

New manager expands fall programs at Tessie W. Norris Library

By CAROLINE WEATHERSBY
Staff Reporter

Tara Morris started her new role as branch manager at Tessie W. Norris Library in Cochran on Aug. 1./Caroline Weathersby

Tessie W. Norris Library in Cochran welcomed new leadership last month with the introduction of new branch manager, Tara Morris. In the past month, Morris has expanded programs at the library in her mission to make it “a place for everyone.”

Since Aug. 1, the library has held 14 new community events with around 200 total attendees.

Some of the new programs include weekly Mahjong and Canasta clubs meetings, with more sporadic

ic meetings for clubs like the Knit & Crochet Club and Dungeons & Dragons.

Previously, the only regular program held at the library was a book reading by the Retired Teachers Association, where every third Wednesday of the month between September and May, they gather to read a book to the community. Now, the program is one of many.

“We’re looking for something for everybody, every audience and every walk of life,” she said.

Other programs held in the last month included Lego Club, Craft & Create and Puzzles.

According to Morris, the reception in just the first month has been overwhelmingly positive.

In the past several weeks, multiple organizations and community members donated items to the library to continue the programs.

Farmers Home Furniture donated a loveseat, a chair and an ottoman, and the Chamber of Commerce donated over a dozen chairs. One resident donated a table and another an entire Mahjong set.

“I’m very impressed with Cochran and how much they’re supporting all of the programs and the team, making me feel welcome,” she said. “The programs and all the new ideas that we have, they’re just working, and it’s so great.”

Though Mahjong appears to be



Tara Morris started her new role as branch manager at Tessie W. Norris Library in Cochran on Aug. 1./CAROLINE WEATHERSBY

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Cochran convenience store re-opens after remodeling

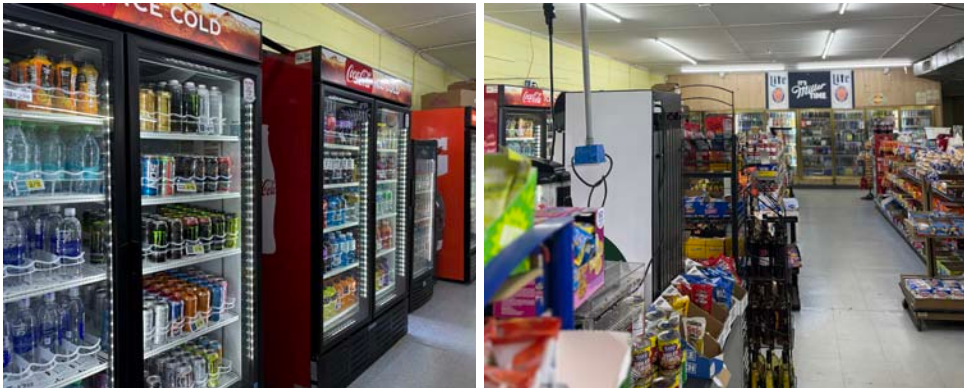
By CAROLINE WEATHERSBY
Staff Reporter

Cary Convenience Store in Cochran has reopened after being closed for remodeling. New additions to the store include updated gas pumps, lotto machines, food refrigeration and a new security system, complete with state of the art cameras.

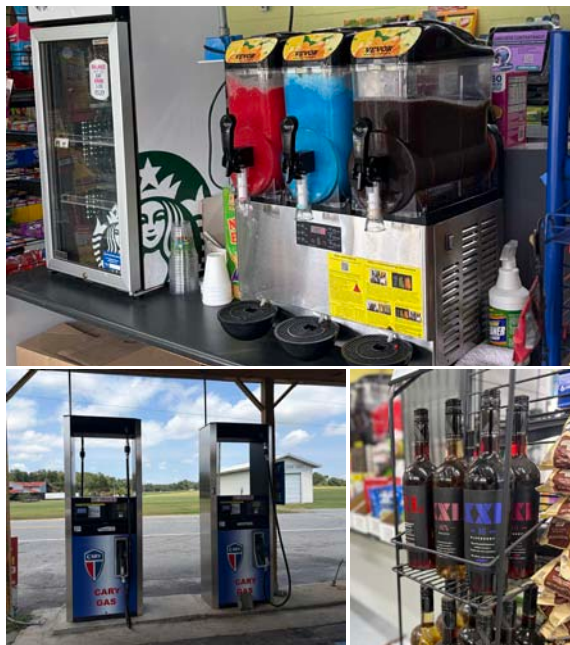
Perhaps the most convenient remodel for patrons is the addition of 24-hour gas pumps.

Previously, like many other gas stations in the tri-county area, gas pumps were cut off after business hours ended, leaving motorists who pass through the area late at night in a bind.

Gas stations closest to Cary Convenience that also offer the 24-hour service are each 11 miles away, or about a 15 minute drive. The road in between is rural and dark late at night, posing a danger for drivers running low on fuel.



CONVENIENCE STORE
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Sen. Walker seeks more info about Flock cameras

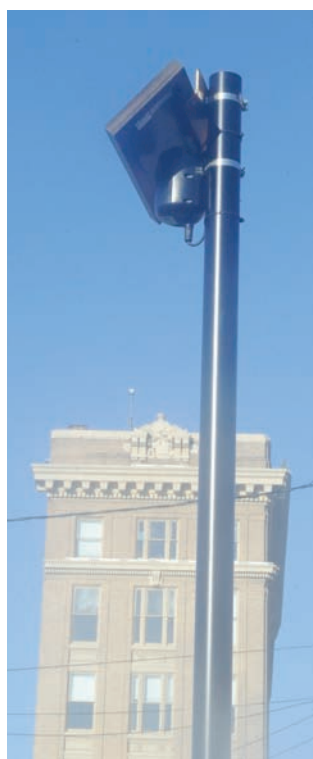
By PAYTON TOWNS III
Georgia Trust For Local News

State Sen. Larry Walker is concerned about the number of law enforcement officers who have gotten in trouble and fired for their abuse of Flock traffic cameras.

Walker, who represents Laurens County in Senate District 20 and serves as the body's president pro tempore, expressed his concerns in a letter to the Georgia Association of Police Director A.A. “Butch” Ayers and J. Terry Norris, who serves as the executive director of the Georgia Sheriff's Association.

The senator is currently in what he calls an information-gathering mode as he prepares for next January. He is confident there will be some legislation introduced about this.

“I want to have the facts,” Walker said. “Because of all of the furor about it, I wanted to get up to speed on it. We continue to hear about the misuse of automatic license plate readers. Agencies do an audit and finding out that some are abusing the information or they are not using it lawfully or properly. I’m just trying to understand who authorizes the use (of Flock cameras) and who has access to the data.”



A Flock traffic camera stationed on the sidewalk in Downtown Dublin /RODNEY MANLEY

TRAFFIC CAMERAS
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Periodical — Mail Label

ACA premium prices insuring 900K Georgians to shoot up - again

GEORGIA RECORDER

The Affordable Care Act health insurance program that covers 900,000 Georgians is on track to see price hikes of as much as 20% or more when open enrollment begins this fall for 2027 coverage. That's according to state data obtained by the Georgia Recorder for the ACA exchange run by the state and called Georgia Access.

Next year's inflation is on top of massive price increases that already occurred for 2026 coverage after Congress and President Donald Trump allowed pandemic-era extra ACA subsidies to expire.

The insurance companies' proposed price increases on the Georgia marketplace are not final. First, the numbers might still change because they are from the mid-summer negotiation point, said Bryce Rawson, a spokesman for the Georgia Office

of the Commissioner of Insurance. Prices are finalized before open enrollment begins Nov. 1.

In addition, the premium price changes that consumers see when they go to sign up at open enrollment will also be affected by how federal and state subsidies are calculated.

But the news is a signal and a blow to customers, as well as to the hospitals who wonder if this means more are going to walk in uninsured next year in need of free care. A lobbyist for hospitals in Georgia, Monty Veazey, said that the massive price increase that already took effect this year threw so many people off the ACA exchange that Georgia hospitals lost \$441 million, based on his calculations of the average value per insured person.

Carry Smith, an ACA customer in coastal Georgia, was terse when told about the coming price increases. Smith juggles multiple part-time

jobs and has depended on her ACA plan to keep a life-threatening infection at bay.

Smith's premium insurance skyrocketed seven-fold earlier this year, and she managed because she had just paid off her car. She couldn't say exactly how she plans to pay her premium if it increases yet again. Hearing the possible numbers, Smith said, simply, “Wow.”

Nora Pullen, a self-employed life and wellness coach and math and testing tutor in Fayette County, already dropped her ACA coverage this year after prices skyrocketed. She had little hope that prices would come back within reach this year but this seals it.

“I honestly don't think this is sustainable for people,” Pullen said, when told about the planned increases.

Pullen is a Democratic activist but the decisions are being felt across the political spectrum.

However, the decisions to drop coverage are weighted in one camp: those who are healthy, like Pullen. Those who are in immediate need of care, like Smith, are more likely to stay. And that becomes a corporate Catch-22 where it's even more expensive for insurance companies to keep providing coverage, causing them to raise prices yet again.

“It is not a good indication of where the market's going, to see two years of extremely steep increases like this,” said Cynthia Cox, senior vice president and director of the Program on the ACA at the health research nonprofit KFF.

“What we're seeing is that insurers are saying that they're kind of expecting the market to continue shrinking. In other words, more people becoming uninsured, likely because it would be the healthier people who leave the market, and

ACA PROGRAM
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the community favorite, Morris says her favorite activity so far has been Canasta.

Even with over a dozen programs throughout the month, Morris called August only the “soft launch,” saying even more programs are planned ahead.

In addition to the other programs set up in August, September will see the beginning of a sensory play program for toddlers (Sept. 8) and a homeschool hangout for homeschooled children (Sept. 1).

Morris says she has other ideas she wants to suggest to the board when they meet again in October, but for now, she needs to prove the community has an vested interest in these programs.

“I’m working without a budget and trying to start all these programs and show that there is a need for our community to enrich it,” she said.

According to her, library leadership are still searching for other ways to benefit the community through their programs, promising to adjust them as they go to meet public interest.

“What I want people to feel like when they walk in here is like ‘Have you been to the Bleckley County library?!’ That’s what I’m hoping for, and that’s what we’re working towards,” she said.

One area Morris says she especially wants the library to improve in is making the space feel more inviting for teen readers.

“The library isn’t appealing to most teenagers. Not by anybody’s fault, but teenagers are looking to find themselves,” she described. “I want them to know that this is a place they can come hang out, read, work on school work, socialize. I want them to feel like they belong here too.”

One program that has been popular with young people is the newly formed Dungeons & Dragons Club.

Morris now resides in Dodge County, but she only recently moved to Middle Georgia earlier this summer to be near family. An Orlando native, Morris said it was hard finding ways for herself and her four children to meet new people.

“I grew up in the country on the outskirts of Orlando, so it’s all developed now... I want[ed] my kids to experience the same things I lived through,” she explained. “When we moved here, we moved up here blind. We didn’t know what we were going to get up into. In Eastman, there aren’t any parks or things to do during the summer for them [her kids] to meet people.”

She began researching ways her kids could make new friends in the area, and that’s when she

made the decision to post to an online bulletin based in Dodge County asking others for suggestions.

“Everyone was like, ‘the library, the library, the library,’” she said. “We ended up going to some of their programs and ended up going there like all the time.”

Morris said the library appealed to her because it fulfilled the separate needs for each of her family members.

“My family specifically all had different needs when we walked through the door,” she explained.

Morris, who’s currently in the process of selling her home in Florida, said she herself had a need for printing legal documents necessary in selling her home. Her toddler, on the other hand, had a need for a space where he could play with his toys and pick out picture books. Her tweens, had a need for free comic books and making new friends before the

school year started.

“It’s something for everybody. I want something for everybody and that includes my kids,” she said.

Around the time she began visiting the library in Dodge County, she met Kim Spencer, who serves both as branch manager at the Dodge County Library and as district manager of the Ocmulgee Regional Library System. After meeting Spencer, she offered her a job.

Weeks later, Morris walked into Tessie W. Norris Library the new branch manager.

Only one month into the job, Morris says her goal right now is to just bring people in, one at a time.

“I just want everyone to come and experience at least one program,” she said. “Just give them a chance. We’re going to have something for everybody.”

TRAFFIC CAMERAS
 Continued from page 1

Among the questions he submitted, Walker wants to know is the data owned by the private entity or the law enforcement agency, how long is the data retained and is it being deleted after a certain period of time?

He has heard from an amount of constituents and members in law enforcement about this issue.

“They all have concerns,” he said. “I think we need to put some guardrails around it and make sure it is being used in a lawful manner and there is accountability if somebody is abusing it and have an appropriate punishment.”

He believes there needs to be some transparency when Flocks cameras are installed. Walker thinks local municipality should pass a local act so there is some public input and transparency.

Walker said Flock cameras are too valuable.

“They have saved lives and restored children to their families,” he said. “They have been a great crime deterrent and crime-solving tool. I just think we need some guardrails.”

In the letter, he points out that the cameras have helped find stolen vehicles, support investigations and protect communities.

“We also value recent initiatives by law enforcement agencies to self-regulate and improve internal practices in regard to the use of these systems,” Walker wrote. “At the same time, recent allegations of improper use - resulting in stalking, misidentification and unjustified arrests – have understandably heightened privacy and accountability concerns for our constituents. In light of this, I believe we must begin a cooperative, transparent conversation so state policymakers and law enforcement agencies can work together to preserve effective public-safety tool while addressing legitimate public concerns.”

Walker would like to hear from Ayers and Norris about their top concerns about deploying this type of technology in the communities.

CONVENIENCE STORE
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The Exxon on GA 26 and the Circle K on N 2nd Street are both located in downtown Cochran, near the southern border of Bleckley County towards Pulaski County. Cary Convenience, on the other hand, is on the other side of the county in North Bleckley, closer to Twiggs County.

Despite not being open 24 hours a day, gas pumps will be available for patrons

throughout all hours of the night.

The store itself will be open every day from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., a change from the previous hours of operation. Cary Convenience will no longer be open until 10:30 on weekends.

A ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly remodeled shop was held on Aug. 19 with the Cochran-Bleckley Chamber of Commerce.

Owner Yousaf Mumiaz said his favor-

ite part of the renovations are the new gas pumps. According to him, customers have shared concerns with him in the past, saying it was harder for them to tell how much gas they were pumping compared to other stations in Cochran with modern pumps.

Mumiaz said he hopes the installation of the new, modern pumps will help customers understand what’s going in their car, and alleviate any anxieties they may have about being cheated on gas prices.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Mike Collins voted to double health insurance premiums for more than a million Georgians while he gave the wealthiest Americans another tax break." As a reward we don't need to promote him to the Senate.

John Ricks,
Cochran, Ga.

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Flock safety and surveillance in the state of Georgia

I love science fiction – novels, television, movies – you name it. The capacity of technology to shape and improve our lives fascinates me, as does the counternarrative. For example, imagine that every trip you take in your car – to church, a political meeting, a protest or a doctor’s appointment – leaves behind a record in a searchable database. Electronic eyes following you in secret, tracking your behavior, feeding a profile of you to unseen, unnamed observers. These watchers did not ask for your consent to being tracked. Worse, this record of your daily activities can last indefinitely - without you knowing how long the information will be stored, who can search it or how far it can travel.

Yet, what I described here is not from Star Trek or an Ursula K. Le Guin novel. It is the reality created by the rapid expansion of automatic license plate readers, including technology developed by Flock Safety, a company founded here in Georgia. And it’s coming to a telephone pole near you.

Flock uses automatic license plate readers (ALPRs) to collect data including license plate numbers, the make and model of a car, the location of scratches on a car, and even the bumper stickers a car may have. Not to mention a timestamp, the coordinates, and the direction a car is traveling. The ACLU estimates that the organization has installed upwards of 120,000 cameras all across the country, with around 8,000 ALPRs being located in Georgia alone according to DeFlock The USA’s camera map. As of 2025, Flock claims to produce more than 20 billion license plate scans each month.

As a state legislator, I supported traffic cameras to regulate speeding and to track reckless drivers in school zones. I firmly believe surveillance technology can serve a legitimate public purpose. Law enforcement agencies have used license plate readers to locate stolen vehicles, identify dangerous suspects and solve serious crimes. In one Georgia case, camera imagery helped authorities track a pickup truck and arrest four people accused of killing an 18-year-old in Hiram. Technology is neither good nor bad - it is a tool. Our questions have to center on who uses it, how and why.

ALPR technology’s power and utility are not the issue. But useful technology does not absolve government of its obligation to establish clear rules. Indeed, the more powerful the tool, the greater our responsibility to regulate its use. License plate readers already exist, but their growth has outpaced the safeguards necessary to protect the public. We cannot become subservient to our leaders by ignoring how they deploy technology. Loss of civic power happens gradually, one freedom conceded, one invasion of privacy accepted.

We live in the south, so we drive. It’s a fact of life. Most drivers do what’s right (except for slow drivers in the left lane), so by and large, the vehicles captured by these systems are not connected to criminal activity. What that means is much of the Big Brother tracking focuses on ordinary people going about their daily lives. Yet their movements can still become part of a database accessible to law enforcement agencies. Potentially to data bro-



kers who want to track your habits. Or sales people who want to flood your inbox or track your kids. Again, far-fetched, but who would have imagined stories of AI hacking other companies even five years ago? Or your IG or Facebook being an electronic mall on your phone?

Flock and ALPRs are the tip of a very deep iceberg where disaster lurks. Georgia law permits license plate data to be retained for as long as two and a half years. The state places few meaningful restrictions on how that information may be used, including whether it can support civil immigration enforcement or be transmitted for other purposes. Local governments are often left to negotiate privacy protections on their own, despite confronting companies and systems that operate across the country. These decisions come with lobbyists on one side and your neighbors on the other.

Flock assures its customers that they are the only group that has access to their data and control over where it is shared, suggesting that federal agencies and Flock do not have access to the information. Regardless of their promises, the number of investigations into abuse of the company’s tracking technology is on the rise, astoundingly so. In Georgia, just over the past few months, an alarming number of police officers have been arrested in Cherokee and Greene counties, in addition to Albany and Fayetteville, for unauthorized use of license plate data. These incidents do not mean that every officer or agency will abuse the system. They do mean that promises and internal poli-

cies are not enough. It’s why we have a legislature and why we make laws.

We need enforceable standards, independent oversight and transparent records that allow the public to know whether those standards are being followed.

The same principle must apply to data sharing. Flock has said that its customers control their own information and determine where it is shared. But the public deserves more than vague, unenforceable assurances. Residents should be able to understand which agencies have access, what searches are being conducted, how long records are retained and whether the system is being used for purposes beyond solving serious crimes. Remember when signing up for a grocery store program simply meant a coupon at the checkout, not that they’d sold your buying history to a company that now invades your social media and seems to read your mind?

I use the example of your Piggly Wiggly card in jest, but the threat is real. Surveillance technology may be used to investigate immigration status, reproductive health care or constitutionally protected protest activity. It can be used to tell your boss about your habits after work, or to alert others who disagree with your choices. The ability to reconstruct a person’s movements can reveal intimate details about their beliefs, relationships and medical decisions. Those consequences are too significant to be governed by a patchwork of contracts and voluntary policies.

Georgia lawmakers need to act. First and foremost, the state should sharply limit how long license plate information can be retained unless it is connected to an

active criminal investigation. Georgians’ movements should not remain searchable for years without cause. This should appeal to Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians and Independents alike - because eroding our

freedom is a nonpartisan issue. And giving the party in power too much of it helps no one.

More broadly, we need a statewide, public conversation about how technology is changing our daily lives

– and we need clear rules to ensure that promises of safety don’t mean sacrificing our rights, liberties and privacy. I’m all for science fiction, but we have a present that we need to protect and preserve.



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Friends of Georgia radio

SANDY SPRINGS – The friends of Georgia Radio Hall of Fame gathered here for its annual awards banquet last weekend. The event drew old friends and honorees, new faces, and a litany of supporters who appreciate local radio.

The “friends” also inducted five radio personalities into its Hall of Fame, including Dallas McCade, the robust personality of Kicks 101.5; Greg Street, V103 (VEE); Marcy Williams, a trailblazing female anchor at WSB’s 95.5 FM; and Joel Williams, perhaps Northeast Georgia’s best-known radio morning host on WCON’s My Country 99.3 in Cornelia.

Dallas McCade is not only known for her love of country music, she, if she could afford it, would take in every stray animal in the state. Greg Street, a fishing

buddy of Georgia’s Jonas Jennings, still working with the Dawgs, has been a mainstay on WVEE since the 90s, an afternoon anchor with his 6:00 p.m. theme: “It’s 6:00 o’clock, it’s 6:00 o’clock. It’s time for Greg Street to Rock.” He has entertained Atlanta audiences for years and has never met a charity he didn’t like.

Marcy Williams, a graduate of Princeton, is the only Ivy Leaguer in the group. She is an iconoclast who has gone where women have never gone before. She had gigs in Los Angeles and San Francisco before settling in with WSB’s 95.5 FM in 1993.

Joel Williams has reached “beloved” status with his morning show, which he co-hosts with Rebecca Biddy at My Country, 99.3 WCON, Cornelia.

I know Joel best among



LORAN SMITH

the inductees, and beyond our on-air conversations each week in the fall, I enjoy the occasional interludes with his family, including his charming wife, B.J., who also has a long on-air relationship with WDUN in Gainesville.

When you preview the resumes of these local stars, you find them all keen on community support and

making people feel good when they might be having a bad day.

They initiate and throw their support for the communities they serve. They never take their status for granted, and they are all about reaching out to others, underscoring charity and having fun.

When on air, they are proponents of goodwill, and if they could they would build a campfire and invite the whole world to embrace and sing kumbaya.

One of the things I have always enjoyed about local radio stars is that, in addition to entertaining the constituency, are keen on extending a helping hand. I was taken by the selflessness these local stars have in their communities and the goodwill that comes from what they do in their respective neighborhoods.

With this group, you have a rap star, country music stars, and the con-

summate storyteller who has been a breaker of icons for women in radio, whose theme is to put the listener first.

Neil Williamson, longtime sports executive at WSB and who has for decades been the host of the UGA Tailgate Show, was the emcee. He brought levity and insightful remarks relating to the inductees, which made it a lively evening.

When these exceptional radio personalities have a guest on the air with them, you feel you are sitting in on a fireside chat. I remember growing up when country singer Eddy Arnold did those Purina commercials, I felt that he was talking to me personally. I certainly wanted to buy Purina Dog Chow for the family hound dog.

The Friends of Georgia Radio, led by Dr. Dale Van Cantfort, are enterprising in one very special way. They

raise money and donate scholarships to aspiring college undergraduates who are interested in pursuing a radio career.

Those honored many very well become a star of tomorrow trying to make the day of their peers and generation as the aforementioned Hall of Famers have done in their time.

To make everybody’s day, how about these Internet radio quips?

What do you call the average radio? Stereo-typical.

How do radios say goodbye? They wave.

Why was the radio tired after work? It had too many watt hours.

It was a good evening, and reminded all in attendance that local radio

Is not just entertainment, it is the home of goodwill with an accent on giving back to their communities. How nice!

Dolly Parton was as good as it gets

Dolly Parton left us last week. She entered America’s hearts as a country music performer. She leaves us as one of our most iconic and beloved figures. Tributes to her indicate our hearts are broken yet full.

She earned everything required to be called a celebrity. She leveraged that title to be so much more. At every step of the way she gave back.

She was born into a dirt poor family in Appalachia, at least by monetary standards. As she made clear over the years in statement and song, it wasn’t money that mattered. Her song “Coat of Many Colors” summed it up with the lyrics “And oh, I couldn’t understand it for I felt I was rich and I told ‘em of the love my momma sewed in every stitch...But they didn’t understand it and I tried to make them see that one is only poor only if they choose to be.”

Many didn’t understand it, or a less charitable interpretation, is that she was still openly looked down upon for not giving up her

rural ways. A famous interview with Barbara Walters demonstrated grace and class while being called a hillbilly to her face.

She understood her roots, and refused to let how others viewed her shake her. When asked if it bothered her to be considered a dumb blonde, she said of course it didn’t because she knew she wasn’t dumb, and she knew she wasn’t blonde.

While many were content with underestimating her, she was making the most her many talents that seemed to outnumber the many colors in coat made from her mother’s love. Singer. Actress. Businesswoman. Philanthropist. Literacy Advocate. Evangelist. Those are just the broad professional titles for her many successful ventures. She had the full set of personal talents which included strength, resolve, perseverance, empathy, vision... and so many more.

She took care of her people. Dollywood was often described as a way to help get her family jobs. That enterprise alone now em-

ploys about 23,000 of her Tennessee family members, and provides an almost \$2 billion annual economic impact to a region that is now demonstrably richer for her contributions.

She didn’t like that her people were considered dumb by the elites she worked with in New York and L.A. so she started sending kids books. She’s now donated over 300 million children’s books to promote literacy. I have to think she smiled at all the recent studies showing Mississippi now has the highest literacy rates in the country for elementary school students...while still seeing that we still have so much work to do here.

She made direct contributions and efforts to fix graduation rates, support disaster victims, and medical research. Each has real, tangible results. It wasn’t about putting her name on buildings, it was about making positive changes in lives and lifting up entire communities.

She was an open advocate for her faith in word,



CHARLIE HARPER
GEORGIA POLITICS

deed, and song. If you’re building a playlist of her songs this week, make sure you include “He’s Alive”.

She even sang in my little home church’s choir – sort of. About 15 years ago she starred alongside Queen Latifah in a movie about a small church choir. The move production company used Bethany Methodist Church in North Fayette County as the principal set for the film. They even used members of our church as a lot of the extras.

It’s quite surreal to sit in a theater and watch the great Mrs. Parton sing behind the pulpit where you learned your most import-

ant life lessons and was the gathering place for those in life you’ve loved the most. Even more so when the shot pans to the pews and many of those faces are captured if but for a fleeting moment. For that I needed to add a personal thank you.

It was in that church I learned the parable of the talents from the 25th book of Matthew. I’ve confided to a few that this is the one passage that I find the most daunting at this stage of my life.

This is the story of a rich man leaving “talents” – pieces of his wealth – among three servants based on their abilities. The two with the greatest abilities, given 5 and 3 talents each, doubled theirs and presented the profits to him upon return. But the other hid the one talent and only gave it back upon the master’s return. It served no use while on loan, and returned no yield to anyone except what was given. It was a wasted opportunity.

Dolly was given so many talents – yet none of the obvious paths to unlock them and almost every barrier that prevents most of us from even trying. There is

no doubt when she returned her talents last week she was told “well done my good and faithful servant.”

With all the well-deserved complements flowing her way last week a scene from As Good As It Gets seemed to frame most of the responses. During an argument in a restaurant, Helen Hunt’s character demands Jack Nickelson’s character pay her a complement. He pauses before blurting out “you make me want to be a better person.”

Many reflections on her life indicated Dolly made us want to be better people. That’s a nice feeling, yet also an empty platitude.

Her formula was to act with purpose and have tangible and attainable goals in mind. Random acts of kindness make us feel good, but they don’t employ 23,000 people, teach a generation how to read, or lift graduation rates.

If you want to live like Dolly, inventory your talents. Dig them up if you need. Put them to work, with purpose. That’s how we become better people – by helping others become their best. I’m pretty sure that’s as good as it gets.

Son-in-law not helpful in Mike Collins senate campaign

I have warned my two kids that if they ever contemplated divorcing their spouse, I was keeping the one they brought. My son-in-law is a retired public schoolteacher with a PhD, a coach and was named Georgia’s Teacher of the Year. He can build anything, including the house they have occupied for the past 35 years. He is kind and thoughtful and smart as a whip.

My daughter-in-law is a nurse who spent most of her career in hospital nursing and retired as a hospice care nurse, one of the toughest jobs I can imagine. As I have stated on previous occasions, she is credited with having saved my life (that, according to the doctors) when she saw how pale I looked one evening and got me to an emergency clinic and then into the hospital. It was sepsis. She remains my go-to regarding matters of my health.

It’s a shame I’m not running for the U.S. Senate in Georgia. I could talk about the real issues facing our nation and not have to worry about dealing with the next harangue coming from an in-law. I’m afraid that is not the case for Republican candidate, Cong. Mike Collins. His race-ranting, antisemitic, misogynistic son-in-law doesn’t seem to have an off-switch or much interest in helping his father-in-law focus on the issues instead

of having to talk about him.

David Alan Scheer II is identified as a social media influencer which is said to be “someone who uses their trust and credibility online to shape attitudes, behaviors and decisions.”

According to various sources, Scheer has some 1.5 million followers on TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Telegram and other channels. His misbegotten efforts to shape attitudes, behaviors and decisions are only serving to make his father-in-law’s campaign a lot more difficult than it already is where polls show him running behind incumbent Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff.

On his Telegram channel, Scheer wrote, “We’re going to retake America for Christian White men!” I have a feeling God is going to zap whatever brains this guy may have (which can’t be a lot) when the time comes and will hopefully give the privilege of pulling the switch to Ray Charles Robinson, of Albany, Georgia, and Moses. In the meantime, I would suggest Scheer spend more time reading the Sermon on the Mount and less time on Telegram. He might learn what Christianity is really all about.

Scheer has called Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a “Satanic war-mongering, Zionist piece of

garbage” and in 2025 displayed a German Nazi Party propaganda poster from the 1930s with the text “I want to make babies, Not die for Israel.” Ask the Nazis how that turned out for them. He has also asserted that Jews have “captured American politics,” and that “Gen-Z doesn’t hate Hitler.” (Gen-Zer’s are defined as 14 to 29 years of age. What do they know about Hitler? Ask them instead about Taylor Swift or love bombing.)

As for women, Scheer has stated, “(R)epeal the 19th amendment and a lot of issues will resolve themselves.” The 19th Amendment guarantees women the right to vote. I’m going to assume the women in the Collins household have no problem with being thought

of as unworthy to vote. The women in the Yarbrough household would punch his sexist lights out. That would resolve a lot of issues, too.

I don’t know Mike Collins. I did know his daddy, the late Cong. Mack Collins, quite well. He was very helpful to us in the runup to the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games. And a good guy. His son may be a good guy, too, but if he can’t manage his family how can he manage the affairs of state?

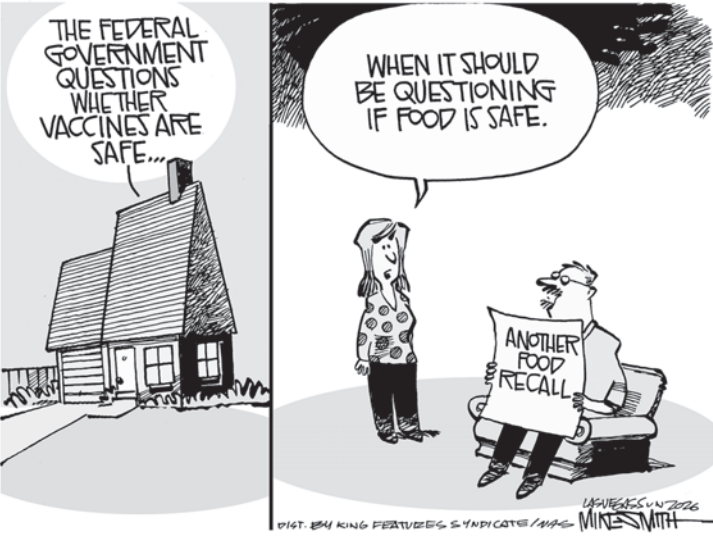
Mike Collins either can’t or won’t get Scheer to shut his trap. How all of this can be a positive in his campaign is a mystery to me. He had to abort a press conference in Monroe County recently because reporters kept asking him to address the claims of his son-in-law’s ties to antisemitism



DICK YARBROUGH

and white nationalism, instead of letting him discuss his health care initiatives, which was the purpose of the press conference. You can bet it won’t be the last time this happens.

Watching this guy spew his verbal garbage on the Internet reminds me to say thank you to Ted and to Jackie. You two may not be social influencers but you are great in-laws who have never embarrassed me or the family. Maybe I should have run for the Senate.



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DID YOU KNOW...?

Was a well-known American general nominated three times for the Medal of Honor?

By JACK BAGLEY
Georgia Trust For Local News

Good grief, where is the time going so quickly? I mean, here it is September already!

You know what that means, right? (Well, you do if you're a regular reader of this silly stuff.). It means that later on, just three more weeks or so, I have another one of those silly events called "birthdays."

This month, I'll turn 68 years old.

While I ruminate on what all that could possibly mean, I'll turn over the trivia column and let you enjoy some things that don't cause me to feel older.

Did you know...

... two separate attacks on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii took place during World War II? We are all familiar with the "day of infamy" attack which happened on December 7, 1941, and which brought the United States into the war. A second attack, on March 4, 1942, is lesser known. Dubbed "Operation K," this involved two Japanese flying boats attacking Oahu Island once again, specifically targeting a dock. Bad weather and even worse navigation caused the bombers to miss the dock, dropping their ordinance harmlessly near a high school. (Thanks to Terry for the tip!)

... an astronomer once designed a super-telescope? Adrien Auzout (1622-1691) drew up a design for a 1,000-foot-long refracting telescope. He thought that the telescope would have a magnification so great that he would be able to see animals on the Moon. The telescope would not be contained in a tube, but instead would have been an "aerial" telescope which uses lenses mounted high in a tree or on a pedestal, and the observer holding the eyepiece lens. (Now that would be a heavenly view.)

... a man can make a sound humans can't hear, but elephants can? Tim Storms (born 1972), a singer said to have the "world's deepest voice," holds the world record for the lowest note produced by a human. The note is eight octaves below the lowest G on a piano, and cannot be heard by the human ear – but elephants can hear it, scientists say. Storms himself cannot hear the note, but he says he can "feel" it in his head. His vocal abilities arise from the fact that his vocal cords are twice as long as most peoples'. (What the elephants think of Mr. Storms' ability has not been recorded for posterity.)

... a famous American general was nominated three times for the Medal of Honor? Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964), one of the most well-known and controversial Army officers in American history, was nominated for the Medal of Honor on three separate occasions. The first was in 1914, when then-Captain MacArthur conducted long-range reconnaissance behind enemy lines in Mexico as part of the Veracruz expedition. The award was submitted by General Leonard Wood (1860-1927), but was rejected by a board convened to review the award, which said awarding the Medal of Honor might encourage staff officers to ignore their commanders and go off on their own missions. The second recommendation came during World War I, when then-Brigadier General MacArthur led another reconnaissance patrol, this one into a gap in German barbed wire fencing and was wounded, ending up the sole survivor of the patrol. This award was submitted by General Charles Summerall (1867-1955), but was downgraded to a Distinguished Service Cross. MacArthur did receive the Medal of Honor in 1942, during World War II, but not for any specific moment of gallantry. Rather, MacArthur was awarded the Medal to offset Japanese propaganda about him supposedly "deserting" his command in the Philippines after he was ordered to leave for Australia. (Thanks to Dave for the tip!)

... filming of one movie caused another movie to shut down for a day? When the 2007 movie No Country for Old Men was being filmed in Marfa, Texas, a cloud of smoke from the set of another movie being filmed there, There Will Be Blood, caused the production to shut down for a day. What makes this a very interesting coincidence is the fact that There Will Be Blood filmed in Marfa for months, but No Country for Old Men only worked in the town for two weeks. (I guess nobody ever heard of coordinating schedules.)

... two rival Mexican religious groups are based on soft drinks? In the town of Chamula, located in the southern state of Chiapas, Mexico, shamans in a religious group began using Coca-Cola™ in their rituals to heal worshipers. When word of this got back to rival Pepsi-Cola™, that company began giving commissions to shamans to get them to recommend Pepsi instead. Coke did the same thing, and now in Chamula there's the Coca-Cola group and the Pepsi group. The "Coca-Cola Church" is actually a tourist attraction. (I got nothing here, folks.)

... engagement rings are expensive because of a marketing ploy? The "standard" value of an engagement ring is said to be two months' salary for the prospective groom. This arbitrary standard was created by the DeBeers Diamond Company's advertising agency. Additional trivia note: Diamonds are only valuable, some sources say, because of DeBeers. The company keeps millions of dollars worth of diamonds hidden in order to drive up the price of those on the market, or so it is alleged.

Now... you know!

Too many flavors of toothpaste

While doing a little light housework the other day, I discovered a glob of fluorescent blue gel at the bottom of the sink.

My daughter, like most little girls, is enamored with all things squishy or made of clay and slime, and she, like seemingly everyone in her circle of influence, loves to play mad scientist with these gooey toys, creating their own out of plastic wrap and balloons or dissecting the ones I spent my hard-earned money on. I have spent too much of my life unclogging drains congested with the leftovers of her experiments At first I believed my afternoon was going to be booked up taking apart another obstructed P-trap.

I tried to wipe away the substance with the rag clutched in my fist and the azure sludge only smeared across the white ceramic surface. My initial fear was assuaged; it wasn't slime, it was toothpaste.

I had two thoughts as I continued to scrub away at the ever-spreading smudge: Why does something meant to clean your teeth make such a mess everywhere else and how well are the members of my household, particularly the youngest ones, brushing their teeth when most of the toothpaste ends up at the bottom of the sink?

There are two kinds of people in this world - those who are shrewd practitioners of oral hygiene and those who take a lackadaisical approach to brushing and flossing. I've been on both ends of this spectrum and both sides keep the dentist office busy.

I'm always surprised at the variety of flavors toothpaste comes in

THE NEW
SOUTHERN
DAD



By KYLE DOMINY

these days. For decades of my life I believed there was mint and cinnamon, the latter being only for old people. At every visit for a cleaning the list grows longer and longer. It takes the poor hygienist more time to rattle off the options than it does to actually brush my teeth. Among the popular offerings, I'm told, is birthday cake.

It seems counterintuitive, yes, but maybe the good people at Colgate are getting desperate.

The Egyptians were the first people to develop an oral hygiene routine. Some 5,000 years ago, the first tooth cleaner was concocted out of the ashes of burnt ox hooves, pumice and egg shells. The Greeks and Romans improved on the recipe, if you can call it that, by adding crushed bones and oyster shells. Apparently garbage is good for the teeth.

Ironically, the toothbrush didn't come along until more than 3,000

years later. A clever soul living in China during the Tang Dynasty, attached hog hair bristles to a piece of bamboo. Rumor has it that the inventor was known for his less-than-stellar good looks and was trying to find a way to impress the ladies.

Fluoride wasn't clinically proven to benefit teeth until the 1950s, though the chemical was added to the drinking water supply of Flint, Michigan in 1945. An attendant was stationed at all municipal water fountains to ask thirsty partakers if they wanted mint or cinnamon. The latter being only for the elderly, of course.

Back in the confines of my own home, with a freshly cleaned sink, at least until the next tooth brushing session, I'm just thankful that toothpaste evolved from animal parts and bone meal.

The next time I'm at the dentist, I think I'll give birthday cake a try.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

By LUCIE WINBORNE
King Features

* An isolated Israeli city with a high rate of deafness created their own sign language as a way of communicating.

* Pakistan was the first official Muslim nation in the world.

* An emoji of a building underneath a pink heart originally symbolized an invitation to meet at a Japanese "love hotel," where rooms can be rented by the hour.

* At many European operas, whistling actually means boo.

* The Aetherius Society, a UFO religion, was founded by George King in 1955 after he claimed interplanetary sources instructed him to become "the Voice of Interplanetary Parliament."

HERE'S A TIP!

By JOANN DERSON
King Features

* This facial mask is good enough to eat. You might have a hard time deciding whether you want the facial or the snack: Mix together one mashed ripe banana with 3 tablespoons of sugar, and apply liberally to face. Leave it on for about three minutes, and rinse with warm water. Follow with your favorite moisturizer.

* "The best way to soften butter is to let it stand at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes. But if you are in a hurry, you can slice it into 1/2-inch pats and roll it between sheets of waxed paper. It will only take a minute or so." -- I.V. in Connecticut

* Pet hair is best removed from upholstery with a squeegee. Drag over the upholstery or even your carpet to collect the hair into a ball. Dispose of the hair in the trash.

* "Here's my tip for using a pool noodle in the garage. We have a narrow parking area, so we cut a foam noodle in half lengthwise, then secured it to the wall where the door might hit when we get out of the car. No bumps, no chips. The noodle saves the day!" -- Y.I. in Maryland

Public Notice

Twiggs County Commissioners _____ is applying for funding assistance under Title 49 U.S.C. Section 5311 of the Federal Transit Act pertaining to rural areas.
Twiggs County Commissioners _____ will offer general public transportation to all citizens of _____ for any worthwhile purpose, including but not limited to shopping, medical treatment, social services, and other purposes.
Twiggs County Commissioners _____ solicits private sector input and participation to assure that private for-profit transportation operators have a fair and timely opportunity to participate in the development of this program.
Twiggs County Commissioners _____ also solicits comments and concerns from the general population on local rural public transportation services.
Twiggs County Commissioners _____ also solicits comments and concerns from the elderly, low-income, and disabled population and their representatives to assure that issues relating to the disabled are addressed in the service design proposed during the planning process.
Interested persons are invited to request that a public hearing be held to discuss the services being offered or development of the application.
Written comments, requests for a public hearing and/or written notice of intent by private for-profit transportation operators to provide or participate in any or all of the above services should be submitted no later than fifteen (15) days from the date of this publication to:
Commission Chairman/Mayor/Chief Executive of Applicant Organization: Kenneth E. Fowler
Address/City/State/Zip Code of Applicant: P.O. Box 202 Jeffersonville, GA 31044
Phone Number of Applicant: 478-945-3629
If no response is received within the fifteen (15) days, _____ will proceed with the application to the Georgia Department of Transportation.

First-year grants to bolster rural hospitals completed

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

The federal government announced the delivery Thursday of the rest of a \$218 million award to Georgia to support rural hospitals. The \$93.3 million completes the first fiscal year of a five-year, \$50 billion national funding program approved by Republicans in Congress last year in President Donald Trump’s One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said the money will pay for technical innovations at rural hospitals, such as surgical robotics and telehealth, plus medical training and recruitment, maternal and behavioral services, and newborn screening. It will also help 87 rural Georgia hospitals prepare to provide what the federal agency is calling "value-based" care.

Dr. Dean Burke, the physician who leads Georgia’s Department of Community Health, said in a statement Thursday that the program will "have decades of positive impact" on rural healthcare. U.S. Rep. Mike Collins, R-Jackson, thanked the Trump administration for "prioritizing rural communities." Collins, who is running to unseat Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff, also attacked his opponent for voting with all other Democrats against the funding, which was part of the One Big Beautiful Bill and its budget and tax cuts. Democrats had instead wanted to preserve funding for Medicaid, which the bill slashed by hundreds of billions of dollars. Democrats have been attacking Collins and the GOP for their approach to healthcare, blaming it for rural hospital funding shortfalls.

For instance, the state Democratic Party asserted in late-July that Collins’ vote to pass "massive Medicaid cuts" had "solidified" St. Mary’s Sacred Heart Hospital’s decision to close its labor and delivery unit. The Democratic Party has portrayed healthcare in Georgia as a crisis caused by Republicans and their refusal to expand Medicaid in the state. A recent survey conducted by the University of Georgia for the Georgia Health Initiative found rising healthcare costs to be a potent political issue, especially among Democrats. Concerns about rising costs cross party lines, according to the UGA survey, with 54% of Democrats and 38% of Republicans saying they were very or somewhat worried about being able to afford their monthly premiums over the next year.

The federal Rural Health Transformation Program that emerged from the One Big Beautiful Bill is sending \$10 billion a year to the states over five years in the form of grants. Georgia’s application last year netted the seventh-largest sum nationally. The state Department of Community Health said less than 10% of the first year of funding will go toward administrative costs. The state budgeted \$15.6 million to help seven hospitals prepare for the new federal efficiency and accountability program, along with 80 other hospitals that were awarded money previously. Another \$6.2 million will support a "continuum of care," such as medical transportation, school-based health services and newborn screening.

Eight hospitals will split a portion of nearly \$10.4 million for a dozen "telepods" for telehealth and for pediatric "telepsychiatry" training. The money will also cover other initiatives to improve healthcare access. The second largest amount, \$23.6 million, will go toward medical workforce development efforts, including training and nurse faculty recruitment at Georgia’s public universities. More than a third of the funding, \$37.5 million is for technological innovations, such as surgical robots at 13 hospitals that will also get funding for surgeon recruitment and retention. The funding will also cover a grant to Equifax for "eligibility system enhancements" to expedite "eligibility determinations."



OFTC to host one stop enrollment day for fall minimester Sept. 17

SPECIAL TO THE TIMES JOURNAL POST

There’s still time for students to get started with classes at Oconee Fall Line Technical College (OFTC) this fall. With 2026 Fall Minimester classes beginning October 12, OFTC invites those interested in starting classes to attend a One-Stop Enrollment Day where they can meet one-on-one with college representatives who can help guide them through the enrollment process in one visit.

Event Date & Locations
Thursday, Sept. 17
 All Campuses, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

At this event, prospective students can finish their admissions steps, learn about financial aid options, and get ready for fall minimester classes. “We are offering the one stop enrollment day to better serve our students and community,” shared Dr. Saketha Adams, OFTC’s Vice President of Student Affairs. “We want to give those who are working and with families at home an opportunity to take care of the enrollment process during times that may be more convenient for their schedules.”

Students should plan to attend in person and bring essential documents:
 - High school transcript
 - Government-issued photo ID (such as a valid driver’s license or military ID)
 - 2025 tax return

For more information on OFTC’s 130+ programs of study, visit OFTC.edu. Students can register for fall minimester classes through Oct. 12, 2026.

State sets new execution date for Cobb County killer

By TY TAGAMI
 Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Georgia will execute Stacey Ian Humphreys on Sept. 16 after postponing a prior execution scheduled for late last year. Humphreys was convicted of murder and other crimes in in the 2003 deaths of Cyndi Williams and Lori Brown in Cobb County. Georgia Department. of Corrections Commissioner Tyrone Oliver selected the new execution date after a Cobb superior court judge ordered it between Sept. 16 and Sept. 23. Humphreys exhausted his appeals in October when the U.S. Supreme Court decided against him after twice declining

to hear his earlier appeals. The Georgia Supreme Court had twice issued decisions against him. Humphreys was born in 1973, the year Georgia reinstated capital punishment after a brief pause over litigation. He was sentenced to death for the murders of two real estate agents during the lunch hour on Nov. 3, 2003. The women worked in a construction company’s model home at a new Cobb subdivision when Humphreys walked in and killed them. In September 2007, a jury convicted him of murder, assault, armed robbery and kidnapping. He pleaded guilty to possession of a firearm by a felon and was sentenced to death.

NOTICE OF SEALED BIDS
CITY OF COCHRAN
WATER METER SYSTEM REPLACEMENT
ADVANCED METERING INFRASTRUCTURE (AMI)

City of Cochran invites interested and qualified firms to submit sealed bids and Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) for the following:

SERVICES FOR
WATER METER SYSTEM
REPLACEMENT (AMI)

InterestedbiddersmaysubmitQualificationsforanAdvancedMeteringInfrastructure(AMI)Full-Service Implementation and Maintenance Program to improve the process of collecting monthly water utilitymeterdatatoenhancethelevelsofserviceofferedtocustomers.

The AMI Full-Service Program will be implemented system wide in a short time frame, to maximize the benefits of the system. Interested bidders are to submit qualifications for a turnkey deployment of approximately 2,490 water metered accounts followed by an ongoing maintenance program **with field labor** that includes meters, network, AMI endpoints, and software maintenance as well as full-service data hosting and delivery to the City of Cochran. The requirementsforQualifications includinginstructions,requirements,and formattingfor the SOQ may be secured at the City of Cochran, 112 West Dykes Street, Cochran GA, 31014.

Bidders interested in being considered for selection should respond by submitting one original and three copies of the SOQ in a sealed envelope marked “Water Meter System Replacement” to City Hall, City at 112 West Dykes Street, Cochran, GA 31014 by Thursday, September 24, 2026, by 2:00 p.m. The City has the right to wave any bids due to technicality or time issues.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
CITY OF COCHRAN, GEORGIA

Notice is hereby given that the Planning Commission and the City Council of the City of Cochran will conduct Public Hearings to consider a petition for rezoning submitted by John Phillips for the property located at:
121 First Avenue, Cochran, Georgia 31014 containing approximately 2.53 acres.
The petitioner is requesting that the property be rezoned from A-1 (Agriculture District) to R-1 (Low Density Residential District).

The Public Hearing before the Planning Commission will be held:
Date: September 14, 2026
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: City Auditorium Conference Room
102 N. Second Street, Cochran, Georgia 31014

The Public Hearing before the City Council will be held:
Date: September 17, 2026
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Location: City Auditorium
102 N. Second Street, Cochran, Georgia 31014

All interested persons are invited to attend the hearing and be heard on the proposed rezoning request.

For further information, please contact:

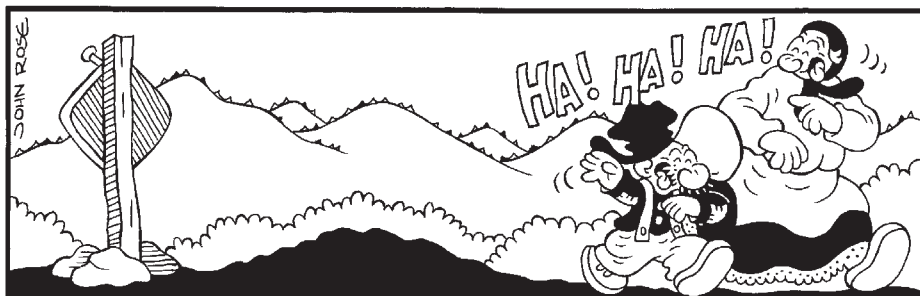
City of Cochran Attn: Angela Redding (478) 934-6346,aredding@ciyofcochran.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
L & A Testing, Computation & Canvassing and Absentee Voting
For November 3, 2026, General Election

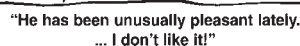
Pursuant to O.C.G.A & 21.2-379.6 (c) notice is hereby given that logic and accuracy testing on the voting equipment to be used on June 16, 2026, Runoff, in Wilkinson County will be publicly performed in the Old GED Building located at 8159 Ga Hwy 57, McIntyre, Ga. 31054. The testing on all voting equipment will begin on Monday, September 14, 2026, beginning at 10 am and will continue from day to day until it is completed. Members of the public are invited to observe the preparation and testing of all equipment to be used. The election supervisor and registrar/clerk and staff will conduct testing. Pursuant to O.C.G.A & 21-2-492 Computation, canvassing, and certification of election results will begin on Wednesday November 4, 2026, unless otherwise posted and will continue from day to day until complete.

The last date to request an Absentee Ballot by mail is October 23. Advance Voting (in-person will begin on Monday October 13, 2026, through October 30, 2026, (Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) Saturday Voting will be October 17 & 24 at the courthouse from 9-5. Election Day voting is November 3, 2026, from 7:00 am to 7:00 p.m. at your assigned polling location. We’re located in the courthouse in the Elections & Registrar’s Office Rm# 133. For more information regarding testing and/or your voter registration status, contact the elections’ office at 478-946-2188.

Wilkinson County Board of Elections and Registration
Kelly S. Chatman, Election Superintendent



Prison



CROSSWORD ANSWERS



MAGIC MAZE ANSWERS

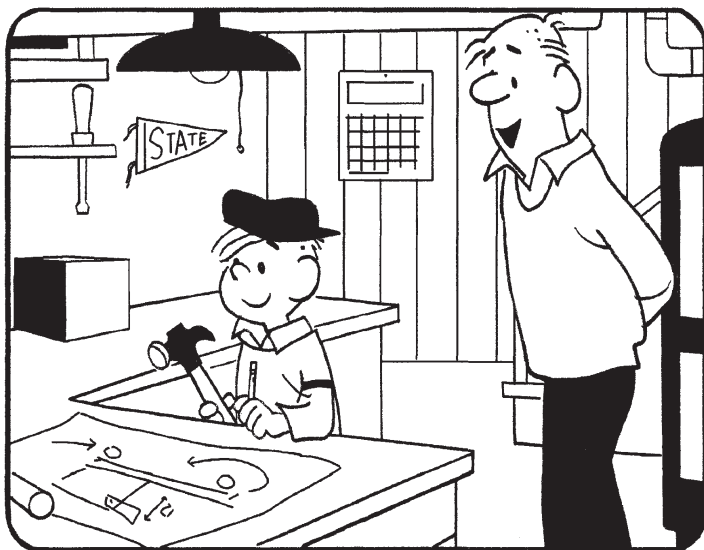
1	Sea predator	22	wear Computer brand
2	Heath	23	Exposes
3	Ad agcy. client	25	"Shoo!"
4	Debonair	26	— tear (rag- ing)
5	Sheep call	27	Hindmost parts
6	Boxer Laila	29	Boyfriend
7	Angelic light	31	Comic
8	Allayed		Gasteyer
9	Severe decline		

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A black and white cartoon panel. A cat is perched on the back of a couch, looking down at a dog lying on its side. The dog has its mouth open in a yawn or is asleep. A speech bubble from the cat reads: "YEAH RIGHT, I KNOW YOU'RE NOT SLEEPING. OTHERWISE THE WINDOWS WOULD BE RATTLING." The artist's signature "Ruggs" is in the bottom left corner.

Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Arm is not showing. 2. Hammer is longer. 3. Box is moved. 4. Cap is tilted back. 5. Lightbulb is smaller. 6. Stripe on sleeve is smaller.

It pays to advertise in your local paper!

COUCH THEATER



Gal Gadot stars in "The Runner" / Photo courtesy of MovieStillsDB

By DEMI TAVERAS
King Features

Mayday (PG-13)
Ryan Reynolds is back on our screens after the successful third installment of his "Deadpool" franchise! Trading in his skintight red suit for a United States Air Force uniform, Reynolds plays pilot Troy "Assassin" Kelly in this action-comedy film out on Sept. 4. After ejecting himself from his plane to survive a head-on collision, Troy lands in the Russian wilderness and quickly encounters ex-KGB carpenter Nikolai Ustinov (Kenneth Branagh). Nikolai, who greatly admires the American government and culture, agrees to help Troy get outside of enemy lines. Of course, even with their combat skills and the power of their two heads combined, it won't be an easy feat. (Apple TV)

The Runner (PG-13)
Having gone under the radar for a bit after the catastrophe that was "Snow White" (2025), Gal Gadot has found herself in a new lead role for an action thriller that's way more up her alley. Gadot portrays Maia, an attorney, mother and running enthusiast. In the middle of her normal run after dropping her son, Noah, off to school, she receives

what she assumes is an ordinary call from him, until she hears a man on the other end of the line. Startled, Maia listens intently as the caller tells her that he has abducted Noah, and only if she follows each of the caller's rules will Noah get to live. Damian Lewis ("Pressure") and Alfred Enoch ("The Critic") co-star. Premieres Sept. 2. (Amazon Prime Video)

The Man Will Burn (TV-MA)
This four-part documentary series that's out now on streaming takes on the radical weeklong desert festival known as Burning Man. Originating in 1986 on Baker Beach in San Francisco, Burning Man has since evolved into a large-scale event consisting of more than 70,000 participants. Now held at its iconic venue of Black Rock City, Nevada, the festival brings together people from around the world with a foundation of 10 main principles: radical inclusion, gifting, decommmodification, radical self-reliance, radical self-expression, communal effort, civic responsibility, leaving no trace, participation, and immediacy. The series explores its history, the nonprofit that organizes the festival, and how celebrity culture has infiltrated Black Rock City. (HBO Max)
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DIVAS ON A DIME

Grilled Baba Ghanoush



By PATTI DIAMOND
King Features

Ingredients
2 small globe or Italian eggplants
1/4 cup tahini
2 to 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1 large garlic clove, minced
1 tablespoon plain Greek yogurt
1/4 teaspoon each kosher salt and black pepper
1 teaspoon sumac
3/4 teaspoon Aleppo pepper or 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, optional
Extra-virgin olive oil and chopped parsley, for serving

Instructions
To grill: Heat the grill to medium-high. Grill the whole eggplants, turning occasionally, for about 30 minutes, until deeply charred, collapsed and completely soft.
To oven-roast: Heat the oven to 425 F. Halve the eggplants lengthwise and place them cut side down on a lightly oiled baking sheet. Roast 35 to 40 minutes, until very tender.
Let the eggplant cool. Peel grilled eggplant and discard the stems; scoop roasted eggplant from its skin.
Place the flesh in a colander and drain for 15 minutes, pressing gently to release excess liquid. Transfer to a bowl and mash with a fork. Stir in the tahini, lemon juice and zest, garlic, yogurt, salt, pepper, sumac and Aleppo pepper.
Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Spoon into a shallow bowl, drizzle with olive oil and garnish with parsley. Serve with pita and vegetables. Refrigerate leftovers for up to four days.
Prepare the dip a day ahead, grill the vegetables at the same time, and add fresh produce and herbs shortly before serving. For outdoor gatherings, bring out smaller portions of dips and cheese as needed. Perishable foods should not remain unrefrigerated longer than two hours, or one hour when the temperature exceeds 90 F.
To turn the board into dinner, keep the grill working and add chicken or pork kabobs, sausages or a steak cut into bite-size pieces, an economical way to share steak with a crowd. Round out the meal with herbed couscous or lemony orzo, both inexpensive and delicious served at room temperature.



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WARNER ROBINS

Space heater cause of fatal fire in Dublin

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Georgia Trust For Local News

A space heater was the likely cause of a fire that killed an 89-year-old Dublin man early Thursday afternoon.

Howard L. Mitchell was pronounced dead at 12:38 p.m. by Laurens County Deputy Coroner Nathan Stanley approximately 30 minutes after Laurens County 911 was informed of a fire at 431 S. Washington St.

“It is a horrible tragedy,” Stanley said.

Dublin Fire Chief Matthew Cutler said neighbors heard a fire alarm going off in one of the apartments and could not get anyone to come to the door.

“They thought they smelled smoke,” Cutler said. “Once fire units arrived, they were able to open the door and found that the apartment was full of smoke. They put it out quickly. By the time I got there, they had located the victim and brought him

out. There was nothing that could have been done.”

Firefighters put out a small fire in the kitchen area. They searched the apartment and found Mitchell in the kitchen. The Georgia State Fire Marshals’ Office also responded to the scene. Officials agreed that it appeared to be an accidental fire.

“Right now we don’t expect any foul play,” Cutler said. “It appears the fire started from a space heater that was too close to combustible materials. One of the neighbors or caregivers said he did like to warm up beside a space heater. We did find a space heater that was on at the time of the fire.”

Mitchell’s body will be transported to the Atlanta Crime Lab for an autopsy later to confirm the cause of death, Stanley said.

The apartment, which is part of the Dublin Housing Authority, sustained smoke damage.



Dublin Fire Department and other first responders at the scene of Thursday afternoon’s fatal fire at an apartment on South Washington Street/PAYTON TOWNS III

Larry Walker III recaps regional Listening Day



SPECIAL TO THE TIMES JOURNAL POST

ATLANTA – This week, Senate President Pro Tempore Larry Walker III (R-Perry) joined members of the Middle Georgia legislative delegation for a regional listening day in Perry, bringing together local leaders and community stakeholders to discuss priorities facing Middle Georgia ahead of the 2027 Legislative Session.

Hosted in partnership with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, the listening day provided local leaders with an opportunity to speak directly with members of the legislative delegation about the challenges facing their communities.

“Some of the most important work we do as legislators happens long before we ever cast a vote at the Capitol,” said President Pro Tempore Walker. “Today was about listening to the people who are on the ground every day to understand what is working and where the state can be a better partner. We’re strongest when we work together, regardless of whether we are talking about our schools, economic development across the state or Robins Air Force Base. I appreciate everyone who took the time to speak candidly with us today. We will take what we heard back to the Capitol and look for practical

solutions that deliver results for Middle Georgians.”

Throughout the morning, the delegation heard from representatives of Middle Georgia State University, Hawkinsville-Pulaski County Economic Development, the Houston County Board of Commissioners, the River Valley Regional Commission, the Robins Air Force Base 21st Century Partnership, the City of Pineview and the Houston County School District.

The listening day brought together legislators and stakeholders representing Houston, Dooley, Pulaski and Wilcox counties. President Pro Tempore Walker opened and closed the event, with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission facilitating the discussions.

Feedback gathered during the event will help inform the delegation’s work as lawmakers continue their work under the Gold Dome.

Sen. Larry Walker III serves as President Pro Tempore of the Georgia Senate. He represents the 20th Senate District, which includes Bleckley, Dodge, Dooley, Laurens, Pulaski, Treutlen and Wilcox counties, as well as a portion of Houston County. He may be reached by phone at (404) 656-0095 or by email at Larry.Walker@senate.ga.gov.



INTERNATIONAL CITY FESTIVAL
SEPTEMBER 12, 2026

Perkins Field
105 Mulberry St. Warner Robins

The International City Festival celebrates the diverse cultures, traditions, and communities that make Warner Robins unique. Featuring live entertainment, international cuisine, cultural exhibits, family activities, and local vendors, the festival welcomes thousands of residents and visitors for a day of discovery and celebration. Sponsors have the opportunity to align their brand with one of the city's most vibrant and inclusive events while connecting with a diverse audience from across Middle Georgia. Through community engagement and cultural experiences, the festival highlights Warner Robins' identity as the International City.



