

# The Cover

We are pleased once again to bring you this annual look at how our community has fared through the preceding year. As you know, we call this our Progress Edition, and traditionally, it features the advances made on various fronts and the new activity we all love to see. This year, we are taking a slightly different approach that not only focuses on the excitement of new developments but also celebrates the achievements earned prior to the Covid shutdown that contributed to this community's reputation as an active, resourceful and caring place. This Progress Edition thanks those many, many folks who kept working, kept hoping, kept the doors open and kept our economy going so that everything we called progress before, would still be our progress after the doubt and fear were over. Our progress would not be lost. So, with thanks to our customers, advertisers, and readers, we invite you to take a look at what we call "Progress...regained."

Your friends at The Forest-Blade



# Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce and the Emanuel County 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 2021.

The Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce's mission is to foster the business environment including the quality of life for our community. 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 retail 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. The development authority President supports 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 2021, 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



## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2021 as well, contributing to the net jobs gain. In addition to the two new industries, 2021 saw the expansion of nine companies in Emanuel County; total new jobs created were 225.

Wincore Windows and Doors, LLC expanded its new manufacturing facility in Swainsboro in 2021 in another existing facility vacated by Husqvarna. Wincore occupies 175,000 square feet of the facility and operates ten lines of window and door manufacturing with 226 employees.

America Knits, LLC opened its first US manufacturing facility in Swainsboro in the Summer of 2019 and expanded its operation with two additional production

lines. The upper-end performance fabric finisher employs 78 employees and is experiencing a significant expansion with the two new nationally recognized lines as well as the Georgia Grown "Dirt to Shirt" program which utilizes Georgia grown cotton that is harvested, processed into yarn and sewn into product all right here in the state of Georgia.

ECDA is currently working 29 projects, 19 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 under the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chamber and the ECDA continued to support, sponsor and provide programs such as LYTEE 2.2 (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 our Chamber Champion business recognition program, your Chamber will continue to explore new innovative ideas to (Continued on page 4)



**EMANUEL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**Sheriff Jeffrey Brewer**

**Major Nick Robertson**

**Captain Marc Curry**

**Lieutenant West Bedgood**

**Commander of the Traffic Unit  
Lieutenant Marty Mercer**

**Lieutenant Robert Phillips**

**Lieutenant David Way**

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.



## Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber...

(From page 2)

create new jobs and opportunities for our area.

LYTEE 2.2, 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 2.2 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 215 students have completed Vision 2020/LYTEE 2.2 with 74% 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 incentive 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 bases 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 di-

rect 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 Highway 297 Industrial Park in Nunez. The ECDA maintains the parks which encompass over 1300 acres. Of special significance in 2021, the water system for the Hwy 297 Park was completed and the sewer system contract awarded. The water system for the I-16 Park was completed in 2019. Sewer for the I-16 Park is under construction. Construction funding was aided by a grant from 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. We also received a OneGeorgia grant for \$500,000 for water and sewer at the Highway 297 Park.

Rehabilitation of the railroad track from the I-16 Industrial park to Vidalia continued in 2021. Funding was appropriated in 2021 for to complete the rehabilitation of the line to Vidalia by the end of 2022. The completion of the rehabilitation and reopening of 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 2023, approximately \$7.1 million of infrastructure improvements at our parks to include water and sewer construction at the I-16 park and the Highway 297 industrial park.

With the expansions of America Knits, Crider Foods, and Wincore Windows, along with other 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.goemanuel.org](http://www.goemanuel.org).



# The state of Emanuel County

by EMANUEL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS CHAIRMAN JIM SHERROD

It is another great day in Emanuel County. I count my blessings every day that I get to live in this great county. I thank God that he has blessed me to be able to live, work, play and raise a family in this area of the world. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

The Emanuel County Board of Commissioners strive every day to make sound decisions to improve the quality of life for its citizens. We are tasked in making decisions that affect every single person that calls this county home and those that are just passing through. It is a tough task at times, but when you use common sense, implement conservative principles and work with a servant's heart, great things usually happen.

I would be hard pressed to believe that there is another county our size and with the population we have that can boast some of the special amenities we have here. We have a well-funded, well trained Sheriff's office, whose staff goes above and beyond the call of duty. Our local city police departments are also outstanding. Our hospital is second to none and the management team, the doctors and nurses and

other support staff are all heroes in my book. They strive day in and day out to always give the best quality care you can find. Very few communities have a secondary education institution in their community, but in Emanuel we have two. East Georgia State College and Southeastern Technical College. And who could forget about our city firemen and volunteer fireman. There is nothing more selfless than being a volunteer and the men and women of Emanuel County Fire and Rescue are the best. They too are truly heroes. We have two amazing recreation departments. The staff at both are absolutely the finest and they work hard every day to make sure our young people get to enjoy organized sports that teaches them sportsmanship, teamwork, and life lessons. Our airport is another asset to our county and if you haven't been by there in a while, I suggest doing so. A lot of good things are going on there and they are busier than ever. Our Development Authority has good things going on as well. They have been very successful in recruiting industry and as of a few weeks ago there were around 470 jobs waiting to be filled. All of our county funded departments have outstanding employees and manage-

ment teams that go to work every day doing thankless jobs but do it willingly to support and raise their families. Some of them can go other places that may pay them a higher salary, but they choose to be here because they love their county and our way of life here. To the newest hired laborer at the county shop, to the twenty-year motor grader operator, to the staff at the county office, to the county administrator and all the staff in between, we wouldn't be the county we are today without your dedication to your jobs and for that the Emanuel County Board of Commissioners thank you and salute you.

To the citizens of this great county, the Board of Commissioners will always strive to make sound decisions on your behalf. We as a board we do not always agree on every issue, but we find a way to come together for the betterment of our county.

And finally, I will end by telling you that the state of Emanuel County is strong, but it can be better. Your input is always welcomed, and it is valued. Please don't hesitate to reach out with concerns or issues you may have.

God Bless us one and all,

*Jim Sherrod – Chairman Emanuel County Board of Commissioners*



**COUNTY  
ADMINISTRATOR  
SINGLETARY**



**COMMISSIONER  
JAMES CANADY  
DISTRICT 5**



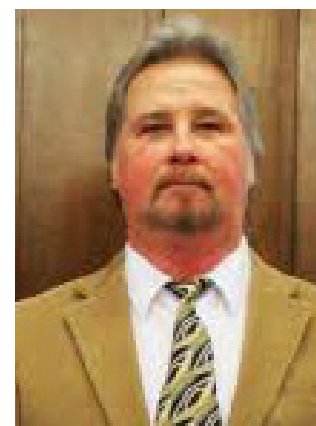
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**COMMISSIONER  
KEITH THOMPSON  
DISTRICT 2**



# East Georgia State College: 2021 in review

East Georgia State College experienced many changes during the 2021 academic year that has continued into the current academic year. "We are at a spot where we want to continue to grow and offer programs that support growth. We also have set our focus on being a community partner and building campus relationships between our Swainsboro, Statesboro, and Augusta facilities," EGSC President Dr. David Schecter stated. Applying the same concept at the Augusta and Statesboro locations, the college now hosts buildings on larger college campuses to allow smoother transitions for students completing studies through the East Georgia State College University system.

East Georgia College newest location is the NeeSmith Lane Building, housed on the campus of Georgia Southern University. The facility has been under renovation work for the past year and as of this year, all remodeling of this location has been completed. As of February, EGSC announced the completion of this project and excitedly await a ribbon cutting and open house ceremony planned to take place at 11 a.m. Monday, April 18. "It looks terrific and is a wonderful place that allows students to

move more seamlessly into the Georgia Southern environment. The college also has the same concept established at its Augusta campus. This change has been very exciting and is something we are very proud of," Dr. Schecter further commented. In addition to the faculty and staff of the college, the liveliness and overall growth is also contributed by educated growth of the students. "Making sure we understand what our students and their families want in education is vital in the process of college growth. We do a lot of surveys with students to see what works with their housing and meals and preferred class and faculty. One thing we have definitely done is to lean more on the students we are serving to perform a better job on our end. It's called continuous improvement, meaning: You're never where you need to be. You must continuously improve and if you're not continuously improving, you're falling behind," Dr. Schecter further elaborated. "Every year, there is something new we can learn from not just our leadership, but our students also."

## **Strength through the process**

When conducting any project for the betterment of a business, a



**DR SCHECTER**

positive lead in the right direction can take a turn for the worst if support is not factored into the equation. EGSC is proud of the significant role its faculty and staff have played in the overall outcome of the college and credits their employees for much of the success. "We have a tremendous faculty and staff at this institution. Many are former students. Your strength is in your people and we couldn't do what we do without having a strong faculty and staff who help and support our students and each other. They are amazing part of what we do at East Georgia," Dr. Schecter said with much pride.

## **Other Completed Projects**

Two other important goals noteworthy of the college's success include reaccreditation efforts and improved technology efforts. "Because of the successful reaccreditation efforts brought

about by Dr. Bob Boehmer, Dr. Dawn H. Cartee, our faculty, staff and other leadership positions, EGSC is now accredited by a group called Southern Association of Colleges, which further indicates the campus is going in the right direction," Dr. Schecter commended former and current involved faculty and staff.

The best grade a college can receive from this association is a 10-year renewal, and thanks to the leadership efforts instilled in the local college to achieve the highest score, EGSC obtained the prestigious honor of being a recipient for the 10-year renewal. Another accomplished milestone Dr. Schecter spoke on was the development of college's new website that went live on February 23, 2022. "These two projects were huge and took up a lot of time and energy on the campus this past year and we're really excited over these accomplishments," Dr. Schecter further complimented the instilled efforts and outcome of EGSC projects.

## **Current Goals for the Future**

EGSC President Dr. Schecter spoke briefly on future goals of the college that included building on-campus enrollment numbers, strengthening community relationships, and implement-

ing additional technical improvements to better serve the community and region. "One of EGSC's main goals for the future is to increase enrollment of on-campus students. To achieve this goal will require community assistance so that we can better serve individuals and families throughout the area. We know the impact of an educated work force for Georgia, and we owe it to the community to continue to serve and educate people of all ages. We're not just educating 18,19 and 20-year-olds now. We have adults who have returned to continue their education and offer online courses that people are taking. So, we know that we are doing our job so that all of Georgia benefits and the economy of the area benefits. Our number one goal for this year is to boost enrollment to help serve this community and region." On the technical side of things, EGSC President Dr. Schecter makes clear his confidence in the capabilities of the college's IT department and what a valuable contribution they make to the college's success. "We have a terrific I.T. team. During last year, the department used federal funding to help do a laptop refresher that included new equipment upgrades. (Continued on page 7)



## East Georgia State...

(From page 6)

They also introduced portable zoom monitors to the campus that features touch screen and white board capabilities that were also provided through grant funding improvements.

Behind the scenes accomplishments for the college also include the addition of tennis and cross-country teams. Starting this fall, Bill Sasser will serve as East Georgia College's first appointed tennis coach and Professor Walt Mason will serve as the first appointed cross-country coach at EGSC.

### In conclusion

Overall, EGSC is a proud part of Emanuel County and considers its role as both an opportunity and a privilege. If not for the support of the community, the college may have never come about. And for that, EGSC is grateful for the locals who played contributing factors in it's establishment and success throughout the years.

"I think if I could say anything that it would be – Thank you.

Thank you to those who have helped us become a leading regional college. We want to continue to give back to community. We appreciate each member throughout the area for aiding in our success and we furthermore ask for continued support. We need it to

keep doing what we're doing and we're very thankful for everything so far."

### More on Dr. David Schecter, EGSC President

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia named Dr. David Schecter president of East Georgia State College (EGSC), effective Jan. 3, 2022. Prior, Dr. Schecter served as provost and senior vice chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of South Carolina Upstate in Spartanburg, S.C., where he managed a budget of \$38 million, administered a department of 686 employees and supervised deans of the schools and colleges and the library.

Prior to serving at USC Upstate, Schecter served as associate vice president for faculty affairs and then vice provost at California State University, Bakersfield. He provided oversight for the university's Office of Research and Grants as well as the Kegley Institute of Ethics. Before joining the administration at CSU Bakersfield, Schecter was chair of the Department of Political Science at California State University, Fresno where he was granted tenure as a full professor and earned the prestigious Provost's Award for Faculty Service. He also previously taught at the University

of Nevada, Las Vegas.

A Florida native, Schecter holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Florida and both a master's degree in political science and a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies and history from Florida State University. He also holds an MBA from Fresno State.

Dr. Dawn Cartee has been serving as EGSC's interim president since Dec. 1, 2020, when President Bob Boehmer retired. Cartee's 30-year career in higher education has also included serving as director of the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education and Hotel, and as president of Ogeechee Technical College in Statesboro.



SCENE FROM EGSC GRADUATION



# 100 Years of “Twice as Friendly, Twice as Nice”

by MAYOR MATT W. DONALDSON

2021 was a busy year in the City of Twin City. It was the year of our centennial. In 1921, the City of Summit and the City of Graymont were dissolved and the City of Twin City was created from the two cities. The City Commission made the centennial a priority early in 2020 by forming the City Centennial Committee. The committee was made up of citizens, city staff, and elected officials. Without those people, our year of success would not have been possible. The City Centennial Committee members were: Joann Bell, Donna Scott, City Clerk Genia Duckler, Main Street Manager Huddie Culbreth, Police Chief Hank Whiter, and Mayor Matt Donaldson. The committee began planning in 2020 and starting with the goal of having an event every month. This is where our story will begin.

In January, the city started with updating all the city limits signage. All 7 entry points into Twin City were updated with new signage that included our city logo and slogan. This was a much-needed improvement to enhance our gateways into Twin City. In honor of the City Centennial, the city produced 100 limited-edition

medallions honoring our centennial. I had the pleasure of presenting the 1<sup>st</sup> medallion to Governor Brian Kemp at the Georgia State Capitol in January.

In February, we formally kicked off our year of events with our “Centennial Celebration” on Friday, February 26<sup>th</sup> at the Welcome Center. For this event, we invited all local officials, citizens, and former Mayors or their families. We were so happy to have the families of 10 former Mayors of Twin City attend. We recognized their service during the event. Also, our speaker was our State Senator Max Burns. Senator Burns presented the city with a resolution adopted by the Georgia State Senate sponsored by Senator Max Burns, Senator Billy Hickman, Senator Blake Tillery, Senator Larry Walker, and Senator Ben Watson. Senator Ben Watson is a native son of Twin City, so this was extra special. We also unveiled our plans for our centennial mural and the rendering for the mural. The event concluded with a tour of the Old City Hall & Jail and refreshments at the Welcome Center.

On Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, we held our ribbon cutting and re-opening of Pop Boogie Park. Pop Boogie Park is named after Pop Boogie



DONALDSON

Brinson, who was a visionary citizen of Twin City. Pop Boogie was vital in creating recreational opportunities early for the people of Twin City. During the event, we unveiled a history marker to memorialize the impact of Pop Boogie Brinson. The Carmichael Family also played an important part of the park, as James Carmichael donated the land that Pop Boogie Park sits on today. We had the families of Pop Boogie Brinson and James Carmichael attend the re-opening, which was another treat of the centennial. The city has been working on a plan to revitalize the park. During this phase of the work, we replaced the concession stand and bathroom facility and upgraded fencing. The City funded these improvements through proceeds from timber sales, City general funds, and a grant from the Mill Creek Foundation. The day was rounded off with a meal

and a softball game.

In April was a continuation of an annual event in Twin City – City-Wide Clean-Up. The City sponsored (3) dump sites throughout Twin City for the disposal of larger household items. During the week of the event, our Public Works Department worked hard to help citizens dispose of unwanted items to help make Twin City cleaner.

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, the city hosted a Memorial Day event at the Welcome Center. We honored those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. The city partnered with American Legion Post#103 to make this event happen. We are thankful for their support.

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, we broke ground on our newest park in Twin City – Centennial Park & Trail. The park follows the length of the old railroad bed coming through Twin City. The park will include a trail with benches, trash cans, and lighting. For landscaping, we have partnered with the Glad Garden Club in applying for a grant to complete the landscaping in Spring 2022. We were happy for a great turnout at the event. As well as local elected officials, we had our entire state delegation attend and a repre-

sentative from Congressman Rick Allen’s office. This park was funded in part by a grant from the Georgia Department of Economic Development. The park is progressing and should be completed in Spring 2022.

July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend came with a community-led event at the newly reopened Pop Boogie Park. The Community Cares Group arranged lunch and games for the children of Twin City. It was a great day to use the new park.

August and September were busy with planning the inaugural City festival. In August, the city announced the festival naming contest. We engaged citizens and students at Twin City Elementary School and Emanuel County Institute to submit entries to name the festival. The city received over 100 entries. The Centennial Committee chose “Cotton Blossom Festival” as the official name of the first City festival. The submission was made by Helen Logue, and she was awarded the \$250 prize sponsored by Historic Twin City Georgia, Inc.

In October, the city hosted our annual Halloween event. The city had candy stations at City Hall, Police Department, Welcome Cen-

(Continued on page 9)



# 100 Years of “Twice as Friendly, Twice as Nice”

(From page 8)

ter, and old City Hall & Jail. We had hundreds of trick-or-treaters come out and enjoy the fun.

November 6<sup>th</sup> came the big day – the inaugural Cotton Blossom Festival. Along with the “Don’t Bale Out” 5K and antique tractor show, we had over 40 arts and crafts vendors. Although the weather was cool the day of, we had so many citizens attend and support us. A great day was had by all. Go ahead and mark your calendars for the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in November annually – the Cotton Blossom Festival is now an annual event!

December was the busiest month of all. During the first week of December, our Centennial Mural was finally completed. The mural is on the wall of the original City Hall & Jail building located on the old city limits of Summit and Graymont. The mural was completed by John Christian and placed on the Georgia Mural Trail. The Twin City Centennial Mural is listed as Mural 51 on the trail. Thanks to a grant and local donations, the mural was completely funded without City funds. Our generous donors were Lynda Cowart Talmadge, Georgia Power,

Historic Twin City Georgia, Inc., and Durden Banking Company, Inc. The city hosted our annual Christmas Parade on Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup>. After the parade, we had refreshments at City Hall, Police Department, and Welcome Center. Santa also made an appearance! The following Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, was the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual

Mayor’s Christmas Toy Giveaway. Thanks to community donations, we raised over \$4,000 to purchase over 400 toys for local children. The event was well attended and is something we look forward to every year. Finally, we rounded off 2021 with the Shop Twin City campaign. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the annual campaign to

support and promote Twin City businesses during the holiday season. The Shop Twin City campaign is sponsored by the Development Authority of Twin City.

As you see, we were busy during 2021. We plan to continue making Twin City better for our citizens. There is much more to come – stay tuned!



CENTENNIAL LOGO

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# 2021 brings positive changes to Emanuel County Sheriff's Office and our community

Many positive changes have taken place within the Emanuel County Sheriff's Office since the change in leadership following the 2020 election that opted the selection of Sheriff Jeffrey Brewer to serve as the new county sheriff. Although he was elected by the people to serve his current capacity two years ago, the many changes, did not take effect until Sheriff Brewer took office in early January of last year. "I was rehired as the chief deputy right after the election, so the transition period began a little early, but I didn't actually make any changes until January 1st, when I took office."

Among those changes was a significant reordering of his command staff. Some of which 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 Wes Bedgood. "As soon as I took office and became the official Sheriff, I appointed Nick

Roberson as my chief deputy and Wes Bedgood as my jail administrator. I couldn't do this without them. Nick and I think the same, so when I'm gone or I'm not here to do something Nick makes the same decisions that I would. We're both goal driven and goal oriented. We're behind one another 100%." In addition to the change in command implemented within the office since Sheriff Brewer's takeover, many other changes and promises made on behalf of Sheriff Brewer have also been fulfilled. "The overall strength of the agency has increased within the last year. The staff had to know where I stood, and I let them know that I would support them and their job and how they did it, if it's not illegal, immoral, or unethical. We will work through everything, and they know that I have their back. That inspires confidence and a good work ethic. With our uniforms, our investigations, the traffic, the jail, everybody is confident that we're going to do what's right and support them as we do it. The people of the agency have gone from being reactive to proactive and that's what we want, we want a proac-



**SHERIFF BREWER**  
tive agency."

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 within the near future. "We try to post everything that we do on our Facebook page, and we get very little negative feedback from that. Most of it is positive because the people in our community are proud of what we're doing and they're proud that our staff is getting the training they need to do it. I read every comment and look at every share. Though I'm not always quick to respond to a message, I try to be as responsive as I possibly can be and give people the answers they are seeking, even if I must call them."

There are also many

changes that Sheriff Brewer hopes to implement in the upcoming year including CIT training, the coverage of different town hall meetings and the organization of both evidence rooms so that every missing item can be returned to its rightful owner. Among the changes that have taken place, however, is the new technology that was needed in many of the patrol cars. "Last year, we had two vehicles that had car computers, now we have sixteen vehicles with those computers. I would like to continue to expand that until everybody on the team eventually has one because that cuts down on a lot of radio traffic from 911 and helps to take away some of their overwhelming workload. It also gives us an opportunity to see where our officers are located at in a moment of crisis." They are also working towards getting their staff new, cohesive uniforms. "First appearance makes a difference. It inspires confidence which makes our job easier." Something that Sheriff Brewer believes strongly in is proper training. Such as the active shooter training class that his deputies participated in last year. "I set an objec-

tive last year of getting everybody through the active shooter training and we did. So, this year we're getting everybody through the crisis intervention training which teaches you how to deescalate situations with people that have mental challenges of any type. Because even when you're under stress you're dealing with a mental challenge. I've gotten half of my staff through it and have half to go. Most of the training that I'm sending my staff too, I've already been through it. So, I'm not sending them through something that I haven't gone through myself. I would never ask them to do anything that I wouldn't do. "Also, since taking office, Sheriff Brewer announced that the county jail has received a full-time nurse. Giving our inmates the ability to have the best health-care possible. "This is the first time that we've had a nurse on staff, full time. Before, the nurse practitioner came three days a week." Other noteworthy successes over the year, thanks to our Sheriffs Department, is the decrease in the drug interdiction, property theft, and burglar-

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## 2021 brings positive...

(From page 10)

ies because of all the incredible arrests Emanuel County Sheriff's Office has continued to make. A success that he says could not have been possible without the community's involvement. "The community is our eyes and ears. A lot of the things that we solve, come in through reports that we receive from the community. "All in all, it's safe to say the Sheriff Brewer and his staff are working hard in office to provide the best service possible to the county and its residents. "I love everything about Emanuel County. This is God's country. I like to tell everybody that I'm well rounded throughout this community. I graduated from ECI, my children graduated from Swainsboro, and I went to East Georgia." In closing, Sheriff Brewer wants the public to know the following: "We don't know a lot of things unless the public relay's 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." Thank you Sheriff Brewer for your constant, dedicated service to our community over the past year.



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# Citizens Bank produces another solid year of growth

by MILTON GRAY,  
CITIZENS BANK OF  
SWAINSBORO PRESI-  
DENT AND CEO

The year 2021 proved to be another year of challenges and solid growth. We began the year with our lobbies closed due to pandemic related protocols that were implemented on July 31, 2020 to protect our team members and valued customers. The lobbies were reopened on the 3rd day of May and have remained open despite Covid-19 spikes in August and at

year-end. Despite the challenges related to the pandemic our committed teams have continued to render a high level of banking services to our customers. Our team members have been true heroes, many times placing the needs of our customers ahead of themselves.

Congress passed the CARES Act on March 27, 2020 providing economic support to the US economy during the economic shutdown due to Covid-19. A large part of the



GRAY

CARES Act was related to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), providing financial support to small businesses and their employees. President Biden authorized a second round of PPP loans in 2021 for businesses that suffered a 25% or more reduction in gross revenues for a given quarter from 2019 to 2020. The qualification rules were also revised to allow many small businesses that were previously ineligible, to be eligible in 2021. We were able to assist 301 small business customers with over \$6.2 Million in PPP loans. Our lending teams worked many extra hours to make sure that our small business customer applications were promptly processed and funded.

Our locally owned and operated commu-

nity bank has offices in Swainsboro, Dublin, and Statesboro. The bank's consolidated assets increased 11.80% to \$300,648,109, loans 3.33% to \$191,322,262, and deposits 13.25% to \$268,049,039. Our year-end Risk Based Capital Ratio was 17.72% 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 growth and record earnings.

Our second Laurens County branch located in the historic downtown district of Dublin, provided significant loan growth in 2021. 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 \$95 million in outstanding loans producing significant earnings for the bank. Caroline

K. Nelson is the Market President operating under the trade name Bulloch First. We were fortunate to add Zac Frye to our team as Senior Vice-President of Lending serving customers in Swainsboro and Bulloch County.

The seventeenth class of our Student Advisory Board was selected, consisting of thirty-six seniors from Swainsboro High School, Emanuel County Institute, and David Emanuel Academy. 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 2022. At the Citizens Bank of Swainsboro our "Prime Interest" is you.

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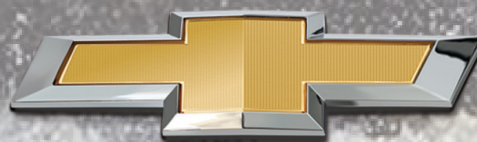
Daniels Chevrolet began in a general store in Twin City in 1926. Mr. Marlow Daniels owned a general store and would bring Chevrolets from Swainsboro and offer them for sale to his customers in Twin City. Marlow and a man named Rice co-owned the venture at that time. Mr. Daniels later bought out Mr. Rice 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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## The Durden-Hudson Way

by DEBBIE HUDSON  
DUBBERLY, OWNER

What started as Peebles-Curry in 1966, now stands as Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors, Inc. – A funeral company that has seen its share of changes over the years and prides

itself on being a business that is here to serve families like they would want to be served.

In the early 90's, it was sold to a corporation. But, on July 12, 2007, Wendall and Zebe Durden and Scotty and I, bought the company

back. A partnership that remained until shortly after Wendell's passing in 2010. Sole ownership was eventually left to me after Scotty passed away unexpectedly in 2016. At that point in time, we had to decide after meeting with ad-

visors, lawyers, and CPA's, how to move forward. After a lot of diligent prayer and research, we decided that we should and would still strive to continue the tradition, the Durden-Hudson way, and we do it with the

utmost dignity for every family, regardless of your station in life.

Everybody deserves the same treatment. It doesn't matter who you are, we can offer you a service that will fit your needs, whether it be a (Continued on page 15)

### *Celebrating Moments Honoring Memories*



The Durden-Hudson Family of licensed funeral professionals are available to guide your family through the most difficult of times. It is still our goal to provide professional, ethical and caring service to the families who trust in us.

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## The Durden-Hudson...

From page 14)  
traditional service or a cremation service, be it traditional or direct cremation, there are lots of options out there for every family. We pride ourselves on being able to serve and provide for our community. It's not a responsibility we take lightly. My reward has been serving other people.

Several years ago, I lost my only child, and I lost my husband, so my life has completely changed. At that point in time, after a lot of soul searching and praying, I was no longer a wife or a mother. So, I no longer understood what my purpose was. Now I feel that my purpose is serving families. I know the feeling of loss and grief. Time heals some, and you're able to move forward. So, our goal here at Durden-Hudson, is to serve those people and relieving some of that stress. We want to do what we know how to do, so that a family in mourning can get through it, with a little less difficulty.

For the first time ever in the history

of the funeral home, Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors, Inc. is both owned and directed under female leadership, something that we consider to be a plus for the industry. Faith Vedder, is our new funeral director. She was in Metter with Kennedy funeral home for over 15 years, since then she's been with Durden-Hudson almost 3 years. She's very accomplished, has a profound experience in this field and is one of the best at what she does. She has been an asset to this business since the day she walked into the door.

The good Lord has blessed us with some incredible employees to serve our community. We're like a family. We're a close-knit bunch and we're here to help people during one of the most difficult times of their life, and to do it with integrity, honor, and trust. It's a ministry to families and an opportunity to serve. That's how it's always been and how it will continue to be. The Durden-Hudson Way

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# Emanuel Arts Council celebrates new home in 2021

by JACQUIE BRASHER, EAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

After several years of being without a home, the Emanuel Arts Council (EAC) finally moved into the Barbara and Tobe Karrh Community Arts Center in December 2021. The center, located at 109 North Green Street in downtown Swainsboro, represents completion of the first phase of a major renovation of the old theatre.

While the theatre portion is still undergoing extensive restoration and renovation, the EAC part of the building is complete. The ground floor is occupied by The Kalmanson Gallery and a kitchen area. The upstairs level of the center—unofficially called The Loft—will be used as office, workshop, and meeting spaces for the executive director of the EAC and the board of directors. The EAC will host regular art exhibitions in The Kalmanson Gallery, facilitated by Gallery Director Desmal Purcell.

A ribbon cutting and open house for the EAC was well-attended by many members of the community. The inaugural art exhibition featured work by Neil Kalmanson, artist and retired professor of art at East Georgia State College. “We have come

full circle,” said Jacquie Brasher, executive director. “The art gallery was named The Kalmanson Gallery many years ago at the old building, and it’s our honor to have him be our first artist to exhibit in this new space.” Kalmanson was art professor at EGSC from 1973 to 2003. He was also the director of the Kalmanson Art Gallery of EAC since its inception in 1979. He passed the torch to EGSC Art Professor Desmal Purcell in 2013.

“Now that we are in our new home, we are planning many exciting events for 2022,” said Brasher. “Mr. Purcell is programming art exhibitions for the whole year. The EAC has been instrumental in bringing unique art exhibitions to Emanuel County for the last few decades. We look forward to continuing that tradition.”

In 2021 the EAC once again offered the popular Summer Art Camp, which began in 2016. Held at the Sudie Fulford Community Learning Center of East Georgia State College from June 7-9, the camp was fully funded by scholarships from Mill Creek Foundation. Twenty slots in the camp were rapidly filled on a first come, first served basis after the camp was announced earlier in the Spring. All



SCENE FROM EAC EVENT

participants at art camp were rising third through fifth grade students from Emanuel County.

Art instructor and facilitator for the camp was Mark Lillquist, art teacher at Emanuel County Institute. Lillquist has been facilitating EAC art camps for five years. His assistants this year were Susanna Hall and Anita Cerpovicz. Salaries for the art instructor and assistants, as well as funding for supplies and snacks, were all provided by a grant through Mill Creek Foundation.

Art projects included drawing horses, birds, and a 3-D barn, painting with atmospheric perspective, spray & salt underwater scenes, making buttons and stringing beads, and constructing paper butterflies. Students also learned about linear perspective and



ANOTHER SCENE FROM EAC EVENT



ART EXHIBIT

(Continued on page 6)



## Emanuel Arts Council...

(From page 16)  
how to draw objects from a distance.

The EAC also participated in Franklin Memorial Library's Trunk or Treat event on October 28. Due to inclement weather, the festivities had to be held indoors. Several local businesses and organizations set up Halloween-themed booths and gave out candy to over 400 children.

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. Executive Director of the EAC is Jacquie Brasher; EAC Board President is Kenny Griffin, and Katelyn Moore is secretary. Members of the EAC board serve on numerous committees in the county, including Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce, Family Connection, Historic Twin City, Pine Tree Festival, Downtown Development Authority, and the Emanuel Coalition for Cultural & Economic Development.

*For news and updates about programming, check out Emanuel Arts Council on Facebook.*



A LOOK INSIDE EMANUEL ARTS COUNCIL



ANOTHER ART EXHIBIT

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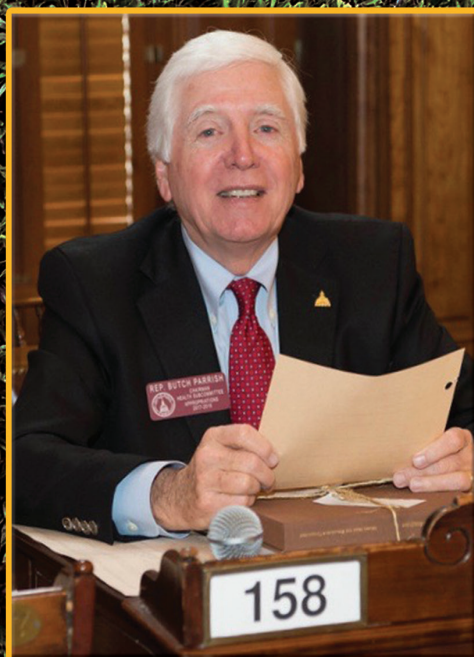
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## A word from our district attorney's office

*When you're facing an uncertain future, it's hard to want to sit and wait for the outcome. It's even more*

*difficult to want to put your fate or the fate of a loved one, in the hands of another. For District Attorney Tripp Fitzner, being an advocate in the trials of someone's life is a calling that he and his staff take more seriously than any other.*

by TRIPP FITZNER

The year has gone by fast. We had a backlog from covid that we're still trying to work through. What I found out early on is that although we have the capability of moving cases a lot faster, we only have two judges in the circuit, and they have less attorneys in the public defender's office than we do. Consequently, I must be mindful not to overload the system in trying to move cases. I think we have a great staff. Everybody's working together very well. The attorneys and the support staff work hard to meet deadlines and needs within our community. I feel that it's been a successful year. We've had some major cases this year. The biggest case of my career was the Tony Williams



FITZNER

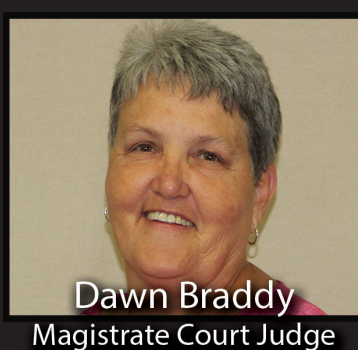
case that we had last year which was successful and took a true team effort. Many different law enforcement agencies were involved, and that's really what it's all about is trying to make a difference within the community. Our greatest strength is teamwork. We all work together. It's a 5-county circuit so at any time in any county within the circuit, I can bring in the full support of all the attorneys in the office whenever there is a trial going on. What's incredible about that is the fact that when I need assistance, I don't even have to ask because they volunteer. I'm also proud of the things that we've done within the community. We've gone out and taught classes on (Continued on page 21)



# Proud To Be Emanuel County's ELECTED OFFICIALS



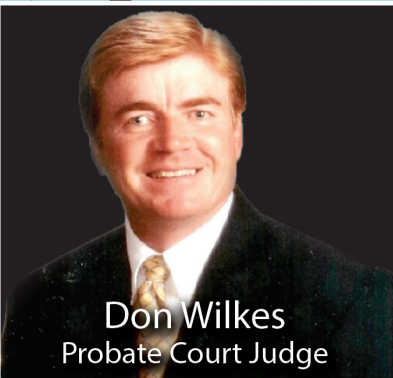
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Clerk of Superior Court



Dawn Braddy  
Magistrate Court Judge



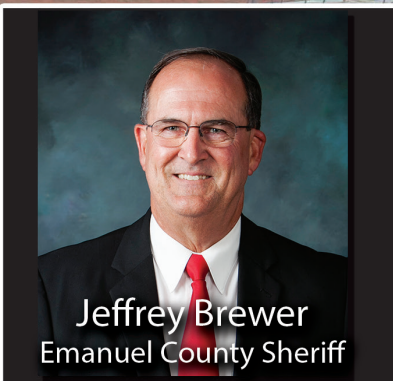
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Tax Commissioner



Don Wilkes  
Probate Court Judge



Bobby Reeves  
Chief Superior Court Judge



Jeffrey Brewer  
Emanuel County Sheriff



Tommy J. Smith  
Superior Court Judge





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## A word from...

(From page 18)

things that we think the public would be interested in. A few examples would be a class for keeping your children safe online, a conceal carry and self-defense course, and we also go into our communities' schools and talk to the children about internet safety and things that are important for kids to be aware of in this new-age society. We don't just sit in our office or go to court, but we get out and interact with the community. And so far, I've been pleased with both the response and willingness of the people that work for me to do that. If you're interested in taking one of these classes, you can call the office and ask for me, Tripp, and I will happily help you schedule it. These are great activities for local groups and organizations. We do have to do it around our court schedule so classes are usually held on the weekends, but we try to be as flexible as we can. All you need to do is call the office, ask for me, and we'll set something up. Our website has a form on it to make it easy for people to reach out to me directly. It goes straight to my email, because I want people who need to get in touch with the District Attorney to be able to do so easily. Because I'm not able to be in the office as much as I would like, I created that online form to give people an avenue where they can reach me directly, with

ease. We also have a victims' services unit, where our clients can take a survey at the end of their case to let us know how we did for them. We try to be as accessible to everyone as much as we can. When you do a good job in court, the victim's family appreciates the fact that you've advocated for them, or that someone in your office has. I really think more of getting positive feedback about my staff where they have done a good job of representing victims in court, than I do about myself. It's a lot more meaningful because I put a lot of confidence in them and their ability to represent me. So, I always like for them to hear the positive feedback from our community and the people that they've served. One thing that I'm very proud of, that took the involvement of the entire team, is the early intervention program that we started this year. Which is basically a pre-trial diversion program for first time offenders in cases with low victim impact. They complete the program and at the end of it they're eligible to have warrants dismissed. It's a great policy and one that I hired Laray Avery to manage. After an individual completed the program, he called our office just to let me know that he felt that Laray was the first person to listen to him in the criminal justice program and how much he appreciated his time (Continued on page 22)

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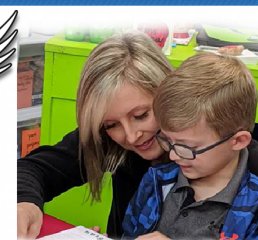
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## A word from...

(From page 21)

and devotion to helping him. That's something that means a lot to me and our staff, because we truly want to help people and make a positive change in their lives. That's our goal. The sheer numbers involved now for us to push everything through, mean that we must be proactive in terms of the caseload. So, there's a limited segment of offenses that we're able to do and utilize in this program. We try to get the people involved with a faith-based group, because the criminal justice system is not going to change anyone's heart. It's just not. But if you can get them involved in a church or some religious type of organization then maybe their heart will change, and their behavior will change too. While we can't tell somebody, *"You can't do that."* We can certainly encourage it because reaching for the better leads to long lasting positive change, more than anything else. The things that I've wanted to see happen, have happened. One of the additional things however, that has been an ongoing project, is the issue of expungement or record restrictions. What that means is that if someone is arrested and they're ultimately not prosecuted, it's been in my opinion that we should at least leave the person in as good a shape as we found them. We're starting to go

to different counties and invite people to come in and join us so that we can help them with their expungement and cases. Cases where people were arrested and not prosecuted. Our goal is to help balance things out for them. If that decision is made, then they should hopefully be in as good a shape as they were. We have been a lot more aggressive in prosecuting gangs and gang cases, and I hope that has been apparent to everybody over the past year. Whether you live in public housing or by the golf course, I've always felt that every person wants and deserves the same thing; a safe place to live, raise their family, go to work, and not have to worry about violence, drugs, or dangerous activity like that. This is an ongoing goal of mine but it's a process not a destination. I don't ever see a time where we're going to get to a point and say *"Okay, we've done enough."* And stop. It's something that requires constant vigilance on our part but the message that I have tried to send is, *"if you're involved in gang violence, we're going to come after you."* Because it's bad for the entire community. It affects everybody and has caused our community to lose almost an entire generation of kids. It shouldn't be that way. While this is our greatest priority, another is to continue to work on getting rid of the backlog from

when the court system was shut down and finding a way to manage that with the limited resources that the court system has. I'm hoping that the circuit will get a grant which we have applied for but haven't been awarded yet, but I'm very hopeful that we'll get it awarded so that we can have more trial weeks and move more cases. The old cases don't exist in a vacuum. We have the old cases but we're also getting new cases and the new cases are more than what was there, so I want to reduce the numbers. Anytime there's a delay it's bad for the defendants, it's bad for the victims, it's bad for the system. So, we want to continue to aggressively try to move cases while respecting the rights of the defendants and not sacrificing the quality of the prosecution. There again though, there are constraints that we don't have any control over and I'm hoping that we'll get some additional resources that will go into the court system and allow us to expedite things a little faster than we have been able to. At the end of the day the job isn't about any of us or our egos or anything else. What it's about is to try to make a positive difference in the community. So, when we don't support each other it's not really hurting us, it's hurting the people. The group of folks that I have and their willingness to work together and

support each other from the chief assistant down to the receptionist and everywhere in between, means that we all want to make a positive impact and understand the importance of the job and the work that we do. That is significant because it's not something that you can teach. I can tell somebody how to try a case or I can have them read the law. Those are necessary to do the job and are skills that can be acquired but having your heart and mindset on the fact that this is about service and not ego, is not something that you can teach somebody. It's something that must be intrinsic to who they are. We're at a place with people who embody that mindset. It's not something that the public would ever see or know about, but it is absolutely one of the most fundamentally important things that absolutely goes with the job. Emanuel County is special because of the people. People don't always agree on how to do things but ultimately everybody wants our community to be better. Whether it's in the business environment or public safety. I think that the community spirit here is very high. I'm proud of the fact that we have so many people who live and work here and are invested in making the community better and I think that sometimes we all need to be reminded that we have the same

goals and that is ultimately the most important thing. We can't always agree on the specifics but it's like I tell people, *I've been married to my wife for about 17 years now and I don't agree with her all the time either.* You're never going to agree with people 100 percent of the time but if you have the same goals then you can work together to reach the same outcomes. Whether it's in my job or the chamber of commerce or the mayor's office or the county commissioners. We have a good group of folks and leadership who I'm confident want to make our community safer and want to make it a bigger and better business environment and a better place for families. If we continue to have this type of leadership and the type of people who are interested in the environment here, I think that Emanuel County will be successful. I appreciate the support that the District Attorney's office has gotten from the community. Swainsboro is my home. I live here, I raise my family here, and that's why I want the community to be safer, because I'm invested here too. I'm raising my kids here too, my wife works here too, I go to church here too. I'm proud of the work that we've done and I'm proud to call Swainsboro home. And I will continue to serve this community if you want me. I'm here for the long haul.



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# Durden Banking Company 2021

by WADE JOHNSON

Durden Banking Company, Inc. remains financially sound and was fortunate to experience another good year in 2021. 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 2.22% and Return on Equity of 15.68%, and we remain extremely well capitalized with a Tier I Leveraged Capital Ratio of 15.04%. Our Total Assets increased by 19% to \$245 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 the promotion of Wade Johnson to the position of president and chief executive officer in January 2022. Former CEO G.W. Johnson retired from the bank at year-end but remains on the board of directors and continues to serve as president and chairman of Durden Bankshares Inc.

The bank returned to its' Annual Employee and Shareholder Christmas Party at Beaver Creek Plantation in December after cancelling the annual event in 2020 due to COVID concerns.

Over 150 guests attended the party where two employees were recognized for their service to the bank and their retirement from the bank. Debra Jones, Customer Service Representative in the Swainsboro office, retired after 30 years of service and Donna Weatherford, Corporate Secretary retired after 20 years of service in the Twin City office. Gail Curl, City President-Metter Office, was also recognized with a Resolution from the Georgia Bankers Association recognizing her for 50 Years in Banking.

President Wade Johnson announced the addition of Zachary Proctor to the staff in the Swainsboro Office. Zach worked previously with the bank as a student employee. He recently completed his education at Georgia Southern University with a degree in accounting. Zach is a loan officer in the Swainsboro office serving the loan needs of customers along with Judy Price, V.P. and Wade Johnson, President.

President Johnson commented that the years 2020 and 2021 have been challenging 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



JOHNSON

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, payment portal for non-deposit customers and the use of ATMs at all our offices. A new product introduced in 2021 was the availability of remote and retail electronic signatures for loan customers. 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 customers and businesses in and around our community with more than 1,000 loans exceed-

ing \$23 million through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) through the Small Business Administration. These loans allowed many businesses to survive and remain open during the pandemic. 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 were closed for brief periods of time in 2020, we found ways to serve our customers. Fortunately, our lobbies have been open during 2021 with business returning to normal operations.

Our Mortgage Loan Department has continued to grow under the leadership of Mortgage Loan Officer Jimmy May. His primary office is located within the Swainsboro branch and serves the mortgage needs for the entire bank. With mortgage rates still very low, 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](http://www.durdenbc.com), had a facelift in late 2020, continues to be enhanced with new features. 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 (Continued on page 26)



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## Durden Banking Company...

(From page 24)  
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 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 will be glad to help you do a little research into the situation. We have your best interests in mind, and we will work to make sure you are protected.



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**DBC SWAINSBORO LOCATION**





CHIEF WHITERS, SUMNER AND BADY

## 2021...Twin City Police Department

*Twin City Police Department* Is located at 130 Circle Drive. Jule Bady serves as police commissioner. The department is directed under the leadership of Chief of Police Hank Whitters, assisted by full-time officers, Marcus Hartwell and Christopher Reed; part-time officers, Gheorghe Register, Trevor Patterson, John Dailey and Chad Roberts; and administrative clerk Jessica Sumner, who also serves as municipal court clerk. Attorney Richard McNeely presides as municipal court judge; Brown Roundtree is court solicitor; and Richard Thompson is the court's public defender.

The year 2021 started off great for Twin City Police Department. Minus a few hiccups along the way, the department gave an overall positive report to update the community on in this year's 2022 Progress publication.

### Crime rate

As far as crime rate, the chief reported that very few incidents occurred that involved city resi-

dents but proudly attested that none of the events occurred nor originated from inside city limits. Other than these events, per Chief Whitters, all operations were *smooth sailing* and crime rates were "Nice and low – just the way we like it." The public's response to department operations have said to be uplifting, too!

### Community Response

"The community response has been very upbeat, and we received very few complaints on how we operate," Chief commented. "The biggest complaint we receive is dogs," he furthered. "Our department received multiple complaints about dogs running loose within city limits last year and received very little compliance in upholding charter codes made to prevent this Issue."

### In Office...

"Last year started off wonderful for our department. We started the year (Continued on page 28)

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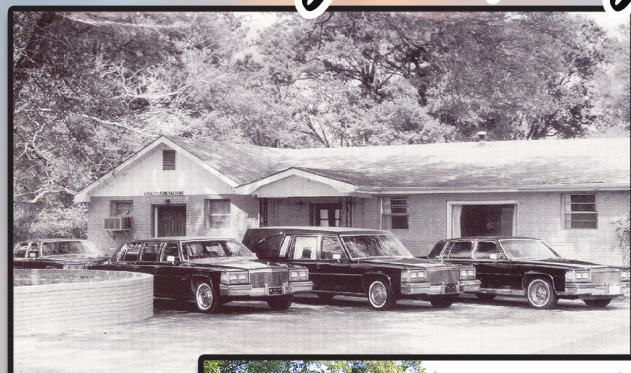
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## 2021...Twin City...

(From page 27)

with a full staff of officers, but slowly they dwindled down, and officers went to work for other agencies," TCPD Chief Hank Whiter stated.

Having a full staff at the beginning of last year brought in the benefit of receiving additional revenue for the small-town police department. These extra funds were sewn back into TCPD and the city's municipal court and utilized to fulfill needs and changes of office.

The need to address fairer compensation to city officers was the first of many items addressed in effort to promote TCPD's overall commitment to protect and serve. Officer compensation was raised to a more competitive rate for two main reasons: one, entice future employment and retain a full staff office again; and two, promote better comfort of living to current department staff.

Additional Incentives, equipment investments and upgrades as well as certifications were also awarded officers.

"Officers who were not radar certified are now certified. We were also fortunate to purchase vehicle and body cameras for our officers

and upgraded department's patrol fleet. The officers also gained the ability to take their patrol vehicles home," Chief Whiter stated.

Changes made in the department's patrol fleet were give-in-take but an overall win in providing more reliable transportation to officers. Upgrades included more efficient patrol cars being added to the fleet as well as a few Ford Explorers. In exchange for the new, old replaced units were auctioned as surplus.

## Twin City Municipal Court...

In administration and municipal court, Twin City Police Clerk and Municipal Clerk Jessica Sumner described the year as business as normal in her profession. She advised that court arraignments are now current and spoke on two big changes seen in municipal court last year - the hiring and appointment of solicitor and public defender. Brown Roundtree Law firm prestigiously serves as the municipal court's first solicitor and Richard Thompson as the court's appointed public defender. These two appointed positions aid Attorney Richard McNeely, Twin City (Continued on page 29)



## 2021...Twin City...

(From page 28)

Municipal Court Judge, in making decisions in court.

Chief Whiter to the Community...

Many of the residents and individuals that travel through our small are very courteous people when dealing with them. Most of them understand the law and understand our duty to uphold the law and they don't mind complying. That makes a world of a difference with a police officer. As we uphold the law, we ask that the public upholds compliance and understanding with the fol-

lowing:

1. Help regulate compliance with city charter codes, especially with dogs roaming freely around our beautiful city.

2. Observe school zones and officers directing traffic.

3. Don't forget to buckle up. Seat belt saves lives and prevent the issuance of citation(s). Car seats are also a lawful requirement for all youth that meet certain age/weight limits. Be sure any juvenile passengers use safety straps in accordance with regulations set by law.

4. No speeding - especially in school zones.

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# 120 years of community banking

by QUEENSBOROUGH NATIONAL BANK & TRUST

As we celebrate our 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, we're taking an opportunity to look back at some milestones we hit along the way.

**1902** – Under the name “First National Bank of Louisville”, our bank was founded in downtown Louisville, Georgia, a rural town located about an hour southwest of Augusta. Banking hours were from 10:00am to 4:00pm and our loan portfolio consisted largely of agricultural notes with security noted in the bank minutes as “six chickens” or “two cows”.

**1954** – By the mid-50's, the bank's deposits had grown to \$2.5 million, which meant we were able to meet community financing needs as well as new industries like Louisville Fertilizer & Gin Company, Jefferson Shirt Company, J.P. Stevens, ThermoKing Corporation, Van Tran Electric Corporation and Delila Manufacturing Company.

**1986** – The bank grew outside of its hometown with the acquisition of the Bank of Midville and Bank of Wadley. Both rural communities not far from Louisville,

this milestone began the intentional expansion of the bank's footprint. In the following 10 years, branches would open in Waynesboro, Wrens, Millen, Sandersville, Tennille, Statesboro, and Sylvania.

**1997** – With Y2K approaching, the bank had a big year in tech advances, launching online banking, debit cards and telephone banking.

**2006** – In an effort to distinguish the bank, it changed its name to “Queensborough National Bank & Trust”, a nod to the area's history. The Queensborough Township was one of Georgia's earliest settlements and today represents parts of both Jefferson and Burke counties.

**2014** – IQ University Financial Literacy Platform launched this year. This program fulfills the bank's mission to help educate our communities about financial well-being. This continues to be a large part of our outreach.

**2020** – During the COVID-19 pandemic, our team adjusted to the “new norm” and focused on how we could help our customers. That help came in the form of the Paycheck



## QUEENSBOROUGH - SWAINSBORO

Protection Program. In 2020 and 2021, our team successfully processed 2,727 loans and were able to get \$199 million into the hands of small business owners who needed it. From restaurants and retail to veterinary clinics and construction companies, our team worked early mornings and late into the evenings all while working through the effects of a worldwide pandemic.

**2021** – We were proud to be named Best Small Bank in Georgia by Newsweek, a ranking of the financial institutions that work to meet the needs of customers during unprecedented times.

**2021** – QNBTONOW Interactive Teller Machines (ITMs) rolled out across the footprint during this year. ITM customers interact with Queensborough tellers

via live video streaming to make deposits of cash or checks, cash checks, make loan and credit card payments, withdraw funds and transfer funds, all from the comfort of their car.

A lot has changed over the last 120 years, but one thing that remains true is our focus on being here when you need us. We've been your community bank since 1902 and we're looking forward to serving you for years to come.

If you have any questions or if you need any-

thing, [contact us](#) today.

Founded in 1902, Queensborough National Bank & Trust Co. is Georgia's community bank with more than 27 locations throughout Georgia. Queensborough was named Best Small Bank in Georgia for 2021 by Newsweek and is currently celebrating 120 years of community banking. For more information, visit [www.QNBTrust.com](http://www.QNBTrust.com), bank and find Queensborough on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram.



QUEENSBOROUGH LOGO



## Emanuel Arts Council christens new location with ribbon cutting, open house reception

A highly anticipated event took place on Tuesday, December 14, as locals gathered at 109 North Green Street to attend the open house reception and red ribbon cutting event for Emanuel Arts Council's Karrh Center. The event that lasted from 4:30 until 7 p.m. was catered by The Cakery on the Square and hosted special guest and featured artist, Neil Kalmanson, professor of art and a founding faculty member of East Georgia State College from 1973 – 2003 and director of Kalmanson Art Gallery of Emanuel Arts Council since 1979.



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# America Knit leads in reshoring of U.S. textile industries

After the need for U.S. cut-and-sew jobs rapidly declined more than 20 years ago, the textile industry, to many, was considered a thing in the past after numerous U.S. jobs were lost to globalization due to manufacturing output ceding to China and other countries. Proving the concept that reshoring apparel production right here in the rural South is possible, the company had already gained the business of three large customers during the launching of the firm. Throughout the years of its establishment, America Knits has continued producing premium knit products using 100 percent U.S. ring-spun cotton that has had corporate giants intrigued and envious.

The U.S. textile industry encountered a high demand need in 2020 as U.S. sewing operations were summoned to stitch fabric that saved lives following the COVID-19 pandemic. As more COVID-19 patients flooded hospitals, personal protection equipment was in short supply and America Knits was one of four companies tasked to fill important orders. The Emanuel County company responded to the call by making masks and gowns for medical professionals across the country. The smalltown company

also kept the best interest of its locals in mind during the midst of the pandemic and partnered with local businesses to provide masks to individuals throughout the county. The ramped-up production called for more workers and longer hours. The workers of America Knits and its owners became American heroes as they operated the plant 20 hours per day to answer America's call. The following year, 2021, America Knits joined an initiative with Field to Closet to further validate the concept that illustrates just how much American textile industries and their associated benefits are needed by the American people. Through innovative, collaborative partnerships, the project utilized Georgia-grown Deltapine® seen cotton to reshore an American manufacturer by revitalizing an end-to-end U.S. supply chain. The initiative's foundation is rooted in agriculture and established a Farmer GiveBack program to address fundamental issues in the garment industry and recognize the rebirth of a robust cotton garment industry. The equation works because it includes the grower in the financial finish line of shared profits of goods sold.

To support Georgia and all U.S. cotton farmers,

Field to Closet, America Knits, Deltapine® seed, Helena® Agri-Enterprises, LLC, Nutrien AgSolutions®, Georgia's Rural Center and HomeTown Health partnered to bring to life to an end-to-end U.S. supply chain using cotton and supporting frontline healthcare workers by providing medical scrubs treated with PROTX2® AV antimicrobial technology that inhibits bacteria growth and destroy viruses.

To highlight the initiative, a kick-off event was held April 9, 2021 at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture in Tifton and culminated with donating medical scrubs to 15 rural Georgia hospitals: Emanuel Medical Center, Brooks County Hospital, Burke Medical Center, Crisp Regional Medical Center, Colquitt Regional Medical Center, East Georgia Regional Medical Center, Irwin County Hospital, Jeff Davis Hospital, Jenkins County Medical, LifeBrite Community Hospital of Early, Memorial Hospital and Manor, Mitchell County Hospital, SGMC Berrien Campus, Southwell Medical and Taylor Regional Hospital.

The company's vision to produce the finest quality, authentic made-in-America apparel while developing and using the most sustainable production practices



TALTON AND HAWKINS

available have more than restored hope for American textile and U.S. industry.

Since launching in 2019, the vision of America Knits has been fully supported by many locals and has since spread over the United States.

In a 2019 press release by Devin Steele, former Swainsboro Mayor Charles Schwabe stated,

"First of all, it shows that we can reclaim jobs that wandered offshore. Secondly, it shows that we have a solid labor pool, a legacy labor pool for the right industry. And I want to give credit to you guys because you all looked hard and you did it right, and you finally found the match. I know it's the right match and we're so glad, so proud and so appreciative of the effort you put into this."

By continually demonstrating these same efforts throughout its years in operation, America Knits and its success in

reshoring the American textile industry has been captured in media across the state of Georgia and has even received incredible support from Governor Brian Kemp, who highlighted America Knits in his 2021 State of the State speech. The Swainsboro business has since received national recognition and was included in featured news content for the New York Times in January 2022.

America Knits is located at 772 Empire Expressway in Swainsboro. America Knits is a Georgia based manufacturing company dedicated to producing the finest quality authentic Made in America apparel available. The business opened for operation in 2019 and is co-founded by two life-long friends from New Bern North Carolina, Dr. David Talton, cardiothoracic surgeon, and Steve Hawkins, apparel industry veteran and company president.



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## 2021 Emanuel County Humane Society Progress

by BARB MOORE

The Emanuel County Humane Society continues to assist the Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter in providing care, treatments, free adoptions and finding homes for local dogs in Emanuel County.

We continue to be stifled somewhat with the ongoing Covid-19 variants, but we do have good news for our county's dogs!

As of January 2022, the annual shelter report states that a total of 296 dogs were taken in from the city of Swainsboro and 530 dogs were taken in from the county, for a total of 826 dogs. These Emanuel County intakes include dogs taken from the municipalities of Twin City, Garfield, Oak Park, Adrian, Canoochee, Nunez, Stillmore, Kemp, Summertown, Modoc, Norristown, Dellwood, and South Midville, as well as 171 dogs received from right outside the city limits of Swainsboro.

It was also reported that 73 dogs were adopted from the shelter, 67 dogs were returned to their owners, 7 dogs were necessarily euthanized due to health conditions, 10 dogs died at the shelter of natural or accidental death, (mostly newborn puppies) and thanks to the diligent hard work of the shelter staff and one volunteer transport coordinator, 662 dogs

were transferred to rescue agencies. These 662 dogs all had a forever or foster home waiting for them before they left our shelter. These rescue organizations frequently provide spay/neutering, heartworm treatments and other necessary medical treatments before they go to their new homes, all at no cost to the shelter.

In February 2021, a Zoom meeting was called and basic needs that we provide to the shelter was animatedly discussed by those present. We also discussed the upcoming new sheltering over the benches at the Bark in the Boro Dog Park, which should be in place by Spring. We will develop signage for the dog park as well. Free neuter and spay applications, sponsored by the Georgia Dept. of Agriculture, are available at 5 locations around town. The Mill Creek Grant was approved and will be forthcoming. Participation in the Pine Tree Festival was discussed as well as the Summer Reading Program at the library which can incorporate a virtual program about caring for your pets.

In March, 18 applications for free neutering and spaying have been submitted so far. More advertising will be done. We will begin watering and fertilizing the trees at the dog park. Flooding at

the shelter is a huge issue, with 37 pens currently under water with all the rain we've been having. The office was almost flooded. Seth Brewer has looked at the problem and leveled and graded some dirt at the back of the shelter property to stem the runoff. Much more work is needed to correct the drainage and sewage issue.

In April 2021 the spay and neuter applications count rose to 28, with 7 spots left for this free service. The shelter at the dog park is in place and looks great! Thanks to Tony Mangiere and Handi-House! The Shelter received a new aluminum dog box for their truck to accommodate dogs. Richard Claxton fertilized and staked the trees at the dog park, and Shari Watt is watering them weekly.

May 2021 saw the hanging of the new ECHS signs at the dog park. Barb is preparing yearly membership letters to go out. Tractor Supply Company has not yet set a date for the annual adoption event at their store. Shari is planning a couple of events over the summer to coincide with the library's Summer Reading Program.

In June, inventory was done at our Handi-House, and it will be moved within the next few months. Nom-

inations for new Board members were accepted. The Shelter Reopening Event was held and deemed a great success! The state agricultural inspector, Beth Miller, was in attendance. He spoke with Mayor Schwabe and was impressed with the community turnout.

In August, candidates Claxton, Hancock, J. Meadows, Moore, and Williams were elected to serve the next three years on our Board of Directors, with Moore to continue serving as president. Discussion was held concerning an October BarkFest at the dog park. More decals were ordered for incoming members. Foster parents for dogs in need was discussed. We announced our "Dog Days of August" free adoption event from August 15 through August 31. This event includes a rabies shot, spay or neutering, and adoption fees.

In our September meeting it was announced the 6 dogs were adopted during our free adoption event. We also discussed the "Paws with Claus" event. It was decided that this event would be free to the public and held on the square the weekend before Thanksgiving. We also discovered that foster parenting was not feasible due to liability issues.

In October we tentatively scheduled BarkFest

for October, depending on Covid. The adoption event at Tractor Supply Company has been suspended due to Covid. We finalized plans for "Paws with Claus" to be held downtown this year and have a free event.

In November we planned a "Home for the Pawlidays" free adoption event to empty the Shelter for Christmas. A gracious volunteer designed, and the Shelter staff provided photos for full-page color ads to picture shelter dogs each week during December.

In December, the BOD developed ten questions for discussion with City and County officials. A future meeting will be scheduled for this discussion. Also, a Civil Engineer was contacted to look at the drainage and sewer issues at the shelter and a report will be forthcoming.

Members of the Emanuel County Humane Society Board of Directors are Barb Moore, president; Stephanie Flanders, vice-President; Carla Daughtry, secretary; Connie Terwilliger, treasurer; Annie Barua; Richard Claxton; Patricia Hancock; Mary Kalmanson; Carter Meadows; Jessie Meadows; Andy Moore; Kaye Stephens; Henry Terwilliger; Shari Watt; and Lea Ann Williams.



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## Vyve Broadband cuts High-Speed Internet ribbon with Swainsboro-Emanuel Chamber of Commerce

Vyve is committed to the Swainsboro Community and bringing High-speed Internet and a customer appreciation brunch

Vyve Broadband celebrated their newly re-branded local office with the Swainsboro-Emanuel Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, April 21. Vyve Broadband is located at 123 Roger Shaw Street

and members of the community were welcomed with a ribbon cutting ceremony and special treats from Happy's. Ken Warnock, CEO of the Swainsboro-Emanuel Chamber of Commerce, spoke about the momentous occasion and welcomed Vyve to Swainsboro. Mayor Schwabe was also present to celebrate Vyve bringing Gig speeds

to Swainsboro and spoke about the positive impact this will have on the community. Mark Hood, Regional Vice President, Vyve Broadband, cut the Vyve Gig ribbon to mark the occasion.

Vyve Broadband has been working non-stop upgrading our fiber-rich network to deliver to Vidalia the fastest broadband speeds.

"This upgrade is part of our multi-million-dollar upgrade project and is focused on expanding the network and delivering Vyve Gig to Swainsboro. The best Gig in town," said Hood.

Vyve is committed to bringing High-Speed Internet to rural communities. Vyve lives and works where we invest and whether it means launching Vyve Gig

Internet or partnering with local schools and organizations like the Swainsboro-Emanuel Chamber of Commerce, our core values is always centered around the communities where we serve. We are more than just a service provider we are a critical thread of our communities," said Diane Quennoz, SVP of Marketing, who was also in attendance.

About Vyve Broadband LLC Vyve Broadband is an innovative company, founded in 2012 serving largely non-urban communities in sixteen states, including Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. A technology leader in the cable and broadband sectors, Vyve Broadband offers an extensive range of broadband, fiber connectivity, cable television and voice services for commercial and residential customers. Vyve was formed as a platform to provide the very best next-generation services and features available, combined with a sector-leading customer experience. Residential services include high-speed Internet with speeds up to Vyve Gig, all-digital, high-definition video and fully featured digital voice. Vyve Business Services provides optical Ethernet, PRI, and hosted voice services to the business community.

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# All the Fixin's... The best year yet!

by BRITTANY HALL-  
When Georgia gives you pecans, make something sweet. That's not quite the saying, but for Janna and Brett Tucker of All the Fixin's, it absolutely should be! The couple owns a small pecan orchard and a Twin City business located in old downtown Summit, where they have an assortment of goods, and their main crop is king. In last year's progress interview, the Tuckers talked about how the harvest from the farm fluctuated in the past at times but then saw a significant increase in the number of pounds of pecans throughout the year of 2020. "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 their 2020 interview. We reached out to them, for the 2021 progress edition, to see if the numbers have progressed since we last talked. "2021 was our best year yet! We more than doubled our business compared to 2020 and we are so thankful for the community's support." They've also added to their team, making their business stronger and tighter knit, than years prior. "We hired several part time employees in 2021 and certainly consider that

a strength. They each bring ideas, hard work and heart to what we are trying to accomplish." Along with their new and devoted staff. The quality of their product adds strength to their business all on its own. Living up to its standards and giving them the potential to raise their own future expectations. "Our product is tasty, has a long shelf life and ships well! This allows us to sell our products online and to other retailers, so the opportunity for continued growth is very promising." The proof is in the pudding, or in the Tucker's case, the proof is in the pecans. As the community and many other supporters have showered this down-home family business with raving reviews. Some of their favorites being:

"I love All the Things at All the Fixin's!" ---

"The online delivery is great, but to truly understand how awesome this company is, you NEED to come to Twin City and meet them!" ---

"They're awesome!" ---

"This pecan butter us amazing. I never want to be out of it! Absolutely delicious!" ---

"Absolutely love the riled-up chocolate pecans. Bought some when we were at the store but didn't open then until we left town. Loved them so much I had to order some to be shipped home for the holidays. I may (or not) share them with the family. Can't wait to visit again to



THE TUCKERS IN FRONT OF ALL THE FIXENS

see what other treasures we will find. ---

"The pecans look as delicious as I remember. I'm sharing my most recent order with friends in Minnesota. Quite a special treat! I'm sure they will love them as much as I do." ---

"My absolute favorite! These are the best turtles I've ever tasted. They're fresh, and just the right level of gooey. The roasted pecans are perfection beneath the creamy chocolate and caramel. Great stocking stuffers, or nice to have as a quick sweet treat when hosting family during the holidays. I'll be ordering more soon!"

When The Tuckers first opened their business, they did it with pecans in mind but the hope to broaden their variety of goods. An aspiration that has been achieved and brought to life. Giving All the Fixin's the ability to stay true to its name. "When we named the business "All the Fixin's", we did that on purpose.

We of course specialize in pecans and pecan candies and now pecan butter, but we had always thought we would expand our business into other types of food. We have done that in 2021 by adding our Kitchen Fixin's product line. We serve Grab-n-Go lunch and desserts, and we also offer frozen casseroles, muffins, and cinnamon rolls. Families and friends fellowship over food and families are also busy, so we hope that our food options save a little time in the kitchen, meet a basic need - we all gotta eat! - and bring joy to those enjoying them while gathering with their family or friends." The couple has expanded their small business horizons and hopes to continue to do more this year! "In 2022, we are looking at expanding our manufacturing operations and improving our ability to produce our products at a faster pace to meet the demand. We are improv-

ing our commercial kitchen space and plan to make our retail space larger so customers will have more room to shop around and make their selections." While they are dedicated to all things homemade, the Tuckers have also implemented some technical improvements within shop that they've excitedly utilized to help their business grow and to make things a tad easier and more personal. "We do so many things by hand, which we pride ourselves on, however there are ways we can automate certain tasks. We have worked with companies to help with printing some of our packaging and we are continuing to look at ways to make our processes more efficient so we can spend more time with our customers and in the kitchen! "As far as community, All the Fixin's prides itself on sharing a part of home with the rest (Continued on page 38)



## All the Fixin's...

(From page 37)

of the world, and making it known that without the love and support from Emanuel County, none of it would have been possible. "Thank you for stopping by our store, liking our posts on social media, and spreading the word with your friends. We

love how you guys are proud of our product and want to share it with others and would not have been able to grow in 2021 without you. Our goal is to "share love through pecans" and that happens when folks meet and have coffee and a warm pecan cinnamon roll at

one of our markets. It happens when you send a casserole to a friend going through a challenging time. It happens when you ship a gift box to a family member or friend to show you care. It happens when you grab a bag of pecans and pour them in a bowl at home

to snack on during a family gathering. It happens when we can donate food items to *Weekend Blessings* with each pecan product purchase. It also happens when our business grows and we can hire additional employees for our team, so they can support their families financially.

Thank you for helping us share *love through pecans* and we look forward to continuing to do that year after year." If you're feeling the need to treat your sweet tooth, go visit Janna and Brett. Give them your support and share a little love through pecans.

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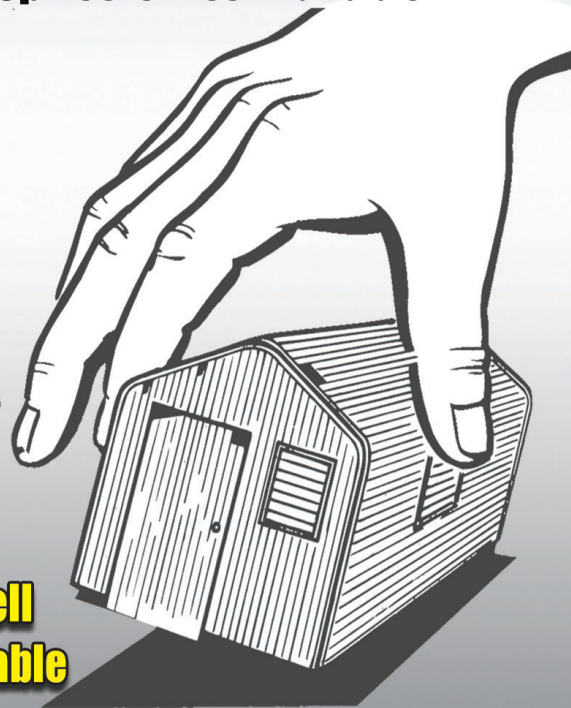
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# Interfor: *Values from the core lead to success*

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. We strive for excellence in everything we do every day throughout our process. "We provide excellent career opportunities for the community and surrounding counties," said Tracy Youmans, mill manager 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. 2020/20221 was extremely challenging with the Covid-19 pandemic. We at Interfor have a lot to be grateful for given what we have been through the past couple of years. Our commitment to safety never wavered. We took many precautions and followed the suggestions provided by the CDC in order to keep our 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 Fillinger, 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 2021.



## INTERFOR SWAINSBORO

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. Our common vision is to be the most profitable, valuable and respected lumber company in the world.

## Proud to be a part of Emanuel County!

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# The Sunshine House Regional Children's Advocacy Center

COVID! COVID! COVID! The progress at The Sunshine House Regional Children's Advocacy Center has been impacted greatly by COVID during the past 2 years. Clients were not able to make appointments, so children were not able to be seen. Some clients came in but would have to be sent home because they failed the screening and were usually sick or needed to be quarantined. When possible, clients were seen virtually. Soon, staff members were in similar situations. For a time, this year a skeleton staff

conducted forensic interviews, forensic medical exams and advocacy efforts. Counseling clients came on irregular schedules due to illness. No child was turned away.

During this time a financial audit and a programmatic audit was conducted. Staff succeeded with great teamwork, and we were pleased with the results of both. Our Board of Directors has been busy reviewing policy, demographic data and financials. Those Emanuel County members include Wilder Smith, Jr., Board President, Jean



## SUNSHINE HOUSE

Schwabe, Vice-President, G. W. Johnson, Treasurer and Carole Yeomans, Secretary. Also, serving are Mary Elam, Sharon Wilson, Rusty Lane, and Kenny Griffin. In addition, from other counties within the Middle Judicial Circuit, we have Julie T. Hall and Kathleen Tootle, from Candler County, Lee Evans from Toombs County, and Emily Sheppard from Washington County. Currently, a prospective board member from Jefferson County is being interviewed.


A major focus of the Board is to ensure funding support. With reductions in federal funding for this and the coming year this is a major concern. The legislature is concerned with mental health needs and the

Governor is actively trying to assist in meeting those needs. Currently, beginning October 2022, we have been told by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council who administers federal grants in the State, to expect a 35% to 15% reduction in funding. Our goal and theirs is to maintain salaries for licensed mental health counselors, and psychologists who are on our payroll and serving tirelessly to provide services to children in need.


These are concerns for the Board and Staff who promote the Give-A-Thon now an annual fundraising event. The event is critical to our ability to keep the doors open. The individuals, civic clubs, churches and businesses are important to the very ex-

istence of this children's advocacy center. We also depend on our partners in Law Enforcement, Department of Family and Children's Services, Juvenile Justice and the Courts to refer children and work to keep them safe. We are grateful for a close relationship with the Office of the District Attorney Tripp Fitzer and staff as together we seek justice for abused children.

We have the privilege of seeing children heal from devastating abuse. We see families restored. We see a stronger community as individuals and families are strengthened and children are safe. As long children are abused and neglected, we will continue to serve and seek progress.



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# Our Historic Society

by MISSY ELDER

The Emanuel County Historic Preservation Society was established in 1976 in honor of the nation's Bicentennial. 2022 is its 46<sup>th</sup> year! The Society is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Membership dues, fundraisers, tax deductible, charitable contributions support programs and projects of the society.

The Historic Society's motto is "Celebrating our Heritage, Preserving Memories." The Society's third heritage book, *Pine Log Echoes, Vol.3*, is available at Swainsboro's Main Street Market along with *Pine Log Echoes Vol. 1*, available only on a CD or Scan Disk as the hardback copies are no longer available. *Pine Log Echoes Vol. 2*, *Tram Lines to Longleaf Pines* (Emanuel's railroads) and *Smithton-Blundale* are also available at the Market, as are *Images of America, Emanuel County*, and the Georgia Historical dinner and salad plates, in blue and pink. Several copies of James Dorsey's *Footprints along the 'Hoopee, Vol. 2* have been given to the society by the family and are available at The Market. Ed Schwabe's Sherman's March maps are available at the museum. The museum sits within the footprint of an 1890s recreated farm named Longview Farm, in honor of the original community near the museum. A spring open house is being

planned with the date to be announced later. *Fall Harvest Open House* is the theme for the annual open house, which will be held at a date to be announced in October, with ghost stories being told at twilight in the old buildings. We will continue our October Spaghetti lunch and dinner fund-raiser on October 27th. Businesses within the Swainsboro area can order delivery with an order of 5 or more plates. We continue to be open for tours, family reunions or picnic opportunities for clubs. The Society continues to add and improve. People who have Emanuel County roots continue to donate family items for display. Come see the

"Veterans Wall", dedicated to local World War II veterans; a naval stores display containing more than 50 artifacts used for gum dipping from the early 1900s; the "Old Hardware Store" named in honor of Bonnie Ogburn, and the high school photo wall and trophy collection. Class photos from 1937 to 1982 are on display there. The commissary, Steven's Crossing Post Office and grist mill are now open. Don't forget the ladies' 5-holer outhouse from Sardis Church. Visit Emanuel County Historic Preservation's website at [myemmanuelcounty.com](http://myemmanuelcounty.com) and check out our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/myemmanuelcounty](https://www.facebook.com/myemmanuelcounty).

uelcounty. The Society strives to keep these social media platforms updat-

ed with meeting notices and events. Our email is [echps1@pineland.net](mailto:echps1@pineland.net).



PHOTOS OF OLD WASHING AND IRONING 1800'S



## 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*

by DANA NASWORTHY

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



FARM BUREAU OFFICE

issues that affect the farmer and rural Georgia and encourages members to stay in contact with government 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. Ag related books are given to the 4 local schools each month for their library.

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, the Right to Farm 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 AirMedCare 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](http://www.gfb.org). Membership is open to anyone who supports agriculture.

Although the last couple of years have been challenging, the one constant has been Georgia farmers and ranchers doing their job of growing and raising our food.

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.



# Emanuel County Family Connection, Inc.

Georgia Family Connection Partnership directs counties to address issues 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 Care Partners of Georgia. Emanuel County Family Connection is a non-profit organization that seeks funds from grant sources at the state, federal, and local levels.

Mill Creek Foundation has been especially supportive to Family Connection work and funded many programs in 2021. Family Connection has a strong focus on improving childhood literacy and seeks to supply programs and resources to teachers and families. We were able to partner with the school system to find ways to give students access to books during pandemic challenges. We supplied 300 insulated lunch bags with books and activity items that were distrib-

uted with summer meals provided by the school nutrition department. Holiday and spring book projects at TCE and SES gave books to over 20 classroom libraries for easy access during COVID-19 restrictions. Family Reading Nights at Swainsboro Primary were done virtually, and Family Connection supplied family fun activity baskets as incentives for participation. More than 600 students at Swainsboro Elementary received a new book and snacks for the October PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports) reward day. Book distribution projects at Early Head Start encouraged family reading with those children birth to 3 years old. Virtual book reading time at Early Head Start was provided by Family Connection at holidays. Family Connection assists in enrolling and promotes community funding for the First Readers program in the county. Currently 85 children under age 5 receive a book a month in their home along with a parent newsletter.

Childhood nutrition is another focus area of work for Family Connection. Through classes offered using The Charlie Cart Project, SES students were able to learn cooking skills and nutrition education while also applying science, math, and social studies from this life skills curriculum. In 2021, Family Connection partnered

with SES in receiving the Georgia SHAPE grant. Those funds supplied raised bed gardens, more than 500 taste tests for the STEAM classes and \$2,500 worth of new PE equipment for the school. This grant also provided a staff wellness component. Sixty-two staff members at SES participated in a 10-week walking challenge of 10,000 steps per day.

Emanuel County Family Connection is part of a cohort receiving the WIC Matters Grant. The funds are used to offer nutrition education and programs to qualified families. Finding ways to promote participation and voucher use specifically for fruits and vegetables is their main focus. Farmers Markets were offered to 40 families at the Early Learning Center. Fresh produce was given to families along with WIC education and recipes to encourage families to eat fruits and vegetables. "We're Into Cooking" classes had previously been offered in person had to be recorded and offered through social media.

We are proud to be able to offer a scholarship to each of the high schools in the county. We have also assisted students at East Georgia State College through the Bobcat Bridge program, donating personal care supplies, healthy food items, and a Farmers Market. Georgia Southern University partners with Family Connection

in their Dietetic Intern program by sending students to carry out their Community Nutrition rotation. As Family Connection continues to serve children and families of Emanuel County, we wel-

come new collaborative partners. Family Connection holds collaborative meetings at the Sudie Fulford Center at 12:00 pm on the third Thursday of every month and everyone is invited to join.



**FAMILY CONNECTION IN ACTION**



# Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter – *A haven for dogs*

by WHITLEY CLIFTON

Since its establishment in the mid-1970s, The Betty Gambrell Animal Shelter has remained a community staple, serving as a safe haven for local stray and abandoned canines within 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 moved forward, the need for a larger location to house the growing number of shelter intakes became evident, which prompted the shelter to relocate to its current Market Street setting in Swainsboro. The new location served its purpose throughout the years, leading to the need of renovation work that was eventually completed in November of 2020. With the combined efforts of the City of Swainsboro, Emanuel County Commissioners, Emanuel County Humane Society, a host of individual animal lovers, area veterinarians and the State of Georgia Department of Agriculture, this renovation took the shelter into a new era. But special recognition should always begin with Mrs. Betty Gambrell, her daughter Shari Watt and a small staff whose dogged devotion (no pun intended) cared for this facility and all the animals it served for decades. With Shelter

Director Leta Fuentes at the helm now, an updated shelter is available that highlights improvements such as 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 performing the duty, as well as new bathroom fixtures, and the installment of new concrete slabs, fencing, and roofing areas outside of the shelter. Additional renovation work included the rewiring of the entire facility and replacement of worn wood molding and framing with new metal roofing installed on the outside and inside ceiling of the shelter. New facial metal was also installed on the entire building. This renovation progress was made possible by Triple H Construction, Sunbelt Air Inc. and dedicated SPLOST funding received by Emanuel County Commissioners and additional funds from the City of Swainsboro. Two years later, the shelter is still operating wonderfully and continues its efforts in rendering love, care and aid to all intakes and surrenders received throughout the county. When comparing the annual shelter reports for years 2020 and 2021, the reported numbers indicate a rise in all areas except for two, those be-



## RESCUE DOG LUCKY WITH FOSTER PARENTS

ing the number of shelter deaths and escapes.

*As indicated in the 2020 annual report...*

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

Total euthanized: 13

Deaths: 7

Agency transfers: 485

Escaped: 3

*In the 2021 annual report...*

Intakes from city of Swainsboro: 296

Intakes from county: 530

Total intakes: 826

Number of intakes adopted: 73

Number of intakes returned to owner: 63

Total euthanized: 7

Deaths: 10

Agency transfers: 662

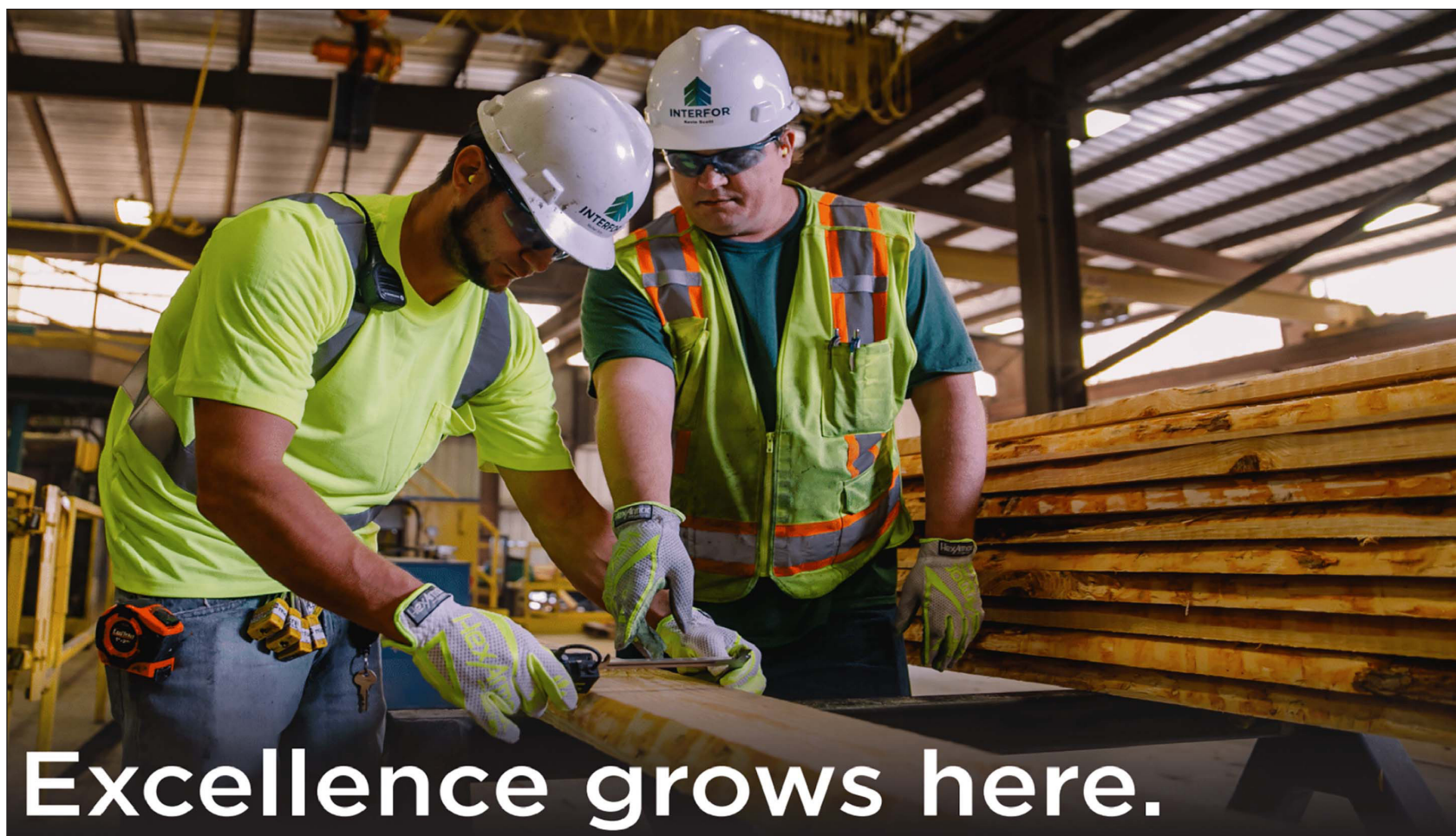
Escaped: 0

*Do the math...*

Swainsboro intakes increased by 105 canines and county intakes seen an increase of 118, totaling to an overall increase of 233 intakes combined. The number of adopted intakes increased by 24 and an increase of canines returned to owner increased by 14. Although the number of unexpected deaths has seen a slight increase of 3, the total number of euthanized intakes dropped by 6 and there were no escapes. Clearly, with such increases seen in just one year, the shelter has been bombarded with unwanted or abandoned canines but has continued to stand by the overall objective of being a no-kill animal shel-

ter that serves as a place of rescue and safety for man's best friend. To ensure this, the animal shelter has been fortunate to work with numerous rescue groups from throughout the United States who help find placements for local shelter pups. Most of these groups also aid in item donations, transportation and other shelter needs to ensure the best of the best for each shelter pet during their transitions from being an unwanted pup, to an adopted pup to loving homes. The Swainsboro/Emanuel County Animal Shelter is a glowing example of progress in our community. Whether it's man or beast, every creature needs care and shelter, and this shelter is doing its part.





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# Yeomans & Associates: From humble beginnings to local hometown insurance agency

by LISA BERTOCH,  
VICE PRESIDENT /  
AGENT

In 1989 Walt Yeomans returned to his hometown of Swainsboro to be closer to his parents. He had been on the corporate side of insurance as a training director & marketing manager, and started Southern Heritage Group, Ltd. A firm that provided employee benefit group plans to businesses around the state and in our local community. At that same time, he opened a separate company, Southern Property & Business. A small property & casualty insurance agency. The two companies were established with very humble beginnings, in a small downtown office that the voter registration center currently occupies. Our P&C block of business was quite literally in two large filing cabinets but eventually, the county took over our portion of the building and we were given the opportunity to move to a larger location. So, in 1993 we made the move to 109 South Circle Drive. Where, believe it or not, a putt-putt golf and family fun center resided at that time.

Now, 28 years later, our office still sits in that same location. Serving our community to the best of our abilities! Over the years we have grown through two agency acquisitions:

In 1994 we purchased the Swainsboro branch of Zorn & Son Insurance and

changed our name to Yeomans & Associates Agency, Inc. In 2003 we purchased the Swainsboro & Louisville offices of Queensborough Insurance Agency. In 2021 we became a member of **GAIN** (*Georgia Agents Insurance Network*)/SIAA giving our agency access to additional carriers for our clients. Through those agency acquisitions and being an independent insurance agent, we have relationships and access to numerous top rated national carriers to offer quality insurance, competitive pricing, and the right fit for our clients. Our agency now has 4 producing agents and 1 sub-agent. Teresa Dixon who was hired in 2003, after an agency acquisition, and currently manages our Louisville branch. Mary Mitchell who was hired in 2004, Deidra Lamb who was hired in 2005, and our most recent employee, Marie Brown who was hired in 2021. This is my 31<sup>st</sup> year working as an agent after joining the Yeomans and Associates team in 1991. Most of our staff are absolutely dedicated to serving our communities and have been with our agency over 18 years. We have a wonderful team that works diligently every day to take care of our clients. Along with our dedicated staff, we have hired part-time help over the years through our school systems *work based learning*



## THE AGENTS AND ASSOCIATES OF YEOMANS

*program* to help provide an opportunity for high-school students to gain real life work experience as they transition into college and/or the work force. We provide a broad range of insurance products:

Personal: (auto, home, mobile home, renters, personal article floater, flood, umbrella, watercraft, RV/Travel Trailer, recreational vehicle, motorcycle, even pet insurance).

Business: (commercial auto, liability, property, trucking, equipment, bonds, umbrella, farm & ranch, workers compensation)

We also write life, cancer, critical care, disability insurance and annuities. When COVID hit, we were challenged to readjust and re-evaluate how we handle business. A few times during the pandemic we were forced to close our office doors to the public for the safety of not only our employees but for our customers and to meet state protocols. We also had to figure out how to function being short staffed when employees

had to be at home.

The PPP program allowed us to take care of our employees and invest in making many adjustments to our business. We knocked out a window and put in a payment/service walk up window. This was one of our best investments as we still have clients that would prefer to just walk up to make a payment without coming inside. We put in a secured payment drop box outside. Purchased a ton of cleaning supplies and sanitizing stations. We became more conscious of keeping our workspace clean and sanitized. We also installed an intercom/video system outside so that when we were forced to be closed, we could still speak to our clients outside of our office. Either through the intercom or walk-up window. It was certainly a different way of handling business, but we wanted to be as accessible as possible. It was a teachable moment that you must keep up with ever changing technology and adapt to the many changes in the world

to stay afloat. COVID also changed the way clients wanted to handle business. Where they were used to coming into our office they started reaching out via phone, email, text, Facebook, online vs in person for payments, policy changes and new business. Many of our carriers now offer electronic signatures so that has been a big help when a client cannot make it into our office. They are also providing incentives to get better pricing by packaging your auto/home or renters' insurance, going paperless, using EFT/credit card for payments, using phone apps to track driving habits.

We love being a local hometown insurance agency where we have a personal relationship with our clients. Whether you are looking to protect your auto, home, business, life, or health insurance we are here to serve! We are blessed to live in a community that has supported our business over the years and pray that we can continue serving our area for many years to come.



# Wincore – An Employer of Choice

The year 2021 was a challenging, yet rewarding, year for Wincore of Swainsboro. After a successful year of tremendous growth in 2020, the company entered 2021 with full intentions of setting the bar even a little bit higher. In 2020, Wincore received recognition as the fourth largest employer in Emanuel County. By December 2020, the company had exceeded production levels of 700 windows per day and was planning for further growth during 2021 and beyond, with increased production capacity and a plan to increase production levels to more than 1,000 windows per day.

By late spring 2021, Wincore reached its first growth milestone by completing a 100,000 sq. ft. expansion to its Swainsboro production facility that included two additional vinyl production lines and a second glass line to meet expected demand. With this, Wincore added 75-100 additional production workers. "We expanded into an additional 100,000 square feet on top of the 75,000 square feet that we already occupied, and we hired 75-100

additional employees to support that expansion. The company has seen tremendous growth and demand for our products over the past few years, and we expect that to continue in the future," Brian Standley, Wincore Chief Operating Officer, stated.

Like many companies nationwide, Wincore experienced challenges during 2021 with attendance and with finding enough qualified individuals who wanted to work. This was made more difficult by stimulus money and added unemployment benefits being paid by the government. To effectively compete for production workers and continue to grow, Wincore knew that it needed to make some changes. In late summer 2021, the company re-evaluated its pay structure for production workers and modified its attendance policy. To better compete for career-minded employees, substantial changes were made including an increase to its starting production wage from \$10.25 to \$16 per hour. In addition, the attendance policy was modified, and management met with all employees to com-



WINCORE LOGO

municate the changes and re-emphasize its expectations. Standley says that the changes were very well received, not only by the existing workforce, but also in the marketplace by potential employees submitting applications for work. "It has been very positive for us. Our staffing levels have increased, and we continue to receive applications, even from outside the area, from career minded individuals who want to be here at work every day and be part of something special. Our absenteeism issues have virtually disappeared. And as a result, our daily production levels have increased and are more sustainable." Standley says he is very happy with where Wincore is currently at and is especially happy with the company's expansion. "The expansion went as well as we could have expected. We are really happy with the direction that we are headed,

and we believe the sky is the limit," he further commented. Wincore expects another year of strong growth. "We recognize that Georgia is growing and has the capacity for continued growth. While we still face significant challenges, as many do, particularly with our supply chain, we will meet those challenges head on and will continue to grow our Swainsboro facility." With its staffing issues behind it, Wincore is now at its 2021 goal of producing 1,000 windows per day and expects to surpass this in 2022. "We've got great people that work hard every day, and this is what allows us to do what we do. We want to be the employer of choice in Swainsboro," Standley stated. "We made our first window three years ago in May, which is hard to believe, and we were there a year before that preparing. So, really, over the last four years, we have been working with Jack

Bareford, Ken Warnock, The City of Swainsboro, Emanuel County and the State of Georgia and so many others who helped us get to where we are along the way. Through it all, there are not enough good things that I could say about all those people that have helped us get to where we are right now. They have been, and continue to be, more than supportive of Wincore. It's just been a tremendous reception since we selected Swainsboro, Georgia for our new plant. As we grow, there will continue to be a need for additional people. We want the people of Swainsboro and surrounding areas to know that we are here, and we are going to be successful. We want to help the local economy by investing in our people, and we want to be the employer of choice for career-minded individuals."



# COME GROW WITH US!



Wincore has been repeatedly recognized within our industry as one of the top 100 manufacturers, we know that our success belongs to our entire team. That's why our employment opportunities as well as our career advancement opportunities are always at the forefront of our priorities.

*Proud to be a part of Emanuel County's Progress*



561 Electric Drive Swainsboro, GA, 30401





# Soaring to new heights in 2022

by HAYLEE FREE,  
HEADMASTER OF  
SCHOOL

As we began the 2021-2022 school year, David Emanuel Academy welcomed its 52<sup>nd</sup> year of educating children. Throughout the 52 years, DEA has been tremendously blessed. These blessings have come by dedication, perseverance, loyalty, hard work, and most importantly, by keeping the Lord first always. Despite challenges and amongst celebrations, the premise for DEA has stayed the same - keep the Lord front and center and in between and amongst all decisions - as we have faith that He will see our Academy through. The Lord has paved a way for DEA to grow and thrive and because of His mercy we give Him all the honor, glory, and thanks. The dedication of previous families has painted a canvas of rich history, traditions, memories, and expectations that have made the vision clear for our current and future families. Through our mission and our SAIS accreditation standards and goals, continuous improvement is our motto and has been for sever-

al years. This motto applies to academics, facilities, employees, and extracurricular activities. We have continued enhancing our facilities this school year with another classroom renovation (leaving only two more classrooms and the hallway to finish DEA's oldest building) and the clearing of trees around the front of campus - in preparation for our upcoming parking lot paving project. We are not stopping there. Before we begin the next school year, we will have a completely repainted gymnasium, new soffits on the exterior of the main building, and hopefully the hallway and two remaining classrooms renovated. Our technology infrastructure has increased through the purchase of 40 new laptops, another copy machine to service our kindergarten building, more access points, and boosters around campus, and we continue to add cameras to our security system- another measure taken to increase the safety and well-being of our faculty, students, and families. DEA's Booster Club has refinished the gym floor and in the upcoming months will



FREE

construct a new batting cage facility. As for academics and extracurricular activities, we continue to purchase and expand our Abe-ka (Christian-based) curriculum throughout grades K3-12, through grants and donations we have expanded our STEAM program, and we are proud of the addition of a chess team this school year.

Our athletics programming has experienced great success this year. The Lady Eagles softball team ended their season as Region Champs and won the GAPPS State Championship at home under the leadership of lifelong best friends and DEA alumnae, Laura Cardell Webb ('11) and Gabrielle Story ('10). DEA's varsity football team had much success as they ended as Region Runner-Up and as State Semi-Finalists.

Our basketball program had wonderful seasons with the Lady Eagles finishing up as Region Runner-Up and both programs, girls, and boys, pushing through to State Quarterfinals. With DEA's growing student population (268 students, up from 235 last year) and their involvement in athletics, comes the conversation of athletic changes, opportunities, and availability of programming that meets our needs within our league, GAPPS. Due to membership changes within our league, athletic offerings and competition began changing. After careful consideration and much prayer, DEA has decided to switch leagues to better fit the needs of our school. Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, we will return to the GISA (Georgia Independent School Association) league for athletic, arts, and academic programming and competitions. The GISA is also changing names and will now be recognized as GIAA (Georgia Independent Athletic Association). We look forward to this partnership and the friendships and opportunities that GIAA

will provide for the students and families of DEA.

Everything happens at DEA because of the love of our supporters. We would be amiss if we did not thank our local communities for the love poured into DEA by supporting our Booster Club, fundraisers, and events. Perhaps our biggest blessing and most exciting thing happening at DEA is that our growth has come to a point where expanding our campus is in our eminent future. We are ready to soar into the future as a school that has built strength, embraced opportunities, aspires for more enhancements, and we are ready to reach out to meet our goals. As the upcoming weeks unfold, be looking for big news from our beloved Academy. We are looking forward to the 2022-2023 school year and for the next chapter of David Emanuel Academy to be written. If you would like to experience a day in the life of DEA, call the main office to schedule a shadow day. Open enrollment for our local communities began on March 7. It's an exciting time to be an Eagle!



## Twin City Elementary: *We teach, challenge and empower*

by PRINCIPAL ROBBIE WARNOCK

I am proud to report that Twin City Elementary (TCE) students are continuing to grow and learn as we push through the pandemic. Our major focus this year has been to locate gaps in our students' learning that were created as a result of the Covid'19 crisis. Just a year ago, we had students enrolled in some combination of traditional, virtual, and even combined learning environments. While this allowed us to avoid losing ground, it

did not create an ideal circumstance for growth. We have devoted our 2021-2022 school term to finding, targeting, and eliminating those gaps.

We have been blessed to remain open so far this year, with just a short period of time where we alternated student schedules to ensure safety. During this term we have shifted our focus to maximizing instruction in a few unique ways.

Each academic teacher wrote a growth goal for their students at the beginning of the year.



WARNOCK

These goals ranged from increasing MAP scores, increasing reading levels, or even increasing performance rates on the Milestones tests. We didn't

just make those goals; we actively monitor them. As of the writing of this letter, TCE's admin team is looking at growth percentages in each teacher's academic classes. I am proud to report that TCE is ranging from 2 points below to 2 points above the mean RIT score in math and reading in grades K-5. This means that we are staying in stride with the other schools nationwide whose students take the MAP assessment.

TCE students are not just making academic progress! Our national-award winning Jr. Beta

Club chapter is at it again - 39 students recently completed at state convention and we will also be heading to nationals in June! Our student body works hard during the day and even after hours, too.

As principal, I am wonderfully proud of my amazing students and staff. It is easy to see how each and every one of them exemplifies how we Teach, Challenge, and Empower!

Thank you for your support!

## Bulldogs continuing strong!

by ANETRIA EDENFIELD, PRINCIPALAs we have progressed through the last three school terms, we have faced more and more challenges, but we have *all* remained strong and push harder and harder each day to have a "normal" school day. We continue to promote and maintain a healthy environment for our students, faculty and staff. Our main goal as an Emanuel County School is to keep Service above Self! We aim to continue to assist and help others above self.

As we have progressed through each school term together, we have kept our pledge to our students and their families to maintain engaging, meaningful and rigorous classroom instruction. Despite the UNfinished Learning experienced

during the pandemic our student have remained focus on growing his/her academic career. We have incorporated many ways to address this for each individual student through small group instruction, individualized remediation as well as a yearlong afterschool program.

We have also maintained our attempt to reach students outside of academics with special events and a plethora of extracurricular clubs and activities, performing arts groups, and athletic teams. We 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, clubs & organizations or on the athletic field. We strive



EDENFIELD

to provide many opportunities for our students to participate in activities outside the classroom that will help build leadership skills as well as show commitment. We have had to be creative with some of these activities, adhering to the social distancing guidelines, by expanding to virtual meetings. Students have remained dedicated to his/her activities despite these changes.

We continue to invite and encourage students and parents to work in partnership with us to seize opportunities in all five facets of our ECI program - academics, fine arts, athletics, CTSO activities and altruistic endeavors. We want 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 & high school career. We value home and community action 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>, our Facebook page @ [facebook.com/ECIbulldogs](https://facebook.com/ECIbulldogs), and KINVO inform-

ing. 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 their classroom. I encourage you to check these sights frequently to stay abreast.

I am honored to continue to serve you all here as the Emanuel County Institute Principal. It is 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 student growth. I am very excited with the current direction we are traveling within the 2021-2022 school term.

Go Dawgs - One Emanuel -



## Early Head Start and Pre-K

by MARIA DANIELS,  
EMANUEL COUNTY  
EARLY LEARNING  
CENTER DIRECTOR

Early Head Start, a federally funded program for pregnant women and infants and toddlers from birth to age 3 and their families, continues to provide services to income-eligible families in Emanuel County to help them become self-sufficient. Center-based services are provided to 48 infants and toddlers from 6 weeks to age three by caregivers trained in infant and toddler caregiving. Seven pregnant teens at the local high school and parents are able to work and attend school, and

job-training programs, while their infants and toddlers receive quality center-based care from qualified caregivers.

The program's school readiness initiative provides training sessions and opportunities for parents to identify school readiness goals for their children. Children with disabilities are identified and provided on-site services by Babies Can't Wait, Georgia's early intervention program that serves children from birth to age three.

The Emanuel County Pre-K program is designed to prepare children for kindergarten, and the curriculum is



**DANIELS**

focused on having children school ready by the time they leave Pre-K. Students are taught to verbally communicate needs, wants, and thoughts, and to be enthusiastic and curious about approaching new activities.

The Pre-K program re-

flects an understanding of how children learn by emphasizing active learning, consistent daily routines, and the use of positive behavioral management and assessment strategies. Our school readiness goals provide emphasis in language and literacy, math concepts, science, social studies, arts, physical development, and social and emotional competence.

Currently, there are eight classes in Swainsboro and two classes in Twin City. County-wide, we have 220 slots, and registration is taken on a first-come, first-serve basis. We follow district guidelines for entry into

each location.

Early Head Start and Swainsboro Pre-K are located at 308 Tiger Trail adjacent to the Swainsboro Primary School with its own entrance. Twin City Pre-K is located in Twin City Elementary School at 162 Parish Pond Road, Twin City.

If you have a child that will be four years old by September 1, 2022 and would like to register for Pre-K for the 2022-2023 school year, please call 478-237-9593 for more information. Remember, the county only has 220 slots, so register early! If you need more information on Early Head Start, call 478-237-3434.

## SPS – A flourishing year of academic growth

by RON HIRST, PRINCIPAL

It is amazing to think that we are moving into the end of the school year. These past seven months have flown by, and our students have been working hard to individually grow daily. We are proud of our students and staff as they have navigated through a variety of obstacles, challenges and changes. As our campus flourished with a positive spirit our students excelled in growing academically. We have already seen growth in our MAP test-

ing data and an increase in student celebrations from, our accomplished Honor Roll Students, to our Character Kids and P.B.I.S. All-star's student recognition programs.

Our staff has worked hard to give all of our students a unique positive learning experience each day this year by establishing positive relationships, preparing creative lessons and activities that produce high levels of active engagement. These efforts have followed our staff's motto this year to "Teach like a Tiger!" which they



**HIRST**

have embraced and gone over and beyond with and if you followed our Facebook page you would see all the exciting things our students and staff have accomplished

this year.

As we wrap up this school year we are working hard to prepare for next year's students who will come back to some new exciting things we anticipate being ready for the 2022-2023 school year. The new programs and things to come for the 2022-2023 school year are as follows:

- Student TV Production Team
- Increased Physical Education to include weekly Motor Lab
- "Reading Jungle" designed by our creative teacher led "Team Inno-

vate"

• Tiger themed Book Vending Machine" provided by our PTO

• Two outdoor classrooms

• Outside eating area.

As a new principal, I couldn't have asked for a better year, and I am excited for the new things to come in the future. We will continue to embrace our "Teach like a Tiger Spirit!" and create new opportunities for students as we expand our mindsets, skill sets and hone in on our "Growth Mindset" for all.

"Go Tigers!"



# SES: *Focusing on academic success*

by VALORIE WATKINS, PRINCIPAL

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, Raz-Kids, 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 de-



WATKINS

cisions to promote 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; Monthly Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) celebrations; Virtual Family STEAM Night; Virtual

Black History Program; Junior Beta Competitions; and Online 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 encouraged to continue to work with their child on new skills and homework. We are

really focusing on our literacy and numeracy 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 through the Kininvolved Messaging System, email or call the school 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.

## Chamber holds ribbon cutting for The Cakery

A ribbon cutting for The Cakery on the Square, was held Wednesday, December 1 at 4 p.m. Light refreshments were served following the ribbon cutting. After being in the baking business for many years near Adrian, the Bedgoods decided to bring their talents to Swainsboro. They offer a variety of cakes, cookies, candies, and pies, along with a Take/Bake and soup menu. Pictured is owner, Michelle Bedgood cutting the ribbon, her husband Joe and children Logan and Jada, Cakery employees and members of the Chamber of Commerce.



CAKERY RIBBON CUTTING



## Swainsboro Middle School: *Promoting student achievement*

by DR. WILLIE A. GIBSON, PRINCIPAL

Here at Swainsboro Middle School, we know one of the basic principles of a successful education is promoting student achievement from all aspects. Our goal is to create an environment that cultivates young people into ambitious and resilient leaders our community can depend on in the future. Our outstanding teachers are highly qualified and dedicated to preparing every student for success. To accomplish this goal, we provide our scholars with a challenging academic curriculum coupled with an unwavering supportive foundation that values the strength and talent

of each individual.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible work our teachers and staff have done to get us to this point. The past few years have found us navigating through a pandemic in which none of us expected in our lifetimes. I personally appreciate the willingness and sacrifices of our faculty and staff to persevere through unpredictability and all the stress and anxiousness that comes with it. Regardless, the SMS faculty continued work in these uncertain times and provide meaningful learning opportunities for students regardless. Your sacrifice is greatly appreciated.



DR. GIBSON

We are at a stage of our school year that is truly unique: it has the feel of excitement as we continue to prepare for upcoming standardized test. Teachers continue to use frequent assessments with constructive feedback to foster academic achievement. This feedback is timely and specific to address content standards. With

the understanding that students learn differently, SMS will continue to place a major emphasis on differentiated instruction. Students will have access to enrichment and/or remediation activities. This process will afford teachers the opportunity to tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of the students by catering to their individual learning styles, thereby enabling every child to reach his or her maximum learning potential.

In addition to providing students at SMS with a well-rounded approach to education, a variety of extra-curriculum activities have instilled a sense of pride and cast a spotlight on

activities ranging from athletics, student organizations and fine arts programs. Through these organizations, SMS students have received high marks at various competitions.

I am honored to serve as the Principal of Swainsboro Middle School. Serving in a community where parents, teachers, and students care for each other and strive to build positive relationships that support academic and social growth is truly amazing. My door is always open, and I welcome your input. Please feel free to call or email me to discuss any concerns you might have throughout the remainder of the school year.

### *Hometown Family Dental cuts red ribbon for Swainsboro office during December Open House Event*

A ribbon cutting and open house event for Hometown Family Dental was held Thursday, December 16, at 4:30 p.m. Refreshments were served as locals were given a tour of the facility and met with Dr. Billy Brinson and his dental staff. Opportunity for pictures with Santa was also given from 4 until 6 p.m. Hometown Family Dental is located at 102 W. Short Street in Swainsboro.



RIBBON CUTTING



## Swainsboro High School: *Three initiatives - data driven culture, personalized learning, and literacy*

Almost two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders all over the nation are working toward improving achievement for students, maintaining safety, and adjusting to the nuances associated with the new way of education. Swainsboro High School certainly has endured the many challenges faced by so many other schools. Nevertheless, Swainsboro High Schools has, is, and will continue to persevere through any/all adversity, foreign and domestic. The process of improvement is essential if progress is to be constant and consistent. Pursuing excellence daily gives us opportunities to enhance communication, make district goals and initiatives an ongoing priority, and encourage all stakeholders to focus attention on progress rather than perfection.

This year, Swainsboro started the 2021-2022 school year with excitement for a much-needed return to normalcy and a sense of excitement for being able to provide our stu-

dents with the quality instruction that only a face-to-face education can provide. Safety for our students, faculty, and staff has always been a priority, and with the continuation of the heightened safety measures offered, we were prepared. It is our goal that one of our primary focuses is the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders.

The various instructional models that have been explored during the past two years have allowed our teachers to reflect on the way our students learn and the strategies utilized in our instruction.

The culture of SHS is to cultivate an environment of continuous improvement in every achievement area. Within our School Improvement Plan, Swainsboro High School's three initiatives—data-driven culture, personalized learning, and literacy across the curriculum—will continue to be focal points as



**ANDREWS**

we progress through the 2021-2022 school term. Since this is such a unique challenge for high schools, our efforts have utilized specific strategies to close the achievement gaps created by Covid.

One of the primary goals of our school has been to involve our faculty and staff in the planning process while also engaging our parents and stakeholders in the process because we understand that the process involves our stakeholders. In learning how to bridge the gap between staff and stakeholders, we redefined what clear communication and support look like—learning that the connection of all involved in the success of our students is a critical

one.

Swainsboro High School believes in engaging stakeholders in school activities consistently to create buy-in, promote culture, and establish a relationship of reciprocity in decision-making. As educators, we know that a child's social-emotional needs directly correlate with their academic performance. If at no other time in the nation, now is the time to implement a curriculum that embodies mental health and educational needs.

Some of the ways that our counselors and advisors are supporting the vision of SHS is by working with students to develop skills such as personal goal setting, organization, and support for academic pressure. Our advisors work diligently with students through the school year to ensure accountability and support in meeting their personal educational goals.

As we progress to yet another closing at Swainsboro High School, you can rest assured we will continue to be the hard-

est working team in Emanuel County and the state of Georgia instilling excellence in our students, faculty, staff, and community. With great pride and respect, I am excited to announce the new additions to our administrative team. Please allow me to introduce our two new assistant principals, our very own Mrs. Lindsey Sconyers and Mr. Jonathan Moses, SHS Alumni. Both candidates were chosen & selected by a panel of respected leaders within the Emanuel County Schools. Our first priority will be to serve and support Swainsboro High School and the Swainsboro-Emanuel County community. With our new Superintendent, Mr. Scotty Hattaway and Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Denise Warnock, as our system leaders, Emanuel County Schools are in great hands to continue the tradition of Excellence in the Emanuel County School System and community.



## Bobbie Jeans: A new-fashioned boutique with an old-fashioned legacy

by BRITTANY HALL

Swainsboro has seen its share of businesses and restaurants over the years. One that has always remained the same, however, is Lynn & Bobs. If you grew up in Swainsboro, then you at least have one core memory eating Sunday dinner there with your grandparents after church. The country style buffet has served generations and generations of hungry appetites with home-made recipes that you can't find anywhere north of here. Though it's changed hands since the passing of the well-known owners, Lynn & Bob, the recipes are just as comforting and their legacy lives on in a new business located on Hwy 56 South. A boutique with the name, Bobbie Jeans – Market on Moring Street. The owner, Brook Claxton, gave it that name to honor the greatest businesswoman in her life, her grandmother, Bobbie Riner. "I have

always wanted to own my own business; I just didn't know when that day would come. Now here we are operating a business that I take pride in and named after my grandmother, who also owned a business in town for many, many years, Lynn & Bob's BBQ." Brook opened Bobbie Jeans doors last year and says that though she grew up in the small-business world, it took a lot of dedication and many hours to help her business become what it is today, and things couldn't be better. "I am so pleased with all the support this town has shown me over the past several months. I hope this continues to be a blessing to me and my family." Bobbie Jeans carries a wide variety of apparel and accessories. Ranging from baby items to women and men's clothing with plus size options. They also have home décor and home goods such as pieces of furni-



OWNER BROOK CLAXTON WITH EMPLOYEE BRYANNA RINER

ture, handmade soaps and wreathes, local honey and homemade sauces and jams. Brook says that they plan to expand more and carry more items that locals have been asking for in our town, but her customers are always so kind and supportive. "Everyone that comes in the store says how much they love it. They'll tell me that it's cute or very well displayed and reasonably priced. When a lot of people walk in the door the first thing they say is "Oh it smells so good in

here!" My employee Bryanna says that she enjoys working at Bobbie Jean's because she gets to see all the different inventory that comes in and she loves interacting with the customers. We both have made some great friends and customers for life!" While Swainsboro has responded well to Bobbie Jeans, Brooke explained that it takes time to get to the good point, and if you aspire to owning a business, remember, patience is a virtue. "Keep your faith and keep your

head up. It will all work out in the end!" She also gives credit to her community for helping make her dreams, reality. "I love Emanuel County. We all treat each other like family and support one another. Thank you so much for your continued support and business!! It means so much to us, and we look forward to serving you many years to come!" Check out Bobbie Jeans on Facebook or visit them in person. Together, we can help small business legacies, prosper on!

## Unique Body Sculpting LLC hosts grand opening ribbon cutting

On Thursday, May 6, members of the community joined together for a ribbon cutting at Unique Body Sculpting LLC, located at 115 Roger Shaw St., Unit 9, in Swainsboro. Shunteese T. Young, CEO of Unique Body Sculpting, cut the ribbon to mark the occasion of her grand opening. The service Young performs is non-invasive body contouring with no downtime and no pain. Young has

more than five years of experience and is certified in all services she performs on her clients. Body sculpting is something she has a passion for, and she loves to see her clients' end results. Young appreciates those in attendance at her grand opening and ribbon cutting and would like to thank everyone that came out to support her and her new business.



RIBBON CUTTING



# Leanna's: Sweet for Swainsboro's soul

by BRITTANY HALL

Two years ago, the people of Swainsboro found themselves lining the corner of South Main Street to grab a bite of comfort in the form of pizza, cheesecake, and coffee. They entered, expecting something new and delicious but the quality of this little downtown cafe exceeded those expectations far more immeasurably than taste alone. Now, Leanna's is a hometown favorite. Serving regulars and out-of-towners every day, the customers keep coming back for the good wholesome food and unwavering hospitality that you just can't find outside of those county lines. Owned by Levi and Arianna Stoltzfus, the pair with their children, 23-year-old Suzanne, 21-year-old Kate, 18-year-old Levi Allen, 13-year-old Nathaniel, 9-year-old Rachelle, and 8-year-old Josiah, share a desire to make *the good* better for everyone that comes through their doors, whether it be through a slice of sweetness or a warm cup of good morning. The family and staff of Leanna's sure know how to make the community feel right at home.

"If I can encourage each customer or help them get through their day either by a cup of coffee or saying 'Hey, how's it going?' then I feel like my job is well worth it,"

Levi said, as he sat down to talk with us about how the progress of his business has been over the past couple of years.

"We opened right in the middle of covid, and I think it actually gave us an advantage because a lot of the other businesses were shut down or were doing take-out only. So, I would say that 2021 has been a very good year for us. Though, it is still hard to tell because we are a newer business, and 2021 was our first full year. However, I will say, it was busy."

Though the year was filled with many uncertainties, Levi said that their goal is to always ensure that every customer gets their fill of coffee each morning, amid the chaos of difficult times and the morning rush. "It being a family business adds a tremendous strength to it. There are days that I get tired, and my son says, 'Come on dad, let's get on with it.' Then there are days when he gets tired, and I pick up the slack. And that goes for the whole family. We each have each other's back. I do think that it being an active family business, where we can all get along and make things happen, there is a tremendous strength to that. And the quality of the employees that we have makes a difference also. Hospitality is key here at Leanna's because



THE STOLTZFUS FAMILY

we want every guest that walks through our doors to truly feel like they are our guest."

It is a feeling that doesn't go unnoticed, as every member of the family truly makes you feel like their own. Calling out coffee orders by name with a smile on their face and a warm, "Have a nice day," the kindness that they show their customers knows no limits.

"We are in very chaotic times. There's nothing stable right now, and we just need little glimmers of hope amid chaos," Levi said. "I think here at Leanna's, the good employees that we have, the kids, the food, the atmosphere... we try to provide that little glimmer of hope for our community. We can all serve food, but if we can make a difference in somebody's life



LEVI TOSSING THEIR NEW YORK STYLE PIZZA

or encourage them to get through the day, then we're doing our job. Each person faces difficult things in life, but if we can put a smile on their face and some caffeine in

their system, then we're good to go."

The community has responded to Leanna's with overwhelming positivity. While life is difficult and (Continued on page 57)



## Leanna's: Sweet for...

(From page 56)

uncertain, for the people of Emanuel County, Leanna's is an always sweet constant and the staff, and family of Leanna's say that they feel the love, 100 percent.

"Swainsboro has been so good to us. It's been 100 percent positive. We'll be going through Walmart and the kids will see someone and say, 'Hey, I know her!' or 'Hey, I know who that is!' I tend to be back in the kitchen more, so I don't know as many of the names, but the positivity that we've received from this community radiates through each one of us."

Leanna's location doesn't get any better, as every Swainsboro business owner wants a spot on the square, but Levi said that there's always room for growth.

"We love this location, but if we keep growing, we'll have to seek other

options. Even if it's just a drive-thru, which would be huge for our coffee sales because we find that when it is a cold or damp morning, our coffee sales drop. You would think they would increase, but no one wants to get out in that type of weather. So, we may try to update to a drive-thru eventually, but for now, it works, and we love our location. There's just something about being downtown that makes it a little sweeter. I would love to see more shops downtown, or little cafes, restaurants, and bakeries. I think the more people that we can bring downtown, the better the community will be. Even if that means our customers only hit us once a week so that they can visit and make time for the others. There's room for all of us here."

When the Stoltzfus family opened the doors of Leanna's, their goal was

to be a source of togetherness for the community. It is a goal that has been achieved by them and appreciated by so many within our community, as many bonds, businesses and nonprofits have begun over a Leanna's cup of coffee.

"Our goal is to always draw people together. A lot of good things can happen over food. We wanted to see families here, bonding over pizza and breakfast. We wanted to see older men here, sitting around with their buddies, cutting up and laughing, and we wanted to see police officers here, enjoying their lunch together. Something wonderful happens over a meal. Things get discussed and issues get worked out so that's our goal here – that Leanna's can be a platform for people to come in, relax and make their wrongs right or discuss whatever they

need to discuss," Levi said.

As Leanna's hopes to inspire their customers, Levi says that many of them inspire him every day. "On Friday mornings the skunk brigade comes in here, and they'll just cut up and laugh, and I love seeing that. I love seeing the passion that they have for life.

Some of them have lost their spouses, some of them have gone through hard times, but they get together in our little cafe and have a good time. It's a little too early to say that we've met some of our goals, but to see these people come in here and live over our tables, that's incredibly rewarding."



LEANNAS HOMEMADE BREAD



LEANNA'S BUILDING



THE SKUNK BRIGADE VETERANS



# *Pam's Magic Sauce cuts ribbon for second location in Emanuel County*

"Mama, there goes that man" - a quote notably recognized by Pam's Magic Sauce creator and founder, Rodney Patterson. On Wednesday, March 31, Patterson held a second ribbon cutting event with Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce to christen the doors of his second business location within the county, Pam's Magic Sauce Cafe 2. Patterson's first location, Pam's Magic Sauce Cafe, is located inside Singh Food Mart of Twin City. His recently opened second cafe is located in Swainsboro at 420 North Main Street.



RIBBON CUTTING



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DCS RIBBON CUTTING

# Swainsboro DCS holds ribbon cutting

A ribbon cutting ceremony for the Georgia Department of Community Supervision – Swainsboro DCS Office was held at 4 p.m. Thursday, August 19, at the department's downtown office, located at 104 South Green Street.

Jerry Cadle spoke about the history and renovation of the building and recognized those that contributed to the renovation work. The event concluded with a tour of the department's new office and assorted refreshments being served.



# Chapman Funeral Home: Committed to serve our family and friends of Emanuel County

The previous two years have been very difficult as we have served some families not once but twice with multiple deaths due to COVID. But in turn we saw the strength of Emanuel County and surrounding areas in helping the many families that COVID touched. We have done extensive remodeling in the funeral home to help meet the needs as we have been honored to serve more families than usual during the last two years. We don't take it lightly when a family chooses our service. It is very humbling, and we appreciate the trust that you all bestow upon

us. Even with the conditions that have challenged us all, we have been able to serve the community with the same dedicated staff that we have had, and still have today. That dedication has not and will not waver even though it may require many more hours service. These past two years have been very difficult, but we have watched this community step up and assist people that needed help. We are honored that we continued to make each funeral service for each family as personalized as possible. We are committed to serve our family and friends of Emanuel County.



CHAPMAN FUNERAL HOME

## Ribbon Cutting held for Swainsboro's new flea market

Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for one of Emanuel County's newest businesses, US 1 Flea Market. The event was held Thursday, October 21, at 4 p.m. at the business's address, 424 North Main Street in Swainsboro, and featured a walk thru tour of the location. US 1 Flea Market is now open Friday through Sunday from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. They have a wide variety of merchandise with new arrivals weekly. Stop by and shop the large selection!



FLEA MARKET RIBBON CUTTING



# The Cakery on The Square: *A simply sweet bakery*

Did you know that stressed spelled backwards is desserts? If you ever needed a sign that you deserve some sweetness in your life, this is it. The Blade reached out to owner Michelle Bedgood of Swainsboro's newest confectionary bakehouse, The Cakery on the Square. She gave us a little insight on what it takes to be in this industry and the progress of opening shop downtown. "We have been in business in Adrian since 2005 and decided in 2021 that it was time to also have a storefront in downtown Swainsboro. We did some remodeling to the space and opened in October of 2021. We had an amazing Holiday season with lots of new and returning customers." Michelle says that a strong point of The Cakery, is their wide variety of tasty options that are created through homemade recipes that have been passed

down through her family for generations. A southern specialty that helps gives them an edge. "We specialize in thin layer cakes as well as grab and go lunches, catering, and other baked goods. A lot of our recipes are family recipes that have been passed down for several generations." Since opening shop, Michelle says that her business has received nothing but love from the community. "We have a loyal customer base that we appreciate so much. We have received lots of positive feedback from the community. Including many compliments on the quaint environment of our establishment and our cakes and other menu items. We are a family run and oriented business that believes in excellent customer service. It is so important to shop local. Small businesses can't succeed without the help

of the community. "The Cakery has also accomplished many of its goals while setting more in motion for 2022 and the years to come. "We opened our wholesale bakery in 2005 and have always talked about opening a retail bakery and decided 2021 was the year for that to happen. We look forward to meeting lots of new customers this year as well as serving our returning customers. We are always looking for ways to grow and improve our business." Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. A famous quote, written and said by Helen Keller and words that Michelle hopes the community will always live by. "Owning and running a small business is hard work. It takes a village. There are lots of times when you think that it is easier to just give up and quit trying. But I am thankful for



CAKERY LOGO

the people who believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. We have an amazing village that has stepped up and volunteered so much of their time to get us up and running. They have taught me that giving up isn't an option and that we must push through obstacles we face and move forward. The Cakery could not operate

without them." Michelle concluded with a heartwarming sentiment. "Emanuel County is such a great place to live and raise our children. It is home to us. There is a lot of love in this community. Businesses and communities will never grow if we give up." The Cakery is located on the square, next to Wrens Southern Ladies and Gents.

## Pop Boogie Park ribbon cutting

As Twin City continues to celebrate its Centennial, a very special event was held on Saturday, March 20, 2021. A ribbon cutting and reopening for Pop Boogie Park!



POP BOOGIE PARK



# Mosley's Funeral Home: *From past to present our family helping yours since 1959*

by DELMUS MOSELEY, OWNER & DIRECTOR

As far as business this year, it's been good. We have set up various prices for funeral services so that we can accommodate any and everybody's budget. We pride ourselves on ensuring that our clients receive the funeral they want for their loved ones and what they deserve to have at such a difficult time in their lives. The community responds well to the

fact that they can afford the service that they want their loved ones to have, and they aren't forced into cremation. We have been in business since 1959 and have served our community with dignity since that time and will continue to do so. We want to make sure that everyone gets what they want when they come into our establishment. Regardless of their situation so that they can have the service they desire and deserve.



MOSLEY'S FUNERAL HOME

## EAC hosts open house, ribbon cutting, art exhibition

The Emanuel Arts Council held an open house, ribbon cutting and art exhibition on Tuesday, December 14, at 4:30 p.m. at the Karrh Arts Center on North Green Street. The event was also sponsored by the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce and City of Swainsboro. Light refreshments were served by The Cakery on the Square.

Featured artist for the opening of the gallery was Neil Kalmanson, artist, and retired professor of art at East Georgia State College. "We have come full circle," said Jacquie Brasher, EAC executive director. "The art gallery was named The Kalman-

son Gallery many years ago at the old building, and it's our honor to have him be our first artist to exhibit in this new space."

Kalmanson was art professor at EGSC from 1973 to 2003. He was also the director of the Kalmanson Art Gallery of EAC since its inception in 1979. He passed the torch to EGSC Art Professor Desmal Purcell in 2013.

Kalmanson received his B.F.A. with honors from Pratt Institute in 1964 and his M.F.A. from the University of Florida in 1971. He is a working artist, exhibiting in New York, Chicago, Mexico, Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, Iowa, and Georgia. Among his awards, he

received a \$300 first prize for sculpture from the Decatur Art Guild Juried Art Exhibition and purchase prize for sculpture from Festival '95 Juried Art Exhibition, Greenville, S.C.

In the world of boomerangs, he developed the Kalmanson Reversible, the Siamese Reversible Boomerang, and has won many Aesthetics awards in United States Boomerang Association National competitions. Many of his boomerangs have been chosen for the Smithsonian Institute's boomerang collection.

The show consists of his recent paintings and boomerangs. His paintings are abstract and non-objective and explore both



FEATURED ARTIST KALMANSON

minimal and intricate compositions in a round or oval format. Kalmanson considers his boomerangs an extension of his painting aesthetic, paintings in the shapes of boomerangs. In much of his

work, he utilizes the process of gilding with metal foil on both his paintings and boomerangs. For more information about the Emanuel Arts Council, check out their Facebook page.



## The Magnolia Shed: A small business with a whole lot of heart

by BRITTANY HALL

It's been almost a year since I first walked through the doors of The Magnolia Shed. It was about closing time and I ventured in as a curious new homeowner with a humble budget and a hope that I could create a magazine worthy atmosphere with nothing to go on other than my desire to be a host of comfort. I knew that I was in way over my head and only had a short amount of time to browse and add things to a list of "Future Dreams and Wants".

Then I was greeted by the owner, Ashley "Nicole" Kennison. With a genuine smile on her face, she came over, wrapped her arms around me and said, "Hey, honey, welcome in! If you need any help let me know!" So, I told her about my new home, my style, my budget, and my dreams. From that, she helped me create a home that I feel happy to welcome others into. When I started to leave, I realized that I had stayed there, talking, and becoming inspired through her warm, exciting words and skill of design almost three hours past closing. Never once did she rush me to leave or make me feel like I had to go home, though. In fact, she welcomed me to stay further. An experience that has led me to new friendships with her and her mom, Mrs. Donna, who shares ownership of the Shed.

Now, almost one year later, I still become inspired every time I walk into The

Magnolia Shed and I'm still greeted by the same kind of energy and smiling faces that both Nicole and Donna have always bestowed on their customers. We recently sat down together to talk about the Shed's progress, and before we began Nicole made one request, that we sit around her favorite piece of furniture within the shed. A beautiful wooden table that her late father, Jim, created for her, in honor of our interview also being held on his birthday. As we gathered around her beloved table with our coffee in hand and joy in our hearts, she, her mom, and two of their newest employees and vendors, Shianne Adkins of Gracefully Southern Boutique and Harley Newsome of Backroads Baby Boutique, began to tell me about their past year together at The Shed, their goals for it, and their all-around achievements. "The year has been good. It's had its ups and downs just like any other new business has. There's a newness about it and you're trying to build your name while you're trying to get people in the community to know who you are, and I think it just takes some networking. We have finally gotten to a point where a lot of people are still finding out who we are and where we're at. We opened on May 7th of last year, during the Pine Tree Festival and I think it has taken until Christmas to really build who we are and for the community to get to know us. The Lord



**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT - NICOLE AND DONNA OWNERS OF THE MAGNOLIA SHED, SHIANNE ADKINS OWNER OF GRACEFULLY SOUTHERN BOUTIQUE AND HARLEY NEWSOME OWNER OF BACKROADS BABY BOUTIQUE**

has done many things to help us grow and to help The Shed become what it is today." Nicole explained their experience with opening a new business during 2021. A time when many small businesses were still experiencing loss from the pandemic that quite literally was 2020. However, Nicole and Donna kept their faith strong which helped them to keep their optimism about opening shop in 2021.

"I remember the first day we opened, May 7th, we were up here the night before and it truly looked like a hot mess." Nicole said through a laugh. "We had furniture everywhere. Nothing was staged. It was pure chaos and we're talking about the night before opening day. Momma had a table that she was painting, and I remember these two ladies came in, and they were like, "Are

you open yet?" and I told them, "No, we don't open until tomorrow. But you're welcome to look around at what little bit we do have." and I'll never forget when one of the women turned around and said, "Whew! You've got lots to do!" And she wasn't wrong!" Nicole said with a smile... "But my mother and I, only the two of us and my husband, Chad, stayed in this shop until 4 in the morning to make this place look like a store. We slept for a few hours, and came back at 7a.m. We accomplished that and opened just as planned on the day of the Pinetree Festival." When Nicole posted the first photos of The Magnolia Shed on their opening day, she captioned it; *Oh, what a difference a day makes!* "We still stay late to accomplish what we need to do. A lot of times if you drive by at night and you see that our

light is on, we're in here working, and I will tell you this. We welcome people in. We've always said; If we're up here working, even if it's after closing hours, we welcome you in. If you want to stop by and look at what we have or even shop, you're welcome too! That's just who we are." She continued. "I would like to think that is our greatest strength. Our personality and customer service. We truly want people to feel that they are welcome into our store whether they buy anything, or they don't."

Though they consider themselves a home retail shop, their options aren't limited to strictly home decor. Their originality derives from the fact that they're a small local market of sorts. With their options ranging from interior design appointments to a

(Continued on page 63)



# The Magnolia Shed: *A small business with a whole lot of heart*

(From page 63)

baby boutique and loaded teas.

"We offer interior decorating if you're needing help to style your home or business. We have Backroads Baby, a baby boutique that's run by Harley Newsome and Gracefully Southern, a women's boutique that's run by Shianne Adkins. We even have an essential oil area of the store if you're feeling like you need a natural remedy in your life. We're also going to start selling loaded teas through Huckleberry Lane, which is my daughter in Law, Kristina Kennisons, shop. We have handmade sugar scrubs coming so there's going to be a spa area in the shed where you can purchase spa-like products. And we just started offering gift baskets and gift cards." They're also planning to add more to the Shed in the upcoming year. "We would love to expand and offer more products within the year. One thing that we plan to do in the next few months though, is a pop-up market. Which will be a variety of items from local vendors in a pop-up style setting, maybe downtown. If the Lord allows us to do that, we will announce a date and keep the community informed of it. Another idea that we have been discussing is, staying open until 8 or 9 o'clock, on one Friday or Saturday night out of each month. So that people can come shop after dinner.

We would love to have a couple of tables and chairs outside so they can come in and get something from the coffee bar and then shop for a little bit in the evenings or just sit outside and enjoy the nightlife of our little town."

Though these are a few goals that they hope to achieve this year, they say that many of their goals were accomplished in 2021.

"We have all kinds of goals that have been somewhat achieved but, in a way, we're working on them because our business is new. One major goal though, is that at the beginning of the year, Momma and I were wanting to add a couple of different vendors. One being a baby boutique and one being a women's and young ladies' boutique, and both of those have been met. Another that I would like to talk about is our Christmas Open House. We really had a great turn-out for that event and I can't wait to see what this year will bring for us and our customers!"

Another goal that they have set in motion is to progress technically within the shop.

"We get so busy just talking and enjoying each other's company that it makes it hard to stay up to date with all of the technical things that go into running a business, so that is a goal of ours to get better at."

However, Nicole says if you'd like to reach them

or see what they have to offer before visiting The Shed, there are ways of doing that from the comfort of your own home.

"We don't have a phone number or review section because we like to welcome and encourage the community to *"come on in!"* We want everyone to feel welcome because they are! However, we do have a private Facebook group where we post our products that we have within the store or that may be up and coming. It's also a great place for locals to talk with us, get to know us and share their reviews of their experience within our store. Customers can also purchase items through the group which is another nice touch. You can find it by searching *Shop the Shed* on Facebook or if you come into the store and like what you see, ask us about our group and we'll happily invite you over to it. We also just started a TikTok, you can find it under *The Magnolia Shed* with our logo. We're going to get more content on there so add us and keep your eyes peeled!"

As far as community, the staff at The Magnolia Shed all say that Swainsboro is where they're meant to be and without its natives, it wouldn't be home.

"We love the people of Swainsboro. They make the town what it is. We also love that they want to make it better. We're thankful for being welcomed. Everyone that

comes in here has told us that Swainsboro has needed a place like this and that they truly feel welcomed when they come in, so, we are very thankful to the community for that! We are also thankful for all of our customers. Whether they're our past customers or our future customers. We love to support everybody. We believe that there's room for everybody, and I'm talking about businesses. Whether it be food, boutiques, or home decor. We try to be welcoming to everybody and support everyone. We love this town and its people." The staff agreed before Nicole continued. "We've called Swainsboro home for a little over a decade now. It's where my kids have grown up and my husband has served as a pastor. During

our time here, we've met a lot of great people and continue to meet great people every day. I've truly fallen in love with this town." Nicole said with tears in her eyes. "We feel at home here and our goal is to provide that same atmosphere for our customers. Whether you buy anything or not, just coming in means a lot to us! When you come in, we want you to feel welcomed like you are coming into someone's home, but we want you to also feel that way when you leave and know that our door is always open. When you're thinking about decorating your home or buying something for a baby or

buying something from a boutique, we hope that we are the first that you think of and will come see us. But if not, that's okay! Because another thing that we always say is - *If we don't have it, we like to try and help you find it.* - We'll send you to other local shops to help you find what you're looking for and support other people, because that's what community is all about. Support your small businesses even if they're not yours." She wholeheartedly said before concluding... "There's a lot of room for Swainsboro to grow and it's such a cute town that I feel like it has the potential to be a town that people want to come to and stay, shop, eat, and raise their children. Together as businesses, we can create a personality for Swainsboro. What I love about being a small business owner in this town is the fact that even though we have our own store, we can get ideas and be inspired by one another. I love when women can come together and encourage each other to reach their goals. Whether it's decorating your home or buying something for your baby or yourself. I want people to feel like that too. When they come in, I want them to feel inspired when they leave. Hopefully we can inspire one another." The Magnolia Shed is located at 125 East Main Street, next to Dream Maker Bath and Kitchen.



## The Meraki Loft: Self-care in Swainsboro

by BRITTANY HALL

When you put a piece of yourself, your soul, creativity, and love into what you do. That's Meraki. A Greek word with deep meaning that Paige Waters, lives by every day. As she truly puts herself into making locals feel their absolute best and most at peace. So, what exactly is her line of work? Paige is a certified esthetician. Licensed in the beauty and cosmetic industry and working out of her very own spa – *The Meraki Loft*. A cozy little oasis that's located at 116 West Main Street, above Ashley and Company. Paige's training is found through her ability to give her clients a calming, self-care experience through her skill of enhancing natural beauty. "I offer full body waking, customized facials and masks, lashes and I'm certified in mi-

crodermabrasion and dermaplaning." But the road to Venus and relaxation doesn't end there. She also specializes in special effects makeup, and many of you have probably seen her work throughout the Halloween season when visiting our local *haunted trails*. "I have taken more classes to improve my skills on special events. My dream is to work on a movie set." Paige uses only natural ingredients in her products and plans to add more to the spa in the upcoming year. "My goal as of now is to add more services. I plan to bring microdermabrasion, dermaplaning, teeth gems, piercings, and more." The Meraki Loft opened in 2021 and has been growing ever since. Paige says that running a business has been a learning experience in every aspect, but she wouldn't have

changed the difficulties for the outcome, for anything. "The main goal for Meraki was to open and grow. I have been open since August of 2021 and the clientele has grown more than I expected and incredibly fast. I'm very thankful for the kind people who have contributed to my success by answering all the questions that I've had while trying to get the hang of running a business and doing what I love. These people guided me with their years of experience in the right direction for my business. Most importantly, I have gained clientele and I want to thank them for that. My clients are everything and I appreciate them for their loyalty." She also mentioned that she's received such warm feedback from the community and that when many of her clients first began going to her,



### WATERS WITH A CLIENT

they rated their experience as a mini tropical vacation right in the middle of downtown Swainsboro. "Location is important. I would have to say Meraki is in an amazing spot downtown. Although it's downtown, when you enter Meraki, you feel as if it's a relaxing getaway."

If you're interested in visiting Paige and The Meraki Loft, check them

out on Instagram at *the\_meraki\_loft*, or Facebook at *The Meraki Loft*. For booking you can visit *the-meraki-loft.square.site* or stop by *Ashley & Company* and ask to see Paige! "Thanks to everyone that has come to Meraki and if you haven't checked it out you should, I have a lot more coming soon." Go see Paige and treat yourself today!

## The Crossroads Chronicle turns one

Last Thursday, The Crossroads Chronicle celebrated its one-year anniversary with a ribbon Cutting and grand opening event at its South Main Street address from 5 until 7 p.m. Live music was performed by Alan Brasher, and door prizes were provided by Darby and Brad Gates of Southern MidMod, Gloria Mason with The Peddler, and Teah Canady with Yard Master. Mason, Canady, and Main Street Market helped with decor and Southern Traditions provided a beautiful floral arrangement complete with newspapers.



### RIBBON CUTTING



# The Bleu Belle and The Bronzing Bay

by MEGAN WILLIAMS,  
OWNER

As I reflect on the year of 2021 at The Bleu Belle, we were blessed with a year of opportunity and growth! When we first opened our storefront in 2020, we knew the aims were to provide our customers with apparel and gifts that were both high quality and affordable, offer a wide variety for the entire family, and to offer pieces that our customers could feel confident and happy wearing. Boutique owners will agree that procuring clothing for men & children is the most difficult task, for sure. However, we searched high and low to find brands and styles that match our “vibe,” and most importantly, fit our customers’ needs! Although continuous improvement is key to any business, we are very proud of the growth of our men’s and children’s selections — in addition to our women’s collection — over the course of the past year. We love that The Bleu Belle can provide treasures for the entire family! The main strength of The Bleu Belle comes from teamwork and solidarity. We love one another, we love what we do, and we love our customers! The friendships formed with our customers are priceless, and we love jumping in and helping you find the perfect gift, the perfect outfit, or just talking with you! The relationship aspect of business is something you cannot plan or

coordinate. It’s something that just flows when happiness abounds, and it’s evident when you walk in our doors! In business school at Georgia Southern, professors drilled continuous improvement (as I mentioned above). I literally live by the motto “you’ve never ‘made it’” — meaning, there’s always room for improvement. In business, you’ve never, ever reached a point that you’ve done all there is to do. You’re never done! We are continually setting new goals at The Bleu Belle, even small goals every day. Two recent goals we achieved that would be of interest to the public are the addition of a new buy now, pay later option on our website in addition to Sezzle (ShopPay) and the addition of a customer rewards program! Customers can sign up for the rewards program on our website & earn/redeem points both in store and online. Those who have already signed up are loving this addition. Another major goal achieved was the addition of a sister company next door, The Bronzing Bay. The Bronzing Bay tanning salon officially opened its doors in January 2022. Going back to one of the main goals of The Bleu Belle — helping customers to feel confident and happy — I thought about things that make ME happy. I reflected on the confidence that having a tan brings me and how much I look forward to those few moments a day



STAFF MAKAYLA CLIFTON, MOYA WIGGINS, CHARLA CLIFTON,  
AND MEGAN WILLIAMS (OWNER)

in a tanning bed. I knew that other women (and men!) must feel the same, and The Bronzing Bay was born to fill that need! We are overwhelmed with your support thus far and encourage you to come out for a tour if you haven’t already. Shopping local. Supporting local. Emanuel County! What I love most about Emanuel County is that we do support one another and that most do take an attitude of “cooperation over competition.” I love when businesses like to see other businesses succeed and support one another, or when customers take the time to like or share on Facebook or spread good word of mouth. It’s something you don’t find as often in larger cities. Also, I love that we know our customers. And if we don’t know you — like our out-of-towners who have become frequent shoppers — we’ll get to

know you, for sure! Word of mouth is a great form of advertisement, but marketing is pivotal to progress! We advertise both online & in print through The Forest-Blade. The Forest-Blade is more for our local reach and to help keep The Bleu Belle fresh on locals’ minds in general. We use our online marketing, namely Facebook, to showcase specific products as well as use paid advertisements to expand our visibility and reach to other cities and states with our online storefront. Because this is the “progress edition,” I would just like to add some general advice to those in our community who may be tossing around the idea of entrepreneurship. For there to be progress, there must be growth. For there to be growth, we do need entrepreneurship! Being an entrepreneur is no small feat, but it’s do-able.

My biggest piece of advice, though, is to do something YOU LOVE and is meaningful to you. You must find your own niche rather than follow the crowd. If you choose to open a business just because everyone else is doing it or for any motive other than your own personal passion — if your heart isn’t in it — it’s going to be difficult to have the drive to succeed. That passion in your heart will help you keep your vision. They say if you love your job, you’ll never work a day in your life! I’m truly scared to count the number of hours I work between The Bleu Belle & The Bronzing Bay each week, but I absolutely love it. It doesn’t feel like work! That’s when you know you’ve found “your thing.” Then, just keep pushing, keep progressing, and keep moving forward.



## 2021-2022 STAR Students, Teachers recognized

Emanuel County Schools recently announced the STAR Student and STAR Teacher for Swainsboro High School and Emanuel County Institute for 2021-2022. STAR Students and STAR Teachers representing the Emanuel County Schools System are as follows: Emanuel County Institute STAR Student, Landon Goodman; Emanuel County Institute STAR Teacher, Kendall Hadden; Swainsboro High School STAR Student, Savannah Reynolds; and Swainsboro High School STAR Teacher, Cindy Riner.

These students and their chosen teachers were recognized at the recent annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet held Tuesday, January 27, at the Swainsboro Golf and Country Club. Chamber President Ken Warnock gave recognition to Swainsboro High Schools STAR student, Reynolds, and her choice for STAR teacher, Riner, and Emanuel County Institutes STAR student, Goodman, and his choice for STAR teacher, Hadden. Unfortunately, due to a BETA convention that was being held out of town, neither party was able to be in attendance for the night but were honored through comments by Warnock in which he congratulated the winners for their

hard work and outstanding achievements. Personal letters written by the STAR students were also read wherein tribute was paid to the respective STAR teachers who contributed so much to the success of these scholars. Emanuel County Schools Superintendent Scotty Hattaway also commended the STAR representatives prior to the annual banquet recognition, stating, "We are very proud of our Emanuel County School System STAR Students, ECI's Landon Goodman and SHS's Savannah Reynolds, for their academic accomplishments. This honor is reflective of their dedication to their academic achievement and years of hard work and focus. We are also proud of STAR Teachers, ECI's Kendall Hadden and SHS's Cindy Riner. It is an honor when a student acknowledges a teacher for the role and the impact that they have played on their student's academic career. We congratulate both students and teachers."

The two STAR students as well as their selected STAR Teachers received their formal board recognition during the Emanuel County Board of Education meeting held February 8 in the Emanuel County Institute auditorium. STAR SHS Student Savannah Reynolds



**GOODMAN, HADDEN, REYNOLDS AND RINER**

and STAR SHS Teacher Cindy Riner, were announced as the county-wide STAR winners for the Emanuel County Schools district. The two will move on to compete at region level and, hopefully, state level.

*Emanuel County STAR Representative Biographies*

**Emanuel County Institute STAR Teacher — Landon Goodman**

Landon Goodman, son of Joey and Shauna Goodman of Twin City, is a senior at Emanuel County Institute.

Landon has been recognized many times for academic excellence and achievement throughout his high school career. He was chosen as a district representative for

Governor's Honors in Mathematics. He was a recipient of the Georgia Certificate of Merit, an award that recognizes students who are in the top 5% of their graduating class in the state of Georgia. He is also a Georgia Scholar nominee, an award that honors students who exhibit excellence in all phases of school life, in community activities, and in the home. Landon has also participated in the Dual Enrollment program at East Georgia State College since his junior year of high school.

Landon is co-president of 21st Century Leaders, an organization that collaborates with business and professional leaders

to connect, transform and inspire Georgia high school students to become the next generation of leaders through training and hands-on experience. Through this club, Landon also leads community service projects such as voter registration for eligible high school students and food drives for families in need. He is also Sergeant-at-Arms of the Technology Student Association, a national student organization that develops students' skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as well as business education. He participates in rigorous problem solving competitions at the state level (Continued on page 67)



## 2021-2022 STAR Students...

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for this organization. Landon is also a member of Senior Beta Club.

Landon has participated in leadership summits at the Fulford Youth Academy, which develops leadership skills and qualities in students who have demonstrated leadership potential. He is also a member of the Citizen's Bank Advisory Board. The objective of this board is to expose students to the world of banking and finance as well as encouraging them to become active and productive members of the community.

Landon was voted "Most Intelligent" by his peers as part of the Senior Superlatives for the class of 2022. He has participated in tennis for four years and has also helped coach the middle school tennis team.

Landon plans to attend East Georgia State College in the fall, and will later transfer to Augusta University to major in biology and become a pediatrician.

Landon has selected Mr. Kendall Hadden as his STAR teacher. When asked why he chose Mr. Hadden, he replied, "Mr. Hadden has always been the teacher that I know I can go to for advice and guidance about anything that I am doing. He is a selfless person and will drop whatever he is do-

ing to help me or any other student who needs his help. My time in his class has been some of my most challenging, but therefore my most rewarding, moments of high school. His problem-solving activities have caused me to stumble and fail, but they taught me to work harder and think outside the box in the face of adversity. Those activities have prepared me to think critically and face much bigger problems that I will face in my life. Mr. Hadden's inspiration and words of encouragement through these challenges played a major role in my growth as a student and problem solver, and we developed a strong bond during his classes. He became more than just a teacher; he became a friend. I know that no matter where I go or what I do in life, I can always come back to Mr. Hadden and count on him to be there for me.

### **Emanuel County Institute STAR Teacher — Kendall Hadden**

Mr. Hadden has a Bachelor of Science in Middle Grades Math and Science, a Master of Science in Leadership, and an Educational Specialist Degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

Mr. Hadden started out his ECI career in 2007 as a 6th-grade math teacher. In 2015, he accepted

the position as the high school Technology and Engineering teacher. Mr. Hadden also started a Technology Student Association at ECI, and 7 of his students have qualified for national level competition in Dragster Design and On Demand video.

This is what Mr. Hadden stated about being selected as Star Teacher

"I first met Landon when I was teaching 6th-grade math. I had heard that I was getting a student that was truly exceptional in mathematics and science. This was exciting news because those were the two subjects that always interested me the most. Just as I had heard, Landon was exceptional. Even as a 6th-grade student, he understood the mathematical process of an upper-level high school student. It was fun just trying to challenge him. I didn't realize how much of an impact this young man would have on my teaching career. When Landon was in 8th grade, he was the youngest student to take my Foundations of Engineering class. It was in that class that I found a way to challenge him. Landon is a very process-driven student, and most of the challenges (projects) that we do in Foundations of Engineering have multiple ways of being com-

pleted. You really have to think out of the box with very few instructions other than what the challenge has to accomplish. It was in that class that I witnessed his first failure and I saw him struggle. I tell my students all the time, you learn more from your mistakes/failures than you do your accomplishments. I think this is where Landon and I bonded as student and teacher. I taught him how to not overthink a problem. Landon would go on to be an officer the last three years in Technology Student Association and competes in various competitions among the best in the state and is now Star Student. I know he will do great things in his life and I'm sure he will look back on some of our conversations about life. I'm honored he has chosen me as Star Teacher."

### **Swainsboro High School STAR Student — Savannah Reynolds**

Savannah Reynolds, Swainsboro High School's STAR Student, is the daughter of Brett and Selena Reynolds. Throughout high school, Savannah has been a member and leader of multiple clubs and organizations. In FBLA, she served as secretary her sophomore year and president for the past two years. She has placed at regional and

state competitions and even competed at the FBLA National Convention her freshman year. Savannah has also been a member of Beta Club. She served as treasurer her sophomore year, vice president her junior year and president her senior year. While in Beta Club, Savannah has competed and placed at the state and national levels. By serving as a class representative during her freshman and sophomore years and president of student council for the past two years, Savannah has represented her peers at Swainsboro High School. Savannah has also been actively involved in 4-H. She was named a 4-H Master in Food for Health & Sport her freshman year, and she was named a 4-H Master in History her junior year. She currently serves as county council president for Emanuel County 4-H. Through her club involvement, Savannah has participated in various service projects, ranging from local community efforts to national initiatives. In addition to her club activities, Savannah has been a member of the SHS concert band, dance line team and tennis team all four years of high school.

In addition to club competitions, Savannah (Continued on page 68)



## 2021-2022 STAR Students...

(From page 67)

has received a number of other accolades throughout her high school career. She was named the school and district winner for the Young Georgia Authors competition three years in a row as well as the district winner for the DAR essay contest during her sophomore year. She was named a semi-finalist in the area of social studies for the Governor's Honors Program her junior year, and she was selected as a Washington Youth Tour delegate with Altamaha EMC. She has also been selected as the district nominee for the U.S. Senate Youth program for the past two years. In addition, she serves on the Superintendent's Student Advisory Board and the Citizens Bank Student Advisory Board. Savannah was also recently named as a semi-finalist for the Coca Cola Scholars program.

Outside of school, Savannah has worked in various positions. She served as an intern for the Emanuel County Commissioners office her junior year and completed an intensive research project on the history of the local John C. Coleman Hotel. She also worked as temporary helper for the Emanuel County Elections Office. Savannah currently works as an assistant to the County Solicitor, an administrative assistant at the Emanuel County Board of Education, and as a radio host for Radio-

Jones. She is also a member of Swainsboro First Baptist Church where she is a member of Acteens.

After graduation, Savannah plans to attend UGA and to pursue a double major in history and communication studies. She then hopes to attend law school and practice in the fields of intellectual property and historic preservation.

Savannah selected Mrs. Cindy Riner as her STAR Teacher. Savannah had Mrs. Riner for three math courses at SHS, and Savannah attributes her success in the classroom and on the SAT to Mrs. Riner's enthusiasm and expansive knowledge of her subject matter. In addition, Mrs. Riner has served as Savannah's Beta Club advisor throughout high school. Savannah will be forever grateful for the support and encouragement Mrs. Riner has provided for her over the years.

### **Swainsboro High School STAR Teacher — Cindy Riner**

A 1991 graduate of Swainsboro High School, Cindy Riner began her teaching career in 1999 and she has been teaching at her beloved alma mater since then. Mrs. Riner holds an Associates of Arts degree from East Georgia State College and a Bachelor of Science degree in Middle Grades Education from Georgia Southern University. In 2002, she furthered her education by earning a Master of Education de-

gree in Secondary Math. She is currently pursuing her Education Specialist degree in Instructional Technology through Kennesaw State University and will graduate in the summer of 2022.

Throughout her career, she has not only earned many degrees, but she has also earned her gifted endorsement and many hours of professional development. This has allowed her to grow as a teacher and better meet the needs of her students. Since 2002, Mrs. Riner has been teaching in the math department at SHS, and she currently teaches Algebra II and Precalculus.

In addition, Mrs. Riner has served as Beta Club sponsor for the past twelve years and as math department chair for the past year. She is a member of Emanuel County 4T (Teams Transforming Teaching Together) and serves on SILT (School Instructional Leadership Team) as well as other committees. Mrs. Riner has always had a love for mathematics and being a classroom teacher has given her the opportunity to share that passion and love with her students. She loves working with students and sharing the "Aha!" moments they experience in their academic pursuits and personal growth.

In addition to teaching, her passions include traveling, crafting, and spending time with family and friends at the beach. She

lives in Swainsboro with her husband Greg and their son Daylan, a seventh-grader at Swainsboro Middle School.

Mrs. Riner had this to say about Savannah Reynolds and why she thought that she was a STAR student. "It has been such a blessing for me to teach Savannah in multiple math classes as well as to work with her throughout her years in Beta Club. Being selected as Savannah's STAR teacher is considered the highest honor because Savannah is such a remarkable young woman of intellect, ambition, and grace. Savannah's legacy is one of academic and extracurricular achievement, leadership, and service to Swainsboro High School. She is humble and never afraid of a challenge. In fact, she seeks opportunities to deepen her understanding through analysis of complex texts and comparison of multiple perspectives on intriguing topics. She is a sincere and curious scholar who shares her love of learning with both her peers and teachers. Even with her countless leadership positions in clubs, sports, and charitable organizations, Savannah manages to work at several jobs and still devotes time to her family, friends, and church. She seems to balance these responsibilities effortlessly, prioritizing her academic success."

### **About PAGE STAR Program**

The PAGE Student

Teacher Achievement Recognition (STAR) program, now in its 64th year, is sponsored, administered, and promoted by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) and the PAGE Foundation. Since its creation, the STAR program has honored nearly 28,000 students and the teachers they have selected as having had the most influence on their academic achievement. To obtain the 2021 STAR nomination, graduating high school seniors must have the highest score on a single test date on the SAT and be in the top 10 percent or top 10 students of their class based on grade point average.

STAR begins each year in participating high schools throughout Georgia when the STAR Student is named and chooses a STAR Teacher to share in this recognition. The students and their teachers are honored by their schools and receive special recognition in their communities from one of the more than 170 statewide civic organizations and businesses that serve as local sponsors of the STAR program. Students then compete for school system titles, and those winners compete for region honors. Region Winners compete for the honor of being named State PAGE STAR Student. STAR Teachers continue on with their STAR Students at every level of the program.



# Chamber of Commerce 67th Annual Awards Banquet

by Brittany Hall  
The Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce hosted its 67th Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Banquet on Thursday, Jan. 27 at Swainsboro Golf and Country Club to honor those who have helped to make Swainsboro a wonderful place to live and to present the new and exciting changes within our great community. The event began with an invocation by Chamber President Ken Warnock and a catered buffet style dinner with two scrumptious dessert choices, as well as the option of fresh fruit. Board member Zach Frye led dinner with a prayer. Following the meal, Chamber President Ken Warnock gave a few special remarks and paid recognition to the night's noteworthy guests; Chick-Fil-A Vidalia leadership team. He then gave the exciting news that our community would be receiving its own little slice of heaven right here in our hometown. Chick-Fil-A will be in the form of a food truck and located behind Leanna's, in the Old Schwabe Motors parking lot, with hopes of something more permanent for our vastly growing city at a later time. Following dinner and the recognition of the Chambers special

guests, all Board Members were introduced and acknowledged with applause. The Chamber President then gave recognition to Swainsboro High Schools STAR student Savannah Reynolds and her choice for STAR teacher, Cindy Rinner and Emanuel County Institutes STAR student Landon Goodman and his choice for STAR teacher, Kendall Hadden. Unfortunately, due to a BETA convention that was being held out of town neither parties were able to be in attendance for the night but were honored through an incredible speech given by Ken Warnock where he commended their stupendous achievements and read personal letters written by the STAR students who tributed their teachers for their amazing successes and letters from their teachers, who tributed their students for their love of teaching.

Zach Frye then introduced The Business of The Year Award to America Knits and part owner, Steve Hawkins who then shared some very appreciative words regarding our community following the award presentation. "We are very proud of what we've been able to do in Swainsboro but we wouldn't have been able to do it without the Emanuel County Development Authority, more



AMERICA KNITS - BUSINESS OF THE YEAR



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT SCHWABE WITH HIS FAMILY AND CHAMBER PRESIDENT WARNOCK

particularly Ken. I had actually googled Swainsboro and I found two names; Charles Schwabe and Ken Warnock and I met them on a Saturday morning with my partner David Talton. I knew they were alright because Ken came straight to the plant with deer hunting clothes on. So I said these boys are alright. I like these guys better than the guys in Ft. Lau-

derdale, they're my kind of people. They helped us with everything we needed. We had some job fairs where 154 people applied. Of course that was before Covid and there were a lot more people looking for jobs at that time but we've been very blessed with many great employee's. I think the tables set for this year now that we have landed a contract with J. Crew,

being the iconic brand that it is. Our intent has been to establish a reputation in the apparel industry that spans Nationwide, and once we have that reputation we hope to launch America Knits as a stand-alone brand. Because although all these other major brands are telling this down home American story, we're the ones who (Continued on page 70)



## Chamber of Commerce...

(From page 69)

are actually living it and doing it. The brands are marketing companies. So we're actually making the shirts for them and making them to their specs but our goal would be to transition to where America Knits and Swainsboro are both household words and well-known names. In fact, we designed our label to say; Made in Swainsboro Georgia, instead of Made in The USA. I think that's important because if you're going to tell a story you have to be able to authenticate it." Before the night ended and closing remarks were mentioned, Honorable Judge Bobby Reeves read a heartfelt and remarkable tribute to Charles Schwabe before presenting him with The Lifetime Achievement Award. Recognizing all of his many achievements throughout his life and the incredible differences he's made within our community. These were Judge Reeves' kind words; "Swainsboro has been blessed with outstanding leaders, citizens willing to give of their time and talent to make Swainsboro and Emanuel County a better community. Tonight we will present the Lifetime Achievement Award to a man who has continued that long line of leadership. Perhaps his most

important contribution was, because of his love for Swainsboro, and his desire to serve and make it a better place for all of us, he came home after college and poured himself into making Swainsboro a vibrant and active city. And, over the years he has literally been the heart and soul and the face of our city. When people around the state think of Swainsboro, this man comes to their minds because he has been such a marvelous ambassador for our city.

1. He is a lifelong member of Swainsboro First United Methodist Church where he has served on the Church Council as well as in various other areas. (He makes a very good usher and does a fine job of taking up the collection.)

2. He was an active member of the Swainsboro Jaycees, serving as President in the early 80s. He received the Lee Price Award, given to the Jaycee of the Year and was inducted into the Georgia Jaycee Rebel Corps.

3. Southeast Georgia Jaycee Fair Board for many years. Not supposed to talk much about what all went on at the fair!! 4. He was very active in the Miss Emanuel County and Miss Southeast Georgia pageants, both as a board member and, set designer, set



**WARNOCK, HAWKINS AND REPRESENTATIVE BUTCH PARRISH**

builder and stage manager. And I'm not talking about just showing up on Saturday night to manage the back stage activities. He designed and built many of our most elaborate sets, working tirelessly and until the last minute to make sure everything was just right. For instance, when the Mississippi River paddle boat was thought to be complete, he decided it needed smoke coming out of the stack, a working paddle wheel, and a gang plank the contestants could walk down from the boat deck. And on Saturday afternoon he made it happen.

More than once we went on stage with wet paint on the set because after everybody went home after the Friday night rehearsal, our recipient would notice something that didn't look just right, and he would come back on Sat-

urday and redo it and paint it again.

He used his enormous writing talents to write the custom lyrics to "As Time Goes By" for the Casablanca Year, and to "Thanks for The Memories" for one of the Anniversary Years.

5. Swainsboro Rotary Club

He has been a faithful member for many years and is a Past President and a Paul Harris Fellow, which is a distinct recognition from Rotary International and carries with it a substantial contribution to the world wide work of Rotary International.

6. East Georgia State College Foundation

Here he provides wise counsel and advice on difficult decisions and regularly brings clarity and unity when differing opinions start to cause dissension.

7. He served on the

Swainsboro Emanuel County Joint Development Authority for over 26 years. For many years switched Chairmanship back and forth with Jerry Ashcroft during some of our most successful years. During one five year period of his leadership the Authority brought in 1000 new jobs, including bringing Nordson to Swainsboro. During that time every available building was occupied.

He was an "all in" member, and was fully involved with every activity of the Authority.

He helped create the Technology Park.

His greatest contribution came from his ability to create an atmosphere that increased the cooperation between the city and county in support of the JDA, gaining full cooperation and participation from both.

(Continued on page 71)



## Chamber of Commerce...

(From page 70)

8. In 2005 he was elected Mayor of the City of Swainsboro, and has now completed his fourth term, serving for 16 years. While Mayor his contributions are significant and many.

During his tenure Swainsboro has built a new police station and a new fire station.

Along with others he has helped improve our airport, building a new terminal and additional hanger space.

The city's waste water treatment facilities have been modernized and improved.

Over 100 streets have been paved, and our downtown sidewalks and crosswalks have been upgraded. We enjoy new and modern downtown street lighting, making our downtown inviting and welcoming both night and day.

He led the effort to re-invigorate the Downtown Development Authority, which I think you can see just from looking around our downtown area has been hugely successful.

His leadership is also fully behind the project to restore our theater. I am told by the committee members that without his help and leadership they could not begin to imagine the progress that is being made on that important project.

Often unnoticed, he traveled many miles and

spent countless hours and days attending meetings and serving on state and regional committees, building relationships with legislators, business and city leaders in order to help our community grow and prosper. He continually searched for and applied for federal and state grants to help boost our economy and help to improve Swainsboro.

### 10. Personal Information

He was born here in Swainsboro in 1950, and graduated from Swainsboro High School in 1968. His mother was a revered and respected teacher, and his father was a successful coach before becoming part owner of a successful car dealership. He attended the University of Georgia and obtained a degree from the Grady School of Journalism.

He is married to the former Jean Davis of Vidalia, and they have two sons, Clark and Phillip, and a beautiful daughter in law, Devin. For many years he worked in the family business, Payne Schwabe Buick Pontiac GMC.

When the business closed he worked for Buckley and Associates for a few years, but cars was too strong in his blood and he opened Schwabe Motors, which he operated for many years. He still has a love for old cars, and loves the family farm where he



**SCHWABE AND HAWKINS**

keeps his collections of Emanuel County memorabilia. I suspect now he is fully retired Jean will be sending him to the farm more often!!

11. He was the recipient of the Chamber of Commerce Person of the Year award in 2006. He has also received the coveted Green Jacket for his dedication to the Pine Tree Festival, and his leadership to the PTF and Southeast Timber Expo Foundation helping the festival take on a new look. His leadership through the city and his personal commitment have caused the festival to soar to new heights. He has also focused on

the timber expo aspect of the foundation, and is working still to expand that aspect of the foundation.

So, in a lifetime of achievement Charles Schwabe has honored and respected our past while at the same time pushing us and our city forward

into a bright future.

He has served with a "quiet" and selfless nature. There have been countless times when Charles has reached out to help those in need, not because he wanted praise or recognition, but because it was the right thing to do. Whether the need was financial or moral support and encouragement or just connecting individuals to needed resources, he gladly provided expecting absolutely nothing in return. There have been numerous occasions when a funeral was scheduled to take place at the City Cemetery, but the grass had not been cut. What would Charles do? Load his lawnmower and get the grass cut before the service began. It is that intrinsic nature of a greater good that burns brightly within Charles... many folks may not know that about him. He has a huge and compassionate heart for others.

Now, he has retired from leading our city as mayor, but I am confident he will still be an active and important leader in our community. After all, old habits are hard to break.

So tonight, we honor Charles Schwabe and present him the Chamber Lifetime Achievement Award, thanking him for all he has done for us and our community! He epitomizes a couple of phrases many of you will recognize: "Earth's greatest treasure lies in human personality, and service to humanity is the best work of life". It was a night to remember, surrounded by many of our outstanding citizens who strive to make our community better each day. If you would like to make a difference within our community, contact the Chamber of Commerce today and join us in making Swainsboro a wonderful place to call home.





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