

Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority

*One stop source for new
and expanding businesses
and industries*

The Swainsboro-Emanuel County (SEC) Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority, under the leadership, and extensive experience of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ken Warnock, saw many positive improvements in existing programs and the implementation of new programs in 2020.

The Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce's mission is to foster the business environment including the quality of life our community has to offer. For Emanuel County, the Chamber creates, encourages, and supports the educational establishment, retail businesses, and tourism industry

to improve the quality of life for the community's citizens. The Chamber focuses primarily on retail and business development, but also works with the Development Authority to support efforts in industrial recruitment and development.

The Emanuel County Development Authority's (ECDA) mission is to attract new industries to Emanuel County, help existing industries expand and prosper, provide quality jobs, and improve the quality of life for our citizens. The ECDA focuses primarily on industrial development, but also works with the Chamber of Commerce to help re-

(Continued on page 2)



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Swainsboro-Emanuel County...

(From page 1)

tail development. The Chamber and the ECDA work together on economic development opportunities, particularly when working with industrial prospects.

The CEO position allows for a single point of contact for interest in our community while maintaining separate chamber and development authority support staff. Jack Bareford continues as the President of the Emanuel County Development Authority, keeping his extensive knowledge base and twenty-six years of economic development experience to support industry recruitment and expansion efforts within the organization. The whole idea is to make Swainsboro and Emanuel County the best community in which to live and grow for not only businesses and industries, but our families.

During 2020, two new industries came to Swainsboro and numerous industries expanded their workforce. It is important to remember that over 65% of all new jobs created come from expansion of existing businesses and industries. A number of new retail establishments started in 2020 as well, contributing to the net jobs gain. In addition to the two new industries, 2020 saw the expansion of eight

companies in Emanuel County; total new jobs created were 326.

Wincore Windows and Doors, LLC opened its new manufacturing facility in Swainsboro in 2019 in an existing facility vacated by Husqvarna. Wincore occupies 75,000 square feet of the facility and operates five lines of window and door manufacturing with 165 employees. An additional 100 jobs should be created within the next year with their expansion into another 100,000 sq. ft. of manufacturing space and the addition of five new lines.

America Knits, LLC opened its first US manufacturing facility in Swainsboro in the Summer of 2019. The upper-end performance fabric finisher employs 72 employees and is already experiencing a significant expansion with the manufacture of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

ECDA is currently working 28 projects, 15 of which are active prospects, eight are construction or construction related, six are real estate related, five are work force related and nine are site related. ECDA is also assisting its active prospects with due diligence on sites at various industrial parks in the community.

Even with the challenge of operating un-



FOUNTAIN ON THE SQUARE

der the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chamber and the ECDA will continue to support, sponsor and provide programs such as LYTEE 2.1 (Leading Youth Through Education and Experience, an expanded version of Vision 2020), STAR recognition and awards, the Pine Tree Festival and Southeast Timber Expo, the annual Chamber Golf Classic, ribbon cuttings for new business, and the latest new program, Chamber Champion, they will continue to explore new innovative ideas to create new jobs and opportunities for our area.

LYTEE 2.1, the joint educational initiative between the Emanuel County School System, the Emanuel County Development Authority, SEC Chamber and our industry partners, started

in 2015 as Vision 2020. A curriculum of study was designed to give job specific skills training to potential employees. This training started as early as the 10th grade and allowed a high school student to graduate with a high school diploma as well as have certification within a specific skill set if the student desires.

There are now 12 students participating in LYTEE 2.1 at numerous local partner facilities. While working various hours, these students also receive one-on-one mentoring from industry partner employees as well as soft skill training periodically to help them improve themselves both on the job and in life.

Once students graduate and they have the potential and desire to further their education in their chosen vocation

or career path, they may choose to obtain a certificate, diploma or degree from Southeastern Technical College; or an associate degree from East Georgia State College; or a bachelors' degree from East Georgia State College or Georgia Southern University. The main objective is to "plug" our "trained" young people into the work force as quickly as possible, as they become ready and qualified to be productive in their chosen path. Approximately 185 students have completed Vision 2020/LYTEE 2.1 with 65% of those students remaining with the companies after graduation.

The city and county governments, the SEC Chamber of Commerce and the ECDA work together to provide incen- (Continued on page 4)



Matt Donaldson, Mayor
Jule Bady, Jr., Mayor Pro Tem
Jesse Brown, City Commissioner
Kenton Landon, City Commissioner
Charles Moody, City Commissioner

Twice As Friendly, Twice As Nice!



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Swainsboro-Emanuel County...

(From page 2)

tive packages, based on job creation and private investment, which help new and expanding businesses become profitable in the shortest time possible.

In addition to the Georgia Department of Economic Development, many other state level agencies have economic development groups who work with communities to bring new industry and expand existing industry, such as Georgia Power, Georgia EMC, Georgia Electric Cities, and others. Frequent contact with their project managers enhances the community's economic development capability. The different state level data bas-

es are kept up to date to provide the most up to date community data for prospects.

In addition to constant networking with state level project managers, the ECDA also does direct marketing to find new prospects. The marketing strategies include direct contact with corporate site consultants, direct mailings, and targeted advertising. Also, because most site consultants and real estate consultants do their initial site screening through the internet, the ECDA's website has been updated to utilize state of the art search engine optimization which will provide improved access for site selection professionals.

To enhance the community's ability to attract new industry and to provide for existing industry expansions, the ECDA has seven industrial parks-Emanuel Industrial Park East, Emanuel Industrial Park West, the Richard L. Brown Park, Pathway Technology Park, the East Georgia Regional (EGR) Airport Industrial Park, the I-16 Industrial Park and the new Highway 297 Industrial Park in Nunez. The ECDA maintains the parks which encompass over 1300 acres. Of special significance in 2020, the sewer system for the I-16 Park was started. The water system for the I-16 Park was completed in 2019. Sewer was held up as it was part of an application to the Economic Development Administration for \$1,623,000 for sewer for part of the I-16 Park sewer, and water and sewer for the Highway 297 Park. Fortunately, we were awarded the grant which allowed us to move forward with this important infrastructure. We also received a OneGeorgia grant for \$500,000 for water and sewer at the Highway 297 Park. Water infrastructure construction for the Highway 297 Park began in February 2021.

Rehabilitation of the

railroad track from the I-16 Industrial park to Vidalia continued in 2020. Money has been appropriated for rehabilitation of more of the line to Vidalia in 2021. Completing the line to Vidalia will significantly improve the marketability of the I-16 Industrial Park as it will then give rail access not only to the Port of Savannah, but also the Port in Brunswick. It will also provide access to two different rail companies, allowing competitive costs for rail shipping.

Our city and county work very hard to provide the resources necessary for developing the infrastructure we need for development and providing great incentive packages. It is difficult, as funding needs are many, but sources of revenue limited. A limited portion of the millage and the SPLOST are dedicated to economic development. There are state and federal programs that can provide funding, and our development authority uses them whenever applicable, to leverage the use of local funds.

The ECDA will be completing by January 2022, approximately \$6.5 million of infrastructure improvements at our parks to include water and sewer construction at the I-16 park and the

new Highway 297 industrial park.

With the opening of the window manufacturing facility, and the new textile finishing facility, along with the expansions in the health-care, cut and sew, CNC manufacturing, food processing and packaging, and timber processing sectors, the potential for significant growth in the job market is promising.

Finally, it is important to point out that the Emanuel County Development Authority has board members with a great deal of experience in community involvement and economic development. As mentioned before, the Chamber, development authority, city, and county work together as a team to develop incentive packages and economic development strategies for the present and the future that create jobs and improve the quality of life for the citizens of Swainsboro and Emanuel County.

Feel free to visit or contact the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority located on the square in beautiful downtown Swainsboro at 478-237-6426 or visit us online at www.goe-manuel.org.

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Together, we all made progress

by MAYOR CHARLES SCHWABE

When folks look back on 2020, it will certainly be one of those years that will always have an asterisk. This is one year that doesn't fit the pattern for the normal discussion of "progress", but if you stop and think back on where we were about this time last year and where we are today, progress is one

word that pretty much says it all.

In 2020, the City of Swainsboro, just like every other part of the planet, found itself having to make major changes in the way things were done. From zoom meetings and conference calls with local, State, and Federal agencies (even one with the White House), it was a different world that had to be adapt-

ed to in a short time. Work schedules had to change, along with precautions for essential employees, front-line hazardous protocol, and new policies for customer services. I am proud to say that our City employees in all departments stepped up and made the effort that was required to see that all operations and services stayed on track. Many of these changes are

still in effect and will continue until official directives change.

Despite all this, however, 2020 was as usual, a busy year for the City of Swainsboro. Two returning Councilmen and one new Councilman were sworn in. John E. Parker, Julian Sconyers, and Ricky Stevens all began new 4-year terms. A ma-



MAYOR SCHWABE

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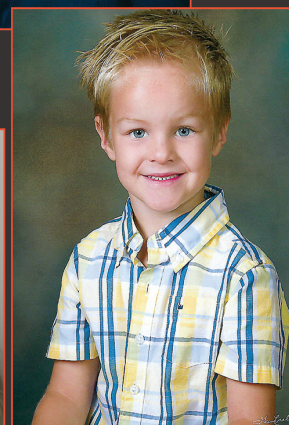
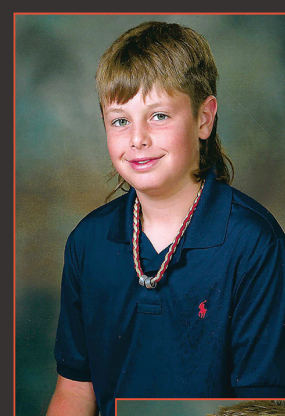
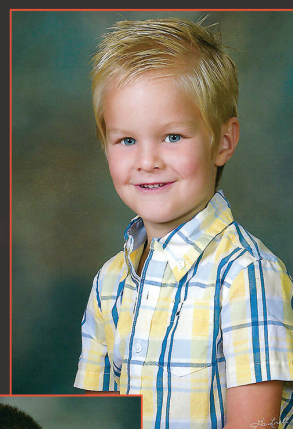
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Together, we all...

(From page 5)

For paving contract was executed in the early part of the year. More than 25 city streets were involved in what was one of the largest such projects in the city's history. In other early action, a campaign to clean up blighted areas in all parts of the city was also adopted. Councilman Stevens chaired an effort to include a Code Enforcement Officer to manage this project. This action was passed by council, and has now resulted in more than 35 cases of abandoned vehicles and blighted property being rectified. The council increased the amount of funding for the removal of abandoned houses in various neighborhoods. Areas of major industrial blight in Swainsboro are also being addressed by the city through remediation plans ordered, and being handled by, the Environmental Protection Division of the federal government.

In addition to the effort to improve environmental issues in the city, there was a detailed review of the city budget in 2020, with a specific examination of contractor costs for public works, water management, and waste water operations. After committee work chaired by the Mayor, a motion to seek information regarding proposals for cost control measures designed to reduce expenses associated with operation of

these departments, was passed. This will result in reordering budget components and bottom-line savings on taxes for us all. The City also continues to review options on operations in all seven departments, including employee benefits and insurance plans and costs.

In 2020, plans were also approved by the City to assist in the completion of two projects that will provide a new phase of community involvement, entertainment, information, and education for all the citizens of Swainsboro. The downtown theater renovation and the elementary school gymnasium will begin the final phases of construction this year and will result in venues that will set out city apart and transform our "quality of life" opportunities here in our town. This will be an exciting time to be in Swainsboro.

Many plans had to be postponed in 2020, but it was also a time for re-evaluation and updating. During the year, a policy for committee control of finances and department responsibility was streamlined to make the process for response time and control more efficient. Several city ordinances were modified to simplify and better serve our citizens. One such ordinance dealt with the requirements and terms of city business licenses and the procedure for dealing with non-compliance.



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BOBBIE COLLINS**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
RITA FAULKNER**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
JOHN PARKER**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
JULIAN SCONYERS**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
JOHNNY RAY
STAFFORD**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
RICKY STEVENS**

The City of Swainsboro complied with all executive orders of the State of Georgia concerning Covid-19. Council voted not to require a Mask Mandate in Swainsboro. However, the City provided masks for anyone who requested them and endorsed the federal guidelines for prevention of Covid-19 transmission, including frequent hand washing, social distancing, and mask use. The council also voted, and provided, special Personal Protection suits to the ICU staff at our local hospital, Emanuel Medical Center.

During 2020, the nation-

al Census was conducted, but the results have been delayed by the challenges associated with Covid-19. Despite some drop in tax collection and business activity, early projections showed an increase in population in the City. Nearly a dozen new businesses opened and the Emanuel County Joint Development Authority reported that two major manufacturers in Swainsboro expanded, creating 150 new jobs. Authority CEO, Ken Warnock, informed council that there were over 200 jobs unfilled at area manufacturers.

2020 was not an easy

year, but I am satisfied that this City responded in a competent, responsible, and compassionate manner. I think that is what is expected and required. Looking back on this very unusual year, some may criticize and cast blame; I would rather just say a sincere "Thank You", not only to our medical community, law enforcement, front-line workers, and all the folks who kept the doors open, but also to every citizen in this community who stayed optimistic and tried to care for themselves and those around them. Together, we all made progress in a very difficult year.

Since 1926!

Daniels Chevrolet began in a general store in Twin City in 1926. Mr. Marlow Daniels owned a general store and would bring Chevrolets from Swainsboro and offer them for sale to his customers in Twin City. Marlow and a man named Rice co-owned the venture at that time. Mr. Daniels later bought out Mr. Rice and became the sole owner of what would become Daniels Chevrolet. He established a Chevrolet dealership in Swainsboro in 1930. Mr. Daniels was joined in business by his son, Arthur Daniels, in the 1930s. In the early 1940s, the Daniels added Oldsmobile to their line. They also sold Fiat automobiles during this time.

With the addition of Oldsmobile, the Daniels sold the first cars in Emanuel County with air conditioning and automatic transmissions. Arthur's son, Dickie, joined the dealership in 1959. Dickie's three sons all joined the dealership as they entered the business world. Son, Richard, joined in the early 1980s; Ed joined in 1984; and Dickie's third son, Sam, joined his father and brothers in 1993. Today, Richard is general manager; Ed is sales manager; and Sam manages the service and parts department. In 2015, Sam's son, Rich, joined the sales team. Service and personal attention to each customer is standard operating procedure at Daniels Chevrolet.

Most automobile dealers cover about a 45-mile radius from which they draw in business. Through providing top notch personal service for 90 years, the Daniels dealership covers a radius of more than 230 miles. The Daniels family prides itself on providing these services to their customers, whom they consider family. In 1991, Buick and Pontiac were added to the line of General Motors automobiles offered by the Daniels family. Another highlight in the history of the Daniels family business came in 1998, when they were awarded the highest award for a Chevrolet dealer.

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Another year of continuous progress in Twin City

The Blade sat down with Twin City Mayor Matt Donaldson to discuss 2020. "2020 was a year full of challenges. COVID-19 caused much concern from the health of my citizens and employees to budgetary concerns from the pandemic," said Mayor Donaldson, "but great challenges test your resilience." Twin City has continued moving forward during this time. Mayor Donaldson continues to focus on several areas for the city: infrastructure, recreation, and the City Centennial in 2021.

When the City was financially sound again and was a Qualified Local Government, the City began applying for grant funding for needed projects. "There are all sorts of grants available, but you must seek them out and have a plan," said Mayor Donaldson. The City was awarded the 2019 round of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding in the amount of \$750,000.



MAYOR DONALDSON

The project began in late 2020. "Infrastructure is vitally important for the future of Twin City," said Mayor Donaldson. The 2019 CDBG project is an \$850,000 cost, that is primarily funded from the \$750,000 CDBG grant. The project focuses on replacement of water lines with new and larger lines, replacement and addition of fire hydrants, and the replacement of water meters in the project area. The project will affect 201 persons in Twin City. When the project is complete in mid-2021, there could be greater advantages beyond upgraded infrastructure. "With increased water flows from (Continued on page 10)



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Another year of...

(From page 8)

the larger water lines and the addition and replacement of fire hydrants, we hope our ISO rating will be upgraded," said Mayor Donaldson. ISO is a rating system used by all insurance companies to measure risk. The lower the ISO rating equals greater fire protection ability. "If we can get our ISO rating lower, this will affect everyone in Twin City – not just those in the project area. We feel this project will push us over the finish line to a lower ISO rating," said Mayor Donaldson. The City hopes to accomplish this in late 2021 or early 2022. The 2019

CDBG project is Phase 1 of phased project, with a Phase 2 pending. In 2020, the City began the work to apply for grant funding for the Phase 2 of the project with 2021 CDBG funding. If awarded, the City will continue with the same type of project but in a different service area. "Infrastructure projects are long term and sometimes messy. Over the next couple of years, we hope you will see construction crews in Twin City making the needed repairs to our City infrastructure. I hope that all citizens of Twin City will be patient and pardon our progress," said Mayor Donaldson.

On recreation in Twin

City, the City has been focused on multiple City parks. In October 2020, the City was awarded grant funding from the Georgia Department of Economic Development to partially fund a new City park – Centennial Park and Trail. The new park will be on the old railroad bed in the middle of town, and the project is expected to be completed in mid-2021. The new park will have a natural walking trail, park benches, and lighting. In the December 2020 meeting of the City Commission, the City approved funding for upgrades at Pop Boogie Recreational Complex. The upgrades were partially made pos-

sible by a grant to Historic Twin City Georgia, Inc. from the Mill Creek Foundation. The upgrades include a new park bathroom and concessions stand, repairs to the dugouts and fencing, and a complete refurbishment of the bleachers and picnic tables. "Pop Boogie Park needed an upgrade," said Mayor Donaldson, "and we used City reserve funding and grant funding from Mill Creek to make this project possible." Also in the December 2020 meeting, the City approved new fencing at Graymont Community Park off Queen Street. Over the next couple of years, the City plans to continue investing in upgrading City parks. "This is just the beginning of what we have planned for our City parks," said Mayor Donaldson, "and you will see noticeable upgrades over the next 5 years."

On January 3, 1921, the charters of Summit and Graymont were abolished, and the City of Twin City was formed. 2021 marks 100 of years of Twin City, and the City has a year-full of events planned. "You only turn 100 once," said Mayor Donaldson, "so we are going to have something every month in 2021 to honor our Centennial." In January 2021, the City unveiled new City limits signage. In February 2021, the City hosted the Centennial Celebration with a tour of the recently renovated Old City Hall & Jail. Other Centennial projects include: a ribbon cutting



CENTENNIAL LOGO

of the improvements at Pop Boogie Park in March 2021, a Centennial Mural on the Old City Hall & Jail, improvements at the Carilee Coleman Park and John Rountree Cabin, and a new City festival in Fall 2021. Mentioned earlier, the new City park will be named in honor of the City Centennial. At the conclusion of the Centennial, the City plans to bury a time capsule at the Centennial Park and Trail to memorialize the events in 2021. Also, *The Forest-Blade* has been interviewing local people every month in honor of the Centennial festivities. "I want to keep the history of my hometown alive," said Mayor Donaldson, "so I am so happy *The Blade* has been helping me with this with the monthly interviews."

2020 has been a year full of progress and growth in Twin City. With a great plan, Twin City will continue to improve and grow with each completed project. Mayor Donaldson said in conclusion, "I am proud of our accomplishments in 2020, and I know 2021 and beyond will yield returns for the great people of Twin City. If we can do something better, please let me know. My door at City Hall is always open."

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Major Nick Robertson

Captain Marc Curry

Lieutenant West Bedgood

Lieutenant Elec Wheeler

Lieutenant Robert Phillips

Lieutenant David Way

EMANUEL COUNTY JAIL

The sheriff is the duly elected and lawfully commissioned Chief Law Enforcement Officer of the county and has the DUTY to preserve the peace and protect the lives, persons, property, health and morals of the people (Law Enforcement), the keeper of the jail, and lastly, the arm and the sword of the Honorable Court.

PTCM, Piggly Wiggly: *Bless the food and those who prepare it*

The year 2020 brought great business for the Brown family, despite odds faced during the pandemic. People staying home during days in quarantine due to Covid increased the need for home cooked meals. Business really flourished for the Brown family's local stores - Pinetucky Country Meats and Piggly Wiggly.

"Business was exceptional through 2020 and I couldn't complain at all when speaking on the support received by the local community through the pandemic," Owner

Del Brown stated.

Though the business was a blessing for the local community in uncertain times, they have also been a benefit to the county since their establishment in 2014. The Browns first opened Pinetucky Country Meats from their home in Emanuel County. Business thrived for the family which led them to move their business to Swainsboro and opening Pinetucky Country Meats in Swainsboro in 2017. The Browns later opened a Piggly Wiggly location in Soperton in 2019, and most recently, in 2020,



PINETUCKY COUNTRY MEATS

opened a second Piggly Wiggly location in Twin City.

"Our Twin City location has done very good. We had anticipated expectations when first opening which were ex-

ceeded by what we were expecting," Brown stated. "You never know until you know. You have to open doors and try before you know what's going to happen, but Twin City has embraced it's small Piggly Wiggly. People are thankful and are enjoying it. They tell us often," he further stated.

In all of their locations, the Browns promote three things within their work environment: 1 - Provide a clean shopping location; 2 - Provide exceptional customer service; and 3 - Provide quality products. Brown emphasized the importance of treating others as they would like to be treated.

"Bottom line - We're always looking to do more. Our main focus is to provide the best service possible for Pinetucky Country Meats and Piggly Wiggly - all locations," Brown commented.

Striving to be the very best and do the very best job possible, the Browns stand firm in offering good, quality products to the community as well as

giving back to the community.

"My wife, Joy, and I find excitement in being able to help others. We don't expect special recognition for helping others. That's not important to us. What's important is that we are able to help someone that really, truly is in need," Brown commented.

Harley, daughter-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Brown and wife of Boulder Brown, works with Joy in accounting services for the family's businesses. Boulder and Gunnar, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Brown, also work actively in the family business, and have done so since the family began their business.

"My two boys are fully invested in our business and have worked in the business every single day. They have been a large part of the company's success," Brown commented about his two sons. "God has blessed us with good business and good kids. (Continued on page 13)

PINETUCKY COUNTRY MEATS

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PTCM, Piggly Wiggly:

(From page 12)

Without my two boys this wouldn't be possible, and that's the truth."

In closing, Brown also expressed his sincere appreciation for the local community in which they serve.

"We appreciate every single person that's ever

done business with us.

It wouldn't be possible without our community and we look forward to continuing to serve in the future. We have a good support system all the way around and could not be more grateful."



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We must prepare for situations that we cannot predict

by GUY SINGLETARY
It is around this time of year, I begin putting my garden plan into action. I don't know about you, but I can already taste the sweet red flesh of watermelon that has been picked from the garden and cooled in the shade of an old pecan tree; I can hear the grease pop as my wife fries okra in her cast iron skillet; I can smell the aroma of sweet corn as it slides down the face of our old wooden creamer; And I get pure excited about the thought of filling our pantry with canned



COUNTY
ADMINISTRATOR
SINGLETARY

green beans, peas, tomatoes, pickles, and preserves. If not for the heavy rains that we have had over the past few weeks (as I write this),



COMMISSIONER
JAMES CANADY

I would have already planted my seed potatoes and started making further preparations for my spring and summer crops, but soon enough I will get started.



COMMISSIONER
DESSE DAVIS

It was Audrey Hepburn that was quoted as saying "to plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow," and I plant my garden each year with the faith that tomorrow will come and that we will have a significant harvest, but I never truly know what the months ahead may bring. Our local government works in a similar fashion. Every year, Emanuel County elected officials and staff collaborate to make projections and plans for the upcoming year. While we know that it is impossible to foresee all of the twists and turns that are ahead, our past experiences and historical data help develop a strong map to go by, but we also must prepare for situations that we cannot predict.

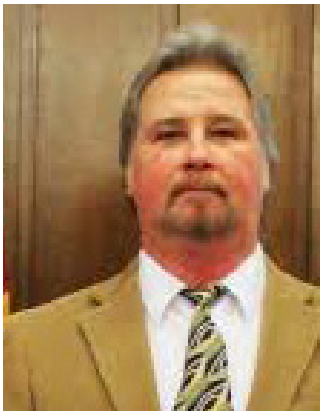
Last year, we had one of those unpredictable years and we learned a lot about ourselves as a county. We learned that living in a progressive rural community



COMMISSIONER
HUGH FOSKEY



COMMISSIONER
JIM SHERROD



COMMISSIONER
KEITH THOMPSON

is actually pretty great. We learned that we are blessed with some of the greatest health care facilities and health care (Continued on page 16)

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Twin City Elementary



Swainsboro Elementary



Swainsboro High



Swainsboro Primary



Swainsboro Middle School



Emanuel County Institute

The Board of Education is dedicated to providing excellent educational opportunities and experiences for every student in the Emanuel County School System. By striving to provide the best academic environment possible, complete with all resources necessary for a top-notch education, the Board continues to enable and empower students to achieve academic success and continue the tradition of excellence in Emanuel County Schools.



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Superintendent



Mason Henry
Chairman



Phyllis
Dixon



Johnny Parker
Vice Chairman



Tanya
Lane



John Allen
Bailey



Sandra
Swinney



Del
Brown

COMMUNITY • PRIDE • INNOVATION

2020: one of...

(From page 14)

workers in the State of Georgia—this includes Emanuel County Health Department, Emanuel Medical Center, East Georgia Healthcare, and the numerous other private clinics and pharmacies throughout Emanuel County. We reaffirmed what we already knew, and that is that we are blessed with a professional and committed staff that are willing to stand firm and provide excellent services to the Citizens of Emanuel County even in the face of the greatest pandemic in the last 100 years. And finally, we must always have faith

that tomorrow will come and that we must always work hard to provide better services to the Citizens of Emanuel County.

Emanuel County is a great place to live, and the current pandemic has proven that rural living has its share of benefits. While large cities across the country were shut down for months, here in Emanuel County, we were able to take the necessary precautions, while also continuing to live our lives. We were able to continue to support our local small business, visit our community parks, such as Harmon Park, Georgia L. Smith State Park, Ohoop-

ee Dunes WMA, as well as the numerous acres of privately owned land, and send our children back to school. We have had our share of ups and downs, but as a whole I am thankful to have been able to weather the storm right here in Emanuel County.

Most communities are not as lucky to be blessed with the level of health care services that we have in Emanuel County—especially rural communities. If the past year proved anything, it is that we have a significant number of quality health care options in Emanuel County. Jennifer Harrison and her team at Emanuel County

Health Department have worked tirelessly to make sure that our community received its fair share of testing, contact tracing, and care to help limit the spread. Now that their attention has shifted to vaccinations, they are making significant strides in efficiently vaccinating many members of our community. Emanuel Medical Center was named the number one medium sized hospital in the State of Georgia by Georgia Trend Magazine. This is a huge accomplishment and was not achieved overnight. Many men and women have dedicated themselves over the last several years to providing excellent health care services to our community and their efforts have now been recognized. In addition to the excellent care provided by our county facilities, East Georgia Health Care and numerous private facilities have made it convenient to get the care that our citizens deserve in our own community.

All of the employers in our community have had to get creative over the past year to ensure that they would have enough employees to continue operations. While our local government has not been immune to the effects that COVID and federal policy has had on our workforce, Emanuel County has an amazing group of employees that continued to show up each day and provide services. Across the board, our employees

are tasked with providing services that improve the quality of life of our citizens including, public safety (law enforcement, fire services, emergency management planning, EMS, 911), public works and sanitation, court services, senior services, elections, economic development, recreation, and many other administrative services. Even in the face of adversity, employees stayed committed, and were able to move forward several great projects, which include a full courthouse renovation and new Magistrate Court Office, Emergency Operations Center planning (project will break ground very soon), implementation of new 911 phone system and CAD, numerous road projects, and many other great projects. We have also been fortunate enough to be awarded several grants this past year, including a \$750,000 grant to renovate the Emanuel County Senior Center.

Looking forward, no one knows what tomorrow will bring, but what we do know, is that we are all blessed to live in Emanuel County. No matter what may lie ahead, our local government is going to stay positive and continue to be proactive, because that is what the Citizens of Emanuel County deserve. We will sow our seeds with a hope and commitment to the future, because Emanuel County is and will always be "The Place to Grow."

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Emanuel Medical Center has great year despite fight against pandemic

The year 2020 was challenging to most local businesses, including Emanuel Medical Center. When speaking with Damien Scott, Chief Executive Officer, he explained that the Covid-19 pandemic has been devastating to all, especially to hospital staff, but in the end, he feels they are

much stronger in many areas.

"I don't really know a single person that has not been impacted by Covid at some point. We've all struggled very hard with this, but when we get past this, and we are going to, there are a few things good things that have come from

this. 1 - We now have better equipment; 2 - We have better training; and 3 - We are stronger now as a team than ever before. We've been through this together. We made it through this together, and we can make it through anything that faces us in the future," Scott explained.

To stay current in preventing and fighting the battle against Covid, the hospital began with installing a REME HALO ventilation system throughout the hospital.

"While experiencing an outbreak in our nursing home, we were made aware of this product and installed it in the

nursing home to combat Covid spreading. After installing the system, almost immediately, the outbreak stopped so we installed the same system in all our clinical areas," Scott stated.

The REME HALO is installed in vents throughout the hospital, nursing (Continued on page 18)



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Emanuel Medical Center...

(From page 17)
home, and clinical areas and features ionizers that put out an electric charge that kills viruses, bacteria, mildew, Covid, and other diseases.

“We are now one of the safest places of business because of the ionizer system. We’ve really gone the extra mile to provide a clean and safe setting for our community the best we can,” he further commented.

In addition to the installation of REME HALO, the hospital has upgraded its equipment to provide top of the line service, such as Vapotherm, a therapy consisting of high level oxygen that keeps patients off ventilators; Central monitoring, new monitoring equipment that helps medical staff see the status of patients on screen rather than waiting on an alarm to respond; UV light machines that sterilize electronic medical equipment, cell

phones and other items carrying viruses and germs by use of UV light technology; a portal x-ray machine, new ultrasound machines, ventilators, negative pressure rooms, critical care beds, and much more.

Through use of the new x-ray and ultrasound machine, hospital staff are able to render care in a more prompt and direct manner.

Renovation work and upgrades have deemed beneficial to the local medical setting. During a recent walk-through of the hospital, Scott highlighted the process of converting 20 patient rooms to negative pressure, an infection prevention measure that creates an isolated environment by controlling airflows from patient rooms, flowing outside to non-contaminated areas.

Critical care beds designed specifically for intensive care were pur-

chased and installed in the unit. The medical-surgical department was also able to upgrade to a smart bed system. These new beds utilize technology to assist patients and their providers in their care and recovery. In addition to the new beds, the hospital has also purchased new recliners to be installed in rooms. Other upgrades include spray gun sterilizers, new vital machines, and temperature scanning systems at four entrances of Emanuel Medical Center.

Thanks to the implementation of the hospital’s new tele-med service, rather than sending a patient to a different hospital setting for treatment, doctors and staff are assisted by Augusta University to help diagnose and treat illnesses without the travel.

“We’re thankful for our partnership with Augusta University. They have provided our location

with telecommunication services to help render care to patients. Through that, we have gained a

tremendous amount of skills and are a much better hospital,” Scott hum-
(Continued on page 19)



DRX REVOLUTION XRAY MACHINE



SCOTT WITH ULTRASOUND MACHINE



CENTRAL MONITORING SCREEN

Emanuel Medical Center...

(From page 18)
bly stated.

Emanuel Medical Center was one of the first clinical sites to offer Bamlanivimab (BAM), a monoclonal immunotherapy infusion approved for high risk Covid-19 positive patients with mild to moderate symptoms. The BAM infusion is provided in an outpatient setting to qualifying patients in an effort to prevent hospitalization and serious illness caused by Covid-19.

The vast efforts reflected the hospital well recently, as the location earned the title of *Georgia Trend Hospital of the Year* – which is an amazing label to carry.

"Was it exhausting? Would we choose not to go through what we have endured? Yes. But, because we did, we became a better hospital. We received better training, but, also, through the CARES act, we received money to spend on Covid preparedness and preventive products. These purchases helped us step up our game throughout the entire hospital. In

2021 and 2022, we will be able to offer services that we never have before. It's truly groundbreaking" he further advised.

Scott gave much credit to Emanuel Healthcare, the 7-day clinic, those administering BAM infusions and Covid-19 vaccinations, those working throughout the hospital, clinics, nursing home and EMS for taking precautions to fight against Covid when caring for patients. Scott is thankful for the community's other healthcare professionals providing care,

testing, and vaccinations to our area. He also expressed his appreciation to the local community for practicing safety protocols to combat Covid-19 and participating in blood and plasma drives that save lives.

"If you come to Emanuel Medical Center, you know that you will be able to receive good care with the best equipment. We're more skilled and have more equipment than we did one year ago and provide a much safer work environment for employees," Scott concluded.



**SCOTT WITH DIRECTOR
OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**



NURSES STANDING AT COVID UNIT DOORS



UV LIGHT MACHINE



NURSE WITH TELEMED MACHINE



TEMP SCAN SYSTEM

An update from Emanuel County Humane Society

The Emanuel County Humane Society (ECHS) has been steadily assisting the Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter in providing care, treatments, and finding homes for local animals of the area. As for every organization and individual, 2020 has been a very trying year. Below are highlights from the last calendar year 2020. As of January, the annual animal shelter report states that 181 animals were taken in from the City of Swainsboro and 412 from the county, for a total of 593. It was also reported that 17 adoptions were made and 49 pets were returned to owners. There were 13 euthanized, 7 died, and 485 were transported to agency transfers. (A total of three dogs escaped from the Shelter)

In January 2020, we supplied new wording for the Shelter van to include "Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter".

We also made available wallet emergency cards at the local Veterinary Clinics.

Extensive repair work at the Shelter began, using SPLOST funds earmarked for that purpose.

On February 3, 2020 we addressed the City Council with a request that they begin help-

ing to purchase needed medicines and materials to the Shelter for the animals' welfare. After last years' expenditures of over \$12,000.00 by the Humane Society, we cannot continue to fund all of the Shelter's medical needs with our estimated income of \$3,500.00 to \$4,000.00. We also looked over several vacant buildings within the city for the purpose of a new Shelter.

We addressed the County Commissioners on February 17th, who stated they have no control over the Shelter budget but can make suggestions as needed.

In March we made plans for our Annual Barkfest at the Bark in the Boro Dog Park. We also planned to attend Farm Day at Swainsboro Primary School on March 20. Tentative plans are underway for the Tractor Supply Animal Adoption Event in August.

In May 2020 the Humane Society met via Zoom Meeting. All public events have been postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic. The Shelter report stated that temporarily no dogs were being taken in due to half the Shelter closed for repairs to roof, HVAC, painting,

fencing repairs and more. They are repairing one half at a time so that dogs can be secluded from the work. The Dog Park landscaping project has also been put on hold for now. Dog worming medication, heartworm tests and syringes have been purchased for the Shelter. Membership renewal letters were mailed out.

On August 27, 2020 the Humane Society appeared in municipal court to support the Shelter during a court hearing in a dog abuse case. The judge found the dog owner guilty and released the abused dog to rescue or adoption.

In September we met at the Fire Station, observing social distancing and using masks and hand sanitizers. Upcoming events include a tour of the Shelter and its improvements, and the Agricultural Spay & Neuter Grant allocation.

On November 16, a design was submitted to Handi House by the City Rec. Dept. for overhead shelters which will be installed at the existing park benches within Bark in the Boro.

On November 21 we gathered at Bark in the Boro to plant three groups of River Birch

trees, donated by The George's Flower Shop.

During our December meeting it was announced that all repairs to the Shelter have been completed. The Shelter looks and functions almost unbelievably better since all work has been done. Here are your SPLOST tax dollars at work! The GA DOA Grant check has arrived and a committee of the Shelter and Humane Society met twice to draft an appropriate application and discuss processing of them.

We provided 9-in-1 vaccines for outgoing dogs to rescue. (Dogs going to Canada receive these vaccinations.) This is in addition to the regular 5-in-1 that all incoming dogs receive.

We continue to supply needed vaccines, medications and assistance to our Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter to assure the shelter dogs remain healthy for adoptions and rescues.

Every dog that is sent to rescue from our shelter has a home waiting on the other end, whether it's a temporary foster home for training or a forever home for these lucky dogs. With our assistance, over 500 dogs have been rescued for the second year in a row!

Members of the ECHS include Barb Moore, president; Stephanie Flanders, vice-president; Carla Daughtry, secretary; Connie Terwilliger, treasurer, Annie Barua; Richard Claxton; Frances Cross; Patricia Hancock; Mary Kalmanson; Carter Meadows; Jessie Meadows; Andy Moore; Kaye Stephens; Henry Terwilliger; and Shari Watt.

This price included local veterinary hospitals and medical supply companies to assure shelter animals remained healthy for adoption and rescues. In part, due to said maintenance, only 20 dogs were euthanized in 2019. With the assistance of the society, the Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter transferred more than 500 dogs to rescue out of the more than 600 dogs taken into the shelter. Members of the ECHS include Barb Moore, president; Stephanie Flanders, vice president; Carla Daughtry, secretary; Jessie Meadows, treasurer; Annie Barua; Richard Claxton; Frances Cross; Patricia Hancock; Mary Kalmanson; Carter Meadows; Andy Moore; Kaye Stephens; Connie Terwilliger; Henry Terwilliger; and Shari Watt.

DBC operations during a pandemic year

Durden Banking Company, Inc. remains financially sound and was fortunate to experience another good year in 2020. G.W. Johnson Jr., CEO said, "The bank completed the year with stable earnings and continues to be one of the state's highest performing and rated banks. We completed the year with a strong Pre-Tax Return on Average Assets of 1.87% and Return on Equity of 11.78%, and we remain extremely well capitalized with a Tier I Leveraged Capital Ratio of 16.48%. Our Total Assets increased by 17% to \$207 million. We also remain a 5 STAR Rated Bank, the highest rating awarded by Bauer Financial Inc., a nationally recognized bank research firm."

The bank's board of directors announced several significant promotions after their June 9, 2020 meeting including the promotion of Wade Johnson to the position of president and Jim Cowart, Zac Frye, Gail Curl, and Kirk Rocker to the positions of city presidents for their respective offices. Luke Lanier was promoted to assistant city president of the Met-



**WADE JOHNSON,
PRESIDENT**

ter office. Matt Donaldson, Controller, was promoted to Vice President in January. G.W. Johnson remains the CEO of the bank.

When asked about the continued growth and success of the bank, CEO Johnson continued, "We've stayed true to what we were designed for. We've continued to help the low and moderate-income customer with loans and continued to assist the small businesses and the farmer. We're diversified. Many banks walked away from the farmer and consumer loans and only wanted the construction and large business loans." Luke Lanier, who is VP & Ag Lending Specialist for Durden Banking Company, added his thoughts as (Continued on page 22)

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DBC operations during...

(From page 21)

well. "Durden Banking Company realizes that agriculture is the backbone to the communities we serve. Our bank has always tried to support local farmers and agribusinesses in our markets. We offer FSA Guaranteed loans, equipment loans, cattle loans, and farmland purchase loans to farmers in Emanuel, Candler, and Jenkins counties. The diversification of our loan portfolio and customer base has been our strength." CEO Johnson also credits his hard-working staff and a good board of directors. They have remained an independent bank and stayed locally owned and managed. "We're not a bank where decisions are made elsewhere; our decisions are made on the local level," he said. "Our staff works, plays ball, and goes to church with our

customers. We're close to our customers." Durden Banking Company is also very involved in the community, supporting area schools, athletics, The Sunshine House, the Emanuel Arts Center, the Pine Tree Festival, the Dixie Theatre Project, an honor graduates' luncheon, and many other worthwhile events, civic clubs, and more. "We support and encourage our officers and staff to be involved in civic organizations and community activities," President Johnson added. "We, both with our personal resources and monetarily, support the community as best we can." He also says that he is very proud of the bank's staff. "We have a seasoned staff with many years of experience, and we have an outstanding younger staff," he says. "We have very little turnover in our staff, which indicates our



DURDEN BANKING COMPANY SWAINSBORO BRANCH

bank is a good employer and provides a pleasant work environment."

The Twin City branch organized our first ever community blood drive on August 31st. A total of 21 units were collected. "Durden Banking Company is committed to strengthening our community and helping meet hospital and patient needs through blood donations," said Jim Cowart, City President of the bank's Twin City location. "This blood drive was our way of giving staff, colleagues and neighbors an opportunity to help save lives." We plan to continue to schedule semiannual blood drives rotating between various blood banks.

President Wade Johnson commented that the year 2020 has been a challenging year for everyone and especially for the banking industry. The bank has tried to be more innovated by offering up-to-date electronic products and services for their customers.

COVID-19 almost immediately changed the way of banking for the future. This will impact the way consumers continue to bank. Durden Banking Company has many electronic products in place to help customers with their banking on the go including Online banking, Mobile banking, Telephone banking, a secure portal for customer upload on the bank's new website, E-statements, and the use of ATMs at all our offices.

Vice President and IT Officer, Rebecca Rainey reminds us of the importance of focusing on security for our customer's non-public information while we provide the latest in banking technology.

President Johnson was very pleased that the bank was able to assist 181 customers and businesses in and around our community with \$11 million through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loans through the Small Business Administration.

These loans allowed many businesses to survive and remain open during the pandemic. The bank is now processing a second round of PPP loans to businesses that qualify. He further stated how pleased he has been with his staff that has continued to offer quality banking services to their customers during the pandemic. Although our lobbies have been closed for brief periods of time, we have found ways to serve our customers. It may have been by appointment to come into the bank or meet in the parking lot or conduct business by email or by phone or at the drive through window.

We were extremely pleased to expand our Mortgage Loan Department with the addition of Jimmy May to our team stated President Johnson. Jimmy brings with him a wealth of experience in the mortgage lending area and the overall operations of (Continued on page 23)

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DBC operations during...

(From page 22)

a bank. He is a lifelong banker and resident of Emanuel County. His primary office is located within the Swainsboro branch and serves the mortgage needs for the entire bank. We encourage those interested in re-financing or buying or building a home to come see Jimmy for advice.

Durden Banking Company's website, located at www.durdenbc.com, had a facelift in late 2020 with new features to offer its customers. Michelle M. Millsaps, the bank's Retail Banking Officer, who orchestrated the website update stated "It has been redesigned to help customers view the website with any device they may use smartphone, computer, or tablet. The site now adapts to the size of your device screen, helping you to have the best online/mobile experience possible. It is easier to navigate, with simple content and a new modern look and feel. Among the new features include a secure payment portal that allows loan customers to make payments from other financial institutions using their debit card. It also includes a Secure Customer Portal that can be used for uploading your confidential documents to your banking officer. Durden Banking Company has always focused on the

security of its customers and their confidential non-public information. The secure portal will continue to accomplish this more effectively going forward."

She further commented "We encourage our community to visit our website and learn more about our banking services, products, banking hours, officers & community blog. The "Meet Your Banker" section highlights loan officers and senior management with a picture, branch location and contact information. The "Community Bankers Supporting our Communities" blog offers articles on happenings in which our bank or staff has participated."

Today's customers can now quickly and easily access their mobile devices and apps, and they expect the same ease of use from their mobile banking. Durden Banking Company provides a fast and frictionless option that give customers rapid access to their account information in a seamless and highly secure way. With Biometrics, or touch identification, iPhone and Android users have their bank account information at their fingertips—literally.

As community bankers, one of our many goals is to protect our customers from fraudulent and deceptive



DURDEN BANKING COMPANY TWIN CITY BRANCH

schemes. We want to use the information and resources that we have available to us to empower our customers to make wise choices about their money, assets, and well-being while avoiding fraud and exploitation.

Scams are rampant, with new ones popping up all the time as scammers adapt to new technologies, the latest trends, and current events. Fraudsters carry out scams through phone calls, mail solicitations, emails, phony websites, online ads, and by going door to door.

At any time, if you feel unsure about a situation involving your bank accounts or any of your assets, consult a trusted family member or friend. As always, you can also contact any of our staff in one of our convenient locations in Twin City, Swainsboro, Metter, or

Millen. Our employees your best interests in mind, and we will work to make sure you are protected.

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DEA: So blessed

by HAYLEE FREE

To say David Emanuel Academy has been blessed this school year is an understatement. We have so many wonderful things going on at DEA - all of which I give glory to the Lord.

Going into this year, we had no idea what to expect. What will school look like with Covid very much a part of our daily walk and lives? Can our children still come to school and just be children? This summer, a school committee took recommended guidelines and formed a responsible and doable protocol plan. We also had donors donate an electrostatic sprayer and chemical to help ward off germs. Thanks to this plan, hiring extra cleaning staff, and diligent work on behalf of our teachers and staff, we have had a wonderful, healthy school year - a year that our children can truly just be children.

Continuous improvement is our motto at DEA and has been for several years. This motto applies to academics, facilities, employees, and extracurricular activities. We have continued enhancing our facilities this school year with another classroom renovation (the last



FREE

renovation of our main building), a new metal roof on our historic main building, new 90 and 72 passenger buses, and due to increased enrollment, we doubled the number of lockers for the middle and high school. Our technology infrastructure has been increased and updated and security cameras have been installed over campus - another measure taken to increase the safety and well-being of our faculty, students, and families. DEA's Booster Club has renovated our boys and girls athletic locker rooms, refinished the gym floor, and members have donated new roofs over the bleachers at the baseball/softball fields and the Eagle's Nests at the football stadium.

Our athletics programming has experienced great success this year. Our Lady Eagles (Continued on page 26)

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DEA: *So blessed*

(From page 25)
softball team advanced to State semi-finals and our Lady Eagles basketball team also advanced to State playoffs. DEA's varsity football team competed in the State Championship for the first time since 2001 and for the first time in school history, DEA hosted the football State Championship. With DEA's growing student population (235 students, up from 220 last year) comes the opportunity to grow athletic programming at DEA. This year we added middle school soccer, tennis and golf and also increased to four levels of baseball teams.

Perhaps our biggest blessing and most exciting thing happening at DEA is that our growth has come to a

point where building an additional building is in our eminent future. Our Board of Trustees are analyzing the data and in the beginning discussions of a campus expansion.

Everything happens at DEA because of the love of our supporters. The spirit and energy of our village fuel the fire to make things happen for our beloved Academy. We would be amiss if we did not thank our local communities for the love and support they pour into DEA by supporting our Booster Club, fundraisers, and events. As our school year comes to an end, a sense of thanksgiving fills our halls. This Covid year has been one to remember and one of bountiful blessings.



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Photo by Gambrell Photography
CHEERLEADERS RALLY FOR THE EAGLES



DAVID EMANUEL ACADEMY



LADY EAGLE BASKETBALL TEAM

Citizens Bank produces another year of growth despite pandemic challenges

by MILTON GRAY,
CITIZENS BANK PRES-
IDENT

Despite the challenges related to COVID-19 The Citizens Bank of Swainsboro produced another year of growth and solid performance in 2020. As an essential business, we were required to remain open to serve the financial needs of our customers and the community during the Pandemic. We implemented our Pandemic Contingency Plan on March 20, 2020 as an effort to protect our valued customers and team members. Our lobbies were closed, and we provided banking services through our drive-thru windows and on-line banking products. Access to lenders and other banking services were permitted inside the bank after a thorough screening process. Critical managers worked remotely from their homes in the event of a spread of COVID-19 inside of our banks. Our team members did not flinch and served the needs of our customers as quickly and



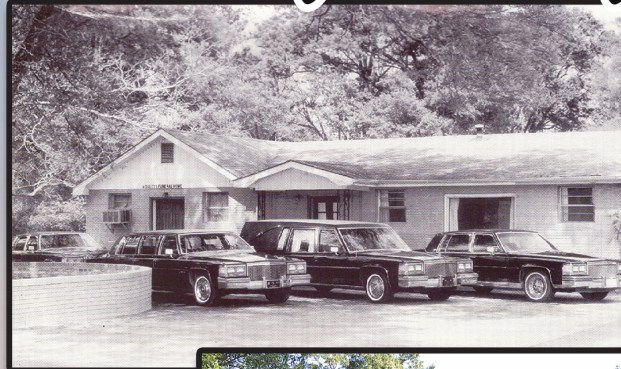
GRAY

efficiently as possible. They have been true heroes, placing the needs of customers ahead of themselves.

Congress passed the CARES Act on March 27, 2020 providing economic support to the US economy during the economic shutdown. A large part of the CARES Act was related to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), providing financial support to small businesses and their employees. Small Business Administration approved banks were asked to be the vehicle to fund over \$669 Billion in PPP loans to eligible small businesses. These loans would be for-

(Continued on page 28)

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Citizens Bank produces...

(From page 27)

givable subject to small businesses continuing to fund the payroll of their employees. We elected to participate and were able to assist 174 small business customers with over \$11.9 Million in PPP loans. Our lending teams worked many extra hours to make sure that our small business customer applications were timely processed and funded.

Our locally owned and operated community bank has offices in Swainsboro, Dublin,

and Statesboro. The bank's consolidated assets increased 24.12% to \$268,923,763, loans 12.35% to \$185,154,068, and deposits 23.83% to \$236,693,619. Our year-end Risk Based Capital Ratio was 17.31% and is considered strong. Under Glenn Way's leadership, CBS Insurance Services, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of the bank offering a full line of insurance products produced another year of strong growth and earnings. Agent Patti Hendley also established an insurance



CITIZENS BANK OF SWAINSBORO

office in our Dublin office located at 1210 Hillcrest Parkway, Dublin, Georgia.

Our second Laurens County branch located in the historic downtown district of Dublin, provided significant loan growth in 2020. The original Laurens County office located at 1210 Hillcrest Parkway had deposit growth and continued to be a strong profit center for the bank. Jeff Cannon is the Market President operating under the trade name Citizens Bank of Laurens County.

Our state-of-the-art banking facility located at 1101 Brampton Avenue in Statesboro grew to \$75 Million in outstanding loans producing significant earnings for the bank. William E. (Wes) Sim-

mons, Jr. is the Market President operating under the trade name Bulloch First. Caroline Nelson was added as Vice-President of Lending, Abigail Donaldson was promoted to Assistant Vice-President, and Sara McCorkle Brinson was hired as Mortgage Loan Officer. Gary Johnson was named Executive Vice-President and Chief Lending Officer.

The sixteenth class of our Student Advisory Board was selected, consisting of 40 seniors from Swainsboro High School, Emanuel County Institute, and David Emanuel Academy. Unfortunately, COVID-19 limited our ability to offer the full Student Advisory Board experience to these bright

young men and women. As the future leaders of Emanuel County, we expose them to the world of banking and personal finance, while encouraging them to be active and productive members of our community. Class coordinators Leck Boatright and Angie Cavanah provide a quality experience for these bright students.

Since 1900, providing quality, convenient, and personal banking services have been our guiding principle. We truly appreciate each of our customers and look forward to serving the citizens of Emanuel, Bulloch, and Laurens County in 2021. At the Citizens Bank of Swainsboro our "Prime Interest" is you.



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2020 election brings new changes to Emanuel County Sheriff's Office

Many changes have taken place at the Emanuel County Sheriff's Office since the change in leadership following the 2020 election that opted Sheriff Jeffrey Brewer to serve as the new county sheriff. Although he was elected by the people to serve his current capacity last year, new changes in office did not take effect until Sheriff Brewer took office effective January 1, 2021. While waiting for his term in office, Sheriff Brewer and his wife, Connie, celebrated the sheriff election win with a week-long beach trip featuring 5-star restaurant feasts before getting to work in office.

"My wife and I went to the beach for a week after the election was over to celebrate and take a break from reality before getting back to work. Tyson Stephens hired me around the middle of November and no changes were made until I took office on January 1, 2021. After taking office, a new command staff was implemented and everything just seemed to fall into place from there," Sheriff Brewer stated.

Command staff changes were highlighted in a February 2021 edition of *The Forest-Blade*. The article detailed the new task assignments implemented by Sheriff Brewer. Promoted sheriff's office employees includes Major Nick Robertson, Captain

Marc Curry, Senior Lieutenant Investigator David Way, Lieutenant Elec Wheeler, Sergeant Robert Phillips, and Lieutenant West Bedgood.

In addition to the changes in command implemented, many other changes and promises made on behalf of Sheriff Brewer have also been fulfilled.

"Deputy Miss Guerra has been assigned to cover duties with sex offender compliance in addition to serving as courtroom security. She keeps tabs on sex offender's locations and status and ensures that all registrations are up to date and that all registered sex offenders are complying with orders," Sheriff Brewer explained.

In addition to this, the sheriff has also revamped the office's virtual appearance by bringing the Emanuel County Sheriff's Office Facebook page current as well as plans to launch the office's new website in the near future.

"We've been releasing info on our social media page and are still getting accustomed to that. If you notice, my posts aren't about me. They're about the investigators, deputies and jail staff doing what they're supposed to do," Sheriff Brewer commented.

Sheriff Brewer announced that Deputy Michael Reddish is be-



SHERIFF BREWER

ginning training in cyber-crimes and that the office has joined the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Taskforce on internet pornography. With this new role, Reddish will be attending training with the GBI in Decatur and the GBI has committed to providing required equipment to help aid in this new venture.

"Our new command staff, deputies, investigators and jail staff are doing an incredible job in all areas. We now have full staff at the sheriff's office and jail. We're being more visible in the community as well as in court sessions and are hopeful that jury trials will resume in the near future so that we can reduce a lot of backlog in the office," Sheriff Brewer commented.

Other changes to take place in office include new computer programs for logging evidence, increased traffic unit staff, uniforms worn by sheriff's office employees,

active shooter training, the installation of mobile data computers in deputy vehicles, and much more.

Since taking office, Sheriff Brewer announced that the county jail has recently been inspected by the state fire marshal, which is a task that has never been done before and has been referred to by the sheriff as an 'interesting experience'.

According to Brewer, the sprinkler system was inspected on different levels, including a one year and five year inspection, as well as the commercial range in the kitchen which has recently been cleaned by local, experienced individuals. Sheriff Brewer said that more emergency lighting and exit signs were installed since the inspection to be in compliance with the state fire marshal.

Other noteworthy changes include the implementation of a new virtual visitation with jail inmates as well as a new GED program for inmates at the county jail.

"There have been no in-person visitations held at the jail in one year. With the new virtual visitation, family and friends of inmates can download an app on their phones or computers to have virtual visitation sessions with inmates. Another thing we have just introduced is a GED program

at the jail. We began the first program with three inmates and are hopeful that in a few weeks they will be able to take the GED test. Marion Shaw has assisted greatly with this, as well as Susan Cross with Southeastern Technical College. Now the tech will be taking over the program in the future and Shaw will conduct the screening for the next group of inmates to enroll in the program. We anticipate the next class to hold 6-8 inmates," Sheriff Brewer explained.

All in all, it's safe to say that Sheriff Brewer and his staff are working hard in office to provide the best service possible to the county and its residents.

"We don't know a lot of things unless the public relays information to us. I encourage everyone to not be distrustful with law enforcement. We're your friend. We're not here to hurt anyone and we're doing our best to keep the community safe. If you see us around, we're not always expecting something from the public. Sometimes, we just want to talk or say hey. Our goal is to obtain and keep an open, transparent relationship with the public. Keep an open eye, and you won't be disappointed," Brewer concluded.

SPD Chief Randy Ellison:

progress throughout headquarters and the city

by CHIEF RANDY ELLISON

The officers and staff of the Swainsboro Police Department continue to serve its citizens in 2021 by providing a well-trained police force.

2020 was a year that we all are glad is behind us. For those of us in law enforcement we saw many communities turn their backs on law and order which led to property being destroyed and lives being lost. Over the years those of us that have been on the job have witnessed these events that cause distrust in government across our country. This type of distrust brings to mind the analogue made by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman in his description of American Citizens. Most of the people in our society are sheep. They are kind, gentle, productive creatures who can only hurt one another by accident. This is true. Remember, the murder rate for our nation is 6 per 100,000 per year, and the assault rate is 4 per 1500 per year. What this means is the vast majority of Americans are not inclined to hurt one

another.

Then there are the wolves that feed on the sheep without mercy. Do you believe there are wolves out there who will feed on the flock without mercy? You better believe it! There are evil people in this world, and they are capable of evil deeds. The moment a person forgets or pretends it is not so, you become a sheep.

Then there are the sheepdogs, and law enforcement officers are the sheepdogs. They live to protect the flock and confront the wolf.

If you have no capacity for violence then you are a healthy productive citizen, a sheep. If you have a capacity for violence and no empathy for your fellow citizens, then you are defined an aggressive sociopath, a wolf. But what if you have a capacity for violence, and a deep love for your fellow citizens? What do you have then? A sheepdog, a warrior, someone who is walking the hero's path? Someone who can walk into the heart of darkness, into the universal human phobia, and walk out unscathed?

Let me expand on this



CHIEF ELLISON

old soldier's excellent model from a police perspective. We know that the sheep live in denial - that is what makes them sheep. They do not want to believe that there is evil in the world. They can accept that fires happen. Which is why they want fire extinguishers, fire sprinklers, fire alarms and fire exits throughout the kids' schools.

But many of them are outraged at the idea of putting an armed police officer in their kid's school. Our children are thousands of times more likely to be killed or seriously injured by school violence than fire, but the sheep's only response to the possibility of violence is denial. The idea of someone coming to kill or harm their child is just too hard, so they choose the path of denial.

The sheep generally do not like the sheepdog. He looks like the wolf. He has fangs and the capacity for violence. The difference, though, is that the sheepdog must not, cannot and will not ever harm the sheep. Any sheepdog who intentionally harms the lowliest little lamb will be punished and removed. The world cannot work any other way, at least not in a representative democracy or a republic such as ours.

What is expected of a law enforcement agency reflects through the number of calls for service. Every society gets the kind of criminal it deserves. What is equally true is that every community gets the kind of law enforcement it insists on.

The year 2020 showed an increase in calls for the Swainsboro Police Department going from 18,420 calls dispatched to 21,863 in a single year. These numbers come from Emanuel 911 dispatch and direct calls into police headquarters. Even though the department shows an increase in its requested service the numbers reflect a drop in violent

crime from previous years. The increase was related to non-violent crime incidents such as misdemeanor theft and active alarm calls for service. These numbers reflect a call for service of one every 24 minutes in order to be reactive to the needs of the citizens.

Proactively the officers are to spend their time between calls, patrolling neighborhoods, attending court and completing paperwork on previous calls of service.

As in years past, the agency remains focused on training its staff to become the most knowledgeable and best prepared law enforcement professionals possible. One of the more important parts of a successful agency has nothing to do at all with enforcement of the law but with developing community relations with its citizens it so proudly serves. The department will continue to put the community first in its decisions and we appreciate the public input into the service we provide.

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The Sunshine House: Give-a-thon raises over \$105,000

The year 2020 has been challenging for The Sunshine House Children's Advocacy Center. It was the year of COVID, yet progress has still been made. It was a year of virtually seeing children to maintain their progress in counseling. Fewer children and families came to the Center on West Main Street and fewer still attended in the area counties. Zoom was a way of life for months until children began to get back in school and in Sunshine House offices. Of course, investigations continued and forensic interviews were scheduled away from others. Emergency medical examinations were the only ones scheduled for a while. By the end of February, things became more normal. By March, many for the staff had obtained both shots and it became business as usual. Precautions were continued but children and families were being seen on a regular basis by late February..

There were two goals for the year 2020. One was to raise a large amount of money and the second was to work on an endowment. Near the end of year, in December, a Letter Campaign and Give-a-thon

were planned. The event was held on December 10, 2020 and was an overwhelming success. The event was planned by board member Rusty Lane and with his wife Tanya with a little technical support from an area marketing company. Judge Bobby Reeves came to host the event with Rusty and various volunteers and entertainers added to the two-hour program. The thermometer registered the \$80,000 goal and it was surpassed by the end of the evening. Total proceeds received for the letter campaign and give-a-thon were over \$105,000. Second, is the appeal for funding to begin an endowment. That project is currently underway.

Because of the pandemic, funding has changed but services continue to abused children and families at risk. Surviving a pandemic indicates progress and the board of directors and staff are extremely grateful for the many ways civic clubs, churches, businesses and individuals from the community supported our efforts.

Our continued goal is to see safe children, strong families and a prosperous, caring community.

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Southern Traditions sees flourishing year despite pandemic setbacks

The year 2020 brought challenges and changes for many. Though the year was a bit discouraging, Jim Roberts, owner of Southern Traditions, best described the year as “different” when reflecting back on the progress of Southern Traditions.

“The year 2020 was different but overall a good year. Although events were postponed or cancelled, such as local proms, other areas of the business, like sympathy services, were very large,” Roberts commented.

After 21 years of serving the local community, Roberts’ business flourished last year as he and his team learned and adapted to the new atmosphere, and, with a creative mindset in use,

the shop was indeed blessed.

Highlights of the year for Southern Traditions included a facelift of the East Main Street business, which included entrance changes, painting of the building, and other improvements as well as the introduction of Roberts’ truck background setting that many locals stop for a quick family photo session on their own free time.

A special highlight for Roberts was a trip to Washington D.C., where he was chosen to use his talent to be one of the decorators at the White House for Christmas.

Entering into 2021, Roberts is optimistic of the year to come.

“Proms are being

planned, community businesses are picking back up and reopening, plus we have some new ideas in the works that we cannot wait to introduce this year,” Roberts stated.

Roberts is appreciative of the support received throughout the years from the local community - “As a community, as a whole, we should all come together and commit to be the best that we can be. Try to do something positive and promote local growth within the community. Support local businesses. Those are the individuals who sponsor local schools and events. We’re invested in this town and I cannot wait to see what growth Emanuel County has in the future.”



ROBERTS IN THE WHITE HOUSE



ROBERTS WITH HIS FAVORITE TREE



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Community Action for Youth, Inc. – A community based education and recreation center project

Community Action for Youth, Inc. is a community-based organization that was started in 2004 as a non-profit. A group of concerned citizens organized the Community Action Youth Center after a reported 38.6 percent overall drop-out rate of high school students. The drop-out rate was even higher among African-Americans at 47.3 percent and Hispanics at 62 percent.

The Community Action for Youth is housed in the old Swainsboro Elementary School gymnasium. Renovations are currently going on through funds raised in fundraisers along with assistance from the City of Swainsboro. The group has also organized a fundraising committee to aid in raising funds for youth activities. Currently 85 percent of total funds have been donated by members of the community. The old gymnasium, which is about 50 years old, was used by the Emanuel County Board of Education as a storage building prior to the Community Action for Youth, Inc. occupying it. It now serves as the host spot for ongoing youth activities and a safe haven for youth. The purpose of the program is to have a place for youth to benefit from by offer-

ing merit and need-based scholarships, grants, and charitable contributions, along with opportunities for children to learn and experience life in a way they may not have otherwise been afforded.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 – Reduce student drop-out rate through academic and recreational enrichment

- Provide remediation for students that are suspended or expelled from the school system.

- Provide afterschool tutoring

- Develop positive character building/educational activities

- Partner with local public school staff and other community agencies to ensure academic achievement

- Support and enhance the learning that takes place in the school environment through afterschool and weekend activities

- Foster the value of education among participant's parents

- Encourage parents of all participants to get involved

Goal 2 – Recreation and Sports

- Provide organized and supervised sports and recreation programs for participants

- Develop an intramural competition system

- Create a curriculum



COMMUNITY ACTION FOR YOUTH BUILDING

for each sport that teaches team building, trust, and character development

Goal 3 – Use of Community Volunteers

- Recruit retired educators within the community to become volunteer tutors

- Develop a system that enables youth participants the opportunity to develop and maintain positive relationships with educators, mentors, community leaders, and peers

Goal 4 – Education Life Skills

- Establish personal responsibility standards that address negative, risk-taking behaviors

- Provide a safe environment which will allow participants to create new visions of themselves within their family and community

- Provide referrals to other community resources if needed

Other services that

will be provided include after school tutorials, computers with internet connections, cooking classes, flower arranging, event planning, health and wellness fairs, Bible studies, talent contest featuring gospel and pop genres, aerobic classes, volley ball, chess and checker tournaments, basketball, modeling classes, classic and modern movie nights, tennis and put-put golf, modern day manners and etiquette training, drug support groups, parenting classes, remediation for kids expelled from school, successful entrepreneurship, how to own your own business classes, and financial workshops.

In addition to local community support, retired teachers within the area have also committed to supporting and helping with objectives and missions set by Community Action for Youth, Inc.

For additional information, contact Community Action for Youth President Betty Davis at 478-237-2757 or 478-268-2114, Vice President Johnny L. Parker at 478-455-0673, or Secretary Mary M. Connor at 478-237-8486 or by email at con3teach27@yahoo.com.

Community Action for Youth's vision is to improve the lives of all youth in the community through education and recreation. Community Action for Youth's aim is to help each youth participating in the program to embrace the idea that learning is a life-long process through guidance from community members who help encourage and motivate each child to grasp this concept and the importance of continuous growth through education. It is expected through the program to refocus cultural values and character building along with small group tutorials which will have a direct effect on the quality of life for the youth of the community.

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Highlights of success at Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter

by WHITLEY CLIFTON

Since its establishment in the mid-1970s, The Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter has remained a community staple and has served as a safe haven for local strays and abandoned canines throughout Emanuel County. During the shelter's earlier days, the simple setting of a handi-house located in a fenced-in yard served the needs of the local community, but, as time continued moving forward, the need for a larger location to house the growing number of shelter intakes became much needed, which prompted the shelter to relocate to its current Market Street location in Swainsboro. The new location has served its purpose throughout the years. However, the need for renovations increased. During the beginning of the year 2020, renovations began to take place to provide a more ideal environment for shelter staff and pups being housed. Beginning in January 2020, renovations began with rooftop repairs that included the replacement of wood with new metal roofing being installed on the outside and inside ceiling of the shelter. New facial metal was also installed on the entire building as well as complete re-wiring of the

facility. A shelter update was released in November 2020 announcing the renovation process had finally been completed. In the article, Shelter Manager Leta Fuentes stated, "The shelter has served its purpose throughout the years and has just recently received some much-needed revamping this year deemed beneficial to all canines of the shelter as well as shelter employees who provide care to the dogs at our shelter. The improvements completed this year have made many locals beyond excited to see and visit the newly updated Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter."

Other improvements to the shelter included the installation of new lights, fresh coats of paint, new doors, new and much needed heating and air units on both sides of the building, a raised bathtub to make doggie baths much easier for both canines and shelter employees, as well as new bathroom fixtures, and the installation of new concrete slabs, fencing, and roofing areas outside of the shelter. Renovations were made possible with the help of Triple H Construction, Sunbelt Air Inc., and the Emanuel County Commissioners, who dedicated and administered SPLOST funds for shel-

ter improvements.

The renovations made an impact during this year's animal protection inspection report conducted by the Georgia Department of Agriculture Companion Animal/Equine Division on February 26, 2021. Having passed all areas of inspection, except one, the shelter's inspection comments outlined that during the inspection, 38 dogs were on site and all kennels were clean and appeared to be in good repair, facility grounds were clean and well-kept, safety requirements were satisfactory, and all incoming and outgoing records were current and filed accordingly. The only issue at that time was the shelter's need for a wire crate to properly transport intakes, which was corrected within one week of the inspection. In addition to individuals and elected officials seeing that the shelter and its staff receive proper assistance, so has the Emanuel County Humane Society. This society plays a key role in rendered care to shelter pups at the shelter by providing support for care, rescue, and services for animals in crisis. In addition, the humane society works closely with the local shelter to educate the community on responsible pet owner-

(Continued on page 39)



NEWLY RENOVATED AREA



NEW RAISED TUB



CONCRETE SLABS AND NEW CAGES

Highlights of success...

(From page 38)

ship and the promotion of spaying and neutering of pets.

"The Emanuel County Humane Society has and still works with the shelter on a regular, active basis, and supplies needed medication and vaccines for shelter intakes. These roles play vital in the health of shelter dogs at the Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter and are needed requirements when placing shelter dogs with rescue groups," Barb Moore, Emanuel County Humane Society president, stated during the November 2020 interview.

In early 2021, Betty Gambrell Shelter staff and humane society board members announced receiving a subsidy grant to assist pet owners financially with spay and neuter services for pets. In addition to medical assistance for local pets, the shelter works with approximately 35 rescue groups to ensure shelter intakes find a forever home. The shelter is considered to be a no-kill shelter, and only euthanize intakes if mandatory – most being medical cases in which the dog's wellbeing has been jeopardized and cannot be fixed. In fact, during the year 2020, the shel-

ter only euthanized 13 canines. Roughly half of this number was due to canines being struck by vehicles on roadways within the city and county.

"In 2020, the number of intakes from city and county totaled to be 593. Of the total intakes, only 13 were euthanized. Those numbers are really low and euthanization was required due to medical issues or dogs facing paralyzation from being struck by drivers," Shelter Manager Fuentes stated. "At all cost, we try to avoid any intake being euthanized. We love our shelter pups and our top priority is providing them with the best care and placement homes possible," she further stated.

The complete annual animal shelter report for 2020 is as follows:

- Intakes from city of Swainsboro: 181
- Intakes from county: 412
- Total intakes: 593
- Number of intakes adopted: 17
- Number of intakes returned to owner: 49
- Number of euthanized intakes from city: 8
- Number of euthanized intakes from county: 5
- Total euthanized: 13
- Deaths: 7

Agency transfers: 485

- Escaped: 3

The Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter receives numerous support from individuals throughout the county, who enjoy lending a hand when donations are needed. The shelter is also fortunate for those who dedicate their time to provide volunteer services. In fact, just last year, The Braswell House implemented a new therapy session for clients fighting addiction and drugs through volunteer services at the local shelter and participate

in puppy therapy with the shelter's intakes.

"The idea was prompted by Braswell House Supervisor/Director Leigh Farrow, as a way to provide therapy for clients of the Braswell House. Our clients are dog lovers, so not only do they benefit from pet therapy with each visit, they also obtain a sense of self-worth by providing voluntary services," stated Eric Best, representative of The Braswell House.

With this program, weekly visits are made where Braswell House

clients not only benefit from each visit, but the shelter pups do also.

"The Betty Gambrell Shelter welcomes volunteers who wish to take time for a visit, lend a helping hand and play with shelter pets," said Leta Fuentes, shelter manager. "We are appreciative of the volunteer work provided by Braswell House clients within the past few weeks, as well as others who volunteer and donate to the shelter to help benefit our shelter pups."

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Downtown Swainsboro perseveres through pandemic

by DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR LYNN BRINSON

For practically everyone, 2020 was a year of adapting. Adapting to new ways of educating our children, reporting for work, shopping for household essentials, celebrating life's milestones, and for many, continuing without loved ones who were lost last year. Of the many things that came out of 2020, one that stands out is how this community came together to support one another through a time of difficulty and uncertainty.

For the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), 2020 began with its annual planning session in January. The Board of Directors developed a work plan for the year and beyond, including a schedule of exciting activities intended to elicit community spirit while supporting downtown businesses. However, within a few weeks of that meeting, many of the DDA's plans were placed on hold as the COVID-19 pandemic took center stage.

As the pandemic grew, several downtown events were canceled in an effort to protect the health and safety of Swainsboro's citizens and visitors. The cancellation of 2020 Pine Tree Festival was especially disheartening as it would have marked the 75th anniversary of the city's largest event and signature festival. The organizing body

of the event, the Emanuel County Festival Foundation, is working diligently, however, in coordinating the 2021 festival. Tagged as the "74 ½ Pine Tree Festival," the upcoming event will be held on a slightly smaller scale than previous festivals and will feature enhanced safety measures. Event organizers look forward to celebrating the 75th Pine Tree Festival in grand fashion in 2022.

Other 2020 event cancellations included the Downtown Swainsboro Summer Concert Series, Downtown Swainsboro Fall Festival, and Swainsboro Christmas Parade. In place of the Christmas Parade, the Downtown Development Authority hosted a Drive-In Holiday Movie Night which included drive-thru visits with Santa, free popcorn and cotton candy provided by the Swainsboro Kiwanis Club, and a double-feature of Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer and Olaf's Frozen Adventure.

Additional Holiday activities included Small

Business Saturday promotions, meet-and-greets with The Grinch on the Square, a storefront decorating contest, and Downtown Swainsboro's Holly Jolly Holidays which featured special sales, offerings, and business open houses.

Throughout the pandemic, the DDA's Decorations Committee and volunteers kept downtown festive by decorating the Square for various holidays and seasons, and the downtown flower baskets displayed showstopping red blooms all year long thanks to the care they received from Willie Butler.

Despite difficulties presented by COVID-19, downtown welcomed four new businesses in 2020: TZ Signs, Tax Source Financial Services, The Shabulous Boutique, and Leannas Espresso, Pizza & Cheesecake café. Additionally, four downtown buildings received improvements and the DDA awarded one façade grant to Leannas.

The DDA's mission of supporting downtown businesses became even

more critical as many battled temporary closures, staffing difficulties, and interruptions in supplies. From keeping businesses up to date with the State's guidelines for business operations during the pandemic to sharing information about small business relief programs and training opportunities, the DDA worked to provide a variety of resources help business owners navigate the uncertainty of the past year.

To further support existing downtown businesses and entrepreneurs considering opening a business in downtown Swainsboro, the DDA created the SEEDS (Supporting Entrepreneurial Excellence in Downtown Swainsboro) committee which is comprised of local business owners and professionals who have taken an interest in helping entrepreneurs find success in Swainsboro's downtown district. Though the events of last year hindered some of the SEEDS committee's plans, the group looks forward to continuing its efforts in 2021.

Despite the recent challenges, the Downtown Development Authority's Main Street Market, a 12,000 square foot retail space that features more than 60 arts, crafts, and antiques booths, continues to thrive. After closing for a month and a half due to COVID-19, the market still recorded its highest sales year since opening in 2011. In addition to the Market's great selection of merchandise, it also houses the Music Memories Museum, displaying one-of-a-kind relics representing more than 70 decades of music history.

The Main Street Market draws customers from around the region and beyond, welcoming visitors from every state and more than 20 countries. Manager Michael Bright and staff work to provide a clean, inviting atmosphere, which brings people back time and time again.

As one of the five original Georgia Main Street Cities designated in the 1980s, Swainsboro reclaimed its endorsement (Continued on page 41)



FALL HAYBALES



MAIN STREET MARKET

Downtown Swainsboro perseveres...

(From page 40)

as a Nationally Accredited Main Street America City in 2016 and has worked diligently in maintaining the distinction since. National Main Street Accreditation is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the DDA Board of Directors, local leaders, and residents as they work together to strengthen the community. The DDA Board of Directors demonstrated this commitment last year as each board member became Main Street 101 Certified by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). In addition, Swainsboro was again designated as a Georgia Classic Main Street City by the DCA.

The Downtown Development Authority is structured on the Main Street Four Point Approach for downtown revitalization, which identifies the following key focus areas:

- Organization — setting goals and establishing partnerships to build the downtown economy;
- Economic development — strengthening the economic base through business recruitment and retention, creative use of vacant properties, and supporting downtown merchants;
- Promotions — communicating downtown's unique characteristics and rekindling community spirit through hosting special events, festivals, and retail promotions; and
- Design — creating a safe, attractive, and inviting

downtown environment.

The Department of Downtown Development is a department of the City of Swainsboro with additional governance by the Downtown

Development Authority Board of Directors. The 2021 DDA Board of Directors is composed of: Gary Mason, board chair; Margaret Anne Allmond; Stephanie Flanders; Anna

Gambrell; Daisy Reeves; Jim Roberts; James Ward; Mayor Charles Schwabe (ex-officio); Ken Warnock (ex-officio); and Michael Bright (ex-officio). Lynn Brinson is the Director of

Downtown Development. To keep up with the latest news and announcements from downtown Swainsboro, follow along on Facebook @downtown-swainsboro.



2020 ACCREDITED LOGO



SHABULOUS BOUTIQUE



LEANNAS' MOCHA



DOWNTOWN WAGON DECORATED FOR FALL



DOWNTOWN WAGON DECORATED FOR JULY 4TH



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2020 yearly review from Twin City Police Department

by JESSICA SUMNER

The year 2020 brought many changes to the world as we know it, and the Twin City Police Department and Municipal Court were no exception.

The year of change for the Twin City Police Department began with a new Police Commissioner, Mr. Jule Bady, Jr. Born and raised in Midville, Georgia, he now resides in Twin City with his wife where he has lived for more than 30 years. He is married to Mrs. Shelonda Martin Bady, has several children and grandchildren, is a member of Rountree Grove Baptist Church, and serves as Twin City Police Commissioner and Mayor Pro Tem. Mayor Pro Tem Bady feels one of his greatest accomplishments was when he revived a children's park in his community. He built a committee with Betty King, Debbie Branch, Troy Randall, Sr., and Stanley Robinson. They raised money, found a grant, and worked with the city to match the funds to be able to install new playground equipment. They named the new children's park, Graymont Community Park. Bady then went on to become a City Commissioner in 2018. He worked as the



**TWIN CITY POLICE
PATCH**

Fire Commissioner for his first two terms, but starting his 2019 term, he transitioned to Police Department. Bady works alongside the Chief, helping to protect the officers and citizens of Twin City.

In January, the police department implemented a new electronic citation and court system called CourtWare. This new system accurately and effectively stores and calculates all the citation/financial business that filters through the police department. This system replaced the manual, handwritten system from 2019, that was the result of the state-wide TIPS computer system crash. CourtWare has already proven to be a beneficial tool for the department. The new system is used in the patrol cars by the officers to issue/edit citations, as well as in the office for sentencing. (Continued on page 43)

2020 yearly review...

(From page 42)

ing, court scheduling and payments. All three CourtWare programs are used simultaneously in conjunction with DDS and the Department of Revenue. This ensures the most accurate and up to date electronic information is available on all Georgia drivers.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Twin City Municipal Court did have to delay several months of court dates to comply with State and Federal safety procedures, regulations, and lockdowns. When court was safely able to resume, the Honorable Judge Richard McNeely continued his dedicated service to Twin City as Municipal Court Judge. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Chief Randal Beach continued his work policing the city with his two full-time officers Marcus Hartwell, Sr. and Rolando Rivera-Gonzalez, and two part-time officers Parker Olsen and Gheorge Register. Chief Beach still wanted to expand the TCPD office staff even further by adding a new police/court clerk, who would stay at the front desk and work strictly with the police department during the work week. Several potential applicants were interviewed in June 2020 for the part-time position. Of those interviewed, Chief Beach, City Clerk Genia

Ducker and Mayor Pro Tem Jule Bady, Jr, selected Twin City resident Jessica Sumner. Jessica was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, but she has been an Emanuel County resident since 2003. She has deep family roots in Emanuel and surrounding counties. Although Jessica attended Southeastern Technical College for Medical Assisting and Phlebotomy, she is no stranger to law enforcement. Her husband is a 10-year veteran of Georgia's Motor Carrier Compliance Division (MCCD). Jessica is married to Mr. Justin Sumner of Adrian, Georgia, has 3 children, serves as Secretary of ECI's Bulldog Booster Club, and is an active member/volunteer in the community. She began her work with TCPD on June 9, 2020 and is still currently with the department.

In June 2020, Chief Randal Beach resigned as Chief of TCPD, and Officer Marcus Hartwell, Sr. stepped in as Interim Chief, until the beginning of August. Interim Chief Hartwell continued to "hold down the fort," run court, and assisted in training the new clerk on her responsibilities in the department. On August 12, 2020, Henry "Hank" Whiter returned to the Twin City Police Department, as the new full-time Chief. Chief Whiter had worked as the



CHIEF WHITER, JESSICA SUMNER AND JULE BADY, JR

Assistant Chief in Twin City about 10 years prior and is very familiar with the city. He has been welcomed with open arms from the community. Chief Whiter was born and raised in Perry, Georgia, and now resides in Millen, with his wife Mrs. Emma Whiter and daughter Erika. He also has a daughter named Latoya, son-in-law Myron, and three grandsons that live in Brunswick, Georgia. He graduated from Georgia Southern University with a B.S. in Criminal Justice and has been working in law enforcement over 30 years, beginning in Savannah, Georgia. Chief Whiter has been hard at work modernizing the agency by getting projects in place for replacing, upgrading, and renewing the equipment/vehicles used to keep our city safe. Of course, like any small town, the funding

has been a challenge. The Chief, Police Commissioner Bady, and Mayor Matt Donaldson have been working diligently to ensure the department has everything it needs for day-to-day operations and plans on continuing until everything is updated successfully. In addition to upgrading equipment, Chief Whiter has been working on growing the department with more full and part-time officers. Currently, TCPD has one recruit attending police academy that will graduate in March, and two more are awaiting the next class that begins in April. All three of the new recruits will come on as full-time employees once they graduate. Until then, Chief has brought on two P.O.S.T. Certified officers to help patrol the city on a part-time basis.

The annual report for 2020 shows some of the same statistics as 2019. A

review of citations shows the primary offense is speeding, followed by safety belt violations. There were 98 speeding citations, 30 safety belt violation citations (children and adults,) 27 possession of marijuana city ordinance violations, and 16 driving while license suspended citations issued over the course of the year. Very few traffic cases from Twin City Municipal Court leave the city. Most are resolved in-house, with a total of only 9 transferred to Emanuel County State Court.

Lots of fun planned this year in Twin City while celebrating the 100th Year Anniversary of the joining both Summit and Graymont into Twin City! Combined with the police department additions and changes, we would say 2021 looks to be a very promising year, and we are excited to see what it has in store!

Swainsboro Raceway prepares for reopening

When are we going racing again?

That is a question that Paul and Debra Purvis heard a lot in 2020. The pandemic, and some challenges faced by the Purvis family, made racing impossible in 2020. That changes this spring, when the Swainsboro Raceway opens up again.

"The big challenge was the pandemic. It's hard to have an event like this and keep people separated," Paul Purvis said. "At dirt tracks, and all race-tracks really, everyone is like family. You can post rules to keep your distance, but from what I've seen, that's just not going to happen."

The challenges that COVID-19 presented gave enough reason to pause racing activities. But, other factors contributed to when, and how, the Purvis family wanted to reopen.

"We're going to race every other week this year," Purvis said. "I've lost five family members in the last three years, and all of them were crucial to what we did here. I just had to slow down, step back and take a look at it. I told my wife we were going to do it at a pace we could enjoy."

Now, don't make the mistake of thinking that Paul, Debra and other track staff have been taking it *THAT* slow. Swainsboro Raceway is known for being fast, but that

doesn't always add up to the best racing. Purvis and his staff set out to correct that by changing some of the surfacing, banking and setup at the track.

"I've really been working on the track for the last eight to nine months. We put up a concrete wall all along the outside, and we took a lot of banking out to slow this track down," Purvis explained. "It had gotten so fast, you could run around it wide open without lifting in all of the classes, so the racing got stale. I knew what we needed to do. We needed to slow them down. We've got the wall, taking banking out, and this new clay we've got should slow it down. I believe we're going to see a lot better racing and less dust for the fans."

Events at the Swainsboro Raceway bring in people from all over the region, and even the country, making it a vital part of the local economy. The new and improved track is going to make a lot of people happy, including Purvis and his family.

"I'm really excited about getting back going, just to see my family again," Purvis said. "I raced for 25 years, and I looked forward to getting to the track and seeing my friends. It's the same way now. I'm as excited as anybody. I'm really ready to see some cars on this new track."



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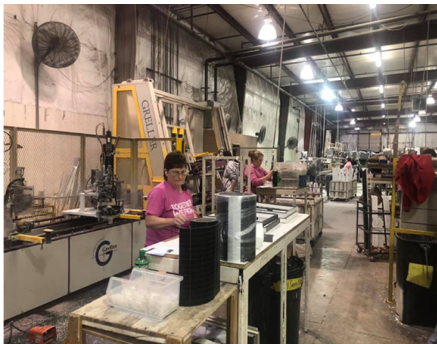


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East Georgia State College: 2020 in review

East Georgia State College saw many changes in 2020, but many of those changes caused the college to work together – from at least six feet apart – to find solutions during a year like no other. Before COVID-19 began cancelling events and gatherings, EGSC was able to host a few important events to kick off the new year.

In February EGSC hosted the 2020 Economic Outlook Luncheon, locally sponsored by the Swainsboro/Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce and Joint Development Authority.

The Georgia Economic Outlook series annually draws several thousand influential business and governmental leaders to luncheons around the state. Directed by the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia, this popular program has become the most comprehensive and detailed look

at the future economy in Georgia. The guest speaker at the event was Dr. Jeffrey M. Humphreys, the director of Economic Forecasting at the University of Georgia Terry College of Business. Ken Warnock, the CEO of the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce Joint Development Authority, also spoke about Emanuel County's 2020 economic outlook.

Before the pandemic EGSC completed its 8th Annual College Readiness Tour. Past EGSC President Dr. Bob Boehmer, his wife, faculty, staff and students from the college traveled to high schools throughout EGSC's service area to promote the importance of a college education. Students from over 15 high schools received resources and advice to navigate a sensible, direct path to post-secondary education, regardless of the college they decide to attend. The

visits were part of EGSC's Complete College Georgia campus plan, a statewide effort in collaboration with the University System of Georgia and the Governor's Office to dramatically increase the number of Georgians completing college degrees by 2020, which is critical to Georgia's economic future to ensure a highly talented workforce.

COVID-19:

In February the college began monitoring COVID-19 alerts, and in mid-March, all 26 USG institutions temporarily suspended instruction for two weeks to allow time for USG institutions to test their business continuity plans and online instruction modules. Classes resumed March 30 in an online only format for the remainder of the semester.

COVID-19 may have physically removed students from campus, but that did not stop EGSC

from celebrating and honoring the student's hard work and achievements. On April 16, EGSC held their annual Spring Honors Night in a virtual ceremony. A watch party was held on Facebook, on the EGSC website and other social media platforms. Students from each academic area and campus activity were honored, and special recognitions were presented.

The virtual events continued with The Sudie A. Fulford Community Learning Center's 10th anniversary in April. The Virtual Celebration kicked off with a photo slideshow. Each hour, a photo and memory were shared leading up to the main celebration video that premiered that evening. Over the past 10 years, the Fulford Center has served as a bridge between EGSC and the community and has welcomed over 75,000 visitors. The dome ceiling in the great room serves as a planetarium and offers 19 different planetarium shows which have been provided to thousands of students over the 10 years. In addition, 58 summer camps have been offered to local students. The Center classrooms serve as a venue for tutoring, workshops, trainings and small conferences.

Following the Fulford Center Anniversary, the first virtual commencement ceremony in the history of the college was held. The ceremony featured speakers, singing,

and the presenting of degrees. Each graduate was encouraged to send in a photo to be used in the video when their name was called.

A second virtual commencement ceremony was held in December. This ceremony featured speaker and singing but it also gave graduates an opportunity to get a free professional photo taken in regalia to use in the virtual ceremony. Students were able to download the photos for free after the ceremony.

Student Achievements:

Even in the middle of a pandemic EGSC students continued to work hard and pursue their goals. A new scholarship was formed to assist a family member of a former student at the institution (either at Emanuel County Junior College, East Georgia College or East Georgia State College).



EGSC READINESS TOUR



KELLY

Charlsey Kelly, a sophomore at EGSC, was awarded the first EGSC Alumni Association Scholarship. Charlsey is the daughter (Continued on page 47)

East Georgia State...

(From page 46)

of Jennifer Price Kelly and Demones Kelly who are both former EGSC students. Charlseý was an honor graduate and the salutatorian for her graduating class in 2019 from Swainsboro High School. While in high school, she was a dual enrollment student at EGSC. After enrolling full time at EGSC,

Charlseý became a 4.0 Correll Scholar and women's basketball player.

Charlseý is now continuing her education at Georgia Southern University where she would like to major in accounting.

Susanna Hall, a Spring 2020 graduate, was recognized by the University System of Georgia (USG) Board of Regents and the

Georgia General Assembly for receiving the Academic Recognition Day Award. The Academic Recognition Day program honors students from the University System of Georgia based on their academic success each year. All undergraduate students chosen are residents of Georgia and represent outstanding scholastic achievements by

acquiring a 4.0 grade point average.

Honorees like Hall, a Biology major in the College of Science and Mathematics, receive a letter of commendation from the USG chancellor and signed resolutions from the state Senate and House of Representatives.

Hall chose EGSC after (Continued on page 48)



HALL

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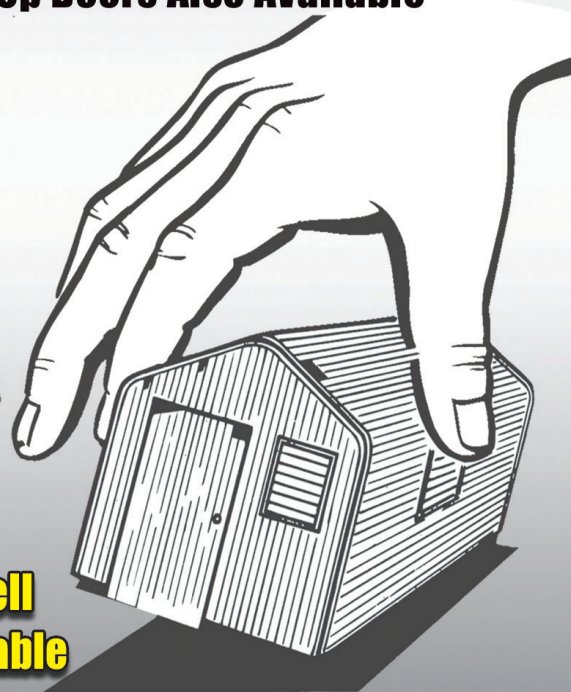
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East Georgia State...

(From page 47)

graduating from Thomas Jefferson Academy in 2017. She entered the bachelor's degree program at EGSC because she liked the smaller atmosphere of EGSC. Hall graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Biology in May of 2020. After graduating, she began Mercer University School of Medicine in Macon to pursue her dream of going into pediatrics and internal medicine. Hall's future plan is to come back to the area of Swainsboro and open her own pediatric and internal medicine practice.

Hall was also awarded the Mercer University School of Medicine Physicians for Rural Georgia Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to students who are committed to practice medicine in medically underserved rural areas of Georgia. Recipients of the scholarship are named Nathan Deal Scholars. These scholars receive financial assistance and leadership training to successfully meet the health care needs of rural Georgia.

Athletics:

The East Georgia State College Women's Basketball team competed in the GCAA Conference Final Four Basketball Tournament in Americus, Georgia. The Bobcats would fight to the end but fall to the number one ranked team in the conference by a score of 89 to 65.

Ka'Shay Hankerson was named Freshman Women's Basketball Player of

the Year for the Georgia Collegiate Athletic Association. She was also selected as All-Conference First Team for the GCAA. Hankerson led the conference in scoring with 16 points per game and also led in steals with two steals per game.

Kayla Garrett was named All-Conference Tournament Team. She averaged a double/double for the regular season and for the tournament. Garrett also led the conference in rebounds and blocks on the season.

Charlsey Kelly earned All-Academic Team honors for the GCAA Conference.

The EGSC Athletic Department was proud to announce that 10 student athletes made the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) All-Academic Team for the 2019-2020 year. Student-athletes are eligible to earn academic honors by achieving an overall GPA of 3.60 or higher.

The criteria for the NJCAA All-Academic First Team is to have a 4.00 GPA. EGSC women's basketball player Charlsey Kelly from Swainsboro, Ga, received this recognition along with William Ford Townsend, a baseball player from Jesup, Ga.

Taylor Elliot of Hampton, Ga, and Wilhelmina Watkins of Snellville, GA, both softball players, received the NJCAA All-Academic Second Team recognition for having a 3.80-3.99 GPA.

Six student athletes were awarded the NJCAA All-Academic Third Team. For this recognition the students had to have a 3.60-3.79 GPA. Women's basketball player Kayla Garrett of Reidsville, Ga, received this award. EGSC Softball players Madison Bussell (Kathleen, Ga), Stephanie Ruffin (Warner Robins, Ga), Casey Sims (Lawrenceville, Ga), Reese Stalvey (Waverly, Ga) and Haley Taylor (Richmond Hill, Ga) were also named

to the NJCAA All-Academic Third Team.

The women's basketball team welcomed a new coach in 2020. Theo Howard, a veteran with 25 years of coaching experience, was named the interim head women's basketball coach at EGSC. Howard comes to East Georgia State College as its fifth head coach in the history of the women's basketball program. He brings with him coaching experience from the college, high school, and AAU ranks. Howard most recently spent three seasons as the women's basketball recruiting coordinator/assistant coach at Columbus State University (CSU). Howard helped recruit a class in 2016 that lead CSU to a Peach Belt conference championship and NCAA region championship, with a trip to the NCAA Elite Eight. CSU was nationally ranked as high as 4th in the country in 2016-2017. He also served as the Athletics Director for Develop-

ment while at CSU.

Prior to his stint at CSU, Howard served as a volunteer assistant for the Livingstone College women's basketball program for two seasons. During that time the team amassed a 79-30 record and was ranked as high as 5th in the country. Prior to Livingstone, Howard served as the assistant coach/recruiting coordinator for the Salem College women's basketball program from 2012-2014 seasons. The Spirits made two trips to the Great South Atlantic Conference (GSAC) championship, ultimately winning the conference title in 2014. Howard was recognized as the Assistant Coach of the Year while at Salem College. Howard coached men's basketball during the 2011-2012 season, when he served as a volunteer assistant coach for Winston-Salem State University who also won the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) conference championship on the 100th anniversary of the conference.

Students Welcomed Back:

When the start of the Fall 2020 semester rolled around, it had been over four months since EGSC had seen students on campus because of COVID-19. On August 10 the EGSC-Augusta campus began classes on the Augusta University campus. The EGSC-Statesboro and the main campus in Swainsboro began on August 17. (Continued on page 50)



STUDENTS AT WELCOME BACK EVENT IN AUGUST

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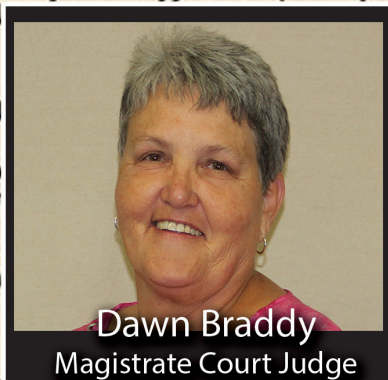
Kristin Cannady Hall
Clerk of Superior Court



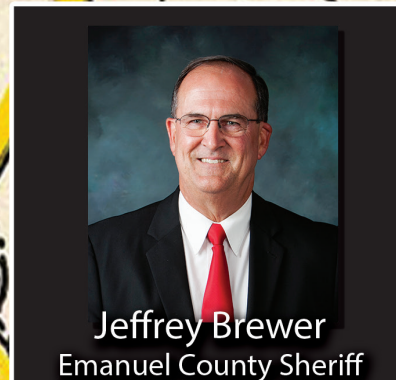
Tommy J. Smith
Chief Superior Court Judge



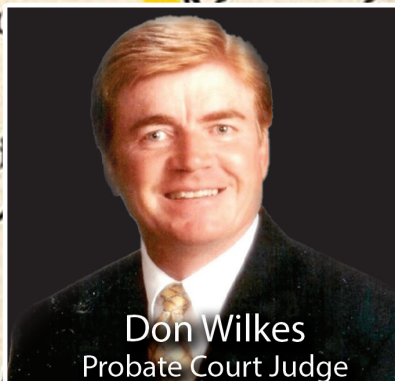
Sandra Wright
Tax Commissioner



Dawn Braddy
Magistrate Court Judge



Jeffrey Brewer
Emanuel County Sheriff



Don Wilkes
Probate Court Judge



Bobby Reeves
Superior Court Judge

East Georgia State...

(From page 48)
gust 17.

Over the summer EGSC worked to come up with a safe plan as students returned for the fall semester. Protective face coverings are now required in all campus buildings. Classrooms and other areas have been moved around so students can be a safe distance apart. Extra hand sanitizing stations have been added around campus along with signs notifying students and employees of all the new rules on campus. The EGSC webpage now has an online form for students and employees to fill out if they have COVID-19 symptoms or have been exposed to someone who may have COVID-19. There are many other changes made on campus including hybrid classes, event location changes, and dining services changes.

Grants and Recognitions:

EGSC was recognized as a Tree Campus USA for 2019. This designation from the Arbor Day Foundation is awarded to universities and colleges across the United States for promoting healthy trees and student engagement on campus.

This is the third time that EGSC has been designated as a Tree Campus USA. To obtain this distinction, the college met the five core standards for an effective campus forest management, including establishment of a tree advisory committee, evidence of a campus tree-care plan,

dedicated annual expenditures for its campus tree program, an Arbor Day observance, and the sponsorship of student service-learning projects.

EGSC also received a grant from the University System of Georgia that focuses on undergraduate research and mindset. The STEM IV Initiative Grant is for \$50,000 annually for three years. Currently, EGSC is in the second year of the grant.

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia has supported the USG STEM Initiative since 2007 as a method to increase the quality and number of graduates from the State of Georgia's colleges and universities in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

To apply for the grant, EGSC had to complete a detailed application. In the application a campus team lead, Dr. David Chevalier, and a development team was created. The group

then formed a statement of institutional focus and student needs and formed a topic area as the main focus for their STEM IV Initiative Program. After selecting the program, the members proposed activities and a timeline as well as a plan for how they plan to collect data for evaluation. The campus team also created a sustainability plan and budget for the grant.

The EGSC STEM IV grant focuses on undergraduate research and growth mindset. The principal investigator (PI) of the grant is Dr. David Chevalier, interim Dean for the School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Dr. Sandra Sharman, Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, and Dr. Jimmy Wedincamp, Professor of Biology, are the co-PI's. Senior members of the grant include Dr. John Cadle, interim Biology Chair; Dr. Breanna Simmons, Professor of Biology; Dr. Julius Schneider,

Professor of Biology; Dr. Paul Cerpovicz, Professor of Chemistry; Dr. Carmine Palumbo, Professor of English and Director of the Study Abroad; and Mr. David Strickland, Professor of Sociology. Mr. Strickland oversees the mindset activities and Dr. Palumbo of the study abroad. Drs. Cadle, Simmons, Schneider and Cerpovicz supervise the undergraduate research.

Ribbon Cuttings:

A ribbon cutting was held for the Jean Anderson Morgan Student Activities Center Expansion Project in October. Local and state leaders were in attendance, as well as a limited number of community members, EGSC students, faculty and staff to remain within social distancing guidelines.

The expansion project, which began in 2018, was completed over the past summer and has added approximately 15,000 square feet to the

existing facility. The new addition has provided much-needed student activity space, including a large multi-purpose room, digital gaming, larger game room, offices and a meeting room for the Student Government Association, Student Publication offices, and Student Life administrative space. The existing portion of the JAM Center was repurposed for a larger College Bookstore, as well as open computing space and student group study nodes.

Administration Changes:

Early in 2020, the college named Dr. Sandra Sharman as the new Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs following a national search. Sharman filled the role as Interim Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs since August of 2019. In this dual role, she will manage and supervise the two Academic Deans, the Associate Vice Presidents in Academic and Student Affairs, and be a vehicle of communication between many of the college's departments.

Sharman began her career at East Georgia State College over 20 years ago. For the first seven years of her tenure at EGSC, Dr. Sharman was the director of the Statesboro campus. When she decided to start a family, she took a step back into a teaching role for more flexibility. As a faculty member, she was promoted through the (Continued on page 52)



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East Georgia State...

(From page 50)

ranks and is currently a tenured full professor. A few of years ago, Dr. Sharman moved back into administration.

President Bob Boehmer announced his retirement from East Georgia State College, effective December 1, 2020. Dr. Dawn H. Cartee was appointed interim

president.

"President Bob Boehmer has done an outstanding job at East Georgia State College," said USG Chancellor Steve Wrigley. "He has focused on student success, added new degrees and remade the physical presence of the campus. He is also an outstanding individual, and someone

who has dedicated himself to teaching and leadership. I have known Bob for 20 years, since our days at the University of Georgia together, and I shall miss him. We wish Bob and his family our best upon his retirement, and I am grateful for his service at EGSC and to the University System of Georgia."

The Board of Regents named Boehmer EGSC's fifth president in September 2013 after one year as interim president. Prior to coming to EGSC, Boehmer served as the University of Georgia's associate provost for academic planning, associate provost for institutional effectiveness and professor of legal studies, among other academic and administrative roles.

During Boehmer's tenure at EGSC, the college's foundation grew from \$987,000 in assets to nearly \$3 million. The Correll Scholars Program was established, and overall scholarship awards went from \$79,669 to \$308,466 annually. For the first time in the college's history, bachelor's degrees were offered, and the annual College Readiness Tour of local high schools was launched.

Dr. Cartee has extensive higher education experience in Georgia, serving in key leadership positions at three institutions over a nearly 30-year career.

She most recently served as director of the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education and Hotel. In that role she initiated a strategic planning process resulting in the first strategic plan for the Georgia Center since 2009. Dr. Cartee also sought and secured \$15 million to fund an extensive facilities renovation project of the interior and exterior of the Georgia Center.

Prior to leading the Georgia Center, Dr. Cartee led the reaffirmation process with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools



CARTEE

Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) for two different institutions while she served as president of Ogeechee Technical College and vice president for academic affairs at Southeastern Technical College.

Under Dr. Cartee's leadership as president, Ogeechee earned Technical College of the Year honors twice, in 2015 and 2011. Ogeechee was cited for achieving the highest graduation rate in the system, the largest growth in high school enrollment, increased overall student enrollment, higher than average retention, high performance on adult education postsecondary entrance goals, superb licensure pass rate among graduates, and continued strong delivery of specialized workforce training.

Dr. Cartee earned four degrees from Georgia Southern University: an Ed.D. in Educational Administration, Ed.S. in Educational Leadership, an M.Ed. in Adult Education and a BBA in marketing.

East Georgia State College would like to thank Emanuel County and its citizens for their support during 2020! We look forward to a great 2021.



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The Main Street Market celebrates 10 years

by LYNN BRINSON,
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

For the last 10 years, the Main Street Market has provided a one-of-a-kind shopping experience in the heart of downtown Swainsboro. A project of the Downtown Development Authority of Swainsboro, the Main Street Market opened in March 2011 offering retail space for small-scale arts, crafts, and antiques re-

tailers, an art gallery, and event space.

The Market has grown over the last decade and now features more than 60 dealer booths filled with antiques, collectibles, furniture, home décor, man cave and she-shed items, seasonal decorations, and more. The shop also offers a locally made booth, with artwork, jewelry, books, and albums by local artists.

Michael Bright, who

has a long record of success in operating craft and antique malls, has managed the Main Street Market since 2014. He and his staff stay busy ensuring the store offers a clean, well-organized shopping experience for the thousands of visitors who shop with the market each year. In addition to local shoppers, the Market is a welcome respite for many travelers looking to stretch their legs

during long trips along I-16 or U.S. #1.

A new addition to the Main Street Market is the Music Memories Museum. Displaying Bright's personal collection of music memorabilia, the museum features personal items from some of music's biggest names including Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Taylor Swift, Michael Jackson, Blake Shelton, BB King, and many, many more.

The museum also includes an exhibit showcasing Swainsboro's unique place in music history as the home of the Nancy Auditorium and location of Hank Williams Jr.'s first public on-stage performance. The Music Memories Museum is located inside the Main Street Market and is free to browse during the Market's business hours. (Continued on page 54)

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The Main Street...

(From page 53)

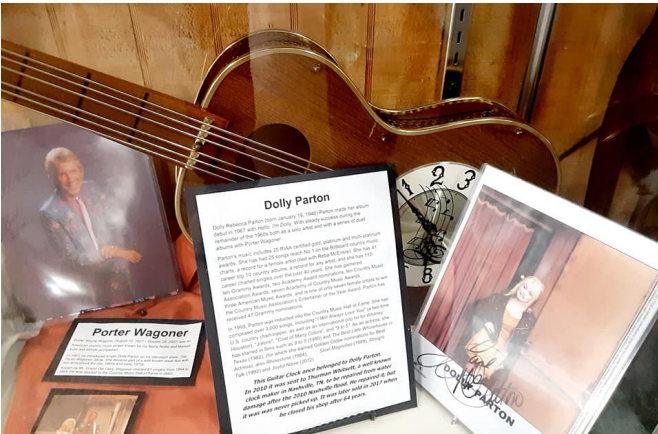
With vendor booths offering a wide range of items including fine antiques, farmhouse décor, artificial flower arrangements, collect-

ible coins, vinyl records, chalk paint, furniture, seasonal décor, local art, and more in its 12,000 square foot space, the Main Street Market truly offers something for

everyone. The Main Street Market is located at 215 West Main Street in downtown Swainsboro and offers ample parking at its rear entrance on the Bone-

yard. It is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. To preview new merchandise, sales, events, and more, follow the Main Street Market on Facebook

@MainStreetMarket-Swainsboro, and to keep up with new additions to the Music Memories Museum, follow it on Facebook @MusicMemoriesMuseum.



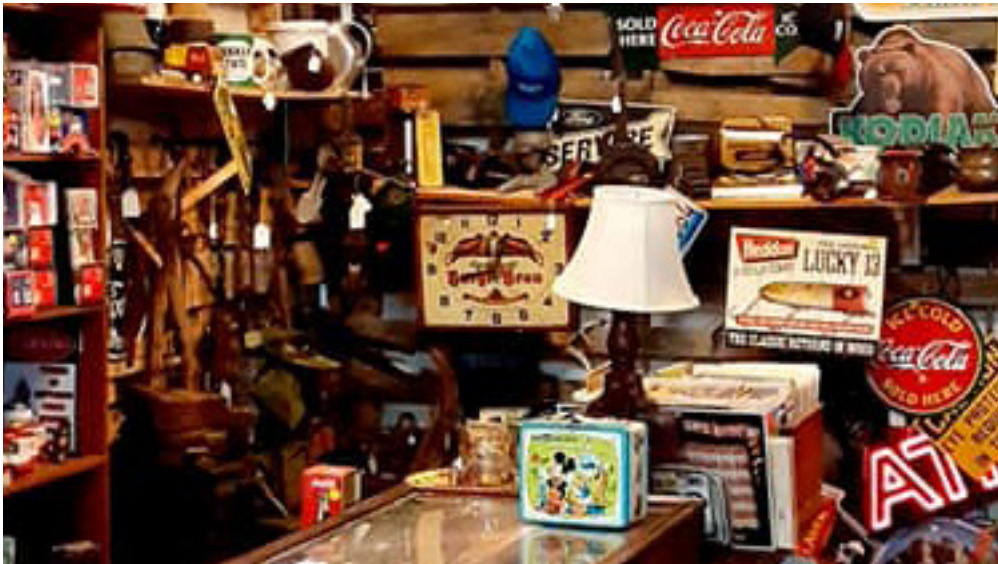
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MAIN STREET MEMORIES MUSEUM

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Farm and Home Museum sees membership growth

Established in 1976 in honor of the nation's bicentennial, Emanuel County Historic Preservation Society was reorganized in 1993 and has continued to see growth each passing year. When speaking with George Elder, president of the society, he reported, "While we normally host approximately 1,000 visitors and tours of Swainsboro Primary School second graders, the year 2020 saw the museum closed to all activities due to the Covid-19 virus. We feel

certain things will return to normal once the virus is contained. We have a website set up at www.myemanuelcounty.com and a Facebook page where we post meeting notices and upcoming events. Our email address is echps1@pineland.net.

"We are still striving to raise funds for the Highway 56 sign. Pine Log Echoes, Volume 3 will finally go to the printer in early April. Though we continued to lose some of our elderly members



HIGHWAY 56 DRIVE-IN SIGN

during 2020, Elder was pleased to announce

the addition of several new members with our membership drive in January. Of those members is a surprising amount of out-of-state people who have ties to Emanuel. From West Virginia to California to Colorado and states in between, there are many members who love Emanuel County's history.

The Highway 56 Sign is at the museum but the neon still needs to be added. Funds for the Highway 56 Sign were raised through the society's annual spaghetti plate fundraiser. While not as many plates were sold in 2020, donations helped us tremendously. When looking into projects for 2021, Elder states the society plans to continue fundraising efforts for project com-

pletions and to promote an interaction with the public. "We plan on keeping to our goals during the upcoming year and continue to see increased tourists. We still see an interest in family reunions being held at the museum and we look forward to visiting with local students in the county. The children love the historical education and experiences when visiting and we hope to expand to more schools and class presentations." Another highlight set to take place for the society in 2021 is the club's annual meeting set for April 22 at 7 p.m. at the Varner 4-H Clubhouse in Swainsboro. Jason Wetzel, co-author of Georgia POW Camps in WWII, will be the speaker.

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Family Connection maintains literacy, nutrition agenda

Georgia Family Connection Partnership, or GAFCP, directs counties to address issues specific to their county involving children and families. Emanuel County Family Connection, Inc. operates under the direction of coordinator Tammy Allen. She, along with the executive board and collaborative partners, identify the needs and seek resources for programs and activities to meet those needs. Some of those partners are Early Head Start, the Emanuel County School System, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Family and Children Services, Franklin Memorial Library; the local health department, East Georgia Healthcare Center, the Swainsboro Kiwanis Club, and CarePartners of Georgia. Emanuel County Family Connection is a non-profit organization that seeks funds from grant sources at the state, federal, and local levels. Individuals have also support-

ed many of the programs that are offered to children in Emanuel County. Mill Creek Foundation has been especially supportive. Grant money has been the driving factor in the areas of work in 2019. Recent funding has guided Emanuel County Family Connection to two main focus areas: Literacy

- Family Reading Nights at Swainsboro Primary, Swainsboro Elementary, and Twin City Elementary
- Book distribution projects at Early Head Start and Swainsboro Elementary

- Resources for teachers such as Bear Friday, Pen Pal, and Caught Reading posters

- Reading time at Early Head Start

- Parties at Franklin Memorial Library with book distributions

- The First Readers Program, which enrolled and obtained funding for 48 Early Head Start and 67 Pre-K children to receive a book a month in their home
- Nutrition

- Using Positive Behavior Intervention Supports to teach cooking skills and nutrition to Swainsboro Elementary School students each month

- The Emanuel Chopped Junior Program, a 2-week event in the summer that teaches cooking skills and nutrition

- The Charlie Cart Project, which brings cooking to the classroom using science, math, and social studies curriculum

- The "We're Into Cooking" monthly cooking classes offered to parents to better use their WIC vouchers to serve healthy meals to their families

- The farmers markets offered to Early Head Start and Pre-K families
- WIC promotional activities
- Raised bed gardens at Pre-K and Swainsboro Elementary

As always, Emanuel County Family Connection looks to continue these projects and keep improving literacy and nutrition in 2021.



QUEENSBOROUGH BANK
SWAINSBORO LOCATION

QNB named Georgia's Best Small Bank of 2021

Queensborough National Bank & Trust Company has been recognized as Georgia's Best Small Bank by Newsweek.

This announcement comes with Newsweek's first ever ranking of the financial institutions that are working to meet the needs of customers during these unprecedented times.

"Like virtually every other aspect of our lives – work, school, shopping, entertainment, you name it – the pandemic is changing the way Americans bank," said Diane Harris, Newsweek's deputy editor-in-chief, in announcing the awards. "And those changes, in turn, are creating a new set of challenges and opportunities when it comes to picking the financial institution that best suits our banking needs."

With more than 2,500 FDIC-insured institutions, U.S. banks were assessed based on 55 separate fac-

tors in order to develop a best-in-class option for 19 different categories, including the Best Small Bank in every state.

"Queensborough is committed to the communities we serve to provide **Great Service and uncomplicated banking** since 1902." – Bill Easterlin, President and CEO "We are delighted to provide the professional banker expertise you need with a personal banker attitude you want."

Queensborough has a footprint that extends from Augusta to Savannah with over 25 locations offering state of the art technology and first class customer service.

Founded in 1902, Queensborough National Bank & Trust Co. is Georgia's community bank. For more information, go to QNBTrust.bank and find Queensborough on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram.

EAC: Looking Ahead. . .

The year 2020 was not what anyone expected.

Activities at the Emanuel Arts Council, as with many other organizations, were abruptly halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "Our plans for a fun year of art and theater camps, festivals, and other arts-related events were, sadly, all scrapped," said Jacquie Brasher, executive director of Emanuel Arts Council. "But we are looking forward to what's to come. There is still much to celebrate."

Brasher said renovations to the EAC section of The Karrh Center in the Historic Dixie Theatre building are almost complete and Moving-In Day is imminent. "The finishing touches to the EAC are currently in progress and we can't wait to finally get a roof over our heads," said Brasher.

The EAC will have an art gallery on the ground floor and office space upstairs. Plans are to have an art show as the first event in the building. "Gallery Director Desmal Purcell is already working on ideas of what kind of show we will have in the Kalmanson Gallery of Emanuel Arts

Council," said Brasher. "The gallery will have state-of-the-art lighting and furnishing. I think Emanuel Countians will be very proud to have this space to call their own." The community arts center will also be a venue for workshops and classes in art, theater, and arts and crafts. There will be opportunity for students and residents to participate in on-site performances and demonstrations.

"If there's one thing I have learned from this pandemic, it's that we all value human connection," said Brasher. "My hope is that once the vaccine is available to everyone, and this virus is under control, we can all look forward to participating in many exciting events at the Karrh Center."

For more news about the Emanuel Arts Council,

'Like' and 'Follow' its page on Facebook.

The Emanuel Arts Council, Inc. (EAC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose purpose is to empower and grow the community through cultural programs in all areas of the arts. The EAC operates through membership, donations, fundraisers, and grants. EAC Board President is Kenny Griffin, and Katelyn Moore is Secretary/Treasurer. Members of the EAC board serve on numerous committees in the county, including Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce, Family Connection, Pine Tree Festival, Downtown Development Authority, and the Emanuel Coalition for Cultural & Economic Development.



RENOVATIONS AT EMANUEL ARTS COUNCIL IN THE KARRH CENTER

All the Fixin's... A good year

In fall of 2018, Janna and Brett Tucker opened a business that has brought a lot of attention to local vendors and highlighted the importance of locally owned business within the county...*All The Fixins'*.

"We focus on pecans, candies, and gift boxes while also offering coffee, candles, soap, beef jerky, and coffee mugs. A focal point to us is being able to donate and give back to others. We work with our vendors to find a charity to support. For example, one vendor donated a percentage of each purchase to fight childhood cancer. So, for Christmas, we were able to make two gift card donations to a children's hospital. Coffee products benefit the county's senior center. Our snack pack products are donated to Weekend Blessings, which benefits local youth. And the candles make charitable profit for a women's shelter, whose residents make the candles homemade," Janna stated.

They grow their pecans on their small family owned orchard. "When we first began this side of the business, we designated approximately 600 lbs. of pecans. By the second year, the numbers increased

to approximately 3,500 to 4,000 lbs., and this past year, there was a little over 10,000 lbs. of pecans shelled for *All the Fixin's* products," the couple explained in a recent interview. "We've grown slowly and have made it a mindset to not overwhelm ourselves to where quality changes," Brett added.

Prior to the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, the couple launched their website, which deemed beneficial during days spent quarantined. Janna implemented creativity with online promotions for Easter, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. This went well with the shining light on loved ones during times of quarantine.

In addition to the Tuckers' online appearance, the couple also makes a local appearance as well. The couple spent time in 2020 by hosting live events in Twin City and also attending vendor shows in Swainsboro and Metter.

"It was a great learning experience and I got to get to know a lot of other vendors that I hope to incorporate in upcoming events this year," Janna stated.

The couple plans to host upcoming events in 2021 at their location on 5th Avenue.

"We try to make shopping fun and easy by offering gift boxes. This market has done well in 2020 and we are excited to see what this year brings. We've been fortunate with our business in Twin City. Mayor Matt Donaldson and other locals throughout the county have been wonderful supporters and promoters of our business. The support really has been awesome," the Tuckers expressed.



THE TUCKERS WITH THEIR DISPLAY OF 'FIXINS'



JANNA AND BRETT SHARE A LOVE FOR THEIR THREE CHILDREN, PECANS, AND SERVING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

Farm Bureau: *From the time you get up in the morning until you go to bed at night, agriculture is a part of your day*

Emanuel County Farm Bureau Emanuel County Farm Bureau was organized in April 1941 with a membership of 116. The county office is affiliated with Georgia Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation. Farm Bureau is a "GRASSROOTS" organization made up of voting members who are directly involved in production agriculture. These members lead the organization and formulate its policies. Farm Bureau was organized to provide leadership and assistance to the agricultural sector and give farmers a voice in the legislature. The organization continues to promote farm products, aid in ag-related development and expansion of farm markets, strive for more agricultural research, use their facilities to assist in providing farm families a fair and equitable standard of living and ensure the existence of agriculture as a vital and thriving industry in the future. To fulfill this purpose, Emanuel County has a legislative committee to help members stay aware of legislative issues that affect the farmer and rural Georgia and encourages members to stay in contact with government



EMANUEL COUNTY FARM BUREAU CELEBRATES FARM-CITY WEEK WITH A DRIVE-BY SACK BURGER LUNCH AND AG PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL HAND-OUTS WITH THE HELP OF EMANUEL COUNTY YOUNG FARMERS, BOY SCOUT TROOP 75, EMANUEL COUNTY FFA, EMANUEL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, SWAINSBORO POLICE DEPARTMENT AND SWAINSBORO FIRE DEPARTMENT

leaders. The Policy Development committee asks members to submit recommendations to various commodity committees each year, which when ratified by the delegates at their annual meeting in December becomes Farm Bureau's legislative course for the next year. The Women's Committee promotes leadership among Farm Bureau women through ag-related programs in schools, such as the essay and art contest, scholarship programs

and various other agriculture activities in the classroom. Because of the COVID-19 this year we have been unable to work in the classrooms but have continued to furnish reading books to the schools and other materials. The committee also promotes farm commodities and the general education of the public to the importance of agriculture in our daily lives. Through participation in the Young Farmers organization, men and women learn to become better

managers of their land and resources, be aware of new products to enhance their operations, and convey the interest and concerns of young farmers to elected officials. Georgia Farm Bureau has a strong voice in Atlanta and Washington because of our lobbyist group. They are there to be the voice of our family farmers and ranchers. Your Farm Bureau membership helps our Georgia farmers to keep supplying you with safe, plentiful and moderately

priced food. When you support Farm Bureau, you help the American family farmer to keep us strong and our food supply safe and abundant. Farm Bureau believes private property rights are worth protecting. The rural way of life is worth preserving, and a prosperous agriculture ensures a viable, domestic source of food, fiber and fuel. Farm Bureau is concerned as well with such issues as estate taxes, energy, water rights (Continued on page 61)

Farm Bureau: *From*

(From page 60)

and many other matters that affect both rural and urban citizens. Your Farm Bureau membership offers many benefits such as Ford bonus program, discounts on Choice Hotel reservations and car rentals as well as AirMed-Care services. The Farm Bureau bank offers property loans, auto loans, credit cards and other financial benefits. Our insurance company offers life, property and auto coverage as well as retirement and financial planning. A list of member benefits and services can be found online at www.gfb.org. Membership is open to anyone who supports agriculture. Year 2020 was one of the most challenging years farmers have faced. But the one constant has been Georgia farmers and ranchers have continued doing their job of growing and raising our food through the pandemic, shutdowns and economic turmoil. From the time you get up in the morning until you go to bed at night, agriculture is a part of your day. If you eat food, wear clothes, or use the many by-products produced on a farm, you are invited to join Emanuel County Farm Bureau in support of local farmers and agriculture, and to add strength and influence to our membership.



SWAINSBORO POLICE DEPARTMENT ASSISTING THE SCOUTS



EMANUEL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ASSISTING THE SCOUTS



SWAINSBORO FIRE DEPARTMENT ASSISTING THE SCOUTS



INTERFOR - SWAINSBORO LOCATION

Interfor: *Values from the core lead to success*

From leadership to operations to growth, Interfor of Emanuel County strives for excellence in every aspect of business. Known to be strategic, fact-based, and proactive, Interfor strives to embrace world-leading safety and environmental standards through implementing the company's core values throughout the workforce. They strive for excellence in everything they do every day throughout our process. "We provide excellent career opportunities for the community and surrounding counties," said Tracy Youmans, Mill Manag-

er of the Swainsboro division. "Our core values are very important, and we conduct our business daily by these values." Interfor actively looks for new and better ways in the area of safety for each employee to go home with a better understanding of the job and its safety than when they arrived. We are dedicated to the quality of our products, not just how much we can produce. Safety though is job #1. It's not a goal, it's an expectation. It's not what we strive to do, it is what is expected." Interfor's core values are made clear early on in every employee's

career as outlined in their Career Owner's Manual. By providing specific descriptions of excellence, each individual has a better understanding of what is required and how work is evaluated. With this knowledge, every employee is accountable for their own career advancement. 2020 was extremely challenging with the Covid-19 pandemic. Interfor has a lot to be grateful for given what they have been through this past year. Their commitment to safety never wavered. They took many precautions and followed the suggestions provided by the CDC in or-

der to keep the family safe.

"With the ups and downs of the pandemic this year, I find myself appreciating the 'little everyday things' that I previously may not have taken the time to savor - being with family, friends, and colleagues, and being healthy," said Ian Fillingier, President & CEO. We are also a community staple. Interfor is also known for making donations in support of local education facilities such as Southeastern Technical College as well as East Georgia State College. Planting fruitful seeds, the company has reaped its

benefits and set many records in 2020. Not only has this accomplishment benefited the business, but it has played a large portion in community-driven advancement, all being led by core values.

With operations across North America and customers around the globe, Interfor is now one of the world's largest lumber providers with the broadest range of products of any of the major lumber companies. The common vision is to be the most profitable, valuable and respected lumber company in the world.

Karrh Center prepares to enter next phase

by DIRECTOR OF DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT, LYNN BRINSON

The development of the Barbara & Tobe Karrh Community Arts Center continues to move forward thanks to the continued support of the local community. Due to the extensive nature of the project it has been approached in phases, and as with most other projects, the Karrh Center project was not immune to the challenges of 2020. From scheduling difficulties to material shortages, the project endured a number of delays last year; however, the project committee worked diligently to ensure that progress continued despite the setbacks.

Prior accomplishments in the project included the installation of a new roof, restoration of the façade, and addition of a front plaza. Construction progressed over the last year with the build-out of the Emanuel Arts Council's new home, the purchase of theater seats, and preparations for the theater's final phase of construction.

Exposed brick walls, restored original flooring, and new plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems will welcome the Emanuel Arts Council as it prepares to settle into its new home at the arts center. The space will offer an art gallery, offices, and workspace for classes, workshops, and other

activities of the Emanuel Arts Council.

In addition to completing the Arts Council's offices, crews also worked throughout the year to prepare theater space for its next phase of construction. Once complete, the theater will feature a stage for live performances and state-of-the-art cinema equipment for showing newly released movies. Expanded concessions and community event space will complete the project.

With the continued support of the community, project committee members look forward to further progress in the coming year. The Barbara & Tobe Karrh Community Arts Center project is

led by the City of Swainsboro, with the assistance of the Emanuel Coalition for Cultural and Economic Development (ECCED), Emanuel County

Commissioners, and a number of other local organizations. The ECCED is a 501(c)3 charitable organization that is led by co-chairs Kristin Hall and

Bobby Reeves and a committee of dedicated volunteers. For more information, follow along on Facebook @karrhcenter.



KARRH CENTER BEING RENOVATED



RENDERING OF THE COMPLETED KARRH CENTER

Oak Park, Georgia: What was and what is to come

Oak Park is known as a transportation hub rich in natural resources and history. Though the town has faced its trials throughout time, the community still stands strong when sticking to its southern heritage and hosts annual celebrations to keep those ties tight, such as the Oak Park Moonshine Festival, and more exciting fun and new plans for the town for the year 2021. When speaking with Nancy Edge, social entrepreneur of small business Keep Thinking, she is proud of the progress made since stepping in to assist the small town's growth. "The Shiners have been working for over a decade to bring community events to Oak Park with the intent to remodel the old school house. I was overjoyed to be welcomed into the group to provide service with my expertise in nonprofit development. With my line of work, I focus on non-profit development such as fundraising and grant writing, and when I began my work here in Oak Park, I noticed there was a lot of turmoil, which is abnormal to see in my line of work," Edge stated. Aiding the chaos, Edge has diligently worked with the Oak Park Shiners in reaching a point of tranquility for the town to acquire a plan of sustainability despite any political play. "I reached out to the Shiners and asked for assistance and advice on what actions they considered important and deemed fit for the city. From politics to non-prof-

it to family matters, many factors overlapped one another, causing many delays in plans for the town's progress," she further commented. From this gathering of information, Edge reported seeing a wonderful response. Edge and Shiner members discussed previous goals dating back to at least 10 years, including all the hard work and energy projected to get to its current build-up of Oak Park. She then took this understanding and combined it with her knowledge in non-profit function and, as of 2019, has assisted Oak Park in receiving two grants to help further the city's goals and objections. "In 2019, we applied and were approved for two grant applications, one being a Georgia Humanities Grant and the other being a Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council (GHRAC) Grant. With these two grants, the city of Oak Park will be seeking additional funding to leverage these funds. I am currently assisting with paperwork for donations and acknowledgement processes for Oak Park as well as untangling a government committee, which is the Shiners, to function as a non-profit organization," Edge proudly stated. From this hard work, Edge, Shriner members, and the city as a whole have seen the growth from the tiny seeds planted by so far. "Our grants began in 2020 and will run all year. In addition to this, we have been allocated our first sponsor, Sherwin Williams, who



**OAK PARK
MOONSHINE
FESTIVAL LOGO**

has donated more than \$1,000 in paint products for the Oak Park School Project. We have hired a professional painter who is coming in to begin paint work and prime the school building up for an inarguable presentation on Oak Park transformation and history.

Like so many others, the Shiners were affected by Covid 19. Events leading up to the 2020 moonshine festival were canceled but luckily the Moonshine Festival was able to be held. While they were disappointed that they could not follow the original timeline and schedule, any progress adds up to the sum and they are thrilled to continue with the 2021 moonshine festival, celebrating 99 years of the Oak Park School. This event will begin being offered free to the public starting at noon on Saturday, April 4, and will continue to be offered throughout the entire year. Other fun-filled events scheduled for the upcoming year include an Easter egg hunt and events associated with GMA Week."

With so much going on, Edge is excited about the future plans she has for the town, which include partnership with Ohoop Regional Library for the purpose of grants involving genealogy and history and continuing efforts with the Shiners to complete the school project. "Once upon a time, Oak Park saw growth following the pavement of Highway. Once upon a time, Oak Park hosted two railroads. Once upon a time, the city changed its outline to include I-16. Oak Park is a town that has maintained its 20th century. We are a town full of rich history with a lot of history to promote tourism," Edge said. A native of Oak Park, Edge moved off from home following high school graduation and was employed as a trip adventure guide director in New England and is excited to bring opportunities back home with her. "There are a lot of ways to improve the economy of Oak Park, and I'm excited on what's to come. We have plans to host the annual Moonshine Festival and Moonshine Run in memory of Mick Lindsey, the late son of Mayor Micky Lindsey, and there are plans of implementing a beauty pageant with this year's festival. In addition to all the fun, we are working on digitizing all records as well as securing more history to detail the railroads that once ran through our town," stated Edge. "Our car show is bigger than ever; great artists are lined up for our

concert at the festival this year; and we hope to keep growing in years to come! We are so thankful to have Zena Nobles return as our official festival photographer to help document the town's progress!" All in all, the message stands as clear as, well, good ol' creek water, or moonshine, as some might say... Oak Park is on the brink of return. "You don't have to pack your bags and move here," Edge said. "Just be sure to come on down and visit. We'll have a good time, educate you on Oak Park's history, and send you on your way home."

This year has helped impress upon them the dire need to move quickly to preserve this history. In the past year alone, they lost their only citizen who was over 100 years old, as well as more than four different elders from the community. It's more urgent than ever to have good turnouts at these events so they can fund more projects, sooner, so that this history is not lost. The Shiners hope to raise \$10,000 to finish the floors and renovations of the white building so that we can begin efforts to restore the second (red) school building next.

The town worked with the Swainsboro Board of Education to secure the deed to the schoolhouse so that the community will own it for decades to come, thus ensuring that all proceeds raised by the community will stay in the community and help the members of the community for years to come.

State of the District Attorney's Office

As children, we all learn that patience is a virtue. After all, you learn patience by waiting for an egg to hatch, not by smashing it. But for many victims of crime (and those accused), that age-old maxim is being sorely tested. It is being sorely tested because for a year, we have not had jury trials in Emanuel County. For much of that year, neither have we had grand juries.

The issue has not been what we were willing to do, but rather what we were able to do. In response to the COVID pandemic, the Supreme Court of Georgia called off juries. Today, we can have grand and are just now resuming jury trials. In Emanuel County, our first week of trials in over a year will be during the week of April 12. The suspension was done by judicial order, and that order was renewed on a month-to-month basis. We waited to hear from the Supreme Court of Georgia like everyone else did.

Since we were still having regular court days and some grand juries, we were able to move some cases to mitigate, in part, the backlog and give justice to victims. When I took office, there were 445 felony cases

pending in Emanuel County. Approximately 55 percent of those cases were not ready to be presented to a grand jury nor were they ready to be accused. Two months later, there are now 462 felony cases pending in Emanuel County, but we have reduced the number of cases that is not ready to be presented to 37 percent. We will continue to work hard in the upcoming months to reduce that number even further.

Fortunately, I am at full staff. Because of this, I am happy to say that we are seeing similar progress in every county in this circuit. However, there is simply no substitute for having jury trials. Where a defendant demands a trial, it is his absolute right, and many are waiting and the queue is getting longer. So when trials do resume, I expect further progress. All of the assistant district attorneys working with me stand ready, willing, and able to try cases. And we will.

I am immensely proud to have three assistant district attorneys working with me who are Emanuel County natives. The first is Jessica (Black) Wilson from Garfield. Jessica is the



FITZNER WITH EMANUEL COUNTY STAFF

supervising attorney in our satellite office in Toombs County, and she does an excellent job there. Working with her is Chase Sherrod of Midville. Chase is a new attorney, and he is passionate about prosecution. He is well on his way to being an outstanding assistant district attorney. The third is Bruna (Rodrigues) Morehead of Swainsboro. Bruna has been with the office since she was in high school when she worked as a receptionist. Over the years, she has held every position we have here at the District Attorney's Office. Seeing her learn, grow, and now achieve

her dream, not only of being an attorney but also of being an assistant district attorney, has been one of the highlights of my career. In addition to aggressively moving through the backlog, we are also being proactive in other ways. Last month, I announced an early intervention program that partners low-level, non-recidivist offenders with faith-based organizations. Also, we have three prosecutors with significant gang experience and are using the criminal gang statute to target criminals who commit violent crimes on behalf of gangs. Our Committee on Commu-

nity, Faith, and Leadership has already met and will continue to meet quarterly. Finally, we will offer several classes on various issues of public interest on topics like concealed carry, self-defense, and what parents need to know about kids and sexting. These classes will be free and open to the public. Finally, let me say I am proud to be your district attorney. Our judicial system faces some significant challenges, but we will meet them. We will meet them because at the end of the day, we all want the same things: a safe place to live, to work, and to raise our families.

Wincore selects Swainsboro for second expansion site after successful year despite pandemic

The year 2020 brought tremendous growth for Wincore in Swainsboro. In fact, during a recent interview with Brian Standley, chief operating officer of Wincore, he stated that the window company's volume was up substantially in 2020 despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Wincore's decision to further expand was confirmed once we saw how the year was going. Initially we were unsure on the second expansion due to the Covid-19 pandemic striking the country. Everything just sort of stopped in April and order volume was down significantly for a couple of weeks. Within 3-4 weeks, everything in our industry seemed to go back to normal and the flood gates opened. We were deemed by the government to be an essential business, so we were never really closed due to Covid. By mid-May, order volume was back up substantially year-over-year, which confirmed our need for further capacity, and we determined that Emanuel County was the best place for us to do that," Standley explained.

Though Wincore was

somewhat surprised by the tremendous growth during 2020, Standley spoke on how shocking it is that the plant will be celebrating its second year as an Emanuel County business in May 2021.

"It's hard to believe we produced our first window two years ago, on the Tuesday after Memorial Day. The company has grown so much since then, and with growth equals the need for more capacity. We have space available here in Emanuel County that we don't have at our corporate location in West Virginia, and the Southeast is where our strongest growth has been over the past few years. These factors played into Swainsboro being a prominent location for us," he further stated.

Highlighting the strong growth that came from its first year of operation, Standley elaborated on the process of getting Wincore established in the city of Swainsboro.

"It takes a while to get a new operation where it needs to be. As we approached the end of 2020, we felt like we had the right leader-



SWAINSBORO WINCORE

ship team in place here and the operation really started to perform the way we needed it to. We were finally able to shift all of the customers that we initially intended to service out of the Georgia location with confidence that the operation could handle it. You don't really know how a new location will work out until you do it and we're happy where we are. The fact that we're expanding already in such a short period of time, I think, kind of says it all."

As of December 2020, Wincore has seen production of more than 700 windows per day, and, at some point in 2021, the company will

begin to exceed 1,000 windows per day.

Wincore's current expansion effort is expected to be completed with 3 new production lines running by late April. They are still working to hire staff to support the new lines, and expect to create approximately 100 additional jobs for Emanuel County.

"In 2020, it was announced that Wincore is the fourth largest employer in Emanuel County. We're very proud of that. You never know exactly what it will be like expanding into a new location. You do your homework and try to find what looks like the best location with all factors consid-

ered, but, at the end of the day, until you hire people and start making product, you really don't know how it will work out. We are very proud of the way things have worked out these past two years.

We're thankful for everything that the State of Georgia, Emanuel County, and Swainsboro has done for us. We've been welcomed with open arms and we're very appreciative of that and are hoping to return the favor in terms of the jobs that we're creating and the work environment we're providing," Standley concluded.

What a year it has been....

by STEPHANIE FAGLER, BANK PRESIDENT

A year of uncertainty, of change, of adjustments both personal and professional, of health concerns never seen by this generation and the year of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

2020 will go down as a year full of surprises. We were introduced to COVID 19 and the emergence of face masks everywhere we go, to political unrest, to the government stepping in to help businesses continue to operate. It is an understatement to say we have had to adjust.

Life for many of us has changed beyond recognition compared with just a few short months ago—one of the biggest changes has been the transition to a virtual life. Everyday tasks that have traditionally been in person are now being done electronically. From video conferences for meetings and socializing, to online shopping for everything from cars and houses to groceries and household staples, to electronic banking, our daily lives have been turned on end, but like you, Spivey State Bank has adjusted our way of doing business to con-

tinue to serve our customers.

Beginning in April 2020, the Spivey State Bank adjusted lobby hours by closing an hour earlier to allow time for extra cleaning and sanitizing of the branch in an effort to help reduce the spread of the virus. Our customers utilized our convenient drive thru, as well as our online and mobile banking services allowing them to continue their banking services while reducing the risk for exposure to the virus.

In the face of our local economic shutdown, triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, Spivey State Bank ensured our local businesses had access to the government programs that were introduced. With our



FAGLER

long-term relationships and specialized knowledge of the local market, we made PPP funds available quickly and efficiently to businesses in need.

Known for our relationship lending and personal connections to customers, we have always prided ourselves in supporting small businesses and our local community. Thanks to our staff working long

nights and weekends, we were able to ensure clients made it into PPP queues in a timely manner.

Our focus has always been on building a better Emanuel County by serving small businesses and giving back to our community. I am proud of our team's dedication to make a difference in this time of crisis by delivering PPP loans to eligible small businesses and maintaining an outstanding level of service for all of our customers. I feel like the familiar faces at Spivey State Bank have been a reassuring and calming influence for our customers and community. It is our goal to continue to provide excellent customer service as we progress through

this pandemic and back to some sense of normalcy.

I want to thank our existing customers for their patronage. I also want to urge those who we hope to count as customers in the future, to consider the benefits of banking with Spivey State Bank. We offer personal service, hometown support, and are trusted advisors to existing and future customers alike. Stop by today to discuss your financial situation and learn how our community bank can help you realize your dreams.

Through it all, Spivey State Bank continues to deliver quality financial products and services that provide exceptional value to our customers.



SPIVEY STATE BANK

Pathways to success at SES

by PRINCIPAL VALORIE WATKINS

We are striving for excellence at Swainsboro Elementary School. We value the importance of our students obtaining a strong foundation for learning. We realize the importance of motivating students to love school and to gain a love for learning. We want our students to know what it feels like to be successful. We look for a variety of ways to reach and teach our students; for example, flexible small group instruction, center rotations, direct instruction through guided reading groups and the use of manipulatives and technology have aided our students in making huge gains in

their learning. At SES, students participate daily in Tiger Time, an intervention period in which students are allowed to work on a prescriptive reading or math intervention computer program. Teachers are also able to work on individualized student needs. The use of Education Galaxy for all students, Moby Max, Reflex Math, and iReady has helped students to show gains in reading and math based on our recent Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) testing data. MAP is a computerized adaptive test which helps teachers, parents, and administrators improve learning for all students and make informed decisions to pro-



WATKINS

mote a child's academic growth. We are happy to share all the wonderful activities that are going on within our building—recognizing Students of the Week; Students of the Month; Virtual mini-nine weeks honor presentations for each grade; monthly Positive Behav-

ior Intervention Support (PBIS) celebrations; Virtual Family STEAM Night; Virtual black history program; Junior Beta competitions; and school book fairs. Our Academic Blitz After School Program has started and will end in May. The after school program is available for students working below grade level. Eligibility is based on various assessments in both Reading and Math that indicate additional instructional time is needed in deficient areas. For more information, please contact your child's teacher. We are thankful to our SES families and parents for realizing the importance of their child's education. Parents are encour-

aged to continue to work with their child on new skills and homework. We are really focusing on our reading and literacy skills. Parents are asked to set aside time to read with their child for 15-20 minutes daily. Remember to continue to check for your child's weekly letter for upcoming lessons and assignments. Parent Portal is still available for parents to view their child's grades and attendance. Parents should contact their child's teacher at 478-237-7266 if there are any questions about their child's performance on assignments or assessments. Thank you for partnering with us in your child's education.

Swainsboro Primary School: *saying goodbye isn't easy*

by MARIBETH CLARK, PRINCIPAL

I can't believe March is here! It seems like only yesterday it was August. Thank you for all your support and willingness to be there when we need you. While this has been a year like no other, it has still been a year of learning(both virtual and face-to-face), fun times, flexibility, and building great friendships. I've been extremely proud of the way our SPS teachers, students, and parents have handled the demands we have all endured while dealing with COVID-19.

We have all faced the unknown while pushing forward to make this year successful.

We have continued to focus on literacy skills this year. We are working hard on increasing our Lexile scores. We are encouraging parents to set aside 15 minutes daily to read with your child. You may increase your child's reading fluency by having your child read and reread familiar books. We still encourage parents to check the daily communication folders and sign it daily to let us know that you are seeing it. You are welcome



CLARK

to contact your child's teacher at 237-8302 if there are any questions about your child's academic performance.

Our Academic Blitz is going well. We currently have 112 students

participating in the program. We are extremely thankful that our county is providing bus transportation to take some students home. The after-school program is available for students working below grade level in kindergarten, first, and second grades. Eligibility is based on the students' deficient area and their RtI tier level.

As I look back over my years at SPS, I look back with so much contentment and gratitude. I will take with me so many wonderful memories. I will always remember: the academic

goals we achieved; the sounds of teaching and laughter coming from classrooms as I walked the halls; the smiling, eager faces as they entered the building after a long break; the daily hugs; and the wonderful, dedicated staff I have been blessed to work with.

To my present and past students, parents, and my entire SPS family, "How lucky **I am** to have had a job that makes saying goodbye so hard."

Thanks for everything!

A glimpse of thing taking place at SMS

by DR. WILLIE GIBSON, PRINCIPAL

Swainsboro Middle School (SMS), we continue to use a team-based approach to focus on improving academic achievement. In an effort to close achievement gaps due to Covid-19, all stakeholders have been instrumental in assisting us with implementing instructional practices to meet the social and emotional needs of our students. Our educational professionals utilize data and sound research-based instructional strategies to deliver excellent instruction. Data from the Georgia Milestones Assessment, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), unit assessments, School Climate Survey results, and a variety of formative

assessments are utilized to drive instruction and address students' needs. In continuing with the Emanuel County Schools' focus, Swainsboro Middle School strives towards increasing literacy skills in all content areas. We were successfully able to adjust our schedule to ensure Writing and Reading were separate classes.

Our school's leadership supports a healthy culture by providing our staff with the opportunity to collaborate and share their expertise. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are intentionally designed to discuss and share best practices, look closely at student data to make informed decisions, apply response to interventions for struggling students, and to develop



GIBSON

teacher leaders.

SMS students continue to excel in many areas, including athletics, music, and other extracurricular events. During the fall, our softball and football teams completed successful seasons with our football team winning the 2020 MGMSAA Football Championship. The wrestling team had several students who placed in their

individual divisions. Additionally, our basketball teams did well and put forth 100% effort during every game. We have begun our spring athletics with tennis, baseball, and track.

Student incentives are pertinent to the success of Swainsboro Middle School. By applying these incentives to the everyday curriculum, students are encouraged to become inspired to adhere to the rules and regulations of our institution. Students who display the admirable attributes of dedication, upstanding character, and excellence in academics are compensated with rewards such as Student of the Month for each grade level. Additionally, our Positive Behavior Interventions

and Support (PBIS) has allowed us to implement evidence-based practices whose purpose is to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of school discipline. Students are not the only ones who are rewarded for outstanding excellence in personal character and performance in the classroom. Our teachers and staff at SMS are highly valued for their credentials and service in education and are recognized for their incomparable dedication and compassion for educating young people. Teachers and staff are provided various incentives as a token of our appreciation. As always, we're looking forward to continuing all of these practices for a successful 2021 school year.

Twin City Elementary: *Teachers are teaching, children are learning*

by PRINCIPAL ROBBIE WARNOCK

It was this time last year when our students and staff found our school year cut short due to the looming pandemic facing our nation. Emanuel County School's team of educators, bus drivers, and school nutrition employees worked diligently to provide a new kind of school – a remotely operated model to keep us afloat until we could re-group as we did when school started back on August 3, 2020. We are still open and going strong!

I have discussed all of

our Covid precautions and procedures in a prior letter, so this one is all about the great things we have going on here. Back in August, we had 108 students enrolled in our virtual school program; as of March 2021, we have 32 students enrolled due to 76 students returning to face to face instruction. We knew that this school year would have to address a wide range of skill gaps due to last year being cut short, so TCE teachers have reached deeply into an ever-increasing back of conventional and high-tech strategies to make



WARNOCK

up for Covid-time. I have asked each teacher to integrate digital delivery platforms such as Seesaw and Google Classroom

into their routines so that we are more prepared should we ever have to close again. In fact, every certified teacher had a learning goal to be able to deliver 20% of their content through one of those platforms, and I selected that same goal as the primary focus of my leadership goal as well. Community helpers visit our classes through Zoom; our students loved their virtual tour of Trooper Riner's patrol car. We were able to have our annual math and science night with a trio of guided STEM labs thanks to Erin Youmans.

Our media center has created an indoor bookmobile to make the literary rounds every morning to keep those pages turning. Just this week alone, we have had nine students level up their math skills in Xtra Math and students are hitting the 1,000,000-word mark and joining our 100 Book Club each nine weeks.

The classes at TCE might look a little different than they did a year ago, but our teachers are teaching and our learners are learning!

School is still in session!

Flexibility and resilience describe progress for SHS

by DR. DENISE WARNOCK, PRINCIPAL

The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a new era for education, and this school year, our focus has been on the health and safety of our students and staff. Although we have always strived to ensure a safe and secure learning environment for students and a safe and secure work environment for staff, our approach to "safe and secure" has become more comprehensive. We believe the added health and safety measures necessitated by the pandemic have kept our student body and staff healthier.

Last year's school closure provided our faculty and staff with the opportunity to rethink how we teach. This school term, our students benefit from our intentional efforts to develop and implement a sustainable digital-age learning culture. Our student organizations continue to persevere as BETA,

FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, TSA, and 21st Century Leaders all navigate virtual events and conferences. Virtual platforms and the integration of current digital tools and technologies increase our teachers' ability to impact and improve student learning. Face-to-face students participate in digital learning days quarterly to develop and refine their digital learning experiences should a shift to virtual learning become necessary.

Navigating current conditions has increased our awareness of the importance of social and emotional skills. Prior to the pandemic, SHS ordered a new advisement curriculum with plans to implement it this term. Fortunately, the new materials not only address soft skill development and workforce readiness, but they also align well with our young people's social and emotional learning needs.

This term, we have enjoyed the results of last



WARNOCK

summer's school renovation. An impressive feature of our renovation is our new cutting-edge culinary arts lab. In response to our local food and hospitality industry needs, this addition has enabled us to offer the Culinary Arts pathway. In this pathway, students have the opportunity to learn a variety of skills to work in the restaurant and food industry.

The return of sports has brightened our spirits as much as our new school lighting and newly reopened sunlight in the

common area atrium. In Tiger athletics, the wrestling team recently set a new school record by qualifying ten athletes with four placing at the GHSA AA Traditional State Championship. Competition cheerleading finished eighth in the state, which is the second-highest placement in program history. Our boys and girls basketball teams finished first and third in the region, respectively, and advance to state playoffs where our boys will defend last year's AA State Championship title. Baseball, golf, soccer, tennis, and track seasons are just getting underway. Denied their season last year, these sports report being able to see growth this term. Football's off-season workouts are well underway and the coaches are excited about the work ethic this group is showing and look forward to spring practice and seeing the strides made. When they return to the field

next fall, we hope the SHS Band of Gold will join them in full force presenting their spectacular half-time show in their new band uniforms.

Our focus this year has been on managing change well, targeting issues important to student success, and ensuring a shared belief that together we can make a difference for our students in these unprecedented times. In the past, we have included achievement and process data in the Progress Edition. Traditional school-wide data are not available this year. While we remain committed to our personalized learning and data-driven culture goals, we recognize a sustainable digital-age learning culture is important as well. This year our students, parents, faculty, staff, and community's flexibility and resilience are evidence of progress for Swainsboro High School.

Crider Foods Inc. opens hiring center

Crider Foods in Stillmore Georgia, hosted the Grand Opening of the new Hiring Center in Swainsboro, Georgia on November 5, 2020.



CRIDER RIBBON CUTTING

Bulldog Strong!

By ANETRIA EDENFIELD, PRINCIPAL

The past two school terms have proved to be a challenge for the students, faculty & staff of the Emanuel County School system but we have ALL continued to stay strong! We are working extremely hard to promote and maintain a healthy environment for our students & faculty.

Despite the challenges of operating under social distancing guidelines ECI is well on its way of helping students perform at a high level and be prepared to meet the demands of postsecondary education, meaningful careers, and effective citizens. As we progress through the school term together, we pledge to you, our students and parents, that this will be the best year ever filled with engaging, meaningful, and rigorous work in our classrooms,

combined with special events and a plethora of extracurricular clubs and activities, performing arts groups, and athletic teams certain to encourage our Dawgs to be involved and stay connected! Our students and advisors/coaches have been working hard to achieve success outside the classroom in their area of CTSO, club/organization or on the athletic field. We strive to provide many opportunities for our students to participate in activities outside the classroom that will help the build leadership skills as well as show commitment.

We invite and encourage students and parents to work in partnership with us to seize opportunities in all five facets of our ECI program—academics, the arts, athletics, activities, and altruistic endeavors. We want



EDENFIELD

you to take advantage of opportunities to be involved and support your child's education. Your active participation is the key to success for your young "Dawg" during his/her middle and high school career. We value home and school communication here at ECI. It is vital and plays an integral role in each student's academic career. We hope that you will find our school website, <https://www.emanuel.k12.ga.us/1/Home>, helpful and informa-

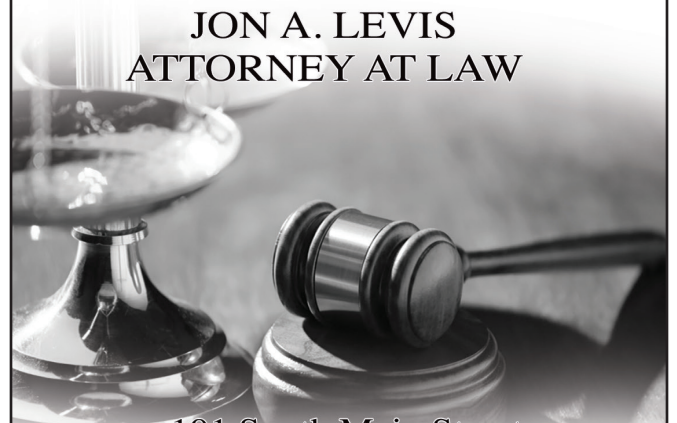
tive. We aim to update this daily with the latest activities that we have going on at ECI. You will also find a link to teacher websites where you can keep up with what your child has going on in his/her classroom. We also share information via Remind, Kinvoled, Emanuel Inspirations, Twitter, and Facebook. I also encourage you to follow your child academic progress/grades within the Parent Portal. You can find the link at <https://www.emanuel.k12.ga.us> to sign up.

I am honored to serve as the principal of Emanuel County Institute. It is truly a privilege to be a part of a community where parents, teachers, and students care for each other and strive to build positive relationships that support academic and social growth. I am very excited of the direction our 2020-2021 school term is headed. Go Dawgs!

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Accolades for Southeastern Technical College 2021

When speaking on education within Emanuel County, there are several locations worthy of receiving recognition for quality education, especially Southeastern Technical College's recent highlights.

In a press release made by nursingprocess.org, Southeastern Technical College's (STC) was ranked no. 1 out of 731 schools offering practice nursing programs in the southeastern U.S. This information was

based primarily on excellence in NCLEX-PN pass rates. This ranking was generated on four important factors - NCLEX-PN pass rates, academic quality, the nursing school's reputation, and affordability. The following is the weightage NursingProcess.org assigned to each of these factors.

1. NCLEX-PN Pass Rates (2016-2019): 60%
 - 2016 Pass Rates: 10%
 - 2017 Pass Rates: 20%
 - 2018 Pass Rates: 30%

- 2019 Pass Rates: 40%
- 2. Academic Quality: 20%
- 3. The Nursing School's Reputation: 10%
- 4. Affordability: 10%

In the press release, Southeastern Technical College's received the following recognition:

If you are browsing through the best Practical Nursing programs in the Southeast region, then Southeastern Technical College will not fail to impress you. The 60

credit hour program offered requires students to graduate through a full-time schedule. The primary focus of this program is to deliver fast-paced education with maximum practical exposure and with minimum tuition and fees.

Southeastern Technical College also ranked as no. 1 in Georgia Practical Nursing programs by practicalnursing.com.

EDsmart.org, a nationally recognized publisher of college resources and rankings, released the 2021 edition of the Best Accredited Online Colleges in Georgia. STC was ranked as no. 7 among all colleges and universities in the state of Georgia, as having the most comprehensive and well-rounded online instruction. This ranking was based on such factors as affordability, graduation, and retention according to the U.S. Department of Education and information obtained from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

STC was also included on Intelligent.com for having the best Human Resources Certificate program for 2021. The ranking was based on an assessment of 174 accredited colleges and universities in the na-

tion. Each program was evaluated based on curriculum quality, graduation rate, reputation, and post-graduate employment. The rankings were calculated through a unique scoring system that included student engagement, potential return on investment, and leading third party evaluations. The institutions analyzed by Intelligent.com on a scale of 0-100, narrowed the numbers of ranked schools down to only 45 that made the final list. The methodology used featured an algorithm which collects and analyzes multiple rankings into one score to easily compare each school.

Students completing a program from Southeastern Tech have a 99% job placement rate.

"I am so very proud of our faculty and students. Southeastern Technical College is one of the smallest technical colleges in Georgia, but don't let our size diminish the excellence we provide. Our faculty and staff are second to none and are always willing to go the extra mile for our students. Our programs consistently produce quality graduates who fill employer needs in our communities," said Teresa Coleman, Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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