

The Courier Herald

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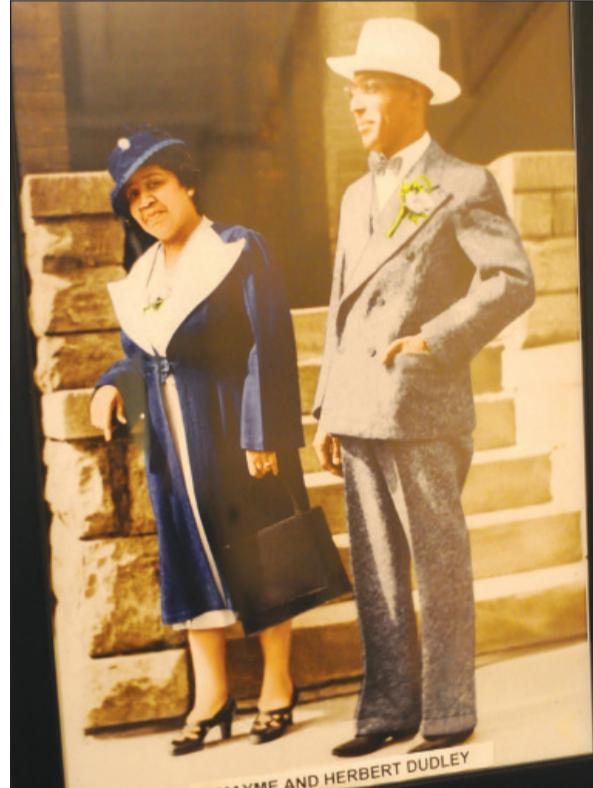
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026

COURIERHERALDTODAY.COM



SPEAKER SERIES: FRIENDS OF THE CARNEGIE RECALL LIFE OF HUB DUDLEY

The Friends of the Carnegie Library continued its Speaker Series with an event focused on the life of Herbert "Hub" Dudley on Feb. 5. Dudley, a famed black entrepreneur, is an important figure in the history of Dublin who established several businesses, including a gas station, restaurant, motel and the still-operating Dudley Funeral Home. Dudley's hospitality endeavors became prime destinations in an era when U.S. 80 was a main travel corridor to Savannah and black travelers had few options for safe lodging. The motel hosted many figures important to the Civil Rights movement, including Martin Luther King Jr. The site, on Jackson Street near the Oconee River, is a protected historic location. The talk about Dudley's life was led by his grandson, Carl Pearson/KYLE DOMINY



EMA chief: It's always a good time to prepare for severe weather

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

The weather outside lately has been frightful, but it will not be long before it may turn severe. And when that happens, local officials hope people have planned and are ready for whatever Mother Nature brings this

way.

Bill Laird, director of Laurens County Emergency Management Agency/E-911, wants people to be prepared for the weather – rather it is severe cold or storms that we normally receive later in the year.

"We had that ice come

through and immediately behind that we had potential for severe weather," Laird said. "We always get severe weather in spring and summer."

That is the real reason for preparing for severe weather.

"Our biggest thing here is

wind and maybe tornadoes or thunderstorms," Laird said. "Those are what usually causes the largest power outages and trees coming down to cause road blockages. Having a plan is the best thing to do. Planning for the family, especially when it comes to being prepared,

is a valuable opportunity to educate ourselves on safeguarding our homes and loved ones. By actively participating in this endeavor, we can establish and develop safety measures that will benefit both our loved ones and the wider community."

When there is a bad

storm, and the power goes out, it is good to have non-perishable food and water for at least three days.

"That is what is recommended," Laird said. "Depending on the damage and destruction, it may take that

SEVERE WEATHER
Continued on page 8



LOCAL DEALERSHIP RAISES MONEY TO FIGHT CANCER

Dublin Chevy GMC Nissan raised more than \$1,500 for cancer organizations during the month of October. Recently, Heather Abbott and Whitney Rogers, both from Cure Point Cancer Center, received a \$775 check from dealership employees. Employees also presented a \$775 check to Clarissa Wadley, from The Cancer Center of Middle Georgia. Dublin Chevy GMC Nissan General Manager Don Carswell said they also gave money to a private individual. This is the fourth year the business has raised money in the fight against cancer/CONNIE ADAMS

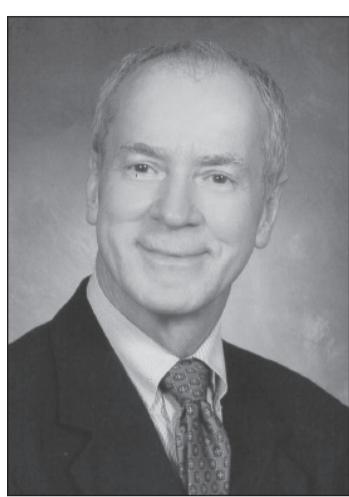
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OBITUARIES



T.J. Lord

T.J. Lord, "Tom," a pillar of intelligence, kindness and faith, passed away peacefully on Feb. 6, 2026, in Dexter, Georgia, at the age of 84. Born on Aug. 5, 1941, in Dudley, Georgia, T.J. lived a life marked by dedication to his family, his community, and his unwavering faith. He leaves behind a legacy of love, service, and enduring wisdom.

A man of exceptional intellect, T.J. was a proud 1958 graduate of Dexter High School, where he not only earned the honor of class valedictorian but also set a precedent of academic excellence. His thirst for knowledge led him to Georgia Southern University, where he obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology followed by a Master's degree in counseling. T.J.'s passion for education and helping others shaped his early career as he taught biology for three years in the Marietta School System before moving into a counseling role.

T.J. served his country with pride as a member of the National Guard, a period in his life that instilled in him a sense of duty and community service. His professional journey took a creative turn when he joined Rich's Department Store in Atlanta, where he led the sales-cosmetics department for three years. Eventually, T.J.'s entrepreneurial spirit called him back to his roots, where he became the owner-operator of Dairy Queen locations in Eastman and Hazlehurst, Georgia.

Beyond his professional endeavors, T.J. was a cornerstone of the Buckhorn Methodist Church. His involvement was profound and multifaceted; he served as worship leader, pianist, Sunday school teacher, chairman of the board, treasurer and chairman of the finance committee. His dedication to his faith was evident in every role he undertook, and his guidance was a source of inspiration for many.

T.J.'s interests also included a successful partnership with his brother Roger in Lords R&T Development Company, through which he contributed significantly to the growth and development of his local community. His sharp mind and warm heart were evident in every project and relationship he nurtured.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Julian and Latha Pope Lord and his brother, Roger Wayne Lord Sr. He is survived by his sisters, Sandra (Freddie) Alexander and Cynthia (Randel) Bryan; his brother, Phillip (Renny) Lord; and a host of beloved nieces and nephews: Roger Wayne (Tammie) Lord Jr., Jill Lord (Jerry) Hatcher, Tracy Lord Cesario, Michael Britt (Nedra) Lord, Nicole Alexander, Simone (Steve) Putnam, Melessia (Mark) Rowland, Shana Lord, Darren (Ruby) Bryan, Spencer (Jan) Bryan, and Keila (Scott) Monroe. T.J. also leaves behind many cherished great-nieces and great-nephews, as well as great-great-nieces and great-great-nephews, all of whom will carry forward the light of his enduring spirit.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m., Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026 at Buckhorn Methodist Church with Rev. Grady Mimbs and Rev. Jared Middleton officiating. Burial will follow at the church cemetery. The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m., Monday, Feb. 9, 2026 at the funeral home. His great-nieces and great-nephews will serve as pallbearers.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that contributions be made to the Gideons, PO Box 27, Dublin, Georgia 31021.

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

Townsend Brothers Funeral Home has charge of the arrangements.

Book ban versus parent control: Lawmakers debate purpose of bill that could send librarians to jail

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Legislation to strip librarians of their criminal immunity from a law that makes it illegal to give "harmful" books and other content to minors is moving quickly through the Georgia General Assembly, after passing a House committee in a partisan vote Friday.

Conservatives and religious advocates have been pushing for years to revoke the librarian exemption from a 1980s obscenity law that makes it a crime to knowingly give a minor a visual, written or recorded work depicting sex or sexuality in a way that offends the "prevailing standards" of a community.

The Senate legislation that passed one of the state House's judiciary committees Friday would subject librarians in public libraries, schools and colleges to prosecution for violating that law.

Previously, Senate Bill 74 sought to remove the librarian shield entirely. But amendments added Friday would only take it from librarians who fail to comply with their library or school board decisions concerning complaints about books and other materials.

"If the librarian follows what the governing board says, then that's it, the end," said Rep. Soo Hong, R-Lawrenceville, who based her amendment off wording suggested by a West Georgia library director at a previous hearing.

The bill passed 6-5 along party lines, with Democrats opposed.

Critics have long contended that

the move to strip librarians of their legal protection is part of a strategy to scrub libraries of books about sexuality and gender orientation. SB 74 relies on a section of state law that includes sexual conduct as content considered to be harmful to minors. The law's definition of sexual conduct includes "acts of masturbation, homosexuality, sexual intercourse"

Rep. Shea Roberts, D-Atlanta, argued that SB 74, in conjunction with that existing definition, would lead to the banning of books "where two boys are holding hands."

Rep. Rob Leverett, R-Elberton, disagreed with her interpretation. "It's talking about sexual contact, contact involving, you know, our privates," he said.

Leverett also disagreed with Rep. Esther Panitch, D-Sandy Springs, who predicted that the bill, should it become law, would effectively become a book "ban" by encouraging extreme caution among library boards.

They would become "censorship boards," she said.

"When the choice is between keeping a challenged book on the shelf or exposing your libraries to prosecution, the book will lose every time," Panitch said, adding that one arrest and mugshot of a librarian who defended a controversial book would cause every library in the state to remove it.

Giving harmful material to a minor is a misdemeanor of "a high and aggravated nature," punishable by up to 12 months in jail and



Sen. Max Burns, R-Sylvania, discussing Senate Bill 74 at the Georgia Capitol on Friday, Feb. 6, 2026. His legislation would expose librarians to jail for violating a decades-old law against giving "harmful" books and other such material to minors/ASHTIN BARKER, Capitol Beat News Service

a fine of up to \$5,000.

Leverett said the legislation was not a ban because it would only require moving certain books to age-restricted parts of libraries.

"That's a great difference," he said. "I would agree with you if we were talking about burning them or taking them out of the library altogether."

At a prior hearing this week, a member of the public commented against the measure by observing that a book for children had been attacked because it named male and female genitalia.

A Republican lawmaker shot back: "is it the librarian's responsibility to teach my children what a vagina and a penis is?" The lawmaker, Rep. Charlice Byrd,

R-Woodstock, said a parent should decide when to expose their child to such information.

The next stop for SB 74 will be the House Rules committee, which gets to decide whether to put the measure to a vote by the full House. The bill has already passed the Senate, in a party-line vote last year, the first year of this biennial session.

Should the House pass it with the new amendments, the Senate would need to agree to the changes before it would move to the governor's desk.

The main sponsor of the legislation, Sen. Max Burns, R-Sylvania, told the House committee members Friday that he supported their changes.

Legacy Readers Theatre presents 18th Annual Black History Month Presentation

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

Tony Award nomination as Best Featured or Supporting Actress in a Musical.

Content

The actors performed poetry, songs and content by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Ted Joans, Gwendolyn Brooks, Richard Wright, James Weldon Johnson and many others. The production combined recitations with folk songs and spirituals.

A Hand is on the Gate was originally presented at the Longacre Theatre, previewing September 19, 1966 and opening September 21, 1966. The show was originally announced to run for three and a half weeks but closed after two weeks. The production was revived at the Afro-American Studio in New York City, running from 1976 to 1977. An original cast album was recorded on Verve Records on Sept. 26, 27 and 29, 1966, featuring the entire cast performing the poetry and music from the show.

Historical Significance

The production was significant as one of the notable all-Black Broadway endeavors of the 1960s civil rights era, presented in a non-narrative format that emphasized African American cultural heritage through poetry and music. Despite financial challenges that nearly caused an early closure, this production represented an important moment in bringing Black



LEGACY READERS THEATRE, INC.: The readers: Frenchy Hodges, director, Joyce Davis Smith, Dr. Willie Edmond, Dr. Diann E. Fye, Charles Howard, Joe Ann McBride, Martha Mincey, Brenda Pauldo, Jerome Pullen, Lois Stroman; the musicians: Dedrick Guyton, director, Alexis Brantley, Carol Carswell, Nanyamka Johnson, Jonathan Lewis, Maurice Sizer, Carolyn Walker; the dance: Rodney Wiggins, director/SPECIAL PHOTO

artistic voices to Broadway during a transformative period in American history.

In February 2011, Legacy Readers Theatre presented an almost complete version of the original Broadway production A Hand is on the Gate. Presently, Legacy Readers Theatre, Inc. has revised and updated the original version of A Hand is on the Gate with a local cast of dedicated community persons. Guest Director

of Music is Jonathan Lewis, Dance Direction guided by the practiced hand of Rodney Sha'Ron Wiggins and Spoken Word coached by Frenchy Hodges, with production in the able hands of Dr. Ricky Porter.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 21, 2026 at 5:00p.m. at Dublin Middle School to attend the 18th annual themed production by Legacy Readers Theatre during Black History Month.

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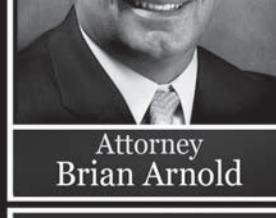
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Now Wheeler County has to pay for court proceedings

Dublin Courier Herald

By DOUG HALL
Ronnie Horne lived and worked most of his 36 years in Laurens County.

He lived in Rentz.

Dessie Woods and Cheryl Todd are Atlanta residents.

None of them had special ties to Wheeler County.

Last June 16 they were just passing through this east central Georgia county when the Rentz man was slain.

Now, the 4,600 residents of the small rural county have to pick up the tab for bringing the two women to trial.

And the tab for seven and a half months of criminal investigations and courtroom proceedings will be substantial, maybe as high as \$20,000, according to some who have closely followed that case since that summer night when Horne's body was found just inside the county line.

A few miles and minutes difference and the crimes could have been committed in another county.

Wheeler County Commissioner Mackie Simpson said, "It's a shame the county will have to pay the cost although there was no connection between the people involved in the case and the county.

"But, we'll just close our eyes and write the check. Then we'll go hunting or fishing."

"We're willing, and the county is financially able to pay for trial. We think the costs were necessary to insure law and order and to have a fair trial," Simpson added.

The commissioner met this morning with Superior Court James B. O'Connor to discuss the costs.

O'Connor, who was threatened by one of the defendants, said Monday that extra security forces were "necessary to control everyone inside and outside the courthouse."

He praised Pulaski County Sheriff Andrew Hill for his coordinating courthouse security.

A big chunk of the cost on bringing the two women to justice was incurred during the last three weeks when the case was in court in three counties every week and two Saturdays.

In addition to courtroom costs - the judge, district attorney, recorder, clerk, bailiffs, jurors - there was extremely tight security in evidence. At least 25 state troopers and sheriff deputies were on hand the past two weeks at the Pulaski County Courthouse. They came from Perry, Eastman, Ft. Valley and Dublin.

A pool of prospective jurors were paid \$8 a day during the week long jury selection. Simpson said the week of jury selection alone will cost the county between five and six hundred dollars a day, but he estimated that the cost of the trial might not be as high as expected.

"There were a lot of things about this trial that did not turn out as expected," and he noted that "It didn't take three weeks like they had said, for one thing, and that will cut down on the cost."

But, the 12-man jury, plus two alternates and bailiffs, spent seven nights in a block of rooms at Eastman's fine Carriage Inn motel.

They had to be fed, too, along with meals for court personnel and bailiffs.

And since most courts believe in treating their juries hospitably, the food and service were superb.

Steaks - thick ones at that - fried chicken, heapings of vegetables, desserts, and relishes adorned jurors'

tables when they left the courthouse for Hawkinsville's Towne House Restaurant.

The caravan of cars transporting the jury to the courthouse resembled a motorcade for some hot-shot politician.

Police car after police car carried their heavily guarded passengers down the 19 miles of pavement that links Eastman with Hawkinsville.

The trial was everything it promised. Two skillfully prepared and well planned cases logged nearly thirty hours before the 11 woman, one-man jury.

Drama was intense from opening arguments to Mrs. Woods' sudden outburst of anger and emotion when Court Clerk Woodson Daniels read the verdicts.

Outside, a few demonstrators, members of the Atlanta Workers Defense Committee, passed out leaflets: "This case is not just Cheryl and Dessie against the State, but it is all working and poor people, Black and White against the rich, their courts, and their police."

Inside, a jury of their peers - six white and six black working class people - school teachers, a secretary, a department store clerk, a machine operator, a housewife, a nurse, a veneer plant worker - found the two women guilty.

Throughout the trial, defense attorneys continually asked for guarantees for a fair trial. They got a change of venue, a lengthy and exhaustive jury selection process, and access to the prosecution files that the judge called "as liberal as" any he had ever seen. Nothing the state had as evidence against the women was kept from the eyes of defense attorneys in the unusually generous open file agreement.

A Dublin attorney made a name for himself in the well publicized case.

Leon Green, hired as a special prosecutor by friends and family of Ronnie Horne, handled much of the state's case and even took the brunt of several protest chants.

A motion early in the trial was entered by the defense to have Green kicked off the case, and when the judge allowed the Dublin man to stay demonstrators showed up at the Pulaski County Courthouse several days later, shouting, "Mean. Mean. Leon Green."

Green delivered the first half of the state's closing argument, which many courthouse observers called the turning point in the prosecution's case.

The Dublin attorney was joined at the State's table by District Attorney Phil West and Assistant District attorney Bob Sparks of the Prosecuting Council of Georgia.

The Todd-Woods case was West's first as D.A.

Green said he was happy with the verdict and praised West and Sparks who joined the case late.

O'Connor said this morning that he had received apologies from Mrs. Woods' attorney, Randy Bacote. After she was convicted on Monday, the woman angrily threatened the judge, calling him a "stinking, ugly devil," and shouted, "We're going to kill you."

The Judge said that the two women will be sentenced at a February 12 hearing.

Mistrial motions by attorneys for both defendants will be decided "much later" than the sentence hearing, the judge said.

SW LAURENS ELEMENTARY

LOOKING BACK...
50 YEARS AGO
FEBRUARY 10, 1946



By HARRIETT CLAXTON

HONOR ROLL

The Southwest Laurens Elementary School Honor Roll for the second nine-weeks of the 1975-76 school term is the following:

5th grade:
Valerie Anderson
Barbara Coney
Debbie Curl
Twana Evans
Darren Fordham
Cynthia Jones
Krista Lowery
Patricia Mimbs
Billie Jo Mullis
Danny Pope
Gregory Reagin
Carrie Rozier
Marnie Willis
6th Grade:
Julie Holland
Robert Coleman
Clayton Sellers
Phillip Lee
Vonda Morton
7th Grade:
Melinda Coleman
Melody Fountain
Tina Garnto
Honorable Mention:
5th Grade:
Lisa Baggett
Pamela Brewer
Eve Coleman
E.C. Coley
Jeffery Mims
Bill Taboyyan
Lynn White
Kim Walker
6th Grade:
Richie Childers
Donna Gilder
Jessie Mincey
7th Grade:
Kay Upshaw
Wendy Wynne
Betty Stanley
Greg Clark
Mark Mullis

EAST LAURENS 6th GRADE HONOR ROLL

Miss L. Hamilton, a sixth grade teacher at East Laurens Elementary School is proud to announce seven of her homeroom students made the honor roll for the 2nd nine weeks.

These students are:
Christy Calhoun
Russell Chambers
Faith Frost
Verdina Holder
Kay Howell
Jay Mimbs
Clay Ricks

ENGAGEMENTS

Bass - Simmons
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Edward Bass, Sr. of Dublin announce the engagement of their daughter, Susan Carol, to Thomas Guy Simmons, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Simmons of Dublin.

The bride-elect is a graduate of Dublin High School and received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Georgia Southern College in Statesboro. She is employed as a Counselor in Child Adolescent Program at the South Central Mental Health Clinic in Dublin.

The future bridegroom received his diploma from Dublin High School and is employed as Program Director at Radio Station WXLI in Dublin.

The wedding will be April 10 at the Olivet Baptist Church, Dublin.

Fordham - Darsey
Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Fordham, Sr. of Rentz announce the engagement of their daughter, JoAnn Fordham, to Donald Darsey, son of Mr. and Mrs. M.O. Darsey of Dublin.

Score: 42-25
42-25
Bush 4
Williams 8
Allen 4
Payne 7 2
Wilkes
Spivey
S.Shepherd
A.Shepherd
Beacham
T. Hatchcock
S. Hatchcock

DUBLIN WINS WRESTLING

Dublin captured the first Laurens County Wrestling Tournament, held at East Laurens on Saturday scoring 35 points to 12 for East Laurens and six for West Laurens.

The Irish, under the tutelage of Travis Davis and Doug Metts, won nine of the 12 classes wrestled and received a trophy.

East Laurens had two winners, Cornell Moss pinning Weldon Payne in the 98-lb class, and Russell Moore winning the 126-lb class by default.

West Laurens had one victory. It came in the 105-lb class when Ulysses defeated Norrie Andrews of East Laurens with a pin.

expecting to have the tournament filled within a week since 442 invitations were extended.

In addition, a copy of the St. Patrick's Festival activities for the week was included with the golf invitations.

Golf members of the Dublin Country Club who were not included on the list through an oversight and who wish to play in the Shamrock Invitational should contact Mrs. Pat Hughes at the club by Wednesday, March 3rd.

The Shamrock Invitational is being coordinated with Clarence Carroll, pro, the club's board of directors, the ladies' and men's associations, and W.L. Wilkes, club president.

All decisions regarding play will be rendered by the Tournament Committee.

Families and friends of members and players are invited to attend.

AD

Hallmark Cards
Valentine's Day
February 14
Sherri's
Dublin

Mall

HERE'S A TIP

By JOANN DERSON King Features

* "Jazz up your pancakes by adding pureed frozen blueberries or strawberries. It turns the mix either blue or red, and it's fun for the kiddos." -- V.R. in Florida

* "Purchase colorful laundry baskets for each child in your home. In the evening, you can have the child find all his or her stray items, put them in the basket and then put them away. In our house, the kids also use their basket to hold anything they need for school the next day -- backpack, coats and outerwear, even boots. We stack the baskets by the door and nothing gets left behind." -- P.W. in Missouri

* Tissue boxes have so many uses after they are emptied of tissues. Try lining one with a plastic grocery bag and keeping it in your car for stray trash. Or you can use it to corral all those plastic grocery bags until you need them, just stuff them in one at a time. Lastly, and probably my favorite, cut out doors and windows to use as a house for a toy. Imagination makes the possibilities endless.

MOMENTS IN TIME

* On Feb. 23, 1885, John Lee went to the gallows in Exeter, England, for allegedly murdering Emma Keyse, a rich older woman who'd employed him. Insisting he was innocent, he was nonetheless convicted and sentenced to hang. However, the lever to release the floor beneath his feet malfunctioned and he didn't drop. Baffled authorities sent him back to prison for the next 22 years, though his death sentence was commuted. Upon his release, he emigrated to America, leaving the cause of his reprieve unsolved.

* On Feb. 24, 1961, the first 15 students received their Bachelor of Hamburgerology degree (not a traditional academic one!) from McDonald's Hamburger University, aka the "Harvard of Fast Food."

* On Feb. 25, 1837, Vermont blacksmith Thomas Davenport received the first U.S. patent for an electric motor. He insulated the wires with strips of fabric from his wife's silk wedding dress (cut by his wife, and with her full approval).

* On Feb. 26, 1968, Allied troops who'd recaptured the imperial capital of Hue from the North Vietnamese during the Tet Offensive found the first mass graves in Hue. Communist troops who had held the city for 25 days had massacred about 2,800 civilians whom they identified as sympathizers with the government in Saigon, and one authority estimated they might have killed as many as 5,700 people in Hue.

* On Feb. 27, 1935, 6-year-old rising Hollywood star Shirley Temple received the first-ever kid-size "juvenile" Oscar, measuring about half the height of a full-size Oscar.

* On Feb. 28, 1982, the J. Paul Getty Museum became the most richly endowed museum in the world when it received a \$1.2 billion bequest left to it by the late J. Paul Getty. A good portion of the endowment went to construct the Getty Center, a six-building complex on a hilltop in the Brentwood section of Los Angeles.

* On March 1, 1960, the first-ever Playboy Club opened its doors in downtown Chicago. Female servers known as "bunnies" were subject to the rules of a 42-page manual threatening demerits for offenses ranging from chewing gum to unkempt bunny tails.

(c) 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

OUR TAKE...



Calvin McNeal salutes a member of the Carl Vinson Medical Center Honor Guard after the American flag was folded during the Last Roll Call on Jan. 30/PAYTON TOWNS III

Veterans deserve to be honored during last roll call

Nelson Mainor makes his presence known, hitting the gong in the Carl Vinson Medical Center. But he did not do this to bring attention to himself. He did it to bring honor to veterans who served our country and have passed away during the last six months.

The gong is part of the Last Roll Call ceremony, which is held locally at the VA twice a year. The next roll call is usually done in late July and it will honor veterans who passed away between January and June. The roll call held on Jan. 30 remembered the veterans who received care at the VA and passed away between last July and December.

These ceremonies give the veteran's family, friends and the community a chance to thank them one more time for their dedication in serving in one of the six armed forces: the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy and Space Force. Their names are read out one last time, before the gong is hit followed by the playing of "Taps."

While we may not know the names that were read out loud a week ago, we know they were loved. We know they returned from their roles of service and came back to make lives better in the communities they lived in.

Thank you VA for honoring the heroes we should never forget.

— Payton Towns III

YOUR TURN:

Share your opinion on current events, or topics covered in The Courier Herald by emailing us: tchnewsreporter@gmail.com

THOUGHT FOR TODAY...

"To uncover your true potential, you must first find your own limits, and then you have to have the courage to blow past them."

- Picabo Street, Olympic gold medalist

DAILY SCRIPTURE...

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

- Philippians 4:6-7(NLT)

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY...

Feb. 10, 2026 is...

- National Flannel Day
- Extraterrestrial Culture Day
- National Cream Cheese Brownie Day
- World Pulses Day
- Umbrella Day
- Plimsoll Day

The Courier Herald

LOCAL MATTERS  Judged a newspaper of General Excellence 2024

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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.

Fun stories from behind the wheel

MAN ABOUT TOWN...



By PAYTON TOWNS III

While reading last weekend's Tell It! selection, I noticed one about me running out of gas in my blue 1971 Chevrolet Nova. That reminded me of some other memories from my younger driving days.

That blue Nova I drove for a few years belonged to my great aunt. She hardly drove it. In fact, every summer when we went to her house for our family reunion it was always parked in the same spot.

After she passed away, the Nova went to my grandparents, who in turn handed it over to me. The Nova, which had a V8 engine, was a gas guzzler. I remember a time when a friend of mine wanted me to pick him and some other people up and travel to a ball field.

We gathered in the car and made our way to this field. Along the way they wanted to go down a path that was off the main road. I felt adventurous and made the turn off the paved road onto a path that went from going down the middle of a field to into the woods. As we traveled, the path got narrower and narrower until we just about bottomed out in front of a small body of water. Despite my passenger wanting me to gun it and cross the water, I spoke up and said, "This is as far as we go!"

Thankfully, we were able to back up and make our way out. For a brief moment though, I was worried that the car would get stuck and we would have to walk miles to the nearest house to call for help. I was not looking forward to having to call my father and explain how I got into that particular mess.

Driving was something I looked forward to doing since the day I was dropped off in my mother's Brady-Bunch-looking 1970s model, wood paneled Plymouth station wagon. Besides the paneling, it also featured a back up alarm letting everyone know your vehicle was in reverse. There were several times I asked to be dropped off at the bottom of the hill or even tell her that my baseball or band practice was over 15 minutes

later than it really was. That way not too many would see me picked up in her vehicle.

So, what was the very first vehicle I got to drive as a sophomore to the student high school parking lot? That's right. My mother's old Brady-Bunch-looking 1970s model Plymouth, wood paneled station wagon. On that first day, I got to school early. Thankfully, I did not have to drive it but maybe for a week.

When I was in the eighth grade, I thought I was going to be heading to high school in a black 1980s model Oldsmobile Cutlass. It was my father's car and it looked good. The deal was it would be the car I got to drive to school instead of "The Brady Bunch" wagon. Now this was a car I did not mind my father picking me up in because it was cool.

It was the first car I had the opportunity to drive when I walked out of the DMV with my learner's license. I dropped that car into drive and quickly jammed on the brakes as the vehicle inched forward. I was able to prove that my father and brother's seatbelts worked. I don't necessarily recall the pleasantries that came out of their mouths but I'm sure it included something about not doing that again.

A few months before I was to obtain my driver's license, my dad had an accident in the Cutlass going back to his house. We had gone to a car show in Macon, and he returned us to our mother's house. Unfortunately, he fell asleep while driving on his way across town. Thankfully, he was okay. The next time I saw

my car was in a junkyard - totaled.

I was hoping we would get another Cutlass just like that one. Not even close. My father showed up in a bronze 1976 Mercury Comet. It was in no way as eye pleasing as the Cutlass, but the sound of its V8 engine was impressive. After a while, I was glad to call it the vehicle I would drive to school.

Even though my father would say the Comet looked like it was the kind of car your grandmother would use to go grocery shopping, it was the fastest vehicle I have ever driven. With a slight push of the accelerator, the Comet would take off from the traffic signal. I did that a lot, especially if I was the first vehicle in line. It was fun to leave everyone in my dust. Of course, my father was not in the car, but he had a way of telling that I was not simply driving the car from my school to my brother's school to pick him up and go home.

He told me that he had to put on two new back tires because the ones that were on had somehow lost its thread. He told me those were on him. The next set was on me. I stopped gunning it from the red lights.

Driving can be fun but it is a privilege. And when it came to me driving, my father would take that right away from me if I got into trouble which did not happen a lot but did occur from time-to-time. On those occasions, my punishment was that my younger brother would drive me to school and church.

One particular Sunday a

friend of ours in the youth group had purchased a new Toyota. He and other group members bragged about how fast his car was because they had gone up to Atlanta and back the day before. They declared that his car was the fastest one in our youth group. That is all we heard about all day - over and over.

That night we had a event at the bowling alley. As we left the church, my brother was ahead of our buddy's Toyota as we headed to the bypass. I knew when we turned onto the four-lane road that he was going to go around us. I could see the car behind us in the rearview mirror as I sat there with my arms crossed. I so badly wanted to be driving. But, I was in trouble - hence the reason for being in the passenger seat.

As my brother accelerated onto the bypass into the right lane, our friend's Toyota made the right turn and immediately got into the left lane and began to get up to speed. As they caught up to us, I simply told my brother, "Don't let them pass us." We went from slowly gaining speed to taking off and leaving that Toyota. It went from objects in the rearview mirror may be closer than they appear to objects so small you could barely see it.

I could not help but to break into a smile like Gru does in "Despicable Me." Eventually I told my brother to back it down, while I prayed for law enforcement not to be on that particular part of the road.

Looking back, I know that it was not the right thing to do. For one thing, I advised my brother to do something that put us in danger. I cannot imagine what my father would have said if we were pulled over or my brother lost control and we wrecked. Also, members from the youth group could have told us. Thankfully, they did not narc on us. So, I don't condone what we did.

But it did shut our friends up, and thankfully, we were able to return home and ride again another day.

Looking back: The year 2025 in review

GUEST COLUMN

By JIM THOMAS

Before the America of 2025 recede further in history, this brief overview. Turmoil and upheaval were parts of the picture, but not the worst on record. Some bad was with us and a lot of good.

Forever an advantage are the country's physical dimensions. Only Russia and Canada are larger. The contiguous United States occupies an area of 3,119,884.69 square miles, spread across 2.43 billion acres of Earth's surface.

By the close of 2025, the population was 347,275,807. That is 4.22 percent of the world at large. Life expectancy for men was set at 74.8 years, with women living longer at 80.2 years. Although recent data suggests the overall life expectancy is nearing 79 years. The U.S. is a very rich nation. It represents 30.8 percent of the world's total household wealth. Clearly evident are abundance, plenty and prosperity. As of late 2025/early 2026, personal income per capita had reached \$76,400 per annum. Despite China's rise the latest figures show the U.S. producing 25.9 percent of global gross domestic product.

Last year and across most

of the preceding decades, America was uninvolving in a major war. Year after year nonfarm employment rose. Inflation is under 3 percent. The U.S. unemployment rate in 2025 averaged in the mid-4 percent range, finishing the year at only 4.4 percent. Respectable by any measure. After years of inexcusable neglect, the southern border is secure.

More good news. The Council on Criminal Justice, a respected nonpartisan group, reported the national homicide rate was the lowest in 125 years.

As always, a bleak side. The body politic is severely divided and polarized. This impedes constructive action when constructive action is needed. Progress appears stymied. America, it seems, has difficulty building high-speed railroads, transmission lines, highway tunnels, bridges, apartment buildings and homes.

cord-high homelessness (771,480 people in January 2024), and extreme cost-burdening for renters.

Home ownership is increasingly unattainable for many, with median single-family home prices significantly up from 2022 levels. The median age of first-time homebuyers in the U.S. has reached an all-time high of 40 in 2025, rising from 38 in 2024 and 33 in 2020.

The housing crisis aside, scientists, UN officials, corporate executives and political leaders point to other trends in 2025 well worth time and attention. However, they are beyond the scope of this piece. Meanwhile, thoughtful citizens everywhere consider themselves fortunate indeed, to live in this great and mighty democratic republic - the United States of America.

Writer's note: Sourced from "The Wall Street Journal;" AI Overview; Wikipedia "Why Nothing Works," M.C. Dunkleman, 2025, Public Affairs Books.

Jim Thomas is a retired attorney from Dublin. He now lives in Atlanta.

Dublin Police Department

- Terri T. Goodwin, 46, was charged with theft by shoplifting and possession and use of drug related objects at Piggly Wiggly on Bellevue Avenue around 1:49 p.m. on Jan. 25.

An officer responded to the location in reference to a shoplifting at the store. Goodwin told the officer that she essentially gave the items back. The staff told the officer that they wanted to prosecute.

The manager said Goodwin was walking around the store with a bag. The manager, who was watching the woman on camera, saw her on isle four put stuff in the bag. That is when he called the police. He then approached the woman before she could leave. There

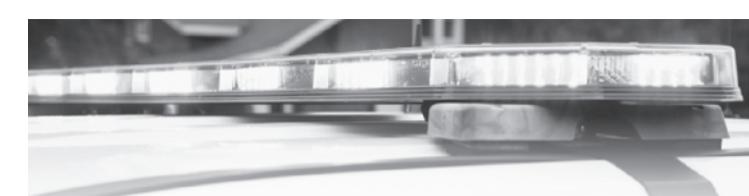
wound up being two ribs inside her jacket.

The officer ran a criminal history on Goodwin and she did not have any prior convictions of shoplifting. She was wanted through the Dublin Police Department on forgery.

The total amount of food items stolen was \$158.61. Goodwin was transported to the sheriff's office. Later, it was determined that Goodwin had a pipe/crack pipe inside her black bag.

- Keshawn Vontay Mincey, 41, was charged with public drunkenness at Bell Homes at the intersection of Hudson and Decatur around 12:09 a.m. on Jan. 24.

An officer responded to the location in response to a domestic dispute. The officer saw Mincey, who was

**POLICE BEAT...**

walking down the street and was clearly intoxicated. He was not physically aggressive but yelling at officers while stumbling around.

He was handcuffed and transported to the Laurens County Jail.

- On Jan. 30, an officer responded to Fairview Park Hospital on Industrial Boulevard, around 7:05 p.m. in reference to removing a person.

A medical employee talked with an officer who was told that Wesley Ful-

ford, 33, had been threatening to hit them and spit on them. He also threw a table and trash bin at the workers. A nurse said the first time they entered Fulford's room to give him a shot, he told them he would spit and swing on them. Fulford told employees he was not going to take the ordered medication and that he would spit on them.

When the officer approached the room, he found Fulford lying on a mat in the doorway. Fulford

was placed into handcuffs and taken to the sheriff's office. Fulford was charged with simple assault and terroristic threats and act.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- Lakesha Antwanette Lloyd, 45, was charged with simple assault on Fletcher Stanley Road around 12:56 a.m. on Jan. 19. The deputy responded to a remove call.

- A motor vehicle was stolen on Brazeal Circle in East Dublin around between Jan. 16 and Jan. 17.

- On Jan. 20, around 10:25 p.m., a deputy took a walk-in at the sheriff's office about chickens being killed on Ralph Keen Road in East Dublin.

- On Jan. 20, around 2:01 p.m., a deputy met with a woman at the sher-

iff's office in reference to harassment by phone. A report was completed to document the incident.

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.



Something positive for a change. I would like to just express how grateful I am for the Medical Center here in Dublin, their staff and physicians are the best!

Williams does not deserve a flag. He is so compromised that it would only represent the \$13 million lost, not any good he did. They will have to dig deeper to actually find someone that is respected in the community, and Williams is not.

I overheard a distressed lady telling how she could not get her teeth fixed because she had to pay her high city taxes. The school board has failed us all due to their mismanagement, deceit and neglect.

Thank goodness it was Mrs. Smith who went and meet with the leaders in Atlanta.

Now that the sign at NWLE has been taken care of can we get the chain link fence near the gym car rider line and the fifth grade hall cleared? It has some terri-

ble overgrowth that is out of control.

What is going on with the energy assistance program that helps seniors, homebound and low income people with their electric bill? I've tried to call each month. Within the four or five minutes is up, they have already given out all of their appointments, which can't be very many. We need some more assistance for elderly people.

This is for the school board, I wrote a check yesterday for my taxes for the city and the schools. The check took my whole social security check for the month to cover it. I'm 93-years-old and I hope these folks understand what the hell they are doing to us old people. Thank you!

It was very nice for the Dublin City Chairwoman to go to Atlanta and meet with Richard Woods, Matt Hatchett and the others concerning the school situation. However, there was nothing mentioned about the property taxes that the

city people have to pay the schools. Nothing at all! Nor, was there anything mentioned about any investigation that could be going on. Someone needs to be held accountable and the chairwoman was involved in all of it because she was on the board.

Can we get road name signs at the intersection of Marie Church Road and Wyatt Road? The sign bandit.

Why put a crossword puzzle in the paper? You can't read it. Either clear the problem up or put something else all together. *Editor's note: Thank you for your comments. We are aware and apologize for the inconvenience.*

Did a war take place on the cypress trees near Live Oak on Claxton Dairy? It looks like when the battle was over all the casualties were left behind. Responsible parties should be made to clean up.

Please post pictures that represent Dublin from

past St. Patrick's events that show how much this town has to offer during the festival. A picture of beer drinking does not represent Dublin at its finest.

The city needs to buy the old Big Lots and turn it into a homeless shelter. Many homeless already live in the woods behind and beside it. If Dublin has money for Hilburn Park and the Madison Street projects, surely it has money for this. Then of course churches, civic organizations and local restaurants and businesses should help also.

The Dublin City Schools behavioral health director lives outside the district and serves on the preparatory school board. She hasn't been in DCS schools for months and that is unacceptable for our students!

So the deficit is "only" \$3 million now. Does that mean they have also paid back all of the millions borrowed from the state last year?

The former Dublin city clerk has shown no remorse except getting caught. The city of Dublin had better check their accounts thoroughly because if she would steal from her church, she

would most certainly steal from them and anyone else.

Finally a weekend**Local 7-day Forecast:****The next 48 hours:**

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----|--------------------|
| | TUESDAY: | 70° | Mostly cloudy. |
| | | | Sunrise: 7:25 a.m. |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| | TUESDAY NIGHT: | 49° | Partly to mostly cloudy. |
| | | | Sunset: 6:13 p.m. |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------|-----|--------------------|
| | WEDNESDAY: | 69° | Cloudy. |
| | | | Sunrise: 7:19 a.m. |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----|-------------------|
| | WEDNESDAY NIGHT: | 48° | Mainly clear. |
| | | | Sunset: 6:14 p.m. |

| | | | |
|--|---------------|----------------|---|
| | Thursday 2/12 | HIGH/LOW 67/47 | Partly sunny and nice. |
| | Friday 2/13 | HIGH/LOW 64/38 | Cloudy with a little rain. |
| | Saturday 2/14 | HIGH/LOW 59/37 | Cloudy followed by increasing chance for rain and a thunderstorm. |
| | Sunday 2/15 | HIGH/LOW 61/41 | Cloudy most of the time. |
| | Monday 2/16 | HIGH/LOW 67/46 | Mostly cloudy in the morning, sun through high clouds in the afternoon. |

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-------|
| River levels... | Oconee (at Dublin) | 5.26' |
| | Ocmulgee (at Macon) | 6.1' |

Guest Night features award-winning speaker and gospel quartet**SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD**

The Dublin Country Club will be the setting for an evening of music and inspiration on Friday, Feb. 27, at 6:30 pm.

The festivities will begin with a delicious buffet dinner, with lovely buffet music provided by pianist Dr. Trent Herring.

The musical entertainment will continue with a concert by acclaimed Gospel Quartet "Common Garments."

This Georgia-based group is comprised of Mark Clarke from Covington, Rodney Jacobs from Vienna, Darrell Dunn from Madison, and Stan Sheppard from Dublin. For almost 20 years, they have been thrill-

ing audiences with their rich harmonies and soul-stirring renditions. Their message of hope and healing through music has made them a beloved presence in the community.

Special guest speaker Connie Mercer Carey is a native of Dublin, the daughter of the late Trixie Mercer. She was named the 2013 Most Outstanding Speaker of the United States by Toastmasters International and was First Runner-Up in the International Competition.

With her signature blend of comic relief and rich content, she helps others "Laugh More and Live Better" by viewing life's challenges from a renewed perspective.

Connie is a professional

musician and a Georgia Author of the Year.

After earning music degrees from Shorter College and Southern Methodist University, she enjoyed twenty years as a music teacher, from preschool to college level.

She is a member of the National Speakers Association and the author of "Falling Up," a powerful guide for those walking through the loss of a loved one.

Connie Carey follows in

a tradition of distinguished Guest Night speakers, including Chick-fil-A founder Truett Cathy, his daughter Trudy Cathy White, Atlanta Braves Chaplain Terry Evans, and acclaimed speaker and author Andy Stanley.

"Guest Night" is a yearly event, sponsored by Dublin After Five and Dublin Christian Women's Connection. Most of their events throughout the year are designed for women, but "Guest Night" is especially

set aside to welcome men as well. Door prizes will be provided by local restaurants and businesses.

Tickets are \$25 and must be purchased in advance by Tuesday, Feb. 17.

Tickets are available at the Olive Branch Bookstore or by calling Annette (478) 279-0010 or Jane (478) 595-2499. Members of Dublin After Five and Dublin Christian Women's Connection also have tickets for purchase.

There will be no ticket sales at the door, so please make your ticket purchases early!

Classifieds

4-25+ ACRE Tracts on Hwy 80 East, Adrian GA: 2 parcels with pond, 2 parcels with pecan orchard and pasture. Abundant deer & turkey: \$225,500. Brokers welcome 478-957-9734 owner

Wanted: Small travel trailer for The Church of Jesus Christ. 478-290-5304 or 478-275-2741.

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R



Connie Carey will be the special guest speaker for Guest Night on Friday, Feb. 27 /SPECIAL PHOTO



SIGNING OFF: East Laurens' Caleb Jackson and Norrion King (left) and West Laurens' Juvon Hill and Ethan Cason Guyton (right) marked the conclusion of their high school football careers, and the start of new journeys at the college level, with Wednesday's signing ceremonies/CLAY REYNOLDS

National Signing Day: EL's King, Jackson, WL's Hill, E.C.G. make commitments official

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

College commitments were made official side-by-side last Wednesday for a couple football teammates each at East and West Laurens who put pen to paper, with crowds of supporters looking on, during programs to mark National Signing Day.

Sharing the Falcons' spotlight were defensive linemen Caleb Jackson, who's headed to in-state D2 powerhouse Valdosta State, and athlete Norrion King, who signed with Arkansas Baptist College.

"It's just an honor to God that they've been blessed with the gifts to do what they do, and that somebody saw their talent and wanted them," said East Laurens head coach Jesse Hicks.

The Raiders celebrated defensive back Juvon Hill, bound for Fort Valley State, and defensive lineman Ethan Cason-Guyton, slated to attend North Carolina-based HBCU Shaw University, who were two in a group of four total that faxed in their signing paperwork Wednesday. Two others, in running back Branden Brooks (Dodge City Community College) and O-lineman Michael Dasher (Livingstone), bring the team's total of college-bound seniors in the current class to seven... and head coach Kip Burdette says there may be a few more in the works.

Here's a little more on each player, and what they had to say about the opportunity to continue playing at the next level...

Strong recruiting relationship takes EL's King to Arkansas Baptist

Arkansas Baptist College, an NAIA school based in Little Rock, seems a somewhat remote destination for a running back out of East Dublin, Georgia.

But for Norrion King, a relationship built up with a future coach through his current one made the long-distance connection into a fit that both he and his new school feel strongly about.

"They really liked him," Hicks said. "It's farther away from home, but he's not worrying about it. He just loves the opportunity to go play and get his education paid for."

Milton Adams, a former player of Hicks' back at Baldwin, had initially targeted King as an assistant at a former school, and kept up the determined pursuit after recently moving on to a new gig at ABC.

"It was really the bond he had with me from the time he recruited me at a different school to time he got to the school he's at now," King said. "We talked every day constantly, talked about football, talked about opportunities I had, talked about school. He made sure I was good mentally, physically, everything. That led to my commitment and my signing. I really love the culture and the history behind the school, and also the relationship

I have with the coach. It's a great opportunity, many people don't get the opportunity that I've got, so I'm grateful for it."

Since debuting with a remarkable performance in a come-from-behind win over Washington-Wilkes to open the 2023 season, the dependable offensive contributor – at 5-foot-10 and a little under 220 lbs. – has carried it over 250 times for a little more than 1,250 yards, and added about 300 as a receiver. A punt return score to clinch an early October win over Southwest was among the highlights of King's senior season this past fall.

Looking back, he considers the everyday grind with his teammates, and the moments of life they got to share along the way, as the most rewarding aspect of his high school playing experience.

"It was all the practices, the good, the bad, the sad," King said. "I definitely had a sad moment with the passing of one of my best friends, Wyatt Murphy. We lost him way too soon. My brothers have always been there for me. We play, laugh, joke, get serious. It will always be the practices for me and my brothers."

I like the way they do things: EL's Jackson drawn to culture at VSU

From its history (with trophies representing 12 conference crowns and four national titles) to recent success (the Blazers have gone deep in the NCAA Division II playoffs multiple times, and finished runner-up twice since last winning it all in 2018), there was a lot about Valdosta State football that stood out when the school – one of a select few that can truly back up the claim of being a powerhouse – made its pitch to Caleb Jackson during recruiting.

The East Laurens D-line standout, who's used to catching eyeballs with his 6-foot-1, 275-pound build and dominant strength up front, walked away with a mutual impression of the program's longtime stature at the D2 level, and culture of excellence that numerous head coaches (most recently Graham Craig) have sustained over multiple decades, after an official visit last year.

"Really, when I first opened the doors, I saw the championships," Jackson said. "But they're a winning program, and I like the way they do things."

That's what helped the Blazers, who enjoyed a slight home-state advantage over multiple contenders who were in the mix to lock down his services, win out in the end.

"He had a bunch of guys at him," Hicks said. "He had the choice to pick between about six schools... We're just proud of the fact that he's going to get the opportunity to not be too far away, then go play some real good football and go get a good education."

Prodigious size and gifts on the offensive and defensive lines of scrimmage made him a fixture in

the East Laurens trenches all four years he played, but Jackson blossomed into a true game-changer on the defensive side as a junior and senior.

Both seasons, he was among the top tacklers on the Falcon defense. This fall, his five sacks and tackles for loss were good for the lead, or co-lead, in both stat columns. Jackson added two fumbles and a blocked kick to his 2025 numbers, as well as two interceptions – one a memorable pick-six against Washington County – his junior season in 2024.

For Hicks, it's less the outstanding plays than the leadership by example that he observed from Jackson and King each day that he'll remember most from his time getting to coach them.

"They've always been team captains and leaders," Hicks said. "When I walked in the door two years ago, I already knew who they were because of their presence, how they did things, how they spoke, how they carried themselves and how they worked. You don't replace good people like that. You hopefully find somebody who's watching and they've got an idea of what it looks like."

Hill's versatility, playmaking prowess leads to FVSU

Over his three main seasons as a starter, Juvon Hill has earned the nickname "Mr. Clutch," some coinage by the articulate West Laurens secondary coach Brandon Edmond to describe his tendency to step up and make key plays.

Whether it was picking off passes (his nine tied a longstanding career record of Eric Scott that teammate Jayce Blash broke with two more this past fall) or bringing in key receptions (a team-leading 17 for 303 yards and five touchdowns), the Raiders' two-way weapon had a way of delivering those in all the big moments they were needed the past two years.

Looking back on just their 13-game unbeaten streak this past fall, there were all kinds of them that had a momentum-swinging hand in major games. His huge touchdown grabs marked late-season wins over Aquinas, Westside Augusta (in the region title game), Beach (in the first round) and Jenkins (in the quarterfinals), and much-needed picks the same against both Harlem and Oconee County in round 2.

"When it was time to make a play, he would show you," Edmond said.

Fort Valley State came calling, or rather texting, earlier this academic year when an assistant coach reached out to Hill with an invite to come visit, followed shortly by an offer to become a Wildcat.

"I loved how their campus looked and how big it was," he said.

In college, he's likely to focus his talents on defense, though the 6-foot, 150-pounder had the body control, hands and ball-skills to be just as much a game-changer as a

receiver for the Raiders, and that versatility was what made him one of the most indispensable components of their lineups during both 2024 and 2025.

Most impressive to West Laurens head coach Kip Burdette was how seamlessly handled that full-time workload on offense and defense, along with the year-round demands of playing multiple sports.

"He's just a gifted athlete," Burdette said. "I don't think Juvon's come to school a day in the last three and a half years and not played a sport after school. He's done something ever since he's gotten here, whether it be football, basketball, track. I've seen him really progress over the last four years. Fort Valley's getting a good one. He's got a strong work ethic, gifted physically and also I think he cares about what he does and puts all that into it."

Hill is already looking forward to the challenge of making the same type of name for himself as a college player.

"Just getting a grind in, trying to get a starting position when I'm coming up there," he said. "Do my work and stay focused."

WL's E.C.G. to continue playing in mother's memory at Shaw

Ethan Cason Guyton, better known around the West Laurens football facility by his initials E.C.G., underwent a major transformation physically between his freshman year and this past fall, building himself into what Burdette described preseason as "pound-for-pound, the strongest player on our team."

Between 2024 and 2025 alone, the rising senior put on at least 10 extra pounds of muscle that was flexed routinely over the course of the Raiders' run to the region championship and state semifinals that had consistent pass rush – courtesy of himself, along with fellow "sharks" Maxx Chafin and Keith Walker up front – as a running theme.

"He's a true definition of, if you work hard, you'll get rewarded," said West Laurens defensive coordinator Kenny Murphy.

In the final accounting of stats, E.C.G. was seventh in the competitive tackles category, and led the squad in three others with his five sacks, 12 tackles for loss and 11 pressures. He also forced two fumbles, one to seal a defining win at Harlem back in August that will go down among his most notable highlights from the season.

But the most memorable, he said, was likely one of several key tackles late in their semifinal loss at Jefferson that helped preserve the Raiders' chances in a four-point game, and ensure that the eventual defeat would be on their terms.

"It was a tough loss," he said. "But I made a play, a third down stop, and the stadium just started rocking. That was my favorite moment."

As it would turn out, his perfor-

SCOREBOARD

GIRLS HOOPS

Friday

Dublin 43, Dodge Co. 42
Trinity 61, Brentwood 54
West Laurens 37,
Richmond Academy 32

Saturday

East Laurens 57, WL 23
ECI 54, Dublin 53

BOYS HOOPS

Friday

ARC 44, WL 40
Brentwood 74, Trinity 50
Dodge Co. 57, Dublin 31

Saturday

Dublin 75, ECI 45
EL 65, WL 45

PREP SCHEDULE

BASKETBALL

Tuesday

Cross Creek at
West Laurens/5 p.m.
Bleckley Co. at Dublin
Central Macon at
East Laurens/6 p.m.

Thursday

GlAA 2-AA Tournament
(at Brentwood)
Trinity (girls) vs. Gatewood
/3 p.m.
Trinity (boys) vs. Central
Fellowship/4:30 p.m.

Friday

Dublin at Central Macon
EL at Northeast Macon
/6 p.m.

BASEBALL

Monday

Johnson Co. at EL/6 p.m.

Tuesday

Aquinias at WL/5:30 p.m.
Dublin at Toombs Co.
/5:45 p.m.

Thursday

WL at Aquinas/5:30 p.m.
Dublin at Johnson Co.
/6 p.m.

Friday

Bacon Co. at EL
(doubleheader)/4 p.m.
Swainsboro at Dublin
/6 p.m.

SOCER

Tuesday

Dublin (girls) at Treutlen
Swainsboro at EL
WL at Westside Augusta
/5 p.m.
Dublin (boys) at
Hawkinsville/5:30

Wednesday

Dublin (girls) at
Northeast Macon/5:30 p.m.

mane that night was what caught the attention of an assistant coach out of Shaw (an NCAA D2 school based in Raleigh, N.C.) who was in town to check out a different player on the opposing side.

"I just stood out to him, and he texted me that night," E.C.G. said.

He dedicated Wednesday's signing ceremony, just as he has each play of the last few seasons, to his mother, whom he lost several years ago and continues looking to make proud.

"It means a lot," he said. "My mom pushed me when I was young, she said give it my best, so that's what I'm going to do."

Wrestling: Trinity's Simmons, Shirley place sixth at GIAAs; 17 clinch spots in GHSA state championships

From STAFF REPORTS

Two Trinity Crusaders reached the podium at the GIAA state finals, and 17 local earned state berths at GHSA sectional tournaments during this past Saturday's postseason wrestling action.

Both Tommy Simmons (120) and Hudson Shirley (138) finished sixth in their

respective weights at the GIAA state tournament in Gainesville.

Meanwhile, the following region qualifiers out of Dublin, East Laurens and West Laurens punched their tickets to state at sectional events in Lyons and Flowery Branch:

Dublin

Alan Myers – eighth, 106

Quinton Lovett – first, 120 Keymontae Sanders – fifth, 126

Kye Young – third, 132
Major Morton – eighth, 175

Domimarkyo – first, 285

East Laurens

Bradly White – sixth, 144
Cayson Wadley – second, 138

Jeremiah Wright – fifth, 190

West Laurens

Damien Cummings – eighth, 138

Jarek Giles – second, 106

Jayden Starley – sixth, 132

Jayden Watkins – sixth, 190

John Howell – fourth, 144

Keith Walker – fourth, 285

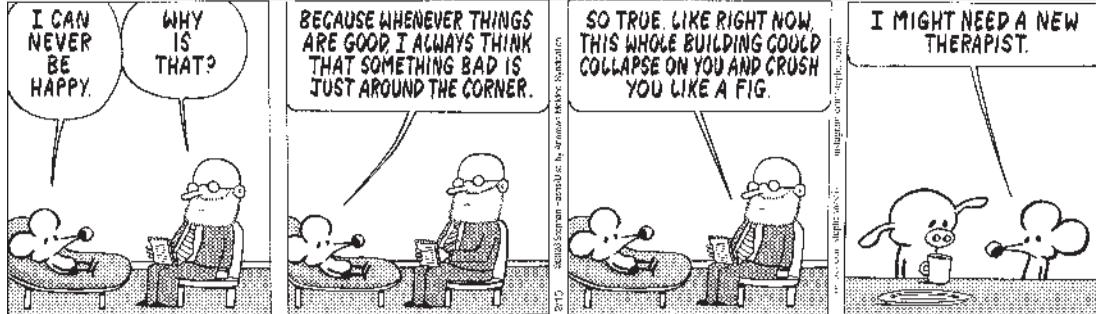
Maxx Chafin – fourth, 215

Sebastian Rodriguez – third, 120



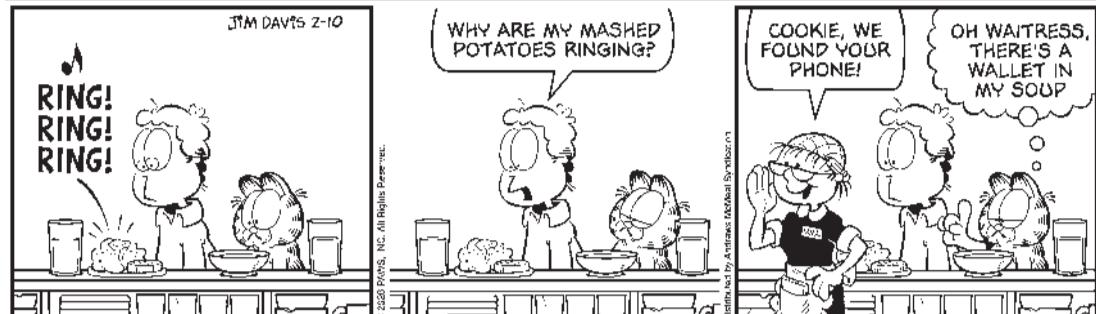
STATE MEDALISTS: Trinity wrestlers Tommy Simmons (left) and Hudson Shirley (right), shown with head coach Brooks Hendrix, (center) both placed sixth at the GIAA championships Saturday/SPECIAL PHOTO, courtesy Trinity Christian School

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



BY STEPHAN PASTIS

GARFIELD



BY JIM DAVIS

OVERBOARD



BY CHIP DUNHAM

DEFLOCKED



BY JEFF CORRIVEAU

ZIGGY



BY TOM WILSON

PLUGGERS



BY JEFF MACNELLY

pluggermail@aol.com

Thanks to
David Barsam
Waltham,
Massachusetts

Pluggers don't like the word "denial" and prefer the term "coping mechanism."

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

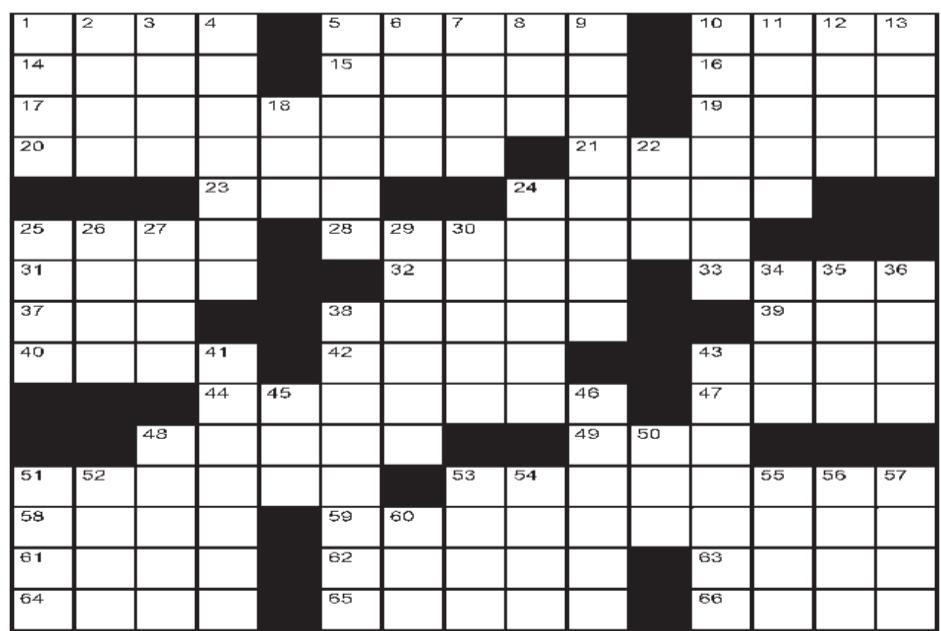
ACROSS

- 1 Marking on a Dalmatian
5 Revises
10 Got bigger
14 Romeo (Italian carmaker)
15 Artwork on a wall
16 Part to play
17 Milky espresso drink
19 Boot out of office
20 Short excerpts
21 Dinner dishes
23 Frozen water
24 Book's backbone
25 Raisin cereal
28 Soup cracker
31 Pealed
32 Back of the neck
33 Orange peel
37 Section of an opera
38 For face value: 2 wds.
39 Female deer
40 Examination
42 Chicken cordon

- 43 College housing
44 Flips, as a house
47 Shade trees
48 Cake tier
49 Baking pan
51 Clean— (beardless)
53 Most intelligent
58 Cassette
59 Orange-flavored frozen treat
61 Wicked
62 "Bald" bird
63 Soft— (dance style)
64 Chaotic situation
65 Discolored spot
66 Small city

DOWN

- 1 Animal pouches
2 Map out
3 "Life" (2012 film): 2 wds.
4 Dancing like Gene Kelly
5 Roast hosts
6 Air passage



9/25/25

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- 43 Tooth care pro
45 CBS logo
46 Male flower part
48 lazuli
50 Tax agency: Abbr.
51 Pipe part
52 Possess
- 53 Video game company
54 North African country
55 Reverberation
56 Sluggish
57 High schooler, often
60 Mob informant

ENTERTAINMENT

Man opts to take ex on trip instead of his girlfriend!



with autism, ADHD, PTSD and major depressive disorder. They are not doing well and have been hospitalized multiple times over the past five years. They have no friends and no contact with extended family. The only people they interact with are me and their father.

I feel it is very important to keep me informed so I can offer support and help both of our children deal with whatever is happening. Am I wrong to ask my ex to explain to me what is going on? -- IN THE DARK IN VERMONT

DEAR IN THE DARK: You are not wrong to ask your estranged husband for that information, in light of the fact that one of the children you share has so many mental health challenges. However, if he refuses, you will have to accept it and deal with your children as best you can with limited information. Believe me, you have my sympathy.

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

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ ANSWERS

Q 1 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:

▲ K 3 2 ♠ K Q J 10 7 ♦ 6 5 3 2 ♠ 7

What call would you make?

A - Don't be shy. This hand is worth it. Bid 3H.

Q 5 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:

▲ 9 8 6 5 3 2 ♠ K J ♦ Q 9 5 3 ♠ A

As dealer, what call would you make?

A - This looks like a weak two-bid to us. Open 2H. In the unlikely event you become dummy, put this hand down proudly.

Q 2 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:

▲ K Q 9 7 ♠ A 9 7 ♦ K Q 10 6 ♠ 9 6

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

1♦ Pass 1♠ Pass 2♦ Pass

What call would you make?

A - This hand is worth 15-16 points in support of spades. Bid 3S.

Q 3 - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:

Q 10 9 7 ♠ 4 7 6 3 ♠ A Q 10 9 7 5

Right-hand opponent opens 3H. What call would you make?

A - Overall at the four level with only 11 points? With this suit, you bet! Bid 4C.

Q 4 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

▲ 8 7 ♠ A K 7 5 ♠ 5 4 ♠ A K 8 6 4

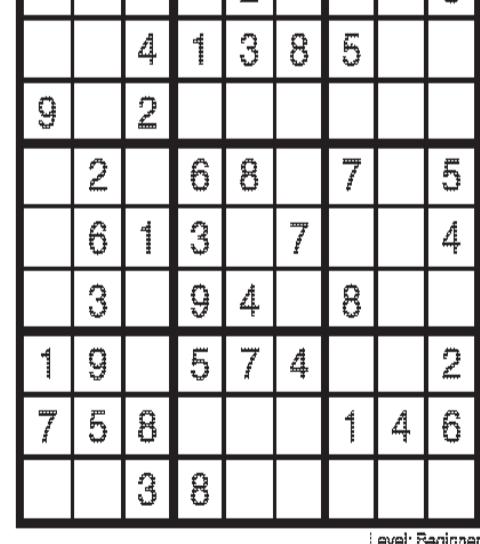
What call would you make?

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.

SUDOKU

Fun By The Numbers

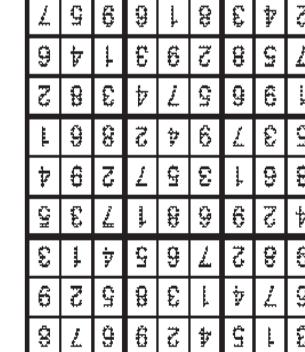
Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!



Level: Beginner

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:

SEVERE WEATHER

Continued from page 1

long to get the central services restored and back to you."

One of the best things to have is a basic disaster supplies kit where the following items are recommended:

- Water for one gallon per person for several days for drinking and sanitation.

- Several-days supply of non-perishable food.

- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA weather radio with tone alert.

- Flashlights

- First aid kit

- Extra batteries

- Whistle to signal for help

- Dust mask

- Plastic sheeting, scissors and duct tape

- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties

- Wrench, pliers or other tools to help turn off utilities

- Manual can opener for food

- Local maps

- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery.

People are also advised to have soap, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes along with organizing and protecting prescriptions which include over-the-counter drugs and vitamins. It is also important to not forget non-prescription medications like pain relievers, anti-diarrhea, antacids or laxatives.

Laird said there is a check list on the Ready.gov website.

"That is a fantastic resource to enable you to be ready for weather, storms or anything else," he said.

People can also sign up for hyper reach alert, which is a communication service for those in Laurens County through CivicReady in case of an emergency. They can sign up going to the city of Dublin or Laurens County Commissioners websites. The alerts will notify people about:

- Missing persons

- Evacuations

- Local threats

- Severe weather alerts

- Other incidents

"People can customize their alerts," Laird said.

Do You Have A Family Emergency Communications Plan?

1

Make a list of important information such as: school and work contacts, insurance policies, etc.



2

Identify an out-of-town friend or family member for everyone to call.



3

Select a safe meeting place near home and another one farther away.



4

Give a printed copy of the plan to each family member and store it on your cell phone.



These "Four Steps" will ensure that you are prepared for Any Emergency!



SNAPSHOTS: MORE FROM HUB DUDLEY PROGRAM PRESENTED BY THE FRIENDS OF THE CARNEGIE



DOWNTOWN DUBLIN

Continued from page 1

merchant's meeting, we met and proposed that the one parking space becomes a fire lane. If it's a fire lane, then the police department can fine them or do something. Right now, nothing can be done."

The board approved a fire lane for this area "in an effort to continue to be proactive in that parking lot," Berry said.

"We've had people park there and block the ramp, which is an entrance into the building. Turning it into a fire lane will be able to make sure that people aren't blocking the wheelchair access to the restaurant. We want to make sure the access parts are not being blocked."

The board later approved Uniform Paving and Seal Coating LLC to do the parking lot at Market on Madison.

"Now that Madison Street has been beautifully completed, we are ready to go back and re-visit the parking lot on Madison," Berry said. "The gentleman with this company has done this work for Market on Madison before."

When asked about when work would begin, the board suggested the company know that the work needed to begin after March 15. They want the work to be completed by April 4, which is when the local farmers market will start.

The wintry weather, and very cold temperatures that happened the evening of Jan. 31, caused the postponement of the showing of "Smokey and the Bandit." The new date has been set for 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 7.

"I'm happy that we moved it because it was so cold," Berry said. "We're optimistic that the weather is going to be better when we get into March."

Todd Gay will speak about his father, Ronnie, who played a Georgia State Patrol trooper in the movie. Matt Meeks will lead in the movie's trivia.

"It's going to be the exact same program that we had planned (for Jan. 31)," Berry said. "Somebody will bring their identical 'Smokey and the Bandit' Trans Am that is going to be parked in front of the theater for photo opportunities. We've had a great response to 'Smokey and the Bandit.'"

Tickets are \$3 for individuals and \$5 for couples.

"We really want to have a lot of community members come to this," Berry said.

In other meeting news:

- Board member Jason Keyton discussed the Sip and Shop held in December.

"We sold about 65 percent of our cups that we got for a first-time event and we had a lot of positive feedback from every vendor," Keyton said. "We were very thankful for that. We had a little conflict with everything that was going on. We are looking forward to doing another one in the spring. From what we did, we got a lot of positive feedback. We are hoping this is something we can grow."

- Member Josh Crews talked about the upcoming Pig in the Park, which will be held on Friday, Feb. 27 and 28. Country singer Will Moseley will present a free concert.

"We are investing a lot into (the Pig in the Park) this year as the DDA, which should create more exposure," Crews said. "It should be a good time, and we should have a big crowd."

When Moseley performed at the Music and Munchies in 2025, more than 3,000 people paid to attend. The DDA is expecting more for a free concert.

- Berry talked about the DDA's "Live. Love. Local." Valentine's Day promotion from Feb. 8 through Feb. 14. When people make a \$25 transaction, they will take a photo of their receipt and send it to the DDA.

"We will have drawings with cash and gift cards," Berry said. "We will announce the winners at Jackson Plaza on Valentine's Day."

- Berry announced that Dublin Community Theatre recently held auditions for "Annie."

"We had 66 people audition and a cast of 50 people," Berry said. "It will be our biggest show. We believe it is going to be a successful show. The Dublin Community Theatre would not be here without the support of the DDA."

- Padgett brought up the upcoming farmers market, which will be held between April 4 through Oct. 11, which ends up being 28 weeks. As of the day of the DDA meeting, she said they had 28 vendors for this year's market. She added that they had secured \$5,000 sponsorship from Fairview Park Hospital for the farmers market.

"(FPH) comes one Saturday (a month) for our kid's crafts," Padgett said.

Apply to OFTC for free in March

Prospective students can apply for admission to Oconee Fall Line Technical College for free during the month of March through Georgia Apply to College.

Georgia Apply to College is part of the American College Application Campaign, a national initiative of ACT's Center for Equity in Learning designed to increase access to postsecondary education. GAC is sponsored by the Georgia Student Finance Commission and supported by statewide education and workforce partners, including the Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia.

OFTC offers more than 130 programs in high-demand career fields, many of which can be completed in as little as one to six semesters. The college serves 11 Georgia

counties: Washington, Hancock, Warren, Glascock, Jefferson, Wilkinson, Bleckley, Laurens, Dodge, Telfair, and Wheeler.

With affordable tuition, small class sizes, local campuses, and a hands-on learning environment, OFTC provides an accessible and practical path to higher education and career training.

Apply for free during the month of March by completing an online admissions application at OFTC.edu/apply.

OFTC's Summer semester begins May 18, with registration opening March 31. Students can apply at any time.

For more information about the enrollment process or how to get started, contact OFTC's Office of Admissions at admissions@oftc.edu or 478.553.2064.

Federal judge orders Trump to produce information that led to elections raid

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — A federal judge in Atlanta has given the administration of President Donald Trump until Tuesday to give the court the documentation that led to the seizure of Fulton County ballots from the 2020 presidential election.

The order signed Saturday by U.S. District Judge J.P. Boulee also unsealed the court file for the subsequent

lawsuit against the Trump administration that was brought by Fulton County Commission Chairman Rob Pitts.

Pitts sued after the Jan. 28 raid on a county elections warehouse, when FBI agents entered a county property in Union City and left with 2020 ballots.

"The Court's action affirms that this case is a matter of public interest, in Fulton County and beyond," Pitts said in a statement Sunday. "Fulton County will continue to pursue every legal

option to seek the return of election records and to defend our elections from possible takeover."

The order by Judge Boulee of the Northern District of Georgia gives the federal government until 5 p.m. Tuesday to produce the affidavit that the government filed to obtain the search warrant.

Pitts said county staff were continuing to prepare for the 2026 election, "which will be once again free, fair, transparent and legally compliant."

STRANGE BUT TRUE

By LUCIE WINBORNE
King Features

* The cubicle got its name from the Latin "cubiculum," meaning bed chamber.

* When your "inner voice" speaks in your head, it triggers small muscle movements in your larynx.

* Harriet Tubman was

the first woman to lead a U.S. military raid.

* Java junkies, take note: The American Psychiatric Association's DSM-5 handbook classifies caffeine withdrawal as a mental disorder.

* A newborn blue whale gains about 200 pounds a day during its first year.