

# GORDON Gazette

Wednesday, February 3, 2021

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Calhoun-Gordon County's #1 Source for News

## Fairmount man arrested on murder charges after domestic violence incident turns deadly

Brandi Owczarz  
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A Fairmount man remains in Gordon County Jail Wednesday morning, facing counts of felony Murder, felony Aggravated Assault (FVA) and felony First Degree Cruelty to

Children after a domestic violence incident turned deadly Sunday night.

Gordon County Sheriff Mitch Ralston said that around 9:50 p.m. on Sunday night, Jan. 31, police were dispatched to a private residence on Scott Brown Road off Hwy. 411 in Fairmount in response to a report

of a violence domestic disturbance. Upon arrival, a Fairmount police officer found a woman outside who had suffered multiple stab wounds.

EMS was requested on scene and transported the injured woman to a local hospital where she later was pronounced

dead.

The police arrested Patrick H. O'Ree, age 36, of 554 Scott Brown Road, at the scene. According to Ralston, a neighbor had intervened in the assault, and held O'Ree for a short time until the police arrived.

The investigation was turned over to the

Sheriff's Office and detectives were on the crime scene as of 1 a.m. Monday collecting evidence and statements. No one else is believed to have been involved in this event and no suspects are at large.

PHOTO: Gordon County Sheriff's Office.



PATRICK O'REE

## As temperatures drop, GCF&R responds to another structure fire that began near heat source

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Firefighters with Gordon County Fire & Rescue responded to a house fire at 232 Love Bridge Drive SE in Calhoun on Tuesday, Feb. 2. The call was dispatched around 6:20 a.m. that morning. Upon arrival, fire personnel found heavy smoke and flames showing from the single story residence. After extinguishing the blaze, the investigation began and cause of fire was determined to be in the den area in the vicinity of an electric wall heater. Total property loss estimated at \$170,000. This is the second structure fire in a week related to a heating element of a building being used as a residence. "Heating equipment is the leading cause of fires

in U.S. residents," said Gordon County Fire & Rescue's Fire Prevention Division. "Annually heating related fires cause approximately \$ 1 billion in property damage and nearly 500 deaths. With the recent drop in temperatures, it is important that citizens are aware of the dangers that these heating devices create. If citizens keep combustible objects away from heaters, turn heaters off when leaving their home, maintain and clean their fireplaces, never leave fires burning unattended in the fireplaces, and not using stoves or ovens to heat fires the probability of fires occurring because of heat related equipment is drastically reduced. It's also important that citizens ensure that their smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are properly working."

The National Fire Protection Association says that half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February, and that 1 in every 7 home fires and 1 in every 5 home fire deaths involves heating equipment. The NFPA says to prevent heating equipment-related fires, to keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from any heat source like fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators or space heaters. The organization also suggests homeowners to keep portable generators outside, away from windows, and as far away from your home as possible. Another suggestion by the NFPA is to plug only 1 heat-producing appliance (like a space heater) into an electrical outlet at a time. As previously reported by the Gordon Gazette, on Monday, Jan. 25,



This home on Love Bridge Drive off of Lovebridge Road was a total loss after a Tuesday morning, fire that began near an electrical wall heater. (BRANDI OWCZARZ/Staff)

2021, just after 12 p.m., firefighters were dispatched to a structure fire located at 107 Main Street NW in Sugar Valley. Once firefighters were on scene, they discovered

a 10' x 10' outbuilding in close proximity to the railroad tracks and being used as a residence, fully involved in fire. After investigating, the cause of the fire was

determined to be in the area of an item used to heat the structure. The building was a total loss, with the property loss valued at approximately \$9,000.

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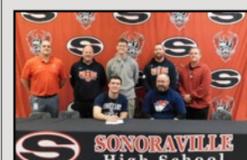
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Sonorville's Brady Lackey inks to further football career at University of the Cumberland.

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## One man arrested, another dead of self-inflicted gunshot wound after Walmart shoplifting incident

Brandi Owczarz  
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A Floyd County man remains in Gordon County Jail this morning after a shoplifting incident at Walmart Sunday afternoon spurred a traffic stop where the driver of the car he was fleeing in succumbed to a self-inflicted gunshot

wound he suffered after being pulled over.

According to the incident report from the Calhoun Police Department, around 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 31, an officer was

See **ARREST**, page 14A



Matthew Roberts, left (Photo: GCSO); Scene of traffic stop, right (PHOTO: Brandi Owczarz/Staff)

## Gov. Kemp appoints DA Greene to Judge David K. Smith's vacated seat

### STAFF REPORTS

On Monday, Feb. 1, Governor Brian P. Kemp announced his appointment of Rosemary Greene to the Cherokee Judicial Circuit, Nancy N. Bills to the Rockdale Judicial Circuit, Clarence Cuthbert as State Court Judge of Rockdale County, Jesse C. Stone to the Augusta Judicial Circuit, Dick Perryman to the Alapaha Judicial Circuit, and Carletta Sims Brown to the Richmond County Civil

and Magistrate Court.

Greene is filling the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge David K. Smith in October 2020.

Greene holds a bachelor's degree from LaGrange College and law degree from Mercer University's Walter F. George School of Law. She previously served as an Assistant District Attorney for the Blue Ridge and Cherokee

See **GREENE**, page 14A



Rosemary Greene (Contributed Photo)

## Calhoun man arrested for battery, false imprisonment after domestic incident

### STAFF REPORTS

According to Gordon County Sheriff Mitch Ralston, at about 11:30 p.m. Sunday night, Jan. 31, deputy sheriffs were dispatched to a private residence on Singletree Drive in response to a 911 report of domestic violence.



CHRISTOPHER THURMAN (Photo: GCSO)

See **DOMESTIC**, page 14A

# Second Front

## AMERICAN HEART MONTH: Heart-healing with cardiac rehab at AdventHealth Gordon

### ADVENTHEALTH GORDON

Over three years ago, Imogene Pack's life was changed when she had a heart attack. After building her strength again with cardiac rehabilitation, she continues to put in the time and effort to live a healthier lifestyle, both for herself and her family.

Residing in Gordon County for over 40 years, Pack is married to Richard Pack, who pastors Freedom House of Worship Church. They have two children, Chris Pack and April Flowers, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Before retirement, she worked at a carpet sample plant and a child development center. Now, she enjoys time at

home and with family. "Spending time with family is what I love most," said Pack. "I also love going to church and spending time with my church family."

In December 2017, Pack started having chest pains. She originally thought it was indigestion and ignored it for a few weeks. One night, when the pain became too much to overlook, her husband called 911, and an ambulance took her to AdventHealth Gordon. After running some tests and finding that the issue was with her heart, she was stabilized and sent to Redmond Regional Medical Center.

"When I got to Redmond, the doctor told me I was having a heart attack right then," said Pack. "They took me to the cath lab and did an emergency stent, and he said my main artery was

100% blocked. He was surprised I was still alive at that point."

After her heart attack, Pack did 36 weeks of cardiac rehab at AdventHealth Gordon. Now, she visits cardiac rehab three times per week to maintain her health.

"The rehab gave me a lot of strength back," said Pack. "I was weak when I first started, but it strengthened my body a lot. I'm not at 100% because I have heart damage, but it has helped so much with my stamina."

AdventHealth Gordon's cardiac rehab program offers personalized recovery plans that include exercise along with the personal attention of physiologists and nurses. Though she doesn't necessarily have to do her exercises



Imogene Pack and Cindy Butler during a cardiac rehab appointment at AdventHealth Gordon. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

at the cardiac rehab facility, Pack chooses to because of Cindy Butler, cardiac rehab clinical coordinator, and the helpful and caring team. "If something goes

wrong or you are having problems, Cindy is there to help you," said Pack. "She is wonderful and works so well with her patients. She puts you at ease and makes sure

you have everything you need. If you're having

See **CARDIAC**, page 10A

# Update from the latest meeting of the Gordon County Board of Commissioners

### Brandi Owczarz staff@gordongazettega.com

The Gordon County Board of Commissioners had an abbreviated meeting on Tuesday night, reviewing and voting on a few items of housekeeping and receiving project updates.

The Board appointed Commissioner Bruce Potts to the Gordon County Board of Health in the CEO designation position, taking the place of former Commissioner Norris Sexton.

The Board approved the appointment of Donna Reeve to the Board of Tax Assessors to fill Lamar Ray's unexpired term ending June 30, 2025.

The Board approved a Hazard Mitigation Assistance Agreement with Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security. The agreement is for a 2017 grant the County applied for to use for emergency warning signs. The grant has come to fruition and the agreement has to be signed; the County pays for the signs up front, around \$40,750 which was already budgeted, then is reimbursed by the grant for all except the County's share, which is just over \$6,000.

Gordon County Administrator Jim Ledbetter gave the following updates:

**SPLOST and LOST** revenue were reported for December 2020 collections. SPLOST collections were \$979,523.30 which is a \$6,429.99 (0.66%) increase over the same period last year. LOST collections were \$620,802.64 which is a \$4,247.01 (0.69%) increase over the same period last year.

**SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS AND ACTIVITY:**

**COVID-19:** The Covid-19 task force met on January 26th. County-wide, public safety has 439 total personnel with four out of service due to COVID. The hospital update (numbers as of Jan. 26 for AdventHealth Gordon) showed 23 COVID-positive patients and no additional patients under investigation. Eight of the 23 were in critical care and 7 were on ventilators. Historical and current Gordon County numbers show Gordon County had an increase of 534 cases and 4 deaths in the two weeks preceding January 26th. The Department of Public Health is currently vaccinating frontline emergency responders and people over age 65.

**JUDICIAL BUILDING**

**CONSTRUCTION:** Steel is onsite and being assembled. The Annex demolition is well underway to get ready for major renovations. County personnel took a virtual tour of the Courthouses in Baldwin and Burke Counties. Those facilities were designed by our architects at Carter and Watkins. This tour helped the personnel look at courtroom layouts, materials and color schemes.

**EMERGENCY RADIO COVERAGE:** County Representatives have moved to a new phase in the investigation of the emergency radio system by beginning to invite Calhoun, Fairmount and others to participate in the task force review and recommendation process. The County is also looking into a grant that should assist with costs to be incurred when upgrades are selected and improved.

**BROADBAND:** The County continues to meet with a broadband provider to attempt to bring service to unserved areas of the county. The Governor's proposed budget includes money for possible grants for broadband.

**ELECTIONS:** Elections have been moved successfully to the new location at 408 Court Street.

**JUDICIARY:**

Congratulations to our District Attorney, Rosemary Greene, on her appointment by the Governor to the Superior Court to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Judge David Smith. Also, congratulations to Lori Moss on her appointment as Juvenile Court Judge to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Judge Lane

Bearden. Judge Moss was appointed by the sitting Superior Court Judges of the Cherokee Judicial Circuit.

**AIRPORT AUTHORITY:** Several years ago, Calhoun and Gordon County each contributed \$150,000 to engineering costs and other expenses at the airport in connection with the new hangars and other

improvements. I am happy to report that the Airport Authority paid us back last week with a check for \$150,000.

The next meeting of the Gordon County Board of Commissioners will be held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 16 at the Administration Building on North Wall Street in downtown Calhoun.



WE'VE GOT JOBS!

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

**CUTTER/GLUER:** \$12/HR, day shift, heavy lifting needed, must pay attention to details-will interview with client and must pass covid test

**EXTRUSION LINE:** \$12.50/hr 8pm to 8am, client wants to see profiles, must have experience running machines, especially extrusion lines. 5 OPENINGS

**GENERAL LABOR:** \$10/hr, 1st shift (7a-3p) 2nd shift (3pm-11pm), will consist of heavy lifting, unloading containers

**PRODUCTION WORKERS:** \$12/hr 7am to 4:30pm, heavy lifters needed for production line work

**CUSTODIAN:** \$11.09/hr, 12pm to 8pm, deep cleaning in facility

**CSR** -entering orders taken via phone, updating order information, checking inventory, etc. Paying temp is about \$11-\$12/hr - Monday - Friday. For now, the hours will be 9:00 - 5:00 when training, but will be adjusted 8:30 - 5:00.

**GENERAL LABOR:** \$10/hr, 12 hour shift- 7p to 7a, 7 days a week right now, lots of over time, bilingual/Spanish is a must! Heavy lifters needed for cutting, sealing boxes, packing, and able to work with variety of people.

**INDUSTRIAL BINDING:** (sewing machine) candidates that have sewing machine experience we will pay them \$14.25 per hour. They must have previous sewing experience. 2nd shift-and work Monday - Thursday 5pm to 3:30am & 6:30AM TO 4:30PM

**GENERAL LABOR:** \$11.25 hour, 8AM TO 5PM & 4pm to 3am approx. ten hour shift-M-Th, warehouse with some heavy lifting needed-sending profiles to client and they will interview-

**1 CAR GREASERS:** rotating days \$12/hr 10-12 hour shifts-if we can't find 2 then 1 would work Mon-Fri 7am-5pm.

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# Obituaries

## February 3, 2021

### Gloria Conaway

Gloria Jean Conaway, 72, of Plainville, died on Jan. 28, 2021, after several years of declining health. She was born on Nov. 21, 1948, to the late Charlie and Lucille Floyd Barker.

Gloria worked at Model High School in the special needs department. She was last employed by Church Chair industries. She loved baking, cooking and planting flower gardens. She adored her grand and great-grandchildren. Mrs. Gloria gave more than she had at times. She was of the Baptist faith.

She is survived by her husband, James White Conaway; son, Shane (Jana) Defoe; daughter, Judy Grant; brother, Tommy Barker; grandchildren, Aleigha Ponto, Katelyn Carlson, and Kelsi Potts; great-grandchildren, Bryleigh Defoe, Cohen Defoe, Mason Ponto, Kaysen Ponto, Aubrey Carlson, Kyle Carlson, and Maylei Ponto; stepson, Darrell (Susan) Conaway; step grandchild, Tiffany Conaway; several friends and other family members also survive.

The family received friends on Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021, from 1 – 3 p.m. at Max Brannon and Sons Funeral Home, with the service following at 3 p.m. in the Chapel of Max Brannon and Sons with Rev. Eddie Manning officiating. Pallbearers were Chris Ponto, Michael Southerland, Charles Luhrman, Harold Davis, and Jeff Allen.

To leave condolences and sign the online guest book please go to, [www.maxbrannonandsons.com](http://www.maxbrannonandsons.com)

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Gloria Jean Conaway.



### Mellanese “Niecy” Correll

Mellanese Wilson “Niecy” Correll, age 89, of Resaca, passed away Sunday afternoon, Jan. 31 at the home of her daughter.

Niecy was born Oct. 26, 1931 in Gordon County, daughter of the late Andrew Jackson Wilson and Pearl Hensley Wilson. She was a homemaker and member of the White Graves Baptist Church. Besides her parents she was preceded in death by her husband, Lester Correll; two brothers, Buford “Burl” Wilson and Jerry Wilson.

She is survived by her son, David Correll and his wife Perri of Dalton; daughter, Brenda Jenkins and her husband Rev. Danny Jenkins of Chatsworth; three sisters, Betty Walraven and Billie Walraven of the Fidel Community and Polly Scott and her husband Bradley of Ranger. Three grandchildren, Dana Jenkins of Chattanooga, Grant Jenkins and his wife Misti of Rocky Face and Dr. Bailey Goodman and her husband Jeremy of Warner Robbins; four great-grandchildren, Ella, Jack and Krew Jenkins and Elizabeth Knottnerus also survives.

Funeral services will be conducted Friday, Feb. 5 at 2 p.m. from the chapel of Thomas Funeral Home with Rev. Isaac Johns officiating. Burial will follow in the White Graves Baptist Church Cemetery.

The family will receive friends Friday from 12 noon until 2 p.m. at the funeral home.

You may send condolences to the family at [www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com](http://www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com)

Due to the ongoing national health crisis, face coverings must be properly worn by all those who plan to attend. Social distancing guidelines must be followed at all times while attending the service.

Thomas Funeral Home has proudly been entrusted with the care of Mellanese Wilson “Niecy” Correll.



### Shawn Fowler

Robert Shawn Fowler, 48, of Calhoun, died Jan. 26, 2021 in Panama City Beach, Fla.

Shawn was born in Atlanta on Jan. 6, 1973, son of Dorothy Underwood Fowler and the late William Larry Fowler. In addition to his father, his mother-in-law, Marty McKinnon in October of 2020, preceded him in death.

He was a man who loved his family and cherished the moments spent with them. He was a member of the 1991 graduating class of Coosa High School where he excelled in football, which earned him an offer to play at the college level with the University of Kentucky. Shawn chose to enter the work force and help support his parents. He was the youngest manager for Office Depot in Dalton at the age of 24; later he joined the Love’s Travel Stop Corporation and climbed the corporate ladder and became the Florida State Manager of Loves Travel Stops, Inc. He and his family currently owned and operated the Bargain Depot in Calhoun. He loved to cook, enjoyed tinkering on automobiles just to teach his son; he loved to travel all over the world with his family, he was an avid scuba diver and taught many of his friends and was a scuba instructor for the YMCA.

Survivors include his wife, Raye McKinnon Fowler, to whom he was married for 18 years; children, Nate Fowler, Dean Evans and Emma Evans; mother, Dorothy Underwood Fowler; sister, Laurie Fowler Hall; nephews, Jacob Hall and Keilan Hall; father-in-law, Roger Loel McKinnon; sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Carol and Jerry Pruett; aunt, Johnette Underwood; several cousins, along with other relatives.



The family received friends Tuesday, Feb. 2 at Rock Bridge Community Church, 905 Curtis Parkway, Calhoun, GA 30701 between the hours of 4 p.m. until the service hour of 6 p.m. Rev. Tim Langston and Rev. Fred McCoy officiated. Stephen Hare and Ben Honeycutt arranged music. A private graveside service will follow on Wednesday at Fain Cemetery. Pallbearers serving will include Nathan Serritt, Kevin Couch, Keith Youngblood, Jose’ Perez, Matt McKinnon, Chris Yearwood, Barry Casey, and Jeff Turner. Michael Abrams will serve as honorary pallbearer.

Online condolences may be expressed and the guest book signed at [www.maxbrannonandsons.com](http://www.maxbrannonandsons.com)

Due to the national health crisis, it is suggested that masks be worn and social distancing guidelines be observed to protect your health as well as the well-being of others in attendance.

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Robert Shawn Fowler of Calhoun.



### Annelle Holcomb

Mrs. Annelle Evans Holcomb, age 91, passed away peacefully at her home on Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2021, surrounded by her loving family.

Mrs. Holcomb was born in Cartersville on Jan. 3, 1930, daughter of the late Cullman Leroy Evans and Lucille Bagwell Evans. Mrs. Holcomb was a devout Christian; a faithful member of Adairsville Baptist Church, and past member of Snow Springs Baptist Church. She served on numerous committees, loved singing in the choir, active in WMU, taught J. Billy Graham Sunday School Class, and Vacation Bible School. She married the love of her life, Otis in 1953. Together they raised five children and owned and operated S & H Super Market in Adairsville for 43 years. Always active in her community, she had served in many civic organizations. She was blessed with a beautiful voice and love for music. She will be remembered as a gracious and kind lady who always thought of others.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Otis Erwin Holcomb; brother, Henry Leroy Evans, and sister, Claudia Evans Haynes.

She is survived by her loving children, Annelle (Ann) Evans Lukowski, Lynn and Phillip Dean, Erwin and Deb Holcomb, Ernest and Melissa Holcomb, and Melanie Holcomb; 9 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren; nephew, David and Tina Erwin.

Funeral services will be held Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021, at 2:30 p.m. at Adairsville Baptist Church with Pastor Eric Sorrell and Rev. Michael Hunt officiating. The family will receive friends Wednesday from 12 – 2 p.m. at Adairsville Baptist Church. Interment will follow in Eastview Cemetery, Adairsville. Pallbearers will be Carter Wilson, Chess Wilson, Norman Parker, David Erwin, Tony Erwin, and Tim Warren; honorary pallbearers will be the former “Bag Boys” of S & H Super Market and the Deacons of the Adairsville Baptist Church.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the Adairsville Baptist Church, P. O. Box 301, Adairsville, Georgia, 30103.

Family and friends attending services will be required to wear face mask and observe social distancing.

Sign the guestbook and leave online condolences at [www.BartonFuneralHome.net](http://www.BartonFuneralHome.net)

R. Dudley Barton & Son Funeral Home, Adairsville, is in charge of funeral arrangements for Mrs. Annelle Evans Holcomb.

### Barton Funeral Home

### Rev. Edgar Pasley

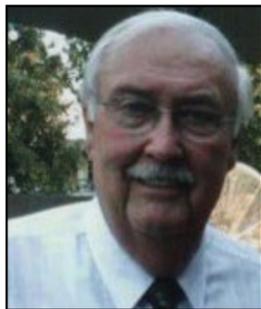
Rev. Edgar W. Pasley, 78, of Adairsville, died peacefully Saturday, Jan. 30 at his residence while surrounded by his loving family.

Rev. Pasley was born Aug. 2, 1942 in Bartow County, son of the late Jesse and Daphene Adcock Pasley. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his precious wife, Maybelle Brown Pasley on June 23, 2016; son-in-law, Timmy Griffin; granddaughter, Candace Pasley; and sister, Wanda Jean Hale and brother, Jerry Pasley.

Rev. Pasley, with his wife by his side, pastored for 50 years at various churches including Towe’s Chapel Church of God, Fairview Church of God, Chatsworth Church of God, Beech Creek Church of God, and Rockmart Church of God. Also, he was assistant pastor of Adairsville Church of God.

He leaves behind his sons and daughters-in-law, Michael and Cheryl Pasley, and Todd and Colleen Pasley; his daughters and sons-in-law, Naketa Griffin, Susan and Johnny Roberson; Mellisa and David Hollifield; grandchildren, Jeremy Griffin, Jill Griffin Brown, Tara Ewell, Robbie Turner, Matt Roberson, Cole Pasley, Lynnsey Hollifield, Madison Hollifield and Greyson Hollifield; several great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren; sister and brother-in-law, Glenda and Manuel Gilbert, along with other relatives.

Service to celebrate the life of Rev. Edgar W. Pasley was conducted Monday, Feb. 1 at 2 p.m. from Adairsville Church of God with Rev. Johnny



Parker, Church of God Overseer Rev. Terry Addis, Cole Pasley, and Rev. Mike Pasley officiating. Entombment followed at East View Cemetery in Adairsville, Georgia. Pallbearers serving included Jeremy Griffin, Cole Pasley, Greyson Hollifield, Matt Roberson, Dallas Sanford, and Brent Holden. Honorary pallbearers include Donnie Nichols, James Keith, Ernest Blaylock, Larry Woodring, and Ed Williams.

The family received friends Sunday, Jan. 31 between the hours of 5 – 8 p.m. at the funeral home.

Online condolences may be expressed, and the guest book signed at [www.maxbrannonandsons.com](http://www.maxbrannonandsons.com). The funeral service will be recorded and can be viewed on the funeral home website following the service.

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Rev. Edgar W. Pasley of Adairsville.



### Ronald “Ron” Patrick

Sherman Ronald “Ron” Patrick, age 85, of Calhoun, passed away on Monday, Feb. 1, 2021 at Tranquility of Dalton Senior Living Home in Dalton.

Ron was born on Aug. 20, 1935 in Newton County, son of the late Ralph Emerson Patrick and Annie Brown Patrick. In addition to his parents, Ron is also preceded in death by his wife, Beverly Stoner Patrick; two sons-in-law, Kent Dean and Michael Worley; granddaughter, Rebecca Patrick; brother, Cecil Patrick; and three sisters, Connie Payne, Bernice Ott, and Flora Brooks.

Ron was a veteran of the United States Navy and served during Korea. Ron was a member of the Leo Masonic Lodge #224 F&AM of Leo, Indiana, Leo American Legion of Leo, Indiana for over 50 years and where he served as a past commander, and the Calhoun Elks Lodge of Calhoun. Ron was an avid golfer and could land a hole in one on the fly, had a good humor, and never met a stranger. Prior to his retirement, Ron worked as a mechanic.

Ron is survived by: two sons, Wade Patrick and his wife Mickey, and James David Scanlon and his wife Ina; three daughters, Selina Schwanitz and her husband Paul, Sabrina Dean, and Claudia Worley; brother, Kenneth Patrick; nine grandchildren, Sommer Bennett and her husband Brandon, Brandi Miller and her husband Matt, Sayward Fite and her husband Adam, Samantha Spinks and her husband Chris, Joseph Patrick and his wife Amber, Stephany Gaspard, Katie McFalls and her husband Chris, Jeremy Gaspard and his wife Lindsey, and John Dean; and twelve great-grandchildren.

The family will receive friends on Friday, Feb. 5, 2021 from 9 a.m. until the funeral hour at 11 a.m. at Thomas Funeral Home.

Funeral Services will be conducted on Friday, Feb. 5, 2021 at 11 a.m. from the Chapel of Thomas Funeral Home with Reverend Jether Cochran officiating. Interment will follow in Gordon Memorial Gardens with full military honors and masonic graveside rites.

Pallbearers serving include: Wade Patrick, Brandon Bennett, Chris Spinks, Jeremy Gaspard, John Dean, and Paul Schwanitz. Adam Fite will serve as an honorary pallbearer.

You may leave the family online condolences at [www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com](http://www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com)

Thomas Funeral Home has proudly been entrusted with the care of Sherman Ronald “Ron” Patrick.



### Robert Walker

Robert Thomas Walker, age 55, of Calhoun, passed away on Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021 in Earle, AR.

He was preceded in death by: his father, Tom Walker; and son, Christopher Walker; and grandson Gunner Walker.

Robert is survived by his mother, Bonnie Walker of Calhoun; sister, Gale Parris of Calhoun; and grandson, Gavin Walker of Calhoun.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

You may leave the family online condolences at [www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com](http://www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com)

Thomas Funeral Home has proudly been entrusted with the care of Robert Thomas Walker.



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RELIGION

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All believers have a desire to please God, but just how do we do that? The way to please God is through faithfulness.

Hebrews 11:6, 7 says this... But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Faithfulness is acting on your faith. Noah was living his life faithfully to God. There's not many things bigger

than the ark that God instructed Noah to build. I mean how many of you are like me, in that you'd love to be used of God to save the human race. But I don't think that Noah was focused on the big picture of saving the human race. Noah was faithful to God everyday, no matter what others said. Otherwise, God wouldn't have trusted him with the ark.

So Noah was faithful in what? Let's consider some things that he was faithful in, that we too should strive to be faithful in...

First of all, Noah was faithful to God in using

his talents for God's glory. We should be also. God has given all of us talents that we could use for His glory. Whether it is to sing, to teach, to draw, to play sports, to play certain instruments or to work behind the scenes, we need to be found faithful in using our talents.

Another thing Noah was faithful in, that we too should be, was in evangelism. I'm sure that Noah spent time telling others about his experience with God. If you are a believer, then that would mean that you have had an experience with God as well.

According to Acts 1:8, we have received power from the Holy Spirit, and we WILL be witnesses unto God.

Noah was also faithful to God in his worship. I believe everytime that Noah hammered a part of the ark together, it was a joyful noise.

John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. Our worship of the Lord shouldn't be about who is around, when it takes place; not even where or how it takes place. Y'all want to know a secret?? Not everybody worships

like you! Not everyone expresses their love for God the way you do!

Lastly, we need to be faithful in our "one-anothers." We need to love one another. We need to serve one another. And, of course, we need to encourage one another.

This is the faithfulness God is looking for. We can't step out and do big things for God until we do the small things.

How do you please God? You live a faithful life! Do you want to do something big for God? Start out with faithfulness.

Be Blessed.

Church Calendar

ONGOING

**-Philadelphia Christian School is located off Highway 41 between Calhoun and Adairsville.** The school offers 4-year-old kindergarten through 12th grade, using the A-Beka curriculum. To find out more about the school, call the office at 706-625-3233.

**-Faith Deliverance Ministry and Outreach** will be taking donations of clothes, shoes, also all house hold items to help needy families. Call Minister Evelyn Adams at 706-671-7988.

**-Celebrate Recovery, a faith based 12-step program, meets every Tuesday at 6 p.m. at Relevate Church** in Ranger off 411. Call Nicole for information: 706-979-4713/706-290-8028.

**-East Calhoun Church of God, at 401 Peters Street,** gives out groceries and clothing through the "Feed the Needy" ministry each Saturday from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The church hosts a miracle healing service every first Friday at 7 p.m. For more information, contact "Feed the Needy" ministry director Florence Jones at 706-409-1981. Senior pastor is Keith Reid.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

**Fairmount United Methodist Church-Loving One Another To Christ. Sunday School at 10 a.m.; Worship Service at 11 a.m.** Children's Church provided. New Minister now Leading. New programs and community outreach coming soon.

**-Pastor Terry Reisner invites everyone to the Vision Pentecostal Ministry** located at 401 South Wall Street in Calhoun. Come hear the truth of God's Word Sundays at 11 a.m.

**--Pine Chapel United Methodist Church,** located at 2232 Pine Chapel Road in Resaca, "A place to begin, belong and become." Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m. Pastor Louise W. Elmore.

**-Resaca Assembly of God, located at 904 Resaca Lafayette Rd NW,** would like to welcome everyone to please come and join in worship and meet our Pastor Steve Burns and his lovely wife Cathy. Sunday school at 10

a.m., worship service on Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.. Everyone is invited.

**-Calhoun First United Methodist Church Sunday Worship times:** 9:00 a.m., traditional worship; 10 a.m., Sunday school; 11 a.m., contemporary service (in the CAC). Calhoun First UMC is located at 205 East Line Street in downtown Calhoun.

**-First Presbyterian Church,** located at 829 Red Bud Road N.E. in Calhoun. Pastor David McDonald invites you to join us on Sunday for Sunday School at 9:45 a.m., Worship Service at 11 a.m., and Bible Study Class Tuesday 10 a.m.

**-Oakman Baptist Church located at 397 Oakman Rd. Oakman, Georgia,** has Sunday school at 10 a.m. Covered dish dinner every third Sunday following worship. Everyone is invited!

**-Damascus Baptist Church, located on North Highway 41** in Calhoun, Sunday School at 10 a.m. Sunday worship at 11 a.m. and Sunday night at 6 p.m.

**-Old Sugar Valley United Methodist Church located at 2659 Old Rome Dalton Road in Calhoun** has Breakfast Social at 9:30 am every Sunday. The church history is colorful, dating back to the Civil War, small cozy country church nothing fancy! Come join us!

**-Faith Deliverance Ministry and Outreach with Evelyn M. Adams,** Minister has been ordained as a Minister of the Gospel since 1972. Call anytime to come minister to your church of place or event at 706-337-3241. 24-hour prayer line at 706-671-7988. Send all prayer requests to P.O Box 394, Fairmount GA, 30139.

**-Pleasant Valley Baptist Church is a Bible believing & teaching church located in the Red Bud Community.** Pastor Keith Gibson and the congregation invite you to come and worship with us at 3882 Red Bud Rd., Calhoun. Opportunities for worship: Bible Study for all ages 10 a.m., Children's Church up to 5th grade 11a.m., Worship service 11 a.m. Wednesday night service times Prayer Bible Study and Student Ministries 7 p.m. 706-624-0198, Find us on Facebook or email pvbcalhoun@gmail.com

**-Maranatha Baptist**

**Church on Hwy 225 across from paradise Drag Strip,** Calhoun would like to invite you to attend our services for Sunday School starting at 10 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m. Wednesday Night Services are at 7 p.m. Everyone is Welcome. Pastor Richard Webster.

**-Evangelistic Outreach Ministries on 1590 Dews Pond Road.** Pastor Mark Kirby invites everyone to Fellowship and Worship with us. Children's Church on Sunday Services starts at 11:00am Childrens Church starts at 11:30am. Wednesday nights Bible Study 7:00pm-8:00pm. Come out and see what the Lord is doing!

**-The College Street Church of God, 731 College St., Calhoun,** 706-483-3666, pastor Dewayne Smith, holds weekly services: Sunday school at 10 a.m., Sunday; morning worship at 11 a.m., Sunday; Sunday night service at 6 p.m.; and Bible study on Wednesday at 7 p.m.

**-Victory Fellowship Center, 925 Oothcalooga St.,** invites you to weekly worship services held at 11 a.m. every Sunday morning. Pastor Joe Stewart and the VFC family also invite everyone to join each Wednesday at noon and 7:30 p.m. for anointed and enlightening Bible studies. If you are looking to grow in your understanding of God's plan for your life and gain greater insight of the life changing power of His word, come and join us as we study the word.

**-Boone Ford Baptist Church invites you to attend its services for Sunday School** starting at 10 a.m. and Worship services at 11 a.m. every Sunday. Sunday night services are at 6 p.m. on the first and third Sunday night of each month. Wednesday night services start at 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome. Gary Quarles, pastor.

**-Pleasant Hill Baptist Church and Pastor David Peeler invite everyone to attend weekly services.** Sunday School begins at 10 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. Sunday evening activities and discipleship training begin at 6 p.m., and children's and youth programs at 7 p.m. Wednesday service begins at 7 p.m., along with Bible study programs for children and youth.

**-Pastor Steve Corbin**

**invites everyone to regular services at New Zion Baptist Church.** Sunday School is at 10 a.m., worship service at 11 a.m. and Sunday night service at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday night Bible study is at 7:15 a.m. Everyone is welcome.

**-Greater Mt. Tabor Baptist Church, 259 Herring Road, NW, Armuchee,** invites you to come worship and fellowship with us on Sunday morning at 11 a.m. Pastor Reginald McDaniel and Church Family also welcome you to attend Mid-Week Bible Study, Wednesday evening at 6 p.m. and Sunday School at 10 a.m.. We are a church on the move for Christ, come share with us as we grow in the Word of God.

**-Resaca First Baptist Church and**

**Pastor Rev. Harold Blackstock** would like to invite you to attend our Sunday School at 10 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. Sunday night service is at 6 p.m. Wednesday night service at 6 p.m. for children and youth.

**-Liberty Baptist Church Pastor Gene Ratcliff invites everyone to church services in Ranger;** service times are 10 a.m. Sunday School, 11 a.m. Sunday worship and 7 p.m. Wednesday worship.

**-Brother Joe Hall and the congregation of Ranger Baptist invite everyone to its regular services on Sunday morning.** Sunday School begins at 10 a.m. Worship is Wednesday night with dinner at 6:30 p.m. and Bible study at 7 p.m. For more information, call 706-629-3425.

**-Oak Grove Baptist Church of Adairsville is located at 997 Brownlee Mountain Road S.W.** Service times are Sunday school 9:45 a.m., with worship at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sunday and 7 p.m. on Wednesday. Pastor: Roger Fisher.

**-Fellowship Baptist Church of Plainville** will hold a Brotherhood Breakfast on the second Sunday of each month at 8 a.m.

**-Hope in Christ Ministries, 306 Peters St., is holding services every Sunday morning.** Adult Bible Study starts at 10 a.m. with praise/worship service at 11 a.m. Bishop W. S. (Billy) Weems is the pastor. Rev. Earnest Diamond Jr. is assistant pastor. For more information, call the church at 706-602-2433.







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Family Medicine

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Family Medicine

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Neurosurgery and  
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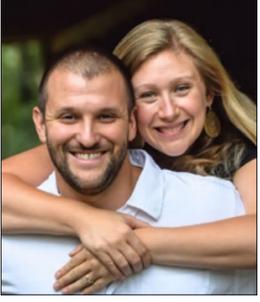


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## FINANCE

## CASH FLOW WITH JOE: Why we use private money lenders



**Joe & Ashley English**  
Owners of Focus Property Solutions, LLC  
focuspropertysolutionsllc@gmail.com

What I'm about to tell you may come as a shock, but I have only applied for a mortgage through a bank one time in my life... and I was denied. To make that fact more interesting, you should know that it happened in February of 2020.

I have to tell you I was little surprised myself. It happened as Ashley and I

were expecting baby No. 3 and were looking for a place with more room for our new addition. It just so happened that we had a flip we were in the process of finishing, and it could provide us with the extra space. Our plan was to buy it from our flip company at a discount, still giving the flip company a profit but also affording us plenty of equity to make the loan better.

We approached a mortgage broker we had used to qualify many of our buyers in the past. She noticed my credit score was high and said we should be good to go. But we got denied.

The reason was, according to our mortgage broker, that our tax return made it look like we didn't make much income.

You see, rental properties afford many write-offs for a real estate investor that lowers their

taxable income. That doesn't mean the income didn't exist. What it means is the IRS allows for many deductions, such as depreciation, that lower a landlord's bottom line on their tax return. So, even though we had consistent income and a great credit score, because of the nature of our business and how it manifested on our tax returns, we were considered too much of risk.

I had to laugh. Especially since we already owned that house and have been buying houses consistently for both personal and investment purposes since 2010.

Now, you may be asking yourself how in the world we have been able to do that if we can't qualify for a loan. I have talked to you at length about using creative deal structuring to buy houses. But another thing that has made it

possible has been the use of private money lenders.

A private money lender is a normal person who has funds they would like to invest and grow at a rate better than what money market, CD and other saving accounts offer. And when I say, "a normal person," I mean they come from all sorts of backgrounds. We have lenders with jobs that range from secretary to pilots, mechanic, utility worker and small business owner, just to name a few. One time, we did a deal in a trailer park where the next door neighbor became a lender for us.

There are lots of reasons why I love using private money lenders. The biggest is that they use their heads to evaluate a deal as opposed to relying on policy and procedure that may not be one size fits all. (like the one that disqualified us from that

mortgage).

Speed and ease of use are huge. Let me give you two instances. Once we had a REO property under contract that Bank Of America owned. They were dragging their feet until I got a call from them saying they wanted to close the next day. I wasn't sure we could get funds there in time with such short notice, but I told them I would try. I called my pilot lender as he was prepping a plane to fly to Germany. He said he wasn't sure it could be done either, but he would check. Ten minutes later, I get a text saying we were good to go. And sure enough, we closed the next day.

That's fast.

The other instance happened when we were supposed to be selling a house and we needed a payoff from our lender. My lenders and I wait until we have a closing

date and time set before we calculate a payoff because closings are often postponed. On this house, we were supposed to close on a Wednesday, but my agent told me Monday that the buyers still had not gotten the clear to close from their lender.

Tuesday evening, however, I got a text from my agent saying we would in fact close on Wednesday. I was able to contact my lender, get a payoff drafted and sent before our closing attorney made it into the office the next day. You just can't do things that quickly with banks, and that's one of the many reasons why I love my private money lenders.

*Joe and Ashley English buy houses and mobile homes in Northwest Georgia. For more information or to ask a question, go to [www.cashflowwithjoe.com](http://www.cashflowwithjoe.com) or call Joe at 678-986-6813.*

## FINANCIAL FOCUS: With Ultra-low Rates, Should You Still Invest in Bonds?



**Dewayne Bowen**  
Financial Advisor at Edward Jones  
[dewayne.bowen@edwardjones.com](mailto:dewayne.bowen@edwardjones.com)

If you've been investing for many years and you've owned bonds, you've seen some pretty big changes on your financial statements. In 2000, the average yield on a 10-year U.S. Treasury security was about 6%; in 2010, it

had dropped to slightly over 3%, and for most of 2020, it was less than 1%. That's an enormous difference, and it may lead you to this question: With yields so low on bonds, why should you even consider them?

Of course, while the 10-year Treasury note is an important benchmark, it doesn't represent the returns on any bonds you could purchase. Typically, longer-term bonds, such as those that mature in 20 or 30 years, pay higher rates to account for inflation and to reward you for locking up your money for many years. But the same downward trend can be seen in these longer-term bonds, too – in 2020, the average 30-year Treasury bond

yield was only slightly above 1.5%.

Among other things, these numbers mean that investors of 10 or 20 years ago could have gotten some reasonably good income from investment-grade bonds. But today, the picture is different. (Higher-yield bonds, sometimes known as "junk" bonds, can offer more income but carry a higher risk of default.)

Nonetheless, while rates are low now, you may be able to employ a strategy that can help you in any interest-rate environment. You can build a bond "ladder" of individual bonds that mature on different dates. When market interest rates are low, you'll still have your longer-term

bonds earning higher yields (and long-term yields, while fluctuating, are expected to rise in the future). When interest rates rise, your maturing bonds can be reinvested at these new, higher levels. Be sure you evaluate whether a bond ladder and the securities held within it are consistent with your investment objectives, risk tolerance and financial circumstances.

Furthermore, bonds can provide you with other benefits. For one thing, they can help diversify your portfolio, especially if it's heavily weighted toward stocks. Also, stock and bond prices often (although not always) move in opposite directions, so if the stock market goes

through a down period, the value of your bonds may rise. And bonds are usually less volatile than stocks, so they can have a "calming" effect on your portfolio. Plus, if you hold your bonds until maturity, you will get your entire principal back (providing the bond issuer doesn't default, which is generally unlikely if you own investment-grade bonds), so bond ownership gives you a chance to preserve capital while still investing.

But if the primary reason you have owned bonds is because of the income they offer, you may have to look elsewhere during periods of ultra-low interest rates. For example, you could invest in dividend-

paying stocks. Some stocks have long track records of increasing dividends, year after year, giving you a potential source of rising income. (Keep in mind, though, that dividends can be increased, decreased or eliminated at any time.) Be aware, though, that stocks are subject to greater risks and market movements than bonds.

Ultimately, while bonds may not provide the income they did a few years ago, they can have a place in a long-term investment strategy. Consider how they might fit into yours.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.*

## CONSUMER ED: Paying off old debt

CONTRIBUTED

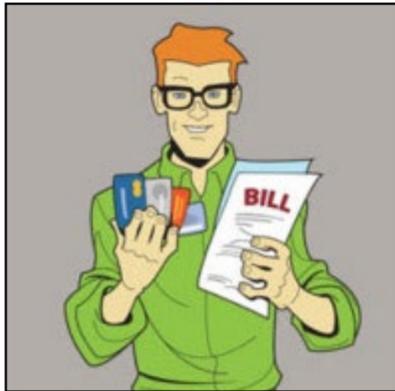
Dear Consumer Ed:

I had a bill that went into collections. Now that I've paid it in full, will this continue to negatively affect my credit?

Consumer Ed says:

It depends. There are different credit scoring models, so it depends on which model a particular lender uses. Some newer models ignore collection items if they have a zero balance, so your credit score may improve once you pay off the outstanding balance. However, older credit scoring models do not ignore collection items with a zero balance. For those older scoring models, any bill that goes into collections is subject to a seven-year reporting period, regardless of whether the account is subsequently settled. The seven years begins 180 days after the account becomes delinquent. That means paying off a collection item will not have a positive impact on your credit score until seven years have elapsed.

However, practicing good credit habits starting now can help to improve your score over time. The two main components of healthy credit habits



are paying current and future bills on time and keeping your outstanding debt low.

You can check your credit score for free on Experian's and Equifax's websites, as well as some other sites, such as [creditkarma.com](http://creditkarma.com).

To see what information is on your credit file, you should review a copy of your credit report from each of the three credit reporting agencies (Experian, Equifax and TransUnion). In consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic, all three of the credit reporting agencies are now offering free weekly online reports through April 2021. To access your free credit report, go to [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com).

## GORDON Gazette

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# GORDON GROWN

## Growing Home Garden Tomatoes



**Greg Bowman**  
Gordon County  
Extension Agent  
gbowman@uga.edu

This article will be the second in a two-part series on growing tomatoes in the home vegetable garden.

Last week we centered on variety selection with additional data on when to plant plus information on growing your plants from seed or purchasing transplants. This week, we will go into more important practices to consider when growing garden tomatoes. I will be sharing information from a UGA publication by Bob Westerfield, UGA Extension Horticulturist.

For a quick review

in variety selection, remember there are several considerations for the gardener.

First, most varieties are selected and grown based on personal preference along with family tradition.

People will favor certain varieties and at times will plant based on what the family has grown in the past.

You need to consider the goal for the tomatoes. Do you need determinate varieties that gives the bulk of the harvest in a few pickings for canning or do you want varieties that can give fruit up to fall frost? There can be advantages of growing varieties that have resistance to some of our pest issues also.

Just like the last article, I will remind that you still have time to take a proper \$9 soil test to obtain liming and fertilizing recommendations from the UGA Soil Test Lab.

Tomato plants prefer soil that will drain excess moisture well and is also amended with organic

matter.

Tomato plants also prefer a pH in the 6.2 to 6.8 range. We have the tendency to be more acidic or lower soil pH in our area. This is why a soil test is important so you will know your soil pH in the garden and be able to lime off a soil test recommendation. It can take a while for lime to adjust pH so this is why taking a soil sample months before growing season can be helpful. Dolomitic lime can also provide calcium and magnesium to the soil which are important elements for plant growth and health.

Westerfield states that if the pH comes back normal, but the calcium level is low based off the soil test report, you can apply gypsum at the rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet of tomato garden area.

When you plant, you only need to select healthy tomato transplants. You may have heard experienced gardeners recommend to plant tomatoes deep.

Note that tomatoes can develop roots all along the stem. You need to plant them deeply to help aid strong root system development. You should set the transplants down to the first set of true leaves near the soil surface.

Also, if the transplants are in peat pots, it is not necessary according to Westerfield to remove the container. You do need to plant deep enough so the peat pot container is not exposed to the soil surface. This could lead to the root ball drying out. You should firm the soil around the plants to force out any air pockets.

When you plant, you should give the tomato plants a light fertilization. This can be done with a starter solution. Our information recommends to pour about 1 pint of starter solution (2 tablespoons of 5-10-10 or 5-10-5 fertilizer dissolved in 1 gallon of water) around each plant.

Westerfield states that if tomato plants are to be steaked or trellised, you should space them

24 inches apart in rows that are 4 to 6 feet apart. Staking tomato plants can be extra work early in the growing season, but it can make tomato care overall easier. Staking will also keep tomato foliage from touching the soil which can reduce disease issues.

Mulch can be a big benefit when growing tomatoes. You should mulch soon after planting in the garden. Mulch material can be weed-free straw, chopped leaves or compost per our literature.

Mulch can reduce weed problems and conserve soil moisture. Don't forget that you can use newspaper in the mulching effort. Lay the newspaper about three sheets thick around each plant to act as a weed barrier and also to conserve moisture. You then put a 2 to 3-inch layer of your organic mulch on top of the newspaper.

Westerfield does add that synthetic weed barrier rolls are also an option. They work best

when laid down over the beds prior to planting transplants. You can make small slits in the material in order to plant the tomato transplants.

Note that soil or small stakes may be needed on the edges of the material to keep the material secured to the ground on windy days.

Make plans for irrigation of tomatoes. The use of drip irrigation or soaker hoses is recommended. This can help keep foliage dry thus less disease issues. Soaker hoses can be laid near each plant above the soil, but under the mulch layer. Tomatoes need 1 to 2 inches of water per week depending on the soil type. If rainfall does not take care of watering needs, water plants completely once or twice per week.

For more information, contact UGA Extension-Gordon County at 706-629-8685 or email gbowman@uga.edu.

## Seven “Wander-ful” Spring Break experiences for the family

### Top 7 ideas for a spring outdoor escape in Georgia’s State Parks & Historic Sites

#### GEORGIA DNR

A visit to any Georgia’s State Parks and Historic Sites will leave guests wanting to experience even more. From parks listed as one of the “Top Places to Visit in the U.S.” by Buzzfeed, to parks considered to be one of the “20 Wild and Beautiful State Parks in the U.S.” by National Geographic, the options are endless, affordable and allow families to check adventures off of their bucket lists. Experience the opportunities available to park goers as the weather warms up and gear up for the seven can’t-miss adventures.

**Astrotourism: Camping Under the Stars** – Pack the tent and build cherished memories while toasting s’mores. Camping encourages the entire family to enjoy the simple pleasures of swapping stories while looking up at the stars. All campgrounds have water and electric hookups, hot showers and site-specific reservations. Many have full hookups, and leashed dogs are welcome. GaStateParks.org/Camping

Insider Tip: Stephen C. Foster in the Okefenokee Swamp, a certified Dark Sky Park, is a perfect location to start for awe-inspiring views of the stars and more.

**Glamping Yurts** – Want to camp without the hassle of pitching a tent? A yurt is the perfect option and provides a unique and affordable way to escape to the great outdoors. These funky wood and canvas structures are a blend between a tent and cabin, with furniture inside and fire rings outside. Guests can even walk to nearby hot showers. Yurts are available at Cloudland Canyon, Red Top Mountain, High Falls, Fort Yargo, Sweetwater Creek and Tugaloo state parks. GaStateParks.org/

UniqueAccommodations Insider Tip: Anglers, High Falls’ yurt village lets you stay on a premier fishing lake in middle Georgia.

**Basecamp for Exploration: Cozy Cabins** – For an affordable and cozy staycation, book a cabin or cottage surrounded by beautiful scenery. Ranging from one to three bedrooms, state park cabins come with fully equipped kitchens, screened porches and a wide range of activities right outside the door. Choose from mini golf, nature trails, archery, disc golf and more. Bring the four-legged family members along when you reserve a dog-friendly cabin in advance. GaStateParks.org/Cottages

Insider Tip: Many parks have added more dog-friendly cabins for 2021, including Richard B. Russell, Elijah Clark and Hard Labor Creek.

**Junior Rangers** – Open to all ages, each park has its own badge (59 of them). Children will have fun learning in the outdoors as they work toward earning Junior Ranger badges from more than 50 state parks and historic sites. By following the activity books, those who partake in this fun opportunity will experience nature first-hand and explore Georgia’s fascinating history. Learn more at GaStateParks.org/JuniorRanger.

Insider Tip: The newly revamped Junior Ranger program is open to all ages, good for day-dates with friends or mid-day “schoolcations” while homeschooling.

**Club Challenges for all ages and skill levels** – Discover the wonders of nature through your children’s eyes. Georgia’s State Parks offer a variety of hiking, padding and biking paths, from easy paved loops to

challenging backcountry trails. Energetic explorers can join Canyon Climbers, Park Paddlers or Muddy Spokes clubs while wearing members-only t-shirts. Learn more at GaStateParks.org/ParkActivities, GaStateParks.org/ParkClubs and GaStateParks.org/TailsOnTrailsClub.

Insider Tip: Bring Fido along for the Tails on Trails Club, and he will get a matching bandana too.

**Go Fishing** – Grab your rod and reel and head out for a day of fishing at parks like High Falls or Reed Bingham. There is no fee for casting a line, but a license is required for ages 16 and older. For families who would like to take their adventure up a notch, many state parks rent boats by the hour. GaStateParks.org/ParkFishing

Insider Tip: The state record blue catfish – 80 pounds – was caught in 2019 at Florence Marina State Park on Lake Walter F. George.

**Travel Back in Time** – Mix entertainment with education when you step back in time at Georgia’s state historic sites. Children can explore colonial times at Fort Morris and Fort King George, or Civil War bunkers at Fort McAllister. To learn about Native American history, visit Kolomoki Mounds, New Echota, Chief Vann House and Etowah Indian Mounds. Even more historic sites are listed on GaStateParks.org/History.

Insider Tip: 2021 marks the 300th anniversary of Fort King George, the first British fort in colonial Georgia.

Rest assured that the list of exploration opportunities does not stop here. During the day, park goers can enjoy a number of activities including kayaking, geocaching, paddle boarding, hiking,



bird watching, waterfall chasing and so much more. Start planning the spring break excursion of the year today at GaStateParks.org/Map.

#### About Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites

Georgia’s State Parks & Historic Sites are affordable destinations for vacations and quick getaways. Waterfalls and lakes, salt marsh

and mountains are just some of the beautiful environments of the state parks. Georgia State Park Golf Courses offer the best variety and value around. With eight golf courses to choose from, each feature natural settings and picturesque surroundings, as well as fun and challenging play. Most state parks offer fishing, boating, hiking, camping, geocaching,

birding and more. Accommodations include campsites, cabins, lodges, even yurts, and vary by park. Among the Georgia State Historic Sites are presidential homes, ancient Indian mounds, battlefields, plantations and even a gold museum. Georgia’s public libraries have Park Passes and Historic Site Passes that can be checked out like a book.

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# HEALTH NEWS

## GEORGIA HEALTH NEWS: State is years behind in reporting on Medicaid program quality

**Rebecca Grapevine , Georgia Health News**

Federal law requires states to update their plans for improving Medicaid health care quality at least every three years.

Georgia, however, published its most recent quality plan in February 2016. It's at least two years out of date.

The guidelines aim to ensure members in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (known as PeachCare in Georgia) get quality health care and state taxpayers get a good return on their investment.

"With the large state investment in Medicaid, the state should have the information it needs to hold the contracted organizations accountable and ensure they are best serving the needs of enrollees," said Laura Harker, senior policy analyst at Georgia Budget and Policy Institute.

Medicaid and PeachCare provide health insurance to about 2 million low-income and disabled Georgians, most of them children. Georgia, like most other states, contracts with private insurance companies to provide health care services for most Medicaid members and all 150,000 or so PeachCare kids. In Georgia, these contractors are called Care Management Organizations (CMOs).

The four CMOs in Georgia — Amerigroup, CareSource, Peach State, and WellCare — are paid a total of about \$4 billion annually for these services.

Sarah Somers, a managing attorney at the National Health Law Program, pointed out that the state pays each CMO a set amount for each patient's care. If the companies do not spend all of that on patient care, they keep the money, as in most other state Medicaid systems, she said. "Without information about how they're delivering care, how well they're doing it, you're not being a good steward of taxpayer money," Somers added.

Georgia's 2016 quality strategy report detailed a range of Medicaid rules, such as:

\*\* How many doctors, dentists, and mental health professionals that CMO networks must provide in a given geographic range;

\*\* Acceptable wait times to see a health provider;

\*\* Plans for addressing health disparities;

\*\*Quality reporting guidelines for the CMOs;

\*\*Standards and sanctions for the CMOs.

The 2016 Georgia report said the state would publish a new quality strategy in 2020. It is now February 2021 — and no new plan is forthcoming.

Other Southern states all updated their Medicaid strategies within the three-year-window the federal government requires.

Tennessee updated its plan in 2020, earlier than required, due to COVID. South Carolina's Medicaid agency will soon update its strategy with changes that reflect the COVID crisis, said an agency spokesperson via email.

When asked about Georgia's outdated report, Department of Community Health (DCH) spokeswoman Fiona Roberts said in an email that the federal agency

that oversees the program — the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) — "is aware" of the situation.

DCH will publish a new quality plan in spring 2021, Roberts added, which will be two years after the 2019 deadline.

GHN reported in December that after consistently submitting information about how its Medicaid program and PeachCare were delivering care, the state for the last two years reported only a fraction of the quality information that federal health officials request.

Since 2016 — when the last quality strategy report was published in Georgia — the Medicaid program has changed in major ways.

Centene, a Fortune 100 company that already owned Georgia CMO Peach State, acquired WellCare, a second state CMO, in January 2020.

Georgia partially expanded Medicaid eligibility for low-income adults, provided they meet certain requirements.

And, back in 2017, Georgia added CareSource to its Medicaid roster. CareSource, a nonprofit corporation headquartered in Dayton, Ohio, now operates in five states.

### Some goals missed

Until last week, Georgians lacked data about how CareSource performed on things like postpartum care, childhood immunizations, lead screening, and diabetes treatment. After repeated queries from GHN, Community Health released the missing CareSource report and posted it on the agency's website. "Thank you for bringing the oversight to our attention," Roberts, the agency spokesperson, said in an email.

CareSource covers about 237,000 Georgians, or 11% of the state's Medicaid/PeachCare population. The state paid CareSource \$656 million for patient care in 2019, according to a state auditor's report from last summer.

Out of the 45 adult and child health measures GHN analyzed, CareSource performed the worst of the four companies on 36.

A CareSource spokesman said in a statement Tuesday that "it's important to recognize that this data is 2 to 3 years old and represents a period of time when we were new to the Georgia market. CareSource went live July 1, 2017, servicing 250,000 Medicaid recipients. Some measures have as much as a two-year window for data to be captured, some of which would precede our [launch]. Additionally, we use the same providers that the other CMOs utilize."

The company performed the best on four measures: screening for depression among teens; screening for chlamydia among young adult women; blood sugar testing for diabetics; and providing follow-up care for children newly diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Georgia's most recent quality strategy report — the one from 2016 — said its goal was to improve CMO performance by 10% over 2014 baseline data by 2019.

Georgia Health News compared the latest data from 2018 with the baseline data from 2014. In many

cases the state did not meet its goal, and in many other cases performance stagnated.

Jesse Weathington, executive director of the Georgia Quality Healthcare Association, an industry trade group, declined to comment on the performance measures. Roberts of DCH said Tuesday that such data reflect "ongoing opportunity for improvement and the need for continued focus and interventions."

### Maternal and infant health performance

Data on three maternal and infant health measures shows that the CMOs' performance declined across the board between 2014 and 2018. Georgia faces a well-known maternal and infant health crisis, racial disparities in maternal and infant outcomes, and a shortage of specialist healthcare providers in rural areas of the state.

Rates of timely prenatal care fell for two of the three CMOs that have been in Georgia since 2014. Peach State's rate dropped most, from 82 to 74%. The only CMO that improved was WellCare, which posted a 2 percentage point increase. CareSource, the newest company, had the lowest rate, at about 70%.

Postpartum care rates also dropped. Peach State's rate dropped ten points, from 70% to 60%. WellCare's rate dropped a few points as well, while Amerigroup saw a 1 percent increase. CareSource's rate was 61%, according to the newly available data.

Low-birth-weight deliveries are those where the infant weighs less than five pounds, eight ounces. Back in 2016, the state said its goal was to decrease the Medicaid low-birth-weight delivery rate to 8.6% by December 2019.

But rates of these baby deliveries actually increased between 2014 and 2018. CareSource had the highest rate, with 9.86%, compared to 9.05% for WellCare, the lowest rate. All four companies' rates exceeded both the 2014 baseline and the 8.6% goal.

Back in 2016, the state centered its plan to reduce health disparities on lowering the disproportionately high rates of low-birth-weight deliveries among African Americans. DCH does not break its data down by race, so there is no way to tell how well CMOs are addressing the racial disparity.

Harker at the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute said CMOs "can also invest in solutions that address racial and ethnic inequities...by tracking this data and developing targeted initiatives."

As of 2018, DCH stopped publishing data on two maternal health measures: frequency of prenatal care, and mental health screening for pregnant women. Maternal depression and substance abuse during pregnancy can have negative effects on both infant and postpartum maternal health. Early intervention can help head off these problems.

"Unfortunately, perinatal behavioral health is not tracked on a statewide level," said Mack, the policy analyst. "Keeping track of this with CMOs is an opportunity to understand if interventions are working and how we can address the behavioral needs of Georgia's moms."

State	Date of most recent Medicaid/CHIP quality strategy report
Florida	December 2020
Tennessee	April 2020 (update to 2019 report due to COVID)
Alabama	January 2020
Kentucky	July 2019
North Carolina	April 2019
South Carolina	March 2019
Louisiana	March 2019
Mississippi	July 2018
Georgia	February 2016

Postpartum depression is "tragic for the mother, particularly if it's not identified and she's not treated," said Kathryn Lockett, a nurse practitioner in Cobb County who sees newborns and their mothers. "If these mothers are depressed, then there's a ripple impact on their family," including the new baby, she added.

### Children's primary care

Babies should see a health care provider for a well-child visit at least six times between birth and 15 months, says the American Academy of Pediatrics. But according to the latest state data, only about two-thirds of Amerigroup, Peach State, and WellCare patients met this target. The 2018 rates hovered around 2014 rates, showing little to no improvement. CareSource, the newest of the Georgia CMOs, posted the lowest rate of all, around 39%.

The Academy of Pediatrics also recommends that children between ages 3 and 6 see a doctor at least once a year. Check-up rates for 2018 improved slightly over 2014 for this age group. WellCare posted the greatest improvement, moving from around 67% to 72%. Amerigroup and Peach State improved by about 1 percentage point. CareSource lagged behind, with only about 63% of young children getting adequate check-ups.

Almost all childhood immunization rates dropped. Fewer than two-thirds of Georgia's Medicaid-enrolled children are getting the full complement of early childhood immunizations. Numbers for this measure dropped across the board: from 67% to 64% for Amerigroup, from 71% to 65% for Peach State, and from 70% to 58% for WellCare. CareSource's rate was the worst of all: only 37% of enrollees got all immunizations.

Only one immunization rate — that of adolescents receiving vaccines for both meningitis and Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) — increased. WellCare performed the best, with a rate of 93%, while CareSource performed the worst, with a rate of 75%.

"Depending on what disease you're talking about, the consequences [of not vaccinating] can be huge, including hospitalization or even death," said Dr. Tracy Barr, a pediatrician in Kennesaw. She also noted that if vaccination rates drop below a certain number, "we know that we will have outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease."

Voices for Georgia's Children, an advocacy group, noted that Georgia ranked last in the percentage of young children who were on track with all recommended childhood vaccinations in 2019, so the

Medicaid numbers are "on trend with Georgia's general experience."

DeWolf called the declining rates "extremely concerning" and noted they "seem to correspond with the rise in anti-vaccination misinformation."

Barr, the pediatrician, also noted that many parents in her office increasingly get anti-vaccine information from social media. Her office will treat children whose parents agree to a delayed schedule for vaccinations, but not those whose parents reject vaccination altogether. Such parents are asked to find another practice because of the risk that unvaccinated children pose to other patients.

### Many don't get routine screening

Developmental screening looks for signs of developmental, social or behavioral problems such as speech issues, problems with motor skills, and even social delays.

More than one-third of children on Medicaid and PeachCare are not receiving early childhood developmental screening. Peach State performed the best out of all the companies, but still only 59% of enrolled children received this crucial screening in the first three years. CareSource lagged behind in 2018 at 45%.

Screening for lead is another important public health initiative, because exposure to the toxic element can do long-term damage to children's intellectual development. Only 63% of CareSource enrollees were screened for lead poisoning. The 2018 rates ranged from 78% to 81% for the other three companies, around the same rates as in 2014.

In good news, the CMOs all made big gains in childhood asthma treatment. For example, Amerigroup increased its rates for prescribing the recommended asthma drug combination by 13 percentage points among children and teenagers. People with asthma need a drug to ward off asthma attacks and a separate drug to treat attacks, not just one drug or the other.

Still, though, just above half of Medicaid- and PeachCare-enrolled Georgia children are compliant with their asthma medications at least half the time, and only about one-quarter are compliant at least 75% of the time. CareSource data is not available for this measure.

Childhood asthma is a leading cause of school absences among children, which in turn is a predictor of poor educational outcomes.

"Some of the barriers to medication adherence we hear about most frequently are: lack of transportation (to pick up prescriptions), missed well-child visits and lack of a medical home to coordinate... regular access to care, [and] lack of parental

understanding about the medication," said DeWolf of Voices for Georgia's Children.

"The administrative burden of navigating different [insurance] formularies takes precious time away from busy physicians — time that should be spent with their patients," said DeWolf

Insufficient treatment of asthma can lead to chronic lung damage, along with increased hospitalizations and resulting increases in medical costs, Barr pointed out.

The CMOs improved their rates of annual adolescent check-ups. The best-performing CMO — WellCare — reported an 11% gain over 2014 baseline data. Despite the gain, though, only 61% of WellCare-enrolled adolescents received adequate care. Rates for adolescents enrolled in the other three plans were even lower, with CareSource posting the lowest rate at 47%.

Rates for screening and developing follow-up plans for depression among teenagers improved dramatically across the board. For example, Amerigroup improved from 2% to 20%, and CareSource had the highest rate of all at 22%. Still, though, the numbers indicate that just a small fraction of teenagers on Medicaid are being screened for depression.

And only between 55% and 61% of children between 6 and 17 years old are receiving follow-up care within thirty days after visiting the emergency room for reasons related to mental illness, according to the state's 2018 numbers. Data for this age group is not available for prior years.

"It's terrifying to myself and to my partners the amount of mental health [concerns] that we're seeing" among pre-teen and teenage patients, said Barr, the pediatrician. "We are in a mental health crisis for our young adults and for our teenagers and even our preteens."

The trend began before but has been worsened by COVID, she added. Barr said that she sometimes has trouble getting specialist mental health care for her Medicaid patients. She estimates 20-30% of her patients use Medicaid.

Both pediatrician Barr and nurse practitioner Lockett put better transportation and care management on their wish lists for Georgia Medicaid.

*Rebecca Grapevine is a freelance journalist who was born and raised in Georgia. She has written about public health in both India and the United States, and she holds a doctorate in history from the University of Michigan.*

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# EDUCATION NEWS

## GNTC alum opens nutrition bar in Calhoun gym

### GEORGIA NORTHWESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Just past the check-in desk of Firehouse Gym Calhoun stands Jalen Hamilton, Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC) graduate and owner of A1 Nutrition, who greets customers with a smile and a custom workout for the day.

“Our teas, shakes and smoothies are low in sugar and calories and high in protein to help the body recover after a workout,” said Hamilton. “I have the nutrition facts on the counter so people can see what is in their drinks.”

The Calhoun businessman launched his enterprise in May 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to impact small businesses. Hamilton said he researched nutrition related products and was ready to bring his meal replacement shakes, smoothies and teas to the market.

“I wasn’t going to let anything stop me,” he said. “I hit the ground running on my birthday, May 8.”

After working several events for local gyms, Hamilton partnered with Firehouse Gym Calhoun in November. Since occupying his space in the gym, the GNTC graduate has worked to build his customer base. In his downtime, he creates new recipes and updates the social media channels for his business.

Customers Linda and Al Welch, along with fellow gym member Theresa Ronig,

make sure they stop by A1 Nutrition before leaving the gym. After consulting the menu on the wall, the trio all decide on a turtle cheesecake meal replacement shake they saw Hamilton post on A1’s Facebook page.

“Everything he posts looks so good,” Ronig said. “There are so many I want to try.”

Linda Welch said her favorite so far was a caramel macchiato milkshake, but is willing to give anything on the menu a chance. Welch said the shakes are so good she usually finishes hers and her husband Al’s in the car before they get home. As the three paid for their shakes and left, Hamilton handed them a flyer for a “lunch and learn” event he is hosting at the gym.

“Come learn about healthy living,” he said. “I’ll be buying lunch.”

Hamilton said he hopes to host these types of events once a month. “Health and wellness events allows me to have one-on-one time with new and established customers,” he said.

The entrepreneur said his next step is to open a brick and mortar location in Calhoun, while still operating his space in Firehouse Gym Calhoun. He wants to create a full-service nutrition shop with a similar smoothie and shake bar. He is considering a few different locations, but nothing is final yet.

Hamilton graduated from Georgia Northwestern Technical College in 2016



Jalen Hamilton stands behind the counter of A1 Nutrition, located inside Firehouse Gym Calhoun, and presents a cookies and cream meal replacement shake.

with a Technical Certificate of Credit in Entrepreneurship. During his time at GNTC, Hamilton was active in both SkillsUSA and Phi Beta Lambda (PBL), one of the largest and oldest student business organizations in the nation. He placed fourth in the Future Business Executive category at the PBL state competition and competed in the Prepared Speech category at the SkillsUSA state competition.

“The thing about Jalen is that he has a fearless entrepreneurial spirit,” said Mark Upton, GNTC instructor and program director of Marketing Management. “He was always engaged in class and would bounce business

ideas off myself and other students.”

To Upton, it was no surprise to see Hamilton launch a business during a global pandemic. The GNTC instructor said his former student has always asked good questions and did his research when it came to business ideas. Upton says he encourages his students to build their businesses based on their passions.

“Jalen has always been into health and nutrition,” Upton said. “I am thrilled for him and look forward to watching him grow his business.”

Georgia Northwestern Technical College provides quality workforce education to the citizens of Northwest Georgia. Students have

the opportunity to earn an associate degree, diploma, or a certificate in business, health, industrial, or public service career paths. This past year, 12,454 people benefited from GNTC’s credit and noncredit programs. With an annual credit enrollment of 7,730 students, GNTC is the largest college in Northwest Georgia. GNTC has an additional enrollment of 4,724 people through adult education, continuing education, business and industry training, and Georgia Quick Start. For more information about GNTC, visit us at [www.GNTC.edu](http://www.GNTC.edu). GNTC is a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia and an Equal Opportunity Institution.

## GHC nursing students recruited to help administer COVID vaccine

### GEORGIA HIGHLANDS COLLEGE

Through a coordinated effort with local healthcare facilities, students in the Georgia Highlands College (GHC) nursing program are using their skills at local vaccine clinics to help administer the COVID-19 vaccine.

We are currently working to administer to healthcare providers, first responders, long-term care facility and adults age 65 and older who are part of Phase 1A [of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan],” Dean of Health Sciences Michelle Boyce said. “All first-year and second-year nursing students have the opportunity to help in this process.”

Nursing students take additional training modules related to safety and administration of vaccines

while also wearing personal protective equipment as normally worn in labs and other clinical settings.

GHC partnered with the Georgia Department of Public Health in the Northwest Health District and with WellStar Health System to aid vaccine clinics throughout Northwest Georgia and Metro Atlanta.

After Shea Walker, assistant director of nursing, was asked by the Georgia Department of Public Health to assist in the administration process, the nursing school agreed without hesitation.

Boyce said having nursing students in the vaccine rollout process reflects GHC students’ commitment to helping the community.

“Our students have learned to adapt and work through a crisis,” Boyce said. “This partnership to aid in the vaccine rollout also helps to



spotlight the role community and public health nurses serve.”

Please visit <https://dph.>

[georgia.gov/covid-19-vaccine-rollout-plan](https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-vaccine-rollout-plan) for more information on who is qualified for Phase 1A. Please

visit <https://nwgpublichealth.org/> to make an appointment for a vaccine.

## CARDIAC From page 2A

any difficulty at all, she wants to know so she can help.”

At one rehab appointment, Pack’s heart seemed to get out of rhythm. Butler and the cardiac rehab team watched her heart monitor closely before determining she was okay to continue.

“I didn’t even know anything was wrong, but Cindy rushed over to check on me,” said Pack. “She’s great at things like that and always takes care

of her patients.”

With the help of cardiac rehab and regular cardiac exercises, Pack is back to enjoying her life. “Now I pretty much do everything I did before my heart attack,” said Pack.

This experience has also changed the way Pack views exercise. Because of the cardiac rehab team at AdventHealth Gordon, she sees how it is an essential part of living a healthy life.

“I was never one to exercise before but seeing how they care and work with their patients to make them healthier has really given me a more positive outlook on exercise and how important it is for your life.”

About AdventHealth Gordon Founded in 1935, AdventHealth Gordon is proud to be a member of AdventHealth. With a sacred mission of Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ, AdventHealth is a connected system of care for every stage of life and health. More than 80,000 skilled and compassionate caregivers in physician practices, hospitals, outpatient clinics, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies and hospice centers

provide individualized, wholistic care. A shared vision, common values, focus on whole-person health and commitment to making communities healthier unify the system’s nearly 50 hospital campuses and hundreds of care sites in diverse markets throughout almost a dozen states. For more information about AdventHealth, visit [AdventHealth.com](http://AdventHealth.com) or Facebook.com/AdventHealth.

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# CCE announces Tiny T-Ball registration through March 25

CALHOUN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Batter Up! Boys & Girls ages 4 & 5 (as of September 1, 2021). Tiny T-Ball Youth League online registration is now open. Register online at <https://securepayment.link/calhousch.../tiny-t-ball-league/>  
Registration Deadline: Thursday, March 25

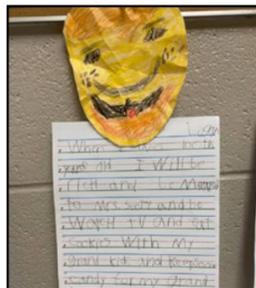


## Celebrating the 100th day of school



W.L. SWAIN ELEMENTARY

Students at W.L. Swain have celebrated the 100th day of school this week. Mrs. Mears' first graders dressed up for the day and completed a writing piece, too! Ms. Rice's Kindergarten students celebrated the 100th day of school by making pancakes with 100 chocolate chips!



## SHS junior Manning selected as semifinalist for Governor's Honors



SONORAVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Congratulations to SHS's Breana Manning for being selected as a semifinalist for the Governor's Honors Program in the area of Science - Biology!

Pictured: Samantha Watson, SHS Biology Teacher and Breana Manning, 11th Grade.

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- Kevan Carpenter, Commercial Floor Resources

# REPORT FROM THE CAPITOL from Rep. Rick Jasperse



Rep. Rick Jasperse  
R-Jasper, District 11

It's funny how fast a week can pass in the legislature. Our sessions are filled with "morning orders," which is a time for legislators to speak for a minute or so on whatever they want. This time has been taken generally talking about the loss of community leaders and friends and family due to COVID

or tragic accidents like at the poultry plant in Gainesville last week. It's very solemn to hear these messages and to know that the very same thing is happening in your own neighborhoods.

I wanted to take a moment and talk about vaccine availability. Yes, you are not alone in frustration about getting an appointment to receive the vaccine if you were in the appropriate target group. It has been beyond frustrating for many. There is no excuse for not answering the phone or failed systems for communication or scheduling. The demand has overwhelmed everyone in the shot-giving business.

The real issue is the amount of vaccine that Georgia is being given by the federal government.

Considering a population of 10 million or so folks, our 150,000 or so doses per week allotment doesn't go very far. From what I understand, the producers are at maximum production, and they themselves are having issues obtaining all they need to keep production at maximum. Think about it; that's a lot a little glass jars and rubber stoppers and all that goes with it. I know they are doing all they can to supply the United States with all the vaccine we need. This will get better over time, but right now it is very hard to get in line for the shot. My work right now is to make sure our rural areas are getting an appropriate amount of vaccine to take care of our folks. We have been promised a new central

appointment system available any day now; that will help.

Many of our committees had their first meeting of the year. You may have seen the announcement in the paper last week about my appointment as Transportation Chairman; I had my Transportation meeting Thursday afternoon; and like all others, we set the rules for the committee, introductions, and all that standard stuff. I don't know if you know it, but you can watch any House or Senate committee meeting online. That includes the very important Special Elections Integrity Committee that was also appointed this week by Speaker Ralston. This group will be reviewing all the statutes and laws

around elections and making recommendations for laws we will pass to ensure a better and more secure election process. If you were interested in when these meetings are; please use the information below to let me know, and I will let you know when they meet.

The most important thing we did last week was to pass the amended budget that will ensure smooth funding for the rest of the budget year, ending June 30, 2021. Most of the money went to restore a bunch of the reductions in K-12 education and Higher Education from last year's Covid budget. We increased funding in Public Health to help with vaccine administration in addition to the nearly 1 billion dollars from

federal sources for work on Covid issues. There was an increase in funds for programs that affect families in foster care, the spread of broadband in our state, and mental health issues in Georgia.

Those are the quick highlights, as I am limited in space here. If you want details, I can provide them if you; you just have to ask! As important bills come up for debate, please call on me to fill in the blanks that are not reported. I like doing that a lot. Either call my Capitol office 404-656-7153 or email me at rick.jasperse@house.ga.gov, and we will do our best to answer your questions or concerns.

Thank you for the honor of being your Voice in the House.

## Georgia House committee clears sports betting bill

DAVE WILLIAMS  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA – Legislation legalizing online sports betting in Georgia passed a committee in the state House of Representatives Tuesday.

The House Economic Development & Tourism Committee voted 20-6 in favor of moving forward a bill that enjoys the backing of a coalition of Atlanta's four pro sports teams, the Braves, Falcons, Hawks and Atlanta United.

The teams need a way to lure fans back to the games after losing millions of dollars during the coronavirus pandemic, said committee Chairman Ron Stephens, R-Savannah, chief sponsor of House Bill 86.

"The stands are empty," he said. "That's major losses for these folks. Fan engagement is what sports betting is all about."

Under Stephens' bill, at least six operators such as FanDuel or DraftKings would be licensed by the Georgia Lottery Corp. to run online sports books in Georgia, paying application fees of \$50,000 and annual licensing fees of \$900,000.

The companies would pay a tax of 14% of their adjusted gross revenues. The money would go toward education, including the popular HOPE Scholarships program.

With demand for scholarships outstripping the lottery's income, HOPE has fallen \$300

million in the hole, Stephens said. Based on the 14% tax, sports betting could be expected to generate more than \$50 million a year in tax revenue.

"It will not fill the hole completely, but it will help" he said.

The legislation would prohibit Georgians under age 21 from engaging in sports betting. Wagering on high school or college games also would be forbidden.

Bettors would have to be physically located in Georgia to place a bet, a requirement that would be enforced with geofencing technology.

The bill got some pushback Tuesday from committee members concerned that legalized gambling in Georgia would create more

problem gamblers.

"We really need to have something in place for people who get caught up in this trap," said Rep. Miriam Paris, D-Macon. "People are going broke."

Stephens said the Georgia lottery already spends more than \$400,000 a year on programs targeted to gambling addiction, and a portion of the revenue from sports betting also would go to help problem

gamblers.

The bill also discourages bettors from getting in over their heads by requiring that they use debit cards to place bets.

"You have a stopgap built in," he said.

The bill's opponents also argue that legalizing sports betting requires a constitutional amendment, as is the case for casinos and pari-mutuel betting on horse racing.

Supporters say a constitutional change isn't necessary because sports betting can be incorporated into the existing legislation that created the lottery.

The bill moves next to the House Rules Committee to schedule a vote of the full House.

The House version of the measure won't be the final say. A competing version of the legislation is expected soon in the Georgia Senate.

## Kemp bills aim to lure retired teachers, vets to GA schools

BEAU EVANS  
Capitol Beat News Service

Gov. Brian Kemp unveiled a legislative package Tuesday aimed at recruiting more teachers from the ranks of retired educators and military veterans to boost the quality of Georgia schools.

Tops among the governor-backed bills is a measure allowing retired teachers to return to work at full pay while they continue drawing retirement benefits. Returning teachers would be slotted into vacant positions in "high-needs areas" picked by regional education officials, according to Kemp's office.

"These hard-working men and women have a wealth of experience and knowledge with decades spent raising up the next generation of leaders," Kemp said at a news conference. "This initiative will help our retirees, retirement systems and education as

a whole."

Other bills would give military veterans with certain degree and testing requirements better access to teacher certificates; boost training, resources and mentorships for new teachers; and require the state Professional Standards Commission to work with historically Black colleges and universities to increase the number of minority teachers in Georgia schools.

The bills – dubbed the "Teacher Pipeline Package" – will be carried by state Rep. Dominic LaRiccia, R-Douglas, and state Sen. Russ Goodman, R-Homerville, both of whom are floor leaders for Kemp in their respective chambers during the 2021 legislative session.

Teacher-focused bills follow moves by Kemp to avoid more budget cuts to K-12 public schools through June 2022 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, add liability

protections for schools from lawsuits brought by virus-infected persons and give educators a one-time \$1,000 check.

Many schools across Georgia have struggled after shuttering in-person classes last spring due to the pandemic and battling bouts of COVID-19 outbreaks among students and teachers this past fall. Some school districts are still holding online-only classes or "hybrid" models involving a mix of in-person and virtual instructions.

More than \$2 billion in federal aid has been allocated for Georgia schools through two separate relief packages dating to March of last year. Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan said Tuesday the new bills package for teachers aims to help struggling schools keep rebounding from the pandemic.

"We have to continue to prioritize education here in Georgia," Duncan said.



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# GAZETTE SPORTS

### Prep Football

## Sonoraville senior Lackey signs to play at next level at University of the Cumberlands in Kentucky

**Brandi Owczarz**  
gordongazettega@gmail.com

Sonoraville quarterback Brady Lackey signed his commitment letter on Tuesday, Feb. 2, to play at the next level at University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Ky.

“It just goes to show you what hard work and dedication can get you,” said Sonoraville head coach Denver Pate. “The effort that he’s put in; we’re glad to have had him the past two years. It was a blessing for our program when he stepped foot in here and the commitment that he’s had to our football program is something for our younger players to look up to.”

“They offered me a

scholarship in December; we visited in January and after talking with the coaches and viewing the facilities, I knew it was where I wanted to play football the next four years,” said Lackey. “The coaches were so nice and they wanted me to be there. I feel like I could become a better man just going to that university.”

Lackey, who will major in Sports Management, said he is appreciative of the time he’s had to hone his skills at Sonoraville.

“It’s been a blessing (being at Sonoraville); they brought me in and didn’t know what I could do,” said Lackey. “I just kept working hard, and all my coaches and teammates helped and supported me. I could

never thank them enough for all they have done.”

University of the Cumberlands is a NAIA Division I school. Located in the heart of Appalachia, University of the Cumberlands is an institution of regional distinction that offers undergraduate degrees in more than 40 major fields of study, along with several pre-professional, graduate, and doctoral programs. With a total enrollment of more than 18,000 students, UC is one of the largest and most affordable private universities in Kentucky. Cumberlands is devoted to preparing students for the future through innovative programs as well as hands-on, experiential learning and research.



BRANDI OWCZARZ/Staff

PICTURED FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Sonoraville High School senior Brady Lackey and his father, Alan. BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Sonoraville Head Coach Denver Pate, Coach Deron Walraven, Coach Adam Long, Coach Nathan Schuster and Coach Jon Lovingood.

## GC's Kowalczewski to run cross country at Berry College

CONTRIBUTED

Gordon Central High School Senior Joey Kowalczewski happily signed his Athletic Letter of Intent with Berry College on Jan.

29, 2021. Joey plans to study graphic design and run cross country and track. In addition, Joey changed out the record board at GC to reflect his new cross country school record of 16:45.



2021

# Ashton

## Home Furniture

# New Year – New Room!

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# ARREST

From page 1A

dispatched to Walmart, located on West Belmont Drive, concerning a shoplifting in progress. While en route, the officer was advised that the male suspect in the shoplifting, later identified as Matthew Roberts, 30, of Silver Creek, Ga., was getting into a black Dodge Dart with a Texas license plate, and was sitting at the traffic light entering Hwy. 53. Dispatch advised the officer that the vehicle was traveling west on Hwy. 53 towards Rome.

Another officer in the area traveling to Walmart spotted the vehicle, and initiated a traffic stop on Hwy. 53 West around Northwest Georgia Paving at the bridge. The vehicle pulled over to the right of the roadway and came to a complete stop. While the vehicle was stopping, the officer noticed the driver of the vehicle making furtive movements inside the

vehicle. The driver was leaning down and back up. The officer exited his patrol car and walked behind his vehicle to make a passenger-side approach of the Dodge. As the officer began walking up the passenger side of his vehicle, he heard a gunshot from the Dodge. The officer took cover behind his vehicle, thinking the shot was directed at him. The officer notified dispatch to have other units en route, pointed his department issued gun at the Dodge and began giving the verbal commands for the occupants to show their hands. The officer noticed the driver of the vehicle begin to slump over the center console. The passenger, Matthew Roberts, opened the door to the vehicle and got on the ground as the officer was commanding. The report notes that Roberts was screaming. Dispatch was notified to have EMS come to the scene. The officer asked Matthew Roberts if the driver had just shot himself, and Roberts stated that he did. The officer called Roberts to the back of his vehicle and Roberts was placed in handcuffs. The officer then began giving loud commands

for the driver of the vehicle to put his hands up, and noted the driver did not obey the commands at this point and was not moving. Other officers arrived on scene and they approached the vehicle while continuing to give commands for the driver to put his hands up. Officers opened the driver side door and secured the firearm that was in the lap of the driver. At the time, medical aid was administered to the driver, identified as Richard Thompson, 47, of Rome. The officer noted that Thompson still had a pulse in his neck. Thompson was removed from his vehicle, where officers discovered a gunshot wound to his head. Officers continued rendering medical aid to Thompson until EMS arrived on scene.

The road was closed for several hours for the scene to clear and the investigation to take place.

EMS transported Thompson to AdventHealth Gordon, where he later succumbed to his injuries.

Roberts was taken into custody, where he was arrested on charges of Theft by Shoplifting and felony Possession of Methamphetamine.

# GREENE

From page 1A

Judicial Circuits. She has been the District Attorney for the Cherokee Judicial Circuit, which is comprised of Gordon and Bartow Counties, from 2013-2021. She is married to her husband, Mark, and she has two children: Stan and Mary.

Nancy N. Bills holds a bachelor's degree and a law degree from the University of Georgia, graduating Cum Laude. She also was the Assistant/Chief Assistant District Attorney for the Rockdale Judicial Circuit and an Associate of Walker & Waldrop, P.C. She is currently the State Court Judge for the Rockdale Circuit Court and presides over a DUI court. In her spare time, Nancy is the Chairperson of the Rockdale County Task Force on Family Violence, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation to raise public awareness and prevent domestic violence. She has served as President of the Council of State Court Judges, is a member of the Judicial Council, the Council of Accountability Court Judges, the State Bar of Georgia, and the Rockdale Bar Association. Nancy is married to her husband, Jeffrey, and she has one daughter, Mary.

Bills will fill the vacancy created by the resignation of the Honorable David B. Irwin, effective October 31, 2020. The Rockdale Judicial Circuit is comprised solely of Rockdale county.

Clarence Cuthpert, Jr. holds a bachelor's degree from Savannah State University, a master's in public

administration from Georgia Southern University, and a law degree from Nova Southeastern University. He most recently served as a probate judge for the Rockdale County Probate Court. Previously, he worked as a managing partner for Cuthpert & Associates, P.C., associate city attorney for the City of Atlanta, and associate attorney for Lester B. Johnson, III, P.C. Clarence resides in Conyers with his wife, Crystal, and they have one son.

Cuthpert will fill the vacancy created by the appointment of Nancy N. Bills to the Rockdale Judicial Circuit.

Jesse Stone holds his undergraduate, business, and law degrees from the University of Georgia. Since 1986, Jesse has served as an Attorney and Managing Partner for Merrill & Stone, LLC in Waynesboro. He served in the Georgia State Senate representing District 23 from 2011-2020 and was chair of the Judiciary committee. Prior to his service in the Senate, he was elected Mayor of the City of Waynesboro. From 1990-1995, he was a Criminal Justice Instructor at East Georgia College. He is chair of the Agriculture Law Section of the State Bar of Georgia, a member of the Augusta Circuit Bar Association, the Federalist Society, and the Middle Judicial Circuit Bar Association. He is married to his wife Amanda and has three children: Drew, Sarah, and Laura.

Stone will fill the vacancy created by the resignation of the Honorable Michael Annis, effective February 1, 2020. The Augusta Judicial Circuit is comprised of Burke, Columbia, and Richmond Counties.

Dick Perryman holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn University at Montgomery and law degree from Mercer University's Walter F. George School of Law. He has previously served as an Associate Attorney for Clyatt, Clyatt, & Golden, LLC, Partner with Hamilton & Perryman, LLC, and District Attorney for the Alapaha Judicial Circuit. In his spare time, Perryman is a board member of the Boys and Girls Club and Friends of the Library. He has served as a board member of Family Connections/Communities in Schools and as a City Councilmember for the City of Nashville, Georgia. He has one son, Shep.

Perryman will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of the Honorable Howard McLain, effective August 31, 2020. The Alapaha Judicial Circuit is comprised of Atkinson, Berrien, Clinch, Cook, and Lanier Counties.

Carletta Sims Brown holds a bachelor's degree from Fisk University and law degree from Marquette University Law School. She most recently served as a managing attorney for Sims Brown Law, LLC, with offices in Marietta and Augusta. Sims previously served as a magistrate judge for the Cobb County Magistrate Court, a staff attorney for the Georgia Public Defender Standards Council, and as a managing attorney with Sims & Associates P.C. She has also held legal positions in the Cobb County Attorney's Office and the City of Union City. She and her husband, Wayne, live in Augusta and have two children: Thandiwe and Chinue.

Sims will fill the vacancy created by the passing of the Honorable William Jennings in March.

# DOMESTIC

From page 1A

Upon arrival, deputies met with a woman who reported she'd been assaulted and held against her will by her husband, identified as one Christopher D. Thurman, age 33, of 226 Singletree Drive, Calhoun. The victim told investigating officers that the events had spanned several hours during the day before she was able to call 911. Thurman fled the scene before the arrival of the deputies, and could not be located in the immediate area of the home. The woman and her children were removed to a safe place and the responding officers gathered evidence before obtaining warrants for Thurman's arrest.

At about 3 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 31, Thurman was found hiding in a mini-bus near Singletree Drive. He was taken into custody without incident and lodged in the county jail, charged with Battery, False Imprisonment, and Cruelty to Children, pending bond proceedings.

## Support Groups

-United Hospice is seeking volunteers who can help others through companionship, reading, sharing, and other small tasks. Give the gift of caring and enjoy the privilege of sharing in your local area. Call Dan Hogan at 706-602-9546 or 800-867-7976.

-The Alzheimer's Auxiliary of North Georgia is seeking new members. For more information about joining the Alzheimer's Auxiliary, contact the Alzheimer's Association at 706-275-0819.

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