



The Cover

Once again, The Blade is proud to present the continuing story of the people, organizations and businesses that make up our community. This 2023 annual review takes a look at the first full year of “normal” life as we emerged from under the cloud of a two-year pandemic. As you read the stories within, we think you will find that, even though things may not be exactly as before, the spirit, determination, and the basic human goodness that exemplifies this area is just as strong as ever, if not more so. New possibilities for industrial growth are on the horizon with major infrastructure recently completed including a significant upgrade in rail service to the county. With that in mind, we have chosen a theme for this publication that focuses on the return of vitality and momentum, as well as the exciting potential of new transportation assets bringing future opportunity by rail. So, with appreciation for our customers, our advertisers, and our readers, we welcome you to the next step in our story of “Progress, back on track”

Pictured on the front is Deaerius Odom, of the Georgia Southern Railway who along with Bobby Spires generously stopped for a photo on the newly refurbished 44 mile route from Vidalia to Swainsboro to Midville

Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce and the Emanuel County Development Authority: *Emanuel County's 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 2022.

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 develop-

ment 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 citizens.

During 2022, 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. Several new retail establishments started in 2022 as well, contributing to the net jobs gain. 2022 saw the expansion of five companies in Emanuel County; total new jobs created were 268.

Wincore Windows and Doors, LLC expanded its new manufacturing facility in Swainsboro in 2022 in another existing facility vacated by Husqvarna. Wincore occupies 175,000 square feet of the facility and operates seven production lines with 239 employees.

America Knits, LLC opened its first US manufacturing facility in Swainsboro in the Summer of 2019 and expanded its operation with two additional product lines. The upper-end performance fabric finisher employs 76 employees and is experiencing a significant expansion with the addition of a second industrial building which houses 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 28 projects, 20 of which

are active prospects, four are construction or construction related, four are real estate related, nine are work force related and three are site related. ECDA is also assisting its active prospects with due diligence on sites at various industrial parks in the community.

The Chamber and the ECDA continued to support, sponsor and provide programs such as LYTEE 2.3 (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 began work on the Read United Program and a new Career Opportunities website soon to come on line. Your Chamber will continue to explore new innovative ideas to create new jobs and opportunities for our area.

LYTEE 2.3, 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 31 students participating in LYTEE 2.3 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 225 students have completed Vision 2020/LYTEE 2.3 with 68% 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 direct marketing to find new prospects. The marketing strategies include direct contact with corporate site consultants, direct mailings, and targeted advertising. Also, because most site consultants and real estate consultants do their initial site screening through the internet, the ECDA's website has been updated to utilize state of the art search engine optimization which will provide improved access for site selection professionals.

To enhance the community's ability to attract new industry and to provide for existing industry expansions, the ECDA has seven industrial parks-Emanuel Industrial Park East, Emanuel Industrial Park West, the Richard L. Brown Park, Pathway Technology Park, the East Georgia Regional (EGR) Airport Industrial Park, the I-16 Industrial Park and the 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 infrastructure completed by May of 2023. The water system for the I-16 Park was completed in 2019. Sewer for the I-16 Park is under construction. The fi- (Continued on page 4)



Matt Donaldson, Mayor
Jule Bady, Jr., Mayor Pro Tem
Jesse Brown, City Commissioner
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Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber...

(From page 2)

nal part of the I-16 sewer infrastructure should go out for bid within the next several months. 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. The ECDA also received a \$500,000 OneGeorgia grant in September of 2022 to help with the last part of the I-16 Park sewer infrastructure, two pump stations.

Rehabilitation of the railroad track from the I-16 Industrial Park to Vidalia continued in 2022. Funding was appropriated in 2021 to complete the rehabilitation of the line to Vidalia by Mid-2023. 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 \$9 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 healthcare, 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.

2022 proved to be a year of getting things done for the Emanuel County Board of Commissioners

Roofs were replaced at the county jail, the health department and the Mitchell Building, with much of the money coming from COVID relief funds. The community service parking lot was resurfaced and added onto with TSPLOST money. The new Red Oak Fire Station was built with money from the fire fee and the general fund. Many roads were resurfaced, including Old Key Mill Road and Kite Road from the city limits to the bypass. New generators were installed at the Emanuel County Sheriff's Office through a hazard mitigation grant.

Large construction projects were a highlight of the year including a major renovation to the Senior Center, which was completed in 2022. County Administrator Guy Singletary and the commissioners made it a top priority to be as responsible and as resourceful as they could in utilizing funds.

"Our administrator is really good at getting and securing grants to help pay for these types of things so the money doesn't always have to come from the general fund," District 4 commissioner Jim Sherrod said of Singletary. "We had a great grant for the Senior Center, and that place looks great. They have great leadership and that place is being used in a big way."

Work on the new Emergency Operations Building made big strides in 2022 and is on track to open in 2023. The timeline for that construction has been impacted by supply issues, which have troubled all types of projects worldwide.

The other major construction project is the new administration building that will

house the tax commissioner, tax assessor and the elections office. Ground has been broken and construction will begin in 2023.

"Breaking ground and having that project move forward is a big thing," said District 3 Commissioner Hugh Foskey. "The commissioners worked with the architects to ensure a drive-thru window at the tax commissioner's office. Elderly and handicapped citizens and anyone else who needs to can take care of their tax needs without having to get out of their car."

"You were having to go up three flights of stairs in the old building," Sherrod added. "That building will also be the new voting precinct for Swainsboro. Qualifying can be done there, early voting and day of elections will be done there. There will be plenty of parking, it is going to be nice."

While there is much to look forward to in 2023 and beyond, the Board of Commissioners and the community in general was dealt a tough loss to start this new year. Keith Thompson, who had served as the District 2 commissioner for 24 years, passed away after an extended illness.

"Integrity, character, you name it, he had it," said Sherrod. "He performed the role with a servant's heart. He was a very good commissioner and an even better friend. That was very impactful on all of us."

While the loss of Commissioner Thompson was difficult for everyone, the members all agree that carrying on and carrying out so many of the plans that he worked on is the best way to honor him.

District 3 commissioner

Hugh Foskey will serve as chairman in 2023, as Jim Sherrod moves from Chairman to Vice Chairman.

Timmy Oliver is the new commissioner in District 5. Oliver is a co-owner of Stitch-N-Print and has lived in Twin City and Emanuel County his entire life. He has served as a volunteer firefighter and looks to bring his unique perspectives as both a business owner and a first responder to the board.

"I consider myself a server," Oliver said. "I'm a volunteer fireman, so from the public safety standpoint I think I can bring a different vision to the table. I try to look at all situa-

tions from all angles. I'll look forward to weighing all of the options and working with all of the commissioners."

Added Sherrod: "Timmy coming in will bring some new ideas to the table. He's not coming to rock the boat, he'll feel his way through it."

The commissioners recently finalized their update to the comprehensive five-year plan. It puts a focus on the future, striving for prosperity while keeping true to the values of the people of Emanuel County.

"We have a quality of life here that a lot of places don't have," Sherrod said. "It feels good when you are able to

help people. We are local elected officials, not state-level or national politicians. We're living and working alongside everyone, and we're striving to do everything we can to help everybody out."

"When I finish this term, it will be 20 years," said Foskey. "I have a lot of folks ask, 'Why do you want to be a county commissioner?' I've always gotten pleasure out of being able to help somebody. If I see a person in need, I'm going to help them. If a person calls me, I'm going to talk to them. I think that is the biggest gratification I get, is to be able to help somebody."

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Best of Georgia winners and nominees are chosen by a combination of readers' votes and editors' input, and are vetted through several ranking sites, Better Business Bureau complaint reports,

and voting pattern analysis reports.

The full list of Best of Georgia winners is available at BESTofGEORGIA.com/winners.

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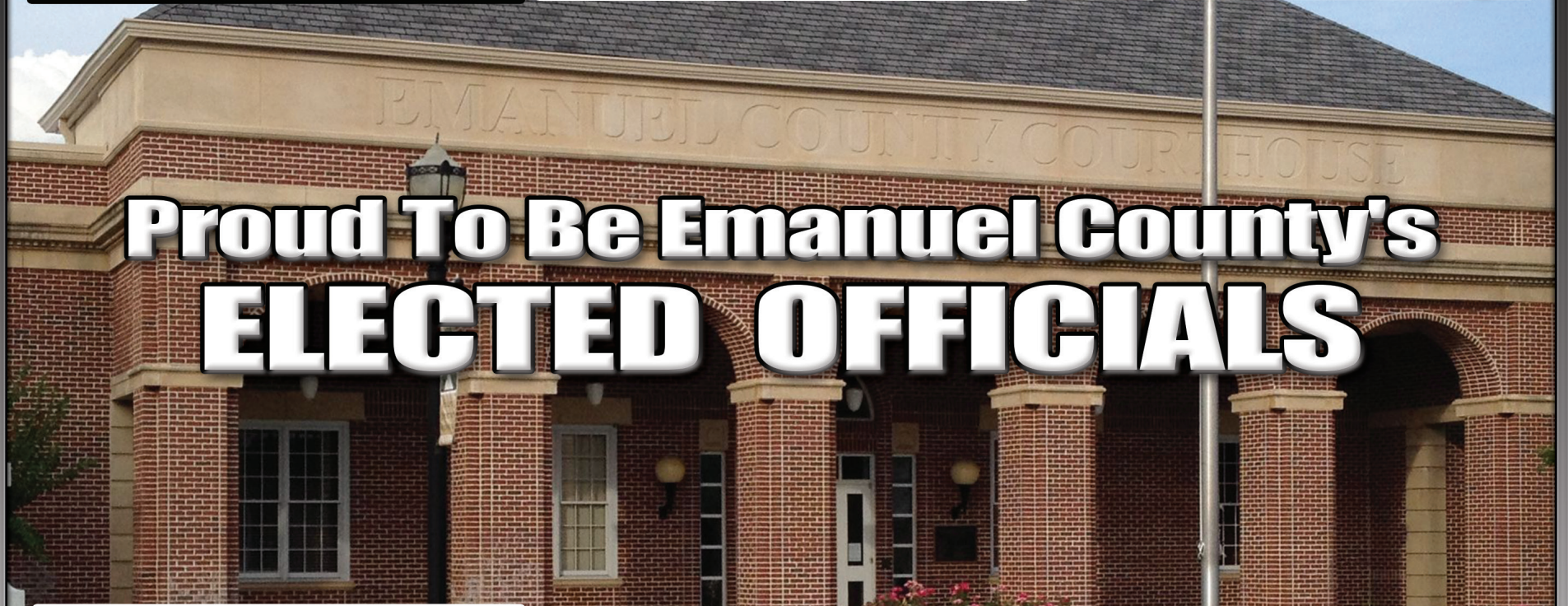
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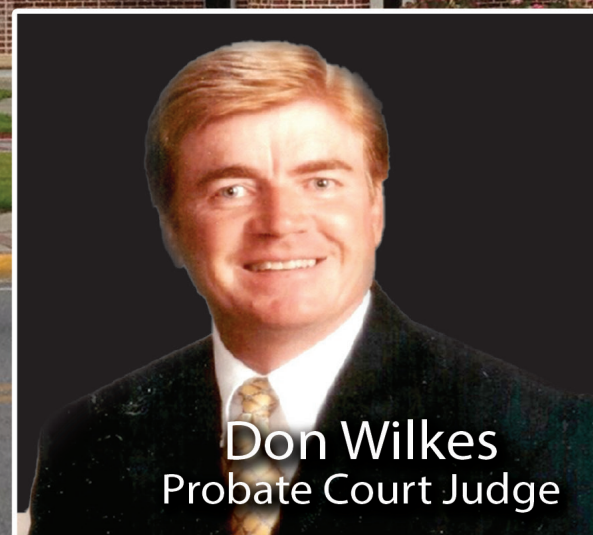
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Don Wilkes
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Sandra Wright
Tax Commissioner

Emanuel Medical Center recognized as Five Star Quality Rated Hospital in 2022

With their approximately 450 employees and more than 40 physicians representing a wide range of specialties, Emanuel Medical Center (EMC) delivers quality advanced medical attention close to home. The team at EMC knows that it takes many elements and factors for a rural hospital to thrive. EMC demonstrates a commitment to excellence through skilled treatment, efficient response, and compassionate service. They strive to provide the best care by having the best equipment and trained personnel. And in 2022, EMC continued to raise the bar and further establish itself as a premier rural hospital.

It was that dedication to excellence that resulted in EMC again being recognized as a Five Star Quality Rated Hospital by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2022. Only six hospitals in the state of Georgia received the Five Star rating, the highest awarded by CMS. The overall star rating summarizes quality information related to mortality, safety of care, readmission, patient experience and timely and effective care. Of 3,093 hospitals rated, only 429 earned five stars in the CMS five-star rating system.

A focus on technology and innovation made EMC a pioneer in the field of telemedicine, and they continue to blaze that important trail today. Through an expanding partnership with Augusta University (AU) and the Medical College of Georgia, EMC gives patients access to specialists at AU, all without leaving EMC. Using a

telemedicine platform, EMC patients are able to receive complex care and consultations from specialists at AU, including emergency medicine and critical care specialists, while allowing them to remain local and keep their support system around them. The program continues to benefit patients and their families while also strengthening rural Georgia.

Thanks in part to financial support received through donations from businesses and individuals that participated in the 2022 Georgia Heart program, a variety of improvements were made around the facility. New signage is featured at the entrance; the nursing home at EMC received new flooring, furniture, and an exterior sign, among numerous upgrades; and the OR has the most up-to-date imaging and screening equipment for colonoscopy screenings. The Georgia Heart program benefits rural hospitals all over Georgia by allowing residents and local businesses to donate funds that can be applied as 100% state tax credits. The window for 2023 donations is open now.

"If you give \$1,000 dollars to Emanuel Medical Center, you're going to get \$1,000 back on your state income taxes," Emanuel Medical Center CEO Damien Scott said. "I feel like we have a duty to this community, and the way we are able to fulfill that duty is through the Georgia Heart program. Most people are going to pay Georgia state taxes. If you owe state taxes, wouldn't you rather give it to us to make decisions



EMANUEL MEDICAL CENTER

to provide live-saving care to our local community? So, I'm asking people to give us the money, you are going to get it back on your taxes."

Support and outreach to the community remained a key component for EMC throughout 2022. Numerous and regular blood drives were held, in addition to a variety of other highlights:

--National Hospital and Nursing week in May 2022 celebrating the staff

--Annual EMC Community Health Fair in October 2022

--Regular meetings of the Diabetic Support Group led by Juanita Porter

--A series of Total Wellness Sessions made possible through a partnership with Emanuel Medical Center, East Georgia Healthcare Center, East Georgia State College, Queensborough National Bank and Trust Company, and CarePartners

--A February 2022 Farm Medic clinic hosted by Emanuel County EMS

--A partnership with Family Connections and First Readers to host a fundraising

drive at EMC in September 2022

Individuals were recognized for their excellence throughout 2022. CEO Damien Scott was named Hospital Leader of the Year by HomeTown Health during their annual Fall Conference in October 2022. The HomeTown Health network spans the entire Southeast and is comprised of more than 70 hospitals.

"The Hospital Leader of the Year award is presented annually to a leader who has demonstrated incredible dedication to their position, their team, and their facility. Leaders receiving this award are known for their innovation, their leadership, their commitment to their employees and their community, and their steadfastness in an industry that is ever-changing," said Jimmy Lewis, CEO of HomeTown Health.

In March 2022, EMS Director Nicky Drake and EMS Educator John Maybry attended the Georgia EMS Association Awards Banquet at Lake Lanier Island. While there, re-

tired Emanuel County EMS Director Courtney Terwilliger was chosen for the Dr. John B. O'Neal III EMS Pioneer Award to honor his service on the local, regional, and state level through his career.

Jessica Johnson, the Chief Financial Officer for EMC, was named to Georgia Southern's annual "40 under 40" list that celebrates young alumni who are leading the way in business, research, leadership, community service, education, and philanthropy.

While those are just a few of the many honors and accolades bestowed upon the incredible staff and facility that makes up EMC, every accomplishment is driven by the same thing – the never-ending pursuit to provide the highest quality care to the residents of Emanuel County. Year after year, EMC continues to strive to provide excellent patient care and customer service to the citizens of Emanuel County, and that is something you can depend on them for in 2023 and beyond.

A busy year for our District Attorney's office

2022 was a busy year in the District Attorney's office. A backlog of cases created by the COVID pandemic made for a very full schedule for Tripp Fitzner and his staff.

315 felony cases were closed out in 2022, the highest number in Emanuel County since 2013. At the top of that list were some high-profile murder cases that were gang related. On December 19, 2022, the office secured convictions against all three defendants stemming from a gang-related shooting that occurred in March 2019 and resulted in the murder of JaMichael Jerrod Walker.

"It has been important to me that we let the people that live here know that we are going after violent gang activity," Fitzner said. "Typically, the people victimized by gang violence are the most marginalized people in our community. I want children in every community to be able to play outside and be safe, just like everyone else wants that. We have had a lot of success prosecuting these violent gang members. Even if we weren't successful in those prosecutions, we'd still be going after them. It's a priority."

Those types of cases can be complicated, and it takes work from many different departments and agencies just to get them to court.

"For the gang-related trial we had in December, just getting people to show up to court can be incredibly frustrating," Fitzner said. "That is because the people are more afraid of the gang members than they are of us. I want to change that. The way you get that change is by showing people in the community what happens when they commit these crimes."

Addressing violent crime and ensuring justice is a vital

role. But, like everything in life, balance is often the key to success. The DA's office is interested in proactive approaches that can impact the lives of those people who may be at risk of following down a criminal path.

"We've started an early intervention program to try to divert people away from a life of crime," Fitzner explained. "In this county we have 35 participants. We may have an individual with a lower-level felony offense with minimal victim impact. We may try to divert their case, help them get resources, education and counseling. We are going to deal with criminals who hurt people and commit acts of violence. They should go to prison. But, there is a group of people that we should help, not everyone should go to prison. The key to anything is balance."

The office has also worked with people in Emanuel County and in surrounding counties from the circuit to help people get their past criminal records cleared up.

"We've held events to help people with expungements," Fitzner said. "If you're arrested and you don't get convicted, we should leave you in as good of a position as we found you. It can sometimes be confusing for people to sort that out. So, we've held these events around the circuit to help people with that. We need the people in the community to buy into us, into our professional community leaders. It needs to be a partnership, and the more people that can help, the better."

Between the work in the court room, and the efforts in the community, 2022 was certainly a year of progress for the District Attorney's office. Fitzner credits much of that to

the people around him.

"We have, right now, the best group of lawyers that I have ever seen in our office. I've got a really good staff, and that makes being District Attorney so much easier," Fitzner stated. "We are not perfect, as far as I know only one person has ever been perfect and he was crucified for it. But, we all care about the work that we do, and we care about the community and making it safer. If you don't have a spirit for wanting to help people, you can't be in this job. Nobody is in this job anymore for the benefits or the paycheck. They do it because they are invested in the com-

munity, and they want to help folks. I can teach somebody the law, I can teach somebody how to try a case, but I can't teach them to care. We've got a group who really cares, and that makes a difference."

As the focus turned to 2023, the office reported 678 open felony cases in Emanuel County. Much of this still stems from the lasting effects of the backlog of cases created throughout 2020 and 2021 when COVID restrictions made prosecuting cases impossible. Fitzner was elected to office in 2021 and initially had hopes of moving through as many cases as possible, as

quickly as possible. However, it became clear that wasn't the right course of action.

"We have two judges for a five-county circuit," Fitzner stated. "We have a public defender's office that has one circuit public defender and one other attorney. It didn't matter how fast we wanted to move cases, they just couldn't keep up. So, that was actually causing us to get even further behind. When you are going wide open, you're not able to resolve as many cases. One of the things I learned over the last year is that you have to be a little more measured. That (Continued on page 10)

PROUD TO BE A PART OF EMANUEL COUNTY'S PROGRESS



Tripp
Fitzner

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

A busy year...

(From page 9)

means that some people have to wait a little longer to get their time in court. But, once they get into court, we can get it resolved quicker."

The goals for the current year remain similar to the goals since Fitzner took office in 2021: a focus on bringing criminals who commit violent crimes to justice, with specific focus on gang-related incidents; growing their early intervention program to divert and support those that may be at risk for turning to a life of crime; a commitment to closing cases

with a measured approach as they continue to dwindle the backload of cases that has burdened the entire legal system over the last couple of years; but, above all, a commitment to making the community a better place for all who live here.

"Ultimately, if you are the DA or any other person, you want to treat people the way you want to be treated," Fitzner said. "I live here, my wife lives here, my kids live here. We are invested. So, having Emanuel County safer is a priority for me, in all walks of my life."

ECISO makes strong statement against violent and gang-related crime in 2022

In 2022, Emanuel County Sheriff Jeffrey Brewer completed his second full year at the helm. This past year brought a continued focus on staff training and many improvements in equipment, technology and resources. In just his second year as Sheriff, he led a team in cutting down on violent crime. He also continued improving conditions for inmates in the hopes of giving them a second chance at being productive members of the community.

The Sheriff's Office and District Attorney's Office ended

the year making a strong statement against violent, gang-related crime. In December 2022, three defendants were found guilty of murder, stemming from an apparent gang-related shooting that left one dead in 2019.

"With that trial and the Tony Williams trial from 2021, law enforcement made a major hit against gang violence," Sheriff Brewer said. "It made a big statement to the community that the Sheriff's Office and District Attorney's Office are committed to reducing crime and making our community safe.

Before being elected, Sheriff Brewer served as the Jail Administrator within the agency, an area he still places a large focus on. The two plus years he spent as jail administrator made a large impact on him.

"The majority of the people in our jail are not bad people, they just made a bad choice," Sheriff Brewer explained. "Even though they committed a crime, they still deserve to be treated with respect and dignity."

One area of improvement started on January 1, 2022, a full-time nurse was hired and began working at the jail.

"When an individual is arrested, the nurse does a comprehensive medical history on them. When the nurse began, they had 140 inmates to catch up on," Sheriff Brewer said. When an inmate has a medical issue, the nurse is on site to treat them.

Sheriff Brewer continues to place a high priority on opportunities for change. He along with Chief Deputy Nick Robertson and Major West Bedgood, Jail Administrator, continue to look for programs



SHERIFF BREWER

to offer the inmates. Every program we can offer gives the person another avenue for change. The GED program launched in 2021 in conjunction with Southeastern Technical College has seen 35 plus graduates. In 2021, we began offering the Forklift class then added a Life Skills class in 2022.

"All inmates are eligible to take the life-skills class," Sheriff Brewer said. "It discusses subjects dealing with everyday life. With the GED program, we are a little bit limited because a number of the inmates already have high school diplomas or a GED and some have college degrees."

Sheriff Brewer stated, "We have seen the differences that can be made through these programs."

Sheriff Brewer said, "If you cannot give a person a second chance, then we live in sad times. When you offer many opportunities to change and see many failures, you are ready to give up on them. All it takes is one success and it reinvigorates you."

As always, the safety of our schools is of utmost importance. In conjunction with our Board of Education and Superintendent Scotty Hattaway, (Continued on page 11)

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ECSO makes strong...

(From page 10)
a fourth school resource officer was added January 1, 2022.

Prior to the school year starting, Sheriff Brewer and Chief Deputy Robertson met with Superintendent Hattaway and school administrators and discussed active shooter scenarios. We then participated in several practice drills.

Sheriff Brewer introduced an impaired driving presentation this past year. In addition to a presentation, the students don "drunk goggles" which impair their vision and drive a golf cart through a path marked with traffic cones. There are 5 goggles which have differing levels of alcohol and 1 goggle which simulates marijuana usage. The idea came from DEA Headmaster Haylee Free so the inaugural group was the DEA senior class. Plans are to provide this opportunity to Swainsboro High School

and Emanuel County Institute soon.

Sheriff Brewer is a firm believer in training. An educated staff is able to perform their duties knowledgeably, confidently and correctly. If each member completed the minimum of 20 hours per year, there would be 600 total hours. In the year prior to Sheriff Brewer being elected, the Sheriff's Office had a total of 900 training hours. In 2021, Sheriff Brewer's first year, they acquired more than 2,000 training hours, a number they were able to surpass in 2022.

"We are dedicated to bringing the staff up where they need to be," Sheriff Brewer said. "I believe in leading from the front so whatever I require to be done, Chief Deputy Robertson and I do it first." I believe in training and equipping our people to do their jobs.

Each year, Sheriff Brewer

chooses a class for each deputy to complete.

In 2021, every deputy completed active shooter training.

Crisis Intervention Training was the class of choice for 2022. C.I.T. teaches the deputy how to deal with mentally stressed individuals. All deputies completed this training.

Chief Deputy Robertson added, "When you go through these training drills, like the active shooter, it gives you a different perspective. After you receive the training, you understand better what you need to do."

The Sheriff's Office ventured into new territory with the purchase of 3 drones. These drones allow us to see where we could not before. One of the drones is equipped with a FLIR system (forward looking infrared). This system detects heat which allows us to track people. It is used for missing

persons as well as someone fleeing from law enforcement.

The third drone can be maneuvered in tight quarters. It is driven with goggles. The operator can see through the goggles just like driving a car. It can be flown in houses, attics, crawl spaces or anywhere imaginable. This eliminates the danger of law enforcement blindly entering buildings. Sheriff Brewer stated, "We send the drone in first to take a look around. This prevents injuries to our deputies."

Another highlight in the 2022 calendar was the return of the Georgia Sheriff's Youth Home/Herrington Homestead annual golf tournament which had been on a three-year hiatus throughout COVID. The event raised more than \$20,000 for Herrington Homestead in Swainsboro. The event will return in 2023, with hopes to grow to a bigger event this

year.

In total, it was certainly a year of progress for the Emanuel County Sheriff's Office. The commitment to serve the county was strengthened through investment in staff training, community outreach, and equipment upgrades. The department's focus on violent crime and efforts to cut down on gang-related violence saw criminals put behind bars, while more programs and tactics were developed to help divert others away from a life of crime. All of these efforts have better positioned Sheriff Brewer and the Sheriff's Office for another year of serving their community.

Thank you to Sheriff Jeffrey Brewer and the Emanuel County Sheriff's Office for their dedicated service and commitment to make our community safe.

2022 Yearly Review from Twin City Police Department

Twin City Police Department is located at 112 South Railroad Ave, Twin City. Jule Bady serves as police commissioner for the department. The department is directed under the leadership of Chief of Police Hank Whitters, assisted by full-time officer: Tiffany Dixon, part-time officers: Gheorghe Register and Trevor Patterson and Administrative Police Clerk Jessica Sumner, who also serves as Municipal Court Clerk. The Honorable Richard McNeely presides as Municipal Court Judge, Sam DeRocco from Brown Rountree is Court Solicitor, and Attorney Richard Thompson is the Court's Public Defender.

Crime rate:

As far as crime rate, the Chief reported that there was a significant decrease in 2022.

Community Response:

In the year 2022, TCPD re-

ceived very few complaints on how the department operates and its officers. Majority of the complaints were concerning animals. We are still combating the loose dogs in the area, but have succeeded in getting some of the more aggressive ones removed from the city. It's a slow process catching wild dogs, but we are making headway with the help of the Swainsboro Animal Shelter. We have issued \$200.00 leash law citations to those who we know the dogs belong and will continue to do so until this issue is resolved. Buzzards are another concern to our citizens. They were taking over the water towers, Pineland Telephone's tower, and in the local citizens trees inside the city limits, causing damage to property and loss of pets. Being the birds are a protected species, the City of Twin City

teamed up with Pineland Telephone and USDA to do a legal and controlled removal of the birds. The birds do not like loud noise, so they would shoot off fireworks and blanks several evenings in a row at roosting time. It has been proven to annoy them, so they move to a different area to roost. There has been a dramatic decline in the number of birds in the city. In Office...

Twin City Police Department did lose several officers in 2022 to other agencies, however, in July, Officer Tiffany Dixon attended Police Academy at Columbia County Sheriff's Office Academy. She graduated on September 23, 2022. She was officially sworn in with Twin City Police Department on October 7th during a small ceremony in the Commissioners Chambers/Municipal Courtroom at

the police department.

Twin City Municipal Court:

Twin City Police Clerk and Municipal Clerk Jessica Sumner described the year as "business as usual." She advised that court arraignments are current and the appointment of the solicitor and public defender in 2021 has proven to be very beneficial to the Municipal Court. "Court runs more smoothly and efficiently than ever before. Having those positions filled brings more knowledge and different viewpoints into the courtroom, to better serve the citizens of Twin City," Sumner states.

Chief Whitters to the Community...

Many of the residents and individuals that travel through our small area are very courteous people when dealing with them. Most of them under-

stand 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 following:

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.

Full steam ahead in Twin City

2022 was another successful year in Twin City. The year was spent continuing to work on city infrastructure and equipment needs, as well as looking towards planning the future.

In February 2022, the City was approved for a USDA Community Facilities Grant and Loan to replace the Public Works grapple arm truck. The City received a \$50,000 grant to facilitate the purchase.

In March 2022, the City announced it was selected to participate in the first USDA Rural Partners Network (RPN) cohort. RPN was a new initiative to bring federal resources to rural America. There were only (3) communities in Georgia selected, and Georgia was one of only (5) states selected. Mayor Donaldson said, "This program has been a great hon-



DONALDSON

or to be selected to participate in. We hope even more great news will be announced in 2023."

In May 2022, the City received a Fire Department Fireworks grant of \$24,516.00 to replace safety equipment. Also, in preparation for a 2023 resurfacing project, the City Commission engaged the city

engineer to complete an assessment of all city roads with each road rated based on need.

In June 2022, the City approved to construct a new bathroom facility in Graymont Community Park. The park did not previously have a bathroom facility. Mayor Pro Tem Jule Bady, Jr. led this project, and the City Commission moved forward in June.

In August 2022, the City approved the SPLOST 7 intergovernmental agreement and budget. SPLOST 7 will run from January 2024 – December 2029 with an estimated collection for Twin City of \$750,000.00. Also, the City approved to begin construction on a new isolation system for the water system. This will allow the City to be able to cut off water service in sections of Twin City, when there is a major water issue.

In November 2022, the City Commission approved to roll the property tax millage rate back 2.89%. The City Commission has reduced the millage rate every year since 2020.

In December 2022, the City Commission selected (13) roads to be considered for resurfacing in 2023. The roads were submitted to the city engineer for cost estimates. Also, the City Commission approved to payoff a loan to the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority 3 years early, which will save the City interest costs.

Mayor Donaldson closed with, "The City Commission is moving the City forward with needed infrastructure and equipment improvements. We have been successful with seeking out grant funding to help fund these projects, which takes some of the burden off the City budget. There will be even more improvements in 2023!"

The Sunshine House

by CAROL DONALDSON,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The year 2022 brought us a little relief from COVID 19 and more children and families were able to come to The Sunshine House CAC for services. Our data shows us that 292 children and 246 Caregivers were provided services in 2022. Of those new children 147 received Forensic Interviews and 143 received Forensic Medical Exams. There were 936 or more hours of Counseling and 894 hours of parent education by our staff.

During the year we were able to provide training to two staff members at the Crimes Against Children Conference in Dallas, Texas,

thanks to financial support from Mill Creek Foundation. Staff received training through peer review and conferences at the State level, many provided and required by our funding agencies. We held our Annual Meeting in the Fall with over 110 in attendance and had a luncheon for a group of women who support funding for our prevention programs.

Board Members continued to work hard and they heard from staff who were new during the year. Swainsboro Board members include Wilder Smith, President; Jean Schwabe, Vice-President; Carole Youmans, Secretary; and G. W. Johnson, Treasurer. Other local members are Mary Elam, Sharon Wilson, Kenny Griffin and Rusty Lane. We are entering the 2023 fully staffed, for the first time with the addition of a Counselor for Washington and Jefferson Counties. A new Finance Manager took the reins running. Our most long needed addition in 2022 was the hiring of a Honduran

woman, Maria Davis, who serves as a Family Advocate in Toombs County and provides Spanish translations to families in all counties. The staff currently in the Swainsboro office include Lei Bragg, Child Abuse Nurse Practitioner; Heather Cowart, Counselor and Forensic Interviewer; Brandi Hood, Family Advocate, Medical Advocate and House Manager; Brooke McBride, part-time Family Advocate and medical support, and Executive Director Carol Donaldson; Rita Neesmith, Forensic Interviewer; and Ashley Thompson, Finance Manager.

The 2022 year Give-A-Thon was a rousing success with over \$125,000 raised in December to surpass our \$100,000 goal. This funding helps provide operational expenses, administrative support, program supplies, client assistance and those items not provided for by grant funding. We are grateful for our hard-working board and staff and we maintain our focus on the abused children and families in crisis that we see. What makes our work possible, in addition to two federal grants that pay most salaries, is the financial support of churches, civic clubs, businesses and individual donors. We are able to say to the families, we are here to help you, and to children who want one, they get a hug. Tears are often shared by all involved but we know that we are fulfilling the mission and vision of those in the late 80s and early 90s like Rosby McKenzie, Rick Malone, and many others. Today, our treasured donors continue to help make it all possible. With their support, we look confidently to 2023.



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SPD answers more than 23,000 calls in 2022

The standard.

That was the theme that kept coming up during a recent conversation with Swainsboro Police Chief Randy Ellison as he reflected on 2022 and the staff he oversees.

"The community is going to demand the law enforcement they deserve," Ellison said. "They expect us to respond quickly because that is what we have done. That is the standard, and we must live up to it."

The Swainsboro Police Department has a response time of three minutes for calls that come into their office. They maintained that standard in 2022, despite the number of calls increasing from roughly 19,000 in 2021, to more than 23,000 in 2022.

"You have a call every 18 minutes," Ellison said. "The hard part is when you have such a good working staff, trained and educated, and they have made the standard a 3-minute response time, how do you improve it? The call may be as simple as someone locking themselves out of their house, and they have nobody else to turn to. It has nothing to do with criminal justice, no violation of any laws, but it's the right thing to do to answer that call and go help."

Being ready to answer every call and treat it professionally and efficiently is paramount.

"In 2022, our detectives solved 68% of the crime that was reported to this agency," Ellison said. "The national average is 29%. We did that because we know people and they trust us and give us

good information. In turn, we protect them and we follow up and we solve crime. The more trust we have in the community, the better we can do our job."

The department holds that trust in the community sacred. Fair and compassionate treatment goes a long way in earning those community feelings.

"I tell my officers, 'I will give you two warning books a day and one ticket book,'" Ellison said. "What does that tell you? Not everybody deserves a charge, some people deserve an opportunity to correct it. That shows compassion. If you just use that 4,822-page code book that Georgia gives you, I can go out at any time and see some type of violation. But, that's not what we should be doing."

Expanded staffing, increased training and improved equipment all play a part in progress each year for the department. In 2022, SPD increased to having four officers per shift instead of three. But it is the quality of the officers, not the quantity, that Ellison puts his focus on.

"We will have some attrition and turnover that can make it to where we aren't at capacity at all times," Ellison explained. "I expect officers to dress a certain way and conduct themselves a certain way, we don't lower our standards, that is not what we do here. We are only as good as our weakest link. If we have a weak link, we make sure we get that training. We may put them with a field training officer, someone who is really good,



CHIEF ELLISON

that they can observe and watch."

While the people are important, the tools they use often can be the difference in a success and a failure. In 2022, SPD was able to upgrade in a number of areas.

"Cops love new stuff. New gear makes us more proficient," Ellison said. "Every officer on the street has a body camera that functions. They have the authority to look at the footage. They can't erase anything as it is protected, but they can look and document the incident and use it for their reports. Another upgrade in 2022 was every single car now has a computer in the car. This gives them the ability to send reports back to the office instead of having to come back and physically log in to submit them. I can pause a report I am working on in my car and answer another call. It keeps officers out on the street."

The equipment in the cars improved, and there was also a focus put on the vehicles themselves. The city began updating the fleet in 2022, with more talks ongoing with Enterprise that would see them rotating in

new cars every 4-5 years.

"It's important to have a reliable vehicle in this job," Ellison said. "If your house is being broken into and you call us, you don't want to hear that our car broke down on our way out to help you. I've been vocal about this, our people are doing a good job and we need certain things to service the citizens. I think we have made big improvements there and will continue to do so."

2022 was also the first full year that the department got the full benefit of the K-9 unit, which it brought back to the force in 2021. Maya, a Belgium malawa/shepherd mix, and handler Detective James Young produced impressive results for both the city and county in terms of drug detection and human tracking.

"Maya has proven to be a huge resource," Ellison said. "It has brought a whole new aspect, things we can't see, but we really think are there. There have been changes with laws as it relates to reasonable suspicion versus probable cause. If we have reasonable suspicion, we can utilize the dog."

Through exhaustive training exercises, Maya and Detective Young have achieved national certification by attending accreditation classes that are held in Cartersville, GA. This allows the agency to not just have a state certification, but elite status at the national and federal level.

"We wanted that recognition so when a bad guy has money to hire a high dollar attorney, they can't dispute the accreditation of the dog,"

Ellison explained. "Often the dog is the probable cause that leads to an arrest, and we want to make sure we are on solid ground. When you have a handler that cares about doing it the right way, that carries over to the dog and then to the agency. It all starts with James, he is a go-getter. She stays with him 24/7, and nobody can handle her except for him. I wanted to see the results, and they have delivered."

From the burgeoning K-9 unit to developments in technology, improved equipment and disciplined training sessions, many things impacted and improved the Swainsboro Police Department in 2022. All are tools that can be used to help improve the effectiveness of the department and each officer. But, sometimes success can come down to just one simple thing.

"A lot of it is the ability to talk to people," Ellison said. "No matter what the situation is, we have to be able to de-escalate when we need to de-escalate. It all goes back to training and experience. That officer has five seconds to make a decision that a judge and jury take two weeks to decide on. We can't hesitate, and we can't lose. The public expects us to win. If we lose, then why are we there?"

They are there to serve, to maintain peace, to provide safety, to reduce fear, to solve problems and to improve the quality of life in Swainsboro on a daily basis. We thank the SPD and Chief Ellison for keeping their standard so high.

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Citizens Bank produces another year of growth

by MILTON GRAY

The Citizens Bank of Swainsboro produced another year of growth and solid performance in 2022. Our locally owned and operated community bank has locations in Swainsboro, Dublin, and Statesboro. The bank's consolidated assets grew 9.06% to \$329,440,300, loans increased 20.72% to \$230,797,666, and deposits increased 10.04% to \$294,651,298. Our year-end Tier One Leverage Capital Ratio was 10.06% 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 strong earnings.

Our second Laurens County branch located in the historic downtown district of Dublin, grew their loan portfolio by 42.80% to \$35,847,381. The original Laurens County office located at 1210 Hillcrest Parkway 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 their loan portfolio by 30.40% to \$113,391,297 producing significant earnings for the bank. Caroline K. Nelson is the Market President operating under the trade name *Bulloch First*. Senior Vice-President of Lending Zac Frye was a strong contributor to loan growth by serving customers in Swainsboro and Bulloch County.

E-sign technology was introduced to our customers in 2022 allowing them to conveniently sign loan documents remotely without



GRAY

having to come into the bank. Carneage Young was promoted to Senior Vice-President of Information Technology, and Information Technology Specialist Thomas Smith was added to our team as another layer of protection for cybersecurity. We plan to enhance the digital platform of banking services available to our customers with a growing Information Technology team.

The eighteenth class of our Student Advisory Board was selected, consisting of forty-six seniors from Swainsboro High School, Emanuel County Institute, and David Emanuel Academy. As the future leaders of Emanuel County, we exposed them to the world of banking, personal finance, community leadership, and the importance of volunteerism and community participation. 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 2023. At the Citizens Bank of Swainsboro our "Prime Interest" is you.

Daniels Chevrolet: Since 1926

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

With the addition of Oldsmobile, the Daniels sold the first cars in Emanuel County with air conditioning and automatic transmissions. Arthur's son, Dickie, joined the dealership in 1959. Dickie's three sons all joined the dealership as they entered the business world. Son, Richard, joined in the early 1980s; Ed joined in 1984; and Dickie's third son, Sam, joined his father and brothers in 1993. Today, Richard is general manager; Ed is sales manager; and Sam manages the service and parts department. In 2015, Sam's son, Rich, joined the sales team. In 2020, Sam's son Jake also joined the 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 250 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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Pediatrics is a full time job

East Georgia Healthcare Center (EGHC) in Swainsboro has recently gotten a facelift. Their home office on North Coleman Street was renovated and expanded to provide a better patient experience, and to fully encompass multiple aspects of primary healthcare. Offering full-time comprehensive pediatric service is one of EGHC's main areas of focus. EGHC has also partnered with the Emanuel County Board of Education to bring care directly to our county's schools.

EGHC has 3 pediatric medical providers in their Swainsboro location. Dr. Claudio Machado, Dr. Cheryl Cliff, and Paige Neely, FNP. These providers, along with their teams, bring years of experience and knowledge to our community in Emanuel County. Dr. Machado has worked at EGHC for the past 7 years. Before coming to work at EGHC he was a Pediatrician at Vidalia Pediatrics for 14 yrs. He has been a board-certified Pediatrician for over 35 years.

Dr. Cliff, a board-certified Pediatrician, has dedicated the past 30 years to serving children in Georgia. She has a diverse range of experiences, having worked as a Neonatal Hospitalist, a Pediatric Hospitalist, and an Outpatient Pediatrician. She's been in the Atlanta area most of her career but she has been in Southeast Georgia for the past 6 years.

Paige Neely is a resident of Emanuel County and has recently joined the EGHC work family. Prior to joining them she was an ICU nurse at Fairview Park Hospital for 7 years. During her time in Family Nurse Practitioner school and her pediatric rotation, she developed a passion for providing care to children. She completed the FNP program in

May 2022.

Peyton Frye from EGHC emphasizes the significance of delivering healthcare services in a manner, location, and approach that caters to the patient's comfort and best interests. He said, "EGHC is committed to providing high-quality primary healthcare services to all those in need, and our pediatric practice is an example of our dedication to delivering age-specific and location-based care to the residents of Emanuel County." EGHC accepts most health plans and offers a sliding fee discount scale for anyone that meets the requirements.

EGHC began prioritizing school-based healthcare in 2018, and they are excited to continue partnering with school systems throughout their service area. Their goal is to provide families with convenient access to high-quality care that fits their needs. EGHC is constantly looking for new opportunities to bring healthcare services to more students, educators, and schools in our community. For the past 5 years, EGHC has also provided free sports physicals for athletes and students in many of our local schools, further demonstrating their commitment to promoting the health and well-being of our community's youth. Additionally, they offer online booking and telehealth services to make it easier for families to access care from the comfort of their own homes. Stay tuned for updates on EGHC's upcoming school-based locations and partnerships!

EGHC began offering school-based care in Twin City last fall. Currently EGHC uses one of their mobile medical units to bring in person primary

care to Twin City Elementary two days per week, as well as every other Friday at ECI. Twin City's very own, Brandon Johnson, FNP provides in-person care to students and staff in need of a primary care home or simply same day care on the state of the art medical mobile unit. "It is truly an honor to provide healthcare to families I know and to serve the schools that I attended. I am excited about the possibilities this opportunity presents for my community," said Brandon.



JOHNSON, JEAN MARIE HUNTER, ANNA CAROLINE FRYE, DAISHA DURDEN AND FRYE



BRANDON JOHNSON, FNP



DR. CHERYL CLIFF



DR. CLAUDIO MACHADO



PAIGE NEELY, FNP

Durden Banking Company since 1935

Durden Banking Company, Inc. remained sound and committed to its mission with another great year in 2022. H. Wade Johnson, President & CEO said, "The bank completed another successful year in 2022. We saw increased profitability over 2021 with strong loan growth. We also saw overall assets grow by 10%." Durden Banking Company, Inc. remains a 5-Star rated bank, which is the highest rating awarded by Bauer Financial – a nationally recognized bank research firm.

Along with strong financial growth, Durden Banking Company, Inc. saw key

promotions of senior staff. In August 2022, the Board of Directors announced the promotions of James O. Cowart, Jr., Matt W. Donaldson, and Judy L. Price. Cowart, who has been with the bank since 1994, was promoted to Chief Operations Officer. Donaldson, who has been with the bank since 2006, was promoted to Chief Financial Officer. Price, who has been with the bank since 2000, was promoted to Swainsboro City President. President & CEO H. Wade Johnson said, "This group of key promotions recognizes the continued growth in our manage-

ment team. This group has a combined 66 years of experience with just Durden Banking Company, with overall banking experience of 100 years."

Newly promoted City President Judy Price celebrated 50 years of banking in Georgia in 2022. The Georgia Bankers Association officially recognizes any banker who devotes 50 years to the industry. At the bank's annual Christmas party, Price was presented with a resolution from the Georgia Bankers Association by its President & CEO Joe Brannen in recognition of her service. Price has banked in

Emanuel County for nearly all of those 50 years.

The bank also celebrated retirements of long-standing employees in 2022 of Jan Lamb (with 35 years of service), Peggy Hurst (with 32 years of service), R. Jack Mincey, Sr. (with 15 years of service), and Carol Odom (with 21 years of service). Peggy & Jan worked in the Swainsboro office, Jack Mincey worked in Twin City, and Carol Odom worked in Metter.

Durden Banking Company's website, located at www.durdenbc.com, had a facelift in late 2020, and continues to be enhanced with new features. The site now adapts to the size of your device screen, helping customers 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. 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 rap-



JOHNSON

id 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.

President & CEO H. Wade Johnson closed with this, "We sell an experience, it just happens to be banking. We want that experience to exceed your expectations in every way. We will continue to focus on being a true community bank, while remaining independent with local management and local decision making. We pledge to continue serving the people and businesses in our markets. We want to be your bank, so we look forward to serving you in the years to come."

Durden Banking Company, Inc was founded in 1935 in Twin City. The bank has offices in Twin City, Swainsboro, Metter, and Millen. The bank has been locally owned and operated since it was founded in 1935.

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Feeding the Future: Crider Foods' efforts to support local teachers

Stillmore-based food packing company, Crider Foods employs over 850 people from the surrounding counties. From homeless food drives to sponsoring youth sports teams and supporting local church congregations, the organization has a long history of working to give back to the communities where its employees live. Three years ago, they noticed that teachers in the surrounding schools were being asked to teach larger numbers of students with fewer resources. In response, they launched the "Teacher Pay it Forward" campaign to help fill the gap and ensure local educators have the tools needed to create bright futures for the next generation. The program has not only provided much-needed resources to deserving teach-

ers but also highlighted the invaluable work that they do.

The annual Teacher Pay it Forward campaign encourages students, parents, and community members from the surrounding counties to nominate inspiring teachers who have gone above and beyond their call of duty. When nominating a teacher, they are asked to write about what makes them extraordinary and share a story that illustrates their impact. A group of outstanding teachers is then selected to receive \$1,500 each in classroom supplies, allowing them to make an even greater impact in the coming school year.

This program has grown rapidly in only two years' time. In 2021, they received 53 submissions, but that number skyrock-



CAMPBELL

eted to over 500 in 2022. \$13,500 in school supplies has already been provided to Emanuel and Candler County teachers since the program's inception. Thanks to the overwhelming success of Teacher Pay It Forward, Crider Foods will be expanding the program in 2023. This year, Bulloch and Toomb county schools will also be included, resulting in teachers from 46 schools being eligible for nominations. Crider Foods is also expanding funding for the program. A total of \$19,500 will be divided among 13 selected teachers in 2023. Each exceptional teacher chosen will be provided with a \$1,500 budget to spend on additional classroom supplies for the upcoming school year.

The Teacher Pay It Forward program is part of a larger effort by Crider Foods to go beyond the factory floor, working to make a positive impact on the communities where its workforce members reside. "We recognize that the teachers in our local communities are superheroes. With limited resources, they are educating and enriching the future of this great nation, our children. Our hope is that the Teacher Pay It Forward campaign will not only recognize these overachievers but also amplify their great work by providing them with additional tools to get the job done," said Aaron Schoeneberger, Crider Foods' Director of Marketing. "At Crider Foods, our core purpose is feeding the future. For us, this term is more

about who we are than what we do. We grow people, we support our local community, local and national business partners, our families, and those that are entrusted to us each and every day and yes, we also make food."

Nominations for the 2023 Teacher Pay It Forward campaign will open on April 10, and can be submitted at TeacherPayItForward.com.

Teacher Pay it Forward 2022 Winners:

Debra Austin, from Swainsboro Elementary School

Cherly Cobb, from Metter Elementary School

Donna Campbell, from David Emanuel Academy

Annette Worthen, from Twin City Elementary

Devin Coxwell, from Swainsboro Primary School.

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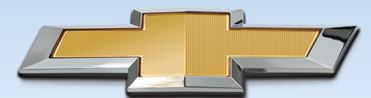
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Our Historic Society

by Missy Elder

The Emanuel County Historic Preservation Society was established in 1976 in honor of the nation's Bicentennial. 2023 is its 47th year! The Society is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Membership dues, fundraisers, and 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 three history books, *Pine Log Echoes, Vol. 1-3*, are available at Swainsboro's

Main Street Market along with *Tram Lines to Longleaf Pines* (Emanuel's railroads) and *Smithton-Blundale, Images of America, Emanuel County*, and the Georgia Historical dinner and salad plates, in blue and pink. James Dorsey's *Footprints Along the Hoop-ee, Vol. 2* is available at The Market as is *Images of America, Emanuel County* book. Ed Schwabe's *Sherman's March* maps are available at the museum.

The museum is located at 161 Museum Rd, across from the Jaycee Fairgrounds. It rep-

licates an 1890s farm named Longview Farm in honor of the original community near the museum. An open house is being scheduled for Thursday, April 27th, 1-7 PM at the museum with a short meeting at 7 for election of officers. Our Fall Harvest Open House will be Saturday, October 21 from 1-5:30 p.m. with a quarterly meeting at 6 that day. We do not have a theme yet, but the ghost stories were a hit in 2022. The April and October meetings will include a potluck supper as our meetings do.

We continue to be open for tours, family reunions or picnic opportunities for clubs. The Society continues to add and improve. Membership is growing. 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, and a naval stores display containing more than 50 artifacts used for gum dipping from the early 1900s. We continue to add to the "Old Hardware Store" named in honor of Bonnie Ogburn, as well as 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 myemanuelcounty.com and check us out at [Facebook.com/myemanuelcounty](https://www.facebook.com/myemanuelcounty). The Society strives to keep these social media platforms updated with meeting notices and events. Our email is echps1@pineland.net.

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DR. WILDER SMITH'S INSTRUMENTS

C&G: The best in car care

by BRITTANY HALL

"2022 was probably our best year yet." C&G Car Care co-owner, Rod Wiggins said as he leaned back in his office chair, reminiscing on the memories that made their business the thriving company that it is today, "We've been in business for 42 years now and over 2022, we not only gained more local support, but a wide variety of out-of-town support as well."

Throughout the year of 2022, Wiggins and his uncle Graham Lawson, who he shares joint ownership with, experienced a stream of customers that have almost certainly exceeded the goals he set for himself years ago when he first took over the business.

"My daddy and uncle started this business in 1980, and they built this place on quality not quantity. They had always had a great business and they've always had a great customer base, but since I came on, it received a generational change. It's no longer a mom-and-pop shop anymore, it's larger than that now." He explained.

Today, Wiggins, Lawson, and their team at C&G car care, have acquired an exceptional name for themselves through their first-class automotive service that absolutely speaks for itself, proving that they truly are "the best in car care".

"I've got a great group of employees who do a great job and the work they do is what makes people come back." Wiggins explained, "The response has been amazing. We have customers out of Wilmington Island, Savannah, Augusta and even Florida. When my daddy decided to retire and I purchased his part in 2018, there were five employees here, not counting Daddy and Graham. Now we have eleven and I never expected it to be this big."

We all know the expression "every cloud has a silver lin-

ing", but for C&G the meaning of that phrase accurately emphasizes the record year they experienced over 2022.

"Believe it or not, COVID actually helped us a lot. Nearby cities were shut down and couldn't do the work but being in a more rural community we weren't closed, so we received a lot of business from larger places during that time. Then after we began fixing those vehicles, those same customers returned. There was a lot of bad with COVID, but we reaped some benefits from it too, and we were blessed and fortunate that our employees remained healthy and stayed on with us throughout that period." He said.

Incredibly conscientious of the strong work ethic each of his employees display, Wiggins added that without his "team" none of C&G's accomplishments would have made it to fruition.

"If I had to brag on the biggest strong point of our company, it would be our dedicated employees who make it happen. They are a great team of people who keep our business rolling and customers coming back." I give a pile of credit to the employees and a pile of credit to the support I've received from this town and community since I've moved back home." Wiggins said with a smile.

One local business from our community who has supported Wiggins and C&G for several years is Daniels Chevrolet. Additionally, C&G has also partnered with Swainsboro Ford and Kyle Durrance Chevrolet in Claxton who began giving their business to them over 2022. Currently, C&G oversees the entirety of their automotive maintenance needs.

"We get a lot of help from dealerships. Richard, Ed, Lee, and Jake from Daniels have

helped us so much. We also do all of the work on the vehicles from Kyle Durrance Chevrolet in Claxton, which was shocking, but again, our work speaks for itself." Wiggins said with a smile.

On top of the consistent business they're receiving, C&G has also expanded their shop in many different, necessary ways, to meet the demands of their repeat customers.

"We added on to the shop about a year and half ago. We put in a second paint booth, added a new parts room and prep station, bought a new air pressure machine, and added a new lean-to." Wiggins explained.

They also use the latest technology, the proper tools and equipment that are needed in their line of work, and are very persistent in attending training classes twice a year which allows them to stay experienced on everything that's needed to better service your vehicles.

In addition to specializing in car care, C&G also specializes in the care of our community, and recently began providing a \$1,500 scholarship that gives up-and-coming Emanuel County graduates the opportunity to attend a Technical College and learn a trade.

"In previous years, we always sponsored a team for the Dixie Youth League, but now that program is no longer available, we decided to offer something else." Wiggins began to explain, "My wife, Natalie, came up with the idea that we should offer a scholarship through the technical college so that kids can learn a trade. There are plenty of scholarships that are offered through colleges and universities, but not many that teach kids how to work with their hands. After she came to me with the idea, I thought it sounded great and asked Gra-



C&G CAR CARE

ham if he was fine with it and he said 'yeah, it sounds like a great idea!' So, Lord Willing, I hope we make some kid's day this year and coming years that wants to learn a trade but can't afford to do so. It doesn't matter what trade they choose - they just have to be enrolled in a technical college."

The scholarship is rendered through all Emanuel County School's including Swainsboro High School, Emanuel County Institute, and David Emanuel Academy.

When asked about his future goals for C&G, Wiggins shared that he hopes to eventually open a second location, or even five, in other areas across the state. However, as far as the many other goals he set for himself in 2018, he happily stated that he's been blessed to have already exceeded them all.

"I got up one morning and the thought went through my head that 'most everyone wants more than what they got.' I told myself, 'Well if you want more, do more - life's what you make of it.' We wake up with a choice of who you want to be that day, how you want to act that day, and we can make all the excuses in the world but it's a choice we make for ourselves. I wanted this place to be more than what it was and that's what it is today, and I'm not finished yet." He said.

While all testimonies are evidence that prayer, dedication, and hard work pay off in the

end, Wiggins' proof is found off Highway 56 North, where the black top meets C&G Car Care.

"I've been blessed beyond measure with the people I've met and the help I've had jumping into this business. I've made many good friends that I would consider family that continue to help me. The most important thing that I've learned about running a business is getting the right people in the right place to do the right job, and that's what it took over these past five years." He said before concluding with a heartwarming message, "I love home and I appreciate the support from my family, friends, employees and all my customers. I also want to thank my uncle and my daddy for giving me the opportunity to do this. My uncle puts up with me and slows my reins when I want to jump too far too fast. If he hadn't been here sometimes to do that, I don't know where I would have ended up. He's been a blessing to help me and guides me in the right direction."

At the end of our discussion, Wiggins left a piece of advice for all young business owners who need a little encouragement to never give up..."Set yourself up while your young and able so that you can do what you want when you're older. Don't be afraid to take a chance because hard work always pays off in the end."

East Georgia State College: 2022 in review

East Georgia State College (EGSC) saw many new changes during 2022. It was the first full year under the leadership of a new president, Dr. David Schecter, and programs were brought back since the COVID-19 pandemic. EGSC continued to impact the local economy, as well. A study during 2022 conducted on the behalf of the University System of Georgia (USG), showed EGSC contributed \$63.9 million to the local economy in fiscal year 2021. The USG contributed a total of \$19.3 billion to Georgia's economy between

July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021. This is a \$700,000 million or 3.8% increase over the previous year.

"EGSC has been a major driver to the local and state economy for nearly 50 years since its first graduating class in 1973. The multiplier effect of having a successful College in our community cannot be underestimated and we are thankful for the local support we have received over the years to keep us strong," shared David Schecter, President at East Georgia State College. He added: "We currently

have the lowest tuition and fees in the USG, so not only do we contribute considerably to the area, we do so at a cost that is affordable to all families. In terms of bang-for-buck, there may be no better deal around than a top-notch degree from our College."

The study also showed USG over the same time period generated 152,629 full- and part-time jobs across Georgia. East Georgia State College generated 652 of these jobs.

EGSC – Statesboro Update:

In the Spring of 2022, the EGSC-Statesboro location host-

ed a ribbon cutting and open house at its new location in the Nessmith-Lane Building on Georgia Southern University's campus. The event was held to celebrate the new location and give guests a look around at the renovations that were completed in January 2022.

The new space offers offices for faculty and staff, an Academic Center for Excellence (A.C.E.), classrooms and convenient access to Georgia Southern's campus. Being located on their campus provides an easy transfer pathway to Georgia Southern. The two institutions launched the Bobcat to Eagle Program (B2E) program last year to help the partnership between the two institutions continue to grow. The program increases access and simplifies the process for progression to Georgia Southern for those students who start out at EGSC-Statesboro. The concept of the program is not new, but the recent collaboration, the Bobcat to Eagle Program (B2E), signifies the commitment to the students of the region.

Inaugural Alumni Awards:

During EGSC's Spring Commencement Ceremony in May, the presentation of the very first EGSC Alumni Awards was held. Matt Donaldson, the president of the EGSC Alumni Association and Foundation Trustee, presented the Distinguished Alumni Award and the Rising Star Award.

Courtney Terwilliger received the Distinguished Alumni Award. This award was given to Terwilliger because he has had a positive effect on the local, regional, state, or national level. Terwilliger, of Swainsboro, has been the director of EMS for Emanuel County for many years. He was one of the driving forces

in the creation of the Fire and Emergency Services Administration (FESA) degree program at EGSC. He received his Associate of Arts in FESA in December 2018, and his Bachelor of Arts in FESA in May 2020. Courtney was also a student at the college in 1975 and graduated with an associate degree in biology. Courtney's service to the community is commendable as he leads the EMS department at Emanuel Medical Center and works with others in public safety in the community to keep Emanuel County safe. Courtney is well known throughout the State of Georgia for his work in EMS and serves with the Georgia EMS Association on projects and conferences. Terwilliger was recently appointed as the director of Public Safety for Emanuel County. His service to the community has been recognized on several occasions, and in the last few years he was awarded EMS Director of the Year by the Georgia EMS Association.

Susanna Hall Jenkins received the Rising Star Award at the ceremony. This award celebrates the achievements of alumni who have graduated in the past 10 years and who have notable recognition in their chosen field with a promise for continued success. Hall is from Bartow, Georgia, and is a graduate of Thomas Jefferson Academy. She began her studies at East Georgia State College in 2016 and earned her Bachelor's in Biology in 2020. She was a Correll Scholar, Student Ambassador, and active in many clubs and organizations. Upon graduation, Susanna was awarded the Nathan Deal full Scholarship to Mercer University Medical School.

EGSC Vision Series returns:

One of the many goals of the College during 2022 was to bring back the Vision Series (Continued on page 23)

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East Georgia State...

(From page 22)

to campus. The event is an initiative that brings programs of intellectual and cultural enrichment to the College and its broader constituency. Since its inception, the Vision Series has hosted outstanding personalities, authors, newsmakers, musical performances, dance companies, and theatrical productions. Through sponsored field trips, students and community members have opportunities to attend exhibitions and dramatic productions, not only in Georgia, but in neighboring states, as well.

The first Vision Series event held during the year featured University System of Georgia Chancellor Sonny Perdue. EGSC faculty, staff, students, and the community were all invited to attend the event in the Luck Flanders Gambrell Building Auditorium on the campus of EGSC in Swainsboro.

Before speaking at the Vision Series event, Chancellor Perdue extracted his own bottle of EGSC honey during the Honey Extraction Party. EGSC maintains an apiary on the Swainsboro campus. Each year the EGSC Beekeeping Club hosts the extraction party to harvest the honey and give people the chance to see how the extraction process takes place. Chancellor Perdue worked with Beekeeping Club Advisor Dr. Paul Cerpovicz to prepare the hive frames to be spun in the extractor. He then spun the honey from the frames in the extractor and was able to fill his own bottle with EGSC honey at the end of the process.

After the Honey Extraction Party, Chancellor Perdue spoke at the Vision Series event about his life growing up in Georgia and what led him to go to veterinary school and later run for office. He also spoke about his vision for the University System and what part EGSC has

in that vision. After his speech, Chancellor Perdue took questions from students, EGSC staff, and the community.

The second Vision Series event featured local author Kathy Bradley. The event was held on National Author's Day, and faculty, staff, students, and the community were all invited to attend the free event. Bradley's speech was held in the Gambrell Building Auditorium and was followed by a book signing for people in attendance.

Leadership changes at EGSC:

Over the past year all unfilled positions on the President's Cabinet, also known as the Leadership Team at EGSC, have been filled. The President's Cabinet is responsible for establishing policies and procedures that govern the management, operations, and strategic planning of the College. The Cabinet is advisory to the President and is the official policy making body in these areas at the College.

Trey Drawdy was named and sworn in as the EGSC Chief of Police in August. The USG Chief of Safety and Security, Chief Mike Coverson, attended the event to administer the Oath of Office. Drawdy is originally from Southeast Georgia and has over 25 years of law enforcement and higher education administrative experience. Drawdy is a member of the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police and completed the Chief Executive Training program in 2020. He holds an associate degree from the College of Coastal Georgia, a baccalaureate degree from Armstrong State University, and a Master of Education from Troy University. Additionally, he is certified as a senior instructor through the Georgia P.O.S.T. Council and is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran.

In October Tifani Pool was

named the new Director of the EGSC-Statesboro location. Pool oversees the day-to-day operations of EGSC-Statesboro location. For the past twenty-one years, Pool has been an Assistant Registrar in the Office of the Registrar at Georgia Southern University (GSU) where she supervised the registration and records areas. She also served as a First-Year Experience instructor for two years alongside one of her faculty colleagues. Pool holds an Associate of Arts from East Georgia State College, a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Georgia, and a Master of Education degree from Georgia Southern University.

Dr. Catherine Whelan was named EGSC's new Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs after a national search. Dr. Whelan has extensive academic experience in both the United States and Australia. Most recently, she served as the National Dean of the School of Business at the University of Notre Dame Australia. Previously, she was at Georgia College & State University for sixteen years, including service as the Interim Associate Dean of the College of Business, Chair of the Department of Accounting, and Professor of Accounting. An ACE Fellow in 2014-15, her primary placement was in the Office of the Chancellor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Educated in Australia, Whelan holds a Ph.D. in Accounting, a Master of Accounting, and an MBA from Bond University. She also earned a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from the Queensland University of Technology and a Bachelor of Economics from Macquarie University.

Theo Howard began serving as the Interim Athletic Director at the college. Howard came to

EGSC as its third head coach in the history of the women's basketball program. He has led the Lady Bobcats to consecutive winning seasons and two straight trips to the GCAA Conference semi-finals. He has more than 28 years of coaching experience from college, high school, and AAU ranks. Howard spent three seasons as the women's basketball recruiting coordinator/assistant coach at Columbus State University (CSU). Howard helped recruit a class in 2016 that led CSU to a Peach Belt conference championship and NCAA region championship, with a trip to the NCAA Elite Eight. CSU was nationally ranked as high as 4th in the country in 2016-2017. He also served as the Athletics Director for Development while at CSU.

Howard has also served as an Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at two University of North Carolina System schools for more than 13 years. His experience as an administrator plays an important role in how he interacts with student-athletes and motivates them to grow, learn, and be great. He believes that "student development" should be at the core of all that we do in higher education. Howard obtained a bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Masters in Sports Administration from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL). Howard was honored as a recipient of the Parker Distinguished Alumni Award from UWL in 2015.

Most recently, Harley Smith was named the Vice President for Institutional Advancement. In this role, Smith will provide leadership and strategic focus to further the college's development, alumni relations, marketing communications, and engagement. She will work with the EGSC Foundation and its members to implement

strategies to increase private funding for college programs and capital needs, as well as secure gifts from private foundations and government sources.

Smith attended East Georgia State College in Statesboro before moving on to Georgia Southern University. She was a cum laude graduate of Georgia Southern University majoring in journalism and minoring in public relations. Smith is currently pursuing a Master of Public Administration degree with a concentration in nonprofit management from Georgia Southern University. She will graduate in May. During her time at EGSC, she has held the roles of Communications Coordinator, Coordinator of the Studie A. Fulford Community Learning Center and, most recently, Director of Institutional Advancement and Community Relations. She was named STAR Staff of the Year in 2020.

Smith is a member of the Swainsboro Rotary Club, Leadership Emanuel Class of 2022, The Camilla Foundation, the Evans Region College and Career Academy, and the Ronald McDonald House Charities Wine, Women and Shoes Event Board.

Looking ahead at 2023:

In 2023, EGSC is looking forward to a big year. The College is celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout the year. An Anniversary Committee has been formed and are planning multiple events to celebrate the achievements of the college over the past 50 years. The College encourages alumni, current and former employees, and the surrounding community members to join them in the festivities this year. Visit EGSC's webpage at ega.edu or follow the college on social media for event updates and information.

The Cakery on The Square: *Simply sweet for your soul*

by BRITTANY HALL

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. I recently 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 opened our wholesale bakery in 2005 in Adrian and decided in 2021 that it was time to also have a storefront in downtown Swainsboro." She began to explain, "So, we went to look at a place on Roger Shaw Street and decided that it was meant for us. After doing some remodeling to the space we opened in October of 2021."

Since opening shop, Bedgood says that their family business has received nothing but love from the community, even throughout the course of 2022.

"We have developed 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." Explained Bedgood.

The family run and oriented business only serves fresh quality, made to order homemade recipes that have been passed down through her family for generations. A southern specialty that helps gives them an edge. She also believes in excellent custom-

er service and the importance of shopping local and supporting Swainsboro's small businesses.

"A small business like ours can't succeed without the help of the community, so we're very grateful for the support we've received since opening our doors." Bedgood said with a smile.

Since opening shop in 2021, The Cakery has thrived in downtown Swainsboro. 2022 has also helped them to expand their services as they now offer catering for small and large events, as well as facility rental for showers and parties.

"We also specialize in thin layer cakes as well as grab and go lunches, casseroles, benevolence meal kits, lunch items, a large variety of sweets, whole cakes, loaded teas and many other baked good items." She explained.

While the Cakery's chapter for 2022 has come to a close, Bedgood said that 2023 is another year to look for the good as a small business owner because she's confident that it will bring new ways for them to grow and improve their business, especially being in a place that is truly community oriented.

"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 to have people in my life 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." She said, thinking back on those special people, "The Cakery could not operate without them."

Before our interview concluded, Bedgood left me to think about a famous quote that was first recited by Helen Keller, 'Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.' Which is a sentiment that she hopes Swainsboro will be reminded of when they think of the bigger picture.

"Emanuel County is such a great place to live and raise our children." She began, "It is home to us. There is a lot of love in this community and a sense of knowing that we will never grow if we give up." Bedgood concluded.

If you're looking for a bite that's good for the soul, stop by and visit Michelle at the Cakery, located in Swainsboro's historic square, next to Wrens Southern Ladies and Gents.



THE CAKERY LOGO



CAKERY EMPLOYEE KRIMSEN WRIGHT SHOWING OFF ONE OF THEIR MANY DELICIOUS CAKES



THE CAKERY'S CATERING

Emanuel County Humane Society

by BARB MOORE

We reformed in 2015, we are registered with the State of Georgia, and our mission is to provide support for care, rescue and services to animals in crisis, to educate our community about responsible pet ownership, to promote spay and neutering of pets, and to shape public opinion to prevent animal cruelty.

We are a 501©3, which means we are a non-profit organization. We are funded solely through membership dues, donations and

grants from our community. We have no building, which means we meet at a public building for our monthly Board meetings. We are a stand-alone organization, which has a Board of Directors who make decisions for the group.

We have sponsored and organized Barkfests, Paws With Claus every Christmas, and many "free" (sponsored) adoptions to be counted. We sponsored (paid for) over 100 adoptions in 2022 alone! We've been in Parades, at Pine Tree Festivals, Trunk or

Treats at TSC. We have participated in Farm Day, sponsored by the Emanuel County Extension/4H Club, for many years, which brings the Primary School children together to experience where their food comes from. We have gone into the schools and public library to educate our children about responsible pet ownership with puppet plays, activities and free take-home books.

We actively work with our Animal Shelter. The Humane Society provides EVERY dog entering the

Animal Shelter with 5-in-1 vaccinations, to keep the animals safe and healthy. This also makes it easier for rescues to pull dogs, knowing they've had their shots. We also provide the syringes used for this task. We have also sponsored heartworm tests and more needed vaccinations for dogs going to Canadian rescues. We have transported dogs to rescues for the Animal Shelter on occasion, and have worked with the city and county with suggestions for upgrades and improvements

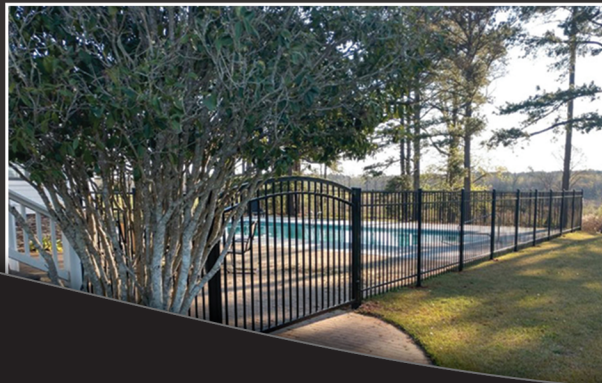
to the Animal Shelter, using SPLOST funding designated for this purpose. We communicate regularly with the city and county officials, and meet about the needs of our shelter.

If you would like to join our membership, and volunteer in upcoming events, please contact us at ec.humanesociety@gmail.com or like us on facebook. Our mailing address is PO Box 443, Swainsboro, Georgia 30401. None of our funds whatsoever go outside our Emanuel County.

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Customs celebrates their 60th anniversary

by BRITTANY HALL

In this vibrant little town, small businesses are always welcomed with open arms and excitement. Although less common, family-owned small businesses are held as treasures, especially those that have stood the test of time. For 60 years, Custom Furniture and Flooring has been the root of many beautiful interiors throughout Emanuel County. Whether walking across a floor or admiring an immaculate piece of decor, if you grew up in Swainsboro then you've surely stepped into a cozy home or an inviting atmosphere that has been touched by the Garrett's.

However, Custom's story

was set in motion years before it came into the Garrett family, when friends, Pete Boatright and Harold Flanders, set off on an entrepreneurship journey that would eventually become the generational gem and go-to place for all things home, that we know and love today. In 1962, Boatright and Flanders began selling furniture from the humble space of their garage and the bed of their pickup truck until they landed their current spot-on West Pine Street.

"It was a very premier furniture store back in the 60's and 70's." Owner, Asa Garrett began to explain, "We came along in March of 1995 and purchased cus-

toms for our own and by that time they had closed the big store on the corner and had remodeled all of the stores that you see today."

Although it was a change, Mr. Flanders, and Mr. Boatright, along with his wife Josephine, continued their livelihood of selling furniture for Customs by working for Asa Garrett until they retired several years later. During this time, the Garrett family was embracing the help that they were receiving for their thriving new business, while excitedly anticipating the arrival of their daughter, Margaret Anne, who was due in July of 1995, only a few months after their purchase of the

store. As they juggled being new parents and new business owners, this uncharted chapter truly became the beginning of the best years of their lives.

"When we bought the store in '95, my wife Bert was pregnant with Margaret Anne, so Margaret Anne was really born and raised in this store, and it's been a very outstanding experience," Asa explained.

Now, 60 years later, the business and the customers have changed but those same friendly faces have remained the same. When you walk through the doors of Customs you'll be greeted by Asa and his hard-working daughter, Margaret Anne, who now works diligently alongside her father to ensure that your interior dreams become reality, offering design boards that will create functional and aesthetically pleasing spaces

by assessing space requirements, determining optimal furniture placement, and selecting decorative items, all while adhering to the customers' requests. What's even sweeter is that all of her services are free with every Customs purchase.

"I've grown up here and enjoyed every minute of it. From asking locals to 'watch out for daddy' to now being a true part of the work team. I've always been behind the scenes but now that I physically get to work here, I've learned so much and getting to share that with my dad is incredible, we always have a good time." She said with a smile before continuing, "Now I have a little girl who I get to watch grow up here just like my daddy did with me and I hope that she cherishes the memories that she makes in this store and loves it as much as I always have."

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EAC programming in full swing!

by JACQUIE BRASHER

What a busy, productive, and FUN year we've had!

Ever since we moved into this new, beautiful space in the Karrh Community Arts Center, The Kalmanson Gallery of Emanuel Arts Council has seen a great number of visitors to our art shows and Christmas play. Located at 109 North Green Street, we are literally a "hidden gem" in Swainsboro. You can find us tucked away next to the still-in-progress theater, and where our neighbors are Bangles II Salon and Stewart's Jewelers.

ART EXHIBITIONS

Gallery Director Desmal Purcell scheduled six art shows last year, beginning with the inaugural show featuring work by Neil Kalmanson, after whom the gallery is named. That show ran from December 2021 through February 2022. Each show is on exhibition for eight weeks.

In March, we presented the "Common Thread/Common Ground" exhibition featuring the artist collective Stillmore Roots. Six artists from that collective shipped their work to our gallery from all over the country. The artists included in this special exhibition at the EAC were Scott Dombrowski (Illinois), Anthony Faris (North Dakota), Jean Gray Mohs (North Carolina), Nick Nelson (Missouri), Desmal Purcell (Georgia), Mary Valeria (Hawaii), and Brandon Tatom (Georgia). Artists who could not attend zoomed in and were able to chat with guests.

On May 24th, the EAC teamed up with Berni's on West Main to feature "A Night on the Town" where guests were treated to an opening reception of the art show before walking across the street to Berni's to enjoy live music

on the back deck with the musical duo Blount & Brasher. The show was then extended a week to celebrate the Pine Tree Festival since many of the art installations featured pine trees. Cross-promotionally, the show was also on exhibition at The Altama Museum of Art & History in Vidalia in October.

In May, we featured work of Group 7A Drawing II art students of East Georgia State College in a show called "Meridional Passions: An Exhibition of Southern Interests." Students exhibiting work were Maddux Bedgood, Odalyz Canesco-Sanchez, Dormeshia Elam, C.J. Gresham, Jadah Harrison, Amanda Lee, and Viri Mejia. They were all present to discuss their paintings during our art opening and to interact with guests.

In July, we featured the oil paintings of Swainsboro resident Kim Youmans. Called "Visually Traditional: Oils in Emanuel" the show was a big hit with many people, all of whom marveled at Kim's expertise with a paintbrush.

In September, Cal Avery of Swainsboro graced us with his series of photographs called "Emanuel County and Beyond." Cal is very well known on Facebook as "The Barn Hunter" and has several thousand followers on his page. Cal's exhibition was the most attended show to date—166 people—so he holds the record to beat!

We capped off the year in November with the exhibition "Gas Money" by Chris Mattingly, native of Kentucky, who taught at EGSC for two years. Chris zoomed in from California, where he now resides, and spoke to guests who came to the show. His show was unique, using letterpress as his medium.

We were also fortunate to

have refreshments for each show sponsored by the community. The Kiwanis Club (twice), Beta Sigma Phi, Mandy Douglas, and Amber Albritton were our sponsors last year.

ART BLOCK PARTY

In 2022, we also presented the first Art Block Party in October. The 100 block of North Green Street was closed from 4 to 7 p.m. to have this event, featuring artwork by students from Swainsboro High School, Emanuel County Institute, and EGSC. Judges for the student art contest were Neil Kalmanson, Kim Youmans, and Syvetta Young. There was a Sidewalk Chalk Contest as well, and live music was performed by Donald Jenkins. Cash prizes for winners of the art contests were provided by Advanced Metal Components, Citizens Bank, Daniels Chevrolet, Hotset, Durden Banking Company, Swainsboro Rotary Club, and Mill Creek Foundation. A total of \$1,650 was donated to the EAC to fund this event. We were extremely grateful for this community's support!

ART CAMPS

For the sixth year, the EAC sponsored Summer Art Camp at The Sudie Fulford Community Learning Center of EGSC. This year, our instructor was Mondie Gagliardo, art teacher from Pinewood Christian Academy. The camp was sponsored entirely by Mill Creek Foundation, who paid for each participant, the instructor, two assistants, and daily snacks. Mill Creek has always been extremely supportive of all our art camps. The camp ran from June 6-8, 9 a.m. to 12 noon, and accommodated 20 students in grades 3 to 5 who completed numerous art assignments during the three days of camp.



FLYER FROM THE CAL AVERY ART EXHIBIT



FLYER FROM THE COMMON THREAD ART EXHIBIT

The EAC and Mill Creek Foundation also sponsored Artist Terrie Daniel in the Franklin Memorial Library's Children's Craft Workshop on June 13th. Terrie taught Creative Book-Making to several children and their parents in two workshops which were held at the Vann Community Center.

CHRISTMAS PLAY

The Kalmanson Gallery

proved to be versatile in 2022—not only did we have six art exhibitions in this space, it also held our Christmas play! EAC board member Ron Ellison directed a whimsical and wacky play with the crazy title "Billy Shakespeare's Christmas Extravaganza and Traveling Freak Show" by Don Zolidis. Held on the nights of December 16 and 17, Ron's ex- (Continued on page 29)

EAC programming in...

(From page 28)
 pertise in creating stage space in our gallery was put to full use; he expertly fit in 50 chairs for the audience. To promote the play, cast members joined the Downtown Swainsboro Christmas Parade on December 1st in a trailer festively decorated for the occasion.

CHRISTMAS ON GREEN

The EAC participated in Christmas on Green on November 18th. The street on the 100 block of North Green Street was closed for holiday festivities that included a bouncy house, clowns, face painting, and activities for children and families. The EAC hosted the Christmas tree on which children could hang the ornaments that they made in one of the activities. The tree was displayed in our front window throughout the Christmas season.

FAREWELL TO THE KALMANSONS

On December 14, 2022, the EAC held an Open House to celebrate Neil and Mary Kalmanson, who, after almost 50 years of living in Swainsboro, were moving to Texas to be closer to their daughter, Leah, and son-in-law Christopher. It was a bittersweet moment for the many people who came to wish them "bon voyage." Our

gallery is named after Neil, whose contributions to the art scene in Emanuel County began in 1973 as a charter member of the then-Emanuel County Junior College. He then continued as a charter member of the creation of the Emanuel Arts Council around 1980, and the rest is art history. Neil's artistic legacy now lives on with this gallery in Swainsboro. Thank you, Neil!

For current information on programming at the EAC, like and follow our Facebook and Instagram pages. You can also contact us at 478-237-2592 or email us at artsemanuel@gmail.com. Our hours are Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. You can also make an appointment for a private tour of our gallery for parties of two or more.

The Emanuel Arts Council, Inc. (EAC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit 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. The EAC is also supported by the City of Swainsboro, the Downtown Development Authority of Swainsboro, and the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce.

FLYER FROM THE LIBRARY ARTS AND CRAFTS EVENT

FLYER FROM THE MERIDIONAL PASSIONS ART EXHIBIT

FLYER FROM THE BLOCK PARTY FOR THE ARTS

FLYER FROM THE CHRIS MATTINGLY ART EXHIBIT

FLYER FROM A NIGHT ON THE TOWN EVENT

FLYER FROM THE CHRISTMAS PLAY

FLYER FROM THE KIM YEOUMANS ART EXHIBIT



2022 ART CAMP KIDS

Durden Hudson Funeral Directors: Meet our work family

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. With that being said, a very important part of the business is the work family.

Introducing:



Debbie Hudson Dubberly

Debbie has been a resident of Kite, GA since 1983 and after the death of her husband, of 36 years, Scott in 2016, Debbie became the sole owner of Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors/ Peebles-Curry Memorial Chapel. She is the daughter of the late James W. and Elna Cannon, and a 1979 graduate of Swainsboro High School. Working with the Citizens Bank of Swainsboro from 1980 until 1993, several years as Head Bookkeeper, Debbie gained a wealth of financial education. In 1993, she was privileged to be a full time mom to daughter Haleigh

Marie Hudson, until she became school aged. At that time in 1999 the opportunity to teach with the First United Methodist Church Preschool in Swainsboro, GA, presented itself, Debbie taught 3 and 4 year old preschoolers until the purchase of Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors. In July 2007, after the purchase of Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors, Debbie was the Accounting Administrator for the funeral home; and eagerly continued her education, as a Licensed Apprentice Funeral Director/ Embalmer. Through many life changing events and losses, one thing remains the same, her dedication to serving families like herself, families in need.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 has become her comfort and purpose. 3. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4. Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

September of 2020, life came full circle and she married Marcus Gregory Dubberly of Tattnall County, GA. Since his retirement, they will be locating full time in Kite, GA. She is a member of the Swainsboro First United Methodist Church, Beta Sigma Phi, past member and president of the Swainsboro Shrine Club Ladies Auxiliary and past member and president of the Glad Garden Club. Debbie and her

husband Greg enjoy spending time at the lake, boating and fishing.



Faith M. Vedder

Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer, was born and raised in Connecticut, Faith moved to Metter, Georgia in 1991 with her husband Steve. They have been Candler County residents ever since. Faith and Steve's family includes two grown children and their spouses and three granddaughters.

A housewife and mother first, Faith was working in landscaping when she decided to go to "back to school". After acquiring her G.E.D., she began college in 2002. Faith graduated from Ogeechee Technical College in 2004 with honors and an Associate's Degree in Funeral Services.

Faith passed the National Board of Funeral Services exams, served her apprenticeship at Kennedy Funeral Homes in Metter and Cobbtown, and gained her funeral director and embalmer licenses in 2007.

Faith continued her career at Kennedy Funeral Homes until September

of 2019 when she came to Swainsboro to work with Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors. Faith is motivated by a sincere desire to provide families with meaningful and thoughtful funeral services, before, during and after their time of need. Although her and her husband still lives in Metter, Faith considers it an honor and a blessing to be able to work with and serve the families and community of Emanuel and surrounding counties.



Brittany Hatcher

Brittany Hatcher is a resident of Twin City, GA, and the daughter of Mike and Teresa Johnson Hatcher also of Twin City, GA. She has been employed as the Accounting Assistant with Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors for five years. Brittany is a 2016 graduate of David Emanuel Academy; with an Associate's of Arts in Early Childhood Education from East Georgia State College. Currently Brittany is a student at Georgia Southern University where she will graduate in July with a Bachelor of Business Administration

Degree in Management. She is a member of Union Grove United Methodist Church in Midville, GA and in her spare time she enjoys going to the gym and spending time with her family and friends.



Johnny B. Hairr

Johnny was born and raised in Wadley, GA, to the late Holland and Virginia Hairr and was a graduate of Wadley High School. As an adult he moved to Swainsboro where he was employed with Brylad Oil/Ohoopee Oil Co. for 35 years. He and his wife Linda Bryant Hairr, a cosmetology instructor with Southeastern Technical School, have been married for 33 years and currently reside in Swainsboro, GA. They have 3 children and 10 grandchildren. Johnny has been employed with Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors part time for 6 years. Johnny and Linda are members of Calvary United Methodist Church and in their spare time enjoy traveling.

(Continued on page 31)

Durden Hudson Funeral...

(From page 30)



Mike Hatcher

Mike is the son of the late Andrew Perry and Elease Sherrod Hatcher. He is a licensed Apprentice Funeral Director/Embalmer, with plans to further his education by attending Ogeechee Technical College completing his Mortuary Sciences Degree. He is also the Life Insurance Agent for Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors with Homesteaders Life Insurance Co. Currently he is employed with the State of Georgia, Department of Public Safety with 28 years in the field. Mike is married to Teresa Johnson Hatcher a third grade teacher at Twin City Elementary. They have two children Brittany and Brandon who both attend Georgia Southern University. Brittany is an Accounting and Business Management Major, she will graduate in July; and Brandon is a Criminal Justice Major. Mike is a member of Ridgeway Masonic Lodge of Garfield, Emanuel County Sportsman's Club,

and Union Grove Methodist Church of Midville, GA. He and his family reside in Twin City, GA.



James "Freddie" McVey

Freddie is the son of J. W. and Ruth McVey. He was born in Savannah, GA and moved to Treutlen County in 1963. After graduation from Treutlen County High School in 1966, Freddie enlisted in the U.S. Navy. While in the Navy he served aboard the USS America off the coast of Vietnam. Freddie married Rosalind Palmer in November, 1968. Their son, David, was born in 1970. In 1972, Freddie, Rosalind, and David moved to Swainsboro where he had begun working at UPS in 1971, retiring in 2001 after 30 years. After retirement from UPS, Freddie worked part time as a commercial truck driver instructor for approximately 18 years. Freddie has been employed part time with Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors for 11 years. Freddie and Rosalind have made Swainsboro their home for 52 years. They are members of First Baptist Church of Swainsboro, Freddie is

currently serving as an active Deacon. He is also a member of the Swainsboro Masonic Lodge #244. Freddie and Rosalind's favorite pastime is spending time with their son and daughter-in-law, David and Jessica, and their grandchildren.

Durden Hudson Vault Company



James 'Ricky' McNeil

James "Ricky" McNeil is a 27 year employee at Durden-Hudson Funeral Directors. Nicknamed "The Grave Digger" in Swainsboro, he installs vaults and does monument maintenance. His motto is "to treat all families with dignity and respect". When asked his top priority during training sessions, Ricky stated that he "teaches others to perform the role as they would like for it to be done for themselves". When he's not telling jokes or working, Ricky enjoys family outings, gardening, and wood working. He resides just outside of Metter with his wife, Teresa and 4 year old twins, Keegan and Kayla. They also share an older son, two daughters, and a precious granddaughter.

Emanuel County Farm Bureau

Emanuel County Farm Bureau was organized in April 1941 with a membership of 116. Affiliated with Georgia Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation, it is a grassroots organization made up of voting members who are directly involved in production agriculture.

Organized initially to provide leadership and assistance to the agricultural section and to give farmers a voice in the legislature, Farm Bureau has evolved into so much more. Emanuel County Farm Bureau has an active legislative committee to keep members aware of legislation that affects the whole community.

Some current issues that Farm Bureau is concerned with are environmental stewardship, tax reform, energy availability and affordability, water agreements, and trade policies. Providing safe and affordable food, fiber, and building products is our goal.

Your membership helps to support ag related activities in the local schools. The Women's Committee strives to educate school students, and adults, about the importance of agriculture to our society. Among the many opportunities for K-12 grades are the Art and Bookmark Contest and county and state scholarships, both with cash awards. Among other projects are school

ag programs and crafts, ag related books donated to school libraries and the public library, and the donation of gardens to several schools. These gardens help students learn how to grow, harvest and prepare their food.

Through the Young Farmers organization, men and women learn to become better managers of their land and resources, to be aware of new products and convey their interests and concerns to elected officials.

The insurance company offers life, property and auto coverage as well as retirement and financial planning. The Farm Bureau Bank offers property and auto loans, credit cards, and other financial benefits. A list of member benefits and services can be found online at www.gfb.org

Membership in Emanuel County Farm Bureau assures your family and community continued healthy and abundant food. From the time you get up in the morning until you go to bed at night, agriculture is a part of your day. You are invited to join Emanuel County Farm Bureau in support of our local farmers and agriculture, and to add strength to our voice in Atlanta and Washington to ensure the continued existence of agriculture as a vital and thriving industry in the future.

Chick-fil-A Food Truck cuts ribbon in Swainsboro

Much joy spread throughout Emanuel County by a glimpse of a red food truck, and not just any food truck – The Chick-fil-A Vidalia Food Truck is responsible for all the hype seen around town.

On Friday, February 25, Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting for The Chick-fil-A Vidalia Food Truck before its first official day in business serving the local community.



CHICK-FIL-A RIBBON CUTTING



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Chapman Funeral Home: The epitome of a smalltown funeral home

by BRITTANY HALL

During the year of 2022, Chapman Funeral Home experienced many new changes unlike ever before. COVID was still lingering throughout the community and affecting the lives of many locals, so they began meeting the qualifications of the CDC guidelines to better serve the grieving families of Emanuel County.

"We had to make special considerations to ensure that our visitors were protected." Explained Funeral Director, Sonny Morgan, "It's been trying at times because we are a small town, and we are a small facility. It was little difficult to meet expectations however we did it, and I think that says a lot, especially from the number of families we've served throughout the years.

It's been hard but it's been pleasing to help those who need it most."

Though Chapman has experienced many challenges with the changes 2022 delivered, it was through the support of their family-like team that provided them with the ability to accomplish the unexpected and be a pillar of support for locals during the most difficult seasons of their life.

"We have a great staff. I may not have a chance to do something, so someone else will take that on. Our part-time help is very key because we couldn't even have funerals without their service. They step in and arrange the flowers and guide the families and make sure everyone is parked where they're supposed to be, so we're very blessed to have their assistance and to have a

team that works together in unity." Morgan explained.

Chapman has also made many new additions to their facility to better serve the public and meet the demands of the families that they have been destined to serve.

"We have updated our parking lot, added a new visitation room and four new stalls to the women's bathroom." He said.

Although they've met many physical goals throughout 2022, it's their constant, sentimental objective, that Chapman prioritizes before any other.

"We just hope that every family that walks through our doors, has a pleasant experience so when they leave us, they're appreciative of the service we provided for them." Morgan explained with a soft



CHAPMAN FUNERAL HOME

smile, "When we walk into someone's home to take their loved one, we want to leave them with the certainty that they will be taken care of."

Chapman Funeral Home is the epitome of a small-town funeral home. It's a place where the service you receive is like a comforting hug when

you need it most.

"It's just an honor to serve the public and the people of our community. During times of need, we see both sides of the county come together and it's just the sense of togetherness that makes this community what it is." Concluded Morgan

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Swainsboro welcomes All the Fixin's

A ribbon cutting and grand opening event welcoming All the Fixin's to Swainsboro was held Thursday, August 18. The event began at 10 a.m. with a ribbon cutting, christening the second location for the popular brand name. Owners Brett and Janna Tucker's original location in Twin City has enjoyed wide acceptance and provided the springboard for the Swainsboro location.

Janna expressed the Tucker family's appreciation for their employees, crediting them for their help in the beginning stages of the homegrown business up through current day. She also thanked the local customers for their support at both the Twin City and Swainsboro locations since the start of business in Emanuel County. Following the ribbon cutting, guests enjoyed servings of donut, pecan and coffee samples and had opportunity to enter a gift basket giveaway filled with All the Fixin's goodies.



SCENE OF THE RIBBON CUTTING



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MOSLEY FUNERAL HOME

Mosley's Funeral Home – globally connected

Since 1958, Mosley's Funeral Home has served Emanuel County and the surrounding areas with service and care. Delmus Mosley, Sr. has guided the business and led its growth into the community staple that it is today.

"There's a slogan we have," Mosley said. "Our business is what the people built. We serve the community, and the community built the business for us as we served them. It has grown since 1959 to today, my father and uncle got into the mortuary business in 1959. Back then, and now, you have to be involved in every aspect and corner of your community in a small town to make it work"

The loss of a loved one leaves family and friends feeling great sorrow and grief. The events that follow immediately after can be difficult to process and handle, but Mosley and his

experienced staff focus on compassion, dignity and respect to assist in those most trying times.

"There has to be a personal commitment to care for people as individuals," Mosley said. "While you are involved in service, you are a part of that service you are giving to these individuals."

With 60-plus years of dedication to honest and expert service, Mosley's Funeral Home has built a trusted business that families can turn to and lean on during a challenging time.

"We are able to do what any other funeral home can do in the world," Mosley said. "I have a national funeral director's license, and I am globally connected. That is what we have established over the years. We serve this community, and we serve them effectively. We've been blessed to have that kind of setting."

America knits: American made, Georgia grown

by BRITTANY HALL

Since receiving the award for Business of the Year for 2021, America Knits has made many new promising changes over the course of 2022, including hiring two Georgia Southern Graduates to their marketing and sales team who have significantly improved the U.S. textile industry.

These essential employees are Emanuel County native, Brock Hooks and Houston County native, Avery Williams.

While Hooks supervises America Knits most recent expansion - the screen-printing building located on Meadowlake Parkway, Williams is primarily focused on their marketing services.

"We brought them on to initiate some of the growth and

changes that are currently taking place." America Knits CEO, Steve Hawkins explained, "The fact that they're both Georgia Southern Graduates is crucial because we're looking to grow organically with people who are local to this part of the country."

More exciting news that Hawkins shared during his interview is that in addition to their partnerships with J. Crew, Buck Mason, and recover brands, America Knits will also be launching its newest brand in July to celebrate its fourth birthday. He explained that because they now have the infrastructure with highly trained seamstresses, engineers and built in models through their marketing and sales team, they're now able to maneuver the day-to-day operations and vision that the

company requires.

"The idea has always been to at some point design and create our own shirts that we supply directly to the public. We aren't quite ready to release the name of the brand yet but it's a substantial addition for both America Knits and Swainsboro because this launch is going regionally and nationally." Hawkins said.

What's even more noteworthy for this expansion is the Georgia grown story that this new brand has all its own.

"We're only using the best practices and products, including Georgia grown cotton that's been produced by local farmers. We then take their cotton, spin it into yarn and make into fabric then cut and sew it into the best fitting softest t-shirts that can be found anywhere." He explained.

Along with America Knits incredibly effective sales and marketing team, they also have many commendable partners who have a global presence that is going to assist in publicizing and promoting the Swainsboro based brand once its unveiled, which Hawkins said could be announced within the next 60 days and will contribute to the State as a whole.

"We're real excited about it!" He said with a smile.

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.

"Back on April 9, 2021, we held a medical scrub project at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture in Tifton and culminated with donating medical scrubs to 15 rural Georgia hospitals. It was a launch that Governor Kemp personally came to and spoke at and was a great opportunity for America Knits to get good publicity, so we're basically playing off that." He explained, "That scrub was made with Georgia Cotton, all the way through to the sewing. The new brand t-shirts will have the same supply chain, it's just we're making premium t-shirts which is what America Knits is."

The company's vision has always been to produce the finest quality, authentic *Made-in-America* apparel while developing and using the most sustainable production practices. An exercise that has provided them with national recognition and even a feature in the New York Times for their January 2022 edition. Staying true to their famous, original methods, America Knits has additionally developed a practice that is especially tremendous for the local and regional market. This most recent addition is their screen-printing service which is provided through their newest factory. This state-of-the-art incorporation will allow local businesses to have the opportunity to order high-quality shirts in bulk amounts at low prices.

"America Knits is not only offering premium, custom t-shirts but we're also presenting a promotional line that offers a very competitive price point for people who just want to advertise their business which is something

we've never been able to offer before." Hawkins explained, "For example, if a local company needs 300 shirts but they want them at 10 to 12 dollars we can do that now and have them printed and out the door. This is something we would like to inform our locals of so that they know that service is made available to them by us."

Before the conclusion of his interview, Hawkins shared that one of the companies' goals for the year of 2023 is to potentially open a satellite sewing plant near Swainsboro or Statesboro.

"An upcoming vision that we have is to possibly open another factory outside Emanuel County but near Swainsboro so that our local engineers and operators can easily travel to train those employees." He said.

So many positive changes have occurred for America Knits over the year of 2022, but Hawkins says that none of these bountiful opportunities could have happened without the service of his devoted employees or Swainsboro's support.

"I respect my employees so much! In the Governors *State of the State* speech, I mentioned that because of the courage of our employees to come into work during the pandemic, even without knowing the effects, a large amount of respect was given to them for their drive and character to do that. They're an essential part of this company." Hawkins stated, "I also love being in South Georgia and in Emanuel County because the people here recognize your efforts and uphold you as a valuable business not only within but for the community."

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Wincore: We're proud of where we are

Wincore has firmly established an operation in Swainsboro that puts it among the best industries operating in Emanuel County and the surrounding area. 2022 brought challenges, but facility upgrades and workforce growth from 2021 allowed the company to overcome and thrive.

"It will be four years this May (2023) since we made our first window in Swainsboro," said Brian Standley, Wincore Chief Operating Officer. "We're proud of where we are at and what we have accomplished so far in Swainsboro. We have had to overcome many challenges in the last couple of years, including COVID and constant supply chain issues, but we have met those challenges. We are proud to employ approximately 235 people in Emanuel County, and we expect to continue to grow that number."

That commitment to the employees was evident when the company re-evaluated its pay structure during the summer of 2021. Like so many companies, Wincore battled employee retention and recruitment issues coming out of the pandemic. They moved the beginning pay to \$16 per hour, adjusted their attendance policy and met with employees for open-ended discussions on the workplace and expectations. In 2022, the benefits of that investment in the workforce paid off.

"Our attendance has been much better, much more predictable, and our turnover has been much lower,"

Standley said. "All of those things are a direct result of what we did from a wage standpoint. We sought career-minded people, and the changes we made generated a lot of interest in people wanting to work for Wincore. We were looking for people that wanted to come to work every day, do the right things, and be in an environment that is exciting and growing."

While Wincore was now more able to count on the workforce to be there every day, the same could not be said for their materials in early 2022. Global supply chain issues and a large backlog of orders became common for industries worldwide. The good thing is, those issues had significantly decreased by the end of the year.

"Everyone has experienced supply chain challenges in industries like ours these last couple of years," Standley said. "By the time we got to the end of 2022, in large part, those issues were behind us. In large part, the supply chain has gotten its feet back under it, and we made some changes in what we were getting and who we were getting it from to help eliminate some of the issues. We have put a lot of that behind us and now we are on to what we expect to be a really strong 2023."

The company feels they are positioned to fully take advantage of the 100,000 square-foot expansion to the Swainsboro facility that was completed in late spring of 2021.

"The timing of that ex-

pansion was perfect for us," Standley stated. "Since the supply chain was backed up, we had a backlog of orders. But, at the end of 2022 that backlog was pretty much cleared up entirely. Had it not been for that expansion in Swainsboro, we might not have been in that position to clear that up as quickly."

The expansion allowed the operation to significantly increase its daily production capacity to meet what is expected to be strong demand in 2023.

"1,000 units per day is about what we are doing now," Standley said. "But it is a seasonal business, and this is the time of year when we are typically slowest. By Spring 2023, and into early summer, we will likely be up over 1,200 units a day. In the fall, which is our busiest time, we will approach 1,500 units a day in the Swainsboro facility."

Growth in the business, commitment to the workforce and a burgeoning bond between the company and community has Wincore looking forward in 2023.

"We have been really blessed with our facility and the people we employ," Standley said. "I believe we have the best team that exists in Swainsboro. Everyone in Emanuel County has made our stay there great up to this point, and we look forward to that continuing. We are very proud of what has happened in four very short years, and we are excited about the coming months and years."

Pinetucky Country Meats named 'Best All Around Business' in 2022

A continued commitment to quality products, customer service and attention to detail was a winning formula for Pinetucky Country Meats. The local grocery store was named Best All-Around Business by the community during the annual Forest-Blade Readers' Choice Awards in 2022.

"We resource the best quality meat, pork, poultry that we absolutely can resource," said owner Del Brown. "Some people say it, we don't just say it, we do it. Our business has grown because we offer a quality product."

High quality and custom-cut meats are a staple of the store. In addition, Pinetucky's dedication to offering customers products and an experience that they can't find anywhere else is what keeps people coming back.

"We don't want to be a grocery store," Brown said. "It's a custom-cut butcher shop where there is a little bit of nostalgia, something from yesteryear. We don't want to be a Publix or a Kroger or a big box store. We have something different to offer that those folks don't offer every day."

Brian Milbee has worked for Brown for the last seven years, first as a butcher at Pinetucky Country Meats, and now as a store manager at another of Brown's owned stores, Piggly Wiggly in Twin City.

"It starts at the top with our business," Milbee said

when asked about working for Brown. "Del and his family are great people, their faith is solid and they are men and women of God. I believe that rolls down to us, we treat everyone like family here. That is how they have done me since day one, and I'm grateful for that, so I try to do that with my staff."

In Brown's mind, the continued growth and success of the business comes down to just a few key ingredients.

"Service has always been a high priority," Brown said. "Clean and sanitary stores are high priority. Quality products are a high priority. We want to take those three things and work hard at them for our customers and our community."

"Our customer service is what is going to set us apart from our competitors," added Milbee. "We truly do care. We can't do it without our customers, and we can't do it without the support from our community and from our staff."

As we begin 2023 and look to the future, we can expect more of the same recipe that has gotten Pinetucky Country Meats to where it is today.

"We have a high-quality product, and we are going to try hard to service our customers every day," said Brown. "We respect every customer who comes in our door, and we want them to have the best possible experience they can have."

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Pam's Magic Sauce has record year

by BRITTANY HALL

During the year 2020, local entrepreneur and U.S. veteran, Rodney Patterson, made his debut as Mr. U.F.O. and began a business journey by creating a universal sauce that's truly out-of-this-world. During the final stages of seeking USDA approval as an all-purpose product, Patterson gave the sauce a legendary name to honor two incredible people, his late sister and best friend, Pam Patterson, and Eric Desean Davis A.K.A Magic.

"I created the name to honor two individuals who will forever hold a special place in my heart, my late sister, Pamela Patterson, who passed away due to sickle cell disease, and my late best friend, Magic, who was killed in a drive by in Texas," Patterson solemnly shared, "I wanted to do this to honor them and their name because I knew I would never be able to do anything for them again except for this."

The following year, Patterson had obtained a partnership with Sunbelt and the

University of Georgia to test and produce Pam's Magic Sauce. It was from this point forward that his dream of his sauce becoming a household item began to unfold.

"I decided to reach out to the University of Georgia, and they took me in during COVID and tested my product and said that I had one of the top sauces on the market and the best PH balanced sauce to ever be tested at UGA." He explained.

Although one major step to his goal was achieved, the road remained unknown and rocky as he continued to drive his entrepreneur dreams out into the world. Still, however, he remained steadfast and hopeful, knowing that whatever issues may come, lessons would follow so that he could accomplish his objective and reach his destination.

"I thought that I would just be able to make some sauce and put it in the stores, but it doesn't work like that. It happened through trial and tribulation and through a lot of losses and mistakes. All of which I was very thankful for." He said with a smile.

After trusting the process, Patterson closed his BBQ restaurants and began focusing solely on the promotion of Pam's Magic Sauce.

"The movement became the focal point. I got everything that was needed, including my nutritional facts panels so that I could continue to do what I promised my sister I would. I promised her that I was going to take her name across the world." He explained with a smile.

Since establishing Pam's Magic Sauce, Patterson has sold between 40,000 and 50,000 cases of homemade sauces and has become a Georgia Grown Member. His most recent achievement, however, is becoming a vendor for over 10 Georgia stores including Lanier IGA in Portal, Ellis Meat Market in Statesboro, DNR Grocery in Metter, Metter Food Market, A & E Graphics, Metter Farm Products, Toms Pawn in Metter, Wild Georgia Safari Park, Grandy's Truck Stop, Twin City Piggly Wiggly, Dublin Piggly Wiggly, Soperton Piggly Wiggly, Wrightsville Piggly Wiggly, Swainsboro Sunoco, and



PAMS MAGIC SAUCE ON THE SHELVES

IN PINETUCKY COUNTRY MEATS IN SWAINSBORO

Pinetucky County Meats here in Swainsboro.

"I began this journey on the side of the road. I was making my sauces and BBQ whatever way I could and selling it to friends and neighbors here in town. It's a God given vision. I didn't get here by mistake." He said.

Before our interview concluded, Patterson gave a shout out to Sub Distribu-

tions for all their support, as well as the incredible people of our community and his distributors.

"This journey has been incredible. My supporters are iconic, the movement has been iconic. Thank you all for your support!" Patterson said in closing.

Pam's Magic Sauce is a universal friendly sauce that can be used on or with anything!

Direct Furniture Outlet cuts ribbon at new Swainsboro location

Direct Furniture, Mattress and Appliance Outlet, Swainsboro's newest Direct Furniture Outlet Store, celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon cutting ceremony Thursday, September 1. The grand opening celebration began with a ribbon cutting at 5 p.m. and was followed by a welcome and introduction of business owners, Mitchel and Nancy McGraw and Josh and Brooke Guy; sales associates, Sharon Tomlinson, Jade Mason and Nadine Sellers, as well as other individuals who played a vital role in the newly established business setting. The event continued until 8 p.m. and featured offerings of refreshments, touring of the store and products, as well as prize registrations for a recliner, queen-size mattress set, \$500 dollar shopping spree at the shopping outlet and four \$50 gas cards.



DIRECT FURNITURE OUTLET RIBBONS CUTTING

Glad Garden Club

The history of the Glad Garden Club begins with the history of the Garden Club of Georgia. The Garden Club of Georgia was the first garden club in America known as the Ladies Garden Club of Athens. The University of Georgia was a garden-minded institution and maintained a botanical garden as early as 1833. Interest grew and in 1891 a group of Athens ladies formed a garden club with the first meeting at the home of Mrs. Lamar Cobb and membership was by invitations only. Then in 1892 it was decided to change the charter of the club from a small, select social group to invite any lady who might be interested in learning and growing anything from a "cabbage to a chrysanthemum". The Garden Club of Georgia was organized June 8, 1928 at the Biltmore House in Atlanta with 29 members and the first president was Mrs. F. Phinizy Calhoun (Marion) of Atlanta. The first Annual Meeting was held in April 1929 in Augusta. Clubs thrived, even through wartime, and in 1959 at the Annual Meeting it was voted to divide

Garden Clubs into Districts as there were over 700 clubs. The Glad Garden Club belongs to the Oleander District which is comprised of 24 counties -- Appling, Bacon, Brantley, Bryan, Bulloch, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Chatham, Clinch, Emanuel, Evans, Glynn, Jenkins, Liberty, Long, Montgomery, Pierce, Screven, Tatnall, Toombs, Treutlen, Ware and Wayne.

Swainsboro Garden Club became part of Oleander District and in 1951, the Swainsboro Garden Club divided into the Seedling Garden Club and the Glad Garden Club. Basically the Seedling Garden Club meets in the evening while the Glad Garden Club meets at 10:00AM at the Sudie A. Fulford Learning Center located on the campus of East Georgia State College. It is actually uncanny that the club meets there as the mission and spirit of Mrs. Fulford coincide with our mission of being in an "environment where learning opportunities take place and community relationships are enriched". Even our goals of education, civic engagement and hospi-

talities are coexistent. The Glad Garden Club is a club of like-minded people that are dedicated to beautifying and improving the environment. Our objectives include aiding and supporting improvements in our community, dedication to conservation of the environment and sharing our knowledge and love of gardening with the community.

Perhaps Glad's biggest ongoing project is the planting, replanting and maintaining the six entrances to the "Crossroads of the Old South". The entrance signs to the City of Swainsboro are constantly monitored and refurbished by the Glad Garden Club. All the plantings in the parking lot of Emanuel County Medical Center were established by the ladies of Glad. The Club also maintains a butterfly garden at the Pine Brook Park and Bird Sanctuary renamed and now known as the Veterans Memorial and First Responders Park. The Club has become involved in the efforts of the "Wreaths Across America Project" started by the Veterans at the Library and has participated in the planting of a

Christmas tree in the park. Decorations to come later! The Garden Club also provides financial support for programs such as Historical Preservation, Natural Disaster Support, Roadside Beautification, Scholarship Funds and the Sunshine House. Christmastime can be an unsettling time of year for those in the hospital - be they patients or staff. Among the greatest joys that the Glad Garden Club has is to decorate Emanuel County Medical Center at Christmastime. The halls are decorated with boughs of holly, Christmas trees, angels and wreaths. A traditional Christmas tree is placed in the lobby along with carolers, Santa and a snowman. Two handsome toy soldiers guard the front entrance. Other activities include delivering Christmas stockings to rotating designated nursing homes along with a carol or two. Such sweet memories these residents have to share. Christmas is a time of sharing, giving, and miracles. The world takes on a red and green glow. The kitchen is full of smells that bring back childhood memories but not

every child has that privilege. Not every child gets to hang up their stocking by the chimney with care and hope that St. Nicholas will be there. Families can be especially stressed and dynamics can be difficult. Not only at Christmas, but throughout the year the Sunshines House is devoted to the children and families needs affected by abuse and providing resources that aid in reducing trauma to the child and family.

We have meetings with politicians local and state to discuss current collaborative issues and projects that would involve the mission and goals of all parties involved. We are a non-profit organization that meets every second Monday, from September to May, at the Sudie A. Fulford Learning Center. We are a small but mighty civic oriented group that also likes to have fun so if you like to dig in the dirt and even if you don't, come join us.

The Glad Garden Club is a member of the Deep South Region of the National Garden Clubs, Inc., and the Oleander District of the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.

Ribbon cutting at Thompson Gas

A ribbon cutting for Thompson Gas was held on Friday, July 15, during the company's Grill & Fill event. The event was held to show appreciation to current and future customers and included free hamburgers and hotdogs, grill and steamer giveaways, door prizes, and \$10 off propane cylinders. The event concluded with a ribbon cutting to mark the change from TruFlame to Thompson Gas. Although the name has changed, it's still the same local propane company with the same friendly faces.



THOMPSON GAS RIBBON CUTTING

All the Fixin's: Georgia on their mind, Emanuel in their hearts

by BRITTANY HALL

When life gives you pecans, make something homemade. That's not quite the saying, but when talking about the livelihood of Twin City natives Janna and Brett Tucker, it absolutely should be. The couple are the owners of All the Fixin's who live and breathe by their business motto of *Goodness Served!* Handcrafted and soulfully created with Georgia on their mind, the Tuckers are dedicated to giving back through the flavors of home.

"For us, it's about providing a service that's truly homemade. We not only want our products to taste like they were made from an old family recipe, but we also want them to give back to the people of our community." Janna Tucker explained.

After opening shop in 2018, on the Summit side of downtown Twin City, the Tuckers became devoted to making specialty pecans from those that are produced on their family farm in Oscilla. Georgia grown and coated with the sugary, savory flavors of the peach state, the Tuckers then sell the pecans throughout the United States so that everyone can enjoy a taste of true southern comfort. Although this process is easily putting little ole Twin City on the map one soulful southern bite at a time, it's their reason for being in the kitchen that truly puts the *goodness* in their *fixin's* and makes us proud to call them one of our own.

"We try to partner with local businesses who give back and support the community." explained Tucker, "We sell items from *His Truth* Bookstore in Twin City and all proceeds from that organization go directly to the local food bank. One of the candle brands we offer support children in need and their charities, and another supports a women and chil-

dren's half-way house for the abused. The proceeds we receive from our pecans also go to the local charity, Weekend Blessings of Emanuel County, which provides weekend meals and snacks to children in need within the community."

Even though the root of benevolence is found within the heart of *All the Fixin's*, it was the many new changes that the company received over the year of 2022 that allowed them to further their goal of "goodness served".

"We desperately needed a bigger kitchen to meet the demands of our customers. Our original plan was to build a shop on some property that we currently rent in Twin City, but when the opportunity to purchase the Sugar Bowl became available, we felt that it made more sense to expand there since we were already renting their kitchen during the days that they were closed." Said Tucker, "So, we worked out a deal with them to purchase the building, as well as all of their equipment, and even some of their recipes so that we could continue doing everything that we were already doing in Twin City for Swainsboro."

This new expansion also allowed them to become more diverse in terms of their business and gave them the opportunity to better market their products online and put them in stores nationwide.

"We have the wholesale pecans that we sell to vendors throughout the state as well as outside of the state which is another new and exciting venture that our business began over the previous year. Now customers from across the country can enjoy the flavors of Georgia in California, Nevada, Michigan, and many other states because our kitchen in Swainsboro is able to support that demand." Explained

Tucker.

The products that are offered outside of the state and through shipping include their wide variety of pecan options including their pecan butter, *Good as All Get Out* roasted pecans, *Riled Up* chocolate covered pecans, *Burnin' Slap Up* spicy pecans, *Gussied Up* spiced pecans, *Heaps 'a Good* chocolate covered pecans, *No Fixin's* pecan halves and pieces, and their delicious turtles and snack mix.

Along with their core product, the Tucker's also offer breakfast, lunch and dinner menu options to their locals that are made fresh right in store, such as scratch made cheese grits, sandwiches, paninis, and ready-to-make casseroles with organic ingredients that are sourced right from their family farm in Twin City.

"We don't take shortcuts or skimp on flavor. We use choice ingredients in everything that we serve because we personally want our customers to have the experience of a home cooked meal even if they didn't cook it themselves." Explained Tucker, "It's truly about the comfort the meal provides for the person receiving it. We want to create an opportunity for someone who is having a hard day or experiencing a loss, or just needs a break from the kitchen to have a fresh, homemade meal without having the burden of making it themselves. It's known that a good meal can ease the soul and that's all we hope to do through our mission at All the Fixin's."

Tucker also said that with a growing business one thing you can do is bite off more than you can chew instead of focusing on the now. One goal that they hope to accomplish over this year is to *get better at doing what they already do.*

"We plan to monitor food cost better because we want to make sure that we charge the correct amount for things. We just want to tighten up and make it all more efficient." She explained.

One way they plan to achieve this is through the much-needed expansion of their Twin City store that will occur later this year. This expansion will accommodate their hard-working employees who oversee the manufacturing side of *All the Fixin's*.

"Currently our Twin City employees manage all of our online sales, from wholesale orders to packaging and shipping, but they're scattered throughout different locations that we rent because there isn't much room in that one area, so this year we plan to expand shop." explained Tucker, "There is a warehouse that our Twin City shop attaches to, so we plan to purchase that building and finish out that space so that we can basically get Twin City under one roof."

She also shared that both her employee's in Twin City and Swainsboro make All-the-Fixin's the bright environment that it is and their outlook on the workplace is valued because they make it efficient.

"Anytime something goes wrong or doesn't work out as we hoped it would, we ask ourselves 'how can we improve this? and we work on it together.'" She said.

In addition to the manufacturing improvements that are underway, Tucker said that she plans to update the website and wants the community to know that their feedback is important. She also wants to remind everyone that online orders are always available for menu items from their grab and go options like coffee's, breakfast, fruit cups, sweets, and sandwiches to their kitch-

en fixin's like casseroles and cakes.

"If you want a casserole for dinner, place an order and we can pull it for you so it's ready for you at the drive through when you get off work. If you want a coffee, you can place an order for that, and we'll have it ready when you arrive." Tucker explained.

The Tuckers are truly setting the bar for businesses throughout Emanuel County but instead of thinking competitively, they humbly talk of togetherness for our community and the improvements that can be made through lifelong friendships and supporting one another. Not only have they made room in their own business for other small businesses, but Janna has also established a podcast called 'Fixin's and Friends' that is dedicated to introducing and promoting the business owners and their contributions to our community.

"We're just blown away by the number of new customers we've received and continue to receive since opening in Swainsboro. It's been so cool to see how the businesses support one another throughout our small-town. It's a great place to live and being able to foster that and show it to others has always been our main goal." Tucker said in conclusion with a smile. "We're thankful for all of your support and hope you'll come see us."

All the Fixin's are open Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and located in Twin City at 502 5th Avenue and in Swainsboro at 408 North Main Street.

You can find them on Facebook by searching All the Fixin's or online at www.allthefixinspecans.com. You can watch all of their podcast episodes on YouTube.



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Emanuel County Family Connection continues to thrive

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, Franklin Memorial Library; East Georgia Healthcare Center, the Swainsboro Kiwanis Club, and Care Partners of Georgia; and Aetna/CVS health. 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 2022. 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 in the classroom and at home. We supplied 300 insulated lunch bags with books and activity items that were distributed with summer meals provided by the school nutrition department. Holiday and spring book projects gave books to over 20 teachers' classroom libraries. Book distribution projects at Early Head Start encouraged family reading with those children birth to 3 years old. 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 200 children under age 5 receive a book a month in their home along with a parent newsletter. Our greatest success in fundraising was

the Book Character Contest in the fall. Twenty community volunteers solicited votes and raised over \$11,000.

Childhood nutrition is another focus area of work for Family Connection. Through classes offered using The Charlie Cart Project, students were able to learn cooking skills and nutrition education while also applying science, math, and social studies from this life skills curriculum. We also offered a week-long cooking class "Emanuel Chopped Jr." at the Franklin Memorial Library. Students attended this fun camp to learn about nutrition and develop cooking skills while competing in teams to avoid getting "chopped". This is an annual program and we look forward to this every summer.

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 participa-



CHILDHOOD NUTRITION PHOTO

tion and voucher use specifically for fruits and vegetables is our main focus. Farmers Markets were offered to 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 were offered to parents to learn ways of serving healthy meals and snacks to their families.

We are proud to be able to offer a scholarship to each of the high schools in the

county. 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 welcome new collaborative partners. Family Connection holds collaborative meetings at the Sudie Fulford Center at 12 p.m. on the third Thursday of every month and everyone is invited to join.

The Crossroads Chronicle turned one

The Crossroads Chronicle celebrated its one-year anniversary with a ribbon cutting and grand opening event at its South Main Street address Thursday, January 20, 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 décor and Southern Traditions provided a beautiful floral arrangement complete with newspapers.



THE CROSSROADS CHRONICLE RIBBON CUTTING

It's an exciting time to be an Eagle!

by HAYLEE FREE, HEAD OF SCHOOL

It's an exciting time to be an Eagle! This school year celebrates David Emanuel Academy's 53rd year of educating children. Throughout our 53 years, DEA has been tremendously blessed. The progress of DEA has come through dedication, perseverance, loyalty, hard work, and most importantly, by positioning the Lord first and above all. 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 love and dedication of previous families has painted a canvas of rich history and traditions. The memories and legacies of our families of the past are what pushes us to work hard for the future. With enrollment growth of over 100 new students over the last five years, now is the time, and need, for our planned

campus expansion. After breaking ground in December, DEA is now in the midst of constructing a new 10,000 square foot addition to campus. This monumental task will perhaps leave 2023 as one of our most exciting years in recent history. Through our current building project, we are gaining new administrative offices and conference room, a commons area and security vestibule, two new classrooms, the renovation of two additional classrooms, an expansion and renovation to our current cafeteria, and much needed parking facilities. All of these things are needed to enhance security, confidentiality, fellowship, and convenience. We are thankful for our partnership with James W. Buckley and Associates, Pope Construction, and Georgia First Bank - each of which took our dream, our need, and turned it into a reality. Our progress in building a facil-



FREE

ity to serve our current students is well on its way. But, our goal is to keep marching forward to provide for future needs with further plans designed by Buckley - to add five more classrooms and a new fieldhouse. We are excited and ready!

Our athletic programs have experienced great success this year. DEA's varsity football team won the Region Championship title and went on to win the GIAA State Championship - a first State Championship victory for DEA's varsity

football program! Our basketball teams had wonderful seasons with the Lady Eagles finishing as Region Runner-Up and boys currently advancing through State playoff games. DEA, in a joint effort with the Booster Club, has also finished several great projects for our student athletes. So far this year, a covered shelter for batting tunnels and bullpen have been constructed, additional weight room equipment has been purchased, and the gym has undergone a beautiful transformation with a refurbished and redesigned floor and new paint, signage and logo padding throughout.

David Emanuel Academy has been a safe haven for hundreds of students throughout the last 53 years. In the little town of Stillmore, DEA is still a place that many families will forever call home. 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. To our trustees, faculty and staff, parents, volunteers, and donors (past and present), thank you. Your sacrificial service to our Academy is why we are here today. We are ready to SOAR into the future as a school that has built Strength, embraced Opportunities, has Aspirations for more enhancements, and we are ready to Reach out to meet our goals. We are looking forward to the 2023-2024 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 February 27th.

It's great to be an Eagle!

Southern Gents Salon celebrates grand opening and ribbon cutting

Southern Gents Salon celebrated their grand opening Saturday, September 10, at 333 S. Green Street in Swainsboro, with a ribbon cutting. The all-day event began at 10 a.m. and included free haircut giveaways, product giveaways, and goodie bags for all guests. An extra special treat that was part of the celebration was Tacos La Chona, an authentic street taco food truck.



SOUTHERN GENTS SALON GRAND OPENING

Southeastern Technical College

Southeastern Technical College has had a very successful 2022, however it is the success of these incredible STC teachers and students that have truly highlighted their phenomenal year.

Underwood named Adult Education Teacher of the Year

The Office of Adult Education at Southeastern Technical College (STC) nominated Seneca Underwood for Outstanding Teacher of the Year 2023. She represented STC Adult Education in March at the statewide competition in Atlanta, Georgia.

"Seneca has been an integral part of building our English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) component of the Adult Education program," said Susan Cross, executive director of Adult Education. "Seneca's fluency in ESL has enabled our program to serve the large number of non-English speaking individuals in our service area."

Underwood was also the nominating instructor for Southeastern Tech's 2023 EAGLE delegate, Manuel Torres. In March, Torres competed with other Adult Education students for the Exceptional Adult Georgian in Literacy Education Award at the Dinah Culbreath Wayne EAGLE Leadership Institute.

Underwood, ESL/HSE instructor with the Adult Education program in Vidalia, has been in her role for the past five years. She was an adjunct instructor for two years before becoming a full-time instructor.

"I am honored to have been selected and to be recognized

for the positive impact that I make in the lives of our High School Equivalency students at Southeastern Technical College," said Underwood.

For more information on STC Adult Education programs, visit www.southeastern-tech.edu or call (912) 538-1142.

HSE Instructor of the Year of 2022 Merier, nominates Scott as the 2022 EAGLE Student

The 2022 Dinah Culbreath Wayne EAGLE Awards Leadership Institute was held in Atlanta in March. Charley "Jaycee" Scott from Swainsboro represented the Southeastern Technical College (STC) Adult Education program.

EAGLE is the first statewide program in the nation that recognizes and rewards excellence among students enrolled in adult education programs. This student recognition program is designed to create greater awareness of educational opportunities that are available in local communities across the state and to foster greater involvement in lifelong learning pursuits.

Jaycee received her High School Equivalency (HSE) in December 2021 and is enrolled in the Business Technology program at Southeastern Technical College. She works full-time for the College as the admissions assistant and front desk receptionist on the Swainsboro Campus.

"The day I decided to enroll in STC's Adult Education program was the best (Continued on page 48)

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Southeastern Technical College...

(From page 47)

decision I could have made. I did not know I would meet so many people who would make me feel welcome, offer guidance, and support me to make my journey successful," said Jaycee. "Having fallen behind in school due to medical scares, I would not be where I am today without this program. Giving up on my education was not an option."

The EAGLE Leadership Institute recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of each of the EAGLE delegates and provides professional development sessions focused on increasing leadership, communication, and life management skills. Jaycee was nominated for the EAGLE award by Annette Merier, Adult Education Instructor in Swainsboro.

"Jaycee was willing to work diligently to achieve her goals and she is always willing to help others if she can. She attended Adult Education classes regularly and participated consistently. She will not let any circumstances hinder her progress. For example, despite having surgery, she was back in classes on crutches the next

week. Being an exceptional student, having a great personality, and giving back to the community is important. Because Jaycee possesses all these qualities, I believe that she was a great choice to represent Southeastern Technical College as an EAGLE delegate," said Ms. Merier.

The Technical College System of Georgia through its Office of Adult Education sponsors the annual Dinah Culbreath Wayne Exceptional Adult Georgian in Literacy Education (EAGLE) Leadership Institute.

Accompanying Jaycee in Atlanta were Executive Director of Adult Education Susan Cross, EAGLE Coordinator Precious Landaverde, and Adult Education Instructor Annette Merier.



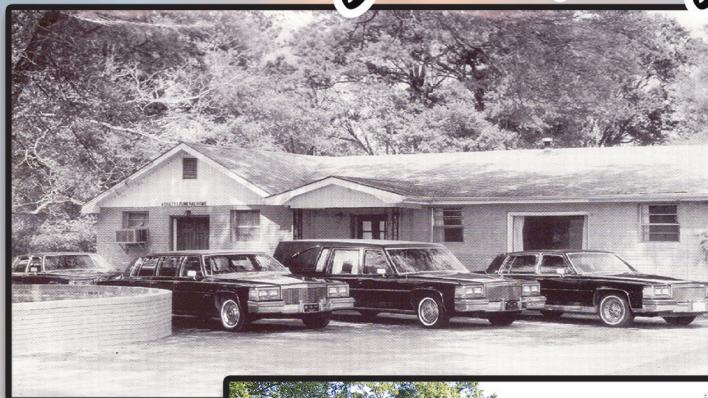
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Letter from Superintendent Hattaway

Dear community:

Emanuel County Schools has had another progressive year with many academic, athletic, and extracurricular achievements. Emanuel County students and staff continue to make us proud. It is rewarding to see students receiving academic awards, signing with colleges and universities, receiving state championship and runner-up titles, and serving our community through school extracurricular organizations. Please visit our school webpage and social media sites to see our students and staff's successes within and beyond the classroom. With a few more months of school in this 2022-2023 school year, we are eager to see what more students will accomplish.

Under the leadership of the Emanuel County Board of Education and with the support of staff, families, and the community, Emanuel County Schools continues to follow our vision to strengthen our community one student at a time. A strong educational program is a foundation for a thriving and progressive community. Therefore, we have invested in strategic initiatives that support the success of each of our students. These include: implementing a structured literacy program for grades K-2 and a balanced literacy program for grades 3-5; collaborating with workforce educational partners; providing staff with research-based professional learning; establishing a cohesive teacher induction program; supporting and fostering student and

staff social and emotional well-being; and developing a district communication plan to increase effective collaboration with families and our community.

To support the initiatives and student success, we have had an active year with our Farm to School program, STEAM and STEM programs, and CTAE Programs. Did you know that Emanuel County has a food processing center in Twin City where residents can process fresh vegetables? Whether you are creaming corn, canning beans or tomatoes, or shelling peas, the facility has the equipment to assist you in making the process easier. The facility is operated by the Emanuel County Schools Agriculture Education Staff and is open during the summer months when fresh produce is harvested. If you are interested in using the facility, please get in touch with John Harrison, Young Farmer Teacher at ECI, at 478-763-2673.

This 2022-2023 school year, our math teachers have been dedicated to training on Georgia's K-12 Mathematics standards, which will be implemented in the 2023-2024 school year. These new standards are drafted by mathematics teachers in Georgia with input from educational leaders, parents, students, business and industry leaders, and community members. They are designed to provide a strong foundation, be clear and understandable, and present a reasonable amount of content each year so that students can genuinely master concepts



**SUPERINTENDENT
HATTAWAY**

rather than simply being quickly exposed to them. "Ensuring that each learner is a prepared, numerate citizen ready to enter the future workforce with the critical thinking and reasoning skills necessary for success in both the local and global workforces."

Emanuel County Schools feels privileged to share in several partnerships with our community. Mill Creek Foundation and Nordson Foundation continue to provide grants to fund state-of-the-art classrooms and school supplies. We have partnered with the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce, the Joint Development Authority, 12 local businesses and industries, Southeastern Technical College, and Chick-fil-A to implement our Industry Tours Initiative. Teachers are touring local businesses and industries to help better understand how to better support our students with workforce readiness.

The Emanuel County School System continues to be financially stable. Your

Board of Education's goal is to be excellent financial stewards of Emanuel County's tax dollars. Like every school system, we have enjoyed financial success as well as financial strains. Your Board of Education works hard to ensure that our School District projects and plans appropriately to keep our school system's finances in good order.

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding will end in September 2024. Our school system has spent countless hours planning, applying for approval, and executing the planning of these funds in a very cautious and fiscally responsible manner. Our goal has been to utilize these Federal funds to fill the gaps that our General Fund and SPLOST monies would not be able to provide and to maintain financial stability during the pandemic and in the future. ESSER funds are being utilized to meet various System needs such as addressing learning loss, providing alternative learning platforms, updating technology throughout the System, HVAC COVID-related upgrades, clean air production, supplies, and equipment needed for proper cleaning and sanitizing of facilities. These funds are also being used to address the significant challenge the school system and the state of Georgia face regarding recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff.

We were both surprised and extremely excited by our community's support of the Ferst Readers pro-

gram during Fall 2022. Our communities raised over \$12,000 for the Ferst Readers program in Emanuel County, facilitated by our Family Connections Director, Tammi Allen. Ferst Readers provides books for children from birth to the start of school age. Ferst Readers aims to ensure that our Emanuel County children have developmentally appropriate books in their homes and provide parents with resources that support them in their role as their child's first teacher.

Read United is a partnership in which our school system has joined efforts with The United Way of Southeast Georgia and our Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce to provide tutoring for struggling readers. This program aims to get all Emanuel County students reading on grade level by their third-grade year. We plan to implement this Read United tutorial program for second-grade students in August of 2023 in our Swainsboro Primary School. Those "bubble students" are already very close to being on grade level. The tutoring through the Read United program hopes to get these students on grade level and help keep them on grade level as they progress in their education in Emanuel County Schools.

None of this would be possible without the support from our parents and community. We know our students are best served when we work together as a team. Thank you for your continued support and collaboration.

Scotty Hattaway
Emanuel County Schools
Superintendent

Swainsboro High School

by BRANDON ANDREWS

Witnessing so much greatness walking the hallways of “The” Swainsboro High School each day highlights the service our faculty, staff, and community invests in our students. Seeing our daily impact on our students’ lives is a constant reminder of our mission at Swainsboro High School. Many of the lives we serve are being revolutionized each day with opportunities for advancement and many other circumstances that life brings about. Each day in my second year serving as principal, I find myself experiencing more of the lessons life brings our way, expected and unexpected. Life experiences help to build and grow our students into the best versions of themselves. I am truly humbled and blessed to serve such a wonderful community. I love each and every one of you!

So far, it has been a very exciting year at SHS! The 2022-2023 school year has seen our football team become the Region 2-A Division 1 champions for the second year and runner-up for the state championship. Four of our football players have signed with colleges. Our boys and girls basketball teams are the 2-A Division 1 region champions and have made it to the Sweet 16 round of the Class A Division 1 Championship. Our

softball team was the region runner-up. Our Cross Country team competed at state this year. SHS Wrestler Zach Lee was the state runner-up. Our competition cheerleaders won the region title and placed fifth in their state competition. Senior Jayson Brown has been selected as Georgia’s number-one Alto Saxophone player. Thirty-nine members of our Beta Club are eligible to compete at the national level after last month’s state competition. After having several regional wins at Regional Leadership Conference, we will move to the state competition in March. FCCLA students competed in region STAR Events. Morgan Green competed in Repurpose and Redesign and advanced to State; Tykerria Phillips, Kimberly Vazquez, and Anna Ogletree competed in Sports Nutrition. Our Bass Fishing team will compete on March 18th in the third regional qualifier for GHSA. We could not be more proud of our Tigers!

Experiences in life, good or bad, yield unlimited growth opportunities. Our focus at Swainsboro High School will always remain on student achievement and growth, and as we progress through 2022-2023, our focus will remain steadfast in our faith. We will strive to accomplish each set goal, for goals are a substance of faith. Faith is those things



SHS PRINCIPAL
ANDREWS

hoped for, yet evidence of things unseen. We believe in Swainsboro High School and our successes, for success is the progressive realization of worthy ideals conjured from the human mind. Prohibit any doubt, trust your abilities, gifts, and talents, and focus intensely on your dreams.

The safety of our students, faculty, and staff has always been—and continues to be—a priority; with the continuation of the heightened safety measures offered, we were prepared. 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.

Continuous improvement in all areas is critical to the culture of SHS. Within our School Improvement Plan,

Swainsboro High School’s three initiatives—data-driven culture, personalized learning, and literacy across the curriculum—will remain focal points as we progress through the 2022-2023 school term. Our teachers have been engaged in professional development that requires them to explore student data and use it to inform the search for new opportunities for our students to grow and achieve more in the areas that each student needs to focus on most. Our teachers have also emphasized clearly communicating to students not just what they are learning but why they are learning it and what success in learning looks like.

One of the primary goals of our school has been to involve not only our faculty and staff in the planning process but to involve the stakeholders also because we understand that the stakeholders are critical to this process as well. 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 consistently engaging stakeholders in school activities 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.

As we progress through 2022-2023 at Swainsboro High School, you can rest assured that we will continue to be the hardest 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 to some but present to others our two assistant principals, our very own Mrs. Lindsey Sconyers and Mr. Grayson Mendieta. As an administrative team, our priority will be to serve and support Swainsboro High School and the Swainsboro-Emanuel County community. With 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.

Swainsboro welcomes newest salon - Shades of Beauty

Shades of Beauty Salon held a grand opening event that welcomed locals to come meet and greet salon staff and tour Swainsboro’s newest salon while enjoying refreshments this past Saturday, June 25. The event also featured a ribbon cutting, giveaways, and opportunity to book upcoming appointments.



SHADES OF BEAUTY RIBBON CUTTING

Emanuel County Institute

by ANETRIA EDENFIELD,
PRINCIPAL

School Improvement through measurement!

Schools around the county have worked hard to improve their instructional strategies for decades. It seems that progress is met with obstacles such as changing standards, test administrations, student/staff turnover, lack of data-driven decision-making, etc. One thing is for sure; you can't improve what you don't measure! At ECI, we have committed to making a greater effort to ensure that we are protecting our ongoing process of collecting and analyzing data to provide personalized learning for every student enrolled. We have also worked for a year and a half to improve our school climate and culture. This lays a solid foundation for school improvement by establishing trust! We have utilized our data coach, Tracey Mercer, Instructional Coach, Dena Walden, and Intervention Specialist, Sondra Cowart, to their fullest capacity this year

to help move forward with this process.

In order to teach a child, you have to know the child! During the improvement of climate and culture, we have dedicated more time to build and foster these relationships. This helps us promote and maintain a healthy learning environment for our students, faculty, and staff. As Superintendent stated, we must Learn em', Love em' and Lead em'! How can we build a strong educational foundation if we are not working hard at these three aspects?

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 students have remained focused on growing their academic careers. We have incorporated many ways to address this for each student through



**ECI PRINCIPAL
EDENFIELD**

small group instruction, individualized remediation as well as a yearlong afterschool program. Concisely, this is what we call "personalized learning".

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 have been blessed with representation at the state level in these activities this year. We strive 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 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 their middle & high school career. We value home and community action here at ECI. It is vital and integral to each student's academic career. We hope you find

our school website, <https://www.emanuel.k12.ga.us/1/Home>, Facebook page @facebook.com/ECIbulldogs, and KINVO informing. Parent Portal is available for parents and students to view grades and attendance. 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 about our current direction within the 2022-2023 school term.

Go Dawgs - We Learn em', Love em' and Lead em'!

ECI Principal,
Anetria Edenfield

Swainsboro Middle School

by MANZIE BROXTON,
PRINCIPAL

Although it seems like the school year just started, it's almost time for spring break already! As we have progressed through this school year, we have realized that there is no place like Swainsboro Middle School. Every day, our students come full of energy and excitement, like the Tigers that they are!

As we have made strides to fine-tune our instructional practices, we still believe that the key to the success

of our students is building positive relationships. Therefore, we are committed to building relationships with not only our students but also the community as a whole. By building meaningful relationships, we can provide students with instructional teaching tailored to their unique needs and learning styles. Throughout the course of the year, our teachers have participated in various professional development activities to assist them with reaching



**SMS PRINCIPAL
BROXTON**

our students. We have con-

ducted data talks with our teachers and students to ensure that we all know what our students' strengths and weaknesses are so that we can close achievement gaps and grow our students in the areas that they need. We look forward to seeing how well our students perform on the Georgia Milestones in April. Based on our Beacon Assessment data and iReady results, many of our students have shown progression, which is a result of the dedication, hard work,

and efforts of our teachers and staff.

Our goal is to ensure that our students have everything they need to be the best they can possibly be. As we hasten to complete this school term, we encourage our parents to reach out to the school if they have any questions or concerns regarding their child's performance or educational needs.

M. Broxton
Principal, Swainsboro
Middle School

Twin City Elementary School

by ROBBIE WARNOCK,
PRINCIPAL

Dear community members:

Please allow me to tell you some amazing things we have going on this year at Twin City Elementary, where we are blessed to be able to TEACH, CHALLENGE, and EMPOWER (TCE) an absolutely fantastic group of students each and every day. We currently have an enrollment of 524 students in grades P-5 with an average class size of 19. Our academic services span the gamut from special education to gifted and talented classes, supplemented by our new EIP programs

and our MTSS paras who work with our interventionist and data coach to give our students learning experiences that are tailored to their own unique needs. In addition to their academics, our students have access to art, PE, STEAM, and music. Music Club is always a great activity, and our nationally-recognized Junior Beta Club continues to perform well on state and national levels. Our kindergarten teachers are implementing systematic, hands-on phonics instruction to build fluency and a love for reading. First graders are working on setting individu-



TCE PRINCIPAL
WARNOCK

al academic goals and working towards mastery with their teachers. Research skills and animal reports running wild in second grade. Third-

grade students are focusing on multiplication facts and proficiency. Down in fourth grade, students are working hard on reading comprehension and fractions skills. Fifth-grade teachers and students are rolling into GMAS prep with an environment of collaboration. Outlook students are working on completing projects on Lego engineering, robotics, careers, and personal fitness. STEAM students are going from Farm to Table and beyond by growing and harvesting cabbage and collards, managing our family of chickens, and even building rotational

models of the Earth to share with younger students. PE students are practicing some new events for the best day of the year (FIELD DAY) while over in music faces are lighting up when they connect something in music to content in their other classes.

We all know that it takes a village to raise a child. As principal, I am super proud of the teachers and staff that make our school home for our students. Please join me in thanking them for their service and devotion to Emanuel County's children.

Robbie Warnock, Principal

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SES gives students the power to succeed

by VALORIE WATKINS,
PRINCIPAL

We are focusing on student success at Swainsboro Elementary School. We value the importance of our students obtaining a solid 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 considerable 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 that helps teachers, parents, and administrators improve learning for all students and make informed decisions to promote a child's academic



SES PRINCIPAL
WATKINS

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; Family

Literacy Night; Family STEAM Night; Veteran's Program; Black History Program; Junior Beta Competitions; SES Pageant; Spring Fling; Career Day; and School Book Fairs. Our Academic Blitz After School Program has started and will end in mid-April. 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.

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 Kinvoled Messaging System, email, or call the school at 478-237-7266 if they have questions about their child's performance on assignments or assessments. Thank you for partnering with us in your child's education.

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 three 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 focused on having



EMANUEL COUNTY
EARLY LEARNING
CENTER DIRECTOR
DANIELS

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 reflects 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 emphasize 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 dis-

trict 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, 2023, and would like to register for Pre-K for the 2023-2024 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.

Swainsboro Primary School

by RONALD HIRST

The 2022-2023 school year has been filled with a lot of wonderful experiences, activities, and opportunities for our students to grow and enjoy learning. This year we have been able to enjoy having our Fall Festival, Pilgrimage, Winter Wonderland, and several other activities that allow our parents to be back on campus as well. We have seen some tremendous growth in our students,

both emotionally and academically.

We are proud of our staff for focusing on providing our students a whole child education and positive learning experiences that make learning fun. We are excited as we head into the end of the year with our multiple programs, field day, and field trips. We also would like to share the success of some new programs established this year with our Tiny Tigers TV Produc-



**SPS PRINCIPAL
HURST**

tion, Book Clubs, and our new Tiger Book Vending

Machine that has allowed our students to receive books as rewards for positive behavior. Our teachers and students have also enjoyed our newly added outdoor eating areas and outdoor classrooms. We also recently obtained approval from federal funding to update our library by \$60,000, which will allow our students access to new books and help them have the opportunity to gain a passion for reading.

We appreciate all of our students, parents, and staff that make SPS a loving, positive, and supportive environment for our young people. We are excited to finish out this year, watching our students grow, learn, and be supported through positive relationships and experiences that make SPS a special place to learn.

Ronald Hirst
Swainsboro Primary
Principal

2023 STAR students and teachers

Emanuel County Institute senior, Karly Olliff, Swainsboro High School senior, Manuel Fernandez, and David Emanuel Academy senior, Peyton Free, have been named the 2023 PAGE STAR Student for their respective schools. They each earned this recognition for academic achievement and performance on the SAT. Olliff selected Frank Wimberly as her STAR Teacher, Fernandez selected Joseph O'Neal as his STAR Teacher, and Free selected Donna Campbell as her STAR Teacher. The Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce, local STAR program sponsor, recognized STAR Students and Teachers at the annual Chamber Banquet on Thursday, January 26. The STAR Student and Teacher system winner were announced at that time.

About PAGE STAR Program

The PAGE Student Teacher Achievement Recognition (STAR) program, now in its 65th 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 2023 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 competes for the honor of being named State PAGE STAR Student. STAR Teachers continue with their STAR Students at every level of the program.



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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, so much so that she's literally invested in a place that encompasses her love for the well-being of others.

Licensed in the beauty and cosmetic industry, Meraki Loft is a cozy little oasis that's located within Swainsboro's newest salon, Shades of Beauty.

Working alongside Shades of Beauty owner and lash technician, Ami Scott, Waters is the salon's certified technician who always provides her clients with a calming, self-care experience through her skill of enhancing natural beauty.

"I offer full body waxing, customized facials and masks, lashes and I'm certified in microdermabrasion 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 although she's a master of the craft, she hopes to broaden her talent and services in the upcoming year.

"My goal as of now is to add more services. I plan to offer teeth gems, piercings, and more in the near future."

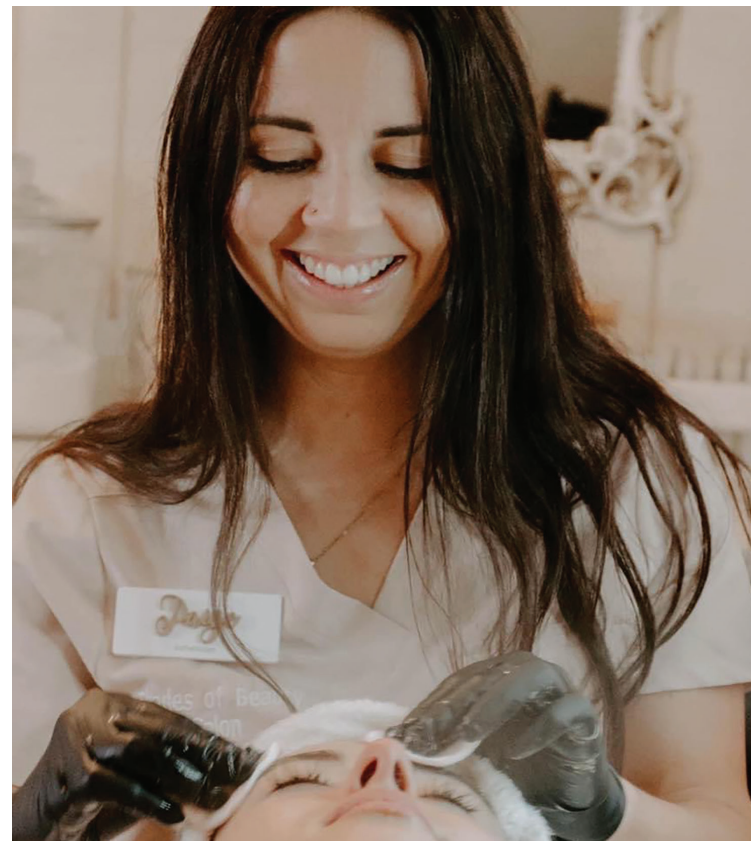
The Meraki Loft has been growing ever since its establishment in 2021, especially now that it's found a permanent home within Shades of Beauty. And though Waters says that running a business has been a learning experience in every aspect, she wouldn't have changed the difficulties for anything because the outcome would've never been as incredible as it is now:

"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 every question 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, 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 has found an amazing home in Shades of Beauty, surrounded by some of the best people I know. Although it's Swainsboro, when you enter our Salon and Meraki, you feel as if you're on a relaxing



PAIGE WITH CLIENT

getaway and that's always been the goal."

If you're interested in visiting Paige and The Meraki Loft, check her out on Instagram at [the_meraki_loft](https://www.instagram.com/the_meraki_loft), or Facebook at [The Meraki Loft](https://www.facebook.com/TheMerakiLoft). For booking you can visit [the-meraki-loft.square.site](https://www.the-meraki-loft.square.site)

or stop by *Shades of Beauty Salon* and schedule an appointment. "I would like to say, 'thank you' 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 treat yourself today!

Ever Wild Boutique holds ribbon cutting

Ever Wild Boutique in Downtown Swainsboro hosted a celebration weekend beginning July 28 through July 30. The three-day event included a ribbon cutting at 4 p.m. Thursday, July 28, that included refreshments, giveaways, spend more save more deals and more.



EVER WILD RIBBON CUTTING

Swainsboro Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce holds their 68th Annual Awards Banquet

by BRITTANY HALL

The Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce hosted its 68th Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Banquet on Thursday, January 26, at Swainsboro Golf and Country Club. As always, the event was held to honor and recognize those who made Emanuel County a wonderful place to call home during the year of 2022.

David Emanuel Academy's 2022-2023 STAR Student is Senior, Peyton Free.

Peyton Free is the daughter of Bill and Haylee Free of Swainsboro. She has been a student at David Emanuel Academy since she was in the third grade. Her awards include, Headmaster Honor Roll, Highest Academic Average in the 9th grade, and Academic Excellence in numerous subjects.

David Emanuel Academy's 2022-2023 STAR Teacher, Mrs. Donna Campbell received her Bachelors, Masters, and Specialist degrees in Mathematics Education from Georgia Southern University. She began teaching in 1986 at Glennville High School where she served for one year, then moved to Swainsboro High School where she taught for seven years before transferring to Emanuel County Institute, where she taught for 29 years. During her last 7 years at ECI, she also taught at East Ga State College part-time. She continued the overlapping of high school and college teaching for 10 years and has taught at David Emanuel

Academy for 5 years.

Emanuel County Institutes 2022-2023 STAR Student is Senior, Karly Olliff.

Karly Olliff is the daughter of Randy and Kara Olliff. She plans to attend the University of Georgia and major in either advertising or marketing to prepare her for the field. Olliff would like to research, design, and plan marketing programs for businesses and companies to sell their product or

service. Some of Olliff's academic achievements include the University of Georgia Certificate of

Merit, highest average in U.S. History and Spanish I, the Academic E during all four years of

high school, and recognition as part of East Georgia State College's Bobcat L.E.A.D

Society.

Emanuel County Institutes, 2022-2023 STAR Teacher, Frank Wimberly, is a 2006 graduate of David Emanuel Academy. He received his Bachelor of Arts in History from Georgia Southern University in 2010. In 2017, he completed his Master of Education in Teacher Leadership from Clayton State University. Mr. Wimberly began his career at Johnson County High School, serving for two years as the US History and Economics teacher, as well as coaching varsity football and baseball. In 2013, he moved to Emanuel County Institute continuing to teach these subjects, as well as serving as the varsity softball and tennis coach.

(Continued on page 58)



BUSINESS OF THE YEAR RECIPIENTS LEVI AND ARIANNA STOLTZFUS, OWNERS OF LEANNA'S, WITH WARNOCK



CITIZEN OF THE YEAR JUANITA PORTER WITH WARNOCK AND DAMIEN SCOTT

Swainsboro Emanuel County...

(From page 57)

Swainsboro High Schools 2022-2023 STAR Student is Senior, Manuel Fernandez.

Manuel Fernandez is the son of Christopher and Alexandra Flowers. During his High School career, Fernandez participated in the Band of Gold and played Tennis. Fernandez is a member of the BETA Club and the Technology Student Association and accredits both organizations as being a huge part of his high school experience. Throughout his High School Career, Fernandez has maintained Honor Roll Status, received the University of Georgia Certificate of Merit, and was selected to serve on the Citizens Bank Student Advisory Board. He was also chosen as a 2023 Senior Superlative and earned the honor of STAR Student for his graduating class.

Swainsboro High Schools 2022-2023 STAR Teacher, Joseph O'Neal, is the Engineering and Technology Teacher at Swainsboro High School. O'Neal has enjoyed the privilege of helping students complete CTAE pathways as a Career, Technical, and Agriculture Education teacher. Mr. O'Neal began his teaching career teaching science courses at Dodge County High School in 2005. From there, he moved to Toombs County High School and taught science and agriculture classes for ten years, later moving to Montgomery County High School to continue in science education. In 2016, his career shifted as he began working for the Georgia Department of Corrections Academic Education program, where he remained

for three years. He returned to the classroom in 2020 and found a home at Swainsboro High School.

Leanna's named Business of the Year

Leanna's owners, Levi and Arianna Stoltzfus shared this statement:

"It is our honor to be a part of the business community of Emanuel County. We appreciate and value all of you and the wonderful town here. At Leanna's, our mission is offering a slice of hope to the community. If we have made a positive impact on the people that enter Leanna's, then we feel that we have achieved our goal. Being able to serve good food at a fair value is an added bonus. After 20 plus years in a wholesale bakery business our family relocated to Kite, Georgia. We decided if we were to get back into the food business it would be more of a retail setting where we could connect with the community on a personnel level. What we didn't expect was the amazing support and dedication of the locals here and the warm hometown feeling that the people of Swainsboro have shown. It has been an incredible experience. Swainsboro is a special place with so many genuine, gracious people. Our desire at Leanna's is to not only create food but a great experience. We believe that good food should be enjoyed in both preparation and consuming. We believe that families sitting down and enjoying food together can generate a great platform of special memories, great discussions and even healing misunderstandings and con-

(Continued on page 59)



DEA STAR TEACHER DONNA CAMPBELL,
DEA STAR STUDENT PEYTON FREE AND WARNOCK



ECI STAR TEACHER FRANK WIMBERLY,
ECI STAR STUDENT KARLY OLLIFF AND WARNOCK

Swainsboro Emanuel County...

(From page 58)
 flicts. In the future we are interested in getting more into the kraft of food preparation with the possible building expansion on the horizon, we would love to continue to bring in variety as well as incorporating more European style baking. A special thank you to the Chamber of Commerce for their continuous support and encouragement in the past three years that we have been here. Our family came into this with limited restaurant experience, and they have been very supportive from the beginning in spite of the initial challenges that Covid brought in 2020 to the continued support and patronage at Leanna's. A special recognition as well to our wonderful employees for all of their hard work and dedication to Leanna's. They are an amazing part of our team, and we are grateful to each one of them."

Porter named Citizen of the Year

The award was presented to someone who has made service a central aspect of her life, Juanita Porter. Porter graduated from the famous Georgia Baptist School of Nursing. She has raised four great young men, Daniel, Christopher, David, and Benjamin and now has four precious grandchildren.

"One might think that service to her family and healthcare is enough for anyone to feel highly accomplished and ready to slow down but the humble and diligent spirit of Mrs. Porter continues to have an appetite for the service in her community. She has served in more ways unseen than seen and yet there

is still an exhaustive list of all the various physical ways in which she has served our community." Scott explained.

After Mrs. Porter received her award, she shared that "It is the community of Emanuel County that I serve. This is home to me, and it gives me great joy to be able to live out my faith and to do what I do. I could not do it without Emanuel County because it is you who has partnered with me to donate the items to the center. There are many needs here in Emanuel County and many people who don't have the resources. They don't have insurance, and some are homeless. So, we are able to take those donated items and provide them to those who need it most. Spread the word on what we are doing." The Emanuel County Resource Center is available (Continued on page 60)



**SHS STAR TEACHER JOSEPH O'NEAL,
 SHS STAR STUDENT MANUEL FERNANDEZ AND WARNOCK**



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Swainsboro Emanuel County...

(From page 59)

to serve, and they need volunteers. If anyone would like to donate or volunteer your time, please contact Emanuel County Medical Center for more information.

Warnock explained that in Fall of 2022, Leadership Emanuel was able to have its first class in 40 years. The intent of Leadership Emanuel is to build better, more informed leaders within our community through a series of sessions emphasizing practices of exemplary leadership, business and industry tours, and group discussions on issues facing our community both now and in the future. The class met at various locations throughout our

county allowing the participants to experience the opportunities available, better equipping them to be more effective leaders for the future. After sharing information on Leadership Emanuel, Warnock then recognized the 2022 Leadership Emanuel Class, these people are Anna Torrance, Avery Williams, Brooke Marsh, Dr. Shannon Lawrence, Harley Strickland Smith, Jonathan Hampton, Kayla McKenzie, Lisa Bertoch, Mary Radford, Michala Valora, Morgan Boulineau, Scotty Hattaway, Shayna Boston, Sonya Wilson, Stefanie Mason, Steven Clark, Tonya Hooks, Vicki Anderson, Zach Proctor.



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The keeper of the flowers

by Brittany Hall

At the crossroads of the great south, there's a building that sits on the corner of North and West Main. Adorned with big white columns and vibrant red geraniums that embrace each window, it's hard not to admire. We call it City Hall. Many times you'll see a man sitting outside on his John Deere Gator, tending to those beautiful scarlet flowers, or making his downtown rounds to ensure that Swainsboro can be cherished for generations to come. His name is Mr. Willie Jacob Butler, and he is every bit the heart and soul of our community, sharing a contagious smile with anyone who pass-

es by, an absolute joy for life and a drive to make Emanuel County a beautiful place to call home.

Mr. Willie spends his days tending to the square as our city's Maintenance Man and said that, though it's not always easy, the smiles that beam across the faces of his coworkers and locals after it's all done make it the greatest occupation in the world.

"I love everything about the job, and I mean that! Anything they want me to do, I'll go the extra mile to try to make everything comfortable for the people I work with. I like to see everybody happy. If anybody's sad, I'll be sad, so if something

needs doing around here, I'm gonna do it, and if I can fix it, I'll fix it."

One of Willie's most prized responsibilities is caring for the flowers around the city, a job that he doesn't take lightly.

Mr. Willie's passion for being the keeper of the flowers stems from his roots of growing up on his grandpa's farm.

When talking to Mr. Willie about the future, he said, "If everything goes alright and I can stay well, I'd like to still be here taking care of things within the next 10 years, and I would like to keep the same plants going."

While his geraniums are his sunshine, Willie is the sunshine

to the city of Swainsboro. His beautiful flowers bring smiles and happiness to residents and visitors alike as they truly thrive in his presence and have since the moment they were planted. No matter the season or weather, they're sitting pretty in all their colorful glory, ageless and radiant as ever because of the unyielding attention Willie provides for them.

Mr. Willie has been married to his beautiful wife, Emma Jean Butler, for almost 42 years. "We don't have any children, but we enjoy working out in the yard together. I'll get home sometimes and sit down with my wife, and I'll get to talking about my flowers and she'll

teasingly say, 'Oh you worry about those flowers more than you worry about me!' but she's the prettiest flower in my life."

Willie is an ever-constant optimist who effortlessly views life from the lens of rose-colored glasses. "I like to get the most out of life so it's not about the big or small things. If you enjoy what you do, you'll never work a day in your life, and I get to wake up in the morning excited to go to work. My flowers enjoy life too, and if I'm taking care of them, they're happy. That's just like life. When you love something, you got to take care of it, even yourself. It ain't always easy but you gotta enjoy the ride."

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