

County school board approves tax increase

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

The Laurens County School Board approved keeping its millage rate at 14, resulting in a 2.82 percent tax increase.

Two people attended the second public hearing at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Sept. 17, while no one attended the third and final public hearing at 4 p.m. that evening. Following this hearing, the board approved the millage

rate during a called meeting held at 4:30 p.m.

The public hearings, which lasted approximately 30 minutes, were led by Laurens County School Finance Director Mary McColough. She said there are two ways to have a property tax increase. One is by the digest growing and the other by a reassessment of existing properties, and both of those occurred this year. Even though the county schools were not increasing

the millage rate, they did propose a millage rate that is greater than the rollback rate.

The Laurens County Commission, which levies its own tax, has proposed raising its millage rate from 5.49 to 7.0. The commission's final two meetings will be on Sept. 22 at noon and then at 6 p.m. The commission will then meet at

SCHOOL BOARD
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Laurens County Superintendent O.J. Hall (left) discusses the purchase of two new school buses with the school board during last Thursday's meeting/PAYTON TOWNS III

Mayor: No increase in city taxes

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

The Dublin City Council agreed Thursday to go with the rollback rate – 4.426 mills – to avoid an increase in its portion of the city's taxes.

No tax increase means no need for public hearings, Mayor Joshua Kight said.

"You will see in the newspaper, and this is not any of the schools' or county's, that the city will not increase," Kight said. "Our millage rate has gone down from over 6, which was what it was in 2021. We have been able to do this without decreasing the amount of revenue because of the natural growth in the city of Dublin. As more people invest in the city, we have more businesses here, and more houses built here."

Because of growth in the tax digest, the city does not to increase the taxes to get the same revenue or even additional revenue.

Kight then asked for City Manager Josh Powell to explain the Floating Local Option Sales Tax. Voters in Laurens County will decide a referendum on the FLOST, an extra one-cent tax, in the



Mayor Joshua Kight announces that the city government's portion of tax bills will not increase /PAYTON TOWNS III

November election.

According to Powell, the state legislature adopted legislation that will allow for a homestead exemption that caps how much property's value can increase year after year. The law also allows officials, if a county and all its municipalities agree, to call for a vote on the FLOST, which would be used to directly offset county and city taxes.

FLOST revenue cannot be used to reduce school taxes, however.

"All of the municipalities as well as Laurens County has entered into an inter-governmental agreement to

CITY COUNCIL
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EMPTY STROLLER WALK: EVENT PUTS FOCUS ON INFANT DEATHS

Heart of Georgia Healthy Start Coalition recently held its Empty Stroller Walk to draw attention to Infant Mortality Awareness Month. Empty strollers were pushed from the Laurens County Library to Dublin City Hall /PAYTON TOWNS III

Man in critical condition after being hit by truck while riding electric bicycle

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

A man was in critical condition after he was hit by a truck Friday morning

while riding an electric bicycle near East Dublin the night before.

According to the Georgia State Patrol, Richard Dennis Paul, 56, was riding a blue

Urlife E-bicycle on U.S.80 near Ernest Stinson Road when a Dodge Ram, driven by Charles David Coursey, 49, approached him from behind around 8:16 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 17.

"The area was dark and not lit," GSP Sgt. Brian Jones wrote in an email. "The Dodge and bicycle struck each other in the

roadway."

Jones said Paul was not wearing a helmet and was airlifted to Navicent Atrium Health Hospital in Macon.

"This crash is still under

investigation due to receiving video footage from a nearby business, and we are still waiting for an update on the injury status of the bicycle driver," Jones wrote.

Nature Conservancy board stops in Dublin to visit restored land

By KYLE DOMINY
Staff Reporter

The Georgia branch of the world's largest natural preservation group recently stopped in Dublin to hold its regular business meeting and visit with a local landowner working to restore and preserve a part of Laurens County's ecosystem.

The Nature Conservancy's Georgia chapter's governing board convened in downtown Dublin on Sept. 16 before venturing out to the historic Whitehall property on Ga. 26. to

meet with a landowner who has replanted parts of the expansive terrain in native longleaf pine and grasses. The effort has been so successful that native species, particularly wild quail, have returned to the property.

"This is a learning expedition," said Monica Thornton, the group's executive director. "We'll be seeing what he's doing and comparing it to what we're doing. This is so hopeful for conservation and what we can do."

The conservancy has long had local ties. Former state Rep. DuBose Porter held a seat on the group's board for two decades. His son Asa currently serves on the board.

For over six decades The Nature Conservancy, which operates in all 50 states and 80 countries across the globe, has worked to preserve land and waterways in Georgia. Thornton said that so far more than 400,000 acres have been preserved

across the state through the group's efforts.

Notable projects include assisting the state of Georgia acquire parts of Cumberland Island and helping position the barrier island for public use and earn its National Seashore designation. The conservancy is also working with federal authorities to purchase and maintain about 75,000 acres around Fort Benning near Columbus.

That project serves a two-fold goal – helping preserve the natural landscape and native species while creating a buffer zone for military operations at the base.

"They need that land for their mission," Thornton said. "The mission needs dark, dark skies, and some of the species that we're working to preserve also needs those dark, dark skies. These are the guys that went in and took out Osama bin Laden, you don't

want that next to a school or your neighborhood."

Land use is key to the conservancy's goals, which aims to bolster economic and residential development while preserving green spaces and ecosystems. With about 90 percent of Georgia land held privately, forging relationships with various industries, such as agriculture and forestry, to encourage best practices is vital, Thornton said.

"It's all about land use," she said. "How do we take the land and use it for its best purpose, and do the things that meet the needs. It's better for their outcomes, too."

The conservancy also developed a solar sighting tool, to help developers find ideal locations for solar farms, places isolated from neighborhoods and away from fragile ecosystems, that could be translated to help data center builders. Such facilities are often crit-

icized for their impact to water systems, environment and nearby communities.

"We are hoping that tools become something that developers use when it comes to data centers and where they should put those," Thornton said. "That's a more challenging thing because they are happening so fast."

Thornton has served with The Nature Conservancy for about five years. She is an experienced broadcaster on the Atlanta media scene and later worked for the Piedmont Park Conservancy, helping the city expand its signature green space by 63 acres. She is a native Georgian whose parents and grandparents, who farmed in both southern and northern portions of the state, taught her the importance of land stewardship.

"Land is something important," she said. "If you take care of it, it will take care of you."



OBITUARIES



David C. Heath

CMSGT (retired) David C. Heath, 88, of Euharlee, Ga., passed away peacefully on Sept. 17, 2026, surrounded by love and faith. Born Aug. 15, 1938, in Fair Haven, Vermont, alongside his twin sister, David grew up deeply rooted in his Green Mountain heritage, always guided by the principles of God, family and country. His entrepreneurial spirit shone early when he established the first Rutland Herald paper route in Fair Haven, setting a high standard for excellence that defined his life.

David cherished simple pleasures, including gardening and taking walks with his beloved wife, and was always devoted to his family as a father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

Enlisting in the United States Air Force on Oct. 23, 1956, David served with distinction until his retirement on Nov. 1, 1982. He rose to the highest enlisted rank, Chief Master Sergeant, and his career took him to many states — Texas, Colorado, Washington D.C., Savannah, Jacksonville, Montgomery, Dover and Warner Robins — as well as overseas assignments in France, Southeast Asia and Panama Canal Zone. His exemplary service was recognized with honors including the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Presidential Unit Citation, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with four Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Force Organizational Excellence Award, National Defense Service Medal, Army and Air Force Good Conduct Medals with devices, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross and Humanitarian Service Medal. He graduated with distinction from both the NCO and Senior NCO Academies.

After retiring from active duty, David continued to serve as an Air Force civilian Information Management Supervisor for another 20 years, demonstrating his steadfast commitment to the military community.

David was preceded in death by his parents, Robert G. Heath Sr. and Louise J. (Hughes) Heath; brothers, Robert George Heath Jr. and Bernard Francis Heath; and sisters, Beverly Marion (Heath) Kowalewski, Phyllis Ann Heath, and Jean Lorrain (Heath) Dunham.

He is survived by his twin sister, Dorothy “Dottie” (Heath) Briere, Joyce Mae (Heath) Barsalow and Betty Lou (Heath) Holley.

He leaves behind his loving wife, Mary Ann (Rutland) Heath, who was his companion for 63 years af-

ter their marriage on Feb. 23, 1963. Also surviving, are his son, Paul David Heath of Eatonton, Ga.; daughter, Julie Lynn (Heath) Simmons of Kathleen, Ga.; son Michael Edward Heath of Warner Robins, Ga.; grandchildren Mary Christine Heath, Jessica Lynn Simmons, Jason Scott Simmons and his wife Michaela Marie Simmons, Jennifer Lenora Heath; and great-grandchildren Catalina Raegyn Simmons, Kaedyn Bodhi Simmons, Elijah David Simmons, Lydia Iris Simmons, Neveah Destiny Heath, Marquis DeMario King Jr. and Lyrica Dream King.

The family received friends on Monday, Sept. 21, 2026, from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m. at Townsend Brothers Funeral Home. A graveside service will follow at 11:30 a.m., at Dublin Memorial Gardens with Rev. Matt Rutland officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial donations be made to either the American Cancer Society or the Alzheimer’s Association.

Townsend Brothers Funeral Home in Dublin, GA, is in charge of arrangements. Please visit www.townsend-funeralhome.com for service updates and to sign the online memorial register.



Wanza Sheppard Soles

Wanza Sheppard Soles, lovingly known as Wanza, passed away on Sept. 19, 2026, in Dublin, Georgia, at the age of 96.

Born on July 15, 1930, in Dawsonville, Georgia, she was the daughter of the late Wesley Herbert Sheppard Sr. and Avis Keen Sheppard. Wanza lived a long and meaningful life marked by faith, devotion to family, and quiet strength. She was a Christian woman whose life reflected the values she held dear, and she will be remembered as loving, faith-filled, and thoughtful by all who knew her.

Wanza was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Rev. Terry W. Soles; her parents, and her siblings, Anna Mae Mason and her husband, Lamar, Esther Senn and her husband, Dewey, Opal Slappey and her husband George, Nell Daniels and her husband Edwin, Mary Underwood and her husband Edward, Martha Brantley and her husband Jimmy, Wesley Herbert Sheppard Jr. and his wife Anne, Patsy Tenhoor, and Johnnie Faye Graham and her husband Cecil. Though she experienced many losses throughout her life, she remained steadfast in her faith and continued to be a source of comfort and encouragement to those around her.

She is survived by her children, Dana Kinzler and her husband Dick of Dublin, Georgia, Ron Soles and his wife Karen of Clermont, Georgia and Marsha Fountain and her husband Chuck

of Alexandria, Louisiana. Her legacy continues through her grandchildren, Stan Kinzler, Jon Kinzler, Dylan Soles and his wife Shandi, Brannon Soles and his wife Sam, Chip Fountain and his wife Amy, and Heather Moore and her husband Gareth. She also leaves behind her great-grandchildren, Raina Danielson and her husband John, Melissa Kinzler, Macie Soles, Holden Soles, Avery Fountain, Casey Fountain, Kiya Soles, Tayton Soles, Liam Moore and Heaven Griffin, Callum Moore, and Evangeline Moore, as well as her great-great-grandchildren, Charlotte Danielson and Mateo Griffin; brother-in-law, Fred Tenhoor. She is also survived by a host of beloved nieces, nephews, and cousins who will cherish her memory.

Wanza was a devoted member of Dublin First Church of the Nazarene and served faithfully as a Sunday school teacher both at church and in senior living homes. She was an avid student of the Bible and served as a Georgia District Missionary Secretary, demonstrating her deep commitment to ministry and service. Her life of Christian witness touched many hearts, and her steady presence was a blessing to her church family and community.

In her professional life, Wanza served with diligence and integrity as a retired Fiscal Officer with Hall County, Georgia. She also worked as Manager of the J.C. Penney Catalog Department, where her strong work ethic and dependable nature were evident. Beyond her career, she was known as an avid Bingo player and a remarkable bookkeeper extraordinaire, gifts that reflected both her enjoyment of life and her careful, capable mind.

Wanza’s life was a beautiful example of devotion, grace, and perseverance. She will be remembered for her warm spirit, her unwavering faith, and the love she shared so generously with her family and friends. Her memory will live on in the hearts of all who were blessed to know her.

The family will receive friends on Wednesday, September 23, 2026, from 10:00 AM until 11:00 AM at First Church of the Nazarene. Memorial service will follow at 11:00 AM, at Dublin First Church of the Nazarene with Rev. Don Hicks officiating. Honorary pallbearers will be the Terry Soles Sunday school class. Mrs. Soles will be laid to rest in Mount Olive Church of the Nazarene Cemetery at 2:30 PM on Wednesday.

Townsend Brothers Funeral Home in Dublin, GA, is in charge of arrangements. Please visit www.townsend-funeralhome.com for service updates and to sign the online memorial register.



Shannon Moore Phillips

Mr. Shannon Moore Phillips, 93, beloved husband of the late Lois Jean McLain Phillips of Treutlen County, released his hands from the plow and passed away peacefully, with his two sons and granddaughter, Chloe, by his side, at his home on Saturday morning, Sept. 19, 2026.

Born in Vidalia, he was the youngest of two sons born to Vasco Sherrod Phillips and Beulah Moore Phillips. His mother passed away when he was five years old. At the age of seven, the Phillips family came to Treutlen County where he grew up, would make his home, raised his own family and became a recognized and respected member of the community. Shannon was a member of the Class of 1950 at Soperton High School.

After high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force. While serving in the USAF, in the early 1950s, he was stationed in Saudia Arabia where, as he put it, he served the greatest country God ever gave to man. While on that assignment his unit came under enemy mortar fire and at that time Mr. Phillips realized that there was a God and at that exact time he prayed for the salvation of his soul. During his time in the Air Force, he was honored to be able to visit Jerusalem and walk where Christ had walked. Upon returning to the States and being honorably discharged in 1955, he returned home and enrolled at ABAC in Tifton, on the GI Bill, where he remained until transferring to the University of Georgia earning his Bachelor Degree

in Agricultural Economics. Upon graduating from UGA in 1959, he returned home and began raising livestock and row crop farming. While establishing his farm, he worked with the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Office in Soperton and Mt. Vernon from the early 1980s until the mid 1990s.

In 1973, he was recognized by the Ohooppee River Soil and Water District as the “Treutlen County Man of the Year.” Mr. Phillips possessed a strong work ethic that he instilled in his two sons, Terry and Ronnie. They have each walked behind their father, following in his footsteps and becoming well known and respected farmers as well.

Mr. Shannon and his sons were the only cotton farmers for many years in Treutlen County. They were the first farmers to install underground drain tiles and terraces and to employ conservation tilling in their farming operation. He would oftentimes talk about and reminisce about his life of farming and the changes that he had witnessed, such as: single row plowing with mules to multi row plowing with tractors that steer themselves; picking cotton by hand, one row at a time, to driving cotton pickers that would harvest multiple rows at once and put the cotton in tight rolls and from applying Arsenic on cotton plants to fight Boll weevils to the complete eradication of this pest. Mr. Phillips was a man of honesty and integrity. He was a good steward of the land and was a devout conservationist of the soil for generations to follow. Even at around the age of 75, he could physically outwork most 20 year-old men. Mr. Phillips was a member of Morningside Baptist Church where he was the oldest living member.

His passion was work, his family and especially time spent with his grandchildren and great grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by his step mother, Lillian King Phillips, his wife of sixty years, Lois Jean McLain Phillips who passed away in 2021, an infant son, Kerry

Phillips, his brother, Arnold Phillips and canine companions, Bitsy and Rags. Mr. Phillips leaves behind, his two sons, Terry Phillips (Laura) and Ronnie of Soperton; his beloved grandchildren, Brandi Dykes, Brenna Phillips, Chloe Phillips, Jacob Phillips; great-grandchildren, Mason, Madilyn and Abigail Dykes; a special friend, Janis Talley; his canine companion, Speedy; his church family at Morningside Baptist Church; and the remaining living members of the Soperton High School Class of 1950.

Funeral services were conducted at 11 in the morning on Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2026 at Boiling Springs Baptist Church with Pastor Vic Fordham, Pastor Owen Waters and Mr. Van Phillips officiating.

Mr. Phillips were laid to rest beside his wife in the Boiling Springs Baptist Church Cemetery.

Serving as pallbearers were: Jacob Phillips, Tom Phillips, Greg Powell, Mark Lumley, Wes Williamson and Tony Way.

Honorary pallbearers were: Sylvester Harris and Alvin Heath.

His family received friends on Tuesday, at the church, from 10 a.m. until the hour of service.

His family would like to extend a special thanks to Kimberly Lewis, Arnold Lumley, Sylvester Harris and his other caregivers for the care and attention paid to him during his recent illness.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in his memory are encouraged to be made to Morningside Baptist Church, Boiling Springs Baptist Church, or to the charity of one’s choice.

Please share a memory, leave a condolence message and sign the online guest register at www.sammons-funeralhome.com

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ANNIVERSARIES

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NOTICE

The Dublin City Governing Authority does hereby announce that the millage rate will be set at the City Council Meeting to be held at City Hall on **October 1, 2026 at 5:30 P.M.**, and pursuant to the requirements of O.C.G.A. § 48-5-32, does hereby publish the following presentation of the current year's tax digest and levy along with the history of the tax digest and levy for the past five years.

CURRENT 2026 PROPERTY TAX DIGEST AND 5-YEAR HISTORY OF LEVY

City of Dublin	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Real & Personal	616,972,559	682,117,656	718,535,007	887,148,445	918,150,500	958,002,801
Motor Vehicles	4,873,380	4,301,940	4,198,830	4,065,710	3,486,160	3,245,650
Mobile Homes	1,230,962	1,678,254	1,915,230	2,139,710	2,105,990	1,918,163
Timber – 100%	----	----	----	----	----	----
Heavy Duty Equipment	700,133	35,200	1,976,116	148,792	59,920	----
Gross Digest	623,777,034	688,133,050	726,625,183	893,502,657	923,802,570	963,166,614
Less M&O Exemptions	114,948,828	139,965,708	155,651,382	123,696,559	135,183,477	159,377,741
Net M&O Digest	508,828,206	548,167,342	570,973,801	769,806,098	788,619,093	803,788,873
Gross M&O Millage	12.73	12.424	12.777	9.954	10.098	10.196
Less Rollbacks	-6.232	-6.444	-6.829	-5.354	-5.601	-5.770
Net M&O Millage	6.498	5.98	5.948	4.6	4.497	4.426
Net Taxes Levied	\$3,306,366	\$3,278,041	\$3,396,152	\$3,541,108	\$3,546,420	\$3,557,570
Net Taxes \$Increase/Decrease	\$-150,522	\$-28,325	\$118,111	\$144,956	\$5,312	\$11,150
Net Taxes % Increase/Decrease	-4.3543%	-.00856%	3.6031%	4.2682%	.0015%	.003144%

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Democrats and Republicans find common ground in affordable housing debate: Curb corporate landlords

By MAYA HOMAN
Georgia Recorder

It's not often these days that candidates from across the political spectrum find common ground. But on the subject of how to create more affordable homes, both Democrats and Republicans running for higher office in Georgia this year can agree on one thing: It's time to address the rise of corporate-owned housing.

In a year where affordability issues are top of mind for many voters, the cost of everyday necessities like housing, gas and health insurance may be a key factor motivating Georgia residents at the polls this year.

Housing in particular is the largest expense for most Americans, with data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics showing that housing accounts for about 33% of the average consumer's annual spending. Experts say there are a variety of reasons that housing prices are rising, including increased costs for labor and materials and strict zoning laws.

But in Georgia, the role that institutional investors play in the housing market may also be a key factor. A 2024 report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office showed that a quarter of all single-family rental homes in Atlanta were owned by institution-

al investors, which studies say may have contributed to increased rent and home prices.

"We are the epicenter of corporate investment in housing nationwide," said Taylor Shelton, an associate professor of geography at Georgia State University who studies corporate-owned housing. "Here in Atlanta, it's [an issue] that is impossible to ignore, given how large a share of the housing market these companies have come to control."

And as the November midterm elections grow nearer, candidates up and down the ticket and on both sides of the aisle have shown a willingness to combat the proliferation of corporate-owned housing. U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff, a Democrat who is running for reelection, launched an investigation into the issue last year, and voted to pass a bipartisan housing bill that caps the number of single-family homes an institutional investor can own at 350. His rival, Republican Congressman Mike Collins, also voted in favor of the bill.

In the race for governor, Democrat Keisha Lance Bottoms has emphasized the need for limits on corporate-owned housing. But her opponent, Republican Rick Jackson, said he would leave regulation of corpo-

rate-owned housing up to the federal government and has instead proposed freezing property taxes and eliminating regulations that he says are driving up the cost of home construction and ownership.

In the lieutenant governor's race, very little connects the two candidates in terms of policy. On housing, Democratic nominee Josh McLaurin, a state senator from Sandy Springs, has promised to address restrictive zoning laws that he says make it hard to build smaller houses, townhomes and accessory dwelling units that could be more affordable for Georgia residents.

His Republican counterpart in the race, Sen. Greg Dolezal of Cumming, said he wants to reduce building and permitting regulations to make it easier and cheaper for developers to build housing, as well as expand a state-run program that provides financing options for first-time homebuyers.

But both have pledged to tackle the issue of corporate-owned housing. During the 2026 legislative session, Dolezal introduced a bill that would prevent institutional investors from owning more than 500 single-family homes and ban international private investors from buying rental property. The bill passed the Senate in a 49-3 vote,

but did not make it to a vote in the House. Still, Dolezal said the bill was an important step in raising awareness about the issue.

"There was, I think, a universal recognition of the need to address that," he said.

McLaurin said he has witnessed issues his constituents have experienced with corporate-owned housing firsthand, and is "willing to pursue every available option" to limit their presence in Georgia.

"Large corporations who buy up a lot of housing tend not to see the purchase as anything other than a financial investment," he said. "They tend not to keep the human concerns of their residents at the front of their mind, and you see that even in places like my district."

And though members of both parties have taken steps to elevate the issue of corporate-owned housing, experts say that addressing what they say are weak landlord-tenant protections in Georgia may be a key part of the solution. Part of the reason that Atlanta has become such a hub of corporate ownership is because there are fewer guardrails protecting those who live in corporate-owned property in Georgia compared to other states, Shelton said.

"These large corporations are able to come in and act with almost total impunity in the way that they raise rents and fees, the kind of neglect of maintenance that they're known for, how often they file for eviction as a core part of their business model," he said. "All of these things are really not possible in many other parts of the country."

Natallie Keiser, the executive director of HouseATL, said she was disappointed that housing issues haven't been a more prominent campaign issue this year, citing a 2025 survey from the Atlanta Regional Commission in which a plurality of residents said housing affordability was Atlanta's biggest issue. Roughly 35% of residents said investors buying up rental housing was contributing to affordability issues.

"We had the survey from the Atlanta Regional Commission saying that it's the number one issue for metro Atlanta residents," she said. "To not see it be at the top of the list for our candidates is very concerning."

Policies that protect renters, in particular, are often missing from candidates' platforms on both sides of the aisle, she added.

"Tenant protections are a huge issue, especially when we talk about institutional

investment," she said. "Institutional investors come to Georgia not just because we have a lack of housing supply and a population growth, so there's a clear market, but also because we have very weak tenant protections."

Allowing local municipalities to establish rental registries and policies that require landlords to disclose all fees and rental costs upfront, she said, could also help address the issue.

"There should be some truth in advertising around fee transparency, which I think would go a long way towards addressing the large investor-owned business model," she said.

OBITUARIES

Jimmie Daniel Norris

Mr. Jimmie Daniel Norris of Dublin passed away of Friday, Sept. 18, 2026. Funeral arrangements are incomplete but will be announced later.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Creations, LLC of Dublin.
Services by Dudley.com.

BIRTHDAYS

Sept. 18
Michaelyn Michelle Sumner

Sept. 22
Vanessa Haslem

Sept. 23
Manazja Davis
Shannon Green

COMMUNITY NEWS

City marks Suicide Prevention month



Dublin Mayor Joshua Kight with representatives from the City of Dublin and the VA Medical Center during a recent proclamation ceremony/SPECIAL PHOTO

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

Mayor Joshua Kight and representatives from Dublin VAMC designated the month of September 2026 being Suicide Prevention Month.

Suicide is a serious public health issue that affects individuals in our local community. September is nationally recognized as a time dedicated to raising awareness about suicide prevention and promoting mental health resources. Suicide is preventable and effective prevention requires comprehensive approaches that include education, early identification, treatment, and supportive services.

Certain populations face unique challenges and are at an increased risk for suicide, which makes targeted outreach and support services essential for these vulnerable groups. The Department of Veterans

Affairs, local organizations, healthcare providers, schools and individuals all work tirelessly to provide mental health services, crisis intervention and support those in need. Reducing the stigma associated with mental health conditions and help-seeking behavior is crucial to encouraging individuals to seek the help they need.

This proclamation encourages all residents and community organizations to learn the warning signs of suicide and how to help someone in crisis, promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma, support veterans and their families in our community, utilize available mental health resources and encourage others to seek help when needed, participate in suicide prevention activities and education programs, and learn about lethal means safety and how to reduce access to mean of self-harm during times of crisis.



The Lighthouse

Adult Day Care Center

274-0003

NOTICE

The Town of Dexter Council does hereby announce that the Town of Dexter millage rate will be set at its Tuesday, October 13, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall located at 101 East Main Street, Dexter, Georgia, 31019. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. Sec 48-5-32, as amended the Council hereby publishes the following presentation for the current year's tax digest and proposed levy.

In accordance with Georgia law, all taxable property shall be assessed at forty percent of its fair market value, which will be determined by the Tax Commissioner of Laurens County. The taxable property shall then be taxed by the City at a millage rate of 4 mills. By way of example:

The average home in Dexter, Georgia has a fair market value of \$200,000. The property owner of the \$200,000 home would pay \$320 in property taxes, as calculated below:

40% of said value is \$80,000. Considering the millage rate to be 4 mills, the property Owner shall pay \$4 per \$1,000 taxable value:

\$80,000 x (4/1,000) = \$320.00 taxes owed.

All concerned citizens are invited to attend the three public hearings regarding this tax implementation, millage rate adoption, and the tax increase to be held at **101 East Main Street, Dexter, Georgia 31019** on:

- Tuesday, October 6, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.**
- Thursday, October 8, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.**
- Tuesday, October 13, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.**

All concerned citizens are invited to join these public meetings.

City Council will render its final vote regarding the implementation of ad valorem property taxes and the proposed millage rate of 4 mills at 6:00 p.m. on October 13, 2026.

Revival



Sunday, September 20 to Wednesday, September 23, at 7 p.m. nightly

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Monday - Wednesday: Rev. Andy Carter
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NOTICE							
The Town of Dexter does hereby announce that the millage rate will be set at a meeting to be held at Dexter City Hall located at 101 East Main Street, Dexter, Georgia, 31019, on October 13, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. and pursuant to the requirements of O.C.G.A. 48-5-32 following presentation of the current year's tax digest and levy, along with the history of the tax digest and levy for the past five years.							
CURRENT PROPERTY TAX DIGEST AND 5 YEAR HISTORY OF LEVY							
INCORPORATED	V A L U E	INCORPORATED	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		Real & Personal	8,244,874	8,970,884	9,473,267	12,080,724	14,725,072
		Motor Vehicles	199,720	176,770	151,020	159,420	159,310
		Mobile Homes	128,318	237,406	257,045	173,355	197,262
		Timber - 100%					
		Heavy Duty Equipment	18,975				
		Gross Digest	8,591,887	9,385,060	9,881,332	12,413,499	15,081,644
		Less Exemptions	79,515	79,660	174,436	176,616	998,535
		NET DIGEST VALUE	8,512,372	9,305,400	9,706,896	12,236,883	14,083,109
		NET M&O TAXES LEVIED	\$22,643	\$24,752	\$25,820	\$32,550	\$37,461
R A T E	T A X	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
		TOTAL CITY	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		TOTAL DIGEST VALUE	8,512,372	9,305,400	9,706,896	12,236,883	14,083,109
		TOTAL M&O TAXES LEVIED	\$22,643	\$24,752	\$25,820	\$32,550	\$37,461
		Net Tax \$ Increase		\$2,109	\$1,068	\$6,730	\$4,911
		Net Tax % Increase		9.32%	4.31%	26.06%	15.09%

A parable teaches us how to get on the right path

It had been a long day and I was ready to make my way back to my car and drive from Statesboro to Dublin. I had just watched the West Laurens Raiders beat Statesboro in a football game and all I wanted to do was return to the office, write the story and go home - hopefully before the sun rose.

I programmed my phone's GPS to tell me the best way to make my journey from the football stadium because I was not familiar with the route.

I remember how things used to be before GPS was readily available. You either had a map to look at or hand written instructions. As a youth, I loved to sit in the car and follow our path on a map to wherever we were going.

My father took my brother and I on a trip to Texas in 1994. We did not need a GPS to get us there. We followed a map and the signs along the side of the interstate.

But on that night in Statesboro, I was by myself and had no one to help navigate the way home when the voice from my phone said, "At the next road, make a left."

I saw the road, and since no one was coming from the other way, I made my turn. That is when I saw the



By PAYTON TOWNS III

wrong way sign. By then, it was too late. I had already committed.

Thankfully, I saw no headlights heading my way. That was still not a good feeling. I was able to make a U-turn on that one-lane road, and made it back to the intersection where I made another U-turn and was able to correctly put myself back on the correct route.

There was one other time in life when I did something similar. I was making a left turn onto the newly opened bypass in Baldwin County after arriving back at my high school from an out-of-town football game after midnight. The good news was no one was driving my way that night.

I thought about these situations after I saw a woman

drive the wrong way around the Laurens County Courthouse a few weeks ago. Co-worker Kyle Dominy and I were stopped at the traffic light at the courthouse intersection heading out of town. I could not help but notice a car stopped facing the wrong way on a part of the road that traffic should be going the other way.

We watched as thankfully everyone driving toward East Dublin moved over into the right lane and avoided her. Eventually, our light turned green and she proceeded to make a right turn in front of us. Dominy, who was driving, made it a point to leave plenty of distance between us and her.

When it comes to life, we need to know the direction we are traveling towards.

Heading the wrong way down a one-way street is a recipe for disaster.

In life, we know when we have made a bad choice and are heading down the wrong road. For some of us, it is easy to figure out that we are not heading in the right direction, just like when I made those wrong turns in Statesboro and Baldwin County.

Many of us make bad decisions but decide to continue on that path. Jesus talks about this in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. A young man wanted his share of inheritance from his father early. He goes off down the wrong path and makes bad decisions.

After a famine hits, this young man is left with no money and has to feed pigs for a living. He gets to the point where he is jealous of the pigs because they at least get to eat.

He eventually comes to his senses and returns to his father. The young man probably thought that he would be scolded and humiliated. Instead, his father sees him from a distance, runs to him, hugs him and throws a party.

The important part for all of us is to realize we have made a mistake, but all we have to do is make a U-turn and get ourselves back to the right path.

TELL IT!



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

Can we please institute a time limit (perhaps 90 minutes) for parking on the main street downtown? I drive by in the morning and afternoon and see the same cars. That's what all those lots are for!

Well Laurens County taxpayers, you knew it was coming - a 30 percent increase in taxes.

To the person not wanting prisoners to be treated at the hospital. We have all done things wrong and God forgives us if we ask. Remember there but for the grace of God go I.

'Tis the season to hike taxes. Bibb County, Baldwin County and now Laurens County who looked around and decided "everyone else is doing it..." The hearings for the hike are just a formality to meet legal requirements. Tax payers have zero say in the hike. It's a forgone conclusion.

A year or so ago my water meter readings were erratic, charging us the same each month even when we were gone. I found the meter box was full of dirt and trash, completely covering the meter. I called the water department and they sent out a supervisor to view the situation. I asked him how they were reading my meter each month and why the dirt and trash were not removed. He stated "I'll have to talk to the meter reader and we don't have time to dig it out." Not a clue.

The other day we saw a city truck drive past our lawn sprinkler meter at a fast rate with something hanging out of the window. They were going fast and if that is how they read meters, no wonder there are errors.

We watched the "meter lady" read our meter not too long ago, which amounted to getting out of the truck, lifting the lid of the meter box and dropping it immediately. We have an old analog meter and you have to get close to see the numbers. There was no way our meter was read. Our reading is 3,000 gallons a month, even when we are gone for a month, just like some other folks said.

To avoid a tax increase, what services would the county cut? Roadwork, collection centers, office hours?

Reading the Tell It!, I see I'm not the only one in the city of Dublin whose water bill doubled from one month to the next with the city of Dublin giving me no explanation as to why it doubled.

Enjoyed the DAR display at the Lauren's County library today. Very nice job.

What happens 10 years from now when the county has to repossess all the houses and land because people can't pay the taxes anymore? And we will be paying 11-12% sales tax.

Will there be a housing glut when all of us boomers die off?

Notice: County tax payers, the county commissioners are raising your property taxes 30 percent. There is a solution. Vote yes for the one percent FLOST and see your tax bill cut by half. No brainer.

How about a small museum in the two stationary railroad cars facing Martin Luther King Boulevard? Those two cars are so nice and could well be put to use.

Dublin needs more things for adults to do for fun! Every event is geared towards children, families or seniors. What is there for the 30 to 50 range to do for fun?

Whoever it was who put in the Tell It! about consolidating the schools, I don't think that is good. The county doesn't want to get involved in the city's mess. If they don't straighten up they are going to get into a bigger mess, and the county wants nothing to do with it. Bye!

Regarding the comments about not receiving the paper since the change. It's not The Courier Herald's fault. They get the papers to the post office. I agree it is frustrating especially after you've paid for your subscription and not getting a paper.

George Harwood

George Harwood is a retired schoolteacher who knows much about many things. That's because he reads a lot, has an interest in history, and thinks nothing of heading off to far-off places. He and his wife, Rita, have sojourned to Tanzania a few times, where they explored the wilds of Africa and conversed with the local folk, with a curious and empathetic bent—getting such an emotional uptick from these excursions that he is likely to outlive his friends and neighbors.

He is an introspective sports fan who loves searching for the inside story on an athlete or the performance of an accomplished star. He is a professional cooking on his grill, is fascinated with Greek mythology, and has become an expert photographer. His enthusiasm for life is a reminder that he is in step with the view of the remarkable Michelangelo, who said on his 87th birthday, "Ancora imparo," which translates to, "I am still learning."

One of the pleasures of George's daily life is the hummingbird feeder on his porch, where he often stands, staring in awe of the hummers who come calling. He wanted still photos of these amazing creatures in reverent pause and set about setting his shutter speed to accommodate his objective. He shared the photos with his friends, along with such insights that hummingbird wings beat at 80 times per second. (If there is anything more startling than that, it is that when males are courting, their wings flap at 200 times per second.)

George has encyclopedic knowledge of many subjects. He reads; he keeps up. His daily intake goes beyond the nightly headlines. For example, he delights in sharing with his friends that people in Africa are beginning to realize that

killing off the animals is a bad practice. They want poachers to be rendered invalid.

For example, the Maasai tribes in Kenya and Tanzania no longer condone the long-time tradition of expecting their young sons to confirm their manhood by killing a lion outfitted with only a spear and a shield.

Many communities realize the value of tourism. They realize that conservation practices are important in the face of declining lion populations with the aim of protecting wildlife. One alternative to the traditions of the past is that there are the Maasai Olympic games.

The Harwoods will be making their third trip to Africa after the first of the year. They were introduced to "The Motherland" by joining a tour organized by a well-known minister in Gwinnett County, James Merritt.

With a deep and abiding interest in history, George remains enthralled by Greek mythology. When he visits ancient sites, he makes sure he knows as much as possible about where he spends time. When he and Rita went to Ephesus, they were armed with a detailed study



By LORAN SMITH

of Ephesians and the works of the Apostle Paul.

At the temple of Artemis, George was overwhelmed, as most visitors are, by one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. When he visited Istanbul and saw the Bosphorus Strait, he photographed this fascinating body of water where giant tankers and fishermen dinghies ply its waters side by side. He was armed with facts about the 19-mile Bosphorus and knew more about this natural strait than the tour guide.

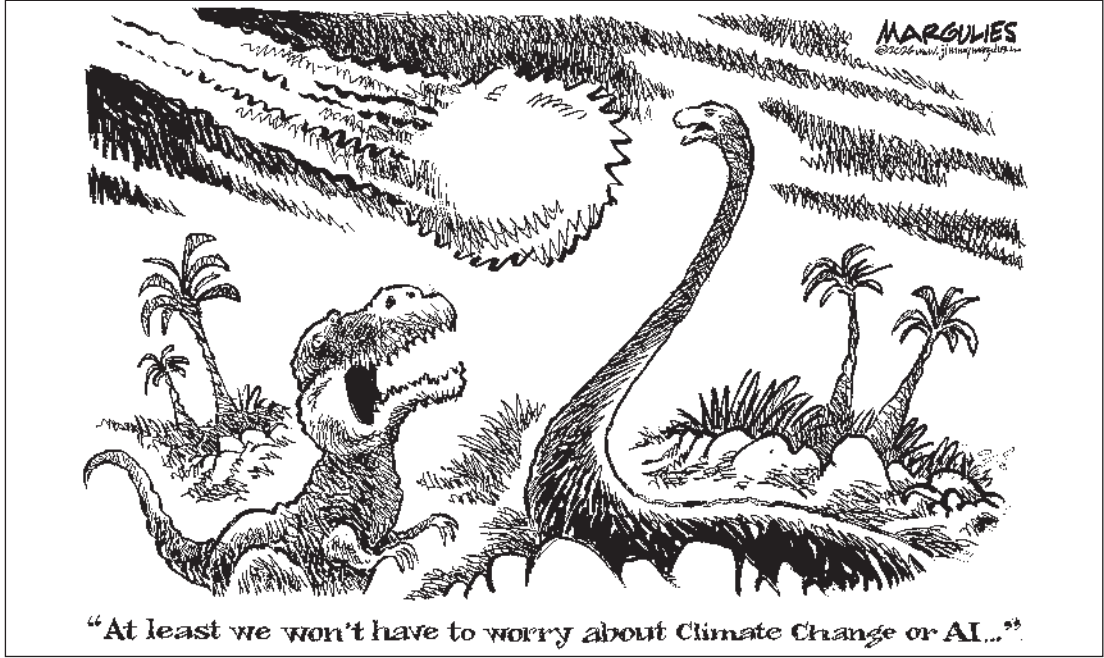
I got to know George via his father-in-law, Billy Bryant, longtime postmaster in Lexington, a man who was gifted at grilling chicken halves for a popular fall dove shoot, hosted by William Porterfield and John "Kid" Terrell.

While George has an intellectual curiosity, he also

has affection for downhome lifestyle and an appreciation for flower and vegetable gardens and the outdoors.

He knows about herbal medicine, which he experienced in Tanzania when an acacia thorn became embedded in his right forearm. He dined for over a week with a Hadzabe tribe, one of the last group of hunter-gatherers remaining in the world and raved about the food.

Perhaps George will write a book about his many travels and insights for us to enjoy and refer to. My guess is that we can clap our hands thrice in a second while the hummingbirds on his porch come with 240 flaps of their wings in tribute to a retired teacher who, like Michealangelo, is with each passing birthday still learning.



DAILY SCRIPTURE...

"Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

- Isaiah 43:18-19 (King James Version)

THOUGHT FOR TODAY...

"Relax. Worry is infamous for being inaccurate."

- Karen Salmansohn

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY...

- Sept. 22, 2026 is...
- National Voter Registration Day
 - National Legwear Day
 - Fall Prevention Awareness Day
 - National Singles Day
 - World Car Free Day
 - World Rhino Day
 - National White Chocolate Day
 - National Ice Cream Cone Day
 - National Elephant Appreciation Day
 - Business Women's Day

The Courier Herald

LOCAL MATTERS



Judged a newspaper of General Excellence 2024

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GEORGIA TRUST

— for Local News —

DuBose Porter/PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Pam Burney/GENERAL MANAGER
Courtney Vessell/CIRCULATION MANAGER

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

Dublin Police Department

- Ladonna Amy Marie Dykes, 46, was charged with theft by shoplifting at Dollar General on South Jefferson Street at 8:05 a.m. on Sept. 9.

Officers were provided a description of suspects who had left the location before they arrived. One officer met with the store manage who said two people entered the store and went separate ways. One of the women went to the fridge and removed cheese and syrup. The woman walked down another aisle and put the items into her bag. She paid for the syrup and cigarettes.

Video showed the woman with multiple items in her arms and hand, go to another aisle. When she was next seen on camera, she was only holding one item in her hand. The officer found the cheese and butter in the woman's possession. She was transported to the police department to be fingerprinted and a trespass form was completed.

- Jack Fleming, 63, charged with two counts of disorderly conduct and one count of simple battery of a healthcare worker at Fairview Park Hospital on Industrial Boulevard at 9:09 p.m. on Sept. 8.

An officer responded to the hospital in reference to a combative patient. Upon arrival, the officer saw a man standing near the stop sign at the exit of the hospital parking lot. The man was facing the hospital and was seen extending his middle finger toward it while shouting expletives.

The man informed the office he was having a bad night and needed to go home. At that time, the officer did not have a description of the combative patient from dispatch and allowed the man to leave the area. The officer proceeded to the emergency room entrance where she met EMS personnel and hospital nursing staff. The staff advised the



officer that they had just escorted a man from the hospital after the man had assaulted a doctor and a nurse inside the facility. The officer received a description of the man, which matched the person she had encountered in the parking lot.

The officer met the man walking along Industrial Boulevard. She asked Fleming what he was doing and he said he just wanted to walk home. Fleming stated he had not done anything to the nurses or hospital staff.

While talking with Fleming, the officer detected an odor of an alcoholic beverage coming from his breath. He was arrested for punching multiple staff members inside the hospital. The man was transported to the sheriff's office.

- On Sept. 13, around 8:31 p.m., an officer was patrolling the area of East Jackson Street and Truxton Street when she observed a vehicle without a tag light.

The officer initiated her emergency lights to conduct a traffic stop on the vehicle, which pulled over into the Middle Georgia Mechanical parking lot. The officer identified the driver as Matthew Joiner, 39.

The man advised that he did not know about the tag light being out. The officer ran Joiners' information through dispatch and it came back with him having a suspended li-

cense. Joiner told the officer that he thought he had a work permit. The officer check with dispatch and was informed that Joiner's work permit was cancelled.

The man was arrested and taken to the police department to be fingerprinted and released. He received a citation for driving on a suspended license.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- A man met with a deputy at the sheriff's office around 4 p.m. on Sept. 3 to file a report of identity theft that happened on Hogan Family Road in Dudley between Aug. 19 and Aug. 31.

- On Sept. 2 at 4:50 p.m., a deputy responded to the sheriff's office to assist a citizen with a report about an incident that occurred on Buckeye Road in East Dublin.

- Ozzie Wayne Merritt, 57, of Reidsville was charged with possession of methamphetamine after a deputy conducted a traffic stop on a Ford Ecoline for failure to use a turn signal on Holliday Circle around 3:43 p.m. on Sept. 2.

- A man talked with a deputy about a Ruger LCP 380 from his truck on Sept. 1 on Red Rox Trail. The man had heard his horn sound one time around 2 a.m. but did not think much of it. The man found the driver's door ajar.

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.

Mayor Kight recognizes 2026 national recovery month



Dublin Mayor Joshua Kight signs a proclamation with representatives of Rise Up to recognized the month of September as National Recovery Month/SPECIAL PHOTO

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

Mayor Joshua Kight and representatives of Rise Up gathered during a recent proclamation signing recognizing the month of September as National Recovery Month.

Behavioral health is an essential part of health and one's overall wellness and prevention of mental and/or substance use disorders works and with effective treatment, people will recover in our area and around the Nation. The benefits of preventing and overcoming mental and/or substance use disorders are significant and valuable to individuals, families, and the community at large.

People in recovery achieve healthy lifestyles, both physically and emotionally, and contribute in positive ways to their

communities, but we must encourage relatives and friends of people with mental and/or substance use disorders to implement preventive measures, recognize the signs of a problem, and guide those in need to appropriate treatment and recovery support services.

To help more people experience and sustain long-term recovery, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Clinton Foundation, the Georgia Council for Recovery, Mobilize Recovery, Serve You Rx, and the Georgia General Assembly Working Group on Addiction and Recovery, along with Mayor Kight and the Dublin City Council invite all residents of the State of Georgia to participate in National Recovery Council invite all residents of the City of Dublin to partic-

ipate in National Recovery Month. Recovery is Real!

Classifieds

Real Estate

For Rent/Lease

For Rent: 2 and 3 Bedroom. Located in East Dublin. No Pets! 478-272-8090

Albany Classifieds

MERCHANDISE

Miscellaneous for sale

U Pick Sweet Potatoes, \$10 per 5 gal. bucket, bring containers. Randy Deloach: 912-282-4300 day, 912-739-4124 night. 1026 Herman Lynn Rd, Claxton, GA.

First Laurens Bank welcomes O'Neal as relationship manager

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

First Laurens Bank, a division of BankSouth, is pleased to announce the addition of Kevin O'Neal as Relationship Manager. Based in Dublin, O'Neal will focus on helping local businesses achieve their financial goals by building strong customer relationships, providing commercial lending solutions, and delivering the personalized service that has long defined community banking.

O'Neal brings more than a decade of banking and commercial lending experience to First Laurens Bank. Throughout his career, he has built a reputation for developing lasting customer relationships and helping local businesses find financial solutions that support long-term growth. Prior to joining First Laurens Bank, he served in lending and banking leadership roles with Morris Bank, Bank of Dudley, and Bank of America.

Commercial Lending School at Southwestern Graduate School of Banking at Southern Methodist University. Before beginning his banking career, he earned a degree in Business and Golf Management and became a Class A PGA of America Professional, bringing a unique background in leadership, customer service, and relationship building.

A lifelong supporter of the Dublin and Laurens County community, O'Neal is a graduate of Leadership Laurens and served as a Chamber Ambassador. He is passionate about investing in the next generation, volunteering as a coach for Dudley Little League Baseball, Dublin youth soccer, and Upward Basketball.

"I've always believed that community banking is about



building relationships and helping people succeed," said O'Neal. "I'm excited to join the First Laurens Bank team and look forward to serving the businesses and families that make this community such a special place."

BankSouth is a leading community bank headquartered at Lake Oconee in Greensboro, Georgia, and is recognized as a top-performing bank nationwide. With over \$1.6 billion in assets, BankSouth serves customers with branches in Atlanta, Cochran, Dublin, Greensboro, Savannah, Watkinsville, and beyond with a full suite of consumer, commercial and digital banking and lending products. Currently, BankSouth Mortgage originates over \$1 billion in home loans per year with over 30 experienced loan officers across their locations across Georgia. For BankSouth locations and more information, please visit banksouth.com.

SEND US your best pictures of Hunting, Fishing and the outdoors and you may be included in our October 10th Edition of

Porter's Guide to Hunting & Fishing in Middle Georgia

Email it to: tchsports77@gmail.com

The Courier Herald

Subject: Porter's Guide

Please include your name and phone number and brief description of the photo, story or recipe. *All submissions may not be printed. Photo publication is left to the discretion of the Editor. Submission deadline 9/25/26.

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EAST LAURENS 28, METTER 21 (OT)

Runback of kickoff/punt, 3-touchdown rally aids Falcons' return to win column in Metter

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

East Laurens had suffered its last two losses by a combined nine points, after gaining an early lead but failing to close out two back-and-forth games against Southeast Bulloch and Washington County.

Facing a familiar situation down 14 with a quarter to go Friday night in Metter, the Falcons refused to let a third-straight end the same way, scoring three unanswered touchdowns in the last 10 minutes – plus overtime – to pull

off a galvanizing first win.

Two involving Major Floyd evened up the score to necessitate some free football, and a third on the run of Jeremiah Rozier, accompanied by a defensive stop, put East on top 28-21 for a happy ride back down I-16.

It was another tight one with equal potential to reverse the Falcons' fortunes and morale as it did to add to their discouragement after an 0-3 start.

East Laurens head coach Jesse Hicks observed some newfound resilience from his team as it buck-

led down to rally back.

"We've been there. We've been through two close football games," he said. "It was our kids' attitude. It's one thing to listen to your coaches say it, but our guys' thought process and mindset was, and I could hear the kids saying it, we're not going to lose this game."

Hicks has a saying that special teams makes special plays.

The mantra held true as the Falcons picked up two of their four scores in the kicking phase.

Myles Burke ran back the opening kickoff 79 yards for an early

touchdown, and Floyd a punt midway through the fourth for the last of regulation to help even things up late.

While the East Laurens offense and defense have had their moments through four games, special teams might be the niche where the Falcons have delivered most consistently on putting their top athletes in position to make plays with the football.

Its range of return men, including Burke, Floyd and Aveone Wicker (this game's leading receiver, with three catches for 32

yards) among others, is averaging a not-too-shabby 38 yards per kickoff return, and 41 per punt. Both, now, have a TD in the stat tally as well.

"You have to pick your poison when you're dealing with our kicking game," Hicks said.

He highlighted the great plays by both returners, but also the sometimes unnoticed blocking that was instrumental in their run-back opportunities.

FALCONS
Continued on page 7

MONROE AREA 21, WEST LAURENS 13

Raiders revive under-center run game, resume rugged play on defense to give Hurricanes their money's worth

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

Friday's non-region finale was the step forward West Laurens was looking for from its young team, but not quite the leap ahead that it needed to come up with a second win against its fourth-straight ranked opponent.

The Raiders became the first of five challengers (each of the previous four classified AAAAA or higher) to hold the state's sixth-top scoring offense under under 42, and got theirs going as well with some confidence and big plays in both run and pass dimensions.

But unbeaten Monroe Area, whose high-powered attack still lived up to its billing with several clutch plays by junior quarterback Cooper Shumate, relied on its own defense to hold off the upset bid and take home a fifth victory, 21-13.

West Laurens heads into its region 3-AAAA schedule with a record of 1-3.

"I think we're getting better, and that was my whole thing this week is we've gotta improve," said Raiders head coach Kip Burdette. "We're still not making the plays we need to make to quite win the game."

But they were much closer in four of the best quarters they've put together to this point in the fall. And that started with a first that was dominant going both ways.

West Laurens ran it right down Monroe on its first few possessions, and none more



Left: Kaden Bloodsaw finds a crease on a second-quarter run that contributed to his total of close to 150 rushing yards. Right: Freshman Tre’J Germany (29) digs for the end zone as Monroe Area linebacker Jock’ese Miller misses on a diving effort to trip him up on a 7-yard jaunt to score the Raiders’ first touchdown on Friday’s opening drive/HORACE AUSTIN

confident than the first of 65 yards to ram in an early touchdown.

The Raiders went on to force punts on on four of the Hurricanes' five first-half possessions, and held them without a first down until the fourth, which did lead to a game-tying touchdown midway through the second quarter, as Bryce Bell fought his way through some defenders on a bubble screen to convert a fourth down, and Mandela Manga cut for a hole from the remaining two and a half yards to score and tie the game.

West Laurens forced one more three and out in the second half, but Monroe Area figured out enough stuff to score twice, and

nearly a third time, though a penalty made the Canes settle for a field goal try that was blocked by Tripp NeSmith, who led a surge up the middle to deflect the kick of Ethan Kinney.

It tumbled short of the crossbar to keep an eight-point margin intact for a potential game-tying drive that didn't materialize.

West Laurens kept Shumate in the pocket, and succeeded in preventing him from changing the game with his legs on 23 carries for a modest 105 yards (which was well-below an established season average of 250 coming in).

But the junior, which drew pregame comparisons to Johnny Manziel from



Burdette, showed his arm's got just as much magic in it with some clutch throws from on the run, off balance and even the seat of his pants on the desperate nine-yard touchdown connection – inches from a Devin Watkins sack – to V.J. Sandifer.

He released the football as he was on the way down, shoving it about nine yards ahead to a waiting Sandifer for the catch to deny the Raiders' valiant attempt at a red zone stop on a 72-yard drive to go ahead that had survived multiple third and fourth downs just out of halftime.

They were in a similar position, albeit with Monroe Area much further out, after giving up some big ear-

ly-down runs on a quicker drive to the same spot early in the fourth quarter.

An ineligible man penalty negated a catch at the 1 that would have set up a first and goal, and Ayden Moore sacked Shumate for a loss to set up a third and long.

But he threw another seed on the next play with a bit of a stab in the dark toward the back line of the end zone, where the ball found his top receiver Bell with a toe in bounds for the touchdown that made it 21-13.

It was one of a few outrageous plays that made you want a second look, if not to confirm that either were actually a touchdown, to find out just how he managed to pull either throw off.

A glance at the tape, for what it's worth, proved both unbelievable plays to be legit.

Shumate had some other passes that were almost as ridiculous, hitting the diving Bell on a long toss early on the second-half scoring drive and Javien Jones from under duress in a couple of other situations, among his 11 completions (out of 13 attempts) for 167 yards.

"We did an excellent job getting (Shumate) on the ground. He's a really good player, as well as (Bell)," Burdette said. "They're a top-10 team in 4A. We feel like we're capable of playing

RAIDERS
Continued on page 7

JOHNSON COUNTY 57, WILCOX COUNTY 0

Wombles wows with 335 yards through the air as unusually pass-happy Trojans take it to Patriots, continue perfect streak

By RALPH JACKSON
Correspondent

WRIGHTSVILLE – The defense dominated, and the offense demonstrated its diversity as Johnson County pounded Wilcox County 57-0 Friday night.

Chance Wombles completed 11 of 12 passes for 335 yards and three touchdowns as the Trojans improved to 4-0 heading into Region 5 play.

"I was real proud of how we came out and played," JoCo head coach Don Norton said. "I never would have expected a 57-to-nothing game. Our kids really got after it tonight. They played hard, and man, how about our defense?"

Johnson County entered the week averaging more than 350 yards per game on the ground, while throwing for just 146 yards in its first three games combined.

That changed in a hurry.

Wombles connected with Jacaden Webb for a 66-yard touchdown to open the scoring, with Grayson Jackson adding the extra point.



LEAVING IT TO CHANCE: The Trojans departed from their typical run-first approach on the offensive side to try their luck with the passing game, and their junior quarterback Chance Wombles made it pay off, firing 11 completions for 335 yards and three touchdowns/RALPH JACKSON

Wombles then scored on a five-yard run and Jackson converted again before Wombles found Jeremiah Scott for a 73-yard touch-

down. The extra-point attempt failed, leaving Johnson County with a 20-0 first-quarter lead.

"And we threw it a little bit

tonight, so that was fun," Norton said. "I think everyone played, everyone had fun. A lot of different guys touched the ball, and I was very proud that we were able to come out and open up some things, work on a few things and have a little success."

Scott and Wombles struck again in the second quarter, this time for a 68-yard touchdown. Scott later scored on a four-yard run, the defense added a safety and Kelsey Waters scored from 10 yards out as the Trojans carried a 43-0 lead into halftime.

Jackson converted all three of his second-quarter extra-point attempts.

Wombles finished with three touchdown passes of 66, 73 and 68 yards. Scott caught five passes for 178 yards and two touchdowns while adding 23 yards and another touchdown on four carries.

"My line up front – I couldn't do it without them," Wombles said. "I've got some dogs in the back I can get the ball to, and great coaches that get me in the spot."

Webb caught two passes for 93 yards and a touchdown, while Daezon Devero had three receptions for 52 yards.

Johnson County finished with 335 yards through the air and 169 on the ground for 504 yards of total offense.

Matthew McCoy said the Trojans' willingness to go to the air helped catch Wilcox off guard.

"Tonight we passed more than we ran it, and that took them by surprise," McCoy said.

While the passing game provided the big plays, the Johnson County defense provided almost nothing for Wilcox.

The Patriots were held to just 41 yards of total offense, gaining 18 yards on 23 rushing attempts. Wilcox completed three of eight passes for 23 yards and threw an interception.

"Wow, what a performance by our defense," Wombles said. "Our defense had a great night tonight. A shutout."

TROJANS
Continued on page 7

FALCONS

Continued from page 6

On the kick, it was Jaden Griffin who came all the way across the field to clear out some potential tacklers.

Floyd, on his punt return, initially froze three Tigers in his immediate vicinity as he played the ball off several bounces, but without much room on an angle for the sideline, he needed some help from both Jaxten Thomas and Cayden Stanley, who took care of potential tacklers as he made the rest miss.

"Those guys are dangerous, but others around them are doing their jobs," Hicks said. "I think our special teams is doing a heck of a job."

Contributions of the un-sung up front were just as important in only the Falcons' second triple-digit rushing effort of the season.

Big carries for JaBryan Bigham, Gary Stockton and Jeremiah Rozier originated with some great blocks.

The ultimate OT winner, out of a wildcat-style package the Falcons call "Beast," relied on the work of Bigham, Butler, JaTuan

Wright and Tawan Horne that gave Rozier the room he needed to churn out two remaining yards after Metter's first contact.

He faked to Floyd off some jet motion, and ran determinedly for a crowded lane over the right side. But the dedicated blocking held up to get him in.

Metter's attempt to answer and extend the game came to a fourth down from 10 yards out, and the Tigers had Obadiah Jones open in the back of the end zone on a fourth-down pass that would surely tie the game.

But the senior couldn't survive the landing in the orange-painted end zone after extending for the catch, and the ball bounced incomplete and into the hands of East Laurens defenders who sprinted directly back to their sideline to begin the celebration.

For Hicks, it was hard to overstate the importance of the win for the Falcons' confidence, as some confirmation they can get over the hump and win the close one, and a reward for not letting themselves get down along with the chips early in the game, whose ups and downs

have kind of mirrored the course of the season.

"It speaks to the character of our kids not having a defeatist attitude," Hicks said. "It's huge to go into somebody else's place in overtime and get a win to keep us going."

A turn in the right direction...

Despite some considerable offensive production, the Eastside attack continued to be plagued by stalled drives in the first three quarters. Metter answered the early touchdown to even the score before halftime, and then twice in the third to take a 21-7 lead to the fourth quarter.

But the Falcons changed the night's trajectory with a confident march to cut the Tigers' lead in half on their first chance of the final period, with a string of double-digit plays including a Skyler Snead scramble, a Stockton carry and a Floyd catch-and-run that led into the red zone.

There, Bigham nearly took the ball in as he shouldered his way through a tackle around the 1 to set up

a first and goal, and Floyd took a wing sweep and outran the Metter pursuit to the left side of the end zone for the TD.

His punt return, after the defense forced the Tigers to kick the ball away from deep in their own half of the field, ensured the offense wouldn't have to worry about the remaining seven points.

But with more than five minutes still to play, there was still work left to do.

The Falcons had to dig deep to keep Metter from going back in front, with a Kayleb Butler sack helping key a field goal miss from the edge of their own red zone with a minute and a half to go.

They'd also run out of time in search of a last-second shot for some game-winning points via touchdown or kick as a final possession used a 27-yard Snead dump-off to Bryson Hazley and a subsequent Floyd run into the boundary to reach the Tigers' 18.

Key plays on special teams weren't limited to those that scored touchdowns.

Logan Gibson hit three punts for an average of close

to 30, John Thang was a perfect 4-for-4 on points-after and the East Laurens punt return unit also stopped a Metter fake punt to take over the ball in plus territory early in the game.

Rozier also led a strong effort on the defensive side of the ball with 11 tackles. Thomas followed with seven.

The boost of confidence couldn't have come at a more critical time for the Falcons, who are now headed into region play with some weight off their shoulders, and a first win under their belt.

"It's almost like it's a new season," Hicks said.

They open their 2-AA schedule Friday with a hungry Swainsboro team that has maintained its place in the top 10 despite three losses in its first four games, all against ranked teams.

The caliber of league competition coming up is well-known. But with a clean slate, East is taking things a week at a time, starting with this one.

"If you look at it right now, it's a 1-0 situation," Hicks said. "It's going to be big for both teams."

RAIDERS

Continued from page 6

with those teams, but we're still learning how to win, learning how to get out of our own way a little bit."

A new look on offense...

The Raiders' run game, led by a couple of breakout ball-carriers in Kaden Bloodsaw and freshman Tre'J Germany, went under center, and all out in the first half.

The two combined for all except a double-digit gain on the shoetop reception of Jeremy Brownlee along the scoring drive, with just one negative play, that began the night with six.

Germany, carrying the football for just the second time of his career, went in standing over the left side on a cutback from seven yards away to give West Laurens the lead after only three and a half minutes.

Monroe Area's defense – having seen none of this on any clip of West Laurens film this season, or those before – would eventually adjust and mostly shut off the gushing flow of yardage between the Raiders' D1-committed tackles to just a trickle, but the trend of offensive confidence continued despite some snags that prevented any addition to the lead.

Drive 2 threatened, but ended on a play-action shot to the end zone that the Hurricanes' Jones picked off. Their pass rush forced an incompletion on a fourth down to cut short the next at about the same spot.

One other chance just before halftime also came up empty on downs, as the Canes stuffed some early-down progress and brought some more stiff pressure on third and fourth



COOPED UP: Monroe Area quarterback Cooper Shumate (2) still had 272 total yards, but was held to a season single-game low in rushing as Maxx Chafin (8, left), Nicholas Hester (10, right) and others in the Raider front seven kept him mostly contained in the pocket, and forced to make plays off-balance, which he did quite well, with his arm/HORACE AUSTIN



to get the Raiders off the field.

West's first possession of the third, after Monroe area reclaimed the lead on a 6ish-minute march to start the half, produced a needed answer quickly.

Malone had Jaden Stanley headed right where he wanted him on a wide-open cut into the center of the field, and hit him with the pass to go 48 yards for a touchdown to make it 14-13.

"It was a seam route," Stanley said. "They've always told me if it's too high, or if there's nobody across the middle, bend it. The first time we did it, we had a little miscommunication. We went back into the locker room at halftime, talked about it, they gave us the same look and we capitalized on it."

Regrettably, some trouble with the snap on the point-after kick forced a fire-drill attempt at two points for the lead, and Malone's pass was broken up at the goal line to leave the score there.

Three remaining shots to do something about the deficit, which would grow to eight, failed with turnovers



Jaden Stanley streaks to the house on his 48-yard TD reception in the third quarter/HORACE AUSTIN

via fumble and downs, and a final punt after which three Hurricane first downs would take care of the game's remaining time.

Manga led a majority of Monroe Area's defensive pressures with a tackling line of 12 total, three for loss and three hurries.

Bloodsaw finished with an unofficial 146 yards to answer the call for some much-needed rushing pro-

duction within a West Laurens running back room that, due to injuries and other things, hasn't had its full set of players available for any of the season's four games so far.

Each of them have proven that the Raiders' success this season, no matter what type of identity they settle on, will start with being able to move the football on the ground.

SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL Friday

East Laurens 28, Metter 21
Monroe Area 21, West Laurens 13
Johnson Co. 57, Wilcox Co. 0
Brentwood 42, Lake Oconee Academy 0
Dodge Co. 55, Dooly Co. 12
Taylor Co. 53, Wheeler Co. 19
Treutlen 21, Montgomery Co. 7

PREP SCHEDULE

SOFTBALL Monday

Trinity at David Emanuel /5 p.m.

Tuesday

Southeast Bulloch at West Laurens/5 p.m.
Bleckley Co. at Dublin /5:30 p.m.
ACE Charter at East Laurens /6 p.m.

Thursday

Briarwood at Trinity /4:30 p.m.
WL at Harlem/5 p.m.
EL at Dodge Co./5:30 p.m.
Dublin at Vidalia/6 p.m.

VOLLEYBALL

Tuesday

WL, Southeast Bulloch at Harlem/5 p.m.

FLAG FOOTBALL

Tuesday

EL at Fitzgerald/5:30 p.m.

Thursday

WL, Glenn Hills, ARC at Harlem/5:30 p.m.

FOOTBALL

Friday

Dublin at Bleckley Co.
Southeast Bulloch at WL
Swainsboro at EL
Trinity at Gatewood
Johnson Co. at Glascock Co.
Montgomery Co. at Atkinson Co.
Pinewood at Brentwood
Telfair Co. at Treutlen
Twiggs Co. at Wilkinson Co.
Washington Co. at Westside Augusta /7:30 p.m.

CONTACT US:

Email sports information to tchsports77@gmail.com, or call (478) 272-5522, ext. 110

sides a lot," he said. "I embraced that challenge, and take care of my body the way I'm supposed to."

West Laurens, with the toughest of its regular season schedule now likely in the rearview, moves its attention to region play as Southeast Bulloch visits for its 2-AA opener on homecoming Friday night.

"We're getting better, and we've gotta apply it to the gameplan this week, and see if we can't continue to get better and move forward," Burdette said.

TROJANS

Continued from page 7

Johnson County had done most of its work by halftime.

Jeremiah Taylor scored on a four-yard run in the third quarter, and Kris Siren added a two-yard touchdown in the fourth to complete the scoring. Jackson converted both extra points and finished the night 7-for-8 on PATs.

Johnson County spread the work around as the lead grew.

Taylor led the Trojans on the ground with 69 yards, while Zacarion Graddy added 33, Scott 23, Jammie Wadley 21 and Waters 18. Siren rushed for 11 yards and a touchdown, and Morgan Prosser added six yards.

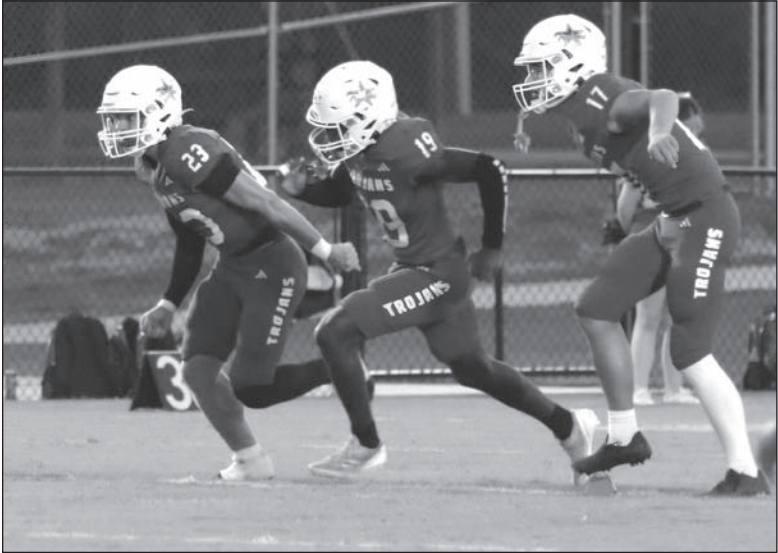
Through the air, Glen Jenkins added a 12-yard



Jeremiah Scott's torrid four-per-game touchdown pace cooled just a bit with Friday's modest total of three, two receiving and one rushing on just more than 200 all-purpose yards, though his role in another stellar offensive display was no less spectacular as JoCo put up its highest point total since 2022/RALPH JACKSON

catch to the receiving totals posted by Scott, Webb and Devero.

The performance continued Scott's impressive start



Grayson Jackson got in some frequent kicking work as the Trojans scored early and often Friday night. The sophomore was teeing it up frequently after their eight touchdowns, after which he also hit seven extra points/RALPH JACKSON

to the season. He entered Friday with 12 touchdowns through the first three

games. His three scores against Wilcox give him 15 touchdowns through four

games, along with 403 rushing yards and 247 receiving yards.

Johnson County has now scored 172 points while permitting just 33 during its 4-0 start.

"We came in ready to play, and we executed," McCoy said. "It's related to our practice and how much we work at practice, and how much we're going to keep on doing it to take it as far as we can go."

The Trojans now turn their attention to Glascock County and their first Region 5 game of the season.

"I think we have a chance to go pretty far," McCoy said. "If we keep on practicing like we play and play like we practice, we can end up making it all the way."

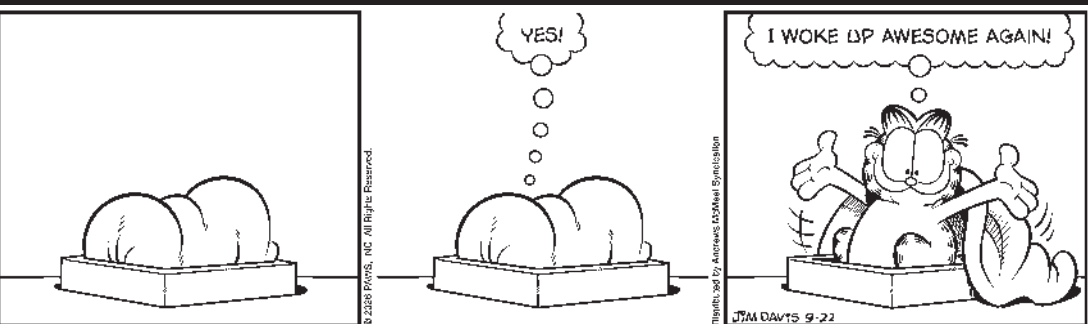
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

BY STEPHAN PASTIS



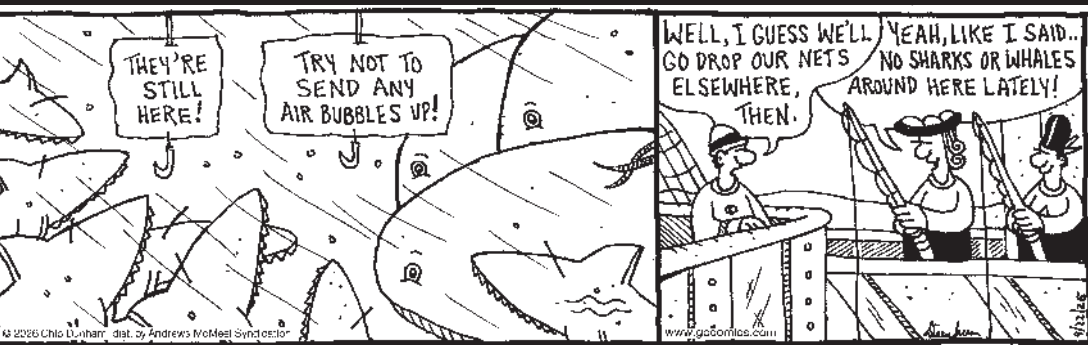
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS



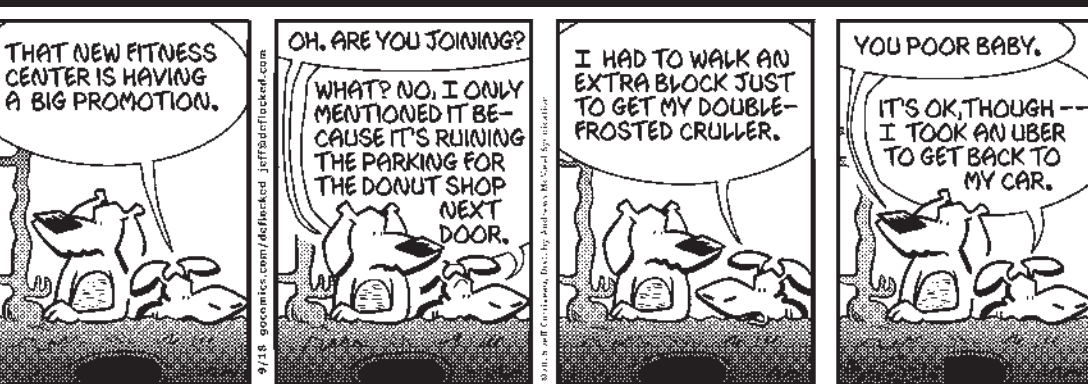
OVERBOARD

BY CHIP DUNHAM



DEFLOCKED

BY JEFF CORRIVEAU



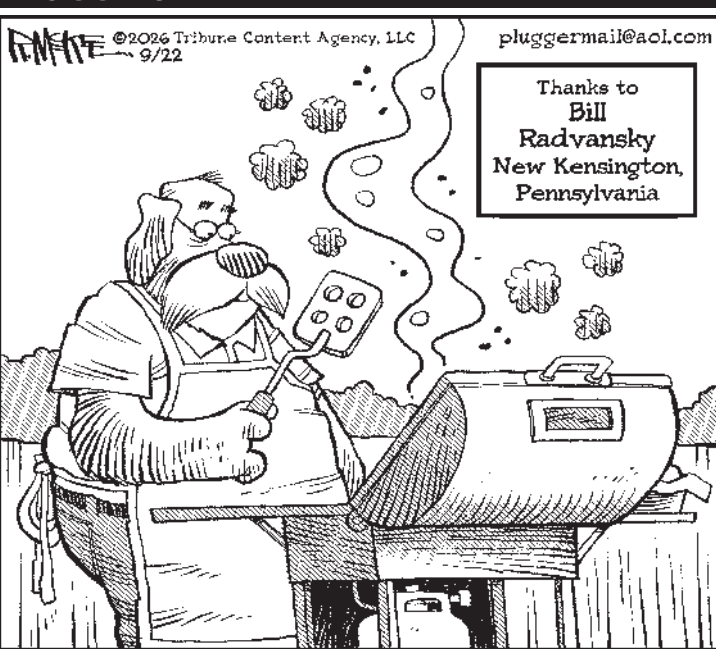
ZIGGY

BY TOM WILSON



PLUGGERS

BY JEFF MACNELLY

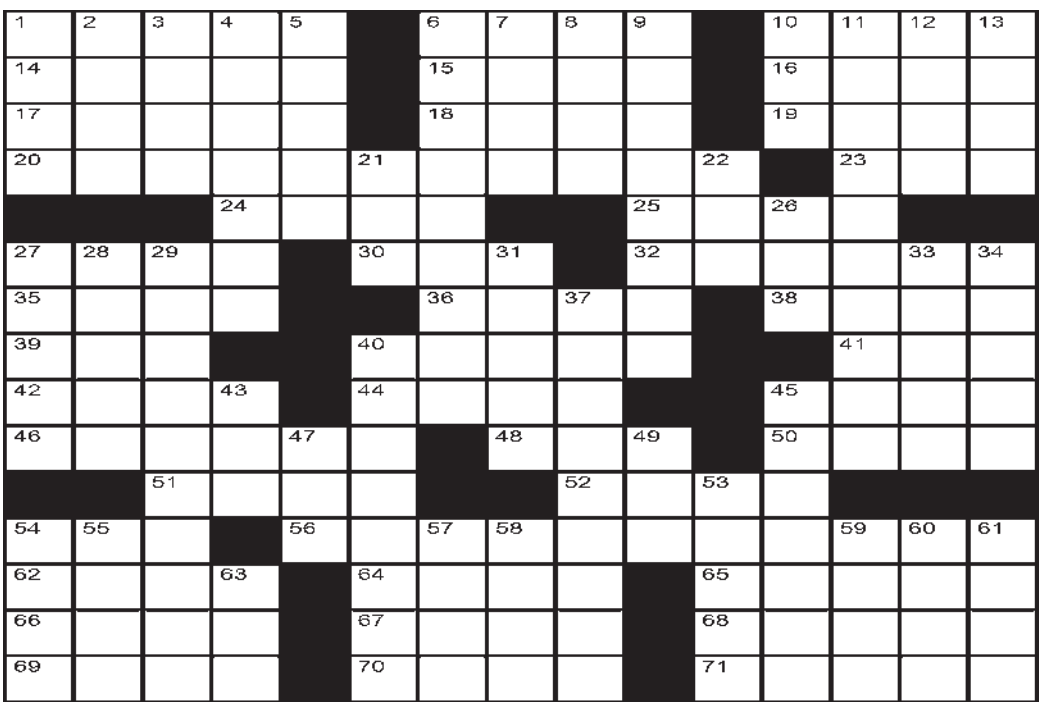


Pluggers like to cook outside to avoid the smoke detectors.

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS**
- Change in mindset
 - The majority (of)
 - Sour substance
 - Bar mitzvah reading
 - Egyptian emblem of life
 - Sneaker, for example
 - Come up
 - Mideastern ruler
 - Despise
 - July 14 celebration in France: 2 wds.
 - Doze
 - Taylor Swift's ____ Tour
 - Uttered
 - Meal starters
 - "Swim" boy band
 - Goes deep, in baseball
 - Mattress support
 - Teased mercilessly
 - Garden area
 - Author Fleming
 - Blunt-nosed rodents
 - Wedding promise: 2 wds.
 - Have a meal
 - Give off
 - Retain
 - Inflame with love
 - Morning moisture
 - Greek love god
 - Actor ____ Gooding Jr.
 - Complain loudly
 - Bovine noise
 - Crossed
 - Liberal-____ college
 - Plunge
 - Huge sea creature
 - Way to walk
 - Word of approval
 - Oklahoma city
 - Kill, as a dragon
 - Shipped
 - Rate of motion

- DOWN**
- Pierce with a toothpick



Created by Stella Zawistowski

- Israeli circle dance
- Showy spring flower
- Like the winner of a race
- Those people's
- Powerful whirlpool
- "My treat": 2 wds.
- Lose traction
- Flails wildly
- Type of hardwood
- Ceiling light fixture
- Tiny amount
- "It's not that ____!"
- Science facility
- Ming of basketball
- Mischievous kid
- "All kidding ____"
- Undecorated
- Jiggly italian dessert: 2 wds.
- Reliable
- Contest with roping
- Ceases
- Discouraging factor



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- Wrap-around porches
- Australian bird
- Hot-dog topping
- Japanese sash
- Used to be
- Small salamanders
- Atlas parts

Mom's passing triggers reevaluation of friendships



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: My mom died of extreme old age recently. She was a sweet woman everyone loved. I sent invitations to her memorial, and I'm getting a lot of excuses for why my friends can't attend. I am upset.

In my circle of friends (all similar ages), I was the last to graduate, get a career job, start a relationship, buy a house, be married and so forth. I've attended my friends' graduations, weddings, baby showers, milestone birthdays, and family funerals, yet there hasn't been much reciprocation.

Excuses for not attending Mom's memorial included going to a grandkid's soccer game and attending a 2-year-old's birthday party. Really? I know I'm dealing with unusually strong emotions due to Mom's death, but I want to scream, "This is MY MOM," not some distant friend or relative. My spouse says I shouldn't stress and that all we need is each other (said by someone who has a huge, loving family whereas my family is just me and my dad). How do I deal with my feelings of resentment, abandonment and being a low priority? -- LAST ONE IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR LAST ONE: Your spouse is right. In the final analysis, all you need is each other -- though a few

can no longer stand to be in the kitchen because the smells linger. They also live on a very different schedule from me. As a result, my diet and sleep are both suffering. They remain unaware of how the adjustment has affected me because I don't feel they are doing anything wrong.

I would like to move out into a studio of my own. The lease on this apartment is currently a month-to-month, so the only thing keeping me here is the guilt I feel about burdening my roommates with this. They will have to move out, find a replacement for me or take on the full rent themselves. I want to do right by them, but I know it would be best for me to leave. What is the proper course of action here? -- DOOMED IN AUSTRALIA

DEAR DOOMED: There is no reason why you should feel guilty for leveling with this couple; your health must come first. Explain the problem to them and tell them that while you like them personally, your health is being affected by the cooking odors. Tell them that because you are now on a month-to-month lease, you plan to move to a smaller place of your own and give them the option of staying or moving. Consider this a first step in learning to stand up for yourself.

Monday, September 21, 2026

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES
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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ ANSWERS

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

♠ J 10 5 2 ♥ Q ♦ Q K J 10 6 5 ♣ A Q 3

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
10 Pass 1♠ Pass

What call would you make?

A - 2S or 3S? Adding value in the heart suit for both the queen and the singleton would overvalue this hand. Bid 2S.

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

♠ J 6 5 ♥ A Q J 8 3 2 ♦ 2 ♣ A Q J

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
1♠ Pass Pass 2

What call would you make?

A - In the "pass-out" seat, as here, a jump overall shows an intermediate hand — 14-16 points with a good six-card suit. This hand is perfect. Bid 3H.

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

♠ A K 5 4 ♥ 5 4 ♦ K J ♣ A 9 5 4 2

As dealer, what call would you make?

A - Some hands with 5-4-2-2 distribution should open 1NT to avoid rebid problems. This hand has an easy rebid of 1S over a red-suit response. Open 1C.

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

♠ Q 7 ♥ K 10 9 ♦ Q 10 7 6 3 ♣ A Q 6

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
10 INT 1♠ 2NT Pass

What call would you make?

A - A close decision, but the excellent intermediate cards in the red suits and the queen in partner's suit call for aggression. Bid 3NT.

Q 5 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A 7 ♥ K J 5 4 ♦ A K J 6 5 ♠ 10 3

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
10 Pass 30♣ Pass

*5-7 points, usually 5-plus card support

What call would you make?

A - There may be a perfect hand for partner that would make game a reasonable proposition, but that is against the odds and looking for it will get us too high. Pass.

Q 6 - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A K Q 9 4 ♥ 8 6 4 ♦ A Q J ♣ 4 2

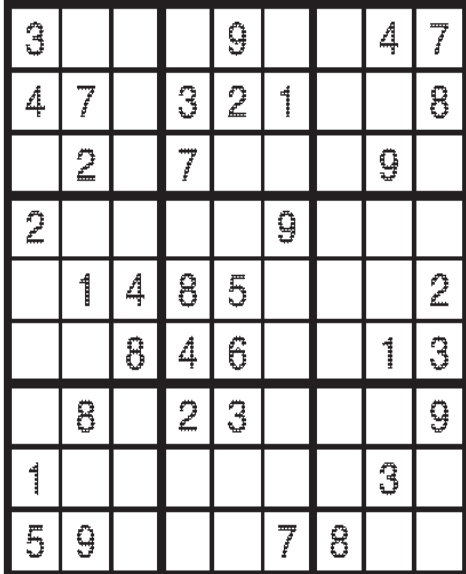
NORTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♠ Pass 1♠ Pass

What call would you make?

A - Partner's rebid has taken slam out of the picture. Give him a chance to show three-card spade support before settling for 3NT. Bid 2D.

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

SUDOKU



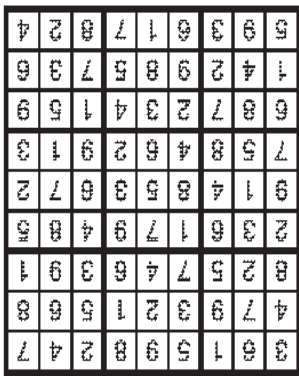
Fun By The Numbers

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:

SCHOOL BOARD
Continued from page 1

6:30 p.m. to vote.

“Now that our millage rate is approved, we’ll send our information to the county commissioners,” McCollough said. “They will compile the millage rate for the county.”

According to McCollough’s slide presentation, the gross digest for 2026 was \$1.6 billion, minus exemptions of \$290 million, for a net digest of \$1.3 billion, which means one mill of taxes was worth \$1,323,854.402.

“The proposed tax increase we would receive this year is \$582,754,” McCollough said during an earlier presentation. “If we were to roll all the way back to the rollback rate, we would have received about \$74,000. So, what we’re asking for is an increase of about \$508,000. That is a 3.25 percent increase over last year.”

The county charges 2.5 percent on all of the collections for processing the millage rate. The county school board’s fee for 2026 is estimated to be around \$463,349. This will be deducted before the

school board receives their money from the county.

The proposed tax increase for a home with a fair market value of \$200,000 is approximately \$30.72. That’s a little more than a \$2.56 per month increase to an escrow account.

If the board rolled back to 13.616, there would have been a zero net increase in terms of taxes, given the evaluation of the properties or new properties in the county, said LCBOE chairman Tony Johnson. The county school system would have collected \$74,000

more in property tax than they did last year, McCollough said.

Laurens County Superintendent O.J. Hall added that had they rolled it back, and the school system only received \$74,000, that would not have been enough for the county to keep up with inflation.

“We would have run into a situation where we would have to raise (the millage rate) if we went with a net gain of zero,” he said in a previous meeting.

The median sale price in Laurens County increased from

\$130,000 in 2020 to \$237,000 in 2026. The median listing price per square foot has increased from \$82 in 2020 to \$136 in 2026.

As to what the school system is going to do with the funds, McCollough said the following have gone up since 2020: insurance (by 111 percent), sheriff resource officer contract (135 percent), fuel (77 percent), maintenance supplies (59 percent) and electricity (37 percent).

The board also approved the purchase of two 2026 used Bluebird buses at \$137,500 each.

CITY COUNCIL
Continued from page 1

call for that election,” Powell said. “This additional sales tax will relieve property taxes. Based on the distribution that has been agreed between all of the governmental entities, the city is looking like if revenues from this additional sales tax hold true to what they have been historically, we will be able to issue zero dollars in the tax bill. And Laurens County would be a significantly reduced tax bill, at least half if not more than half of what the current bill would be.”

If approved, FLOST would take effect in January and would impact 2027 tax bills.

“This makes a lot of sense to do this because Laurens County and Dublin is a hub for a lot of commerce,” Powell said. “A lot of people come to visit here. Everyone coming here or stopping here, spend money, and that penny sales taxes is going to go directly to relieve the property taxes for our property owners. It’s a great way to use the commerce that we are able to achieve here in Laurens County.”

Right encouraged citizens to look into the FLOST.

In other meeting news, the city council:

- Approved the purchase of a 2027 dump truck from Freightliner of Savannah for more than \$168,000 for the street division of the city’s public works department. The current truck has mechanical issues and needed to be replaced.
- Approved an amendment to the zoning code that raises the height



Dublin City Manager Josh Powell discusses the upcoming referendum on the FLOST, a proposed sales tax to offset property taxes/PAYTON TOWNS III

limit on hotel construction to 75 feet from 35 feet. This is only for the hotels near an I-16 interchange corridor.

“Staff and the Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals recommended these adjustments,” Powell said. “This will allow them to be about six or seven stories high.”

- Heard the first reading on rezoning two properties next to each other for professional offices, near Fairview Park Hospital on Industrial Boulevard. The current zoning is for a governmental entity, Powell said. The second reading of these ordinances will be held during the next city council meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 1.
- Approved an agreement with Beard Equipment for leasing 10 pieces of equipment at Riverview Golf Course.
- Approved a contract with Orion Planning Group for the uniform development ordinance project.

“This is the first time our zoning codes would have been looked at thoroughly,” Powell said. “Orion has the best staff to work with our community. This process will involve input from not only the mayor and council but the Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historic Review Board, other local governmental entities, as well as the public.”

All of the firms the city talked with said this is much needed for the city of Dublin.

“We will do outreach by hosting events and holding information on our website,” Powell said. “This will be a highly visual process.”

VA awards \$43 million in grants to fight veteran homelessness in Georgia

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

The Department of Veterans Affairs today awarded \$43,277,657 in grants to 21 community organizations to help Veterans in FY 2027 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in Georgia.

This funding is part of a record-high \$1.17 billion in grants awarded to 680 organizations across the country to fight Veteran homelessness. The grants follow VA’s success in housing 51,936 homeless Veterans in Fiscal Year 2025, the highest number in seven years.

Resource and supportive services grants will be distributed through the agency’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program to:

- Prevent the imminent loss of a home.
- Identify new, more suitable housing situations for Veterans and families.
- Rapidly re-house Veterans and their families who are homeless and might remain homeless without assistance.

Funds for transitional housing and intensive supportive services will be distributed through the agency’s Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program to:

- Fund transitional housing with supportive services or service centers.
- Support transition-in-place housing, where Veterans remain in their current housing unit while receiving services to help them move toward permanent, stable housing.
- Provide special housing designed to better serve women Veterans and those who are chronically mentally ill, frail or elderly.

“VA medical centers across Georgia remain committed to ensuring Veterans have access to safe, stable housing and the supportive services they need to thrive,” said Chandra Miller, director of Carl Vinson VA Medical Center in Dublin. “These grants strengthen our partnerships with community organizations and help us reach Veterans where they are, providing resources that make a meaningful difference in their lives.”

Important safety information from Atlanta Gas Light

Safety, you play a part!

Underground pipelines safely transport natural gas to homes and businesses throughout the country. Atlanta Gas Light operates, secures and maintains the pipelines in our service territories. We adhere to state and federal pipeline safety regulations, perform extensive quality control checks, educate the public on how to recognize and prevent natural gas leaks, and work closely with officials to develop emergency response plans.

You can help prevent natural gas pipeline incidents!

Excavation work, including digging or plowing around a home or business, is the most common cause of natural gas emergencies. Before digging, state law requires you contact **811** to have your utility lines professionally marked for free. After calling, you must wait the required amount of time before digging, so that underground utility lines can be located and marked.



Pipeline security depends on all of us

If you see any of the following related to pipeline facilities, please call **877.427.4321**.

- Holes in fences or open gates
- Suspicious or illegally parked vehicles on property
- Persons on or near property taking pictures
- Drones above company properties
- Unattended bags or packages
- Suspicious equipment left in open areas or hidden, such as placed in buckets or cans

See something, say something.

Pipeline markers and right of way

A pipeline right of way is a defined piece of land where pipelines are installed above or below ground. They can be identified by a wide, cleared strip of land with pipeline markers. If a pipeline right of way is adjacent to your property, you have a responsibility to ensure no new installations or physical structures are placed in the right of way. These encroachments interfere with our ability to monitor and maintain safe pipelines, as required by federal and state safety regulations. If you have a question about activity which might affect the pipeline right of way, please contact Atlanta Gas Light at **877.427.4321**.

Pipeline markers, like the one pictured, indicate the general area of the pipeline, but not its exact location or depth. A pipeline may not always be marked in all areas, so it is important to always “Call Before You Dig.” If you think there is a pipeline emergency, call us at **877.427.4321**.

Information about transmission pipelines operating in your community can be accessed online at <https://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov>, courtesy of the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS).

Pipeline integrity management is a process for assessing and mitigating pipeline risks to reduce the likelihood and consequences of incidents.

Our comprehensive plan that fully addresses these processes, especially for locations deemed high-consequence areas, is available at atlantagaslight.com/integritymanagementplan.



Stay alert and stay safe!

Natural gas pipeline incidents are uncommon, and you can help prevent them, even if you are not an Atlanta Gas Light customer. Below are tips to identify and respond to a possible natural gas leak.

LOOK for blowing dirt, discolored vegetation or continued bubbling in standing water.

LISTEN for hissing or roaring near a natural gas appliance or line.

SMELL for the distinctive, rotten-egg odor associated with natural gas. Natural gas is colorless and odorless, so we add a chemical odorant called mercaptan for easy detection. If you detect even a small amount of this odor, act immediately.

Note: “Odorant fade,” while uncommon, occurs when a physical or chemical process reduces the level of odorant. This can happen in both existing natural gas pipelines and new installations. Additionally, some individuals may not be able to detect the odorant because they have a diminished sense of smell or because the scent is being masked by other odors in the area. The odorant might also diminish so that it is not detectable. Some gas lines, due to their unique function, may not have odor at all.

If you detect even a small amount of this odor in the air:

Do not try to identify the source or to stop the leak yourself.

Leave the area immediately, and move a safe distance away,

Avoid using any sources of ignition, such as cellphones, cigarettes, matches, flashlights, electronic devices, motorized vehicles, light switches or landlines, as natural gas can ignite from a spark or open flame, possibly causing a fire or explosion. While natural gas is non-toxic, in confined spaces it can displace oxygen, potentially leading to asphyxiation.

Call us at 877.427.4321 or 911 once you are safely away from the leak area.

For more information, visit atlantagaslight.com/safety or call **800.427.5463**.

Para solicitar una copia de esta información en español, llame al **800.427.5463** o visite atlantagaslight.com/safetyspanish



Online Survey

Please take a moment to complete a survey about natural gas safety by scanning the QR code or visiting surveymonkey.com/r/P67VMXZ to help us make sure we are keeping our communities safe.

Emergency/Leak line: 877.427.4321



KIDS' CORNER

Brought to you by



Dublin-Laurens County
CHAMBER
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Vol. 029 | Follow Herald the Hound every Tuesday on Kids' Corner from The Courier Herald



CLASS OF THE WEEK:

Mrs. Lawrence's class at Hillcrest

The students in Mrs. Leigh Anne Lawrence's class at Hillcrest Elementary are learning how to express their opinions and they got a lot of practice in when Herald the Hound stopped by for a visit. After hearing a story, the students took turns naming their own favorite books and why they chose them.

Puzzles4Kids

by Helene Hovanec

WORD FUN

Study the two words on each line to find the ONE letter in the left column that is NOT in the word in the right column. Write the extra letter on the blank space. Then read DOWN to answer this riddle:

WHY DID THE STUDENT SIT ON THE CLOCK?

ITSELF	___	FILES	DROOLS	___	LORDS
DRAGON	___	GRAND	ANTLER	___	ALERT
ROBBED	___	BORED	BITTER	___	TRIBE
DARKEN	___	DRANK	AISLES	___	SALES
			MOWERS	___	WORSE
			SIMPLE	___	LIMPS

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Fun Fact

Each American consumes an average of roughly 110-140 pounds of fruit in one year. The amounts of some top favorites include 26.8 pounds of bananas, 17 pounds of apples, 10 pounds of oranges and 8 pounds of grapes.

Sources: [statista.com](https://www.statista.com), [ers.usda.gov](https://www.ers.usda.gov)

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Americanisms



"People who enjoy meetings should not be in charge of anything."
— Thomas Sowell

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MINI SUDOKU

2	1		4	6
			2	
1	5			
	4		1	
5				4

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 6-box square contains all of the numbers from one to six.

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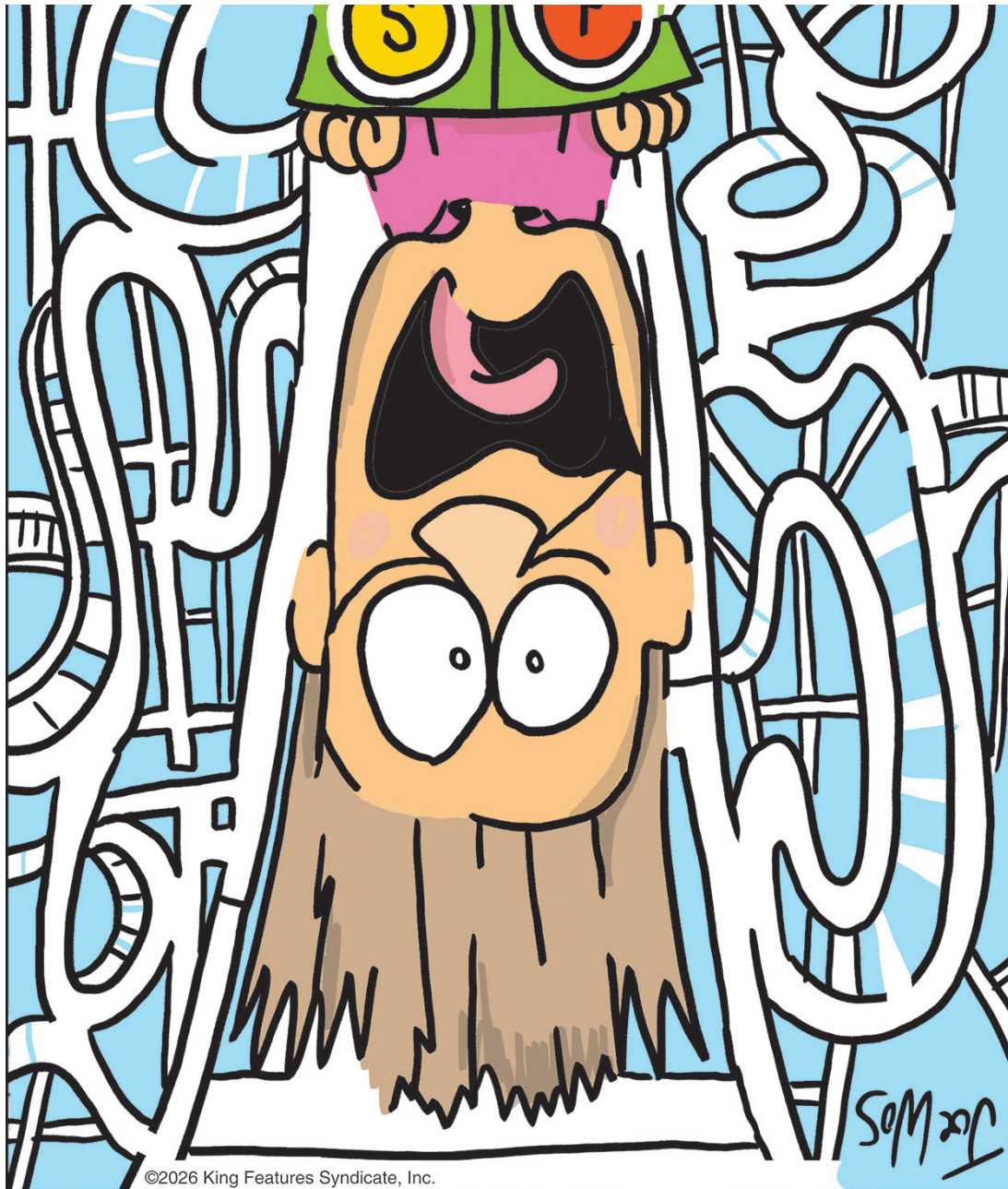
ANSWER KEYS

MINI SUDOKU ANSWERS	6	1	2	5	3	4
	4	2	3	1	5	6
	1	3	5	4	6	1
	2	1	3	5	4	6
	5	2	1	3	5	4
	6	4	3	1	5	2

Puzzles4Kids Answer	FILES	GRAND	BORED	DRANK	LORDS	ALERT	TRIBE	SALES	WORSE	LIMPS
	T	O	B	E	O	N	T	I	M	E
	ITSELF	DRAGON	ROBBED	DARKEN	DROOLS	ANTLER	BITTER	AISLES	MOWERS	SIMPLE

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Teachers, do you want us to visit your classroom? Students, do you have artwork, poems or stories you want to submit for possible publication? Email us at read@courierheraldtoday.com.



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