including her husband's journey and her own illnesses, emphasizing her belief in God's faithfulness. She will share her story as to how she gained

"victory over cancer" and her husband leaving and returning. Childs is the author of the book "Life Is A Dance."

Emerald Ease Spa will be the feature and owner Andrea Craft will update us on the new modalities, techniques and services she offers. Andrea was an educator for 14 years before she changed careers. Emerald Ease is a massage studio located in the Fred Roberts Building and known for therapeutic treatments and prenatal massages. They focus on wellness, pain management and reducing pain and stress.

Please call Dianne (478) 272-6341 or Marge (478) 875-3948 for reservations or cancellations by Tuesday, January 27. The buffet cost is \$21, inclusive, and requires a reservation. We ask that you honor your reservation, cancel it or give it to a friend.

The printing of our invitations is a courtesy and generosity of Clements & Keen Inc.

Woman's Study Club learn about Rembrandt

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

The Woman's Study Club met Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025, at the Laurens County Library.

President Mrs. Gregory S. Crabb called the meeting to order, greeted guests and honorary members, and moved through the order of club business for the day.

She thanked hostess Mrs. Samuel W. Beall for her beautiful flowers. Mrs. Jack Heidler introduced the speaker of the day, Mrs. Donald L. Adams whose topic was "The Incredulity of Thomas" painted by Rembrandt.

Mrs. Adams began her program by relating a family trip to Lake Junaluska in 1982 during which the family took a side trip to Knoxville where the World's Fair was being held.

There were many examples supporting the theme of the Fair "Energy Turns the World," but the thing which piqued their interest was a newly discovered Rembrandt, "The Incredulity of Thomas."

The painting was brought to the United States in 1978 by a Polish immigrant who had purchased it at a garage sale somewhere in Europe. The immigrant's children had agreed to exhibit it at the World's Fair. Drawn in by the painting, the Adams bought a print, framed it, and it has remained in Mr. Adams office ever since.

Mrs. Adams read the story of Thomas from the gospel of John.

Although the scene has been painted by other artists, Rembrandt's is different because Thomas does not touch Jesus' wound in the painting.

Born in Holland in 1606, Rembrandt attended a local protestant church where he embraced faith, forgiveness, and a personal relationship with Christ and the powerful Biblical stories. His paintings reflect his beliefs.

Mrs. Adams described several of them. "The Stoning of Stephen" was his earliest signed painting. This painting exhibits his famous ability to use light, and he became known as the Painter of

Light. When he was 26, he painted "Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee." This painting was stolen from a museum in Boston in 1990 and has never been recovered. In this painting, there are 14 figures, Jesus and the twelve and the 14th figure is Rembrandt who loved putting himself in paintings as a part of his more than 90 self-portraits.

"The Night Watch" is considered his most famous work. It is an immense painting 13 feet by 13 feet and is housed today in Amsterdam. Rembrandt scholar Rosenberg calls the painting "The Return of the Prodigal Son" monumental. He says, "The whole represents a symbol of homecoming of the darkness of human existence illuminated by tenderness, of weary and sinful mankind taking refuge in the shelter of God's mercy.

Rembrandt's wife, Saskia, became ill and died. He had financial woes. He engaged in an unmarried relationship. But he gave us some of the greatest works of art.

Start your new year with a blast from the past luncheon

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

The Dublin Christian Women's Connection invites you to start your new year with a blast from the past!

All ladies are invited to the Dublin Country Club on Thursday, Jan. 29, from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. for a luncheon full of music and fun!

A delicious buffet luncheon will be served with lovely buffet music provided by pianist Brenda Holloway.

The musical entertainment will continue as Sue Hall performs a mini-concert of "Golden Oldies" from the "Happy Days" era

of the 1950s. Hall grew up in Wrightsville, Georgia. She has been a teacher and media specialist. Now retired, she enjoys bringing joy to others through her beautiful voice and her fun, interactive concerts.

Our special guest speaker is Kae Childs from Daniel Island, S.C. She is a retired counselor and a former instructor of Shag Dancing at the University of South Carolina. Shag dancing evolved from the swing and jitterbug of the 1930s and became a cultural phenomenon for teenagers in the 1940s and 50s. It is still going strong as the official state dance of South Carolina and North Carolina.

Childs has written a devotional book entitled, "Life Is a Dance. Who Is Going to Lead?" She shares her upbeat message of victory over cancer and a broken marriage that was restored. Her insights have inspired countless women to face the future with hope and courage.

The cost of the luncheon is \$21 (inclusive). Reservations are required and should be made by Monday, January 26, at 5 p.m. by calling Jane at (478) 595-2499. Invite a friend, make your reservations, and start your new year with a fun journey into the past and a boost of hope for a wonderful new year!

UGA extension welcomes new ANR agent

By BLAKE CARTER
Laurens County Extension ANR Agent



Carter

My name is Blake Carter, and I am excited to introduce myself as the new UGA Extension Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent serving Laurens County beginning January 1. I was born and raised in Glennville, Georgia and have been with UGA Extension since 2020. I started my career in Liberty County before transferring to Effingham County, where I've served as ANR Agent for the past five years. Over that time, I completed a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia's College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, making me a proud "triple AgDawg," with my bachelor's and master's in Agribusiness also coming from UGA.

Through my work as an ANR Agent, I've supported producers across a wide range of commodities including cotton, corn, peanuts, hay and forages, forestry, and livestock. What I hope to bring to Laurens County is steady, practical support for producers, technical assistance for community members, and the continued promotion of agriculture here at home through clear communication and outreach. I look forward to learning from the grow-

ers in this county, identifying needs, and helping address those needs through education, demonstrations, partnerships, and hands-on assistance.

As we move into the new season, Laurens County Extension will be hosting and co-hosting several commodity production meetings this winter. All meetings begin at noon and require an RSVP one week prior to help us get accurate headcount.

2026 Production Meeting Schedule (Locations in parentheses):

- Corn & Soybean Update — January 21, 2026 (Bleckley County Extension Office)
- Cotton Production Update — February 13, 2026 (Cloverleaf Restaurant, East Dublin)
- Pasture & Hay Weed Control Update — February

17, 2026 (Bleckley County Extension Office)

- Peanut Production Update — February 20, 2026 (Cloverleaf Restaurant, East Dublin)

- Row Crop Weed Science & Disease Management Update — February 26, 2026 (Telfair County Young Farmers' Building, McRae-Helena)

In addition to these scheduled meetings, I am currently working to secure a Pecan Production Update meeting for local pecan growers. Details including speaker lineup, location, and registration information will be announced soon.

To RSVP for any meeting, please contact the Laurens County Extension Office at (478) 272-2277.

It is an honor to serve Laurens County's agricultural community, and I look forward to meeting producers, collaborating with local partners, and continuing to strengthen agriculture across this region. I am excited for what the coming year holds and look forward to seeing many of you at our winter meetings.

For more information, please contact:

Blake Carter — UGA Extension ANR Agent, Laurens County

Email: Blake.Carter25@uga.edu

Phone: 478-272-2277

Largest practical nursing cohort in OFTC history pinned in December

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

Twenty Oconee Fall Line Technical College Practical Nursing students were honored during the college's December Pinning Ceremony on the Dublin Campus, Tuesday, Dec. 9. This was the largest graduating cohort of Practical Nursing students in college history.

Each December, OFTC hosts the ceremony to mark the completion of the educational requirements needed for graduates to sit for the state board licensure examination and to welcome them into the nursing profession.

"These outstanding

students have navigated a rigorous journey, persevering through countless hours of demanding study and intensive clinical practice," OFTC President Erica Harden said. "Their dedication to the nursing profession has been truly unwavering. As we celebrate this transition, we recall the wisdom of Florence Nightingale, who wrote of the enduring impact of small acts of kindness in patient care — gestures that profoundly enhance healing. I am confident that our graduates will embody this spirit of compassion and excellence as they officially embark upon their nursing careers."

PN students led the pro-



gram, with JaNiyah Stephens and Irianna Moss addressing their fellow graduates and reflecting on the journey they shared over the past year.

"It has been such an honor to witness the growth of these students from ad-

visement to graduation," said Kerrie Fountain, OFTC Practical Nursing instructor. "They have gone from students who dreamed of becoming nurses to now becoming our colleagues. We can't wait to see what wonderful nurses these gradu-

ates become."

Graduating nurses were: Lakecia Boynton, Soperton
Charlene Bracewell, Dublin
Cole Cauley, Soperton
Paris Davis, Warner Robins

Alana Dixon, Alamo
Paige Oxley, Eastman
Chakerrria Floyd, Bonaire
Alliyah Ford, Milledgeville

Mica Gillis, East Dublin
Destiny Hall, Milledgeville

Kaylee Boone, Milan
Danisha Lewis, Sparta
Irianna Moss, Cochran
Victoria Powell, Dublin
Yolanda Richardson, Mitchell

Anaye Shiver, Dudley
Robdricka Stanley, East Dublin

JaNiyah Stephens, Warner Robins
Tierra Thompson, Warner Robins

Brittany White, Eastman

Southwest Laurens Elementary School releases second nine weeks honor roll

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

Southwest Laurens principal Edwin Bland would like to honor the following students for achieving honor roll the second 9 weeks of the 2025-2026 school year:

Third grade: Scarlett Abrecht, Phoenix Allen, Adelina Alvarez, Scarlett Bailey, Ingrid Baldwin, Callum Baum, Margaret Baxter, Zane Bentley, Reagan Black, Lilyana Branum, Johnathon Browning, Aurora Burkett, Tate Burney,

Jaxon Ciucevich, Bentley Craven, Blakely Dixon, Marion Elvine, Rayna Evans, Remi Faircloth, Zayd Ferris, Zuri Ferris, Zytan Floyd, Bowen Fowler, Ansleigh Francis, Nicole Franco, Willough Gay, Riley Gilbert, Paislee Harden, Lucas Harper, Calliope Harrell, Donna Harris, Kynlee Hester, Braylon Hilbun, Colton Horton, Kenna Jones, Grayson Kophazy, Lane Leggett, Sofie Lewis, Liam Lopez, Raelyn Loyd, Avery Mays, Timmy Mullis, Jackson Nash, CJ Nemier, Xavier Nieves, Marco Ochoa,

Bellamy Olivera, Aiyan O'Neal, Amari O'Neal, Mace Patisaul, Ace Pauldo, Jayveon Reed, Jep Powell, Brooks Rogers, Jackson Scott, Aiden Smith, Bo Smith, Hadden Smith, Jackson Smith, Jocelynn Spence, Nathaniel Spicer, Kaylee Strudwick, Gracelyn Swinson, Wilder Terry, Hadley Thomas, Ariel Toler, Judson Van Norman, Moriah Walker, Cashlyn Webster, Kaiden Wesley, Drew Wilcher, Jacob Wild, and Ayden Wynn.

Fourth grade: Everly Belflower, Greyson Ben-

nett, Hartlee Brown, Parker Cauthen, Murphy Collins, Levi Conklin, Remington Dean, Wyatt Drew, Daniel Espinosa, Laniece Evans, Braxton Fowler, Colton Gundy, Barrett Hamilton, Kase Harden, Brooks Hightower, Reid Hobbs, Amelia Howell, Gunner Howell, Ansley Kate Johnson, Natalie Johnson, Leigh Kemp, McKenzie Kemp, Rhett Logue, Lennox Manley, Blaire McDaniel, Ava Mitchell, Mason Monroe, Arabella Moye, Ladson Ouzts, Kam Parris, Maeleigh Register, Brock Rosenber-

ry, Emma Grace Scott, Eli Screws, Sam Shepard, Jacob Skipper, Max Smith, Logan Sumner, Madilynn Tanner, Kynslea Thompson, Jaysleah Tucker, Lucas Veal, Trent Ward, IsaacWilcher, Presleigh Willis, Lane Wood, Owen Wood and Ryder Wood.

Fifth grade: Evelyn Alvarez, Aranza Arias, Thatcher Baldwin, Gracen Bates, Greyson Black, Noah Brantley, Maddox Brooks, Eli Burch, Taytum Davis, Princeton Devouil, Brailynn Edge, Zeke Ewing, Jocelyn Flanders, Zaelee

Floyd, CharleighGarnto, Grady Gay, Emily Grainger, Madison Harper, Diana Harris, Hudson Hatcher, Charlotte Herrera, Jaxen Hogan, Chedrick Hurst, Zachary Jett, Kason Jones, Andrea Lopez-Ruis, Callen Manning, Mason McNeal, Clayton Mims, Jaxon Moses, Ella New, Parker O'Neal, Rose Padgett, Marlee Hoped Patisaul, Noah Porter, Connor Sanders, Malea Sirmons, Sloane Tanner, Cam Tayloe, Durham Walker, Dillon Watkins, Millie White, Luke Wilcher, and Daylen Williams.

EL downs Dodge to keep streaks rolling

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

Two six-game win streaks converged, but only one could survive as the East Laurens boys played host to Dodge County in region 2-High A’s latest standings-shifting showdown Friday night.

The Falcons, with a mix of tactful defense and clutch shotmaking, passed another test in a 54-47 win to take sole control of second place, and send the Indians away empty-handed after the East Laurens girls rolled to their third of four victories in a row, 56-34, on the front end of the sweep, and both teams’ unbeaten weekend.

Scrappy defense carried the day for the Falcon boys in a low-scoring and frequently sloppy game that – due to some challenges putting it away at the free throw line – got a little tight with a couple minutes still to go.

In the end, their critical foul shots went down, and Dodge County’s last looks from the floor didn’t, in the fulfillment of a point by East Laurens head coach Dwayne Lowther, who stresses that his team “end the game on a defensive stop.”

They finished this one with three in a row as a corner 3-point try by the Indians drew iron, Jeremiah Rozier undercut a backdoor feed for a steal and Anthony Pounds challenged Kyler Johnson’s forceful shot attempt that missed just before time expired.

“That’s what we rely on, defensive stops and rebounds,” Lowther said. “If we do that... whatever else goes, we’ll take care of business.”

The box score, aside from an 11-7 advantage in steals, wasn’t overly kind to the Falcons, who were out-rebounded by three, lost the turnover battle by two and missed 10 free throws – in the most glaring hindrance to their efforts at sealing the game as a multi-possession lead dwindled toward the end of the fourth.

But except for the wide-open hustle baskets that caught East Laurens flat-footed on defense, Dodge couldn’t come up with the points needed to grab an upper hand at any point early, or eliminate the last of its fourth quarter deficit.

Lowther attributed that to a bend-but-don’t-break defensive approach that tried to make the easy stuff as hard as possible as Indians attacked the basket, while affording a degree of respect when they opted to pull up or kick out for shots from mid-range or deep.

And it paid off, as the Indians (despite shooting a clean 50 percent clip from inside the arc) went 0-for-17 from 3, and committed 22 turnovers.

“We helped out a lot, but we weren’t trying to give them high-percentage shots,” Lowther said. “Keep ’em out of high-percentage shots, let ’em shoot the basketball so the rebounds can go long and we can push it.” Those fast-breaks proved



SOPHOMORE SENSATION: Braylon Makaya gets home for the last of his baskets from the field in Friday’s fourth quarter. The Falcons’ breakout 10th grader, after a buzzer-beating shot to force overtime at Jefferson County three days earlier, continued his strong week with 16 points/CLAY REYNOLDS

valuable in helping the Falcons set the pace for most of the night.

Quickness getting to the basket off the dribble by Jeremiah Rozier, who front-loaded the bulk of his 14 points, and a red-hot sequence for the balance of Zion Dixon’s six in the first quarter, did just as much to keep East Laurens out front by a few points on the way to halftime.

Roizer’s co-leader Braylon Makaya would take charge later on, beginning with a run starting late in the third that helped the Falcons grow that narrow lead into a sizable edge. He hit two 3s in close proximity to get them up by five at the end of the period, finished off the dribble to add to that number on the first play of the fourth and scored again to take East’s lead back to seven points with about five to go.

It stood at eight, 48-40, a moment later when things went stagnant for both teams, and free-throw yips kicked in for the Falcons over a few consecutive trips to the line. But Dodge (at one point giving a free throw try away on a violation) failed to capitalize until Jerimiah Burns got a step in transition on back-to-back possessions (separated by the lone East Laurens make of the sequence) to make it 49-45 ahead of a timeout.

The last 50 seconds, in contrast, were drama-free as Major Floyd shook off several consecutive misses to knock down his last in a pair, then Makaya and Skyler Snead were perfect on a final four.

Johnson had 16 points, and Burns 12, for the Dodge County scoring lead. Johnson – slapping the backboard on seemingly every other shot he had a chance to contest from in front or behind – got ahold of five for blocks.

Floyd and Rozier topped the East Laurens rebound count with six and five respectively.

“Just keep pushing, just keep striving, keep being faithful,” Lowther said of his message looking ahead to the next stretch of region games (which begins after this Tuesday’s rematch with Brentwood). “It’s game-by-game. We can’t get ahead of it. We’ve gotta go one



DOING HER THING: Jameria Bing stayed right on trend with her 12th double-digit game out of 13, but also surpassed her previous career high (Dec. 13 vs. Treutlen) by one in Friday’s 26-point performance against Dodge County/CLAY REYNOLDS

game at a time.”

The ‘Makaya Miracle,’ revisited...

Chances to tie or win a game at the buzzer don’t come around often.

But Makaya, before he drained a pivotal shot to force overtime in East Laurens’ win at Jefferson County last Tuesday, had rehearsed it plenty of times in places other than his dreams.

The sophomore, a lone 3-point shooting specialist on a roster dominated by players with a main offensive niche much closer to the basket, was always the team’s go-to for this type of desperation heave from way outside. And the play that got it to him, for the fateful attempt several feet off the right wing, was one the Falcons had prepared with this very endgame in mind.

They ran into a small hangup in the backcourt as a mishap forced Bryson Hazley to give the ball up sooner, and in a different spot than planned. But it got into the hands of Skyler Snead for a relay pass that arrived to Makaya without a millisecond to spare.

The shot, which he caught and released with an estimated seven tenths of a second left on the clock, found bottom to force four minutes of free basketball, which East Laurens went on to win by two.

“He’s been making these shots in practice, so we practice it and simulate it, and it just worked out the way we practiced it,” Lowther said. “One time, we simulated a game like that and he hit a big 3 from just about the same spot.”

That knockdown threat is slowly emerging as a bigger and bigger piece of the puzzle for the Falcons as he carves out a role off the bench as much more than just their spot-up guy.

On top of hitting three triples Friday to bolster his team-best shooting percentage of 43 from deep, Makaya also flexed some versatility by getting to the hole on a few drives and heads-up basket cuts, while stepping out to guard the ball up top, in roles that added a lot of bonus value... and points, as well.

His range, shotmaking and killer instincts – though

more evident to Falcon fans in these back-to-back wins than at any point this season – aren’t at all unfamiliar to coaches and teammates who’ve seen those attributes on display going back through his years of middle school ball (and a freshman season limited to mostly JV work), and quietly observed him putting in a lot of extra hours on his own perfecting the craft of shooting.

That work has positioned him to deliver in a lot of this season’s big moments as they’ve come along, from your typical plays to Tuesday’s once-in-a-blue-moon type of shot that, if you make a few of them, can become the stuff of legends.

“The kid’s a phenomenal athlete,” Lowther said Friday. “He works all the time, and that’s the thing I like about him. He keeps working nonstop. He’ll probably go home tonight and shoot because he’s never satisfied.”

Beast mode...

The East Laurens girls didn’t take it easy on any of last week’s three opponents, Jefferson County and Treutlen (by margins of 77 and 49 points respectively) getting the worst of blowouts on the road.

The Lady Falcons – winners in seven of their last eight, and all but one (last Saturday’s buzzer-beating win at Bleckley) by double digits – played their closest game of the week Friday against Dodge, although it felt nearly as lopsided.

The Squaws, who remain a competent team inside despite having lost the 20-plus points per game of all-region forward Lyric Green, never let themselves get completely overrun, but were still squarely outmatched by East’s speed and defensive pressure, which had blown the lid off of the game after only a few minutes of back-and-forth from the jump.

Despite some usual challenges finishing up in point-blank situations and off of offensive rebounds inside, the Lady Falcons put it in the bucket with regularity out of half-court sets and fast-break situations as they pulled away from a 6-6 tie with 13 unanswered points midway through the first.

Jameria Bing, who continues to ride a sizzling

streak from outside, sunk a guzzling 3 to top off the run that made it 19-6 East Laurens with still 2:35 to go in the quarter.

That advantage quickly grew on the way to a 20-point lead, 31-11, by halftime.

The Lady Falcons eased up defensively, and as a result added only two points to that spread as Dodge found some footing in the third, but had not the first doubt creep in despite some rocky moments down the stretch.

East defenders combined to record 27 steals and eight blocked shots.

Bing dropped 26 to lead all scorers. Garyunna Mitchell added 12 and six rebounds. Deanna Lowther had only nine points, but still reached double-double territory with 11 boards and 13 steals. Zahmaria Robinson chipped in seven points, six boards, three assists and four steals.

Paige Ingram scored 14 to lead the Squaws.

East Laurens girls 73, Treutlen 24

The Lady Falcons (13-3, 6-1 region 2-High A) turned the dial back up to “total domination” on Saturday’s trip to Soperton, scoring 21 unanswered in the first four and a half minutes, and leading that many to six at the end of the opening quarter.

East Laurens boys 90, Treutlen 41

The Falcons’ pressure was just as overwhelming for a Treutlen team that stayed frazzled for most of a first-half onslaught.

East (13-3, 6-1 region) jumped all over the Vikings early, scoring 13 before giving up a first basket of the night two minutes in. The lead was 20 by the end of one, and one shy of 30 going to the half.

Floyd’s 16 points and nine rebounds topped the tally in both Falcon stat columns. Marcus Hudson (13), Dixon (11) and Kelvin King (10) also reached double figures, while Snead dished out 10 assists, and stole seven passes.

West Laurens girls 45, Howard 32

Brooklyn Jackson had 17 and Maddie Ridgway 10 to lead the Lady Raiders’ charge in a defense-heavy battle Friday night.

West Laurens (8-8, 6-5 region 4-AAA) has won three games in a row, and sits tied with Harlem for fourth in the region.

Howard 77, West Laurens boys 55

A workable deficit got away from the Raiders (3-15, 1-10 region) as Howard capitalized on a dreadful eight-minute stretch to end the second quarter and start the third. Though West Laurens regained its footing late, baskets were too rare and turnovers too numerous during multiple rough stretches in which the Huskies’ troublemaking defense took its toll.

SCOREBOARD

GIRLS HOOPS
Tuesday
Trinity 64,
Central Fellowship 56
Dodge Co. 66, Dublin 52
East Laurens 46,
Brentwood 45
West Laurens 43,
Aquinas 25

BOYS HOOPS
Friday
Howard 77, WL 55

Tuesday
CFCA 74, Trinity 57
Dodge Co. 67, Dublin 52
EL 85, Brentwood 59
WL 43, Aquinas 39

PREP SCHEDULE

BASKETBALL
Friday
Hephzibah at West Laurens /5 p.m.
Dublin at East Laurens
Gatewood at Trinity/6 p.m.

Saturday
EL at WL
Trinity at Robert Toombs /4 p.m.

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

Washington Co. 77, Dublin girls 50

The Lady Hawks outscored Dublin in every quarter, though only by a point each in the first and third. The second and fourth, in which WACO chalked up gains of 13 and 12, were most problematic for the Lady Irish as Jade Kitchens (30 points, 13 rebounds, six assists, five steals) and Aeria Hagans (17, eight re’s, six assists) began to dominate both ends of the court for the visitors.

The Lady Irish went on to defeat Johnson County, by an unreported final score, to get back in the win column on Saturday.

Washington Co. 61, Dublin boys 33

Zi’Marion Johnson scored 11 to match the totals of WACO co-leaders Braylon Yorker and Zion Cordy, but was the only Irish player to surpass 10 on a frustrating night worsened by Aiden Watts’ eight blocked shots.

Johnson Co. 70, Dublin boys 57

The Trojans combined to reject another eight Dublin shot attempts as Cory King (19), Tayshawn Norris (15) and Daezon Devero (13 points, 10 rebounds, six assists and four steals) poured on the baskets to build a lead of 19 through three quarters.

Dublin leaders Glen Harris (19), Jaydon McRae (12), Ar’Dreakius Taylor (nine and six assists) and Quantavis Lovett (nine and 13 boards) each had big nights, but couldn’t do enough in a fourth-quarter rally to avert a third-straight loss, which takes the Irish to 6-9 overall (2-4 region).

Trinity boys get win in split with Gatewood to start region play

By JEREMY PAYNE
Correspondent

The Trinity Crusaders opened their region slate last Tuesday with a trip to Eatonton to face off with Gatewood. Both games were competitive throughout, but the girls fell short 53-47. Fortunately the boys were able to salvage the split with a 56-50 win.

The girls came in riding a three-game win streak, and jumped out to a 15-12 lead after the first quarter.

But the second quarter belonged to the home team as the Lady Gators scored 20 points. Trinity went cold from the floor,

managing just seven in the frame, and trailed 32-22 at the half.

The Lady Crusaders would look much better on both ends in the third quarter, and held Gatewood to just seven while scoring 16 of their own to cut the deficit to just 39-38 going to the fourth.

The final period was a foul fest, and the Lady Gators went to the charity stripe a dozen times. They would only convert four of those free throws, allowing Trinity to stay close. Unfortunately, the Lady Crusaders couldn’t make enough buckets down the stretch.

Maddy George led Trinity with 16 and Brinley Vinson added 13.

A night after joining the 1,000 point club, M.G. Alligood chipped in with nine. Trinity made seven 3-pointers, but only went to the free throw line five times all night.

Natalie Sills led Gatewood with 14. Ellie McMillan had 12 and Avery Hill added 10.

The Lady Crusaders fell to 12-6 on the season, but this marks their first loss to a team not ranked in the top three of a higher classification.

The boys game was also a rollercoaster as both teams traded leads throughout the contest. Trinity was shorthanded without Jamarion Ricks and Jude Evans

who were out with illness and injury, but showed some resilience to overcome those losses.

The Crusaders trailed 15-13 after one, but outscored the Gators 18-12 in the second to take a 31-27 halftime advantage.

They went ice-cold in the third, managing just nine as Gatewood put up 14 to take a slight lead, 41-40, headed to the fourth.

Jagger George took over in the last quarter, and refused to let the Crusaders fall again. The sophomore point guard outscored Gatewood 13-9 by himself in the period, and Trinity put up 16 overall to come away with the victory.

George finished with a career-high 33. Hayden Bowles and Carter Lee chipped in with nine points each. Lake Ferman led Gatewood with 16, and Harrison Harper added 11.

The win snapped a five-game skid for Trinity overall, and in its rivalry with the Gators, which continues as the Crusaders host a rematch Friday night.

They were swept by Brentwood as region action continued last Friday night, but the girls rebounded Tuesday night to defeat Central Fellowship in a rematch of last year’s AA state championship game.

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

BY STEPHAN PASTIS

PIG AND I GOT A STORAGE UNIT.

BUT IS THAT SMART?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WELL, YOU PAY X AMOUNT FOR WHERE YOU LIVE AND THEN YOU PAY EXTRA FOR A STORAGE UNIT.

THE STORAGE UNIT IS WHERE WE'RE GONNA LIVE.

OH.

HAVE YOU SEEN THE COST OF HOUSING?

GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES AREN'T SAFE. THEY SPOIL TOO QUICKLY.

KNOW WHAT DOESN'T GO BAD?

CHEESE DOODLES!

OVERBOARD

BY CHIP DUNHAM

WHY DO I THINK I KNOW YOU?

AT THE LAST BONFIRE, YOU AND YOUR COYOTE FRIENDS TRIED TO EAT ME...

...BUT MY WIFE THREW YOU ABOUT TWENTY FEET IN THE AIR!

AH, THAT'S RIGHT. WOW...

..WELL... GOOD CATCHING UP!

YEAH, DON'T BE A STRANGER. WELL, NO. BE A STRANGER.

DEFLOCKED

BY JEFF CORRIVEAU

I'VE COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT ALL MY PROBLEMS IN LIFE ARE CAUSED BY STUPID PEOPLE.

WHEN YOU GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT -- NO STUPID PEOPLE, NO PROBLEMS!

AND WHERE IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IN ALL THIS?

OOO, SOMEONE'S ITCHING TO GET ON THE LIST.

ZIGGY

BY TOM WILSON

THE SPIRITS SAY YOU'VE BEEN SEEING ANOTHER PSYCHIC BEHIND MY BACK!!

PLUGGERS

BY JEFF MACNELLY

Thanks to Joseph H. Crowley Cranston, Rhode Island

OH, YEAH...

Pluggers always remember what they forgot ...at 2 a.m.

Couple’s marriage is mired in the doldrums of middle age!

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I have been together 30-plus years. When our love was new, it was all smiles, hand-holding and thrills when we saw each other after a long day at work or school. And, I guess, that's normal.

Now, three kids and three grandkids later, we're edging past our mid-50s and there isn't much left. There are no more smiles and no more hand-holding, only two sad adults. We still love each other. Neither of us wants to be apart from the other, but we don't know how to bring back happiness.

We hardly touch, and neither of us remembers the last time we smiled or even really laughed. We sit in the same room, living two completely different lives. I am partially disabled, so there are no more long walks or outside activities, which we used to do 20 years ago.

We are now wondering: Is this the rest of our lives? Are we going to spend the next 20-plus years in a depressing marriage in which we love each other but no longer have anything in common? Our youngest daughter is 8, and our youngest grandson is 5. We watch the kids (15, 9, 8, 5) in the evening so our eldest can work. Is there any hope



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

for us? -- SAD SPOUSE IN NEW YORK

DEAR SAD SPOUSE: You say that you and your husband love each other. There is hope for reviving your marriage if you agree to go to couples counseling together. Marriage involves more than smiles, hand-holding and thrills. It is a deep and caring partnership. Few couples can sustain the excitement of their honeymoon years. You and your husband have already done the hard work. Now you need to find your way back together.

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I were dining with friends in a high-end restaurant. The food was great, and so was the conversation. My husband leaned close to me and whispered, "She's brushing

her teeth!" I glanced to my left. I had thought the gal at the next table was just using a toothpick. No, she was vigorously brushing with a full-sized toothbrush!

After about a minute, she placed the toothbrush into a cosmetic bag and pulled out a denture container. She then proceeded to insert and adjust her retainer. We were flabbergasted. Never in all my years have I seen such appalling table manners. Perhaps we shouldn't have been staring, but it was one of those moments in which you are frozen to the spot.

Abby, that restaurant has very nice bathrooms. What is happening to our society? -- SHOCKED IN THE SOUTH

DEAR SHOCKED: I understand why this woman's performance stopped you cold. But, please, don't blame "society" for her ignorance of the rules of etiquette, which dictate that to avoid grossing out those around us in public, we should excuse ourselves from the table and take care of our oral hygiene privately, IN THE RESTROOM if needed.

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

Thursday, January 22, 2026

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES
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PATIENCE

North-South vulnerable, West deals

NORTH		EAST	
♠ Q 10 7 3		♠ 9 8 6 5 2	
♥ A 7		♥ 9 4	
♦ 2		♦ 9 7 4	
♣ 10 8 7 6 5 2		♣ Q J 9	
WEST		SOUTH	
♠ 4		♠ A K J	
♥ J 6 5 2		♥ K Q 10 8 3	
♦ K Q J 8 6		♦ A 10 5 3	
♣ A K 4		♣ 3	

The bidding:
WEST 1♦ Pass
NORTH 3♣ Pass
EAST 1♠ Pass
SOUTH 3♥ Dbl
All pass

Opening lead: King of ♦

Today's deal is from a team match in Europe. South was a player named Franco, who we believe is from Italy. He doubled at his first turn, believing that his hand was too good for a simple two-heart overcall. North valued his hand expecting partner to have at least three-card club support for his takeout double. When South

bid three hearts, he cancelled any promise of three-card support, but it did show a very good hand. North made the reasonable decision to raise with a doubleton rather than rebid his flimsy suit.

Many players would win the opening diamond lead and ruff a diamond in dummy. They would cash the ace of hearts, return to their hand with the ace of spades, and try to draw trumps with the king and queen. When that failed to bring down the jack, they would start on spades, hoping to discard a diamond on the 10 of spades. West would ruff the second spade and cash two diamonds for down one. Franco neatly avoided this by ducking the king of diamonds at trick one! The defense might have prevailed by leading two rounds of clubs at this point, but West led another diamond. Franco ruffed in dummy, cashed the heart ace, and led a spade to his king. Now three rounds of hearts put West on play with no way to defeat the contract. Well done!

(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
- 1 Tousele

5 Behaves

9 On the horizon

14 "___ Karenina"

15 Missouri neighbor

16 Argentine dance

17 School's teaching area

19 Ocean movements

20 Carpentry tool: 2 wds.

21 Make revisions to

23 NFL tiebreakers: Abbr.

24 "___ Woman": 2 wds.

26 Frozen spike

30 Turns upside-down

33 Rooster's mate

34 School's lunch area

37 Warmth

38 Lend a hand

39 Capricorn and Aries

41 Simplicity

42 Historical periods

43 Scratch pad contents

45 Clever humor

46 "I mean it!": 2 wds.

47 ___-seed bun

50 Tack on

51 Get your hands on

54 Rules of conduct

56 Kind of clear plastic

58 Rage

61 From now on

64 Language used in New Zealand

65 High cards

66 Taken by mouth

67 Snapshot

68 Zeus and Apollo

69 A few
- DOWN
- 1 Prefix with "economics"

2 Without illumination

3 Onesie fasteners

4 Impertinence

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14				15				16				
17				18				19				
20							21	22				
23				24		25		26		27	28	29
			30				31	32			33	
34	35	36							37			
38					39			40	41			
42						43			44			
45					46							
47				48	49			50		51	52	53
			54			55		56		57		
58	59	60				61	62	63				
64						65			66			
67						68			69			

Created by Stella Zawistowski

DELI	ITSY	SMASH
IVAN	SHOO	HANOI
VETS	LEAD	ALTOS
ARETHA	FRANKLIN	
AUNT	EYE	
SINNED	ALE	TECH
KNOT	SLED	SALE
ADD	RELAY	GEE
TIED	ICON	SEAL
EASE	STY	STERN
SHE	MAIN	
RECONNAISSANCE		
NOVEL	ERAS	TOLL
UPEND	TIME	ONUS
TENDS	SAID	ROBE

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- 40 Like some grapes
- 44 Northern Italian city
- 46 Not many
- 48 On the ball
- 49 Nintendo character
- 51 ___ cold brew
- 52 Starting squad
- 53 Milton of TV
- 55 Layered haircut
- 57 Money execs: abbr.
- 58 Guitar attachment
- 59 "Nope"
- 60 Sticky substance
- 62 ___friendly
- 63 Like Shiraz and Merlot

SUDOKU

	5			1				4
			4	3				
6		1	8		9			
				2				
			9	5	8		1	
								7
4	8				5			
	7					4		
1			6					2

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!

2	6	8	7	4	9	5	3	1
5	9	4	8	1	2	7	6	3
1	6	7	2	3	5	6	9	8
9	7	2	8	6	4	8	1	5
8	7	1	7	8	5	6	9	2
6	8	5	1	9	2	7	4	3
7	5	8	6	4	8	1	2	9
8	1	9	4	3	2	7	6	5
3	5	3	7	1	6	9	2	4

ANSWER:

Celebrating 121 Years in Banking

- January 18, 1904 - Dexter Banking Company was granted a charter.*
- 1933 - Taylor-Knight-Hogan - A few years later Mr. Hogan sold his interest, and it became Taylor-Knight Banking Co.*
- 1955 - Knight-Hogan Banking Company*
- 1967 - Knight State Bank*
- 1974 - New Bank opened in Downtown Dexter*
- 1990 - Opened a branch office in Dublin on Jefferson Street.*
- 2001 - Knight State Bank was purchased by State Bank of Cochran and renamed 1st Laurens Bank which identifies the bank as the descendant of the first bank in Laurens County.*
- 2003 - Opened new office on Veterans Boulevard*
- 2025 - State Bank was purchased by BankSouth*

Ben Bradshaw	48 Years	Victoria Fulford	4 Years
Scott Jackson	29 Years	Maria Chavez	4 Years
Bill Brown	16 Years	Jessica Floyd	4 Years
Stan Carr	13 Years	Tammy Rogers	4 Years
Clay Claxton	12 Years	Shelby Kight	2 Years
Cynthia Collins	11 Years	Patti Evans	2 Years
Erica Murkerson	11 Years	Angela Moore	2 Years
Jessi Norris	6 Years	Deanne Layfield	1 Year
Kammy Middlebrooks	5 Years	John Arnold	1 Year
Anita Cochran	5 Years		

* number of years banking experience

Board Members
Jackie Bowen • Ben Bradshaw
Bill Brown, III • Curtis Edwards
• Marion “Butch” Freeman
• Tim Lentile • Gerald Smith

First Laurens Bank is the oldest financial institution in the county.
First Laurens Bank’s roots are deep as our financial history goes back to 1904.
The bank has two branches in the county-one in Dublin and one in Dexter

Our name may have changed over the past one hundred twenty one years,
but our values have remained the same.

Community Banking at Its Best.



2040 Veterans Blvd.
Dublin, GA 31021
478-272-8874



Dexter Banking Company
1904



109 E. Main St.
Dexter, GA 31019
478-220-5720



A Division of

BankSouth



MLK BREAKFAST
Continued from page 1

commitment was the key, because the movement was not just about what was happening in Memphis.

“The movement continues in 2026,” Mallow said. “King knew that justice needed to reach the paycheck, classroom and the ballot box. We are still struggling with this in 2026. It is my argument that public education is still under attack. Economic inequality is still widening; healthcare remains inaccessible for too many. Folks are dying because they don’t have a doctor to go to. Hospitals are closing in communities where it takes an hour to get you to the next hospital. Wages still fail to reflect the dignity of work and justice too often requires national attention before it is applied equally.”

Mallow lifted up the names of Tyre Nicholas and Ahmaud Arbery “because forgetting is just not an option.

“Dr. King taught us that democracy demands participation, not spectatorship,” Mallow said. “Faith demands action and not comfort. And justice requires persistence and not patience alone. As the Rev. William Barber reminds us that, “we are called in this moment to be the moral defibrillators of our time.” When some wants the harden the heart of our democracy, we are



The audience joins in singing the Negro National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" /PAYTON TOWNS III

called to shock this nation. We loved to shock it with mercy and to shock it with an unrelenting demand for justice for all.”

Mallow called it a sobering reminder that African Americans are still making some first-time accomplishments in this country. He pointed out that it took until 2025 to confirm Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first African American woman to serve on U.S. Supreme Court.

“We all have a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” Mallow said. “We need to recommit ourselves to an unfinished work.”

Mallow mentioned Matt Hatchett, state representative for District 155. Both opposed a voucher scam bill

during last year’s legislative session.

“We need to demand that we fund our public schools at a meaningful level,” Mallow said. “Matt Hatchett stood in the house as I stood in the senate, and opposed a voucher scam bill. They came up with \$250 million to fund a voucher scam and that gentleman (pointing to Hatchett) stood flat-footed and said we’re not going to put it in the budget. When we are fighting to make sure everything south of I-16 is represented outside of the metro area, I can count on Matt Hatchett to be with me shoulder to shoulder. We might disagree philosophically on some things, but what we agree on is closer than you think.”

Mallow wanted every-

one to remember Colvin, who passed away on Jan. 13. He said she may be an unknown name in the Civil Rights Movement, but she was a powerful voice who led the way for the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

“In order for Dr. King to be great, there had to be good men and women who were foot soldiers in the trenches doing the work,” Mallow said. “Many of you in this room are the foot soldiers in the trenches doing the work. You may not receive the national recognition or the CNN interview, but you are doing the work. So, let us honor the known, the unknown and the unnamed, the celebrated and the overlooked, because this movement for civil rights and un-justice has always

been bigger than one person.”

Mallow reminded everyone that evil triumphs when people stand by and do nothing. If people want change, they must participate, engage and demand justice.

“Nothing would be more tragic than to give up right here in Laurens County,” Mallow said. “I, like Dr. King, want to do God’s will. If you want to do God’s will, when you see the hungry, you feed them. When you see them naked, you clothed them. When they are in the prisons, you go and minister to them. Jesus said, “When you have done them to the least of these, you will have done this for me.” Remember the least of these. Dr. King had a dream. We’ve been to the mountaintop, but there is still work to do.”

Valaya Marie Burke, who served as the breakfast’s mistress of ceremony, thanked Mallow for his speech.

“We are not only leaving here with a full belly but with a full mind,” Burke said.

The breakfast celebrated the 50th year of the Black History Festival committee’s existence.

Richard Nesbitt presented an award for Willie C. Burke to Genola Burke, who had no idea this was happening Monday.

“This is a big surprise,” Genola said. “On behalf of

the Burke family, I thank you so much.”

This is the Black Festival Committee’s 50th year.

“We want to continue to celebrate and participate with us,” said Fran Wells, president of The Dublin-Laurens Black History Festival Community Committee Inc. “This is a day of service.”

Nesbitt said the MLK Breakfast had more than 500 people in attendance this year. He said the attendance continues to grow each year.

“It seems like next year we are going to have to find another place to host this,” Nesbitt said. “We sold over 500 tickets. I want to think everyone for coming out to make this possible.”

Nesbitt also addressed the audience about showing unity.

“Unity is not just a word, it’s a condition,” he said. “We have unity in our minds, but I don’t think we have it in our hearts. No matter where we go, we talk about unity. Unity has to be a condition. We have never been so divided in my lifetime. We cannot depend on our justice system or government. We must depend on each other. We must come together and make a difference. Until we get together with unity in our minds, we are never going to be able to come together and help make Dr. King’s dream come alive.”

BLACK HISTORY
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“We are looking to have all ministers attend this,” Wells said. “It doesn’t matter what denomination, race, culture or background. If you are a minister, we want you there.”

The Youth Career Day will take place at 10 a.m. on Feb. 21 at Greater Macedonia Baptist Church. Also that day, the Legacy Readers, with a spotlight on the first, will be

held at 5 p.m. The location is to be announced.

At 7:20 p.m. that day, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., will hold a gala at Emory Thomas Auditorium.

The month of February concludes with the annual Awards Banquet, to be held at 1 p.m. at Dublin Middle School. The guest speaker will be Michael Thurmond, who served as Georgia Labor Commissioner from 1999 to 2011. Last year, Thurmond announced he would run in this year's governor's

election.

The following awards will be handed out: Senior Citizen of the Year, Man of the Year, Woman of the Year, Young Achiever of the Year, Youth of the Year, Pastor of Excellence, Humanitarian Award and Exceptional Achiever Award.

Tickets are on sale now for \$35. The banquet will be held at noon at DMS. For more information about these events, call Wells at (478) 697-7858.



Festival committee president Fran Wells/PAYTON TOWNS III

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