GORDON Gazette

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Calhoun-Gordon County's #1 Source for News

School Summer Feeding Programs, VAC kitchen expansion discussed at latest Interagency Meeting

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The upcoming Summer Feeding Programs for both Calhoun City Schools and Gordon County Schools was the topic of conversation at the latest Interagency Meeting on Thursday, March 5.

The Summer Feeding Program is open to all children, as young as one, up to 18 years old during the summer break. No registration or identification is required; those wanting or needing a meal can show up to one of the summer feeding sites to receive a meal.

Calhoun City Schools offers both breakfast and lunch throughout the summer, with Gordon County Schools offering lunch on a staggered schedule.

"At Calhoun City Schools, we operate almost the whole summer," said Kimberly Kiker, director of School Nutrition for CCS. "We operate out of Calhoun Elementary School for any walk-ins. We are also feeding any clubs or organizations in the community that requests feeding.

This year's Summer Feeding Program at CCS is still in the planning stages.

"We have no confirmed dates for this year's Summer Feeding Program," said Kiker, noting that they expect

See **MEETING,** page 7A

BRANDI OWCZARZ/Staff

Calhoun City Schools Director of Nutrition Kimberly Kiker, left, and Gordon County Schools Director of Nutrition Betsy Roan, right, discuss each system's Summer Feeding Program at the latest Interagency Meeting on Thursday, March 5.

GCF&R has four begin 2020 Rookie School

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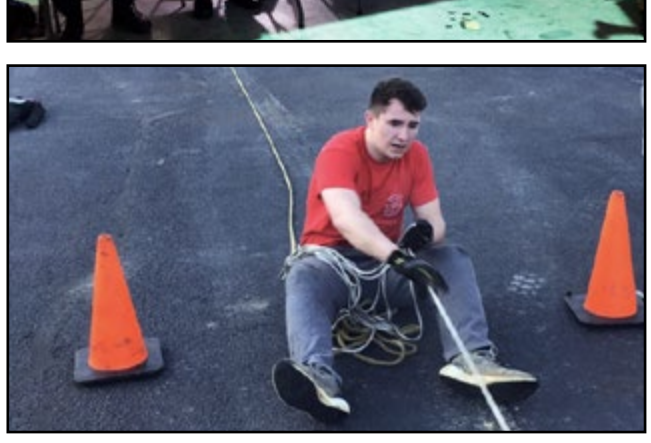
Gordon County Fire & Rescue has begun their 2020 Rookie School, for four recruits who have been hired to become full-time firefighters.

The recruits, Cody Puckett, Nicholas Santos, Taylor Cole and Joshua Cronan, are about two weeks into the strenuous nine week course.

"We started building the foundation," said GCF&R Training Chief Nathan Saylors. "So far, we've covered such

See **GCFR,** page 8A



PHOTOS: GORDON COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE

Index

Second Front.....2A
Events Calendar.....2A
Obituaries.....3A
Health.....9A

Inside this issue:

SECOND FRONT 2A

AdventHealth Gordon Foundation offers allied health/nursing Scholarships.

GOVERNMENT 4A

State Rep. Rick Jasperse gives his weekly update from the State Capitol.

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Only Republicans show up to qualify for local offices

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Qualifying has ended for locally elected offices, and in 2020, there were no Democrats to qualify to run for any of the local seats. Eight of the 12 offices up for election were uncontested.

Qualifying for office:

County Commissioner, District 1:
-M.L. Bud Owens-Republican, Incumbent

County Commissioner, District 3:
-Robert "Rob" Ballard-Republican
-Bruce Potts, Jr.–Republican
-Norris Sexton-Republican, Incumbent

County Commissioner, District 5:
-Kevin Cunningham-Republican, Incumbent

Clerk of Superior Court:
-Grant Walraven-Republican, Incumbent

Coroner:
-James Carver-Republican, Incumbent
-Kenny Padgett-Republican

Judge of Probate Court:
-John "Richie" Parker-Non Partisan, Incumbent

Sheriff:
-Mitch Ralston-Republican, Incumbent

Tax Commissioner:
-Scott Clements-Republican, Incumbent

County Board of Education, Post 2:
-Jason Hendrix-Republican, Incumbent

County Board of Education, Post 4:
-Rod Brehm-Republican
-Bobby Hall-Republican, Incumbent

County Board of Education, Post 6:
-Christie Owens Fox-Republican
-Samuel T. Jewell-Republican
-Bryon Reeves-Republican

Magistrate Judge:
-Pat Rasbury-Republican, Incumbent

The General Primary Election/ Nonpartisan Election will be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 and the General Election will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020.

More than 500 cast their ballot in first week of early voting for Presidential Preference Primary

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The three-week period of early voting for the Presidential Preference Primary Election began this week, 535 casting their vote during the week.

The Presidential Preference Primary is an election in which voters can choose who they would like to be their presidential candidate in the upcoming General Election.

The Presidential Preference Primary Election will be held on Tuesday, March 24, from 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Early voting for the Presidential Preference Primary runs through March 20. All early voting is held at the Gordon County Board of Elections and Voter Registration Office, which will be moved to the Piedmont Street Annex Building, due to the size requirements needed for the new voting machines. Early voting takes place Monday – Friday, from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. during the early voting period.

There will be one Saturday dedicated to early voting, on March 14, from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Gordon County Board of Elections and Voter Registration Office.

And don't forget, the new voting system for the state of Georgia is being utilized for the Presidential Preference Primary. The Georgia State Legislature approved the purchase of a new, statewide voting system in order to replace aging, paperless election equipment dating back to 2002.

Georgia's Secure, Accessible, and Fair Elections (SAFE) Commission presented a report to the state legislature in January 2019, which used the expert recommendations to adopt a new law for the state's voting system purchase. The procurement process was overseen by the Georgia Department of Administrative Services and handled the same way as other competitive bids. An evaluation committee scored each applicant based on an appraisal of cost and ability to meet the state's voting system specifications, which included accuracy, security, auditability, and ease of use for poll managers and voters. Dominion Voting Systems had the highest overall score and was awarded the contract. The system cost is approximately $107 million. The contract includes voting system hardware, software, implementation, training and support for the new statewide system.

The new system offers voters more modern, up-to-date technology with important security and transparency features. The new system will also produce a paper ballot to allow for verification and auditing of election results. It features user-friendly touchscreen selection like Georgia voters have enjoyed using for the last 17 years, with

See **EARLY VOTING,** page 7A

Second Front

AdventHealth Gordon Foundation offers nursing/allied health scholarships

ADVENTHEALTH GORDON

If you are a college student who has been accepted into a nursing/allied health program, then you may want to take advantage of the AdventHealth Gordon Foundation Scholarship. The foundation is currently accepting applications for its nursing/allied health scholarships.

"We began offering these scholarships to help alleviate the nursing shortage the country was experiencing," said Garrett Nudd, president of the AdventHealth Gordon Foundation, and director of marketing & philanthropy. "Our hope is that we can make a small difference in the lives of the recipients and they will partner with us in providing top-notch medical care for our community."

The scholarships range from $500 to $2,000 for select students. Interested parties may go to www.AdventHealthGordon.com to find the application. To apply, applicants must already be accepted or enrolled into a nursing/allied health program, maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher and agree to work for AdventHealth Gordon in an RN or allied health capacity, following passing boards, per the scholarship agreement. The deadline is April 24 at 3 pm. Late entries will not be accepted.

In addition to the web, applications are available at AdventHealth Gordon's Marketing and Foundation office. Mail the completed application, school transcripts and letters of recommendation to Wendy Taylor, AdventHealth Gordon Foundation, P.O. Box 304, Calhoun, Ga., 30703-0304.

If you have questions, please contact Taylor at 706-602-7800 ext. 2318.

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 or Facebook.com/AdventHealth.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Gordon County Saddle Club to host Horse Care Day on Saturday, March 14

STAFF REPORTS

The Gordon County Saddle Club invites horse owners are invited to bring their horses by the Northwest Georgia Livestock Pavilion from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. noon for their annual Coggins and Vaccinations on Saturday, March 14 as they host Horse Care Day.

The Livestock Pavilion is located at 1282 Hwy. 53 Spur SW in Calhoun.

During the event, there will be on site veterinarian services, such as the Digital Coggins for $30, and rabies vaccinations for $25 and Stangles vaccinations for $30. A combo pack of the vaccines if $90 and includes rabies, West Nile, Tetanus, Eastern and Western sleeping sickness, Rhino and Flu.

There will also be a horse care supplies booth and a Tac Swap.

For more information, visit www.gordoncountysaddleclub.com or call 770-548-5956. Additional information can be received by emailing gordoncountysaddleclub@yahoo.com or visiting their Facebook page by searching Gordon County Saddle Club.

Chatsworth duo arrested on drug charges after traffic stop for wrong license plate

STAFF REPORTS

Photos: GORDON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

A duo from Chatsworth was arrested on various drug charges early Friday morning after leaving an area in Calhoun known for drugs with the wrong tag on their vehicle.

According to the incident report, round 1 a.m. on Friday, March 6, an officer patrolling the area of Edmond Street and Highway 53 Spur observed a white Dodge Charger sitting in front of a set of apartments. The officer noticed, as the Dodge pulled into the road traveling east on the Spur, that the vehicle did not have a license plate light to illuminate the plate. The officer ran the plate and it returned to a blue Kia Sorento. A traffic stop was initiated on Court Street at King Street, and the driver of the vehicle, identified as Justin Chambers, 27, of Chatsworth, explained to the officer that he must have mixed up the tags. The officer noticed cigarillo wrappers inside the vehicle, along with multiple torch lighters. The officer had Chambers step to the rear of the vehicle, where he began running the man's information through dispatch and issue him a written warning.

The officer then asked Chambers if there was anything illegal in the vehicle, due to the vehicle initially being parked in front of a well-known drug area, and the objects inside the vehicle commonly used in the use of drugs. Chambers told the officer there was nothing inside the vehicle, and consented to the officer searching the vehicle. As the officer was about to search the vehicle, Chambers informed him that he would need a search warrant to search the vehicle. The officer approached the passenger in the vehicle, identified as Adilen Aragon Castillo, 26, also of Chatsworth. The officer smelled the odor of marijuana coming from the passenger side. The officer began speaking with Castillo, and asked her if there was anything illegal in the vehicle or on her person, and she replied there was not. The officer had her step out of the vehicle and could still smell the odor of marijuana coming from her person. The officer again asked her, several times, if there was anything illegal on her person or in the car, and she stated there was not.

The officer began a probable cause search of the vehicle due to the odor of marijuana. The officer located, between the passenger seat and center console, a clear glass smoking device with a white residue on the inside, believed to be methamphetamine. Both Chambers and Castillo were placed in handcuffs at that time. Also located inside the vehicle was an additional clear glass smoking device in the glove box on the vehicle, along with a black straw underneath the driver seat of the vehicle. Inside a purse in the backseat was a third clear glass smoking device with bunt residue.

The officer then began speaking with Castillo again, and continued smelling the odor of marijuana. The officer reminded Castillo of the guard line at the jail, and she advised the officer she did have something down her pants. The officer removed one handcuff and Castillo removed a clear plastic baggie containing suspected marijuana from her pants. The weight of the marijuana on scene was approximately 28.8 grams.

Chambers was charged with No Tag Light, Concealing ID of a Vehicle, Possession of Methamphetamine and Possession of Drug Related Objects. Aragon Castillo was charged with Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Marijuana and Possession of Drug Related Objects. Both remained in Gordon County Jail at press time.

CPD arrests man on assault charges after he attacks stepson with knife

STAFF REPORTS

Photo: GORDON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

A Calhoun man was arrested on several assault charges after an incident at a knife at a local apartment complex, where he attacked his stepson, threatening to kill him.

Just after 1 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4, officers were dispatched to 601 Harlan Street, Apt. 9, in reference to a fight in progress. When officers arrived, Tammy Clubbs told officers that her husband, identified as John Clubbs, pictured, age50, of the residence, had attacked her oldest son, Justin Beavers, 29, also of the address. The woman told officers that she and her husband had been in their bedroom, when her husband began sharpening her knife. She told officers that this intimidated her due to another incident that previously occurred in Chattanooga, Tenn. She told officers she asked her husband to put the knife away, and that he did, but that when she went into the bathroom, she heard her husband yell that he would kill Justin Beavers.

Tammy Clubbs told officers that went to the living room, where she observed her husband with his knife out, threatening to kill her son. She told officers that her husband then put his fist through the television and threatened to kill everyone that was present. According to Tammy Clubbs, her husband then left the apartment.

Justin Beavers then spoke with officers, and said he was lying on the couch when John Clubbs arrived, sharpening his knife. Beavers said he asked Clubbs to shop sharpening the knife, and that Clubbs then stood up with the knife in his chair, threw a chair to the side of the room, then "came at" Beavers. Beavers said he grabbed an end table, and while Clubbs was trying to stab him, he struck Clubbs with the table in self-defense. Beavers told officers that his mom got in between the two men, which is when John Clubbs screamed "somebody is going to die today." Beavers told officers that 911 was called as John Clubbs ran out the door.

Witnesses at the apartment, Anahi Guzman, 20, of East May Street, Chandler Hall, 18, of the Harlan Street Apartment and brother of Justin Beavers, and Casey Meadows, 18, of 610 Dale Avenue, corroborated the story that Tammy Clubbs and Justin Beavers told officers.

Officers instructed the family to keep the door to the apartment locked, and that if John Clubbs showed back up to call 911 immediately.

Around 1:45 p.m., officers were dispatched to 601 Harlan Street, this time to Apartment 10, due to a report that John Clubbs was located at that apartment. When officers arrived on scene, the resident of the apartment, Shannon McConathy, told officers that John Clubs was inside her apartment. She said that Clubbs had come into her apartment after the altercation and sat on her couch. She said that she saw that John Clubbs was shaking and when she asked him if something was wrong, he told her, "I'm going to stab a (explecitive)."

Officers finished speaking to McConathy and asked if Clubbs had brought his knife with him; they were advised that Clubbs did bring a knife but that it was on the kitchen table. Officers collected the knife and went back to Tammy Clubbs apartment and asked her to describe it. She positively identified the knife as the one Clubbs used again Beavers.

John Clubbs was handcuffed and transported to Gordon County Jail without incident. He is facing three counts of Aggravated Assault FVA, two counts of Aggravated Assault and two counts of Terroristic Threats and Acts.

Obituaries
March 7, 2020

Jimmy Cox, Sr.

Jimmy Lee Cox, Sr., 63, of Calhoun, died Wednesday, March 4, 2020, at Floyd Medical Center after a brief illness. He was born on Jan. 31, 1957, in Fairmount to Ruth Hyde and the late Matthew Cox. He was preceded in death by his brother, Chuck Waters.

He attended Fairmount School. He was a professional truck driver for 40 plus years. He was the owner of J. Cox Transport. He loved working on lawnmowers and fishing. He was a member of Eagle's Way Life Center.

He is survived by his loving wife Barentha Clydene Cox, to whom he was married to for 12 years; his sons and daughters-in-law, Jimmy Lee Jr. and Brittany Cox, Zebulen Brock, and Shayne and Elizabeth Brock; daughters and sons-in-law, Billie Jean and Bo Robertson, Maddie and Michael Page, Leah Goforth, Hollie and John Hembree, Genna and Stephen Dement, and Kim and Brandon Patterson; mother, Ruth Hyde; step-father, Bobby Hyde, brothers and sisters-in-law, Micheal and Elane Cox, Matthew and Kerri Cox, Lee Parm and Jennifer Chairez, Robert and Mary Brock, Jeff and Jamie Waters; sisters and brothers-in-law, Kathy Hodge, Debbie Luffman and Terry Whaley, Susie and Jamie Shoemaker, Judy and DR. Larry Tilly, and Tamara and Keith Burchett; grandchildren, Hazel, Little Jimmy #3, and Emma Jane Cox, Cody and Catlin Bohannon, Stanley Robertson, Camden Page, Haley and Levi Meadows, Leanna and Serenity Brock, Jade, Brock, and Bryce Dement, Maddison Fanning, Bryan Magon, Sydney, and Aiden Macon, and Summer Meadows; several nieces, nephews, cousins, and other relatives also survive.

To honor Jimmy's wishes his body was cremated. The family will receive friends on Saturday, March 7, 2020, from 4 – 6 p.m. at Eagle's Way Life Center.

A Memorial Service will be Saturday, March 7, 2020, at 6 p.m. from Eagle's Way Life Center, with Pastor Vince Gulledge officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you please consider making a donation to cover funeral expenses. No donation is too small and your support would be greatly appreciated.

To sign the online guest book please go to, www.maxbrannonandsons.com

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Jimmy Lee Cox.

Chip DeFoor

Chip DeFoor, age 51 of Summerville, passed away on Wednesday, March 4, 2020 at Redmond Regional Medical Center.

Chip was born on Dec. 23, 1968 in Floyd County, son of the late Everette Louis DeFoor, Sr. and Edna Jeanette Hughey DeFoor. In addition to his parents, Chip was also preceded in death by: a sister, Cindy DeFoor; and a brother, Steve DeFoor. Chip was a resident of Summerville, at Daily Care of Summerville for 17 years in the care of Brenda Veatch.

Chip is survived by: two brothers, Lane DeFoor and his wife Jennie, and Zane DeFoor and his wife Janie; sister, Angie Garland and her husband Cal; aunts and uncle, Nettie Lou and Norman Hollingsworth, Hazel DeFoor and Pat DeFoor; and several nieces, nephews, and cousins also survive.

Funeral Services will be conducted on Sunday, March 8 at 4 p.m. from the Chapel of Thomas Funeral Home with Dr. Steve Pickern officiating. Interment will follow in Gordon Memorial Gardens with Bart DeFoor in charge of graveside rites.

Pallbearers serving include: Ricky DeFoor, Josh DeFoor, Tim DeFoor, Chad DeFoor, Bart DeFoor, Brian Garland, Drew Garland, and Pierce Garland.

The family will receive friends on Sunday, March 8 from 2 – 4 p.m. at Thomas Funeral Home.

You may leave the family online condolences at www.thomasfuneralhomecalhoun.com

Thomas Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements for Chip DeFoor.

Randall Henderson

Randall Mark Henderson, 57, of Champagne, Ill., formerly of the Fairmount community, died Sunday, March 1, 2020 after a long illness. He was born on Nov. 16, 1962 in Champagne, Ill. to Charles Henderson and the late Carol Henderson. He was preceded in death by his brother, Mike Henderson.

He is survived by his children, Mark Ruble (Amber Adams) and Dena Higgins; sister and brother-in-law, Deborah and Brice Barth; grandchildren, Kaden Ruble, Kaylnn Higgins, and Kinley Gibson; nieces, Alaisha Barth and Victoria Barth; nephew, Joshua Barth; great niece, Noelle Barth; and other relatives also survive.

The family received friends Friday, March 6, 2020 at Concord Baptist Church from 11 a.m. until the service hour of 1 p.m.

The funeral service was conducted at 1 p.m. from Concord Baptist Church, with Bro. Randy Southerland and Bro. Sammy Allen officiating. Burial followed in Concord Baptist Church Cemetery. Pallbearers were Mark Ruble, Brice Barth, Joshua Barth and Jamie Trammell.

The family asks that donations be made to the funeral home to help cover the funeral expenses. To donate please go to www.maxbrannonandsons.com

To sign the online guest book, please go to www.maxbrannonandsons.com

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Randall Mark Henderson.

Catherine Jenkins

Catherine Cobb Jenkins, 94, of Calhoun and formerly of Chickamauga, passed away Monday, March 2, 2020 at The Oaks. Catherine was born near Centre, Ala. on Aug. 5, 1925. She was the daughter of the late James and Etta Mullins Cobb. In addition to her parents, she was also preceded in death by her husband, Frank Jenkins; her step-son, Jack Jenkins; her siblings and their spouses, Tye and Louise Cobb, Charlie and Pearl Cobb, Vincent and Paulette Cobb, Paul and Nan Cobb, Willie and Bob McDaniel, and Minnie and Claude Hill.

Catherine is survived by her stepson, Franklin Jenkins; her step-daughter, Martha Sue Hall; many nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews and great, great nieces and nephews also survive.

The family received friends Wednesday, March 4, 2020, from 2 p.m. until the service hour of 3 p.m. at Max Brannon and Sons Funeral Home.

The funeral service was conducted at 3 p.m. from the Chapel of Max Brannon and Sons Funeral, with Rev. Ralph Parker Jr. officiating. Burial followed at Fain Cemetery. Pallbearers were Frank Cobb, Ralph Parker Sr., Joey Cobb, Anthony Parker, Nathan Parker, Stanton Duncan. Honorary pallbearers are Steven Duncan, Stewart Duncan, Carson Duncan.

To sign the online guest book please go to, www.maxbrannonandsons.com

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Catherine Cobb Jenkins.

Jacqueline Peavy

Mrs. Jacqueline Yvonne Peavy, 72, of Calhoun, departed this life Thursday afternoon, March 5, 2020 at Gordon Health Care in Calhoun.

Mrs. Peavy was born in Wilmington, N.C. on Nov. 29, 1947. She was a daughter of the late John Thornton and Ruby Roberta Jackson. In addition to her parents she was also preceded in death by a grandson, Shea Bell.

She is survived by her daughters and son-in-law, Kim and Maurice Rue of Cohutta, and Meleah Bell of Calhoun; her granddaughter, Bobbi Rae Williams of Calhoun; and a sister, Judy Thornton Hall of Dalton.

To fulfill Mrs. Peavy's wishes, she will be cremated and no formal services will be held.

Condolences may be expressed to the family at www.pondersfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements by Ponders Calhoun Chapel and Ponders Crematory. Our Funeral Home does own and operated its own crematory ensuring your loved one never leaves our care. 675 Jolly Rd Calhoun GA 30701 706-625-7577

Faye Petitt

Bertha Ellen "Faye" Petitt, 75, of Calhoun, died Tuesday, March 3, 2020, after an 18-month illness with cancer. She was born on Sept. 4, 1944, in Chattanooga, Tenn. to the late Durwood Dunwoody and Nancy Brumblett. She was preceded in death by her sisters, Louise Terry and Margaret Cannon.

She was a loving wife, mother and grandmother. She was a member of the Evangelistic Outreach Ministry.

She is survived by her husband, James Bryan Petitt, whom she was married to for 57 years; daughter, Brenda Hammonds of Calhoun; sister, Peggy Davis of Rossville; grandchildren, Christina Hollingsworth of Dalton and Daniel Serritt of Calhoun; several nieces, nephews, and other relatives also survive.

A service to honor and remember the life of Bertha Ellen "Faye" Petitt will be held Monday, March 9, 2020, at 11 a.m. from the graveside at Haven of Rest Memorial Park with Rev. Mark Kirby officiating and music will be arranged by Randall Oliver and Lisa Kirby Wooten.

The family asks that flowers be omitted and to please consider making a donation to raise much-needed funds to cover the funeral expenses. No donation is too small and your support would be greatly appreciated.

To sign the online guest book please go to, www.maxbrannonandsons.com

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Bertha Ellen "Faye" Petitt.

Rethie Phillips

Mrs. Rethie Townsend Phillips, 94, of the Ranger community, died Monday, March 2, 2020 after a brief illness. She was born in the Covington Bridge Community in Gordon County, on July 26, 1925 to the late Claude and Susie Silvers.

Rethie never met a stranger and she loved to cook. She farmed and cut pulpwood. She loved her animals and her fur baby, Rambo. She was of the Christian Faith.

She is survived by her loving husband, William Donald Phillips, to whom she was married for 22 years; two special nieces and caregivers, Kayla Silvers and Tammy Blaylock; a host of nieces, nephews, and other relatives that she loved dearly also survive.

The funeral service was conducted on Friday, March 6, 2020 at 3 p.m. from the Chapel of Max Brannon and Sons, with Rev. Delmer Ledford officiating. Burial followed in Liberty Baptist Church Cemetery.

The family received friends on Thursday, March 5, 2020 from 5 – 8 p.m. at Max Brannon and Sons Funeral Home.

To sign the online guest book please go to, www.maxbrannonandsons.com

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Rethie Townsend.

Sandra Shride

Sandra Kay Dukes Shride, 38, of Cartersville, formerly of Calhoun, went to be with the Good Lord, and her mother, on Feb. 29, 2020. Sandra resided in Cartersville with her husband Josh, and her two children, Isaac, and Paisley.

Mrs. Shride was born on Morristown, Tenn. on Sept. 23, 1981, to Brenda and Fred Dukes. She graduated from Gordon Central High School in 2000 and from Georgia Highlands College with a degree in Dental Hygiene in 2007.

Sandra was married on May 4, 2002 to Joshua D. Shride. She was a loving mother, daughter and wife who was loved by many friends and family.

Sandra leaves behind her father, Fred E. Dukes of Fairmount; her husband, Joshua Shride; and son and daughter, Isaac and Paisley, all of Cartersville.

A graveside service for Sandra Kay Dukes Shride will be held Saturday, March 7, 2020 at 1 p.m. at Haven of Rest Memorial Park, 3736 Red Bud Road NE, Calhoun, GA 30701. Rev. Anthony Jeffords will officiate.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Shride family on Sandra's obituary page at www.maxbrannonandsons.com to help with family expenses.

The Brannon family and staff are honored to serve the family of Sandra Kay Dukes Shride.

REPORT FROM THE CAPITOL from Representative Rick Jasperse

BY: RICK JASPERSE,
(R-Jasper, District 11)
State Representative

We are in the seventh week of the 2020 legislative session. Hard to believe we are halfway through the session. Still a lot to do, as we haven't finished our work on the 2021 budget, yet we are hearing from lots of folks about their needs in the budget. So, we have had a lot of local visitors at the capitol from Judges to Parents of Special Needs Children. It's great we can listen to all their ideas and needs.

For me Monday was a special day as I had the opportunity to host the Pastor of the Day. Danny Cochran had a group to drive down from Holly Creek Baptist Church in Chatsworth. The Pastor of the Day presents a message and leads us in a prayer first thing in the morning. Pastor Cochran did a great job, and we all appreciated his thoughts a lot. Marcia and I visited his church earlier and enjoyed the hospitality and beautiful church.

We passed about 12 bills this week in our goal to really cut back on the amount of legislation we pass in a year. I was selected to be an officer on the Rules Committee which oversees what bills get to the floor of the Chamber. Our goal has been to pass only 100. I will be working to see that that happens.

One bill I know all of us will think is important is one we have all been working on for our Seniors and those in Assisted Living and Memory care. Georgia has a rapidly growing aging population, and many of our elderly citizens reside in personal care homes and assisted living facilities, where they can maintain independence and receive help as they grow older. House Bill 987 would update Georgia's laws to enhance senior care in personal care homes with 25 beds or more and in assisted living facilities. Under HB 987, direct care staff would be required to have initial and annual training and facilities would have to maintain one direct care staff person for every 15 residents during waking hours and one for every 20 residents during non-waking hours. Additionally, assisted living facilities would need to maintain at least two direct care staff at all times and a registered nurse (RN) or licensed practical nurse (LPN) between eight and 40 hours each week. Furthermore, HB 987 would require memory care units to provide the following staff: one dementia trained staff person for every 12 residents; one licensed social worker or professional counselor for eight hours per month; Finally, HB 987 would impose and increase mandatory fines for any violation that causes the death or serious physical injury of a resident. This legislation will make necessary updates to our laws to make sure that there is better oversight of these facilities in order to protect some of our most vulnerable citizens. Everyone voted for this bill when it came up for a vote this week.

My colleagues and I unanimously passed another bipartisan measure this week in honor of Georgia's veterans. Under House Bill 819, Georgia residents who are U.S. citizens and veterans of the armed forces for countries that are allies of the U.S. during a time of war or conflict would qualify for a Georgia veteran's license. Georgia has a significant population of Korean American veterans, some of whom fought alongside U.S. soldiers in the Vietnam War, and many of these veterans were present in the House gallery as we passed HB 819 this week. It was very nice to meet some of these men and thank them for their service.

This week we had a lot of visitors from our area and outstanding young people who were selected to be Pages for the day. I encourage you to contact me with questions and/or concerns regarding any legislation that may impact you and your family. You are always welcome to visit my office at the State Capitol, and you can reach me at 404-656-7153 or at rick.jasperse@house.ga.gov.

As always, thank you for allowing me to serve as your State Representative.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

GOT MARRIED?

GORDON GAZETTE

Society Page

We want to publish your Engagement, Wedding and Birth/ Birthday announcements FREE!

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Happy Paws

Now with 2 great locations to serve our clients!

234 King Street North in Calhoun Offers:

- Dog & Cat Grooming
- Dog & Cat Boarding

607 Chatsworth Hwy. 225 in Calhoun Offers:

New Location!

- Dog & Cat Daycare
- Dog & Cat Grooming
- Dog & Cat Boarding

Call Happy Paws at 706-383-8075 for Rates!

Dawn Charles, Owner

Audrey Clayton, Groomer

Community Events

Week of March 1

-T.G. Sheppard and Ronnie McDowell--Nothing But the Hits on Saturday, March 7th, 2020, beginning at 7 p.m. at the GEM Theatre, located on North Wall Street in Calhoun. The Rasberry Producer Group is pleased to present T. G. Sheppard and Ronnie McDowell in Nothing But the Hits. 85 charted singles, 70 Top 40 and 28 Number 1 solid gold hits. It's going to be a one-of-a-kind evening of country royalty. For tickets, visit www.calhoungemtheatre.org/.

Week of March 8

-Spring Door Hanging Painting Class at the Harris Arts Center on Thursday, March 12, 2020, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. or on Saturday, March 14, from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Classes will be held at the Harris Arts Center, 212 South Wall Street, Calhoun, GA 30701 Rene Keese has teamed up with the Harris Arts Center to offer door hanger painting classes for ages 13 and up. Choose from two dates or enjoy both! The first class is on Thursday, March 12 from 5:30-7:30p.m. and will feature an egg door hanger as the project. The second class being offered is set for Saturday, March 14 from 10 a.m.-noon, with a flower door hanger as the project. Participants will leave the class with a hand painted item perfect for a gift or to keep for themselves. Classes are $35 per class for HAC members and $40 per class for nonmembers. Registration is required by March 9. All supplies are included. For more information, visit www.harrisartscenter.com.

-Annual Coulter Hampton Day on Saturday, March 14, 2020, from 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at the Sonoraville Rec, located at 7494 Fairmount Hwy SE, Calhoun, GA 30701. Coulter Hampton Day, Saturday, March 14, from 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the Sonoraville Recreation Center on Fairmount Highway. One of the major fundraisers each year for the Counter Hampton Foundation, this year's event theme is #coulterstrong. For more information, visit www.coulterhampton.org.

-Throw on only your finest camouflage and trucker hat, because the Voluntary Action Center's sixth-annual Murder Mystery Fundraiser, "Murder at the Redneck Reunion" is set for Saturday, March 14. The event begins with a Meet and Greet at 5 p.m., with the performance beginning at 6 p.m. The event will be held at 209 South Wall Street in downtown Calhoun. Tickets are $50 and include dinner and tea. Beer, wine and soft drinks are available for purchase at the bar. To purchase tickets, contact Stacy Long by visiting the VAC at 343 South Wall Street, or reserve your tickets by calling 706-629-7283 or emailing stacy.long@voluntaryactioncenter.org.

-Acoustic Set with Derek Andrew at the GEM Theatre on Saturday, March 14, beginning at 8 p.m. The Georgia based artist, originally from Nashville has played hundreds of shows across the U.S. and earned an impressive resume, opening for some of country music's most recognized artists including Luke Combs, Collin Raye, Jordan Rager, Bryan White, Andy Griggs, Glen Templeton, and Jamie O'Neal. Derek continues to perform regularly in venues throughout the Eastern U.S. Derek is now starting to gain the attention of major labels, booking agents and artist management companies. Tickets are $10. For more information, visit the GEM's website at www.calhoungemtheatre.org.

Week of March 15

"Always...Patsy Cline" at the Harris Arts Center, Thursday March 19 - Saturday, March 21 beginning at 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 22 at 3 p.m. The HAC is located at 212 South Wall Street, Calhoun, GA 30701. The Harris Arts Center and Calhoun Little Theatre are excited to announce the upcoming production of Always… Patsy Cline. Audiences have four opportunities to see this production with dates set for March 19, 20 and 21 at 7 p.m. and March 22 at 3 p.m. For more information, visit the HAC website at www.harrisartscenter.com.

-7 Bridges: The Ultimate Eagles Experience at the GEM Theatre on Saturday, March 21st, 2020, beginning at 7:30 p.m. 7 Bridges: The Ultimate EAGLES Experience is a stunningly accurate tribute to the music of The Eagles. 7 Bridges faithfully re-creates the experience of an Eagles concert from the band's most prolific period. Every show features one brilliant hit single after another with some Don Henley and Joe Walsh surprises sprinkled into the mix, offering the perfect blend of songs to capture all levels of Eagles devotees. The GEM is located on North Wall Street in Calhoun. For tickets, visit www.calhoungemtheatre.org.

Week of March 22

"Always...Patsy Cline" at the Harris Arts Center, Sunday, March 22 at 3 p.m. The HAC is located at 212 South Wall Street, Calhoun, GA 30701. The Harris Arts Center and Calhoun Little Theatre are excited to announce the upcoming production of Always…Patsy Cline. For more information, visit the HAC website at www.harrisartscenter.com.

-Hamilton Medical Group's Scope It Out Seminar - Colon Health presentation on Thursday, March 26, 2020 beginning at 6 p.m. at the Depot, located at 109 South King Street, Calhoun, Ga. 30701. Scope it Out Seminar with Dr. Brandee Albert of Hamilton Physician Group- Gastroenterology on Thursday, March 26 at 6 p.m. Learn how to maintain your colon health and prevent colon cancer, Meet Dr. Brandee Albert & Dr. Michelle Little of Hamilton Physician Group, Enjoy refreshments and Register for door prizes. For more information, https://www.hamiltonhealth.com/event/scope-it-out-seminar/.

-Annual Georgia String Band Festival at the Harris Arts Center the weekend of March 27-28. The Harris Arts Center proudly welcomes Jerron "Blind Boy" Paxton to the Ratner Theater stage. He will kick off the 14th annual Georgia String Band Festival on Friday, March 27, at 7:00 pm. Tickets are $25, and seating is limited. County Fiddlers' Convention Competition for the Gordon County Fiddlers' Convention will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday, March 28, in the Ratner Theater, with registration beginning at noon. Some of the finest musicians in the tri-state area will compete in Traditional Singing, Buck Dance, Banjo, String Band, and Fiddle for $3,000 in prize money. Saturday's armbands are only $10, with children 12 and under free, and will be sold at the door. After obtaining an armband, patrons may come and go as they please throughout the afternoon. It's a fun-filled, toe-tapping day of Old Time pickin' and grinnin'. Musicians must be age 15 or older to compete. Participants may register throughout the day, but no entrant will be accepted after numbers for order of appearance are drawn. Tickets are $25, and seating is limited.

-GUIDED LANTERN TOUR at NEW ECHOTA on SATURDAY, MARCH 28. Have you ever wondered how an 1800s settlement would have looked at night? Wonder no more. There will be a lantern tour of the historic buildings. The tours will be led by park staff and each building will be open and occupied to demonstrate what life would have been like during the 1800s. Reservations are required. There will be a lantern tour of the historic buildings at New Echota-Cherokee Capital State Historic Site on March 28, 2020. There will be four tour times and reservations are required. The tours will be at 7:00 PM, 7:20 PM, 7:40 PM, and 8:00 PM. This is a unique opportunity to see our park at night. Reservations are required. Call 706-624-132 to reserve your spot. New Echota is located at 1211 Chatsworth Highway NE in Calhoun.

Week of March 29

-AdventHealth Gordon Dinner with the Docs on Monday, March 30, 2020 beginning at 5:30 p.m. The presentation will be held at AdventHealth Gordon, located at 1035 Red Bud Rd NE, Calhoun, GA 30701 AdventHealth Gordon will host a Dinner with the Docs seminar on Monday, March 30 at 5:30 p.m. in Conference Room E, which is accessible through the North Entrance. This free seminar will feature David Brannon, MD, and attendees will be educated on the importance of nutrition and eating healthy. To register for this free life-changing seminar, call 706-602-7800 x3166.

-Open House at AdventHealth Medical Group General Surgery on Tuesday, March 31, 2020, beginning at 4 p.m. AdventHealth Medical Group General Surgery at Calhoun will host an open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the opening of its new office location held on Tuesday, March 31 from 4 to 6 p.m. The open house is open to the public and will be held at 1035 Red Bud Road, Suite 200 in Calhoun. The ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place at 4:30 p.m., and light refreshments will be served. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet the general surgery team. To learn more about the event, call 706-602-7800 ext. 2318.

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MEETING

From page 1A

to begin the first week of June until the first week of August.

A goal of both the CCS and GCS Summer Feeding Programs is to provide for those children in households at or below poverty level. The goal is to provide hot, nutritious meals.

"We go to Boys & Girls Club, Imagination Station and LEJO," said Kiker. "We go to numerous neighborhoods and apartment complexes where we feed kids. We take breakfast and then go back out for lunch. USDA standards say that we can feed two meals per day, so we choose breakfast and lunch. Some churches choose to feed a supper meal and a night-time snack. A couple of years ago, we went to a process where we actually seal our meals; so we cook hot food because the kids prefer the hot meals we take out over sandwiches. We'll take lasagna, chicken tenders and tacos; sealing them in a box to deliver to students. In addition to that full complete meal, the students will get a fruit and milk. We also have water available."

Kiker said a good thing for CCS Nutrition's Summer Feeding Program was the USDA offering a waiver two years ago that states in the event of inclement weather or days where temperatures are above 90 degrees, children don't have to eat on-site, but can take the meals off-site.

Betsy Roan, Director of School Nutrition for Gordon County Schools, said that the whole process and food provision for GCS is the same as CCS but GCS does have a larger number of sites and coverage area. While still in the planning phase, the tentative dates of service for the GCS Summer Feeding Program will be June 1 – July 31, and the system is expecting to have 26 feeding sites throughout the county. Last summer, Gordon County Schools Summer Feeding Program fed a total of 41,720 lunches with a total of 36,820 snacks provided to students.

"Our goal is to eliminate food security in our county," said Roan. "We are always interested in increasing our sites and our students served."

During the school year, Gordon County Schools have a 60 percent rate of students who are eligible for Free and Reduced meals, and serve breakfast at no charge for all students due to being part of the Provision 2 Breakfast Program, which is an option for schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs to reduce paperwork and simplify the logistics of operating school meals programs. Gordon County Schools operates 10 kitchens through the 10 schools in their system, serving a total of 7,488 meals each day school is in session.

Roam, who began her position with GCS in 2019, has also been introducing Farm to Table concepts within the school system's nutrition program, saying at a recent meeting of the Gordon County Board of Education that she has been developing relationships with local farmers to be able to use fresh, local produce for the student's meals.

Kiker said that at CCS, they provide a total of 4600 meals each day during the school years, and for breakfast, they will take the food out into the schools, at the bus and carpool areas as students arrive each day. The system is also piloting a new program, "Breakfast After the Bell," at Calhoun High School, for older kids who might not want to eat early in the morning.

Also at the meeting, Stacy Long, director of the Voluntary Action Center, gave an update on the remodeling of the Community Kitchen.

"We hope to be able to offer the first dinner meals in May, on Wednesday night's," said Long, saying that they will slow roll the new dinner schedule out. "We'll start increasing the number of days served as we increase the number of volunteers. The goal is by the end of the year, we will be serving five meal services a week (Monday – Friday) for lunch and dinner."

Long said that the VAC began the process of expanding the kitchen program about two years ago.

"Right now, we serve meals Monday through Friday, from 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Those are open to anyone, primarily adults but there are quite a number of kids who come in," said Long. "Last year, we served more than 30,400 meals last year, which was up significantly from the previous year. We did see a lot more children coming in last year than in previous years. What we are working on now, because of that, we are shifting our focus just a little big because we know that the schools do a tremendous job of making sure kids have access to free and reduced lunches but that dinner has been the missing link. So we are going to start serving dinner."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Community Kitchen at the Voluntary Action Center is currently being renovated and expanded. Director Stacy Long hopes the kitchen will begin serving meals in May.

Dinners are expected to be served from 4 – 5:30 p.m. at this time.

Long said that in addition to seeking volunteers, they are especially focusing on volunteers from local churches because their mission is not just to feed bodies, but to feed and nurture those who need additional support.

"We are hoping when we partner with churches, that from 3 – 4 p.m., they can offer a church service or prayer service before the meal," said Long. "We want to open the doors so that churches can have opportunities to witness to the people that come in and use our services; as most of you know, that is a missing link with a lot of the people we serve. They need something to believe in and need some hope, because they probably don't have a lot of hope in their everyday life."

Long said that anyone interested in donating Bibles are also free to do so.

"We're putting them in our lobby now and people will take them," said Long. "They're going as fast as we put them out."

Long said that they are open to expanding the program and other options as well, saying that they hope to be able to double the number they served last year.

"We want to be a resource to our students," said Long. "Right now, the majority of who we serve are adults 55 years of age and older. We see a lot of seniors who are lonely."

Long said if you don't have a penchant for cooking but would like to volunteer, they seek those who would like to come and be social with those who come to eat, clean the table areas and other vital tasks of the VAC Kitchen Program, and are especially seeking student volunteers.

"We really want our youth groups involved, because we believe that the kids who have good influence in their life can be a good influence to those that don't have that in their life," said Long. "We're trying to bring collaboration from our community. Our kitchen only exists because of our community; we were only able to open it because of the support of the community and we're only going to be able to expand it because of the support of the community."

For anyone interested in volunteering with the VAC can call 706-629-7283 for more information, for visit their website at voluntaryactioncenter.org to sign up for email updates on the happenings at the VAC.

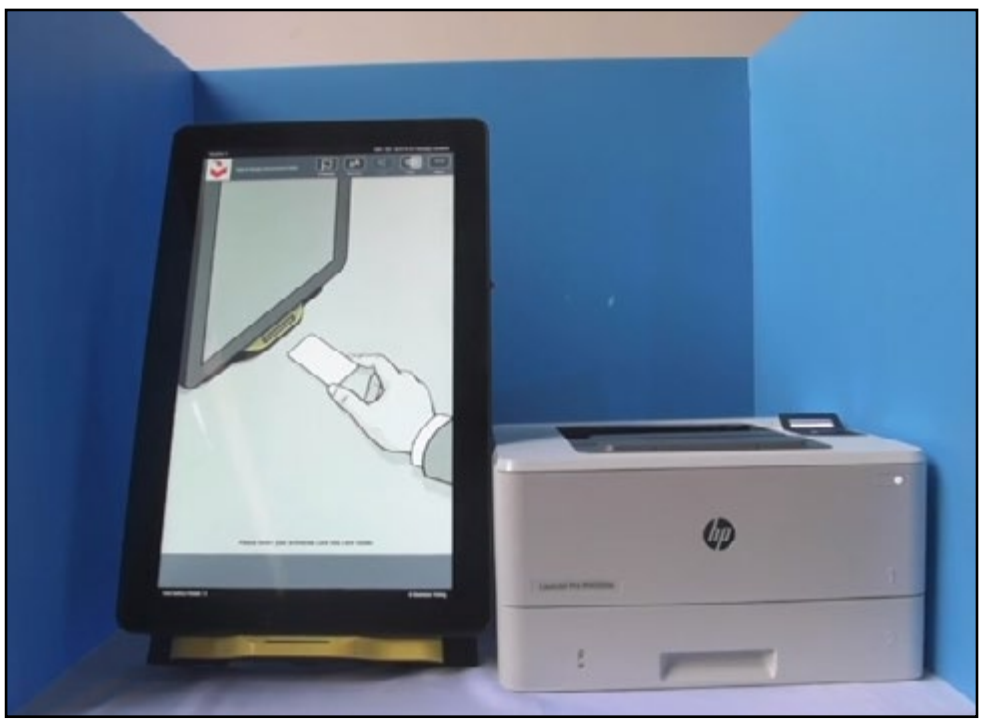
EARLY VOTING

From page 1A

the addition of a secure, paper ballot. Once a voter has confirmed their choices on the screen, they will print their ballot recording their choices in plain language and in a QR barcode that provides extra security and speeds processing. With ballot in hand, they can look over their selections again. When they are satisfied that the ballot reflects their choices, they walk to a scanner and insert the ballot. The scanner will record an image of the ballot as well as tally the votes. The ballot then drops into a locked, tamperproof ballot box. The paper ballots are used for verifying and auditing results. The next-generation system also offers enhanced audit capabilities for security, as well as features to improve the voter experience.

The new, paper-ballot system offers reliability and assurance, balancing the need for both security and accessibility in the voting process. Touchscreens have proven to reduce the rate of under-votes, over-votes and stray-marked votes in elections. They can specifically alert voters if they have skipped or missed a ballot selection, ensuring that all voting choices are complete. The system also provides full accessibility for people with disabilities and/or language or literacy challenges, allowing all voters to privately and independently cast a ballot using the same system. These touchscreens also produce paper-ballots for auditing and reduce paper volumes overall.

For those that need to register to vote and have a valid Georgia Driver's License or Georgia ID Card, visit https://registertovote.sos.ga.gov. This is a fast and easy way to register to vote. For more information, contact the Gordon County Board of Elections and Voter Registration Office at 706-629-7781.



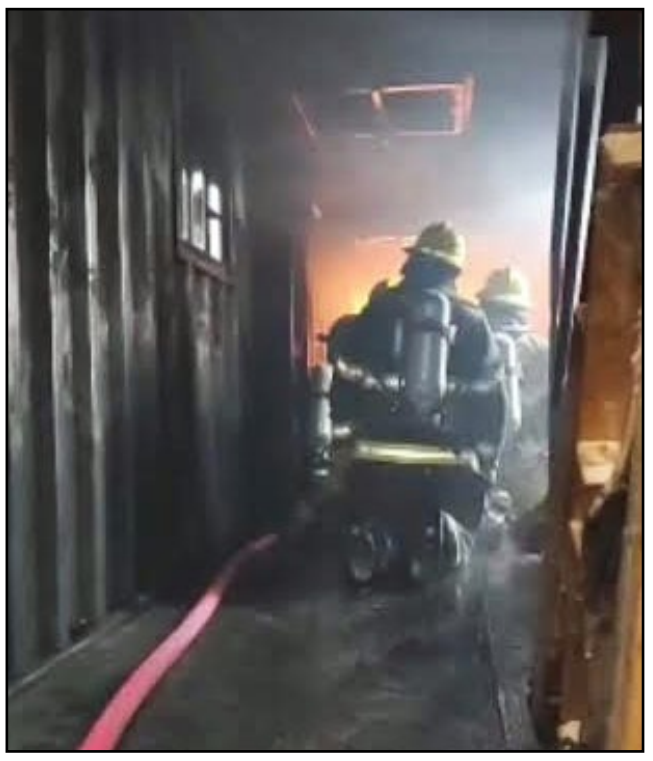
GCFR

From page 1A

topics as Firefighter Safety and Wellness; discussed Fire Behavior, where we started a live fire to show the recruits the different stages of fire, how a fire grows and the science of fire and how it behaves when you introduce air and different manners. "We've covered communications and 911 Dispatch. We visited the 911 Center where Debbie Vance, the director of Gordon County E-911, provided a training class and gave a tour of the center. We've had CPR training and Ropes and Knots training to learn how to tie life-saving knots for things such as repelling, securing vehicles and hoisting equipment. We also spent a lot of time on building construction; learning which building materials burn faster than others and which materials collapse at a faster rate."

Beginning this past Wednesday, the recruits will now move onto hands-on skills.

"We've covered the foundation and basics. We try to build a solid foundation; what we teach is it's just like a house- if we don't build a solid foundation, they're going to crumble," said Saylors. "We're building that foundation now. On Wednesday, we learned about Forcible Entry, which is forcing doors, windows and locks to gain entrance to residences. We don't teach just breaking things and damaging things; we teach, based on the situation, how to be cost-efficient and provide good service when using forced entry. Then we'll train on Fire Streams and how to move fire streams. Next week, we'll move into Ladders.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

"Now we start teaching one hands-on skill at a time, and begin building their confidence and knowledge, building up to Vehicle Extrication and Search & Rescue Techniques and Life Fire Training," said Saylors. "After that, the recruits will learn about Hazardous Materials, followed by a week Firefighter Safety and Survival Training. We'll teach them how we save other firefighters and how we save ourselves if we face a situation like being pinned down in a structure collapse or find ourselves in a dangerous situation."

Saylors said that after that, the recruits will have a week of experiencing what an actual shift is like.

"The first two days of that week, we'll do day training; the third day, we'll bring them in and do a 24-hour training exercise, to show them what it's like to be on a shift," said Saylors. "We have to be prepared at any time during our shift to go out and provide a service to the public. On Friday of that week, the recruits will go to Dalton to take their State testing."

Training culminates with Tactics Week during the ninth week of training.

"There's no set time or set training. It's getting the recruits to show the skills they've learned over the previous eight weeks," said Saylors. "Our goal that week is, as a training division, when I turn them over (for shift) that they are fully trained, they are ready and the Battalion Chiefs have no worry that these recruits can perform what they need to perform as a firefighter."

Puckett is the only recruit in this class with a background in firefighting.

"I'm a second generation firefighter; my dad is a lieutenant at Calhoun Fire," said Puckett. "It's what I grew up around and what I've always wanted to do."

According to Saylors, Puckett was initially a volunteer firefighter with GCF&R about five years ago, and then worked at Catoosa County Fire before coming back as one of the four new hires for GCF&R.

"I never had the full recruit training, just on the job training. I never had the full Rookie School," said Puckett.

Saylors explained that while volunteer firefighters receive a lot of the training the paid firefighters get, it's not as in-depth and they only receive the Registered Volunteer Firefighting Certificate, which is not as detailed as the full Firefighter 1 Rookie School.

"We are trying to move to everyone being Firefighter 1 certified," said Saylors, noting that he plans to start another volunteer firefighter training class soon.

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer firefighter at Gordon County Fire & Rescue can call GCF&R Headquarters at 706-629-8851 for more information or download an application by visiting gordoncounty.org/departments/fire-rescue/volunteer-firefighter-corps.

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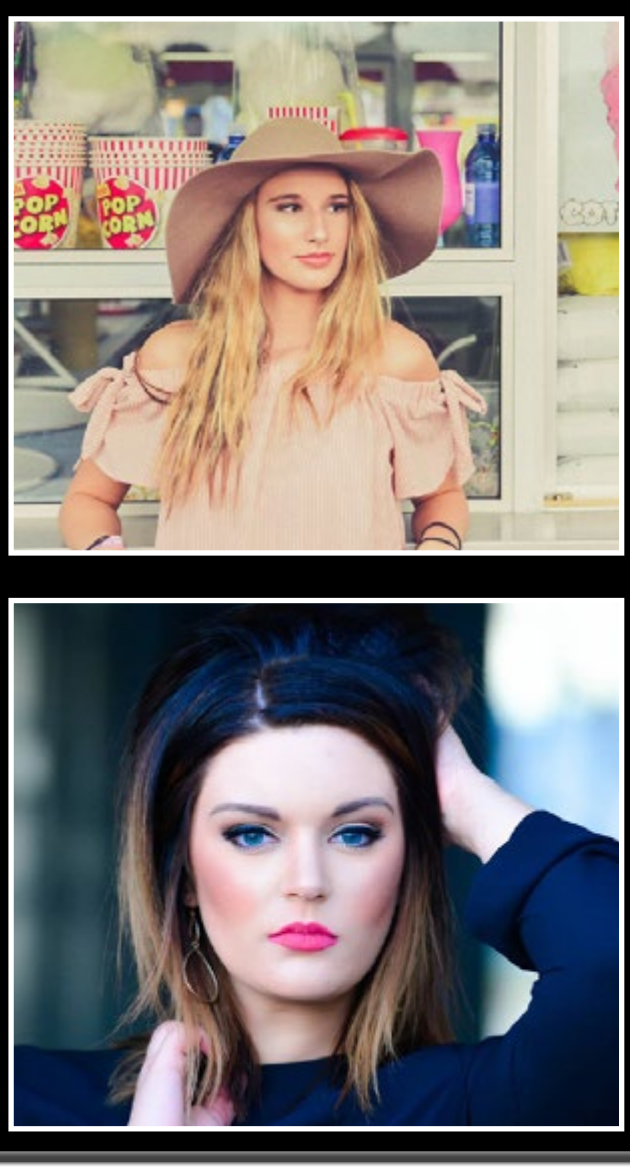

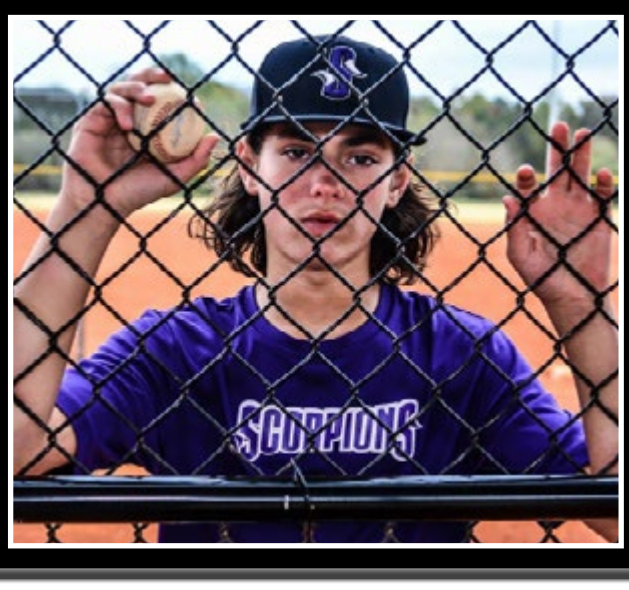

New Cases of COVID-19 Identified in Georgia

Three cases confirmed, One Pending Confirmation

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

ATLANTA (March 7, 2020) – There have been a number of developments overnight regarding COVID-19 in Georgia. Governor Kemp and DPH Commissioner Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H. want to remind all Georgians that the overall risk of COVID-19 to the general public remains low and there is no evidence of community spread of COVID-19 in Georgia at this time.

OVERNIGHT DEVELOPMENTS

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have confirmed two additional cases of COVID-19 in Georgia. Testing was done by the CDC, prior to the Georgia Public Health Laboratory (GPHL) having the capacity to test for COVID-19.

One individual is from Cobb County and recently returned from Italy and is isolated at home. The other individual is from Fulton County and is hospitalized. The source of this individual's exposure is unclear at this time.

Additionally, DPH is awaiting confirmatory testing on a presumptive positive test for COVID-19 in a resident of Gwinnett County. The initial testing was completed by GPHL March 6. The individual recently returned from Italy and was self-monitoring at home, and is now isolated at home.

CDC testing has confirmed the presumptive positive test for COVID-19 in a resident of Floyd County. The original testing was done by GPHL March 5. The individual is hospitalized.

"Federal and state officials continue to work closely together to conduct testing and determine the extent of exposure for confirmed cases of COVID-19. The risk to Georgians remains low. We ask Georgians to stay vigilant, utilize best practices to mitigate health risk, and remain calm," said Governor Kemp.

"DPH is prepared to mitigate the spread of this virus in our state, and we are aggressively working to identify anyone who may have had contact with these individuals," said Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., DPH commissioner. "Despite these new cases, the overall risk of COVID-19 to the general public remains low; but each new case of COVID-19 in Georgia reinforces the fact we should all be practicing basic prevention measures that are extremely effective in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and all respiratory illnesses."

Basic Prevention

-Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

-Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

-Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

-Stay home when you are sick.

-Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

-Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

If you have recently traveled to areas where there are ongoing outbreaks of COVID-19 and develop fever with cough and shortness of breath within 14 days of your travel, or if you have had contact with someone who is suspected to have COVID-19, stay home and call your health care provider or local health department right away. Be sure to call before going to a doctor's office, emergency room, or urgent care center and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.

For accurate and reliable information about COVID-19 log on to: dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus or cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html. Find answers to frequently asked questions at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html.

Suicide is preventable; learn how you can help

HIGHLAND RIVERS HEALTH

If you follow our column, you know that I would normally write about suicide awareness in September to recognize National Suicide Prevention Week. However, the topic of suicide is an issue that impacts a growing number of individuals and families in our communities on a consistent basis. It is also an issue people may be hesitant to discuss even though they generally have a lot of questions about it.

Although studies have found suicide tends to increase in the spring and summer months, the facts are, about 130 people die by suicide every day in the U.S. – more than 48,000 in 2018 – while in Georgia three to four people end their lives each day, every day.

Such numbers make suicide the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S., and the eleventh leading cause of death in Georgia. It is also, sadly, the second leading cause of death for people ages 15 to 34. While overdose is the most common way people attempt suicide, firearms are leading cause of death by suicide – and are the cause of more than half of U.S. suicides.

Although researchers have studied suicide for decades, and learned a great deal in the process, we still cannot point to a single cause. What we do know is although people might believe suicide happens without warning – one of several myths about suicide – there are actually several risk factors and warning signs.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, chronic mental or physical health conditions, stressful life events, exposure to trauma, and access to lethal means are all risk factors for suicide. Likewise, an individual who talks about ending his or her life, expresses hopelessness, increases use of substances or becomes increasingly isolated is displaying some common warning signs of suicidal behavior.

Another myth is that asking someone about suicide will make him or her more likely to attempt it. This is not true. Asking someone if he or she is thinking about hurting themselves, or has thought about ending their life, can provide an outlet for people to talk about the feelings they're experiencing. Asking also shows you care – something critically important to someone who might feel hopeless, isolated or unwanted.

Finally, one of the sentiments about suicide I find most troubling is the idea that people who talk about or attempt suicide are only looking for attention. Actually, this is true – though not in the way you might think. People don't end their lives because they don't want to live, they do so because they want to end what for them is an insufferable and hopeless situation.

People who talk about wanting to end their suffering or not wanting to be a burden are probably not looking for attention but reassurance – that their life is not meaningless, that their suffering might not be permanent, that their problems have solutions. They are likely experiencing a very difficult and complex set of circumstances and want to know someone cares and that their life is not worthless. If you encounter an individual in this state, the best thing you can offer is compassion, even if you don't really understand.

One of the most important things we've learned about suicide is that it can almost always be prevented. Highland Rivers Health offers many suicide prevention resources, including a no-cost suicide prevention training (called QPR) that can be provided onsite at businesses, schools, churches, community organizations or almost anywhere else. The Georgia Crisis and Access Line can be reached at (800) 715-4225, and the national Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available at (800) 273-TALK; both are available 24 hours a day.

How we react to a person exhibiting warning signs for suicide can make a tremendous difference in whether that individual might attempt suicide. We all have the power to help someone, to offer compassion and caring, and ultimately to save a life.

Melanie Dallas is a licensed professional counselor and CEO of Highland Rivers Health, which provides treatment and recovery services for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual and developmental disabilities in a 12-county region of northwest Georgia that includes Bartow, Cherokee, Floyd, Fannin, Gilmer, Gordon, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk and Whitfield counties.

Community Support Groups

-The Georgia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association is sponsoring a monthly support group at Morning Pointe Assisted Living, 660 Jolly Road, on the third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. For more information or directions, call Mary Braden at 770-548-4683 or Karen Parrott at 706-346-5220. For more information about dementia and Alzheimer's disease, call 800-272-3900 or visit www.alz.org/georgia.

- Families Anonymous is a 12-step program, for those concerned about drug abuse and behavior problems of a relative or friend. Completely anonymous, non professional, and non religious. No dues, no fees. Not connected with any hospital or agency. Located on Red Bud Road in plaza below Fitness First, next to Calhoun Counseling Center (Dr. Bledsoe's office). Meeting every Thursday 7 - 8 p.m. Call 770-548-7849 for more information.

-BONDAGE BREAKERS - Breaking the chains of addiction one soul at a time. Every Thursday night at 7 p.m. at Crane Eater Community Church, located at 3168 Red Bud Rd Calhoun, GA 30701.

-Calhoun AA Group meetings. Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from 7 - 8 p.m.; Tuesday and Thursday from 12 - 1 p.m. and Sunday 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Located at 318 North River Street, Calhoun, GA, 30701.

-Volunteers make a wonderful difference! PruittHealth Hospice is looking for people of vision and empathy who wish to make a difference in their community one person at a time. If you have a heart for others and wish to be of service, please contact us at 706-602-9546. Remember…you can make a difference for the good!

-Want to make a difference in the community? Tapestry Hospice is seeking volunteers to provide companionship to our patients, read books, make crafts, garden, light house cleaning, administrative work, etc. If you're interested contact Megan at megan.guthrie@tapestryhospice.com

-The Life Choice Hospice Bereavement Support Group will be meeting the 2nd Tuesday of each month. The support group is open to anyone in the community who would like to attend. The office and support group are located at 189 Professional Court, Suite 300, Calhoun. For Information, contact Jennifer at 706-602-9001.

-Special Care Plus, a free one-on-one consultation program, offers education and information to primary caregivers of persons with dementia. Any primary caregiver who is caring for a loved one with dementia in the home is eligible to receive this program. To learn more about the Special Care Plus program, call 800-272-3900.

-The Alzheimer's Association's Caring Closet was created to help offset the high cost of incontinent products and give the families support they often desperately need. If you would like to visit the nearest Closet, call the chapter office to receive a flier with locations and hours. Morning Pointe in Calhoun has a Caring Closet; call Mary Braden at 706-629-0777.

-The Northwest Georgia Parkinson Disease Association, Inc., is offering a monthly support group for persons living with Parkinson Disease, their caregivers, family and friends. The support group will meet at Gordon Hospital; Conference Room A. For any questions about the support group and future meetings, call James Trussell at 706-235-3164 or 706-346-5678.

-Are you interested in losing pounds and inches? Join TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) for support and how-to information. Meetings are on Monday nights. Weigh-ins begin at 6 p.m., and group support and information starts at 7 p.m. at the Gordon County Senior Citizens Center, 150 Cambridge Court, Calhoun. For more information, call 706-847-3306.

-Community volunteers are needed at Countryside Hospice Care, where the mission is to promote comfort and dignity at the end of life. The agency covers 26 Northwest Georgia counties between three offices in LaFayette, Rome, and Newnan. If you would like to participate in this rewarding program, call 706-638-7651 or 1-800-660-7381.

-Discovering Hope, an autism support group for Northwest Georgia, meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Friendship Baptist Church, Rocky Face. For more information, call Connie Post at 706-673-7765 or www.discoveringhope.us.

-Caring Connection is a telephone support group especially for caregivers of loved ones with Alzheimer's who cannot leave their homes because of care responsibilities. This support group is as close as the phone. Call 706-275-0819 or 1-800-272-3900 and ask to be enrolled in Caring Connection.

-Grief Recovery Group for those who have lost loved ones and friends, receive support and guidance with the Four Tasks of Grieving. Cost is Free. Second Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. at Harris Radiation Therapy Center at Gordon Hospital. For more information or to RSVP, please call 706.879.5850.

-The Compassionate Friends of Dalton and N.W. Georgia is part of a worldwide effort that has helped many families cope with the loss of a child and to honor our children's memory. The Compassionate Friends meets on the third Thursday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. at Evangelical Methodist Church (in the "Gathering Place" building), 1035 Abutment Road, Dalton (on the hill behind the old Lowe's off Walnut Avenue). For more information, call Dawn at 706-277-3312 or 706-264-4458 or e-mail dawnsisson@msn.com.

-SING (Surviving Infidelity Necessary to your Growth) has formed here. If you are experiencing difficulty in marriage and are looking for ways to survive, then you should come and be part of these meetings designed to help, encourage, and solve issues in a marriage that can lead to a promising future ahead for the entire family. For more information, call Iroka Moore at 706-629-2880.

-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.

-Looking for a 12-step meeting for men and women? At "Road to Recovery," recognizing Jesus Christ as our higher power, they take the 12 steps and compare how they are taken from scripture and how to apply them to our lives to experience true freedom from the bondages of addiction. The meetings are free and open to the public at World Harvest Church locations in Cherokee and Gordon counties. For more information, call 706-602-1919. The Calhoun church is located at 2335 Red Bud Road. The meetings here are every Monday and Thursday at 7 p.m.

-A 12-step-meeting for Overeaters Anonymous is held at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 901 W. Emory St, Dalton on Thursdays at 6 p.m. Call Nan at 706-695-9008 or Stephanie at 706-847-8125 for more information.

-Caring for a loved one who is suffering from late-stage cancer is certainly one of life's hardest experiences. But you do not have to go through this alone. The Harris Radiation Therapy Center at Gordon Hospital provides a place for you to meet each month with others who understand what you are going through during this difficult time. Strength for Caring, a support group for caregivers of patients with advanced stages of cancer meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 2-3 p.m. at the Harris Radiation Therapy Center at Gordon Hospital, 1035 Red Bud Road. For more information, please call 706-879-5853.

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Jennifer Smith, FNP-C
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