

## DCS launches search for new superintendent

By **RODNEY MANLEY**  
Staff Reporter

The Dublin City Board of Education launched its search for a new school superintendent Monday, voting to use the Georgia School Boards Association to conduct a nationwide search for candidates.

The new leader will face a steep challenge in turning around the struggling school system, inheriting an operating deficit that at one time was projected to reach over \$13 million by the end of the current fiscal year. The new hire will replace former Superintendent Fred Williams, who stepped down to take an early retirement in September after the school district's financial troubles surfaced.

New board member Jeff Davis suggested using the GSBA to "cast the widest net possible" to find a candidate willing and able to take on the job.

"I believe there's somebody out

there," Davis said. "Calm seas never made a good sailor."

Chairwoman Amanda Smith provided a list of seven search firms contacted by the school board. Just three responded. Two of the firms pitched proposals ranging from \$5,950 to \$66,000, but the GSBA offered to waive all costs and conduct the search for free.

"That's a huge savings for us, so we're very thankful for that," Smith said.

Georgia School Boards Association officials outlined its search services at Monday night's meeting via Zoom call and said the new superintendent could be hired as early as mid-June.

"You're looking at about a three- to four-month timeline," said GSBA Director of Superintendent Search Sam King, whose department is currently conducting searches for about a half-dozen Georgia school boards.

The GSBA will recruit candidates according to criteria set by the board

and will screen them using employment history, education and certification levels, references, background checks and other measures.

"We'll also be looking at elements of their social media for things of a questionable or concerning nature," said the GSBA's Ramona Tyson.

The candidates will be scored and placed into four tiers, with the fourth tier reserved for candidates who do not meet qualifications. Interviews could start in April, with finalists announced by the end of May.

The school board went in-house for its hiring of Williams, who took office in 2015 with the district in similarly dire financial straits. He inherited a multi-million dollar deficit and, with the aid of COVID funds, managed to get the system out of the red briefly in 2021, but left with it in possibly even worse shape.

**NEW SUPERINTENDENT**  
Continued on page 8

## Dublin City Schools ends December with \$1.4M deficit

By **RODNEY MANLEY**  
Staff Reporter

Reports from November and December show an improving financial situation for the Dublin City Schools, with the district operating at about a \$1.4 million year-to-date deficit.

The system's budget has not been amended to account for some cuts to staff and programs, so the actual numbers could be better than reported. State officials had projected the district would finish the fiscal year in June with a \$13.4 million deficit, but interim superintendent Marcee Pool said

after Monday night's meeting that the year-end shortfall is now looking more like about \$5 million.

The Dublin City Board of Education should get a clearer picture of its finances on January and February's reports, after it begins receiving city property tax revenue, which was estimated to come in at about \$14.8 million this year. The school board has had to borrow advances of about four months' allotments of this school year's state Quality Basic Education Act (QBE)

**SCHOOL BOARD**  
Continued on page 8

## Permanent stop signs coming to Madison Street

By **PAYTON TOWNS III**  
Senior Reporter

The temporary stop signs put into place during the Madison Street Project are scheduled to be replaced next month.

Dublin City Manager Josh Powell mentioned the new signs during a Downtown Merchants Association meeting held last week at the Carnegie Library.

"Those temporary signs will be replaced with permanent and decorative green lamppost-style signage as soon as those come in," Powell said. "They have been back order for a while but it is my understanding that they should be up and in place by the end of February."

Dublin Engineering Director Matthew Bradshaw said T. Lake Environmental will place four new signs at the intersections with Lawrence, Monroe and Church streets, making each intersection a four-way-stop. Before the project, these in-

tersections gave vehicles on Madison Street the right-of-way.

"I think people, in some cases, assumed and treated them like a four-way stop," Bradshaw said. "I think this is going to remove some confusion because you will stop at every intersection."

Powell also mentioned the post lights on Madison Street are "very bright."

"Georgia Power will be changing those lights out, and I don't have a date for that," he said.

In other meeting news, Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Glenda Berry announced a new program called "Live, Love, Local." In February, the DDA will have a promotion where they want downtown visitors to get a chance to pick up a card and visit at least eight businesses.

"They have to go to the businesses and get them to sign off," Berry said. "They will turn them in at Theatre Dublin on Feb. 12 or 13 to get a prize."

"Live, Love, Local" will



This intersection of Monroe and Madison streets once had a traffic signal, which was removed during the Madison Street Project. It, along with intersections with Lawrence and Church street, will now be four-way stops/PAYTON TOWNS III

begin on Feb. 2. Berry talked about some of the programs and events coming up, which included "Smokey & the Bandit" being shown at 7 p.m. on Jan. 31. Todd Gay, whose father Ronnie played a part as a state trooper chasing the Bandit, will be on hand Saturday to tell stories about his father's experience.

"People don't have to buy a ticket in advance, but we are selling them at the theatre," Berry said.

Ticket costs are \$3 for individuals and \$5 for two people.

Another upcoming event will be "The Life and Times of Hub Dudley" at 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 5.

DDA Chairman Rob

Miller told merchants about the 22nd Pig in the Park at Market on Madison, which will be held on Feb. 27 and 28, a little bit earlier than normal.

"People will have a chance to go around and talk to the teams and folks cooking," Miller said. "We are hoping people will come out and participate."

The opening night will feature singer Will Moseley, who was runner-up in the 22nd season of American Idol in a free concert.

"We expect it to be really, really crowded," Miller said. "We think the crowd could be really amazing this year."

**DOWNTOWN**  
Continued on page 8

## MGA president: 'We have been named a great college to work for'

By **PAYTON TOWNS III**  
Senior Reporter

The president for Middle Georgia State University announced the college has reached an acclaimed recognition during his annual "State of the Union" address.

MGA President Christopher Blake spoke to community leaders, faculty and staff on Wednesday, Jan. 21. Toward the end of his speech, he was excited to announce that MGSU has been named a 2025 "Great College to Work For," one of only 76 institutions nationwide to receive the honor this year.

"That is something that should help our recruitment of new employees when we have new positions or when someone retires and it should help retain people," Blake said. "It will give you the leverage to help your teams grow and help give



Middle Georgia State University President Christopher Blake talks about plans and goals during school's "State of the Union" speech/PAYTON TOWNS III

them opportunities. This is a very significant story to the world. You can have a good career at Middle Georgia

State University where you will have an opportunity to grow."

One example he gave was

the fact that the MGSU is now playing athletics in the NCAA Division II Peach Belt Conference. A few weeks ago, both MGA men and women's basketball teams beat North Georgia College.

"We also have a cross country facility - and we are going to host the Peach Belt championship - that we opened just last fall," Blake said.

MGA has already exceeded the enrollment officials had thought they would achieve by 2028.

"We are working for a plan for the future," Blake said. "We want to have a plan that will take us into a great and strong future. We have a chance to build this university in a way that most people working in the heart of education do not have. This is a wonderful campus here."

The president said they have doubled the student population at their Dublin campus. They have 450 Laurens County students taking classes at the Dublin campus.

"This is a campus with opportunity, and to our community members, we want to take advantage of those opportunities," Blake said. "We'll need you as guidance, assistance and occasionally you poking and prodding us to tell us that we are missing something here. We don't mind that."

As of the time of his speech, MGSU had the largest spring enrollment in its history.

"This is an extraordinary accomplishment," Blake

said. "This is a team effort. All of us play a role in students coming here and graduating from here. The one takeaway is more people are wanting to come to Middle Georgia to benefit from an extremely high quality and cost-effective higher education and we want to continue to provide that."

When Blake arrived at MGA 10 years ago, the school's foundation was raising \$600,000 a year. Last year, their foundation raised \$5.2 million.

"That's a record," he said. "We have never raised that much. There is belief within the organization about who we are and people willing to step up."

Before his speech, Blake met with community leaders over food and coffee. He said MGA in Dublin has been designated as the university's health campus.

"We have health and nursing programs along with physical therapy programs coming here," he said. "It's really good to be able to share that with our community partners. We

**MGA**  
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OBITUARIES



**Rickey Troy Beauferd Rentz**

Celebration of Life Services for Mr. Rickey Troy Beauferd Rentz will be held on Friday, Jan. 30, 2026, at 4 p.m.. Location: Serenity Funeral Home Chapel – 414 Telfair Street Dublin, Georgia 31021. Public viewing and visitation will be from 3 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Rickey Rentz was born on Dec. 6, 1969, to the parentage of Rickey Rentz and Eulita Fountain. He transitioned into his Heavenly home on Jan. 25, 2026, surrounded by his loving family.

He was the owner and operator of Afterhours Diesel & Auto Repair for 17 years. He enjoyed being in his shop and working in his machine room.

Rickey was preceding in death by his mother and step-father, Kay (Donald) Fountain; father and step-mother, Rickey (Laura) Rentz; grandparents, Beauferd and Merle Holton and Troy (Zelphia) Rentz; and uncle, Charles “Wayne” Holton.

He leaves to cherish his memories his wife of 33 years, Sandra Rentz; daughter, Toya Rentz (Cody Olson) of East Dublin, Georgia; son and daughter-in-law, Wayne (Caitlin) Rentz of East Dublin, Georgia; grandchildren, John, Waylon, and Willow Rentz; father-in-law, Grady Coleman of Dublin, Georgia; sisters, Leanne Rentz (Michael Mays) of Adel, Georgia and Cassie (Trey) Dunbar of Moultrie, Georgia; step-brother, Marcus (Stefanie) Fountain of Tennessee; step-sister, Sarah (Chris) Baggett of Dublin, Georgia; and his companions: Bear Bear, Tator Tot and Waffle.

Serenity Funeral Home – Dublin has charge of arrangements.

**Charles D. Harrell**

Graveside funeral services for Charles D. Harrell, 75 will be held at 11 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026 at Dublin Memorial Gardens.

Mr. Harrell was born Jan. 18, 1950, in Tennessee. He was the son of the late Brooks Harrell and Martha Jane Burks Harrell. He was retired from Middle Tenn. Mental Health Institute. He was of the Christian faith. Mr. Harrell passed away Monday, Jan. 12, 2026 at Dublin Trails Nursing Home.

Mr. Harrell is survived by a close family friend, Gary Adamson of Dublin and his family who always treated and loved Mr. Harrell like family.

Stanley Funeral Home and Crematory/Dublin Chapel has charge of funeral arrangements.



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**Josephine “Jo” Parkerson Smith**

Josephine “Jo” Parkerson Smith, 93, died Monday, Jan. 26, 2026.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, in Bay Springs Free-will Baptist Church, with interment in Bay Springs Cemetery.

Survived by her daughter – Burdette Wheeler (Jimmy); son – Dr. Wayne Smith (Mandy); grandchildren – Holly White (Kevin), Kelli Beverly (Corey), Brent Wheeler (Katie), Jonathan Smith (Megan) and Jennifer Wells (Chayne); and 12 great-grandchildren.

The family will receive friends in Bay Springs Free-will Baptist Church Thursday, Jan. 29, from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.

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

**Kalie Marie Wright**

Kalie Marie Wright, 40, of Eastman, Ga., passed away on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 27, at Eastman First Christian Church, with interment in Woodlawn Cemetery.

She is survived by her children – Ethan, Abbi and Benjamin; mother – Irene Smith York (Bert); father – Randall Wright (Cindy); and siblings – Ashley Conway, Matt Wright, Cole Wright, Amber York and Brian York.

The family will receive friends in Eastman First Christian Church from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 27.

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



**Mary E. Wright**

Celebration of Life Services for Mrs. Mary E. Wright will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026. Location: Antioch Baptist Church – 133 E Trilby Street Wrightsville, Georgia 31096.

Mary Ellen Martin Wright was born on Nov. 7, 1951, in Wrightsville, Georgia to the parentage of Robert Martin Sr. and Willie Pearl Wright.

At an early age, Mary joined the Antioch Baptist Church and attended faithfully until her health declined. She loved being a part of the “Women of Grace” ministry at the church. She attended Johnson County High School, which she never graduated from; however, she was determined to receive her diploma and ultimately pursued and received her GED. She further her education and became a Master Cosmetologist. Mary spent many of her working years in retail, working at Walmart for over 20 years, before retiring in 2016.

Mary entered her eternal rest on Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026. She was preceded in death by her husband of 41 years, Thomas A. Wright, her parents, and her brother whom she loved dearly, Robert “Luck” Martin.

She leaves to cherish

**Popular support growing for ban on cellphones in Georgia high schools**

By **TY TAGAMI**  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Georgia high school sophomores are looking ever more likely to lose their phones during the school day in their senior year, as lawmakers consider expanding a ban on personal devices.

New surveys suggest overwhelming support for the idea from parents and teachers. A ban from kindergarten through middle school takes effect next fall after state lawmakers passed it last year.

Now, the author of that law has legislation that would extend the ban to high schools starting in fall 2027.

Rep. Scott Hilton, R-Peachtree Corners, said he expects House Bill 1009 to get a first hearing in a couple of weeks.

Hilton said he had heard universal support from parents and teachers about his K-8 ban. Although the prohibition will not be enforced statewide until the fall, many schools have voluntarily banned phones ahead of schedule. He said he expects an expansion to high school to be similarly popular, with some caveats about logistics for older students.

“The concerns I’ve heard thus far are more around

scheduling, you know, after school activities, things like that,” Hilton said.

New surveys indicate broad support for phone-free schools.

More than two-thirds of the roughly 3,000 administrators, teachers and other educators surveyed in 176 school districts by Georgia’s largest teacher association liked the idea, according to results out this week. High school teachers were even more enthusiastic, with 83% calling for a cellphone ban.

“Why do they want these bans? Because they believe that phones are very disruptive,” said Margaret Ciccarelli, director of legislative services for the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, which surveyed its members last fall.

Similarly, a survey released this week by the Emory Center for Child Health Policy found 71% of responding Georgia parents want the K-8 cellphone ban extended to high schools.

Their answers in the survey, also taken last fall, indicate that they believe a ban would lead to more learning and social interaction and would improve mental health.

The 29% of parents who opposed a high school ban were mostly concerned about being disconnected from their child during a school emergency.

“Parents’ concerns about emergency access are valid and understandable. However, effective cell-

phone policies can address this by establishing rapid parent notification systems and guaranteed access to phones when needed,” Julie Gazmararian, professor of epidemiology at the Rollins School of Public Health, wrote in a report about the survey. “Strong support for high school cellphone bans among parents suggests broad public readiness for policy action.”

Safety experts have testified at the Capitol that a phone in a student’s hand during an emergency can be a dangerous distraction from safety instructions given by teachers and emergency responders.

But Layla Contreras, 24, said people who think high school students do not need their phone in an emergency have never lived through one.

Her sister, Sasha, is a senior at Apalachee High School in Barrow County and texted her when a gunman entered the school in September 2024, killing four.

Contreras said her sister, 17, texted her to tell her the emergency was real — and that she loved her.

Layla Contreras added that the school was locked down again last week after a false alarm. Sasha texted her that time to relay the news, too.

Layla Contreras said high school students need their phones in an emergency and should be taught how to use them responsibly the rest of the time.

“We need to teach our

kids more discipline and more responsibility rather than just taking it away, because when they enter the workforce,” she said, “they’re not going to take away their phones.”

The ban expansion has high-powered support. House Speaker Jon Burns, R-Newington, said in early January that he expected a “lively discussion” about banning cellphones in high school, acknowledging the competing views of those who see devices as a liability on regular school days versus those who see them as an asset during a crisis.

“Some of that communication certainly is good for the parent to understand that the child is safe,” Burns said, “but it also interferes with the safety protocols in the schools.”

On the Senate side, a bipartisan study committee empaneled by Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, a Republican, recommended a ban on cellphones in high schools.

And in a hearing last week, Richard Woods, the state superintendent of schools, asked lawmakers for such a ban. The Republican elected official said his teacher and student advisory councils, the latter including a student shot at Apalachee High, rank mental health as the top concern for students.

Studies show the negative academic impact and emotional strain of screen time, Woods said. “This is both an academic and a mental health issue.”

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**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 school-teacher 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.

**BIRTHDAYS**

Jan. 29  
**DeAldria O’Neal**  
**Timothy Podesta**  
**Kevin Walden**  
**Sheila Yancey**

Jan. 30  
**Brynlee Bullard**  
**Ellen Fielder**  
**Rosa Snell**  
**Billy D. Wicker**

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# The et cetera chronicles - vol. 123: Twiggs

**A WILD HIGH SCHOOL REUNION** - There are often high school reunions far, far from home. They come to weddings, funerals, and meetings. When Sgt. Howard H. Hill, Sgt. Edward C. Maddox, Corp. John S. Bagganly, and PFC Earl F. Sims met on the 4th of July 1948; they were astonished. The four graduates of Danville, Georgia High School met far, far away at Yokota Air Force Base, some fifty miles away from Tokyo, Japan. Atlanta Journal, July 5, 1948.

**HE IS A HUMAN BEING** - In Middle Georgia during the early decades of the 20th Century, a newspaper reader would not normally read stories like this one. When it came to stories of black and white people, they were stories of lynching, killing and other unspeakable acts. This story is an exception to the rule and, more importantly, more common than one might think.

The story begins on Big Sandy Creek near Danville, Georgia. On May 9, 1933, a black farm worker fell into a swollen stream. Once, twice and then three times the drowning man went down into the freshet. On the banks of the creek stood State Rep. Allen W. Daughtry.

Daughtry knew the victim and was not just going to stand by and watch the impending tragedy. Rep. Daughtry dove into the rushing waters. The third time, as they say, "was the charm." Daughtry brought the man up. Daughtry's farm foreman, Ben F. Holton, aided the rescuer and rescuee to the creek bank. Atlanta Constitution, May 10, 1933.

**A NOBLE LIEUTENANT** - Lt. George J. Nobles Jr. was a member of the ubiquitous Nobles family of Danville, Ga.,

and Twiggs County, Ga. During World War II in Italy, Lt. Nobles found himself in a brutal battle. Nobles led his men through an intense barrage as they crawled toward a bridge to cross a river. Several men were wounded. The lieutenant came to the aid of as many of his men as he could. Nobles continued to push his command across an icy bridge in the face of intense machine gun fire. During the battle, Lt. Nobles was seriously wounded and taken from the battlefield. For his distinguished and conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States was awarded the Silver Star, the nation's third-highest medal for heroism. Atlanta Constitution, Aug. 13, 1944.

**THE QUEEN OF QUILT** - Jeffersonville's "Aunt" Mary Liza Hand loved quilting more than freezing sleeper loves quilts. Mrs. Hand started at a young age. In 1919, Mary Liza lost more than 150 homemade and hand-pierced quilts when her home burned. With only 15 quilts, stored in a bedroom, in Christmas of 1938, Mrs. Hand had built her inventory back to the 150 level. Oh, by the way, "Aunt" Mary Liza Hand was 70 years old and not ready to stop. The Atlanta Constitution, Jan. 19, 1939.

**COOKIE TO THE RESCUE** - The battle of Anzio, Italy, was no easy wade into the shorelines of Italy. One Jeffersonville man, Armour Floyd, Cook Second Class, United States Navy, jumped into action. When fires started aboard Floyd's ship, the U.S.S. Plunkett, it was Floyd who abandoned his post in the galley and ran through the blazing infernos caused by intense enemy fire. Floyd's gallantry

## PIECES OF OUR PAST



By **SCOTT B. THOMPSON SR.**

was cited by the Navy in the face of grave peril, and his tenacious devotion to duty was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service. In addition to being a kitchen cook, Floyd's commendation was a somewhat rare commendation for an African-American naval cook during World War II. Macon Telegraph, July 18, 1944.

**THE FOUR COUNTY BANK** - On the 16th of September 1941, a new bank opened in Allentown, named the Four County Bank. The new bank was designed to serve four counties: Laurens, Wilkinson, Twiggs and Bleckley. At the time, there was no bank between Dudley and Macon. A.W. Daughtry was the first president, aided by vice-president, T.E. Lee. The board of directors was composed of Hembree Carroll, assistant cashier, Homer Chance, director, Grady Toney, director, and A.T. Land, director. Macon Telegraph, Sept. 16, 1941.

### DID YOU KNOW ...?

## Can hoarding be fatal?

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

And as soon as it started, January is over.

Well, almost, anyway. Now that we have moved a little deeper into the new year 2026, let me ask you: How is it going? I hope it's going as well as it possibly can for you.

Want to share your story? E-mail me at [didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com](mailto:didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com) and I'll answer as quickly as I can.

Meanwhile, let's move along to the trivia you came here for. Thanks so much for reading and enjoying the silliness that follows!

*Did you know ...*

... a popular children's poet wrote a big hit song? Shel Silverstein (1930-1999), famous for children's poetry and books such as *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, wrote the classic country-western song "A Boy Named Sue," which became a hit for singer Johnny Cash (1932-2003). Cash first heard the song when Silverstein sang it for him at a party at Cash's home in Hendersonville, Tennessee, in 1969. Little known is the fact that, in 1978, Silverstein wrote a "prequel" to the song called "The Father of A Boy Named Sue," telling the story from the dad's viewpoint. (Believe me, life ain't easy.)

... raw kidney beans can poison you? Raw kidney beans contain a chemical called phytohaemagglutinin (no, I do not know how to pronounce it). This chemical can cause vomiting and headaches after just a small handful of raw beans have been ingested. Cooking the beans removes the chemical from them. (Thankfully.)

... hoarding can be fatal? Just ask the brothers Homer (1881-1947) and Langley Collyer (1885-1947). The Collyer brothers were rather odd residents of New York City, and following the death of their mother they lived in seclusion in their family home. The two men obsessively collected books, furniture, musical instruments and just about anything else. The collection

became an obsession, and soon their three-story home was crammed from floors to ceilings with junk. Passages were carved through the stuff to enable the men to move around, and - fearing someone would break in and steal their possessions - the two created elaborate booby traps in the junk. After Homer went blind and became paralyzed, Langley dedicated himself to taking care of his older sibling. In late March of 1947, though, neighbors called Police to investigate a foul smell coming from the home. After finally breaking in through an upstairs window, Police found the body of Homer Collyer. He had died of starvation. But that wasn't the source of the smell; further digging through the incred-

ibly crammed interior of the house finally led to the origin of the aroma - the discovery of Langley Collyer's body, about ten feet from where Homer had been discovered a few weeks before. Langley had been crushed by one of the booby traps set in the junk about three weeks before Homer died. He was unable to bring the paralyzed Homer any food, and Homer starved.

... tennis players are not allowed to swear if they're playing at Wimbledon? The fact that many players come from countries where English is not the primary language isn't an issue, either - line judges have to learn curse words in all of the languages spoken by the participants, so nobody can get away with breaking that

rule. (Well, darn.)

... a Star Wars actor accepted his role only after an odd request was granted? Samuel L. Jackson (born 1948) accepted the role of Jedi master Mace Windu in *The Phantom Menace* only after he was allowed to wield a purple lightsaber. Producer George Lucas (born 1944) agreed after Jackson said he wanted to be able to find himself in large battle scenes, and having a purple lightsaber would make that easier. (A noble request, if you ask me.)

... former President Jimmy Carter (1924-2024) was a speed reader? Carter could read at a rate of 2,000 words per minute, and retained most of what he read. (That's fast!)

*Now ... you know!*

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OUR TAKE...



For more than 30 years, Mrs. Harriett Claxton has been a part of The Courier Herald staff writing "85 Years Ago" and "50 Years Ago."

Here's to you, Mrs. Claxton

"Hello. Good morning," are words we heard every time Mrs. Harriett Claxton greeted us in the newsroom. And no matter what was going on, those words made our day.

Mrs. Claxton joined the staff of The Courier Herald in 1995, picking up the local history column started by former editor W.H. Champion. She started "85 Years Ago" that April and they have been published in the newspaper ever since. In October of 2003, Mrs. Claxton began "50 Years Ago."

Mrs. Claxton's columns gave us an insight to how life was in Dublin-Laurens County, and many times they showed us that even though things have changed, they are really still the same. We have been able to see family members and friends who made it into the news in the past and read stories about what happened in our community.

During the groundbreaking for the Northside Fire Station, it was mentioned how that particular building had been in the works for approximately 50 years. We knew that because Mrs. Claxton included it in her column.

For three decades, Mrs. Claxton has brightened our days with her wit and wisdom. She kept us on our toes with her comments, and we have enjoyed working with her. It was always good to see her reaction when we had food in the newsroom. Occasionally, she would surprise us with some doughnuts, cookies or something from the Little Debbie aisle in the grocery store.

Almost 10 years ago, a former co-worker found a camel at a yard sale and brought it to the newsroom to be put out on the counter every Wednesday. Mrs. Claxton wanted to see the camel, which she would touch for good luck, every week. She would let her disappointment be known if the camel had not been placed on the counter by the time she walked in on Wednesdays.

Besides working in the office, we were always happy to see Mrs. Claxton out in the community leading in the "Pledge of Allegiance" and "American Creed" at the beginning of many programs held around town.

Today, from 2 to 4 p.m., we are inviting the community to come out to the Carnegie Library where we will honor Mrs. Claxton, as she steps away from her role at The Courier Herald, for everything she has done to help us here in the office and the information she has researched from our past archives and shared with the world.

Thank you, Mrs. Claxton, for all you have done to keep us informed of our history both 85 and 50 years ago.

— The Newsroom

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

- January 29, 2026 is...
- National Puzzle Day
- National Corn Chip Day
- Curmudgeons Day
- Freethinkers Day

The Courier Herald

LOCAL MATTERS



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

In politics, process is power and always ongoing

A former Georgia House Majority Leader once told his caucus "Never confuse what you do when campaigning with what you (have to) do when governing."

There is some wisdom in this statement. What voters demand they be told in order for candidates to be elected and re-elected is often very different from the hard choices that must be made when governing.

This is not to feed a trope that says "politicians always say one thing and do another". It's instead to demonstrate that slogans and actions now live in almost parallel universes, where campaigns are centered on feelings. It's the job of those elected to channel these vibes into actual policies.

Campaigns are designed to show you, the voters, how you will be winners. The missing details would show tradeoffs – what must be given up in order to get something. In campaigns these details become lines of attack for the opposition. Good policy can often die due to a bad campaign.

The Georgia General Assembly is now officially in the process of governing. The one constitutional requirement is that they deliver a balanced budget to the Governor at the end of their session. Anything else they choose to tackle is up to them.

The process of campaigns is also ongoing. Many of the state's top positions are without incumbents. Qualifying officially occurs the first week of March, inside the Capitol.

The first week of March also contains "Crossover Day", the deadline for a bill to pass either chamber for it to be considered by the other this year. As such, the politics of campaigning now marches side by side with the politics of governing. Broad and purposely vague slogans will meet those details that not only will determine spending and policy for this year, but will set up the base spending scenarios for those soon to be elected.

GEORGIA POLITICS



By CHARLIE HARPER

Despite campaign influences, the governing process remains the same. In the middle of this mix, the power subtly shifts.

Governor Brian Kemp holds line-item veto power, lest any legislator get the idea that he's irrelevant in this process. And yet, the final accountability for the finished product will lay at the feet of those who remain in office next year.

Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones hopes to hold that veto pen next year, while presiding over the Senate chamber this year. Central to his campaign is a plan to eliminate the state's income tax over time, with the first step to exempt each individual's first \$50,000 of income from taxation. A lot of the details of where the spending would be cut or what other revenues would be raised and from whom would presumably come once Jones has the Governor's mansion – and the power of the veto pen.

House Speaker Jon Burns, meanwhile, wants to eliminate property taxes for Georgia's homeowners. This comes from growing frustrations with local governments who both collect and spend property tax revenues, and have allowed rising real estate prices to grow their tax collections and local spending.

The details for either plan will eventually have to come out in the state's budget. Each Appropriations Chairman will work with his committees to arrive not only at a budget for this

year, but with eyes looking through to next year's challenges and changes, and beyond.

The Senate Budget Chairman responsible for reconciling these pledges into details is Blake Tillery of Vidalia. He, too, is running for a different office. By anecdotal accounts and the sparse public polling available, he seems to be doing well in the crowded field to replace Jones as the Lieutenant Governor. He also chaired the LG's committee on how to eliminate the state income tax.

There is no policy daylight between the Lt. Governor who would be Governor and the Appropriations Chairman who would replace him on the issue of phasing out the income tax. Both are charting their political futures on it, with the power of their current office part of the institutional process to help get them there.

There is always risk in future elections of who holds power now versus who

might in the future. The other side of this risk coin is the House Appropriations Chairman, Matt Hatchett of Dublin. Given the high likelihood that Republicans will retain control of the legislature after the elections, he's the most certain of those in the budget process to be in the same seat – and to wield the same power.

Those campaigning for statewide office will get the most headlines, and they should. Within the Capitol, however, stability and certainty are currency. Both Appropriations Chairmen hold an outsized amount of power and influence over the entire legislative process that extends well beyond the budget.

Chairman Tillery has a decent chance to direct not just the Budget but the entire Senate next year. In the Capitol's power players, that gives him currency now with an upside option for the future.

When it comes to landing the plane with details this year and next, however, don't sleep on Matt Hatchett. He's the one who must internalize that this year's details will become next year's problems or opportunities.

His peers know he'll be acting today for the starting point they will begin with this time next year, under new leadership with new goals and agendas. They understand and value this stability in a season of change. That directly equates to even more political power.



Food is a way to bring people together

Over the years, I have been fortunate enough to travel from my humble beginnings on a farm in middle Georgia to far-away places like Italy and France—and I maintain that it is virtually impossible to have a bad meal at either locale.

A village in France that has no stop light or stop sign will certainly have a restaurant that will offer a tasty meal paired with an inviting local wine—modest, perhaps, but certainly uplifting to the palate and the stomach. If you find yourself at a family restaurant in Italy, you may get the family's own unlabeled wine from their backyard vineyard to go with the best pasta you ever tasted.

In the U.S., regional influences have long prevailed. It only makes sense that with Vermont's signature maple syrup that there would be a public boast from some restaurant that it makes the "World's Greatest Pancakes."

And it seems that the truism "necessity is the mother of invention" can most aptly be applied to the unlikely combination known as shrimp and grits. The impoverished people of our coastal communities gave us that glorious dish. Shrimp from the sea didn't cost anything and it was easy to obtain cornmeal, which was dirt cheap. As a result, we have a meal that in the big city costs an upscale diner more than the poor families made in a week.

Then there is that thing called barbecue—not the grill, but the meat the grill

creates. No food has more regional influences than this popular mealtime item, which can be pork or beef or, if you are in Montana, mountain oysters. Rest easy—I'll leave it at that.

Those who cook barbecue usually experiment, and some never stop. The sauces and the rubs make a difference with many BBQ aficionados. Some recipes are handed down, and some purveyors listen to the suggestions of friends, neighbors, and customers. The taste test usually dictates the ratings of a "BBQ joint."

There is an art to cooking barbecue, and no one has the market cornered—yet there are many who swear by those who cook barbecue for a living. You could have two BBQ joints side by side, both with different menus, and half the people will swear by one while never darkening the door of the other.

Our neighbors Bree and Richard Hayes have just written a book about dining establishments that have received their blessing as the best barbecue places in and around Athens, the home of the University of Georgia and the tailgatin' Bulldogs. They agreed that they would only research and write about the best barbecue restaurants within 30 minutes of their home on Milledge Circle in the Five Points section of Athens.

Their research is very good, but would you expect anything less from two college professors with PhDs? Many pros like to eat and to experiment with food—include this couple in that



By LORAN SMITH

category. Bree grew up in Maryland, near Washington, learning to cook from Southern family members.

Richard, whose birthplace was Boston, acquired a taste for Southern cuisine, with BBQ often trumping all other dishes. He's now a bona fide expert, with his favorite savory recipes dancing around in his head alongside his psychology counseling expertise that has brought him academic acclaim.

When Richard and Bree settled in Athens, lunch was often a matter of convenience. For Richard, grabbing a pulled-pork sandwich at Springhouse on Broad Street resulted in him becoming a connoisseur. Now he is a "Damn Good Dawg" who can make a "damn good plate" of barbecue, which he often does for family and friends, resulting in nothing but rave reviews.

Then there are Bree's side dishes: Brunswick stew, cole slaw, collards, and mac and cheese. And if you want

dessert, then she has a banana cake that would bowl over Paula Deen. If that doesn't make the Hayeses as Southern as Lewis Grizzard or John T. Edge, then take note of Richard padding around the house in his bare feet.

"Food has the greatest social connection," says Richard Lewis, who with his partner Susan DeRose owns Bones Restaurant, a famous steak house in Atlanta. "Food keeps people connected, which is important for society."

That is why barbecue and country music is a near-perfect pairing.

John Currence, chef-owner of the popular City Grocery in Oxford, Mississippi, and winner of the James Beard Award in 2009 for the category "Best Chef, South," says this: "Barbecue is, like football, religion in the South. For every region there is a variety of its own, and the people of that region stand proudly behind their 'Q' because in their minds, nothing else measures up. Simply put, it is a study in ethnocentricity. Barbecue is a way of life for us."

John T. Edge, host of the popular network TV show "TrueSouth" and perhaps the best-known food expert with a firsthand knowledge of food, and especially barbecue, says that "Barbecue is a vestige of our rural and agricultural past, still blowing smoke in the present."

Travel the BBQ trail blazed by Richard and Bree Hayes in their excellent book, and you will likely conclude that you have been not just filled but fulfilled.

**Dublin Police Department**

- On Jan. 13, around 2:35 p.m., an officer was working at Hillcrest Elementary School when he smelled a strong odor from the hallway coming from the office area.

The officer entered the office and asked a man, later identified as Keandre Kynitez Swint, 29, to step outside the office. The man was there to check out a student.

The officer asked the man if he had anything on him and the man pulled out a colorful bag from his pants pocket, which contained marijuana.

Swint was arrested and transported to the sheriff's office where he was released to the jail staff and charged with possession of marijuana less than an ounce.

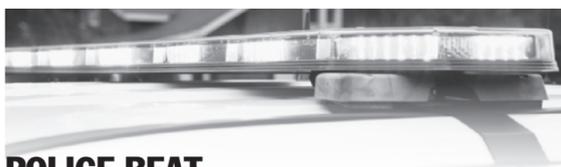
- Lorie Bryan, 49, was charged with possession of methamphetamine on East Jackson Street around 1:55 p.m. on Jan. 15.

An officer made a traffic stop on a red Chevrolet truck for a seatbelt violation. He saw the passenger, later identified as Bryan, appear nervous.

The officer asked her if she had anything on her. She replied yes. Bryan removed the suspected meth and placed it on the back of the truck. She was arrested. The driver was released with a verbal warning for the seatbelt violation.

The suspected meth field tested for positive results.

- On Jan. 12, around 1:16 p.m., officers responded to Rosewood Drive in reference to a domestic.



**POLICE BEAT...**

- Anthony Antonio Spann, 33, was charged with criminal trespass at the Dublin Housing Authority on Dewey Street around 3:07 p.m. on Jan. 13.

An officer received a call about Spann being at the location. When the officer arrived, he saw Spann walking on the property. The officer was aware that Spann had been banned from the DHA property and had a history of violent behavior.

The officer talked with

Spann while waiting for additional units to arrive. He was eventually arrested and searched but no contraband was found.

Spann was transported to the Laurens County Detention Center where he was released to the on-duty jail staff without further incident.

**Laurens County Sheriff's Office**

- On Jan. 5, around noon, a deputy was cleaning out one of the closets in

the office at the courthouse. A cardboard box filled with multiple drug related items such as pipes and drug paraphernalia were discovered.

The deputy was unaware how long it had been in that closet. A few of the evidence bags had the years 2006 and 2007 written on them. Also one evidence bag had CHAMPS training on it. The deputy was taking the box to the sheriff's evidence custodian to be destroyed.

- Property was damaged on Candi Lane in Rentz around 10 a.m. on Jan. 14.

- Anthony Jones, 64, of Dublin, was charged with criminal trespass on Springhaven Road in Dexter around 8:52 a.m. on Jan. 14.

- James Benefield, 54, of Soperton, was driving while

license suspended or revoked at the intersection of Highway 199 and Sawmill Road around 4:35 p.m.

- A deputy responded to shots fired around 7:21 p.m. on Jan. 19.

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



**TELL IT!**

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

**In September, the Dublin city clerk was arrested and fired because of theft from her church. Why hasn't she been indicted yet? Has it been swept under the rug?**

**What that woman did with that church doesn't have anything to do with the taxpayers.**

**Littering in Laurens County** is not only disgraceful but it can also cause accidents. On Ga. 329, that happened when someone lost a trash bag in the roadway and obviously kept going. This caused someone's nice classic vehicle and another vehicle to collide and caused damage to both. This could have been avoided if people

were considerate and cared about their county.

**A lot of words on** why the tax bill was late, but not a one about the homestead exemptions voted on and approved by the voters. Doesn't Dublin city and the school district have a homestead exemption?

**Laurens County may** be the only place in America where the private Christian school has to leave the county wrestling championship early for fighting!

**The St. Patrick's Pageant** Saturday was chaos! Age groups were combined, girls were double crowned, supremes added and money to enter them asked for at the pageant. Girls won cat-

egories they didn't enter.

**I hope the Dublin City Schools** is on the front burner of the GBI and I hope it doesn't linger like it has all of this school term.

**The Dublin City School System** cannot be trusted. This has been going on for a long, long time. The schools need to be consolidated and we only have one board. We cannot continue with the current board of Dublin City Schools. No one trusts them!

**How come gas near interstate 441S** is cheaper than Kroger, Walmart, Circle K and convenience stores on Highway 80 West? It is 20 cents more.

**NEWS DIGEST**

The Laurens County Board of Elections and Registration will hold their regular monthly meeting on Monday, Feb. 2 at 5 p.m. in the board of elections and registration office of the Laurens County Courthouse Annex building located at

117 E. Jackson St., Suite A. The agenda follows:

- Call to order
- Invocation
- Roll call
- Recognition of visitors
- Minutes of previous meeting
- Old business

- Discussion of office procedures

- Revenue expenditures and outlay
- New business
- Preparing for the 2026 election year
- Executive session

**Local 7-day Forecast:**

**The next 48 hours:**

**THURSDAY:** Plenty of sunshine. **53°** Sunrise: 7:28 a.m.

**THURSDAY NIGHT:** Partly cloudy and cold. **29°** Sunset: 6:02 p.m.

**FRIDAY DAY:** Mostly cloudy. **56°** Sunrise: 7:28 a.m.

**FRIDAY NIGHT:** Clouds breaking. **31°** Sunset: 6:03 p.m.

 <b>Saturday</b> 1/31 HIGH/LOW <b>37/18</b> Breezy and colder with snow possible, mixing with rain late in the day. Sunrise: 7:28 a.m. Sunset: 6:02 p.m.	 <b>Sunday</b> 2/1 HIGH/LOW <b>42/19</b> Brisk and cold with sunshine. Sunrise: 7:26 a.m. Sunset: 6:05 p.m.	 <b>Monday</b> 2/2 HIGH/LOW <b>44/26</b> Partly sunny and cold. Sunrise: 7:26 a.m. Sunset: 6:06 p.m.	 <b>Tuesday</b> 2/3 HIGH/LOW <b>54/28</b> Partly sunny. Sunrise: 7:25 a.m. Sunset: 6:07 p.m.	 <b>Wednesday</b> 2/4 HIGH/LOW <b>58/39</b> Sun and areas of high clouds. Sunrise: 7:24 a.m. Sunset: 6:07 p.m.
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**River levels...**

Oconee (at Dublin) .....	7.08'
Ocmulgee (at Macon) .....	8.98'

**Classifieds**  
**Employment**

**COLLECTOR**  
The City of Dublin is currently accepting applications for a Collector in our Sanitation Department. The Collector performs routine, unskilled heavy manual labor in the collection of refuse. Work involves the collection of trash, rubbish and debris and loading it into the collection vehicles. The tasks are usually arduous and normally are of a routine and repetitive nature, requiring the employee on occasion to operate the packer truck. Work is performed under the direct supervision of the Sanitation Supervisor and the Public Works Department. Applicants must have a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and a valid Georgia Driver's license. The successful applicant must pass a drug screen. Salary is \$33,238.40 annually. An extensive fringe benefit package including health, dental and life insurance is also offered. Applicants may apply online through our www.cityofdublin.org website until position is filled. The City of Dublin is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGER AT RISK SERVICES**

The Laurens County Board of Commissioners (LCBC) is soliciting statements of qualifications from firms interested in providing Construction Management At-Risk (CMA) services for the Renovations and Additions to the Laurens County Senior Center in East Dublin, Georgia. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeks to identify potential providers of the above-mentioned services. Some firms that respond to this RFQ, who are determined by the Owner to be especially qualified, may be deemed eligible and may be invited to offer proposals for these services. LCBC reserves the right to reject any or all statements of qualifications or proposals, and to waive technicalities and informalities at their discretion.

The project involves all site work and building Renovations and Additions to the existing Laurens County Senior Center located at 112 Nathaniel Drive, East Dublin, Georgia.

The prospective CMA firms will provide preconstruction services which may include, without limitation, technical review, cost verification, cost evaluation, value engineering, schedule development, and schedule evaluation, in addition to management of the construction. In addition, CMA firms will be responsible for methods of construction, safety, and the scheduling and coordination of the work of all construction and miscellaneous contracts required for completion of the project within its predetermined budget and schedule. The successful CMA will be required to work collaboratively with the Architect and the Owner.

Interested parties should contact Bryan Rogers, County Administrator, to obtain a copy of the RFQ document. CMA firms wishing to submit their qualifications in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Request for Qualifications package must do so on or before Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 2:00 P.M.

**Mr. Bryan Rogers**  
County Administrator  
117 E Jackson Street Dublin, GA 31040  
e-mail: rogersb@dlcga.com  
phone: (478) 272-4755  
fax: (478) 272-3895

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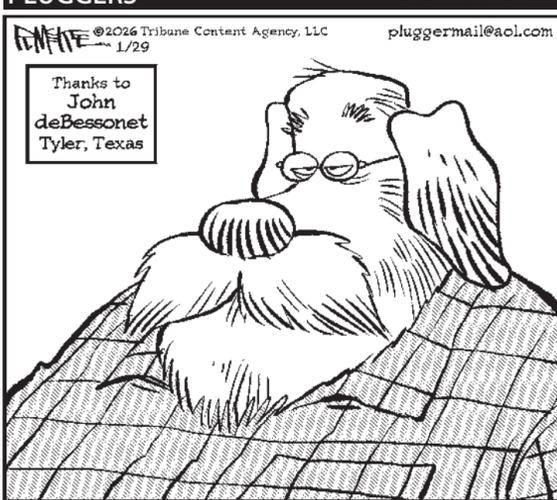
DEFLOCKED



ZIGGY



PLUGGERS



Most pluggers grow beards to reduce the amount of face area they need to shave.

Husband wants young family to uproot for a new job!



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I are raising our 7-month-old daughter together, and we generally get along well. I love him very much, but he has a habit that worries me. He's constantly on the lookout for a new job. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but every couple of months he says he's bored and wants to work somewhere else. These are decent-paying jobs, but they never pay much more than what he's earning now. They are also not always located in the same city or even the same state we live in.

I don't oppose moving away or moving up, but I don't want to move clear across the country when the benefit won't significantly add to what we have now and the relocation creates a burden with moving expenses.

Recently, my father made an offhand comment during a conversation about a business that offers good pay, benefits, etc. -- nearly the same benefits and pay my husband is receiving now. It would require that we move out of state, and I'd have to search for a new job.

My husband has been at his current job less than a year, and I have been at mine less than six months. We just signed a new lease on our apartment. He wants to break the lease and move. What can I do to convince him that this is not a strategic move

keep ants away. That's not all. Every time they open their garage door, we get blasted with the stench. It is so pungent we must retreat inside our house, which is about 80 feet from their property. We can't open our windows, sit on our deck or do yard work outside until their garage door comes down. I don't know how they stand it. How can we let them know it's affecting our quality of life without causing a permanent rift? -- STUNK OUT IN PENNSYLVANIA

for our family at this time? -- STRESSED-OUT WIFE AND MOM

DEAR STRESSED-OUT: I don't recommend breaking your lease and moving at this point because it will damage your credit. I don't know what your husband's problem is -- whether he has trouble getting along with his co-workers or attention deficit disorder -- but things won't improve until you determine the cause.

Neither of you has a solid job history. In a few short years, your daughter is going to be in preschool, and you do not want to constantly disrupt her education or socialization. Stay put until a move will be more financially beneficial.

DEAR ABBY: An elderly couple moved in next door. They once mentioned that they believed mothballs would

DEAR STUNK OUT: Contact your local health department to report what you are enduring and to share your concerns. Mothballs are not supposed to be used in the manner you have described. If you live in an area with a homeowner's association, it also may be able to help. However, if there ISN'T one, you may have to bite the bullet and ask these neighbors to close their garage door more quickly because the scent of mothballs is making you ill.

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 29, 2026

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES  
©2026 Tribune Content Agency, LLC

IMAGINATION

East-West vulnerable, North deals

**NORTH**  
♠ Q 9 7  
♥ A 8 6  
♦ K J 9 2  
♣ K J 7

**WEST**  
♠ K  
♥ J 10 9 7 5 4 2  
♦ 8 4  
♣ 9 6 5

**EAST**  
♠ J 10 6 5  
♥ K Q  
♦ 10 7 6 3  
♣ 10 8 4

**SOUTH**  
♠ A 8 4 3 2  
♥ 3  
♦ A Q 5  
♣ A Q 3 2

The bidding:  
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST  
1♠ Pass 1♠ Pass  
INT Pass 2♠ Pass  
3♠ Pass 6♠ All pass

Opening lead: Jack of ♥

Success for this ambitious slam seemed to depend on a 3-2 trump split with West holding the king. Playing for that to happen, South won the opening heart lead in dummy and led a spade to his ace. He was disappointed to see the king fall from West. There appeared to be two certain trump losers. He tested his imagination to try and see a lie

of the cards that would give him a chance. The play of the king of hearts by East at trick one made it look like East was short in hearts. If East had at least three cards in each minor, there was a chance. South played the ace and queen of diamonds and then led a diamond to the king, seeing West discard a heart. He cashed the jack of diamonds, shedding a club from hand, and ruffed a heart. He cashed the ace and queen of clubs and then led a club to dummy's king. East followed suit to everything leaving this position:

**NORTH**  
♠ Q 9  
♥ 8  
♦ Void  
♣ Void

**WEST**  
♠ Void  
♥ 10 9 7  
♦ Void  
♣ Void

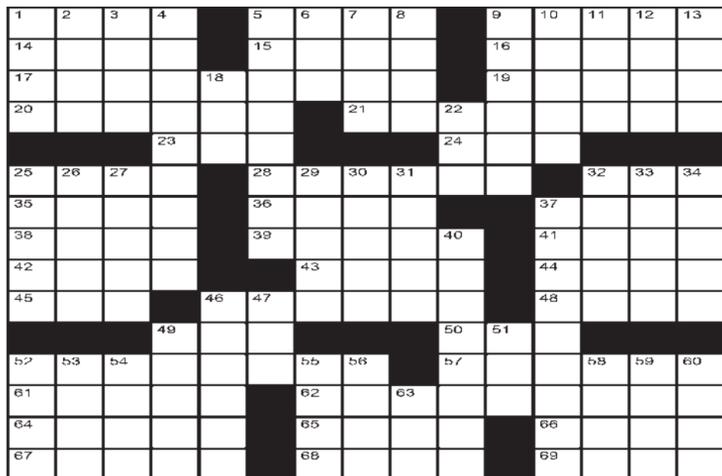
**EAST**  
♠ J 10 6  
♥ Void  
♦ Void  
♣ Void

**SOUTH**  
♠ 8 4 3  
♥ Void  
♦ Void  
♣ Void

South led dummy's heart and East was toast. Whether he ruffed high or low, South would take two of the last three tricks and make his slam.

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS**
- 1 Painter Salvador
  - 5 Kill, as a dragon
  - 9 Bit of postage
  - 14 Big personalities
  - 15 Reusable grocery bag
  - 16 Courtroom event
  - 17 Home of the Sydney Opera House
  - 19 Speaker signal
  - 20 Shaving foam
  - 21 Home of the Emerald Lagoon
  - 23 Fitting
  - 24 Weep
  - 25 Go the distance
  - 28 Makes blank, as a tape
  - 32 Periodical, for short
  - 35 Part of an opera
  - 36 Part to play
  - 37 Thin South Asian crepe
  - 38 Pepper grinder
  - 39 New Orleans NFL player
  - 41 Tattoo supplies
  - 42 Door ringer
  - 43 Quick race
  - 44 Recipe part
  - 45 Cunning
  - 46 \_\_\_ of two evils
  - 48 Professors' degrees: Abbr.
  - 49 Gun the engine
  - 50 Glacier's makeup
  - 52 Most sanitary
  - 57 Glute-working exercises
  - 61 Sets of cards
  - 62 Shaker contents: 2 wds.
  - 64 Non-studio movie
  - 65 Land measure unit
  - 66 Jane Austen novel
  - 67 Mexican money
  - 68 2013 Katy Perry song
  - 69 Musical silence
- DOWN**
- 1 Sale or trade
  - 2 Water, in Spanish
  - 3 Misplaced
  - 4 "Anything else?": 3 wds.
  - 5 Appetizers
  - 6 Texter's "haha": Abbr.
  - 7 Working hard: 2 wds.
  - 8 "Uh-huh"
  - 9 Elevator alternative
  - 10 Genuinely
  - 11 Opera set in Egypt
  - 12 The \_\_\_ event
  - 13 Trudge wearily
  - 18 Sales agent
  - 22 \_\_\_ in the hole
  - 25 Baby sheep
  - 26 Disney mermaid
  - 27 Zany
  - 29 Highways and byways
  - 30 Assumed name
  - 31 Have a feeling
  - 32 June or July
  - 33 Inquired
  - 34 Inhales sharply
  - 37 Pez holder
  - 40 1982 Michael Jackson album
  - 46 Parts of eyeglasses
  - 47 New Year's \_\_\_
  - 49 Boom box
  - 51 Social signal
  - 52 Flaw in a teacup
  - 53 Bowling alley part
  - 54 Wraps up
  - 55 Celebrity
  - 56 Mexican snack
  - 58 Chess or cricket
  - 59 Shade trees
  - 60 ERA or RBIs
  - 63 Bali product

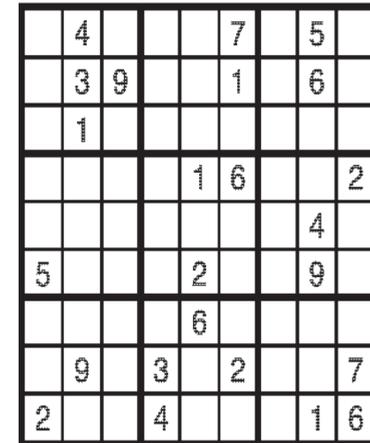


Created by Stella Zawistowski



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SUDOKU



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

Here's How It Works:

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



ANSWER:

# Jackson's milestone bright side of Raiders' rough weekend

## Falcons keep flying high in crosstown wins; Heartbreaker denies Irish sweep of Toombs

By CLAY REYNOLDS  
Sports Editor

One of the best halves of the year was followed directly by one of the worst Friday night as the West Laurens Lady Raiders saw – in one big ebb, and flow – the full spectrum of highs and lows they've experienced at much shorter intervals all season.

After two quarters of highly polished basketball came one of their most exasperating stretches of the whole year, in which a double-digit lead disappeared and their early-game confidence never returned.

Hephzibah took advantage in a comeback to win the pivotal region matchup 65-58, fronting an eventual sweep as its boys went on to defeat West Laurens 86-54.

"We call it a roller coaster, because we have been up and down," said West Laurens head coach Tyler Rogers. "We played hard, we just weren't able to finish the deal."

The frustrating start foreshadowed the Raiders' winless weekend, which continued with a couple more losses in their first meetings with East Laurens Saturday, though things were looking up early this week as the girls rebounded for a big win over Harlem Tuesday night.

One of the many positives in Friday's strong first half was a basket by Brooklyn Jackson to surpass 1,000 career points early in the second quarter.

The junior had been in pursuit of the milestone for several games, though it remained elusive despite multiple opportunities after she reached 999 in a win at Aquinas earlier last week, and then in this first quarter.

Jackson was plenty active, with two blocked shots and a couple of rebounds, on the defensive end, but largely didn't touch it going the other way as the ball found other Lady Raiders for quality looks early in possessions, and those overwhelmingly found the basket with no need of an offensive rebound.

Maddie Ridgway knocked down 3-pointers for six of her eight, and Leah Wells hit a third from deep, to contribute to a 13-5 West Laurens lead after eight minutes.

The stinginess of fate finally ran its course a minute into the second period as Jackson scored on a soft putback, and the long wait was over.

"I don't really know how to explain it, but it felt really good," she said of the accomplishment, which would be officially celebrated with a pregame recognition on Saturday.

Rogers, speaking Tuesday, highlighted Jackson's progress since a freshman season in which she was forced to step right into a major role, and do a lot of learning by experience while continuing to expand her skill set in real time.

"One thing that's kind of amazing about it is she's scored over 1,000 points, and I don't think she's taken a 3-point shot in her career," he said. "Most of her points are coming around the rim and coming at the free throw line. We're continuing to stress to her she's gotta develop her jump shot, continuing to develop right hand and you know, even hit that 3-ball when it's available. She's come a long way, and she's going to continue to get better. I expect her to have a great end to the junior year, a fantastic senior year and hopefully go play at the next level somewhere."

Jackson had no other points before the break, but ended up leading the team



**THE BIG 1-K:** Brooklyn Jackson knocks in a second-quarter tip back to score her long-awaited 1,000th career point /CLAY REYNOLDS

with 10 in the second half to reach a dozen for the night.

Ridgway, who led the Lady Raiders with 17, stayed in her zone with nine second-quarter points to continue their surge into halftime, up 38-27.

But most of that momentum subsided along with their confidence on the other side.

Jackson found her rhythm, but had the only West Laurens answers for Ayala King, who had kept the Rebels in the game to that point with her four triples, for a total of 14 points.

She continued to pour it in, adding two more 3s, and 11 points total, to the count as the visitors' momentum – compounded by some stops and turnovers originating with traps near midcourt – began to snowball late in the third.

The Lady Raiders got enough shots to fall – including a key 3 by Ja'Halee Snead, who had 11 points – to keep some distance through the end of the quarter, though King's second 3 and a couple of free throws by Everlynia Collins would reduce its lead to only six, 50-44, by the buzzer.

Hephzibah overtook them after starting the fourth on a 7-0 run.

Jackson went to the left hand out of a timeout for a floating basket to break the Raiders' drought and flip the score one last time with five minutes to go.

But from there, it was all Rebels. They scored eight unanswered before a bank-in 2 by West's Kynadi Palmer cut a seven-point lead to five.

Hephzibah added a basket, then entered a lull that represented the Raiders' last true opportunity to get back in it. But a bunch of missed shots from right underneath, multiple each on consecutive trips down, ruled out their comeback hopes as a layup by the Rebels' Tatiyana Fann put the game too far out of reach with under 90 seconds left.

The Raider boys – playing a man down with forward Shannon Adkins injured – got left in the dust quickly as Hephzibah raced out to a 15-4 lead in the first four minutes.

The number ballooned to 15 after one, 18 by the half and 27 through the end of the third, over which a 24-14 count in the Rebels' favor assuaged any remaining doubts.

**East Laurens girls 77, Dublin 49**

The Lady Irish played well in the first and fourth quarters, but were too scattered offensively in the second and third, when East Laurens took a stranglehold on the game and didn't look back.

Zoey Bell hit a 3, and Khalil Maddox scored the other 12 points, as Dublin finished the first eight min-

utes with a 15-11 lead.

But the early momentum subsided, and the Lady Falcons – whose defensive pressure always eventually takes its toll – surged into a commanding lead on a 17-0 run during the second.

JaNiya Freeman's 3 with two minutes left in the half ended Dublin's drought, and the Lady Irish were close to a recovery at several spots before it got there. But East finished the quarter leading 37-24, and wasn't threatened in the third, when its 21 went against an opposing nine to take the gap to 58-33.

Dublin stroked some 3s in the fourth, but couldn't put more than a small dent in the number.

Jameria Bing led the Lady Falcons with 25 points. Garyunna Mitchell double-doubled with 17 points, 18 rebounds and four blocked shots. Zahmaria Robinson added 11, and Deanna Lowther 10 (along with nine boards, six assists, five steals and two blocks).

Maddox led the Lady Irish with 16, and Keasia Jackson finished with 10.

**East Laurens boys 55, Dublin 30**

The Falcons broke through after a grinding first half to make it a clean four-game sweep (a second in three years) of their regular-season series with Dublin.

The Irish hung tough early as both teams struggled to find any rhythm in a low-scoring first quarter. East was only able to scratch out an edge of as much as nine in the second, and led only 22-14 at the half before turning a corner in the third.

Dublin got on some runs, but the Falcons always responded quickly, and maintained a lead of at least seven before opening



**HEADS-UP ASSIST:** Devyn Watkins dished one out of a Hephzibah double-team to the open Brycn Holliman, who went up with the left hand (below) for a West Laurens basket in Friday's first quarter/CLAY REYNOLDS

a pretty wide margin of 42-28 by the start of the fourth.

East Laurens, after a really slow first four minutes, would close it out with a flurry of scores and highlights (including a soaring dunk by Bryson Hazley) as the Irish went the entire eight without a field goal.

Zion Dixon and Major Floyd scored 14 each to lead the way for the Falcons, Floyd adding seven rebounds, five assists and three steals. Hazley had 11 and Jeremiah Rozier chipped in nine, plus team highs in boards (10) and steals (four). East blocked a total of eight shots.

Glen Harris, with 15, was Dublin's top scorer.

**Dublin girls 57, Toombs Co. 46**

An early dry spell had them down by as much as 13, but the Lady Irish recovered to outscore Toombs 17-3 from that point through halftime to go back ahead by one.

Neither side took control until Dublin opened the fourth with six unanswered points, then rode that wave to a lead of 10 and on into shore.

Keasia Jackson joined Zoey Bell in the scoring lead with 12 points. Jackson had 10 rebounds for a double-double.

Khalil Maddox added another nine points, Rainna Wyatt seven and JaNiya Freeman six. The Lady Irish (9-9, 3-5 region 2-High A) combined for 18 steals, four blocked shots and 35 rebounds.

**Toombs Co. 51, Dublin boys 50**

Ar'Dreakius Taylor lifted up a good-looking 3-point attempt at the buzzer, but drew iron as the Irish (3-14, 0-8 region) came up empty in their search for a final answer in the four-minute

firefight that made up Saturday's exciting ending.

The teams battled to a 26-point dead heat in the first half. Toombs started the second with 10 unanswered points, though Dublin finished up the third quarter with eight straight to get within two going to the final stanza.

The Irish took a 44-40 lead as Kam Stanley singlehanded a 5-0 run, and Ar'Dreakius Taylor added on with a 2-point bucket to get the Irish up six.

Tucker Braddy drilled a 3 to stop the bleeding for Toombs with 2:39 to go, then another from deeeep on the right wing to put the Bulldogs back ahead, 47-46 with a bit less than 90 seconds to go.

Jaydon McRae answered with a triple at the one-minute mark to make it 49-47 Dublin, then Toombs' Parker Stanley posted up for a jump hook to tie it at 49.

The Irish led again on a first of split free throws, but the Bulldogs responded as Cornelius Bullard banked in a contested shot off the drive with 21 seconds remaining for their final edge. Dublin's Stanley had 18 points and seven rebounds. McRae added 11. QuanTavis Lovett led the Irish in rebounds with eight.

Braddy, Bullard and Stanley (who also had a Toombs-high nine rebounds) scored 10 each for the visitors.

**East Laurens girls 49, West Laurens 35**

Both opening quarters were very low-scoring till the pace picked up in the last few minutes, and the Lady Falcons' lead of 18-13 at halftime was anything but comfy until it started the third on an 11-3 run over about four minutes and change.

West's Jadah Philyaw hit

a 3 off the board as time expired in the quarter to keep it a manageable deficit, 35-25, going to the last eight, and a Ridgway 3 at the seven-minute mark trimmed it further, down to nine. But the Lady Raiders (9-10, 7-6 region 4-AAA) could make no further progress at denying East Laurens (16-3, 7-1 region 2-High A) its seventh-straight win.

Lowther scored 14 and boarded 18 shots for another double-double. Mitchell did the same with a dozen in each column. Bing added 10 points and five assists.

**East Laurens boys 77, West Laurens 62**

The Falcons finally shook the Raiders off late in the second half, starting with a 10-2 run in the last two minutes of the third quarter that grew their lead of a mere three to 11, 61-50, going to the fourth.

But West Laurens (4-17, 2-11 region) put plenty of pressure on with some crisp offense and D, earning a 15-14 lead after one on a Drew Kinchen 3-pointer, and draining several more in the second to take a 27-24 lead before East (16-3, 7-1 region) finished the half on a five-point run.

The Falcons' long-range game – led by a 5-for-5 Braylon Makaya – kicked in as they took over in the second half. Makaya led scorers with 20 points. Floyd added 14, with eight rebounds and four assists. Anthony Pounds picked up 11, and Bryson Hazley scored eight with a team-high nine rebounds.

### SCOREBOARD

#### GIRLS HOOPS

Tuesday

West Laurens 64, Harlem 37  
Dublin 55, Jefferson Co. 25  
Trinity 79, Windsor 62

#### BOYS HOOPS

Tuesday

Harlem 72, WL 46  
Jefferson Co. 59, Dublin 52  
Trinity 70, Windsor 66

### PREP

### SCHEDULE

#### BASKETBALL

Wednesday

East Laurens at Washington Co./6 p.m.

Thursday

West Laurens (girls) at Houston Co./5 p.m.

Friday

Dublin at Wheeler Co.  
Jefferson Co. at EL  
Trinity at Central Fellowship/6 p.m.

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**NEW SUPERINTENDENT**  
Continued from page 1

State officials contacted the Dublin district in August after learning the system owed \$5.6 million to the State Health Benefit Plan after not paying in contributions for the entire fiscal year 2025. After a closer look at the finances, state School Superinten-

dent Richard Woods declared the district on a "path to insolvency" with a \$13.4 million projected deficit.

A subsequent special examination by the state Department of Audits and Accounts, requested by local lawmakers, confirmed the root causes – overhiring and overpaying employees, wasteful

spending and lax oversight – but also identified specific concerns ranging from late tax payments to the IRS, "abnormally" high credit card spending and unwarranted travel and expenditures.

The audit also pointed to instances of family members traveling on out-of-town leadership retreats at the system's expense

and undocumented payments to a local florist.

As the search for new superintendent begins, the board is hoping to hire a new finance director soon. The position has been filled by consultants since former director Chad McDaniel resigned in late August.

McDaniel had served as the

school system's technology director before moving to its finance department in 2022, then taking over as finance director following Christi Thublin's retirement in 2024.

Board member James Lanier said the new superintendent will be "the second biggest hiring we have going forward."



Christopher Blake, Middle Georgia State University president, meets with community leaders and staff before last week's State of the Union speech/PAYTON TOWNS III

**MGA**  
Continued from page 1

can't do it alone. We need a strong community."

Blake encouraged everyone to visit all of the MGSU campuses in Dublin, Cochran,

Eastman, Warner Robins and Macon.

"The state of Middle Georgia has never been stronger," he said. "The opportunities are clear. We know what we can and need to do. I have every confidence that with your help and support, we'll do it as a team. We will be the best we can be this decade."

**DOWNTOWN**  
Continued from page 1

This is usually one of our best-attended events."

DDA operations manager Nichole Padgett brought up the Farmers Market, which will run from April 4 and will go for 28-straight weeks every Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Berry wrapped up the meeting by telling the merchants that they are trying to focus on the arts.

"We want to do more at

Theatre Dublin," she said. "We are having more concerts and live theater that normally start at 7 p.m. We want to try to work more with our merchants. We know that people will come out to eat and we know there is an economic impact that when people come in to attend a show that they may shop or go out to eat before they go to the theater."

The next Dublin Community Theatre production will be "Annie," which held auditions and was cast last

weekend. The shows will be held at 7 p.m. on April 23, 24 and 25 and 2 p.m. on April 25.

"If somebody has a program, or something to let you know they were a patron at the theatre, (a downtown merchant) can have some kind of special to them," Berry said. "If you are doing something like that, let us know so that we can promote it. We want to promote our downtown businesses, especially when we can tie it to our arts."

**SCHOOL BOARD**  
Continued from page 1

funding, so it is counting on property taxes to get through the school year.

The state also has provided financial consultants and support staff to help the system navigate its money crisis and create a required deficit reduction plan, but that help might end soon. School board chairwoman Amanda Smith shared that Georgia Department of Education officials at meetings last week were "talking about an exit plan."

"We're excited about that," she said. "We've been very supported by them."

Financial consultant Laura Jenkins shared the monthly financial reports with the board Monday night. The district finished November with deficits of \$307,000 for the month and \$1.57 million year-to-date, but finished in the black for the month of December, when it spent less money than it took in.

The school system ended that month with \$127,859 in revenue over expenses, bringing the year-to-date deficit down to about \$1.39 million. The reports show about \$2.69 million in expenses for November and \$2.66 million for December.

While tax revenue

will roll in during February, the district is also set next month to start making payments on the \$6 million in past-due contributions it owes to the State Health Benefit Plan.

After discovering the system had not paid into the employer insurance program for more than a year, state officials also found numerous other "financial concerns" that included the school board not having completed an annual audit since 2021. Since then, 2022's has been finished, showing the district in solid shape, with a \$5 million surplus of mostly federal COVID funds after finally climbing out a decade-long deficit.

Pool told the board Monday that the 2023 audit has been completed.

"They're still putting the final touches on it," she said. "We should have that really soon. As soon as we get that finalized, the Department of Audits and Accounts can work on FY24."

In other business, the school board approved a

\$56,000 bid from O'Malley Music to provide musical instruments and support services to the Dublin High band program.

Band equipment qualifies as a capital project, so it can be bought with sales tax revenue. Equipment was included on the ballot as a proposed expenditure when the ESPLOST (Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) was approved by city voters last November.

"This is an approved purchase on the ESPLOST," said Pool.

Board member Jeff Davis pointed out that the district's ESPLOST account currently has about \$2.6 million. That money cannot be used for operating expenses, such as payroll, but it can pay for more than just new schools. Instructional materials and technology are also capital purchases, as are band instruments.

"Most kids come to school for extracurricular. Not every kid can play football, baseball or basketball," Davis said.



*Thank You Ms. Claxton for helping us remember our past.*

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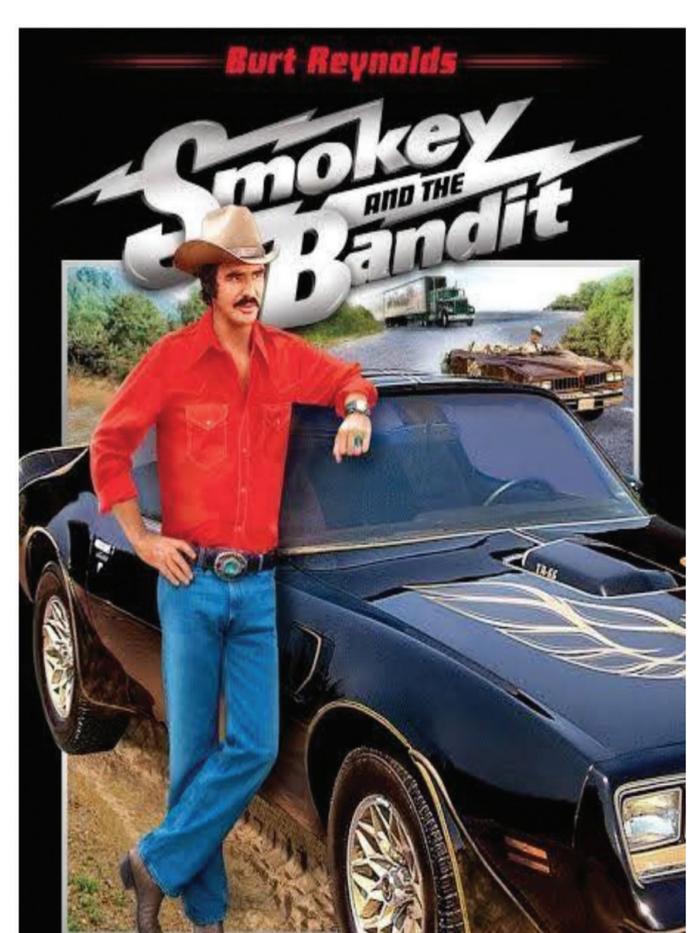
for your three decades of service to The Courier Herald and seven decades of service as Sunday School Teacher. We thank God for how He has worked through you to impact so many lives!



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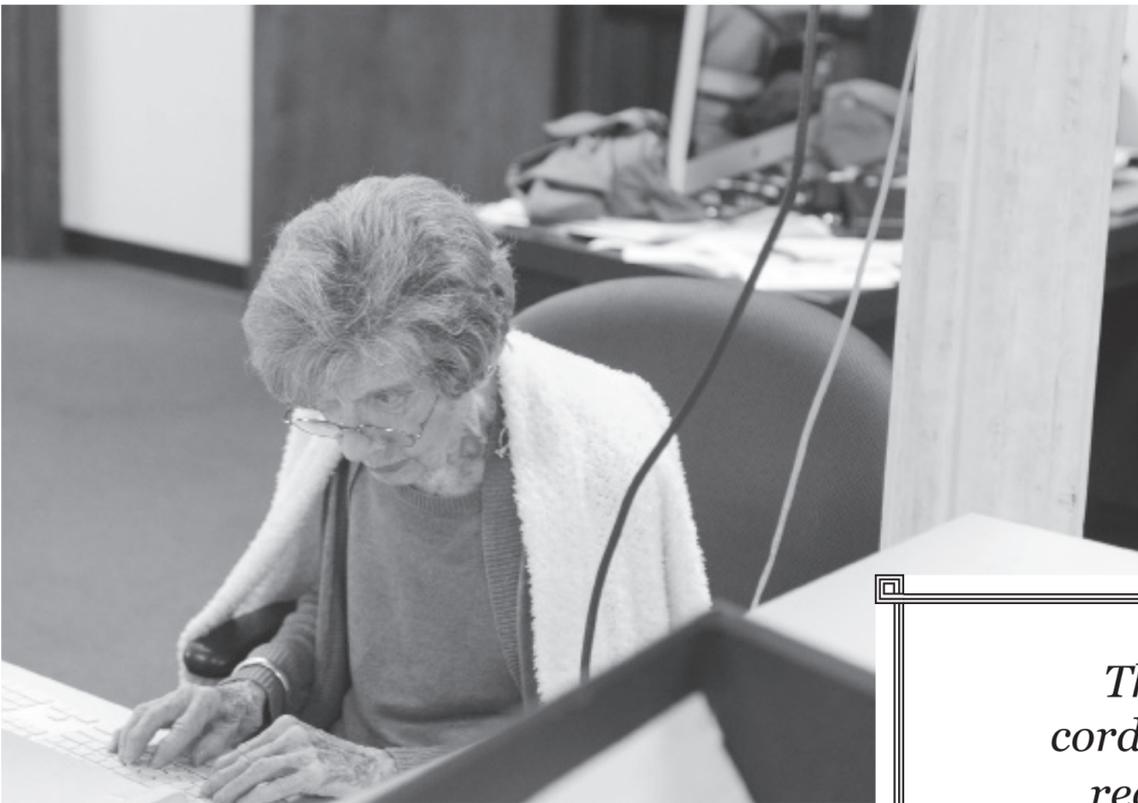


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Many days of the week, Mrs. Harriett Claxton could be found clicking away on the keyboard at her desk in The Courier Herald newsroom. She has been a fixture at the newspaper for three decades and here is a candid shot showing her hard at work. As she steps away from her weekly columns, we wish her all the best/FILE PHOTO

**Harriett Claxton**  
*A celebration of a  
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Thank you for preserving our past and enriching our  
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**Thank you, Harriett Claxton**

Your contribution in sharing  
our city's history throughout the years  
has left a positive impact on us all.



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30 years of dedication, loyalty,  
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