

Chamber hosts sendoff for Taylor, starts search for new president

By PAYTON TOWNS III  
Senior Reporter

The search for a new president/CEO of the Dublin-Laurens County Chamber of Commerce began while members of the community gathered last week to say thank you to the man who held that position the past 10 years.

Heath Taylor talked to many friends and community and business leaders during a farewell drop-in celebration honoring him at the McGrath Keen Sr. Conference Center last Tuesday. He started his new job as the president and CEO of the Columbia County Chamber on Monday.

Marcia Dixon will serve as the chamber's interim president/CEO while the search is being done for Taylor's replacement. She was involved in the search committee when Taylor was hired 10 years ago.

"He has brought so many new programs to our community," Dixon said. "He has been so good to reach out to the businesses and industries to get them involved and know what the benefits of being a chamber member is. That is one reason I was excited about being in the interim when it gives me a chance to be involved in some things."

Taylor wants people to stay in-

involved and support the chamber.

"We will have a new president and CEO in the very near future," he said. "They won't be the next Heath or replace Heath. They will be an individual who comes here, and they'll need your love and support just like you gave to my family. I know Dublin will show up and do that."

O.J. Hall, the current chamber chairman, said the Tom Chason Group will conduct an executive search for the chamber's next president and CEO. Hall is glad to have Dixon step into Taylor's spot

CHAMBER  
Continued on page 8



Chamber President/CEO Heath Taylor talks with members of the community during the farewell event/PAYTON TOWNS III

SOUL IN THE SNOW: SOUL FOOD EXPO DRAWS CROWD DESPITE WEATHER

While snow flurries fell outside Dublin Middle School, participants were warm and filling their plates full of various dishes during the annual Soul Food Expo. Vendors served up fried and baked chicken, greens, neck bones, chitterlings and more. Participants were able to eat, drink and socialize during this Dublin-Laurens Black History Festival Community Committee event/PAYTON TOWNS III



Six to be honored at CIS Gala

By PAYTON TOWNS III  
Senior Reporter

Communities In Schools is preparing to highlight six more individuals for their achievements and dedication to education.

The fourth annual Communities In Schools Gala will honor Clifford Garnto, Marie Hooks, Sandra Flowers, Ellestine Stephens, Angela James and Angela "Angie" Williamson Tullia.

"All of these people have done something in education," said Jackie Pittman Curtis, CIS regional director. "It's important to recognize the people who don't always get the spotlight. There are a few people who are always recognized and then you have those that do the work, make an impact and people don't know about it. We want to make sure they know about them."

The event will be held at the Ice House, 213 S. Monroe St., and it is sponsored by Communities In Schools of Georgia in Laurens/Twigg Counties. Tickets can be purchased for \$30 each or \$300 for a table of eight. Sponsorships are also available.

Tullia, owner of Gee-

CIS GALA  
Continued on page 8



SNOW ... AGAIN: ANOTHER ROUND OF WINTRY WEATHER BRINGS LIGHT SNOW, COLD TEMPS



Just two weeks after a snowstorm, typically a rarity in the South, wintry weather came calling in Dublin and Laurens County again Saturday as another system dusted the area with light snow before dropping temperatures into the teens that night/PAYTON TOWNS, RODNEY MANLEY and LYNDY PRYMULA



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# Smokers have left the building, yet the influence of tobacco lingers

By TY TAGAMI  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Some lawmakers have been working under Georgia’s Gold Dome long enough to remember when the place reeked of cigarettes.

Although no one openly smokes there today, lawmakers seem to have an abiding aversion to legislation to curb tobacco use, specifically a tax increase.

Rep. Ron Stephens, R-Savannah, took his oath of office in 1997. The white-haired pharmacist has personal reasons to abhor cigarettes, and he has been introducing legislation against tobacco since his hair was black.

But some mysterious force has always undermined his efforts.

He and a fellow Republican who chairs the House Public and Community Health committee have been tilting at a tobacco windmill for most of their legislative careers, and they have little to show for it.

After numerous hours invested last spring and summer in a study committee that underscored the dangers of tobacco use, they feel defeated.

“I don’t know why anything related to tobacco has trouble getting through,” said Rep. Sharon Cooper, R-Marietta, the public health committee chairwoman who also led the smoking study committee.

It is not as if the risks of smoking are a secret.

The report written by their five-member study committee makes that plain. It starts off by noting that the resolution passed by the full House to establish the committee had recognized that smoking “harms every organ” in the body.

The report then summarized facts gathered during three hearings: cigarette smoke can produce more than 7,000 chemicals, including ammonia, formaldehyde, lead, mercury and uranium-235. It can cause, among other things, cancer, heart and lung disease, type 2 diabetes, eye diseases, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Both Stephens and Cooper have personal motivations, as well.

Stephens’ sister-in-law died last summer, due, he said, to the effects of smoking. For years, she had been confined at home, tethered to an oxygen bottle. He said his father smoked as a teen and got lung cancer later in life, which cost \$5,000 a month to treat.

Cooper’s half-sister died in her 30s, and the lawmaker always suspected it was due to secondhand smoke exposure from her chain-smoking stepmother.

As a licensed nurse, Cooper said she had witnessed the damage. “I’ve seen lungs blackened over years of smoking,” she said.

Both also spoke of the resulting financial burden for taxpayers.

“You’re going to get sick, usually when you’re older and on Medicare or Medicaid,” Stephens said, “so then the public bears the cost.”

Yet nothing concrete has come of the hours they spent on their study committee. The discussion during the hearings suggested a clear direction: legislation to raise the tax on cigarettes.

Georgia’s cigarette excise tax has not changed since 2003. At 37 cents a pack, it is the second lowest in the nation, behind only Missouri. By comparison, New York charges \$5.35 per pack, and Indiana in-

creased its tax by \$2 a pack in 2024, lifting it to \$2.99.

Stephens was not surprised to learn that the American Lung Association had yet again given Georgia a failing grade. This week, the organization released its 24th annual “State of Tobacco Control” report.

Georgia got an “F” in all five categories related to curbing tobacco use. The association recommended that lawmakers increase the state’s cigarette tax by at least \$1.50 per pack. It said studies show that every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes reduces consumption by about 4% among adults and about 7% among youth.

The association said tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease nationally and claims 11,690 Georgia lives each year.

Rep. Michelle Au, D-Johns Creek, was not surprised by the failing grades.

“We’ve been five Fs for a long time,” said Au, a medical doctor and one of two Democrats on Cooper’s study committee.

Dr. Au observed something unusual for a study committee report. “It is denuded of policy recommendations,” she said. “We were told in the process that we could not include policy recommendations.”

She said she asked House Speaker Jon Burns, R-Newington, who had empaneled the study committee, why it was given such instructions.

“And he said (it was) because there were such strong feelings on either side of the issue that he felt that the best approach would be to just present the facts,” Au said. “Of course, I did notice that basically every other study committee does present policy recommendations.”

Indeed, one of the three study committee meetings focused on policy recommendations, she said. “So, it is a conspicuous omission.”

A spokeswoman for Burns’ office said he had instructed the committee to pres-

ent “the entirety” of the data and testimony gathered by the committee “so that the General Assembly’s future legislative initiatives could be informed and guided by the facts.”

Republicans control both the state Senate and House, so only bills promoted by Republicans tend to become law.

But those two GOP representatives who have been tilting at tobacco for years said they were moving on to other issues this year.

Stephens, who chairs the House Economic Development and Tourism Committee, is instead focusing on bread-and-butter issues for the bustling region he represents. His area is booming due to increased shipping traffic at its ports and the new Hyundai Metaplant, not to mention the visitors flocking to the coast and Georgia’s charming and oldest city, Savannah.

He said he would put his limited time this year into promoting tourism and managing growth “rather than introduce another bill that that won’t go anywhere.”

And Cooper is concerned about recreational use of the drug Kratom and the anesthetic ketamine.

The longtime lawmaker, sworn in the same year as Stephens, has watched a succession of lawmakers parade through the Capitol, including several House speakers. She remembers when smoke wafted through the air and left an awful smell on the faded blue curtains. She also has not forgotten the spittoons and carpet stains.

All that may have faded away, but the resistance to taxing tobacco has endured, Cooper said.

“There just doesn’t seem to be an appetite from members of the legislature for that to move,” she said. “It is the mystery of the century. I would like to know before I die, if we ever find out, what’s causing the resistance to it. They slip through taxes on other stuff.”

# Women’s study club inspects art heists

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER  
HERALD

The Woman’s Study Club met Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025 at the Laurens County Library. President Mrs. Gregory S. Crabb called the meeting to order, greeted guests and honorary members, and moved through the order of club business for the day. She thanked hostess Mrs. C. Brantley New, III. Mrs. Jack Heidler introduced the speaker of the day, Mrs. Alan Powell whose topic was “Madonna della Seggiola” painted by Raphael.

The program began with the intrigue of art thefts. Most recently, thieves broke into the Apollo Gallery of the Louvre in Paris. However, history’s biggest art heist took place in our country in 1990. The robbers tricked guards into letting them enter the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston during the city-wide Saint Patrick’s Day celebration. Thirteen objects of art were taken but after years of investigation and speculations, the case remains unsolved. “Portrait of a Young Man” by Renaissance artist, Raphael, is considered the most important painting to go missing during World War II. The Leonardo da

Vinci and Rembrandt paintings taken at the same time when the Nazis invaded Poland were recovered from the villa of Hans Frank when the Allies arrested him in May, 1945.

Artist, Raphael Santi, was born in Urbino, Italy in 1483. His first instruction in art came from his father, Giovanni, who was a painter of no great painter. He introduced the boy to the humanistic philosophy of Renaissance art. After his father’s death when he was eleven, Raphael served an apprenticeship at Perugia under the Umbrian master, Pietro Perugino. This allowed Raphael to acquire extensive professional knowledge and inspired his first major work, “The Marriage of the Virgin” in 1504.

In late 1504, he went to Florence where his principal teachers were Leonardo da Vinci and Michaelangelo. Many of the works that he executed in the years between 1505 and 1507, most notably a great series of Madonnas were marked by the expressive possibilities of human anatomy.

In the painting “The Madonna of the Chair” or “Madonna della Sedia” from 1513-14, Mary embraces the Christ child while sitting in a chair as the young John

the Baptist devoutly watches. This is one of the single most important of Raphael’s Madonnas. It showcases the use of the tondo (or round) form and Raphael’s naturalistic approach to depicting the Madonna. Here, Raphael has produced his most humanistic form of the Madonna. The intricate detail of the clothing and the contrast of colors add an extra enrichment and vibrancy to the color palette against a background that is painted black. This painting revolutionized singular portrait painting during the Renaissance by enlarging the figure’s scale and allowing them to occupy the entire plane.

Unlike the tortured artist tales that describe so many with the title “genius,” Raphael was a handsome, charming and pleasant young man. He rubbed shoulders with the aristocracy and was hugely popular with both fee-paying clients and the public alike. Art historian, Bernard Berenson, writing in 1952, called Raphael the most famous and most loved master of the High Renaissance period. Raphael died of a fever in 1520, at the age of 37. His body lies in the Pantheon in Rome, Italy.

## AT THE LOCAL LIBRARY

Bingo For Books at the Laurens County Library on Monday, Feb. 9, from 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. in our

auditorium. Enjoy a morning of bingo at the library. You could win books and more! Coffee and tea will be served.

more! Learn coding, too. Ages 8-plus recommended.

Children’s Storytime at the Laurens County Library on Tuesday, Feb. 10, at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. in our children’s center. Join us for our weekly storytime where little ones can enjoy stories, dancing and crafts.

## SNAPSHOTS: MORE FROM THE SOUL FOOD EXPO



## OBITUARIES

### Leo Charles Wise Jr.

Mr. Leo Charles Wise Jr. of Adrian, Georgia passed away on Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026. Funeral arrangements are incomplete at this time.

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## BIRTHDAYS

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# Dessie Woods, Cheryl Todd convicted in killing, robbery case

Dublin Courier-Herald

By Doug Hall

Dessie Woods was found guilty this morning of voluntary manslaughter and armed robbery by Pulaski County Superior Court Jury. Cheryl Todd was found guilty of theft by taking, but innocent of voluntary manslaughter.

Appeals are planned for both defendants.

As the verdict was read. Mrs. Woods jumped from her chair and ran to the jury box 20 feet away. Pointing her finger at the jury, she lashed out, "You let them trick you to send us to prison for something we didn't do. You stinking devils - you devils."

As she was dragged from the courtroom by bailiffs, she angrily threatened the judge, "We are going to get you, you old stinky bulldog mouth."

Later she said, "You know we didn't kill nobody. We never received no justice."

Mrs. Todd broke into tears, but made no remarks.

Her attorneys pointed to Mrs. Woods' behavior and asked for a mistrial on the basis that her outburst extremely prejudiced Mrs. Todd in whatever legal proceedings may come later.

The judge denied the mistrial motion for the present time, but said he would give the motion additional consideration later in a more detached atmosphere.

Ronnie Horne's widow sat quietly and unemotionally as the verdicts were read. She would make no comment on the convictions of the women who were accused of the death of her husband last June 16.

Sentencing has not been set.

The sentences will be handed down later by the judge. A sentencing hearing was set for February 12.

The armed robbery charge could carry a maximum life sentence. The manslaughter charge carries a 20 year maximum, and the maximum sentence for theft by taking is 10 years.

Mrs. Woods was released in the custody of her attorneys until sentencing is set.

Mrs. Todd was also released on bond.

The two women were charged with murder and robbery but the jury found Mrs. Woods guilty of the lesser offense of voluntary manslaughter which indicates a lack of malice and forethought, but suggests that the crime was committed as a result of sudden and serious passion.

This morning the jury was instructed by the judge that it could reach a verdict on one or more of the charges against the two women and not on other charges.

Defense attorneys objected to the judge's additional charges, saying it could be "misconstrued" as urging them to reach a verdict and that it was "totally prejudicial" to the defendants. However, the judge went ahead with the charge.

Prior to resuming their deliberations, the jury again heard Mrs. Todd's statement, which was taped on the day she was arrested.

Friday before she said the jury was firmly deadlocked, Jury forelady Gail S. Nelson asked Judge James B. O'Commor should the

jury find a defendant guilty if they felt she was an "accessory."

Her inquiry generally, seen as an indication that the jury was heading toward conviction, caused defendant Cheryl Todd to break into tears, and defendant Dessie Woods to become visibly shaken also.

Since they retired to consider the fate of the two Atlanta women, the jury has appeared emotionally moved by their burden. The eyes of four women jurors were watery as the jury left the Pulaski County Courts House Saturday night at 8:30 without a decision.

Mrs. Nelson, a teacher at Hawkinsville's private Baker Academy, was on the brink of tears when she told the judge. her voice trembling, "we cannot reach a decision. We don't feel like more time will help."

But the judge, above objections of the defense attorneys, refused to grant a mistrial, and sent the jury back to Stuckey's Carriage Inn in Eastman to spend the remainder of the weekend before returning this morning.

Mrs. Todd's attorney, Millard Farmer, called for jury attempts to wrestle a decision a "badgering and compromise of a true verdict."

The prosecution disagreed. District attorney Phil West reasoned that after as lengthy and physically demanding trial as this one, the jury should have more time.

The judge did not elaborate in deciding to order the jury to deliberate longer.

Under a blanket of bailiffs and policemen, the jury was taken to their Eastman motel. No one was allowed to leave the courtroom until the jury was driven away from the courthouse. Sixteen state troopers and sheriff deputies were in the courtroom when the jury was carried away.

Before they left, the jury spent five and a half hours in the tiny jury room discussing each of the charges against Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Woods.

In his charge to the jury, Judge O'Connor said that they could return guilty verdicts for murder or the lesser offense of voluntary manslaughter and robbery, or the lesser offense of larceny.

Or the jury could find the women innocent of any or all charges, the judge explained.

During the deliberations, the jury asked to hear Mrs. Todd's two-hour testimony from Friday. In the courtroom with attorneys, the judge and spectators present, the official court room tape recording of the testimony was re-played. In closing arguments on Saturday morning, the district attorney asked the jury to consider the "improbabilities" in the defense case.

Splattered blood on Ronnie Horne's arm, Dr. Larry Howard of the State Crime Lab, testified, indicated that the man's arm was parallel "in a position relative to driving," not out-stretched as in a struggle when he was shot.

Mrs. Woods had testified that she stopped the rolling car after shooting Horne, so West said that the "man was only slowing down to let the women out, not stopping to rape and shoot them when

he was shot.

LOOKING BACK...  
50 YEARS AGO  
FEBRUARY 3, 1976



By HARRIETT CLAXTON

"If he were a "hit man," why didn't he kill them, the first time they were together down the first dark, desolate road? West asked.

"Consider getting a pistol that close to a grown man's face (three inches) without his knocking it away."

The pistol holster was found wedged between the front seat, not "flung away as if the crime had been committed on a sudden struggle," the district attorney said.

Then West suggested that robbery was the motive. "If you had just shot a man who was trying to rape you and kill you, would you then go through his pockets and look for money?"

And, if they intended to notify authorities in Atlanta, why did they throw away Horne's wallet which contained his identification, West asked.

Defense Attorney Mary Johnson for Mrs. Todd, said the issue was fear.

Ronnie Horne had been drinking liquor, she said, "He had a car, and gun, and friend with whom he kept in contact on a Citizens Band Radio. The roads were dark, and he was talking rape and sex," she said.

"What more do you have to fear?" she asked the jury.

She said she too, as a woman, would be afraid if "I were in a car with a man who had a gun, who had been drinking, and he was saying to me he wanted to go in the woods and have sex."

Farmer called the case one of "great philosophical issues" and differences.

He said by defending Mrs. Todd that he has learned what it is like to be black and female in America.

He said, "It was close as to whom came out of the car."

And he suggested that Horne's drinking was the reason Dessie Woods and Cheryl Todd are alive.

"Thank the Lord for liquor. She's here today because that man's abilities were impaired."

Mrs. Woods' attorney, Randy Bacote, said that Horne and his boss, Royce Yawn, were planning a "rendezvous to carry on with the women."

"That's why Horne took the 'wrong road' that night, Bacote said. The road he took did not lead to Atlanta, but did lead toward Yawn's hometown, Hazelhurst, the attorney said.

Bacote said that the jury should consider the "consistencies" in the women's accounts of the night.

From the first person they met, they told what happened," he said. "Does that sound like a criminal?"

He suggested that the state did not call possible witnesses because they had a weak case.

EAST DUBLIN  
COUNCIL HEARS  
CITIZENS

A crowd, variously estimated at 100 to 200 people sent a joint meeting of the East Dublin City Council and citizens into the fire truck area last night. The meeting culminated with a petition presented to the Mayor and Council by Willie Clements, signed, as he stated, by one-half of the voters in East Dublin.

The petition asked the Mayor and Council to return a pickup truck recently bought, rescind the garbage fee ordinance passed at the last meeting, reduce firemen's pay to the original amount, and reduce city spending.

During the more than two hour meeting in the cold of a Friday night, citizens voiced their objections to a number of things in addition to the four asked in the petition. Among the things cited by various citizens, that often brought laughter to the crowd as well as applause, were what was the need for the pickup truck, use of septic tanks at rental hoses n the city, failure o processes to stop usage of condemned houses, outhouses, need for traffic lights, marking city vehicles, and zoning.

Mayor E.A. Page had the meeting opened with prayer by former Councilman John

Shepherd and then outlined the grants the city had applied for, for paving, recreation, etc., all not to cost the taxpayers anything. He outlined the efforts that had been made to effect savings in the city's operations and said he had hoped to balance the city's budget by July if no raises were given.

He stated that the garbage fee came too soon. With raises, he insisted, additional funds had to be secured because more raises would have to follow. He compared salaries, according to a survey he said had been made, for firemen in other cities, saying that the East Dublin pay was among the highest.

He did say, after the meeting, that the firemen were not to blame for any of the controversy. They refused to take over the janitor's tasks at the City Hall, he explained, and they refused the additional pay that was authorized. One of the firemen stated that they were in no way involved in the controversy and did not like the criticism that had been erroneously directed at them.

Mayor Page told the group that he had endorsed his first city check as Mayor back to the city. "I ran to serve people of East Dublin," he said, "not for money."

After he answered a number of questions, he turned the microphone over to Councilman Kenny Martin, who challenged the firemen salary information that had been presented, and pointed out the time the East Dublin Firemen were on duty.

Councilman Jack Barwick explained that taxes had been raised from 6 to 8 mills, and bond payments for the city's sewer and water system took all the funds. "We had to have garbage fee to operate the city," he said, adding he saw no way around garbage fees.

He said that the Mayor had used them to get the garbage fee ordinance and added that the Mayor knows the city had to have them. Barwick painted a rather gloomy picture of the city's finances ahead.

Some asked if the garbage fees would be increased in the months ahead. Councilman Don Bradshaw, who was one of two who opposed the garbage fee ordinance, said that with business license increases he was hoping there would be no need for garbage fees - and I still feel that way" he added.

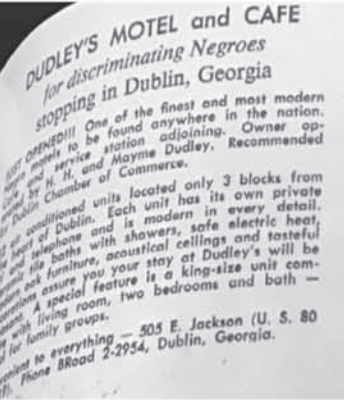
Councilman Jimmy Davis said they have to pay water and sewer bonds and may not have enough money to pay them. He even suggested that increases on the city's obligations might be necessary to keep up the payments on the city's obligations.

In presenting the petition, Clements had said that the citizens felt that the city had acted hastily and that people of the city needed explanations of what and why of the city's need for more revenue.

There was no lack of questions thrown at the Mayor and Council last night, but many voiced their idea that their questions had not been answered. Obviously they had expected immediate action that would undo the actions of the last two council meetings and cause the specter of garbage fees and additional city taxes to fade away.

Councilman Jack Tanner, who attended the meeting last night and was the second one to vote against the garbage fee proposal, did not have anything to say publicly at the meeting.

While the crowd was very vocal in objections of what the city had done, the meeting was very orderly and for the most part was conducted in the best Roberts' Rules of Parliamentary Procedure.



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### NOW HERE'S A TIP

By JOANN DERSON  
King Features

\* "Keep cats indoors during very cold weather. They are particularly vulnerable to freezing. If you can leave the curtains drawn on a window where Kitty can look outside and sunbathe, she probably will be happy."

-- M.R. in Washington

\* This is some good advice given to me by my grandmother if you have lots of outdoor or feral cats in your area: Start your

car with a bang -- on the hood, that is. When the overnight temperature dips, cats know to find someplace that is wind-shielded and off the ground, and sometimes, that means they will climb up into your engine area to hunker down. If your car starts, they can be hurt or even killed. Give the hood a knock to let a cat know to get out quick.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 1800 Pembrook Dr., Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32810.



OUR TAKE...

'Seamless' transfers open doors for tech school grads

Georgia is making it easier for technical college graduates to transfer to more colleges and universities – and take their credits with them.

Gov. Brian Kemp announced last week that The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and Mercer University have signed new transfer agreements designed to create seamless pathways for technical college students to earn bachelor’s degrees, “further reducing barriers to completion and strengthening Georgia’s workforce pipeline.”

The partnership, one of what is known “articulation agreements,” allows graduates from any of TCSG’s 22 colleges to transfer into Mercer University’s bachelor of business administration programs in accounting, business technology, human resource management and management. The agreements also establish a clear pathway for graduates of TCSG’s associate of science in nursing programs to transfer into Mercer’s registered nurse to bachelor of science in nursing (RN-BSN) program.

Kemp said the agreements are important if Georgia is to remain one of the country’s best states to do business by “making sure our workforce is up to the challenge and ready to take advantage of those opportunities.”

The articulation agreement with Mercer is the TCSG’s fourth with University System of Georgia colleges, including Middle Georgia State University. The systems reached an agreement last March that allows technical college graduates who earn an associate of applied science degree in computer technologies can seamlessly transfer into Middle Georgia State University’s bachelor of science in information technology program.

Many students choose technical colleges for their affordability and smaller class sizes, but they also know the education they get there can provide high-tech training and specialized skills that leave graduates work-place-ready.

These agreements open new doors for students, especially the non-traditional ones needing to work their way through college or wanting to go back to school and bump up their pay by adding another degree. This will save them time and money in getting their four-year degree, while also helping fill a critical shortage of skilled and educated workers faced by Georgia industries.

– Rodney Manley

YOUR TURN:

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

THOUGHT FOR TODAY...

*"Some people see things that are and ask, 'Why?' Some people dream of things that never were and ask, 'Why not?' Some people have to go to work and don't have time for all that."*

- George Carlin

DAILY SCRIPTURE...

*"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."*

- Psalm 23:4 (NIV)

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY...

- Feb. 3, 2026 is...
- National Take a Cruise Day
  - National Missing Persons Day
  - National Women Physicians Day
  - National The Day the Music Died Day
  - National Carrot Cake 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.*

It is so cold outside, I wrote this column

MAN ABOUT TOWN ...

By PAYTON TOWNS III

er and like the cold. That is fine. We all have opinions and thoughts.

At one time, the cold did not bother me. I can recall playing a pick-up game of football in the neighborhood, usually at a house where the parents were not there, so we could tackle each other. If a parent or guardian was there, we, of course, played two-hand touch. But we always preferred tackle. Even if the ground caused the fumble, we would all jump on the ball and create one big bundle of bodies.

When I was younger, playing football in the cold was nothing. Many of my friends would play in short sleeves. I liked to wear a jacket with a hood. In fact, once, while playing the illegal tackle version, a friend grabbed a hold of the back of my jacket to stop me

from advancing the ball. I unzipped my jacket and left him holding it as I ran down the field. Everyone was laughing and they let the touchdown stand even though that would never happen in a real football game.

I can recall playing football or even going into the woods on cold days. I like seeing my breath flow out from my mouth as my brother and I tramped through the woods behind our grandparent’s house.

But that was then, and now is - well now. I am older and wiser. I want to stay inside where it is warm and make my trips outside as infrequent as possible.

I am okay with one snow event every so often. What we had in January of 2025 was fine. Honestly, what we had on Jan. 18 was even better. It snowed that morning, and by the afternoon, the sun came out and melted everything away.

The threat of an ice storm, which thankfully stayed north of us, and the chance for maybe some snow last weekend is too much. I know we need the winter to take out the insects and there are many reasons these colder tem-

peratures improve our lives.

But, I still do not like the cold, especially when it drops below freezing. When it is that cold, we have to drip faucets. Also, it is better to let your vehicle warm up some before dropping it into drive and pulling out on the road. If you are running late, you will either have to just go or be even further late to wherever it is you are heading.

Working on Saint Patrick’s event stories kind of warms me up, because I know it will more than likely be warmer then. After all, I - like all of us here - live in the south. I, along with my wife, choose this part of the state because it is warm. If I wanted to live where it would snow every year and have us shivering at nights, we would move north.

The only time I love the cold is eating ice cream, a milkshake or dropping ice into a glass of sweet tea. But it is okay. Thankfully, we naturally have more warmer weather here in the Peach State than we do cold. And when the temperatures do warm up again, it will mean that I will not have to worry about dripping my faucet every night.

Not much peaceful about Nobel Peace Prize

By DICK YARBROUGH

it to somebody more worthy – like Clarabell the Clown.

In what I would deem a rather unpeaceful gesture, Trump ripped into Norway’s Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere because his country “decided not to give me the Nobel Peace Prize for having stopped 8 Wars PLUS.” (The PLUS is a new development I wasn’t aware of. Maybe Minnesota has surrendered.)

In his reply to Trump, Stoere explained that an independent committee, not the government of Norway, awards the prize. Meaning don’t blame him anymore than he would blame the United States for not giving Norway’s Kristofer Hivju an Academy Award for his role as Connor Rhodes in "The Fate of the Furious," not to mention a groundbreaking performance as Tormund Giantsbane in "Game of Thrones."

In the same message to the Norwegian prime minister, Trump insisted the US needed "Complete and

to Clarabell the Clown for all they cared. She was and always would be listed as having won the Peace Prize, not Trump. I don’t think that sat well with the president.

He had already told the Nobel Committee he deserved the Peace Prize. He should have talked to me first. That is not the way to get it. That will sull up folks real quick. In my corporate life, if someone told you they were going to be president of the company one day, the rest of us who knew we wouldn’t be would make sure he wouldn’t be, either. I have the feeling the committee felt the same way.

In fairness to His Eminence, Barack Obama got the thing after having been in office less than eight months and for no good reason. He hadn’t stopped eight wars. He hadn’t even found the White House dining room.

The Nobel Committee said he had made “extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples." Oh, please. He should have been embarrassed and told them to give

FIRMER GROUND: VOICES FROM MINNOSOTA

By STEVE BULLINGTON  
Guest Columnist

“They were just using a lot of force to arrest me, and I was screaming, I was crying, I was so scared, I’ve never been arrested in my life.” (Nasra Ahmed, a U.S. Somali-American citizen)

“We are in total crisis here in Minnesota with this ICE surge. Thousands of agents are terrorizing our communities, not just Minneapolis, but across the state. They are tearing apart families. They say that they’re here to round up the worst of the worst, but we know with our own eyes that is absolutely not true.” (Martha Blackwell, pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in South Minneapolis)

“... If I was looking at this from the ICE perspective, I’d say, look, we’ve had three agents-involved shootings in the last three weeks. ... What can we learn from these incidents? This is ultimately about the sanctity of human life. ... the other side of this that you’re endangering the ICE agents, too. People will look at that and say, well, we need to figure out a way to ratchet down the tension. What

do both sides need to do? And I think it starts with, you know, a tactical pause, stepping back and trying to assess tactics, deescalation ... if this were a local police department, they would be reaching out to the community. They would say, we need you. We need to build trust. But when you have federal agents coming into a community, they can sometime come off as an occupying army. And in American policing, that’s not what we’ve learned. We know, you know, communication, trust, all of those things are essential.” (Chuck Wexler, director Police Executive Research Forum)

“The administration has called these operations targeted, that they’re going after undocumented immigrants, undocumented immigrants with criminal records. Is that what you’re hearing from teachers, bus drivers, hospital workers?” (Leila Fadel) “Absolutely not. Every single one of our unions have a story about a member, whether they were at work or not, who have been illegally detained—folks who are here working legally with their papers. ... they are still being arrested and whisked away to a camp

in the middle of Texas within hours of being arrested. ... And it’s just causing havoc and fear, widespread fear across all kinds of industries.”

(Chelsie Glau-bitz Gbiou, Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation)

“... His (Alex Prettì’s) parents asked us to tell the truth about their son because the Trump administration chose to call him a domestic terrorist ... They said, ‘Alex was a kind-hearted soul who cared deeply for his family and friends and also the American veterans who he cared for as an ICU nurse at Minneapolis VA Hospital.’” (Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar)

--I think that all of us find some of what we’ve been hearing and seeing from Minneapolis disturbing. To me it all seems so unnecessary and sad. The loss of innocent life, the trauma that families and particularly children are experiencing. And the ICE agents, twelve thousand of them hurriedly hired and poorly trained, who have been caught up in this are not most to blame. It’s the folks in charge and their ugly rhetoric. The Trump administration has poured billions into this effort and is intent on de-

porting millions of folks. Stephen Miller, one of the President’s closest advisers, wants to rid the country of all immigrants, because “America is for Americans.” ... We humans seem to need to have somebody to blame, somebody to victimize. Even so, and no matter our political affiliation, we still recognize right and wrong. Know instinctively when something has gone too far, gotten off track.

One hundred clergy were among the large crowd of Minnesotans who came out in subzero weather last Friday calling for an end to the surge. As have many others around the country, the people of Minneapolis have come together in peaceful resistance, to support their neighbors, to stand up for their communities, and to call for something that is truer to the promise of America than what we’re seeing. ... Thankfully on Monday, just as a federal judge was weighing the legality of all this, President Trump called Governor Waltz and there is talk of deescalation and cooperation. It seems it took the sacrifice of a second life.



**Dublin Police Department**

- Around 10:20 a.m. on Jan. 18, an officer responded to a call regarding an individual throwing their personal items on the caller's vehicle that resulted in an arrest at Riverview Drive.

At 8:05 a.m., the officer arrived at the location and met with Quintez Trevon Little, 29, who said he got into an argument with a woman and threw his clothes outside. Little said he threw his clothes all over the woman's vehicle that was parked outside of her apartment building.

The woman said she just wanted Little to leave and he cleaned up his belongings before leaving the residence.

Around 10:20 a.m., the officer responded to another call at the same location regarding Little who had rubbed Vaseline on

the women's vehicle. Little said he had returned to the residence to retrieve his belongings in the dumpster and got into another argument with the woman. Little said he proceeded to rub Vaseline on the door handles to her vehicle so that the police would come back and take him to jail. Little said he wanted to go jail so he could get out of the weather because he did not have a place to stay.

Little was transported to the sheriff's office and released to jail staff.

- Alexis Christiana Jackson, 29, was charged with criminal trespass at Walmart on Highway 80 West around 12:27 p.m. on Jan. 18.

An officer responded to the location in response to a disturbance. The office was approached by employees who reported that a woman was in the store



yelling, cursing, crying and acting irate. They indicated that she seemed confused and did not know where she was, and they requested her removal from the store.

The officer talked with the woman, identified as Jackson, who provided multiple conflicting stories, talked in different languages and claimed that someone was waiting for her. Despite the office's attempts to help her call for a ride home or offer her a ride, Jackson refused any assistance and also refused to leave the property.

The officer arrested

the police department.

Hilton was fingerprinted and released on citations of seat belt violation and driving while license suspended or revoked.

**Laurens County Sheriff's Office**

- Robert Willis Slaugher, 38, of Rockledge, was charged with driving under the influence and driving while license suspended, revoked on Minter Tweed Road around 1:21 a.m. on Jan. 20. Deputies were dispatched to the location in reference to a subject with a gun.

- Two juveniles were charged with entering automobile and theft by taking on Champion Drive. A deputy responded to Duncan Tire on Telfair Street on Jan. 19 in reference to a theft.

- On Jan. 19, around

9:50 a.m., a deputy met with a man at the sheriff's office about stolen firearm. The investigation led to two juveniles being arrested and charged with entering automobiles and theft by taking.

*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.*

**The sewage, along** with other problems in Dudley, should have already been corrected. The mayor and city council keep putting it off and putting it on the back burner. Their priorities are the Dudley Little League and looking for an excuse not to spend money.

**If The Courier Herald** would not send people paper bills for their subscription when the customer auto-pays through the bank or draft, they could save about \$2 per letter: Envelope, paper, printing time, stuffing envelopes and \$.74 for postage. Think it over CH!

**Dublin City Schools cannot** wait until all of the taxes are paid. They are probably already spending money. Most of the people are going to wait until the last day to pay their taxes because of the school.

**When will we get a** Black History Month banner of Fred Williams displayed on the green poles downtown? I think this would be a great addition.

**I know some people** don't like Fred but he did a lot of good things for our school children. Can we get a black history month banner put up for him downtown?

**The Courier Herald -"The Dublin City Board** of Education launched its search for a new school superintendent Monday, vot-

ing to use the Georgia School Boards Association to conduct a nationwide search for candidates." What are they going to pay him/her with? Monopoly money? DCS can't afford minimum wage. Do they have any kind of plan- long term, short term- to not only survive but to restore the system and confidence? No!

**"Records show a** perfect storm of missteps and events leading to the delay in finalizing this year's tax digest" - The Courier Herald. Where have we heard that phrase about a perfect storm before? Oh yes, when Dublin City Schools stole more than \$13 million last year. Seems we have a lot of perfect storms in Dublin government. These continual perfect storms makes a tax payer wonder if there is any competence anywhere in this city government and has completely blown away any confidence in the city officials.

**"Just to make payroll,** the Dublin district has borrowed advances on its state funding allotments for the past four months. The district usually collects substantial property tax revenue each December, but instead had to rely on another advance to make ends meet, essentially exhausting its entire \$16 million state QBE allotment for the school year." Courier Herald. So is that \$16 million on top of the \$13 million DCS accounting black



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

hole? Shut the system down. They will never recover from this debt/theft/mismanagement. I have a feeling this is only the tip of the iceberg for the Titanic. These are just the tens of millions we know about. Think of all the graft and corruption we haven't been told about... \$50 million? \$100 million? Don't be surprised.

**I love my home** work desk ... it's spacious, it's conveniently located, it's organized. Oh snap! It's my dining room table!

**Things we want in** a new superintendent..... someone who is not a crook, can manage a budget, and not have grand ideas than the system is. Just be the best little Dublin system.

**So Mrs Poole said** there should only be a \$5 million deficit? Is that supposed to make us feel better? \$5 million! You better keep cutting!

**I agree with the person** who said the charges against the former city clerk might be swept under the rug. I'm anxious to see if she will get to just pay restitution and get a slap on the wrist. We're watching Mr. DA.

**Cover article hit it** on the nail. Dr. Williams left the system worse than he found it. He created a cul-

Local 7-day Forecast:

The next 48 hours:

**TUESDAY:**  
**60°**

Partial sunshine.  
Sunrise: 7:25 a.m.

**TUESDAY NIGHT:**  
**37°**

Mostly cloudy.  
Sunset: 6:07 p.m.

**WEDNESDAY:**  
**59°**

Considerable cloudiness with a couple of showers.  
Sunrise: 7:24 a.m.

**WEDNESDAY NIGHT:**  
**35°**

Mainly cloudy with rain possible.  
Sunset: 6:07 p.m.

 <b>Thursday 2/5</b> HIGH/LOW <b>53/27</b> Rather cloudy with rain possible. Sunrise: 7:24 a.m. Sunset: 6:08 p.m.	 <b>Friday 2/6</b> HIGH/LOW <b>58/33</b> Plenty of sunshine. Sunrise: 7:23 a.m. Sunset: 6:09 p.m.	 <b>Saturday 2/7</b> HIGH/LOW <b>57/29</b> Intervals of clouds and sunshine. Sunrise: 7:22 a.m. Sunset: 6:10 p.m.	 <b>Sunday 2/8</b> HIGH/LOW <b>60/34</b> Plenty of sunshine. Sunrise: 7:21 a.m. Sunset: 6:11 p.m.	 <b>Monday 2/9</b> HIGH/LOW <b>61/33</b> Plenty of sunshine. Sunrise: 7:20 a.m. Sunset: 6:12 p.m.
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**River levels...**  
Oconee (at Dublin) ..... 3.54'  
Ocmulgee (at Macon) ..... 6.62'

ture of overspending, over hiring and hiding things.

**In an effort to begin** to build back any trust, the board should publicly post each months financial statements with real numbers and have an outside person review their financial reports every month.

**Who is the HR director** at Dublin? Didn't they know they weren't getting state funds for all these extra positions? And that COVID funds were misused? They should be accountable too!

**I hope this community** votes the previous board chair off the board when he runs again. Those videos they made were insulting.

**There are exactly** two people on the Dublin board we should trust! The rest were all part of the problem and refused to hold Fred accountable.

**How did the board** ever justify the previous Dublin City Schools superintendent's salary? Y'all look stupid! Have they ever answered for that?

Classifieds

Real Estate

For Rent/Lease

Apt. for Rent - 808A S. Washington St., 2 BR, kitchen, LR & shower, inc. pest control. \$600 dep., \$600 mo. City gas heat & window ac, stove & refrigerator. Call 478-697-6817. Located in Southside in Dublin.

# Another Georgia lawmaker accused of pandemic unemployment fraud

By TY TAGAMI  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Federal prosecutors have charged another Georgia lawmaker with making false statements to fraudulently obtain thousands of dollars of pandemic unemployment assistance.

Rep. Dexter Sharper, D-Valdosta, was arraigned on Friday on charges of making false statements to obtain \$13,825 in unemployment assistance benefits to which he was not entitled, according to U.S. Attorney Theodore Hertzberg of the Northern District of Georgia.

Sharper had filed federal forms during the pandemic asserting that he had one

employer, Dexter Sharper Party Rental, and had not worked since March 13, 2020, filing certifications during the next 38 weeks that he had no income, Hertzberg's office said.

But prosecutors said he was receiving at least \$325 a week from the Georgia General Assembly, generating up to \$2,231 in income a week from his party rental business, and collecting up to \$275 a week for work as a musician.

Sharper is the third Georgia state representative accused of defrauding the COVID-19 unemployment program.

Former Rep. Karen Bennet, D-Stone Mountain, pleaded guilty in federal court to making false statements to fraudulently obtain \$13,940 in federal emergency relief, Hertzberg's office said earlier this month.

And Rep. Sharon Henderson, D-Covington, was charged in December with making false statements to obtain \$17,811 in unemployment benefits to which she was not entitled. Henderson pleaded not guilty. Gov. Brian Kemp suspended her from office last week pending the outcome of her case or the end of her term.

**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

Notice is also hereby given that the Will Curry, Shamrock Properties, INC is initiating a rezoning for Parcel D10B 210, 22.52 acres more or less. The parcel is currently zoned as B3 (Neighborhood Business) and is being considered for rezoning as R5 (High Density Residential). Proposed use is a single-family homes.

The Mayor and Council will hold the Public Hearing in the Council Chambers of the Dublin City Hall in Dublin, Georgia on Thursday, **February 19, 2026 at 9:30 A.M.**

All interested persons are invited to attend.

**50<sup>th</sup> Annual Black Festival Citizen of the Year**  
Please Submit Your Nomination Form To:  
Black Festival Awards Committee,  
P.O. Box 1867, Dublin, GA 31040

(Please check (x) one)

☐

Senior Citizen of the Year  
A resident of Laurens County for a minimum of (5) years who meets the designated age category of the DIAMOND AWARD (66 and older).

☐

Men/Women of the Year  
A resident of Laurens County for a minimum of (5) years who meets the designated age category of the GOLD AWARD (ages 36 to 50 and or the PLATINUM AWARD (ages 51 to 65).☐☐☐☐☐

Please attach a separate sheet with the following information:

☐

Name of the Nominee☐☐☐

☐

Special Accomplishments☐☐☐☐☐**All Nominations must be postmarked by February 6, 2026.**



# Wrestling: 11 champs, 33 qualifiers moving on from region/area traditional tournaments

From STAFF REPORTS

The road to state ran through Laurens County for midstate wrestlers whose teams convened locally for area/region traditional tournaments late last week.

Action from championship meets of the GHSA's area 2-A (hosted by Dublin) and region 4-AAA (on the campus of West Laurens), as well as the GIAA's region 1 (welcomed by Trinity) saw 11 local athletes capture individual gold, and a total of 33 finish top-four to advance to next week's

GHSA sectional tournaments (Class A's at Toombs County and AAA's at Cherokee Bluff) or GIAA state championships, at Gainesville's Riverside Prep.

West won the overall region 4-AAA title, topping Harlem in first place with 281 points. Dublin (with 193) took second as a team to area 2 champ Toombs County (245.5). East Laurens (130.5) placed fifth. Bulloch Academy (106.5) secured the top spot in the GIAA region 1, with Trinity (55) coming in fifth.

Local champions and qualifiers are as follows...

Dublin

Region champs: Quinton Lovett, 120; Domimarkeyo Walden, 285

Other qualifiers: Alan Myers – runner-up, 106; Kye Young – runner-up, 132; Major Morton – runner-up, 175; Gabe Carcamo – third, 113; Keymontae Sanders – third, 126; Dorian Carcamo – third, 150; NaZyon Mitchell – fourth, 190

East Laurens

Qualifiers: Cayson Wadley – runner-up, 138; Bradly White – third, 144; Dianco Murray – third, 165; Ian Jones – third, 132; Jeremiah Wright – third, 190

Trinity

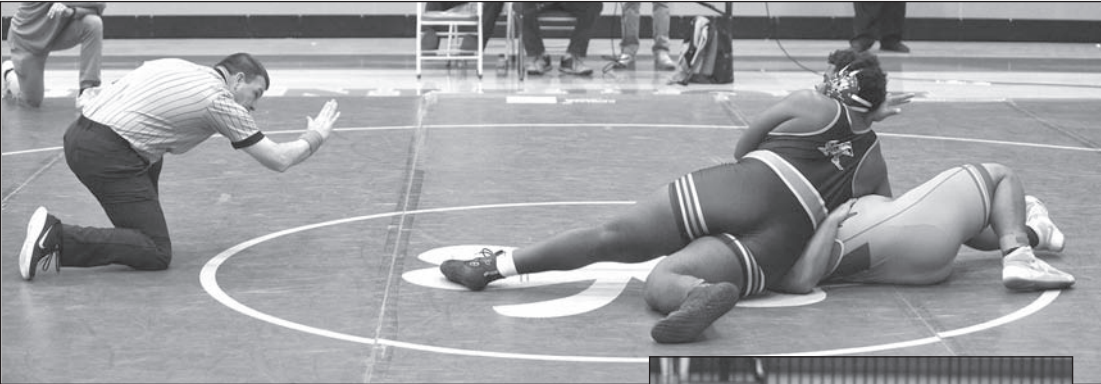
Region champ: Tommy Simmons – 120

Other qualifiers: Hudson Shirley – runner-up, 138; Austin Caraway – runner-up, 150; Cooper Miller – third, 126; Gabe Santiago – fourth, 144

West Laurens

Region champs: Brody Johnson – 150; Damien Cummings – 138; Jarek Giles – 106; Jayden Starley – 132; Jayden Watkins – 190; John Howell – 144; Maxx Chafin – 215; Sebastian Rodriguez – 120

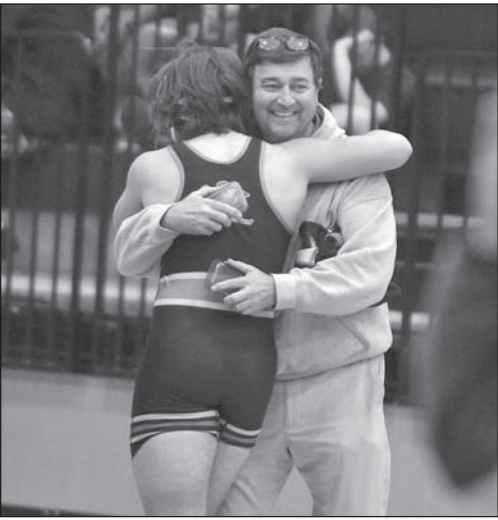
Other qualifiers: Jonathon McDonald – runner-up, 157; Keith Walker – runner-up, 285; Luke Shepard – runner-up, 113; Zo'Rian Willis – third, 175; Ryan Spence – third, 126; Braylen Robinson – fourth, 165



**NO ESCAPING THIS TIME:** Vidalia's Torrey Jackson managed to wiggle off the hook after being taken down once (at right) by Dublin's defending state champion Domimarkeyo Walden, but not a second time as he was tackled to the mat (and rather forcefully, at that) by his 285-pound rival, and fellow defensive lineman, just ahead of a buzzer-beating pin with three seconds to spare. Walden went on to edge ECI's Jordan Handsom 6-5 in a three-rounder for the region title/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



**JUST (P)IN TIME:** There were only a few seconds left before the clock would force a reset, but Trinity's Tommy Simmons struck while the iron was hot and completed this pin of Pinewood's Ridge McCall to capture the region title in under one period. Referee James Ferry made it official with the call (above) and presentation (right) in Thursday's winner-take-all final matching up the event's only two contenders in the 120-pound weight class/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



**PROUD DAD MOMENTS:** Two sets of fathers and sons shared a special time after Friday semifinal matches at the area 2 tourney, Dublin's Major Morton (left) with dad Gary after his pin of ECI's Haven Davis, and Toombs County's Lucas Coley (right) with older brother Roman and father/coach Joe (whose roots, along with all three, trace back to time spent locally at both Dublin and East Laurens) after defeating Treutlen's Caleb Powell for his 200th career victory. Both wrestlers would go on to square off in the 175-pound finals, with Coley taking the win 21-6 by tech fall/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



**TOUGH ENDING:** A come-from-behind effort for Bulloch's Harold Park turned a sure victory into a stinging loss for Trinity's 132-pound runner-up Hudson Shirley (left). He was in control of the match until Park (at right) overcame an 8-2 deficit with three takedowns in the third period, and hung on to win by 15-10 decision as time expired here, and his teammates looking on went wild/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

**SCOREBOARD**

**GIRLS HOOPS**  
Friday  
Wheeler Co. 45, Dublin 44  
East Laurens 72, Jefferson Co. 25  
Trinity 53, Central Fellowship 41

**BOYS HOOPS**  
Friday  
Wheeler Co. 66, Dublin 48  
EL 68, Jefferson Co. 44  
CFCA 79, Trinity 47

**PREP SCHEDULE**

**BASKETBALL**  
Tuesday  
Cross Creek at West Laurens/5 p.m.  
Dublin at Washington Co.  
East Laurens at Dodge Co.  
Trinity at Windsor/6 p.m.

Friday,  
Brentwood at Trinity  
Dodge Co. at Dublin /6 p.m.

Saturday  
ECI at Dublin/3 p.m.  
WL at EL/4 p.m.

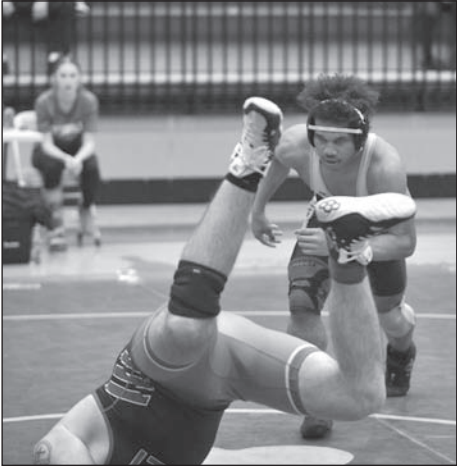
**BASEBALL**  
(scrimmages)  
Thursday  
Dublin at Evans  
EL at Thomson  
Veterans at WL/5:30 p.m.

**SOCCER**  
Thursday  
WL at Perry/5 p.m.

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



**'ARE YOU NOT ENTERTAINED?':** If you weren't, then you probably weren't watching this match between 190-pound semifinalists (and perhaps future special forces operatives) Creed Sanders, of ECI, and Jeremiah Wright, of East Laurens. Each showed off some nimble flips and crafty moves to either evade attempts of the other to gain leverage, Sanders with a somersault (below left) to avoid being taken down early in the first period, or to escape a nearfall situation, as Wright did (below, right) by swinging his legs over the top to get free of a hold that had both his arms tied up early in the second. The back-and-forth battle, resembling a clash of Treadstone agents out of a Jason Bourne film, was bound to end unexpectedly with a crazy twist of fate, and that it did as Sanders (who was down in the count 15-6) spun Wright into a vulnerable spot for the sudden pin with under 30 seconds to go... leaving both his opponent, and the many fans around the gym who were glued to the action, with stunned expressions/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



**LET ME TAKE YOU DOWN....:** West Laurens 138-pounder Damien Cummings drove Hephzibah's Mason Odom to the mat a total of five times (once each above, and below) over the single period that was his match in Friday's 4-AAA semifinals, though rather than going after a pin, Cummings followed the instructions of his coaches from matside to let Odom back up, and do it over again. The strategy worked, as the junior racked up 22 points, while giving up only four via the respective escapes, to take the win by "skunk" in his first match of two. He'd go on to defeat Harlem's Josiah Steadman in the finals/**CLAY REYNOLDS**





PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

BY STEPHAN PASTIS

I NEED TO GET AWAY FROM PEOPLE. WHERE SHOULD I GO?

I GUESS THAT DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH PEOPLE ANNOY YOU.

ANTARCTICA  
HOPE THEY HAVE LIQUOR STORES.

GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS

IT'S SO COLD IN HERE, I'M SHIVERING

WHICH IS FREAKING ME OUT

THIS IS DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO EXERCISE

OVERBOARD

BY CHIP DUNHAM

A COUPLE OF MY MOM'S NICE CHINA CUPS ARE MISSING, NATE.

HUH...

...WELL, I'M SURE THEY'LL TURN UP, HENRY.

EVERYONE'S BEING CAREFUL WITH THOSE THINGS, RIGHT?

OH YEAH.

ABSO-LUTELY!

DEFLOCKED

BY JEFF CORRIVEAU

I'VE DECIDED TO CUT DOWN ON MY SCREEN TIME AND MAKE MORE POSITIVE CHANGES IN MY LIFE.

THAT'S GREAT, MAMET. SO YOU'RE GOING TO BED EARLY?

YUP! I'M JUST GOING TO CHECK OUT THIS ONE LAST FACEBOOK REEL.

11 HOURS LATER...

HOW'D YOU SLEEP?

I HATE THE WORLD.

ZIGGY

BY TOM WILSON

WE WERE AFRAID THAT LOANING YOU MONEY MIGHT CHEAPEN OUR FRIENDSHIP!

FRIENDLY LOAN CO.

PLUGGERS

BY JEFF MACNELLY

Thanks to Dolly Eiswerth Williamsport, Pennsylvania

A plugger can remember when a "new hip joint" was someplace they tried on a Friday night.

Man’s Mother feels left out of family gatherings!

DEAR ABBY: My daughter-in-law, "Louise," died of cancer five years ago. She was 45; my son, "Pete," was 48. They'd been married for 15 years and had no children.

Three years ago, Pete met "Shelly" through a mutual friend, and they were immediately attracted to each other. Within a year, they were living together and seem very happy. Shelly has two grown children and three grandchildren. Her mother is also in the picture. I have met her a few times, and she was very pleasant.

What bothers me is that Pete's "new family" doesn't include me. They're aware that I'm on social media and can see all the photos they post -- doing things with the kids and their great-grandma -- which is lovely. I'd just like to be included once in a while.

This past weekend, I saw another post of all of them, with photos captioned: "Enjoying a leisurely brunch with the whole family." I was stunned when I realized they were in a cafe that is literally across the street from my apartment, but I wasn't asked to join them. I won't bring it up because I'm afraid I'll be seen as a whiny, insecure old lady. But still, it felt like a deliberate snub.

I have kept a low profile and tried not to be "that" relative who always finds things to meddle in or gripe about. Is there a way to express my feelings without a "poor pitiful me" attitude? -- SNUBBED IN ILLINOIS



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR SNUBBED: It is possible that the dominant person in your son's household is his lady friend, and she arranges their activities. Talk to your son. Ask if you might have said or done something that has put Shelly off, which is why you have been sidelined. And then, instead of waiting to be asked, start doing some of the inviting yourself. (Be sure to include Shelly's mother when you do.)

DEAR ABBY: I'm stuck with an alcoholic husband. I do love him, but it's complicated. I don't have any family. My mom is 96, and I would never burden her with my problems. His family is in denial or whatever you call it. I have only my disability check, which isn't much. I can't find part-time work because of my age (I am 63). When my husband drinks, he becomes impossible to be around, packs up his stuff and leaves, and then demands that I apologize

for his mistakes. I'm trapped. What can I do? -- PRISONER IN TEXAS

DEAR PRISONER: Go on-line and search for the location of the nearest Al-Anon meeting (al-anon.org/info). Al-Anon is an offshoot of AA. There are many meetings, so it shouldn't be too hard to find one near you. These meetings are free; they do not charge. Once there, start listening and share what you are going through. If you do, you may learn methods for coping with your alcoholic husband. You may think you are alone right now, but you will soon realize you are far from it.

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](http://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:  
♠ Q J ♠ 9 7 5 ♠ Q J 6 4 ♠ A 10 7 6

**WEST** 3♣ 3♠ Pass ?  
What call would you make?

**A** - Too strong to pass. Bid 4S. What else?

**Q 2** - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:  
♠ 7 4 ♠ A Q 4 ♠ A Q 8 7 5 ♠ J 7 6

**SOUTH** 1♣ 1♦ Pass ?  
You do not play support doubles. What call would you make?

**A** - Don't worry about the lack of a fourth heart. Bid 2H.

**Q 3** - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:  
♠ K 10 9 7 5 4 ♠ 7 ♠ Q ♠ A 8 7 5 2

As dealer, what call would you make?

**A** - 1S or 2S? We like 2S. If the queen of diamonds was a spade or a club, then 1S.

**Q 4** - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:  
♠ Q 8 7 5 ♠ Q J 10 6 ♠ 5 ♠ A 10 9 2

**NORTH** INT 2♦ Pass ?  
What call would you make?

**EAST** Pass 2♣ Pass ?

**SOUTH** 2♣ Pass 3NT

**WEST** Pass

**A** - The great intermediate cards make this hand worth a game force. Bid 3NT.

**Q 5** - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:  
♠ K Q J 7 6 ♠ 10 6 ♠ A 10 7 5 3 ♠ 6

**SOUTH** 1♠ Pass ?  
What call would you make?

**WEST** Pass 1NT 3♠ Pass ?

**NORTH** 1♦ Pass 1♥ ?

**EAST** 3♠ Pass

**A** - The double announces that partner is too good to pass and defend undoubled. It asks you to do something intelligent. 3D looks intelligent to us.

**Q 6** - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:  
♠ A J 8 3 ♠ A K ♠ Q 8 7 4 ♠ Q 10 6

**WEST** 1♦ Pass ?  
What call would you make?

**NORTH** 1♥ Pass 1♠ ?

**EAST** 1♠ Pass 1♥ ?

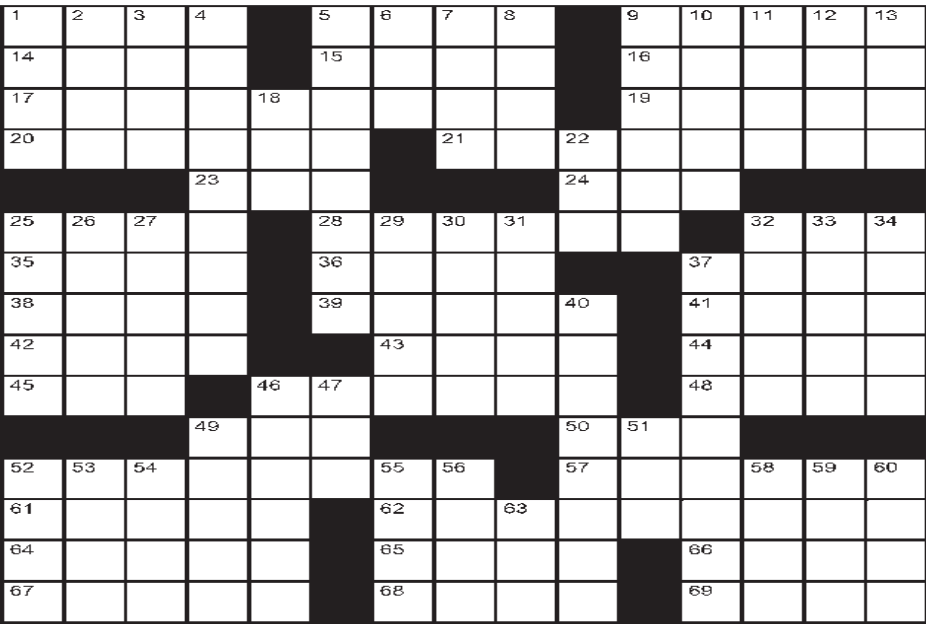
**SOUTH** 1♦ Pass 1♥ ?

**A** - After they bid 2 suits, a double promises at least 4 cards in each of the unbid suits. Your clubs are too short. Bid 1NT.

(Bob Jones welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this paper.)

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

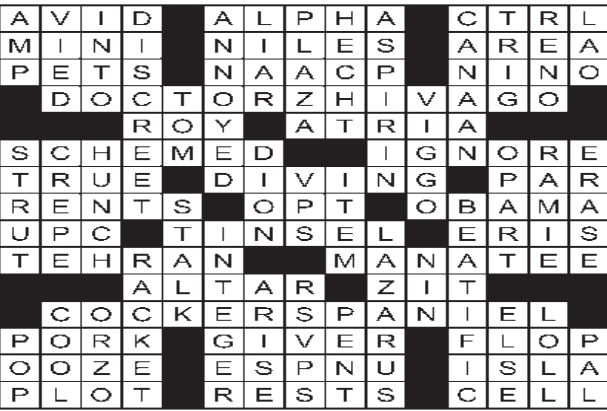
- ACROSS**
- Painter Salvador
  - Kill, as a dragon
  - Bit of postage
  - Big personalities
  - Reusable grocery bag
  - Courtroom event
  - Home of the Sydney Opera House
  - Speaker signal
  - Shaving foam
  - Home of the Emerald Lagoon
  - Fitting
  - Weep
  - Go the distance
  - Makes blank, as a tape
  - Periodical, for short
  - Part of an opera
  - Part to play
  - Thin South Asian crepe
  - Pepper grinder
  - New Orleans NFL player
  - Tattoo supplies
  - Door ringer
  - Quick race
  - Recipe part
  - Cunning
  - \_\_\_ of two evils
  - Professors' degrees: Abbr.
  - Gun the engine
  - Glacier's makeup
  - Most sanitary
  - Glute-working exercises
  - Sets of cards
  - Shaker contents: 2 wds.
  - Non-studio movie
  - Land measure unit
  - Jane Austen novel
  - Mexican money
  - 2013 Katy Perry song
  - Musical silence
- DOWN**
- Sale or trade



Created by Stella Zawistowski

9/20/25

- Water, in Spanish
- Misplaced
- "Anything else?": 3 wds.
- Appetizers
- Texter's "haha": Abbr.
- Working hard: 2 wds.
- "Uh-huh"
- Elevator alternative
- Genuinely
- Opera set in Egypt
- The \_\_\_ event
- Trudge wearily
- Sales agent
- \_\_\_ in the hole
- Baby sheep
- Disney mermaid
- Zany
- Highways and byways
- Assumed name
- Have a feeling
- June or July
- Inquired
- Inhales sharply



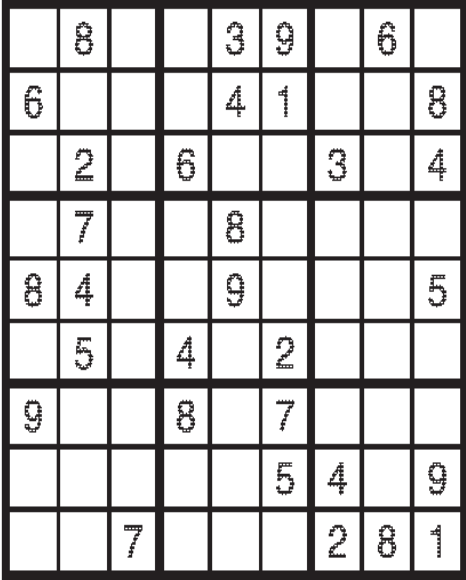
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9/20/25

- Pez holder
- 1982 Michael Jackson album
- Parts of eyeglasses
- New Year's \_\_\_
- Boom box
- Social signal
- Flaw in a teacup

- Bowling alley part
- Wraps up
- Celebrity
- Mexican snack
- Chess or cricket
- Shade trees
- ERA or RBIs
- Ball product

SUDOKU



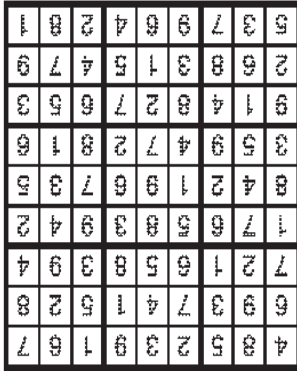
Fun By The Numbers

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:



CHAMBER  
Continued from page 1

as an interim.

“We could not have found a better person to serve as an interim and to continue the great work that Mr. Taylor has been doing for the past decade,” Hall said.

“She has already hit the ground running. That is going to be great to have somebody here in place to be able to provide a transition with the permanent CEO and president once they are hired.”

Dixon is excited to be working with Hall.

“He is wonderful and has already gotten involved,” Dixon said. “Dr. Hall is active because Heath has been so supportive of the school systems and the young people and how we can reach out to them and make them better leaders.”

Since being on the chamber board, Hall has seen the foundation Taylor has laid and also build upon. Their

relationship began when Hall was an administrator in the Laurens County School System. He saw how Taylor partnered with local schools and provided services through fundraising, as well as providing resources from the chamber to ensure that local students are workforce ready.

“He has grown the chamber and we really do hate to see him go,” Hall said. “We are excited for him for the opportunity that lies ahead for him. ... It has been a great ride and I have gotten to know Mr. Taylor better since I’ve been on the chamber board.”

Previous chamber chairman Jason Dollar thanked Taylor for what he did during his 10 years.

“They see the events but they do not see the behind the scenes he did,” Dollar said. “Heath has brought many things to our community like the Archway Programs and things like that. Those are the things that better our community as a

whole.”

Taylor, whose last official role was last Friday’s annual dinner, thanked everyone for what they did during the last 10 years. He thanked his wife, Tammy, who has helped him in everything.

“I see so many friends and family when I look around the room,” Taylor said. “This has been the most wonderful 10 years of any work I’ve ever had. What a pleasure it has been to get to come to work during these last 10 years in this community.”

Hall believes it is important to have a good chamber in the community.

“The chamber connects the work that needs to be done and the help that lures local industries in to ensure that they have the employees that they need by partnering with the schools,” Hall said.

“The chamber helps our small businesses get recognition and to allow people to be aware of our local businesses so that they



The chamber served a cake thanking Taylor for his 10 years as the president/CEO /PAYTON TOWNS III

can go there and shop and continue to keep our local economy going. I truly see the chamber, and the work that Mr. Taylor has done, as a pillar and a connector to our community to connect the businesses with all of

the other areas of our community that make everything work and contribute to our workforce labor and also help increase our local businesses.”

Dixon likes the fact that people support the cham-

ber.

“It is an active chamber,” she said. “A lot of chambers are not like that, but we have so many programs going on. Our chamber is involved in so many things, and it is truly amazing.”

CIS GALA  
Continued from page 1

Gees Boutique, is not in education but she supports every school in the area.

“My board thought she deserved to be honored,” Curtis said. “We always want to look at those people who have made such great contributions and are not always noticed and recognized and we want to make sure we take the time to thank them for all they have done in this community. She supports every school. She gives of herself and her resources to support all students. She has a strong passion for education.”

When Hooks was a principal, Curtis observed her greeting almost 400 children at the school.

“She knew them by name,” Curtis said. “That made such

an impact on me and it made me realize how important those relationships are in order to build those relationships so that the children knew that she cared. She was a wonderful educator and this recognition is long overdue.”

Garnto recently retired as the superintendent for Laurens County Schools.

“We go way back,” he said. “I graduated from high school with him. I have seen him in his career and I’m just so proud of him retiring as superintendent and moving into the role as RESA director. He is an unsung hero who certainly needs his flowers.”

Flowers has the only day-care center in Twiggs County.

“It does extremely well and she is an extremely great

asset to Twiggs County,” she said. “Her husband pastors a church in Dublin at Buckeye Baptist Church.”

James is in her second year as superintendent in Wilkinson County.

“The first thing she wanted to do when she got to Wilkinson County was to bring resources and she brought CIS in to support her children,” Curtis said.

Stephens, a retired Twiggs County educator, has been a part of Family Connections.

“She has been wonderful and supportive,” Curtis said. “She is a local pastor there and deserving of being recognized for her work in the community and with children.”

For tickets, contact Curtis at jackiepcurtis@gmail.com or call (478) 998-3232.



Former Laurens County Superintendent Clifford Garnto will be honored during the fourth Communities In Schools Gala on Feb. 26/PAYTON TOWNS III

FEBRUARY 7, 2026  
10AM-4PM



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