

The Cover

Every year, for nearly a quarter of a century, The Forest-Blade has issued an annual review of the activity that occurred during the preceding 12 months in our county. It is a summary of the continuing forward motion of our community. Sometimes the calendar has little relevance to the momentum and spirit of growth generated by a place. Some years are notable for planning and preparation while other years enjoy the tangible reward of achievement. The imperative involved in the process of progress is that the wheel only turns when the collective number of shoulders are applied to it. That is what drives success, whether in a school, a business, government, or anything else, and that is why we once again are pleased to celebrate all the forward motion of Emanuel County in the last year and once again present the Progress Edition for 2024.

Pictured on the front

I-16 Industrial Park Spec Building, City of Adrian City Hall, Future County Building, Emanuel County Emergency Operations Center, All The Fixin's Candy Operation and the SEC Conference Complex/Nordson Center

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 2023.

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 in-

dustrial development, but also works with the Chamber of Commerce to help retail development. The Chamber and the ECDA work together on economic development opportunities, particularly when working with industrial prospects.

The CEO position allows for a single point of contact for interest in our community while maintaining separate chamber and development authority support staff. The development authority President supports industry recruitment and expansion efforts within the organization. The whole idea is to make Swainsboro and Emanuel County the best community in which to live and grow for not only businesses and industries, but our citizens.

During 2023, 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 2023 as well, contributing to the net jobs gain. 2023 saw the expansion of six companies in Emanuel County; total new jobs created

were 141.

Wincore Windows and Doors, LLC continued to surpass their production goals in 2023. Wincore occupies 175,000 square feet of the facility and operates five production lines with 216 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 41 employees and has experienced a significant market share with the addition of 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 36 projects, 22 of which are active prospects, six are construction or construction related, six are real estate related, eleven are work force related and five are site related. ECDA is also assisting its active prospects with due diligence on sites at various industrial parks in the community.

2023 saw the opening of the newly reconstruct-

ed conference center, located at 210 West Moring Street in Swainsboro. The complex is owned and operated by the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce More formally known as the Nordson Center, the complex has a 6,000 sqft banquet room, a more intimate meeting room, known as the Mill Creek Meeting Room, a catering kitchen, storage space and new restrooms. Video capabilities will soon be added as funding becomes available.

The following entities contributed financially or with in-kind contributions to the project.

- Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce
- Nordson Foundation
- Emanuel County Development Authority
- The Luck Flanders Gambrell Family
- Pine Tree Festival Foundation
- Mill Creek Foundation
- Emanuel County Commissioners
- Former Mayor Charles Schwabe and the City of Swainsboro for the property transfer
- Pineland Telephone Coop Foundation
- RayRob Concrete

• Emanuel County Schools

The Chamber and the ECDA continued to support, sponsor and provide programs such as LYTEE 2.4 (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 2.4, 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

(Continued on page 3)

Swainsboro-Emanuel County...

(From page 2)

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 2.4 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 250 students have completed Vision 2020/LYTEE 2.4 with 72% 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 final 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 (EDA) 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 One-

Georgia grant in September of 2022 to help with the last part of the I-16 Park sewer infrastructure, two pump stations. In July of 2023, the ECDA applied for and received a second EDA Grant in the amount of \$1,150,980 for the two pump stations as economic conditions had significantly increased the cost of the project.

Rehabilitation of the railroad track from the I-16 Industrial Park to Vidalia was finished in early 2023. The completion of the rehabilitation and reopening of the line to Vidalia significantly improves 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. In addition, our I-16 Park is one of only three parks on the I-16 corridor between Savannah and Macon that has rail access and a large amount of acreage.

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 has completed as of December of 2023, approximately \$10 million of infrastructure improvements at our parks to include water and sewer construction at the I-16 park and the Highway 297 industrial park.

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.

It is another great day in Emanuel County

by COUNTY COMMISSIONER JIM SHERROD

For that matter, 2023 was a great year for our county as well. The Emanuel County Board of Commissioners for this great county strive to be frugal stewards of the taxpayer's money. I feel confident that we have and will continue to do so.

There have been numerous challenges and important decisions that had to be made this past year and although every decision

may not have been popular, I believe they were just and fair. I often tell people I work with that we don't have to be perfect in what we are doing, but we need to strive to be excellent. That mentality should be held by the Board of Commissioners, the county administrator, department heads, and the newest employee hired by the county.

2023 saw the Board of Commissioners saying goodbye to Commissioners Keith Thompson and

Desse Davis—2 very good commissioners, friends, and just overall wonderful people.

It also saw us welcoming Commissioners Timmy Oliver and Ricky Thompson to the board.

This past year, there were numerous negotiations and contracts that our county administrator, Guy Singletary, was instructed to accomplish, such as contracts with the Lovins Group and Atlantic Waste (Allgreens) to

name a couple. We added a new airport authority in conjunction with the City of Swainsboro to help our airport grow and become more self-sufficient, and the county also purchased much-needed equipment such as two fire trucks, a new grapple truck, and a side arm mower.

We also moved forward with the new building that will house the tax commissioner's office, the tax accessor's office and the elections office, which will also be the home of the new voting precinct for all citizens that vote out of the Swainsboro voting precinct. This building will also have a drive-thru for the elderly and handicapped or disabled citizens to see the Tax Commissioner. This project is being funded with ARPA money as well as funds from the reserve budget, saving property owners countless amount of dollars.

Speaking of dollars, a much-needed pay raise was given to the employees of the county. We value each and every employee of the county and needed to restructure payroll to be able to stay competitive.

Old Garfield Road, Page Garrett Road, and Mixon Road were resurfaced and should be good roads to travel for years to come. Plans are to resurface Wadley-Coleman Lake Road, Racket Town Road, Lindsey Road, Glenwood Road, and Fannin Circle with our

2024 LMIG funds.

The Recreation Department is now the sole responsibility of the Emanuel County Board of Commissioners. The staff at the recreation department have been busy making improvements and changes, and there are a lot of exciting opportunities that will be taking place moving forward.

In August, the county was awarded three recreation grants totaling 5.8 million dollars to remodel our ball fields at the Ronnie Wommack softball fields, the Woody Nasworthy baseball fields, and the Connie Kight Gymnasium at the Billy C. Carmichael Recreation Complex. One of those grants will include the addition of a competitive swimming pool for patrons to enjoy.

Looking forward to 2024, you will soon see the completion of the new building mentioned previously and also the renovation of the John C. Coleman Hotel building that, when finished, will house the Commissioners' Office, the district attorney's office, code enforcement, the county coroner's office, office space for sheriff's investigators, and a few more county office departments that are close to being finalized. When complete, it will be a fully functioning building from the basement to the top floor. It is being funded by SPLOST (Continued on page 5)

PROUD TO SERVE
THE CITIZENS OF
EMANUEL COUNTY



Tripp
Fitzner

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

It is another...

(From page 4)
dollars that, again, will not be another burden on property owners.

The Keep Emanuel Beautiful organization is full-steam ahead and is another project that is helped being funded by the Board of Commissioners. This group of volunteers meet monthly in the Commissioners' Board room and are actively involved with finding ways to educate and promote the beautification of our county. They are to be commended for

their work to help and keep Emanuel County clean and beautiful.

In our little corner of the world, we have the best of the best. We have outstanding law enforcement. We have an outstanding hospital, EMS service, and medical professionals. Our fire departments are second to none. We have amazing industry here and look forward to adding to that industry in the weeks and months to come. All indications are that a lot of opportunities are just

around the horizon. Not many communities in this state can boast having both a technical school in Southeastern Tech and a college in East Georgia State College in the same area. The economic impact they have on this area is tremendous. We have professionals in leadership roles who do amazing work bringing opportunities here for our workforce. Emanuel County, its cities, and communities have a lot to be proud of. We have a quality of life here that

cannot be found in most places.

As our county continues to grow and prosper, we cannot lose sight in the fact that we need to be proactive in making sure that every citizen has the opportunity to live, grow, and prosper along with it. Making sure that our citizens are safe and can enjoy the pursuit of happiness is of the utmost importance. The Emanuel County Board of Commissioners encourages its constituents to reach out to us with any

ideas or issues you may have. You put us here for a reason, and it's our jobs to listen and help in every way we can where the law allows.

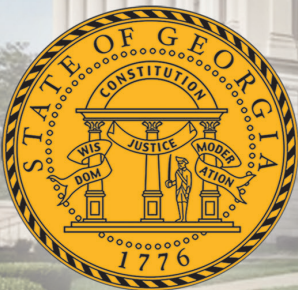
I am proud to call Emanuel County home. Friends, the state of Emanuel County is strong, and for that, we thank God and ask His continued blessings for us all. Thank you for your time, and we wish you the best as we grow and move forward together. After all, Emanuel County is "The Place To Grow."

It is an honor to represent District 158 Georgia House of Representatives

Butch Parrish

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An opportunity to serve

by SWAINSBORO POLICE CHIEF RANDY ELLISON

In today's world everyone has video recorder if you own a cell phone and with the popularity of the social media people have a means of getting their information out quickly to millions of interested viewers that will swiftly evaluate its content.

However, current events, recent observations and a whole lot of listening have moved me to address an issue to our brothers in blue: those lion hearts who everyday place themselves in harm's way to insure we enjoy order instead of suffer from Chaos.

This noble group, whether wearing shields or stars, driving blue or grays on our interstate, operating boats on our rivers, whether documenting crime scenes, enforcing drugs, prosecuting cases, or supervising inmates, parolees, probationers or juveniles. All demonstrate the same quality and character when adversity turns into violence: they run toward the sounds trouble, not away from them. Moreover, they never pause to consider if those in harm's way are white, black, yellow or red,

male or female, gay or straight, rich or poor, or consider their religious affiliation. We in police work have a rich history of dying for those we do not know.

Now, in my travels, I have heard many officers talk about how hurt, disgusted, and disappointed they are as a result of the media attention and citizens opinions regarding the police use of force cases across the country. Officers share how much more difficult it has become to do their job and how they and their peers continue to second guess each other in a craft where second guesses could have fatal effects. The most common expression I hear from officers is "you're damned if you do.....and damned if you don't."

Most know this expression can translate into the thought process that promotes the notion or mindset that you just look after yourself and turn a blind eye toward the everyday challenges we inherit when we accept the badge.

But those of us in law enforcement "know we are better than that", so we walk the beat with a black eye and a target on our back as result of the negative implications of a few.

I ask law enforcement officers to consider two things:

First, we would not be in this profession if we did not care. Policing is a calling for those who are passionate about the good and despise the bad, those in our ranks are shepherds that guard the sheep and chase away the wolves.

Second, we are all human and as humans we are subject to the same human conditions no matter the race, raising, or profession and all humans make mistakes.

The State of Policing today has lost the respect of a public in many aspects. As a result it is becoming more difficult to find quality men and women who want to pursue a career in the law enforcement profession. Agencies are short all across out nation and managers are having to come up with recruiting tools to keep the numbers.

We live in a world where small, random, or unlikely things are blown out of proportion in our media every day. This is partly because or traditional media has been assaulted and vastly changed from the advanced technologies, and social media that promote rapid dissem-



CHIEF ELLISON

ination of information regardless of any factual basis. Further, we live in a time where patience and trust have been replaced by disinformation and emotion.

Thus, here we are judged by the few who are heard by the many that are amplified by the inherit drive of a time sensitive focused media.

Law enforcement must stay the course and be comforted by knowing that the overwhelming majority of all people in this country respect law enforcement personnel, they care about your well being and appreciate your devotion and dedication to public service.

Being born into a military family, I learned

early in life about dedication to duty. Growing up I watched and listened to my father as he pushed troops as a drill instructor at Fort Rucker Ala. I also watched my mother take care of 4 children and handle numerous chores while father was at work. Having been exposed to these things early in life gave me a desire to serve something bigger and be apart of a group of individuals that were proud to serve the cause before them. As a military brat and later watching my father serve on the Savannah Police Department after he retired from military service, I had a glance into what it meant to be in law (Continued on page 7)

An opportunity to...

(From page 6)
enforcement. The brotherhood of the men and women in blue was seen early in my life through friends of my mother and father. I listened to the war stories and thought to myself what a great job this would be for me. So, at the age of 10 becoming a cop was my goal. Shortly, after turning 10 my mother and father moved back home to Emanuel Conty. As I attended grade school, I remained focused on the goal of being a cop and working a beat fighting crime.

35 years later, I looked back on the lives I have touched in some way and thank God for keeping me safe during some very difficult times. Retirement is just down the road for this ole Chief of Police and what an adventure it has been. I look forward to telling the best true stories around the campfire as I walk in different shoes. Last but not least to those that helped me along the way "Thanks". For those that said I was too young and too full of vinegar, well you were right but I grew-up fast.

God Bless!



BOARD OF DIRECTORS: (Seated L-R) Butch Frye, GW Johnson, Jr, Loy D. Cowart (Chair), Wade Johnson (CEO), Jerry Cadle (Standing L-R) Clay Clark, Jim Mercer, Rob Bowen, Danny Olliff, Dal Durden

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LEADERSHIP TEAM: Jim Cowart (Chief Operations Officer); Wade Johnson (Chief Executive Officer), Matt Donaldson (Chief Financial Officer)

Citizens Bank produces another year of growth

by MILTON GRAY
The Citizens Bank of Swainsboro produced another year of growth and solid performance in 2023. Our family of banks are located in Swainsboro, Dublin and Statesboro. Consolidated assets grew 3.00% to \$339,327,981, loans increased 6.41% to \$245,600,730 and deposits increased 1.60% to \$299,157,812. Our year-end Tier One Leverage Capital Ratio was 11.29% and is considered very 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.

The bank maintained a 5-Star rating for financial strength and stability with Bauer Financial, Inc. their highest rating. Having earned Bauer's 5-star rating for 47 consecutive quarters, we earned an even higher designation as an "Exceptional Performance Bank". Bauer's rates every federally insured U.S. chartered bank with the same strict standards



GRAY

and they reported that The Citizens Bank of Swainsboro continues to outperform its peers.

Our second Laurens County branch located in the historic downtown

district of Dublin, grew their loan portfolio by 8.80% to \$39,012,140. The original Laurens County office located at 1210 Hillcrest Parkway continues 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 7.80% to \$122,279,804 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.

The nineteenth class of our Student Adviso-

ry Board was selected, consisting of thirty-eight seniors from Swainsboro High School, Emanuel County Institute and David Emanuel Academy. As the future leaders of Emanuel County, we expose them to the world of banking, personal finance, community leadership, volunteerism and the importance of 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 2024. At the Citizens Bank of Swainsboro our "Prime Interest" is you.

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Optometry Services

Currently serving patients through the innovative Eye Mobile Unit, a temporary solution until the completion of EGHC's new state-of-the-art optometry building, expected to be operational by summer 2024.



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Durden Banking Company, Inc. remained sound and committed to its mission with another great year in 2023

H. Wade Johnson, President and CEO said, "The bank completed another successful year in 2023. We saw increased profitability over 2022. The bank had loan growth of nearly 20%." 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.

In 2023, the bank revamped and increased the Durden Banking Company Scholarship. In the past, the bank accepted applications from all the markets served and awarded only one scholarship. In 2023, the bank expanded the program and awarded a scholarship for each school in Emanuel, Candler, and Jenkins Counties. The scholarship winners were Elizabeth Millsaps (Emanuel County Institute), Lindsey Dalton (Swainsboro High School), Peyton Free (David Emanuel Academy) and Trevor Mainer (Metter High School). Additionally, the bank forwarded the applications on to the state-level competition to compete in the Community Bankers Association of Georgia Hester Family Scholarship contest.

At the bank's annual Christmas party, management recognizes those employees who reach 5-year milestone anniversaries. In

2023, Johnson recognized the following – 5 years of service (Beth Jennings – Swainsboro & Amanda McGahee - Metter) and 15 years of service (Kirk Rocker – Millen). "Our people are our greatest asset. Our community wants to bank with people they know, and we will continue to celebrate these milestone anniversaries with our staff, customers, and community." The bank also celebrated the hiring of new employees in 2023: Ella Kate Canady (Twin City), Lindsey Dalton (Swainsboro), Ashley Hood (Swainsboro), Alessandra Pecina (Metter) and Sarah Catherine Fordham (Metter).

With debit card fraud being at an all-time high, Durden Banking Company, Inc. has implemented Debit Card Controls. This product was implemented in late 2023 to help customers safeguard their debit cards against unauthorized transactions and purchases. Customers can conveniently manage how and where their card is used through our mobile banking app. With Card Controls, they can set transaction limits, establish merchant or transaction restrictions, and even turn their card on or off. Another enhancement to the Durden Banking Company digital banking suite is Quickbooks Direct



JOHNSON

Connect. This allows online banking customers to automatically import their

account transactions into Quickbooks using two-way connectivity between Durden Banking Company's online banking and Quickbooks.

President and 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.

62 YEARS!

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EMC: Premier rural hospital and Level IV Trauma Center

by AVERY BERRY

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 2023, EMC continued to raise the bar and further establish itself as a premier rural hospital and level IV trauma center.

Emanuel Medical Center is named a 5 Star Hospital by CMS, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, being 1 of 9 in Georgia and 1 of 483 hospitals out of 3,061 hospitals nationwide. CMS assigned star ratings to more than 3,000 hospitals nationwide based on their performance across seven areas of quality. This year: 248 hospitals received

one star, 663 hospitals received two stars, 868 hospitals received three stars, 799 hospitals received four stars, and 483 hospitals received five stars.

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.

Georgia HEART

Support received through the Georgia HEART program continues to make a significant impact on Emanuel Medical Center's ability to offer top quality healthcare for Emanuel County and the sur-

rounding communities. Through this program, any person or business with Georgia income tax liability can receive a 100% state income tax credit in exchange for their contribution to EMC.

Funds previously received through the program have supported the addition of colonoscopy and infusion services, the purchase of updated surgical and medical equipment, and improvements to the hospital and Emanuel County Nursing Home, while incoming funds will facilitate the upcoming expansion of the Emergency Department. For more information about Georgia HEART, visit georgiaheart.org or contact Lynn Brinson at lynn.brinson@emanuelmedical.org or 478-289-1274.

Support and outreach to the community remained a key component for EMC throughout 2023. Numerous and regular blood drives were held, in addition to a variety of other highlights:

EMC was one of nine hospitals in the state to receive the 5 Star Quality Rating from CMS in 2023. This marks the third time in the last four years that EMC has

received the 5-Star rating, an accomplishment that no other hospital in Georgia has matched.

Georgia Trend Magazine ranked Emanuel Medical Center as the #2 Small Hospital in Georgia.

EMC received a Rural Hospital Stabilization Grant from the Georgia Department of Public Health State Office of Rural Health to support the upcoming redesign and expansion of the Emergency Department. The Emergency Department Parking Lot was repaved as part of this project.

Lisa Youngblood was presented with the DAI-SY Award

Ms. Juanita Porter received the Herbert Tillman Award

Ms. Juanita Porter was named Person of the Year at the 68th Annual Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

Emanuel Medical Center CEO Damien Scott was named Chair of the Georgia Hospital Association Rural Health Board

Glad Garden Club decorated the hospital and nursing home for Christmas

EMC received a grant to develop and teach (Continued on page 13)

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EMC: Premier rural

(From page 12)

a course on rural trauma to rural healthcare professionals across the state.

EMC participated in Donate Life Month

EMC partnered with the Department of Family & Childrens Services and TLC Casa for the Christmas in July toy drive.

Emanuel OBGYN Clinic welcomed Denise Peebles, FNP to its practice.

EMC CEO Damien Scott and Emanuel County Hospital Authority member Matt Donaldson visited the State Capitol and met with legislators regarding rural health issues at Hometown Health's Rural Hospital CEO Day.

Swainsboro Healthcare welcomed Rhonda Oglesby, FNP to its practice.

EMC Celebrated National Hospital Week and National Nurses Week in May.

A reception was held in honor of Mrs. Erma Jenkins for more than 15 years of service on the Emanuel County Hospital Authority.

The Emanuel County Hospital Authority welcomed new member, Wanda Ellison.

A development retreat was held for department managers.

Seedling Garden Club planted flowers at the nursing home.

EMC continued its partnership with Emanuel County Family Connection and Ferst Readers. It also partnered with Read United to further support early childhood literacy.

EMC partnered with a number of community organizations to host the Healthy U Health Fair.

EMC's REACT team began Food Truck Fridays, where it hosts a different food truck on campus each week. The event is open to the public. Check out EMC on social media for each week's featured food truck.

Emanuel Medical Center participated in a number of community events including, but not limited to, the Downtown Swainsboro Fall Festival, Southeastern Technical College Career Fairs, Swainsboro Christmas Parade, Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber Golf Tournament, and more.

EMC continued its quarterly community wellness blood screenings, which provides the public with an opportunity have a variety of labs completed at a discounted rate. Upcoming 2024 test dates are scheduled for May 16, August 15, and November 14. Schedule is subject to change. Please follow EMC on social media for the most current schedule.

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East Georgia State College has remarkable year, celebrates 50th Anniversary

2023 was a remarkable year for East Georgia State College (EGSC), as they celebrated 50 years of being a student-focused, affordable institution that enables all students to achieve their academic goals. The golden anniversary was marked with several events, including an Investiture Ceremony to officially install Dr. David Schecter as EGSC's sixth president. EGSC also celebrated another year of contributing to the region's economic vitality. According to a study conducted by The University of Georgia (UGA), EGSC contributed \$59.6 million to the local economy and generated 612 jobs in fiscal year 2022.

EGSC continued to make a difference in its surrounding community in 2023. A partnership with Golden Harvest Food Bank enabled EGSC to launch the Bobcat Pantry at the EGSC Swainsboro campus to distribute meals. A grant from the Mill Creek Foundation supported the College's efforts to promote and enhance community awareness of the importance of pollinators, and a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice allowed EGSC to further strengthen safety on campus.

EGSC 50th Anniversary: In September 1971, the citizens of Emanuel County voted for a bond issue of \$2.1 million to underwrite the cost of a new college, and in Fall 1973, the char-

ter class of 167 students began attending classes at the Swainsboro National Guard Armory while the campus was completed. Now, EGSC has campus locations in Swainsboro, Statesboro, and Augusta; boasts a highly qualified faculty who focuses on teaching and fostering student academic growth; as a member of the Georgia Collegiate Athletic Association, the Bobcats athletics program includes men's and women's basketball, baseball and softball; and EGSC maintains the lowest tuition in the University System of Georgia. After 50 years of excellence, EGSC had much to celebrate in 2023.

The celebration kicked off in February with a community Homecoming event, which also concluded Homecoming week at the college. The community was invited to gather at the gymnasium on EGSC's campus for a variety of family activities, and sophomore basketball players were recognized. During halftime of the game, members of the 2013 GCAA State Championship Men's Basketball Team were recognized to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the championship.

In March, EGSC hosted the Golden Anniversary Panel Discussion in the Luck Gambrell Building Auditorium, which was open to the community. The panel discussion featured

retired and current Emanuel County Junior College, East Georgia College and East Georgia State College employees. Alumni and EGSC Foundation members were also part of the discussion. The history of the college, stories of the past, and changes over the years were topics of discussion.

In April, EGSC continued celebrating its 50th anniversary with a Disc Golf Tournament at EGSC's Piney Woods Disc Golf Course. It was a free recreational one-round singles tournament that was open to the public. The winner of the 50th Anniversary Disc Golf Tournament was Levi Proctor. Michael "Clem" Clemons placed second, and Chace Ellison placed third after a playoff with Grayson Johnson and Matt Bates.

Awards were given out to the EGSC alumni, EGSC student, and the youth competitor with the best scores. The Top Alumnus Award was awarded to Levi Proctor. Nathan Headrick was named the Top EGSC Student Competitor, and in the youth category Cola Akridge and Sheppard Purcell tied and both received recognition.

In May, EGSC partnered with the Emanuel Arts Council to display an art exhibition to honor EGSC's 50th anniversary at the Kalmanson Gallery. The show featured art by alumni of the College.

On Oct. 13, 2023, EGSC officially installed Dr. David Schecter as its sixth president in an Investiture Ceremony. The ceremony was open to the public in the auditorium of the Luck Flanders Gambrell Building on EGSC's Swainsboro campus.

The Investiture ceremony was also a celebration of the College's 50th anniversary. Dr. Schecter selected music from 50 years ago along with a few of his favorite songs to be played during the ceremony. Scholars in Sync and Sounds of Gabriel were the two musical groups that performed the songs during the ceremony.

To help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the College, a graduate from each year was invited to represent their graduation year at the Investiture. The graduates were recognized by Dr. Catherine Whelan, Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.

An Investiture ceremony is counted among the oldest traditions of academia. It is a formal and academic occasion to celebrate a new president's official installation. Distinguished guests, elected officials and higher education leaders from around the region gathered with students, employees, alumni and community partners to show support for the start of Dr. Schecter's leadership tenure. The Board of Regents of the University System of

Georgia named Dr. Schecter the sixth president of East Georgia State College on Jan. 3, 2022.

EGSC hosted its first Casino Night fundraising event in November at the Swainsboro County Club. The night featured casino games that guests played for a chance to win various prizes. A silent auction was also held during the event to raise funds for the EGSC Foundation.

"We are so thankful to all the community members who came out to support our first Casino Night fundraiser and to help celebrate EGSC's 50th anniversary! This event was a huge success thanks to the many people who attended and the wonderful sponsors of the event," said Harley Smith, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at EGSC. "The event would have not been possible without the community members and businesses that stepped up to be sponsors and support this event."

All the money raised from the event benefited the EGSC Foundation, whose mission is to help transform and enhance the lives of its diverse student population by providing educational opportunities, financial support, and advocacy for our students. By generating, processing and allocating gifts, the Foundation supports ef-

(Continued on page 15)

East Georgia State...

(From page 14)

forts that enhance the quality of programs by funding scholarships, new academic initiatives, technology, endowments, faculty/staff development, athletic programs and capital projects.

Alumni Awards: EGSC Alumni Awards were presented at the beginning of EGSC's Spring Commencement Ceremony in May. Jordan Robins received the Rising Star Award, which celebrates the achievements of alumni who have graduated in the past 10 years and have notable recognition in their chosen field with a promise for continued success. Robins is a financial analyst at Trane Technologies in Vidalia, Georgia, an air conditioning manufacturing company, and serves on the boards of directors for the United Way of Toombs, Montgomery, and Wheeler Counties, Cornerstone Children's Center, and the Southeast Region of the American Red Cross.

The Distinguished Alumni Award was presented to Lisa Bertoch. This award is presented to someone who has excelled in their chosen field and has had a positive effect on the local, regional, state, or national level. She is employed at Yeomans & Associates Insurance Agency which has locations in both Swainsboro and Louisville, Georgia. Bertoch currently serves as Vice-President, managing partner and a producing property & casualty agent.

She is also the Chair-Elect for the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce Board and completed the 2022 Leadership Emanuel Class, Chair of the Emanuel Medical Center Foundation, the Xi Delta Psi Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi 2020/2021 Lady of the Year and has served as a Swainsboro Middle School Pride with Purpose Mentor.

Bobcat Pantry: EGSC partnered with Golden Harvest Food Bank to launch the Bobcat Pantry at the EGSC Swainsboro campus. It is the first college partnership for the food bank that distributes an estimated 11.8 million meals each year across its 25-county service area. EGSC has operated its "Bobcat Pantry" for several years to serve students facing food insecurity and has relied on donations from the community. Through this exciting new partnership with Golden Harvest Food Bank, the Bobcat Pantry now has access to the food bank's consistent flow of resources that extends to over 350 partner agencies and programs.

"Food insecurity is a major problem right now for many Americans, but it is particularly acute for college students, who are often working their way through school and trying hard to make ends meet," said Dr. David Schecter, President of EGSC. "Hungry students do not do as well in their courses or on their exams. Students un-

dernourished and unsure of where their next meal is coming from are more stressed and less likely to continue their education or thrive on a college campus. Golden Harvest is working to change those things every day throughout our region and this new pantry partnership will focus exclusively on supporting East Georgia State College students and our local community in a way that will have an immediate and lasting impact. We are so lucky and thankful to Golden Harvest for helping us serve these students. The goal is to end hunger as we know it for those trying to make the most of their lives and complete a college degree. Food pantries provide support and hope to those in need, and we want our Bobcat Pantry to be a model for other college pantries – we are well on our way, thanks to the great work of Golden Harvest!"

Grant from Department of Justice: EGSC received a \$399,117 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. The grant was awarded as part of the Grants to Reduce Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking on Campus Program.

EGSC plans to use the funds to reduce the impact of DVDVSAS on the campus through a Coordinated Community Response Team (CCRT) that includes internal and community partners. Specifically, the

College plans to (1) hire a project director to guide and track grant activities and work with the CCRT, (2) evaluate its prevention/education programs for students and provide bystander training, (3) provide DVDVSAS training to campus law enforcement and the College's Disciplinary Team that includes victim-centered, trauma-informed techniques, and (4) work with The Refuge at Vidalia (The Refuge) and Sunshine House to provide confidential and comprehensive victim services.

"This grant will further strengthen the College's efforts in creating an environment that is safe for our campus community. Putting together a successful grant application would not have been possible without the contributions of this grant's development team along with support from our community partners," said Dr. Da'Mon Andrews, Associate Vice President for Grants and Data Analytics.

Grant from Mill Creek Foundation: EGSC received a \$5,078 grant from the Mill Creek Foundation. Dr. Paul Cerpovicz, Professor of Chemistry, requested the funds to further support the College's efforts to promote and enhance community awareness and appreciation of the importance of pollinators and how best to protect them and their habitats. Funding from the grant, Enhancing Pollinator Awareness in Emanuel

and surrounding Counties, will be used to purchase books on honeybees, native bees, butterflies, other pollinators, and pollinator gardening. The various books cover all age groups and will be distributed free of charge to community members by students, faculty, and staff from EGSC's Beekeeping Club during upcoming festivals and campus events.

In addition, thanks to funding from the Mill Creek Foundation and other sources, well over 2,500 books about pollinators and pollinator gardening have been given away free of charge to people of all ages during community events throughout Emanuel, Bulloch, Candler, and Toombs Counties. Sets of books have also been gifted to local primary and elementary schools and provide a positive, long-lasting impact on a community.

EGSC hosted its Honey Extraction Party in September, where guests learned about honey, how it is made by honeybees and collected by beekeepers. Since its designation as a Bee Campus USA institution in 2016, EGSC has greatly increased its efforts to achieve these goals and to further promote honeybee and pollinator education to its students, staff, faculty and community.

Overall, 2023 was a year of celebrations and achievements at EGSC. We are looking forward to what 2024 brings!

Over \$1.5 million in funding for Twin City

by MAYOR MATT DONALDSON

2023 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 March 2023, the City Commission approved to proceed with the replacement of all the water meters in Twin City. Before this, the City Public Works Department was manually reading nearly 800

meters per month. With the new meters, they are read electronically. The project was funded with a GEFA loan with a 40% grant upon completion. The loan Interest rate was secured before rates began to Increase and is locked at 0.13% for 20 years.

In June 2023, the City Commission approved a \$25,000 USDA grant to replace two police cruisers. The City Commission funded the remainder of the purchase from the SPLOST Public

Safety budget. Additionally, the City received a \$24,854 grant from the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council for the purchase of fire department equipment. The equipment purchased was for the used fire truck the city received from federal surplus.

In August 2023, the City Commission approved to receive three grants. The first being from the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (GTIB) for

the resurfacing of 13 city streets. The project cost was estimated at \$1,000,000, with a \$250,000 loan, \$350,000 grant, and the remainder being matched from city funds. The City also received a Department of Homeland Security Grant of \$427,619 for the purchase of a new city fire truck. With a new fire truck, the City Commission hopes the overall ISO rating for Twin City will decrease. Finally, the City received a \$54,750 grant from GEFA to complete the federal requirement to Inventory all water service lines.

In November 2023, the City Commission approved to roll the property tax millage rate back. The City Commission has taken the roll back millage rate since 2016. Mayor Donaldson said, "We are very proud to continue passing along savings to our citizens.



DONALDSON

With record high Inflation, we feel our citizens need those savings."

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 2024!"

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2023's yearly review from Twin City Police Department

by JESSICA SUMNER,
POLICE / MUNICIPAL
COURT CLERK/TAC

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 officers: Tiffany Dixon, Rashard Walker and Jakestal Lee 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 2023.

Community Response:

Citizens have expressed a specific concern related to the directing of school traffic. The Twin City Police Department would like to clarify its

stance on this matter by stating that while they offer the courtesy of directing traffic when available and not on a call, school traffic is not considered a priority over 911 dispatched calls, or other police related business. This courtesy is extended to the public only because we are limited to one School Resource Officer for Twin City schools. The department's commitment to responding promptly to emergency situations shows their primary responsibility lies in addressing urgent matters that come through 911 dispatch, or other agencies. This clarification may help manage expectations within the community, ensuring that citizens understand the department's priorities and operational focus. It's important for law enforcement agencies to effectively communicate their responsibilities and limitations to foster understanding and cooperation, as well as assist in transparency within the community.

In Office...

Twin City Police De-

partment did gain two new officers, Rashard Walker and Jakestal Lee, who attended Police Academy at Columbia County Sheriff's Office Academy. They've joined Tiffany Dixon who graduated on September 23, 2022, and is rapidly approaching her 2-year anniversary with the department. Officers Walker and Lee graduated on June 23, 2023. Their swearing in had to be delayed but is forthcoming.

Twin City Municipal Court:

Jessica Sumner, the Twin City Police Clerk and Municipal Court Clerk, was pleased with the productivity of the Police Department and Municipal Court in the past year, especially with the expansion of the force to three full-time officers, plus the Chief. Their focus on addressing speeding issues in school zones was a key objective for the department in 2023. To tackle the growing problem of speeders in school zones, the department implemented a strategy that includes increasing fines for violations and

having more than one officer patrolling the school zones during pick-up and drop-off times. Despite some initial dissatisfaction from the public, Jessica notes that this approach has been effective in capturing the attention of locals and ultimately reducing the number of citations that need to be issued, thus reducing the amount of repeat offenders in court. The primary concerns are the safety of the school children and of the officers directing traffic, emphasizing the need for vehicles to move at a safer speed in these areas. The department is actively engaged in ensuring the safety of the community, particularly around schools. The emphasis on community safety and the successful implementation of measures to address specific issues showcases the department's commitment to its responsibility for Public Safety.

Chief Whitters to the Community...

Many of the residents and individuals that travel through our small community are very

courteous people when we are dealing with them. Most of them understand the law and understand our duty to uphold the law and they don't mind complying. That makes a world of a difference in dealing 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 belts save 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.

5. Don't forget- Georgia is a hands-free driving state; 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Pineland Telephone: 2023 Year in Review

The year 2023 was very exciting for Pineland Telephone. It was fast-paced, complete with new partnerships, simplified internet speeds, and territory growth. All internet subscribers now receive robust, symmetrical speeds with the minimum offering above what the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines as sufficient. The broadband build-out in Emanuel County was completed, providing the

communities of Blundale, Dellwood, Summertown, Canoochee, Brinson, Old Wadley, and the areas in between with a reliable fiber-to-the-home connection. Emanuel county is now the second of two fully served counties by Pineland Telephone in the state of Georgia.

Pineland's partnership with Jenkins County will bring quality broadband service to 1,000 new locations in the lower portion of the county. That project

is almost complete with over 200 new connections to date. The much larger project in Sumter County is allowing us to bring high-speed internet service to roughly 7,000 currently underserved or unserved locations. Partnering with One Sumter and the Sumter County Board of Commissioners, this project has a planned completion by the end of 2025 with 700 additional miles of fiber in the ground. The Jenkins and

Sumter County projects are part of the Georgia Broadband Grants awarded by Governor Brian Kemp's office in 2022.

In addition to revised broadband offerings, Pineland introduced a new phone service product, VoIP residential service. Providing additional standard features compared to traditional landline phone service, Pineland's residential VoIP provides customers with quality phone service at a lower monthly cost. This new offering is available to residents in all of Pineland's territory, when paired with Pineland's high-speed internet service. Those with existing landline service can request to convert to VoIP residential while keeping their same phone, and without a technician visit.

Recognizing the rising cost of traditional television services, and the effect on subscribers, Pineland choose to absorb the financial impact of increasing network costs in 2023, rather than increase television pricing. To aid subscribers and the public in navigating the numerous amounts of streaming services available, Pineland encouraged the use of its MyBundle Solution available at www.pineland.net. This tool allows visitors to input general information about their television preferences, including the number of

televisions that will be or are currently streaming in the household, must-have networks, and feature preferences. The system then generates a list of streaming providers and their monthly pricing which match these interests, saving time, and money in the search for the best provider.

Pineland's mission is to offer an outstanding customer experience through the efficient delivery of progressive technology solutions in the markets served. We will achieve that mission by focusing on the core values of Excellence, Integrity, Innovation, and a Servant's Heart in everything we do. To further achieve that vision, Pineland has partnered with the marketing and customer experience firm Pivot, who works with companies like ours all over the country, to map the customer journey and to look for ways to simplify the process, make it more efficient, and more enjoyable for our customers. This is not a quick process, but it will be worthwhile ensuring that our customers receive the best service possible.

It is because of the support of our subscribers that Pineland Telephone can continue this mission. We appreciate the opportunity to serve as your telecommunications provider.

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WE TAKE THE PAIN OUT OF ACCIDENTS

Our Historic Society

by MISSY ELDER

The Emanuel County Historic Preservation Society was an idea that began in 1976 in honor of the nation's Bicentennial. The actual Society was incorporated in 1993. 2024 is its 31st 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 museum is located at 161 Museum Rd, across from the Jaycee Fairgrounds. It replicates an 1890s farm

named Longview Farm in honor of the original community near the museum. An open house is being scheduled for Thursday, April 25, from 1 to 7 p.m. at the museum with a short meeting at 7 p.m. for election of officers. The next meeting will be at the Varner 4-H Center on July 25, at 7 p.m. Our Fall Harvest Open House will be in October with a date to be announced later.

We continue to be open for tours, family reunions or picnic opportunities for clubs. Membership is not required for this.

The Society continues to add and improve. Membership is growing

with over 400 members across the country. People who have Emanuel County roots continue to donate family items for display.

We have enclosed part of our group shelter in order to display our extensive agricultural equipment collection. We will enlarge the "Veterans' Wall", dedicated to local World War II veterans, and the naval stores display containing more than 50 artifacts used for gum dipping from the early 1900s. We will also enlarge the "Old Hardware Store" named in honor of Bonnie Ogburn. Children on tours are excited to find their par-

ents' photos on 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 now have handicap ramps as well as sidewalks for all main buildings. Don't forget the ladies' five-holer outhouse from Sardis Church.

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*. We continue to carry the Georgia

Historical dinner and salad plates, in blue and pink, at Main Street Market. James Dorsey's *Footprints Along the 'Hoopee, 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.

Visit Emanuel County Historic Preservation's website at myemanuel-county.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.



OLD MOONSHINE STEEL AT THE MUSEUM



1790'S PINE TREE DIAMETER

Kalmanson Gallery attracts visitors to Swainsboro

by JACQUIE BRASHER
Executive Director
Emanuel Arts Council

The Kalmanson Gallery of Emanuel Arts Council has enjoyed numerous visitors to its art exhibitions since it first opened in December of 2021. We have had people travel from various cities in Georgia, including Atlanta and Savannah. Our gallery director, Desmal Purcell, has curated 13 exhibitions so far, and each one has been unique. Whether it's introducing art to a first-time

viewer or presenting it to a seasoned art aficionado, our gallery has been inspiring and educational.

The Kalmanson Gallery has attracted almost a thousand visitors in the two years we have been open. The out-of-town guests invariably eat at our local restaurants and shop at our stores. Don't let it be said that art doesn't contribute to the economy! We have seen first-hand that it absolutely does.

The Kalmanson Gallery is the only active art gallery

in Emanuel County and is open to the public Tuesday through Friday, from 12-3 p.m. We also welcome groups from schools, churches or other organizations to visit us by scheduling an appointment, 478-237-2592.

ART EXHIBITIONS

In 2023, our gallery hosted six exhibitions beginning with Terrie Daniel's eclectic show "Impression of Denial" for January/February.

For the March/April show, we were proud to introduce "Black Art Inspires" featuring handmade quilts, paintings, and jewelry from the African-American community of Swainsboro.

In May/June, we were honored to celebrate the

50th anniversary of East Georgia State College by presenting artwork from the college's alumni.

July/August featured the work of Twin City resident Eileen Dudley. "Stepping Back; Moving Forward" showcased work produced at Studio Incamminati in Philadelphia, Penn., where she studies painting.

For the September/October show, we hosted the art of Kip Bradley of Savannah, Ga. His show, "Knee-Deep Muddy Adventures in Observational Painting" attracted more visitors from Savannah to our gallery than ever before.

To round up the year, we had the art of Tennessee artist David Salerno for November/December. The show, "Together, A

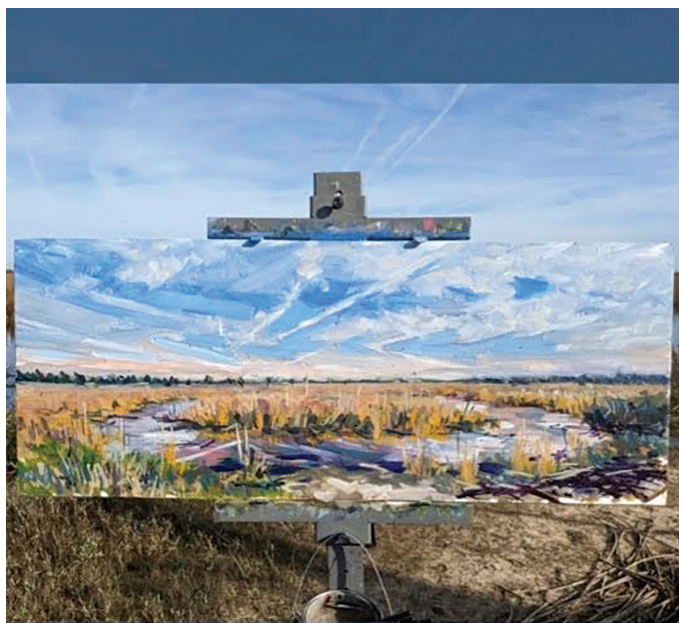
Portrait of Americans" was thought-provoking and moving. His show was also exhibited at the Altama Museum of Art & History in Vidalia, Ga.

SUMMER ART CAMP

For the seventh year, the EAC held its annual summer art camp at The Sudie Fulford Center of EGSC. Funded by Mill Creek Foundation, this art camp is for 20 students in rising third through fifth grades. In 2023, we were fortunate to have Terrie Daniel as art instructor, and Mark Lillquist and Daniella Delgado for her assistants.

DRAWING CLASSES

In 2023, EAC board member Russell Lamb taught two charcoal drawing classes in our gallery. (Continued on page 21)



KIP BRADLEY


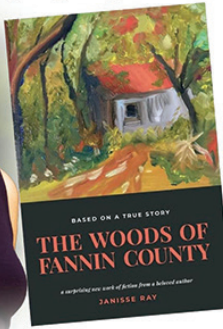
Knee Deep Muddy Adventures in
Observational Painting

Opening Reception
09.21.2023/ 5- 7pm

The Kalmanson Gallery / 109 N. Green St.

BRADLEY EXHIBITION

AN EVENING WITH
Janisse Ray
August 17, 2023 | 6 p.m.
reading | signing


DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 P.M.
The Kalmanson Gallery of
Emanuel Arts Council
109 North Green Street, Swainsboro

\$10
per person

Seating limited to 50 people
Pre-payment required to guarantee seating

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EMANUELARTSCOUNCIL




RAY VISIT

The Kalmanson Gallery Presents:

Together, A Portrait of Americans

New Paintings by David Salerno



Opening November 16, 5-7PM

SALERNO EXHIBITION

Kalmanson Gallery attracts...

(From page 20)

These classes had live models for participants to learn to draw. The EAC provided materials and the \$10 fee charged for each participant went towards paying the models for their time.

THEATER WORKSHOP

EAC board member Ron Ellison facilitated a theater workshop in July. Participants submitted 10-minute plays, rehearsed, and later performed them for an audience. The age range of cast members was from teenagers to senior citizens. Everyone had a great time!

JANISSE RAY

In August, Emanuel County residents and out-of-towners were treated to a visit by award-winning author Janisse Ray, who enthralled her audience with

riveting stories of how she wrote the novel *The Woods of Fannin County*. The event was held in The Kalmanson Gallery. Her novel has since received glowing reviews from numerous publications. Ray told her audience that she first heard of this astonishing story from her father. Ray also took the time to sign her books for the audience, many of whom either brought their own copies or purchased one at the event.

Ray is the recipient of the American Book Award, Southern Book Critics Circle Award, and Southern Environmental Law Center Award for Outstanding Writing on the Southern environment. In 2015, Ray was inducted into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame.

The event was made possible through a grant from



2023 ART CAMP

Mill Creek Foundation.

SIDEWALK CHALK ART

The EAC participated in the Downtown Swainsboro Fall Festival in October. Members of our board facilitated a Sidewalk Chalk Drawing event for children and adults, many of whom drew on the sidewalks

directly outside the EAC and theater. The festival attracted hundreds of people and many festival-goers were dressed in Halloween costumes, adding to the fun and excitement of the event.

The Emanuel Arts Council, Inc. (EAC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

whose purpose is to empower and grow the community through cultural programs in all areas of the arts. The EAC operates through donations, fundraisers, and grants. For more information on programming, find Emanuel Arts Council on Facebook and Instagram.

Stepping Back; Moving Forward
Lessons from Studio Incamminati
EILEEN DUDLEY

Opening Reception
July 20, 5 - 7 PM
Show Runs July 11 - August 22

The Kalmanson Gallery
109 North Green St.
Swainsboro, GA

EMANUEL ARTS COUNCIL Swainsboro

DUDLEY EXHIBITION

50 Years East Georgia STATE COLLEGE

ALUMNI EXHIBITION
THE KALMANSON GALLERY

MAY 5 - JUNE 23

OPENING RECEPTION

EGSC EXHIBITION

The Kalmanson Gallery presents artist Terrie Daniel

Jan 19 5-7PM

A collection of etchings and oil paintings.

Impression of Denial

January 19 | 5-7PM | Kalmanson Gallery
The Emanuel Arts Council
109 N. Green Street.

DANIEL EXHIBITION

Black Art Inspires

March 16, 5-7PM

Opening Reception

The Kalmanson Gallery

Exhibition

BLACK ART EXHIBITION

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 2023. Family Connection has a strong focus on improving childhood literacy and seeks to supply programs and resources to teachers and families. We were able



EMANUEL CHOPPED CHEFS

to partner with the school system to find ways to give students access to books in the classroom and at home. 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. The greatest successes have been fundraisers of Book Character Contests in the fall. Twenty-two community volunteers solicited votes and raised over \$7,500 this past year.

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. They also offered 2 week-long cooking classes of "Emanuel Chopped Jr." at the Franklin Memorial Library. Students attended these fun camps 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 participation and voucher use specifically for fruits and vegetables is our main focus. Farmers Markets were offered to families at the Ear-

ly 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.

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The Sunshine House Regional Children's Advocacy Center has a busy 2023 year

Thanks to our volunteers and donors we were able to accomplish much to benefit our children and families. We served 526 clients during the year; 310 children received forensic interviews and forensic medical examinations, counseling and victim services while 216 caregivers were provided parent education, victim services and forms of client assistance.

Our donors who responded to the GIVEATHON in December and answered our giving letters were instrumental in seeing that we had a successful year. We could not manage without support from the Mill Creek Foundation, the Swainsboro Exchange Club, and the various civic clubs and church groups who contribute faithfully. We are grateful when memorial gifts are made through the Sunshine House CAC and some women joined the Purses With A Purpose Group who pledge \$20 a month for three years. They meet once a year for lunch and a program on how their gifts were used for prevention.

These contributions were vital because for

the second year in a row our major grant from federal fine monies was cut by 30%. The Victim of Crime Act pays salaries. The cuts were caused, in part, from the pandemic and courts being closed for a period of time. The white-collar crime income has simply declined over several years now and all states are feeling the reduction in fine dollars. Georgia is no exception and our Sunshine House Children's Advocacy Center suffered as well as did CACs and other victim organizations across Georgia.

A highlight of the 2023 year was the Regional Multidisciplinary Team Training event we had in August, co-sponsored and hosted by East Georgia State College. Over 106 agency partners, largely law enforcement, welcomed the training and provided positive evaluations. Attendees included the District Attorney and staff members, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Family and Children Services and law enforcement across seven counties. Sponsorships were from Mill Creek Foundation, Nordson Foundation,

Robbins Financial, Correll Family Foundation, and Daniels Chevrolet. National speakers included the dynamic Victor Vieth who trained for three sessions and gave the keynote address: "Unto the Third Generation: A Call to End Child Abuse in 30 Years". Over 160 people attended the luncheon and keynote address.

Our year ended on a bright note as our De-

cember GIVEATHON produced, along with our annual giving letters, over \$120,000. Our host and board member Rusty Lane was joined by Trey Burgamy from the Washington County Sheriff's Department and together they helped to entertain and deliver an interesting two-hour program.

We are grateful for a dedicated and committed volunteer Board

of Directors and a staff which works hard to see that children and families receive the best possible resources to meet their needs. Preventing child abuse depends on education and action on the part of everyone. Meeting the needs of abused children in order to ensure safety, healing, and justice for them is vital to our community for today and for our future.

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Queensborough empowers employees and communities with Financial Literacy Certification

Queensborough National Bank and Trust Company recently launched a new internal financial literacy accreditation program. The bank awarded 96 employees with their "IQ University Certification", a program designed to reward and empower employees to help educate others

about their own financial wellness. Those who attained certification were recognized for their dedication and commitment and received an annual salary increase of \$1,000. Swainsboro's Nona Steele and Wanda Stapleton are among those recently certified.

Queensborough introduced the comprehen-

sive financial literacy program certification comprising 100 online courses and final examination. The courses cover a wide range of financial topics, from personal finance management to investment strategies. The results were remarkable, with 96 employees successfully completing the courses and passing

the final exam.

Queensborough's IQ University Certification represents a significant step forward in its mission to meet the diverse financial needs of all people across the bank's footprint, while also serving as a reliable source of financial guidance for community members. This innovative program reaffirms the bank's commitment to being a financial cornerstone and a trusted source of guidance for all people.

"Queensborough has a long history of providing financial education throughout its communities. As such, we couldn't be more excited about this new initiative, that quite literally, helps us expand upon our efforts to elevate lives through the power of education. Today, we recognized nearly 100 team members that successfully completed our exclusive financial

literacy accreditation program - and this is just the beginning! For this movement not only helps us empower our people internally but allows us to multiply our literacy ambassadors externally as well, and throughout all our communities," said Dagan J. Sharpe, Queensborough Director of Financial Management Group.

Founded in 1902, Queensborough National Bank & Trust Co. recently celebrated 120 years of community banking in Georgia. Queensborough was named Great Place to Work and Best of Georgia in 2022, Best Small Bank in Georgia for 2021 by Newsweek and has 27 locations throughout the state. For more information, visit www.QNBTRUST.bank and find Queensborough on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram.

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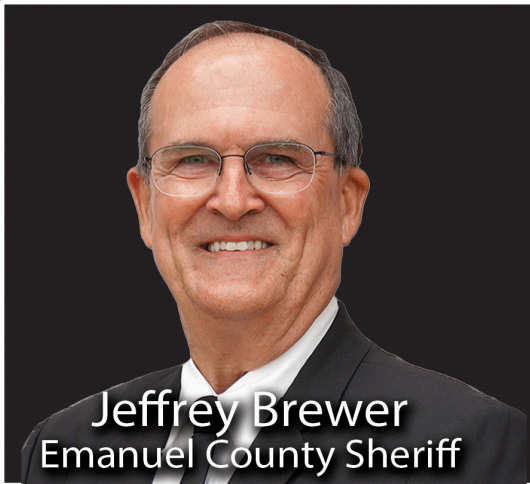
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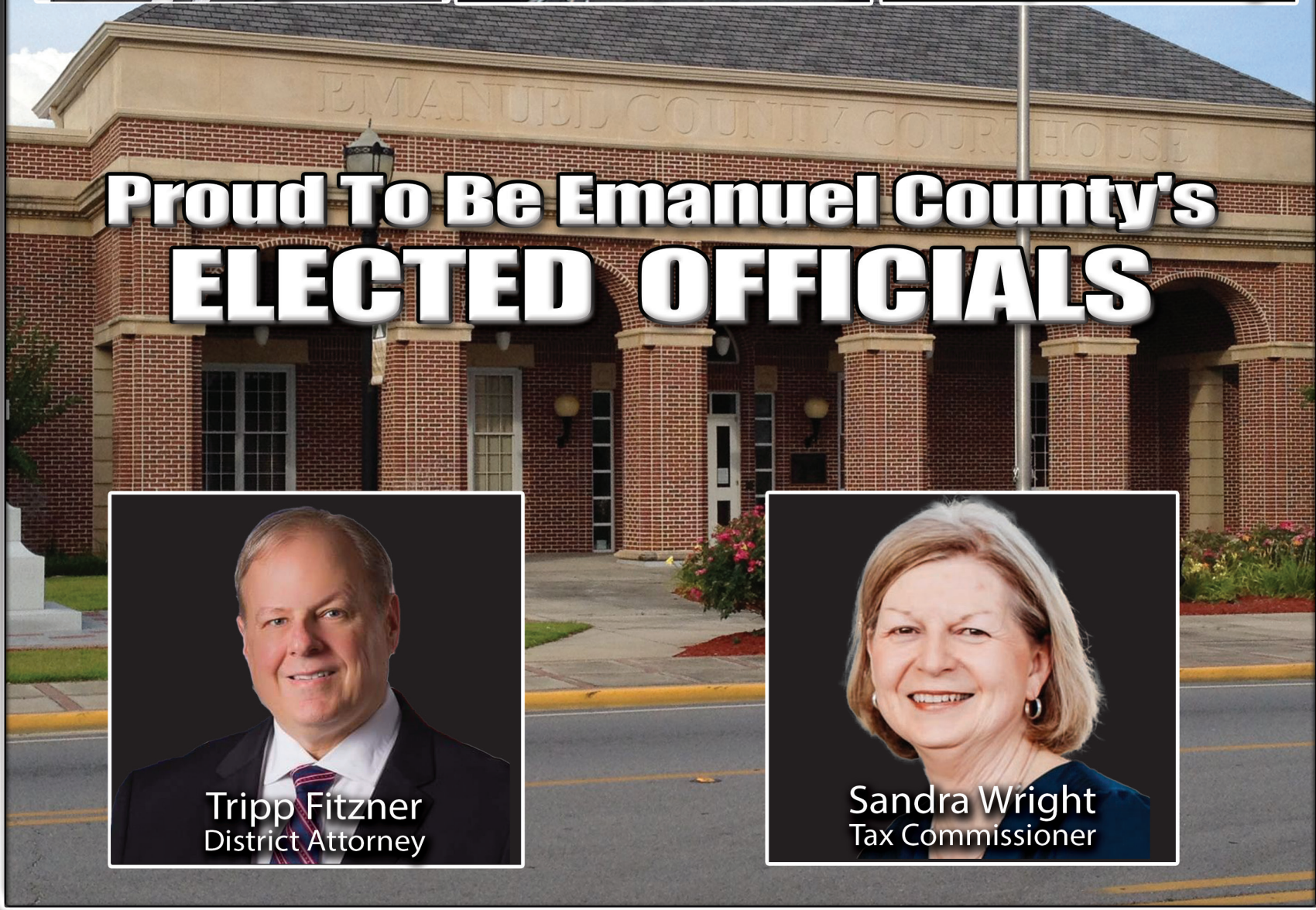
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Glad Garden Club: *a group of like-minded people dedicated to beautifying and improving*

by JOANN TRAMMELL

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 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. Phinzy Calhoun (Marion) of Atlanta. The first Annual Meeting was held in April 1929 in Augusta. Clubs thrived, even though 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, Tattnall, 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 a.m. 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 hospitality 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 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. The tree was decorated at Christmas with ornaments made by school children with lights and a star donated by the Glad Garden Club. The club has further participated with the Veterans in the honoring of veterans that were killed in Afghanistan by donating a banner in their honor. More recently, the club has participated in a memorial service honoring the three veterans from Georgia that were killed in Jordan by a drone while sleeping. The Gar-

den 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 are 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 besthe *Oleander District of the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.*



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New Year, New Look, Same Goal

by HAYLEE FREE, HEAD OF SCHOOL. Continuous improvement. This has been our motto and driving force. As we entered into our 54th school year, David Emanuel Academy began the year with the revealing of our new 10,000 square foot campus addition, the expansion and renovation of our cafeteria, and newly asphalted parking lots. The beginning of our school year was indeed filled with much excitement, but our goal of continuous improvement will not stop here!

Our students are our hearts. They are our purpose. When looking at each individual student we should always ask, "Are they happy, healthy, and thriving?" Since we are a K3 through twelfth grade school, we are blessed to witness and navigate every developmental milestone our children encounter throughout their educational journey. David Emanuel has worked tirelessly to enhance the experience of our faculty and students by providing them with a top notch Christian curriculum, a facility where they can feel safe, and countless opportunities to explore the gifts the Lord has provided them. Over the last decade, DEA has poured much thought and prayer into a master plan of im-

provement. We want our families to feel that their hard earned money is used wisely and for the sole purpose of providing our staff and students with a path of purpose and success.

Our next step is to keep moving forward. The next phase of development is on the horizon. Due to enrollment growth our athletes are in need of a larger athletic training facility. This new addition will include offices for our coaching staff, a new weight room, storage closets, a laundry room, and separate locker rooms for our male and female athletes for both middle school and varsity divisions. Our current field house will be converted to a ticket booth, concession stand, and event restrooms. The plans are ready, and through the support of our constituents and our Booster Club, we want to march forward to begin construction on this new facility.

Our athletic programs have experienced great success. Last 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! This year, they followed up strong as State Semifinal-



FREE

ists as did our varsity girls softball team. Our varsity girls and boys basketball teams ended their seasons as Region runner-up and the boys advanced to the State semifinals. As we complete this school year, we look forward to our baseball, tennis, track, golf, and soccer teams finishing the year strong. In a couple of weeks, we are excited to celebrate the wonderful accomplishments of senior Billy Martin, as he signs with the Mercer Bears to play football. DEA, in a joint effort with the Booster Club, is pushing forward to enhance the current facilities for our student athletes. Soon we will finish the fencing project on the baseball/softball field and we will plant sod around the outskirt areas of the field- an upgrade that will increase the safety of fans as well as the appearance of the entire facility.

This school year, with safety at the top of our

priorities, we secured a School Resource Officer. Our officer has done a fine job of securing our campus, assisting with our highway traffic, and promoting top notch behavior among our student body both during the day and at our after hours events. With safety and student needs as the driving force behind our progression, we hope to push forward with a few offerings that will better serve the needs of our families. For the upcoming school year, and due to increased demand, we are looking to offer a K2 program and we are also looking to add an after-school program. As our enrollment growth continues, we have future plans to construct another academic classroom building. The plans are ready, so as the need arises, we will add five more classrooms in a new building that will connect our preschool and elementary buildings. With this addition, our entire campus will be under one roof.

The progress at DEA has come through dedication, perseverance, and most importantly, by positioning the Lord first. He 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. David Emanuel Academy has been a safe haven for hundreds of students and staff throughout the last 54 years. Progress 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. We are here and strong today because of your sacrifices made to our Academy.

We are looking forward to the 2024-2025 school year and the celebration of educating children for 55 years! If you would like to experience a day in the life of DEA, call the main office [912.562.4405] to schedule a tour or shadow day. Open enrollment for our local communities began on February 19th. If you are an educator looking to teach in a healthy and thriving atmosphere, apply today! The more, the merrier....we would love for you to join our Eagle village!

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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 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 2023-2024 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 is dedicated to our vision to strengthen our community one student at a time. We strongly believe a strong educational program is a foundation for a thriving and progressive community. This is why we have invested in strategic initiatives to 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 a productive year with several programs such as Farm to School, STEAM, STEM, and CTAE programs. Did you know that Emanuel County has a food processing center in Twin City where residents can process fresh fruits, vegetables, and nuts? 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 sum-



HATTAWAY

mer months when fresh produce is harvested. If you are interested in using the facility, please contact Tori Pellerin, at ECI at 478-763-2673.

Last year, our math teachers dedicated hours to training the Georgia K-12 Mathematics standards. This school year, we have implemented the new standards. The new standards were 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 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." Swainsboro Middle School, Swainsboro Elementary School, and Twin City Elementary School were fortunate to receive one of the Teaching and Learning Opportunity Grants from the Georgia Department of Education to purchase math manipulatives and materials. This will help provide quality, hands-on mathematics instruction, and students will interact with manipulatives as they explore real-life situations and problems, enhancing their math skills.

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. This year we implemented this Read United tutorial program for second-grade students in August of 2023 in our Swainsboro Primary School. The "bubble

students" participating are already very close to being on grade level. Recent testing data shows the students are making gains. Thank you to all community members who have volunteered to make this program successful.

Once again, our community showed tremendous support for the Ferst Readers program during the Fall of 2023. Our community raised \$ \$7729.00 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.

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 Swains-

(Continued on page 31)

Letter from Superintendent...

(From page 30)

boro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce, the Joint Development Authority, 20+ local businesses and industries, Southeastern Technical College, East Georgia State College, and Chick-fil-A of Vidalia to implement our Industry Tours Initiative. In the last two years, we have taken more than 300 teachers and staff to tour 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 and 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 could not provide and 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 to clean and sanitize facilities properly. These funds have also been used to address the significant challenge the school system and the state of Georgia face regarding recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff.

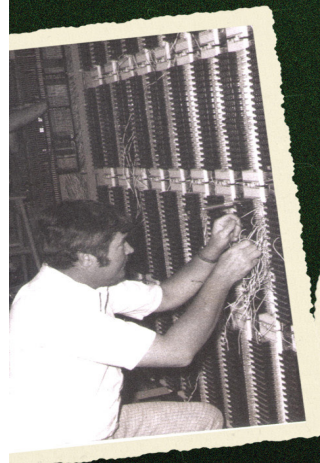
Our students are best served when parents and the community work together. We sincerely appreciate your support and collaboration.

Scotty Hattaway
Emanuel County
Schools Superintendent



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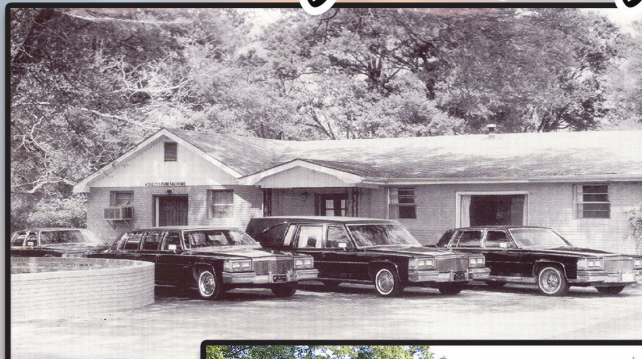
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Swainsboro Middle School

by DAVID MILLER,
PRINCIPAL

As we approach spring break, it's incredible to reflect on this year's positive energy and enthusiasm. Our students and teachers bring their best to Swainsboro Middle School each day, embodying the spirit of Tigers! Throughout this school year, we've come to appreciate the fight to move our school forward and help lead Tiger Trail to greatness.

In our journey to enhance instructional practices, we hold steadfast to the belief that positive relationships are the key to our students' success. Our commitment extends not only to fostering connections with students but also with the broader community. Building these meaningful relationships enables us to tailor instructional teaching to meet our students' diverse needs and learning styles.

Our teachers have actively engaged in professional development activities, participated in data talks, and collaborated with students to identify strengths and weaknesses. This collective effort ensures that we can bridge achievement gaps and nurture our students' growth in areas that require attention. The



MILLER

upcoming Georgia Milestones in April provides an exciting opportunity to witness the fruits of our dedication and hard work.

We are blessed to state that both achievement data and perception data reflect positive progression in our current school year. We attribute this success to the unwavering dedication of our staff, community, and, of course, most importantly, our students. Our ultimate goal is to empower our students with everything they need to reach their fullest potential.

As we approach the conclusion of this school term, we encourage parents to reach out with any questions or concerns about their child's performance or educational needs. Together, we aim to create an environment where every student can thrive and be the best version of themselves.

Swainsboro Primary School

by SARAH BAILEY
TAPLEY, PRINCIPAL

The 2023-2024 school year has been an exciting year, full of many new things! Along with having a new administration, SPS also welcomed new teachers and paraprofessionals who have quickly become a part of our SPS Tiny Tiger family. Throughout this year, our focus has been on growth...Growth of our Students, Growth of our Teachers, Growth of our Paraprofessionals, and Growth of our Administration. At SPS, we realize that it is important to look at where we are, envision where we want to go and put a plan in place for how we will get there. In order to ensure growth this year, we implemented a few new programs and initiatives to help us move towards our goals and ensure that we are on the path to success.

During the 2023-2024 school year, we implemented Tiger Time, which is an intervention time that allows all of our students to receive dedicated and targeted intervention. The Tiger Time portion of the day allows teachers to focus on a variety of concepts to support the growth and development of the whole child. Some students attend group sessions focusing on academic standards and skills, while others attend sessions that focus on the development of social, emotional, and positive

behavior skills. Through this targeted intervention time, teachers and other staff members are able to meet the varying needs of our students.

Another new addition to SPS is our new Character Education class. After looking at data over the last couple of years and noticing some deficits in the area of social and emotional learning for some of our students, we decided that we needed to make social/emotional learning a top priority. During Character Education, the students are able to learn about our monthly character trait by singing songs, participating in skits, reciting poems, playing games, and listening to stories in which this trait is taught. Each homeroom also selects one student who portrays this character trait as Character Kid for each month. This class was added to our activity rotation schedule so our students are able to visit PE, STEAM, Art, Music & Movement, and Character Education for 50 minutes each day on a rotating schedule.

As we are nearing the end of our 3rd nine weeks of the 2023-2024 school year, we still have lots of learning left to do and many exciting events to plan. In March, we will have Read Across America Week as we celebrate reading. Following this special week, we will also

have a Family Reading Night / PTO on March 19, and we invite all of our families to come out and celebrate literacy with us! In addition to these approaching literacy events, we will also have field days, field trips, Honors Programs, monthly positive behavior celebrations, and so much more

to continue growing and developing our students!

We thank you for allowing us the opportunity to work with your students! At SPS, we truly believe that these children are our future, and we are blessed to be able to use our knowledge and skills to make a positive impact in their lives.



TAPLEY

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Swainsboro High School: *Start Here, Go Anywhere*

by PRINCIPAL BRANDON ANDREWS, ED.S

When you walk through the doors of Swainsboro High School, you're walking into an atmosphere where excellence is the baseline expectation. Seeing how each class of students grows the Tiger legacy of academic and athletic prowess proves to me that the investments our faculty, staff, and community make in our students are paying off in dividends.

From the ball fields to the classroom and every competitive arena in between, our students are excelling this 2023-2024 school year.

The Tiger football team had another outstanding season, clinching the 2A Championship before becoming the GHSA Class A-Division 1 runner-up. This team also earned a number of Region 2A Division 1, 1st, and 2nd Team accolades, including Demello Jones being named Player of the Year and Jerrod Steward being selected as the Defensive Player of the Year.

Lady Tiger Flag Foot-

ball also had an outstanding year, with Hannah Howard being named the Region 2A Division 1 All-Area Defensive Back.

With their third-place finish at the GHSA State Competition, the Area D-1A Region Champion Swainsboro Cheer team set a new school record.

Not to be left out of the area winners' circle, The Lady Tiger basketball team also won their region competition. Stand-out Tanyia Williams was selected by GHSA as a Top 20 Power Forward while also reaching the unbelievable milestone of scoring 1,000 career points!

The Lady Tiger softball players also helped add more hardware to the trophy cabinet with their many Region 2-1A 1st and 2nd team awards. Hannah Howard was named the Defensive Player of the Year.

With so many of our senior student-athletes committed to taking their sportsmanship to the next level, I've lost track of just how many signing days we've had the pleasure of



ANDREWS

hosting. What a wonderful problem to have! Jocie Hendrix is headed to East Georgia State College, Jerrod Steward to Georgia Military College, Schuyler Coney to St. Andrews University, and Lenox Lively to Queens University. Demello Jones is already making his mark at the University of Georgia as an early recruit!

Our faculty and staff are also putting in work inside the classroom and out. Mathematics instructor Suzanne Hendricks saw her debut novel, "Garden of Ash," published this year. And our students have enjoyed seeing a novel by one of our own on the library shelves.

Caleb Long placed first in the Area 4 EMC Wiring Career Development Event and progressed to the state competition. He was also named the DAR Good Citizen for all of Emmanuel County.

The Beta Club brought home several awards from the state convention. Top honors went to Emma Sconyers (3-D Design), Abby Phillips (Sculpture), and Quintus Williams (Officer Service Award Essay). Yi'Zhariah Bell was chosen as a Premier Performer winner and received a "Golden Ticket" to nationals.

When it comes to competing in the classroom, our faculty and staff are working hard to ensure that our students receive a world-class education from right here in Swainsboro. We are proud of our Emanuel County roots, but we also want to see our students have what they need to grow wherever they are planted in the future.

The dual enrollment program with Southeastern Technical College and East Georgia State College

is flourishing – more than 160 students are enrolled – while record numbers of students are taking advantage of our career readiness offerings like Microsoft Word and Excel certification courses.

Whether we are hosting a College Probe Fair, industry leaders, or a career fair, the primary focus among SHS faculty and staff is to provide an academically rigorous, nurturing, and safe school environment for our students. We strive day in and day out to impact our scholars in a positive way. When we get them to the finish line of this leg of their journey and see them walk across the graduation stage, we look on with pride for their current accomplishments and hope for their future.

It is both humbling and inspiring to serve as principal for these last three years. Each of us has a gift to give and share with the world. I'm grateful for the continued opportunity to use mine and help nurture the gifts of others at THE Swainsboro High School.

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Swainsboro Elementary School focuses on student achievement

by LARA NORTON,
PRINCIPAL

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

At SES, students participate daily in Tiger Time, an intervention period in which students are allowed to work on a prescriptive reading or math intervention computer program. Teachers and Paraprofessionals are also able to work on individualized student needs. Using Raz-Kids, Moby Max, Reflex Math, and iReady has helped students 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 growth.

We are happy to share



NORTON

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 STEAM Night, Black History Program, Junior Beta Competitions; Family Reading Night, and School Book Fairs. We

have updated our PBIS system, which allows parents to have immediate feedback on their child's behavior in the classroom. Please contact your child's teacher for more information. Our Academic Blitz After School Program has started and will end in 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. For more information, please contact your child's teacher.

We thank 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 Kin-Involved Messaging System, email, or call the school at 478-237-7266 if there are any questions about their child's performance on assignments or assessments. Thank you for partnering with us in your child's education.

Emanuel County Emergency Operations Center holds grand opening with ribbon cutting

On Thursday, June 22, 2023, Emanuel County Emergency Operations Center (911), held their grand opening celebration with a ribbon cutting at 10 a.m. at their new facility located downtown at 110 East Moring Street in Swainsboro.



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 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



DANIELS

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

The Pre-K program re-

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

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

each location.

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

If you have a child who will be four years old by September 1, 2024, and would like to register for Pre-K for the 2024-2025 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.

The Lazarus Project unveils new chapter with community support at Ribbon Cutting Celebration

In a momentous event that united hearts and hands for a common cause, The Lazarus Project marked its expanded services with a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on December 11, 2023, in partnership with Emanuel County Family Connections/Emanuel County Community Health Council and Golden Harvest Food Bank.





Matt Donaldson, Mayor

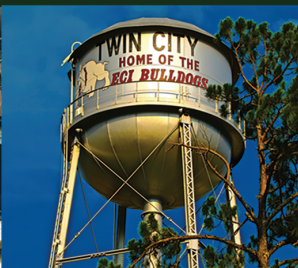
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Twin City Elementary

by JESSICA COL-
LINS, PRINCIPAL

Dear Twin City Ele-
mentary School Families,

As we reach the mid-
point of the academic
year, I wanted to take a
moment to reflect on the
progress we have made
at Twin City Elementary
School and share some
important updates with
you. First and foremost,
I would like to express
my gratitude to our ded-
icated teachers, staff, par-
ents, and, of course, our
students for their hard
work and commitment
to learning. The collabo-
rative effort of our entire
school community has
contributed significantly
to the positive and en-
riching environment at
Twin City Elementary.

Our students have
made commendable
progress. I am pleased to
report that standardized
test scores and classroom
assessments indicate
growth and proficiency
across various subjects.
We want to celebrate our
school's success! For the
past few years, we have
implemented changes to
ensure that our students
receive the best resources
and instructional oppor-
tunities possible. We are
proud to announce that
we are now perform-
ing better than 80.3% of
schools in the state in
Georgia. Some of the



COLLINS

changes include imple-
menting a systematic
phonics program and a
focus on structured lit-
eracy. We have also uti-
lized our Bulldog Block
to incorporate opportu-
nities for intervention
and acceleration. This
forty-five-minute block
has allowed our teach-
ers to close the gaps in
reading and math, en-
suring that our students
are well-prepared for the
next grade level.

Whether it's through
arts, sports, or clubs,
our school communi-
ty continues to foster a
well-rounded and sup-
portive environment for
our students to explore
their interests and de-
velop valuable life skills.
TCE offers several ex-
ploratory programs, in-
cluding STEAM, PE, mu-
sic, and art. Students also
have the opportunity
to join Jr. Beta Club and
Music Club. In Novem-
ber, TCE's Jr. Beta Club
(Continued on page 39)

Twin City Elementary...

(Continued on page 39) clude new flooring, new paint, and repairs to certain areas, such as the roof. The projected start time for our project is May 25, 2024. The work will be able to be completed over the summer break, and we will return to TCE at the end of July with an overall new feel.

We have also seen increased community engagement and support throughout the year. We are thankful for our active PTO this year and look forward to our Winter Wonderland Festival on February 22nd. Our STEAM night was a success, having over 200 people participate in activities. We appreciate the support and attendance of parents during programs throughout the year. The collaboration between parents, teachers, and community members has strengthened our school's foundation and provided additional resources to enhance the overall educational experience for our students.

We are looking forward to our renovation this summer and are excited about the changes that will be made to enhance our building. Some changes will in-

clude new flooring, new paint, and repairs to certain areas, such as the roof. The projected start time for our project is May 25, 2024. The work will be able to be completed over the summer break, and we will return to TCE at the end of July with an overall new feel.

While we celebrate our successes, we acknowledge that challenges may arise. We are committed to addressing any obstacles head-on and finding effective solutions. Open communication between home and school is crucial, and we encourage you to reach out if you have any concerns or suggestions.

As we move into the second half of the school year, we are excited about the opportunities for continued growth and development. Our focus remains on providing a nurturing and challenging educational environment that prepares our students for success.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership. Together, we can ensure that Twin City Elementary School continues to be a place where every child thrives academically, socially, and emotionally.

Warm regards!

Come Join The DEA Experience! David Emanuel Academy

ENROLL TODAY FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

SWAINSBORO/TWIN CITY/METTER BUS ROUTES AVAILABLE

(Continued on page 31)



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Mission Statement

The mission of David Emanuel Academy is to provide K3-12th grade students with an exceptional education under the guidance of Christian principles. Our school will develop ambitious individuals of strong character who are servant leaders and possess a biblical world view.



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Emanuel County Institute: *Are we really being clear with our instruction?*

Schools around the county have worked hard to improve their instructional strategies for decades. It seems that progress is met with obstacles such as the changing of standards, test administrations, student/staff turnover, lack of data-driven decision-making, lack of teacher clarity, etc. One thing is for sure: you can't improve what you don't measure, and we definitely can't measure what we are not teaching! 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 to ensure we are giving quality instruction with clarity being the focus. 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 among staff and students! We are working hard to ensure teachers are communicating the learning intention and success criteria so students can identify where they are going in their learning, how they are progressing, and where they will

go next. This gives students clarity of their own learning. This doesn't hide learning; it lets the students know from the beginning what they must have mastered to succeed.

We plan to utilize our data coach, Tracey Mercer, Instructional Coach, Dena Walden, and Intervention Specialist, Sondra Cowart, to their fullest capacity this year to help move forward. We have also structured our professional development to continue to provide the skills our teachers need to help our students be more successful. We have conducted focus walk-throughs to hold us accountable to this process. It is our hope that students are not stumbling in the dark and missing the intended learning! Wrapping all these pieces together and putting success on top, as a perfect bow!

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 academic gaps that our students may have, we pledge to focus on growing his/her academ-



EDENFIELD

ic career to close these gaps. We have incorporated many ways to address this for each individual student through small group instruction, individualized remediation as well as a personalized learning folder for each child. Concisely, this is what we call "personalized learning". We want ALL kids to show growth and commit to ensuring this happens by empowering and engaging them! EMPOWERING = OWNERSHIP and ENGAGING = BUY-IN. At ECI, we believe that engaged learners are empowered learners. As we engage students, it is our plan to get them excited about content, interest, and curricula. As we empower students, we plan to get them excited about their passions, interests, and future.

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 and organizations, or on the athletic field. We have been blessed with having 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 his/her middle & high school career. We

value home and community action here at ECI. It is vital and plays an integral role in each student's academic career. We hope that you will find our school website, <https://www.emanuel.k12.ga.us/1/Home>, our Facebook page @facebook.com/ECIbulldogs, 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 with the current direction we are traveling within the 2023-2024 school term and look forward to the FY 2024-2025!

Making sure our DAWGS are clear!

PROUD TO BE A PART OF EMANUEL COUNTY'S PROGRESS!



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Fixin' up a new home

"Home is where the heart is." It's an adage old as time, and All The Fixin's took it literally in 2023.

According to owner Janna Tucker, the last calendar year was primarily spent fixin' up a new home.

She and her team of pecan masters have whipped up many a batch of sweet ol' pecan butter and savory snacks at 502 5th Avenue in Twin City since the business opened in 2018.

Tucked off the corner of two busy highways, it's a quaint little shop: simple red brick walls and a red door, white columns and window trim, with a charming front porch to welcome you. But it's certainly not quiet.

All the Fixin's has made quite a name for itself during its short history. That growth is attributed to always doing the next right thing, even though it may mean taking a risk on anticipated growth. Pulling the trigger on a sizable renovation project in Twin City is definitely a risk, but one they hope will pay off as they continue to see the business grow.

"Twin City is close to home and where our business began. It's only natural that we would choose this location to expand our headquarters and warehouse space. We were renting a small storefront on 5th Avenue, but we couldn't help but see the hidden gem of a

space on the opposite side of the 100-year-old, thick, brick wall. In following the "next right thing" principle we've always used, we decided to pull the trigger and purchase the storefront and warehouse building."

So, that's exactly what they did.

They started the purchasing process in March. By May, they were ready to roll on their investment. It took seven months to complete the roughly \$30,000 project, and Tucker says the finished project was worth every penny for more reasons than one.

"Lots of people from Twin City remember our shop as an old storage building, but what they might not know is it was once a theatre in the 1930s. Fortunately, it was built with true, excellent craftsmanship, so its beautiful bones withstood the test of time."

All The Fixin's kept the original exposed brick, opened up a statement archway to become a through-door, and turned a couple other similar arches into windows. They also reinforced the interior balcony, and refinished the floors.

By October, the upgrades were finished, checking off a few of Tucker's goals in the process.

"When you look at everything we do, All the Fixin's really has three streams of business: Our Twin City retail location,



ALL THE FIXIN'S STOREFRONT

our Swainsboro retail location, and our online/wholesale pecan business. Our changes to the Twin City location last year essentially expanded our room in a physical sense to strengthen our home base and operations."

Getting to preserve a part of Twin City's history and add to its tourism and commerce sectors was just the cherry—or, perhaps in this case, the pecan butter—on top.

"This gem of an old building always had potential in my opinion, it just needed some elbow grease and TLC to bring it to life," Tucker said. "Now that it's finished, I think people are happy to see it restored and put to good use."

Yet, when 2023 ended, the improvements kept on coming.

In early 2024, prior to the publication of the Progress edition, Tucker and company added a new

drive-through and added breakfast hours. Customers have responded well to the convenience and early hours, driving up sales to maintain the upward trend that substantiated the changes.

While the successes of the Twin City store are the most visible, the Swainsboro store had its fair share as well.

Most notable, perhaps, is the introduction of a seasonal menu.

"We love offering our customers a special lunch item to liven things up Every week, we would come up with a new, fun special to advertise and post available online. However, sometimes it took several days for the new special to catch on and we were already on to the next weekly special but had customers requesting the previous week's special. Bigger chain restaurants implement seasonal specials, which allows them

to promote them widely and also cut down on food costs on special ingredients needed. We decided to imitate that idea. Over the summer we had three specials: a fruity salad, a light wrap, and a flavorful panini. We continued the idea into the fall and winter, introducing things like a French dip panini that would be a good hearty option for the colder weather. Now, customers can look forward to new specials each season. And you never know, some of the most popular ones may be added to the menu!"

Of course, some of the changes All The Fixin's made to their business model applied to both stores, specifically two of their products that put them on the map: their famous pecan butter and their award-winning candied pecans.

"Last year before the holidays, we really needed (Continued on page 43)

Fixin' up a...

(From page 42)

needed to find a faster way to package our pecan butter. We historically have always stored and sold it in plastic packages with a squeeze tip. That worked great, but we had to rely on gravity to do most of the work to get the product into those packages. As you can imagine, that took a while, especially with the number we needed," Tucker said. "So, we started packaging it in plastic, lidded boxes instead. What we've heard from some customers is they actually like that change. It gives them more access to the product and reduces waste."

As for the candied pecans, All The Fixin's entered its Burnin' Slap Up variety in UGA's annual Flavor of Georgia competition and finished in the top three of the Snack Foods

category.

All of this, Tucker says, came together to create a year that'll be hard to top and one she'll never forget.

"When I think back on 2023, I feel grateful for so many things. The ability to grow our business and give our employees an improved workspace. Getting to make memories with my husband and my children, all of whom were hands-on with the renovations from start to finish. Being able to make Twin City and Swainsboro better places to shop and eat and live. Being able to serve goodness," Tucker said. "Psalm 107:9 says, 'The Lord fills the hungry soul with goodness.' He sure did for us this year, and I am glad for it. I can't wait to see what's fixin' to happen in 2024."



RENOVATED BUILDING



Locked into the antiquing biz

Antique stores are a dime a dozen below the Mason Dixon, but a new one in Emanuel County has a story that sets itself apart from all the rest.

It started more than a century ago when two identical towns, Graymont and Summit, sprang up in close proximity to one another, and they competed for almost 20 years until they finally merged to avoid abolishment by the state legislature due to non-use as the national economy worsened and city function regulations continued to get stricter.

The result is one of America's few "twin cities."

Sonya Woodell Johnson's family (and the space that houses her antique store, and probably some of the relics inside it) have been around for it all.

"I am Twin City through and through. My folks have been here forever," Sonya Waddell Johnson said. According to her, their roots run as deep as those of the cypress and pine trees out at the town's own George L. Smith State Park. "My grandparents were involved in the runnings of this place, one way or another. My great-grandfather was the justice of the peace in Graymont, and my grandfather ran the old depot here."

Roots like those are hard to dig up, so after she married her high school sweetheart from Emanuel County Institute, Boyd, naturally, they raised their three boys in Twin City as well.

Yet, Johnson continued to give herself to Twin City, spending more than 30 years teaching at her alma mater, filling the minds of the new generations of local families.

"This place and its people are incredibly special. I never pictured a life outside of Twin City," she explained. "Even when I retired, I wanted to stay involved in our community."

Thanks to heritage and happenstance, Johnson found a way to make that happen.

Her mother, Margie Woodell, loved antiques. Johnson inherited that love and often spent her free time traveling and pickin'.

"I've always loved old stuff. Finding something that someone else doesn't have, something with a history, something pretty... It makes my heart beat a little faster," she said. "I had considered several times becoming a vendor in someone else's antique shop. One day when I was driving down the road, I decided to call a place in Savannah to get some information about the process, but I hung

up when I passed the old Twin City jail because my wheels started turning in a different direction."

Johnson realized the building on South Railroad Street owned by the city had been turned into storage after a previous tenant had packed up his local history museum, leaving her simultaneously heartbroken and inspired.

"I thought, 'If only those walls could talk! That building definitely doesn't need to be used just to store stuff.' It has so much history, and I wanted to see it preserved and used."

So, she called mayor Matt Donaldson. He asked her when she could meet. She said 10 minutes and within an hour, she had pitched her idea of transforming the place into an antique shop and landed herself a deal.

Thus, in September 2023, Graymont Summit Antique Market was born.

She spent about a month getting her new business ready to open—although construction was minimal.

"We did do some cleaning, of course, and the city put a new roof on, along with new windows. But generally speaking, we left most of the building alone," Johnson said. "We didn't mess with the original brick or tongue and



GRAYMONT SUMMIT ANTIQUE MARKET



ONE OF THE FEW "BIG" PIECES IN JOHNSON'S MARKET IS THIS "JEAN TABLE." IT ONCE LIVED IN THE O.A. HALL GENERAL STORE IN SUMMIT. LIKE THE PLACARD IMPLIES, IT ONCE HELD JEANS AS WELL AS OVERALLS FOR SALE. JOHNSON SAYS SHE REMEMBERS SHOPPING FOR THOSE ITEMS FROM THIS VERY TABLE AS A CHILD.

groove. It was just too pretty to disturb."

Johnson and the city also took deliberate measures to keep some of the space's unique elements. For instance, they left both the original jail cells and the facility's original

safe untouched.

Once the work was completed, Johnson moved her extensive collection of heirlooms into the shop.

"I don't have vendors. I'm the sole proprietor, (Continued on page 45)

Locked into the...

(From page 44)
so the things inside my shop were all found by handpicked by me. I've spent hours and hours, going from little backroad towns all the way to places like Charleston and Savannah, finding things from yesteryear. I don't buy anything and bring it back unless it speaks to me. If it speaks to me, I know it'll speak to someone else," she explained.

That rhetoric, paired with an old-school customer service approach and collaborations with other Twin City businesses, has proven to have her customers locked in, despite the store only being open twice a week on limited hours.

"One of the biggest reasons I love this venture is because I can do it on my time. I'm retired! I don't want to be tied down every day, so I open the shop from 11 to 5 on Fridays and 11 to 3 on Saturdays. But I also post a lot on Facebook. If someone gets in touch with me about something they like, I'll hold it for them," she said. "But I also try to patronize our other local businesses, connect with their customers, invite them into the shop. I tell them, 'Let's sit together at the table outside the shop, have lunch, and you can look around after. You don't even have to buy anything!'"

But, they often do.

Johnson's sales numbers are holding steady as she moves into her fourth month of operation.

She says part of that trend is thanks to the other side of her business: curating home interiors.

"I got started in designing interiors by giving out casual advice when my colleagues would ask for it. They'd pick my brain about what color they should paint a room or what kind of decorative piece would look match the best. Turns out, I have a knack for that, too, so I've incorporated that into the business model. I can do pretty much anything from helping you

liven up an existing space in your home to designing the look and feel of a new build from scratch."

That in a nutshell—getting to be part of people's lives—is what makes this business worth it in her eyes.

"I'm not in it for the money. It's truly a passion for me," she admitted. "I simply love making people smile and helping them get pretty, old things for their homes. I can't wait to see what we pick together in 2024!"



MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE HIGHWAY 80 WAS THE DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN GRAYMONT AND SUMMIT. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO JOHNSON, THE DIVIDER ACTUALLY RUNS SMACK-DAB THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF THE OLD JAIL. THAT'S WHY SHE ELECTED TO PAINT A SINGLE YELLOW LINE, PICTURED HERE, THROUGH THE CENTER OF HER STORE.



ANTIQUE DISPLAY



ANTIQUE DISPLAY

New social spot comes to Swainsboro

For years, Emanuel Countians who needed a venue for gatherings had few places to choose from. The Cadle Barn, The Yeomans Barn, and the country club were tried-and-true options, but it wasn't until 2023 that a new spot was introduced.

Cue the handiwork of a local young married couple, Jon and Zade Hollander. The two have spent countless time and effort flipping houses, mostly on Lake Sinclair, over the last few years.

That's why they felt confident about their ability to execute a vision for a place on the edge of town.

1038 West Main Street, now known as "The Venue," has served as numerous establishments over the years, but after Tinkerbells Daycare shuttered in the 90s, the building and its grounds deteriorated.

The Hullanders knew it had massive potential, so they purchased that property in late 2022 and began giving it a new lease on life. They cleared the landscape, designated space for parking, reworked the inside into an open floor plan, added bright white siding with natural wood trim and black windows for contrast, utilized natural light throughout the inside and installed statement chandeliers and ambient string lights, erected a covered

pavilion complete with seating, put in a commercial kitchen, worked on the bathrooms, added a bar, ran indoor and outdoor PA systems, hung a couple projector screens, and used a combination of eclectic-meets-rustic charm for decor.

Those changes were finished in about 3 months, and when the Hullanders answered the buzz by explaining the purpose of the project through a Facebook post, the community responded exceptionally well. Bookings started coming in left and right, leaving Zade and Jon little to no room to give The Venue the attention it needed and continue their passion for renovation.

Enter Emily Conner Johnson. She says she was fascinated by the Hullanders' project from the beginning, blown away by the transformation, and surprised by their decision to part ways with it. But, she was also quietly hopeful.

"I've always loved entertaining. I get it from my mom, Trisha, and being around her restaurant, McKinney's Pond," the 24-year-old self-proclaimed social butterfly said. "Over the years, I've seen how The Pond has shaped families and given them places to create memories. I've always wanted a spot like that of

my own."

So, she pitched the idea to her fiancé at the time, Abb, to buy The Venue. He was initially apprehensive because they were in the middle of planning a wedding—not to mention Emily's busy schedule as a real estate agent and his farming schedule. Then, out of the blue at seemingly the last hour before the property auction ended, Abb changed his mind.

"I didn't push him about it," Emily said. "When he said no, I thought it wasn't meant to be and just let it go. Then he told me one day, 'I've been thinking about it. This has always been a dream of yours, and it's a good place to start. It's small and comes with a great book of business.' I was so shocked! Obviously overjoyed, too, but shocked nonetheless."

Fastforward a week and The Venue was theirs.

Emily says other than the ownership on paper, not one thing about the business has changed because, as the old saying goes, "If it's not broke, don't fix it." Bookings are as steady today as they were under the Hullanders' ownership and climbing.

"That is much to the credit of Zade and Jon. I tell everybody, we are so blessed to have bought this place from them be-



VENUE ON MAIN OUTSIDE EVENT AREA



TABLES PREPARED FOR AN EVENT

cause they had the business running without a hitch from top to bottom," Emily explained. "They already had rental contracts written and policies in place, plus a good 6 months or more of events on the books."

Those very policies likely help drive all the bookings. According to Emily, The Venue is a nonexclusive, equally accessible and fitting spot for a variety of occasions. To date, their 3,900-square-foot social spot has hosted everything from low-key,

private birthday parties to glamorous, 200-guest weddings, public Christmas open houses, fundraisers for philanthropic organizations in the community, and everything in between.

Another big draw, Emily presumes, is their hands-off approach to vendors. Unlike other venues, the Johnsons do not require renters use a specific caterer, florist, deejay, or other service providers of that nature.

Most of all, though, The (Continued on page 47)

New social spot...

(From page 46)

Venue offers flexible rental hours. Folks can use it by the hour, or they can pay for an entire weekend.

Whichever the case, the Johnsons are committed to being there every step of the way.

"In talking to Zade and Jon, we learned that was a big thing for them. They put a lot of hard work into The Venue because they wanted to see it used by our community. They hoped someone local could take over and keep it personable," Emily said, "and that's what

Abb and I want, too. We're just a call and a short drive away if something comes up, and we have a great support system to help us. Both our moms have went and met with our customers on several occasions when we couldn't make it, so that's been a blessing."

As for what they have planned moving forward, Emily is playing her cards close to the vest—but she did offer a few plans they're considering: "date nights" for parents and their young children, get-to-

gether for area women, and breakfast with Santa during the holidays.

"Those are just three of the many ideas we've talked about. Whatever we decide, the goal is to give the community events through which they can make memories. I wasn't raised here, but Abb was. This is home for us together now, and community means a lot to me. I'm grateful for the times I've gotten to be a part of people's lives here already through The Venue, and I'm excited to keep doing that."



VENUE ON MAIN



THE MEMORY OF EMILY'S BRIDESMAID LUNCHEON HAS AN EXTRA LAYER OF SENTIMENTALITY TO IT. HER HOSTESSES HELD IT INSIDE THE VENUE THE DAY BEFORE HER WEDDING, GIVING SOME FAMILY MEMBERS AND CLOSE FRIENDS A CHANCE TO SEE THE PROPERTY FOR THE FIRST TIME.



EMILY AND ABB MAKE A STRONG TEAM TO RUN THE VENUE TOGETHER. HE BRINGS THE HANDIMANSHIP REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN THE PROPERTY, LEAVING THE FUN PARTS OF OUTREACH AND SOCIAL PLANNING TO HER.

Swainsboro welcomes Quinns with ribbon cutting at Edenfield House

On Thursday, October 5, the community of Swainsboro, along with the Chamber of Commerce, gathered together on the front steps of Swainsboro's beloved Edenfield House to celebrate the grand re-opening of the bed and breakfast under the new ownership of David and April Quinn. The Quinns cut the grand opening ribbon with their daughter Bella, who is the Manager of the Edenfield House.



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MAYOR SMITH READY TO CUT THE RIBBON

City of Adrian holds ribbon cutting

The City of Adrian held their ribbon cutting for the grand opening of the new City Hall on Wednesday, August 23. Mayor Wynola Smith welcomed City Council members and community with a speech and gave a tour of the new facility. Refreshments were served following the tour.



JUDGE WILKES CUTTING THE RIBBON

FML Genealogy Resource Room holds ribbon cutting

Franklin Memorial Library held their ribbon cutting for the Genealogy Resource Room on September 16, 2023, with special guest, Probate Judge Don Wilkes, there to celebrate the occasion.

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Emanuel County's newly remodeled Senior Center ribbon cutting

On Friday, March 24, 2023, Emanuel County Senior Center Director Beth Gibson, was joined by the Emanuel County Board of Commissioners and the Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the ribbon cutting and grand opening of Swainsboro's newly renovated facility located off Highway 56 North in Swainsboro.



GIBSON CUTS THE RIBBON ON NEWLY REMODELED CENTER

Ribbon cutting held for the Beauty Bar

On Friday, April 28, a ribbon cutting was held for the Beauty Bar in Swainsboro. The Beauty Bar is a salon with an in-house boutique called "Mae and Jess" that opened on March 28, 2023. The ribbon cutting commemorated their one-month anniversary of being in business.



NIKKI HACKLE READY TO CUT THE RIBBON

Wincore named Business of the Year, Frye named Person of the Year

The Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce hosted its 69th Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Banquet on Thursday, January 25, at the Nordson Center at the SEC Conference Complex.

Cason DeVane, Chairman of the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors called the meeting to order. Board member, Wade Johnson, gave the invocation and a dinner catered by Heather Belle's Catering was served.

Following the meal, a

building dedication was held for the SEC Chamber of Commerce Conference Complex. Chamber CEO Ken Warnock related the origin of an idea and the developments that followed. During a Chamber strategic planning session in 2006, a meeting or conference facility was identified as a need for our community. From that inception, reality has now materialized 18 years later. Built in 1938 this building was first, the home to Scott's Groceteria. It has been three different grocery stores, a gym and

aerobics studio, a country buffet, Movies-To-Go and almost became a Mexican restaurant 2019. The chamber approached, then, Mayor Charles Schwabe with a plan to convert the vacant property into a conference and meeting facility. The City transferred the property to the Chamber in August of 2021. Demolition began in January of 2022. The project survived two tornados, COVID pricing and COVID's delays in materials and several other challenges along the two-year renovation and

construction process. A 6,000 sq. ft. banquet room, which will now be known as the Nordson Center in recognition of the Nordson Foundation's generous \$150,000 donation, allowed the completion of the project to be expedited significantly. A more intimate meeting room, which will now be known as the Mill Creek Meeting Room for their generous donation of \$75,000, a catering kitchen, storage space and new restrooms is also housed in the building. Video capabilities will soon be added as

funding becomes available.

The complex is owned, managed, and operated by the Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce. The following entities contributed financially or with in-kind contributions to the project: Swainsboro-Emanuel County Chamber of Commerce, Nordson Foundation, Emanuel County Development Authority, The Luck Flanders Gambrell Family, Pine Tree Festival Foundation, Mill Creek Foundation, Emanuel County (Continued on page 52)

Wincore named Business...

(From page 51)

Commissioners, Former Mayor Charles Schwabe and the City of Swainsboro for the property transfer, Pineland Telephone Coop Foundation, RayRob Concrete and Emanuel County Schools.

Following the dedication of the building Chairman DeVane recognized Special guests: Swainsboro City Councilman Julian Sconyers, Swainsboro City Councilman Johnny Ray Stafford, Swainsboro City Councilman Gregory Quarterman, Emanuel County Commissioner Jim Sherrod, Emanuel County Commissioner Timmy Oliver, Emanuel County Commissioner Ricky Thompson, Emanuel County Board of Education Member Del Brown, Emanuel County Board of Education Member Tanya Lane, Clerk of Court – Superior Kristin Hall, Sheriff Jeffrey Brewer, Mayor of Twin City Matt Donaldson, Twin City Councilman Jessie Brown and Twin City City Councilman Buck Brown.

Board members were also recognized - Cason DeVane, Chairman; Lisa Bertoch, Chair-Elect; Vicki Anderson, Secretary-Treasurer; Larry Calhoun, Past-Chair; Wade Johnson; Damien Scott; Neil Shah; Milton Gray; Kristin Hall; Anson Walden; Russ Yeomans; Jessica Peebles; Richard McNeely and Scotty Hattaway.

Members of the Development Authority were recognized. They include Will Donaldson, Butch Frye, Wade Johnson, Jim Mercer, Cason DeVane, Tim Garrett

and Kenny Griffin.

Star Student and teacher awards were sponsored by Jerry Cadle and the Cadle Law Firm and were presented by Chamber CEO Ken Warnock. The PAGE Student Teacher Achievement Recognition (STAR) Program is in its 66th year and is administered, sponsored, and promoted by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE). To obtain the 2024 STAR nomination, high school seniors must have the highest score on a single test date on the SAT and be in the top 10 per cent or top 10 students of their class based on grade point average.

The recognition of the Star Students and Teachers from around our county has been a highlight of the Chamber of Commerce annual banquet for many years and honors the vital role of our entire education community and the effort and dedication of the Star Students and Teachers from our area schools. From this exceptional group, the award for the 2024 Star Student and Teacher went to Ricardo Jose-Lara and Mrs. Salena Reynolds of Swainsboro High School.

A complete review of the Star Student and Teacher representatives from the Emanuel County Schools can be found at the conclusion of this article.

Business of the Year went to Wincore Windows and Doors. Wincore was founded in 2006 by a group of 12 investors with decades of experience in the design, manufacture,



WINCORE EMPLOYEES WITH WARNOCK AND DEVANE



NORDSON EMPLOYEES AND WARNOCK WITH CHECK PRESENTED

and sale of vinyl window products. These investors believed they would “win” in the marketplace with this “core” group of people, thus the name Wincore was born. The Company established its headquarters in Parkersburg, West Virginia and produced its first window in July 2007. Over the next several years, and despite the worst economic recession in several

decades, Wincore continued to expand and grow its operation, shipping vinyl windows and patio doors to customers east of the Rocky Mountains. In 2010, Wincore expanded its product offering to include fiberglass entry door systems.

As part of this decision the Company leased additional manufacturing space at its headquarters, bringing its total facility size

to approximately 167,000 square feet. In 2017, Wincore began to ship products to the west coast, expanding its footprint to include the entire continental United States. Due to significant and continued growth, particularly in the southeast region, and an inability to expand its headquarters in West Virginia, Wincore made the decision in 2018 to (Continued on page 53)

Wincore named Business...

(From page 52)

open a second manufacturing location in Swainsboro, Georgia. Wincore worked with the Emanuel County Development Authority to find a building suitable for its needs and settled on the old Husqvarna facility. The Company leased a 75,000 square foot building and began producing windows in May 2019. In 2021, due to continued growth, the Company leased an additional 100,000 square feet of space adjacent and connected to its existing Georgia facility bringing its total local investment more than \$10 million dollars. Two additional vinyl lines and a second glass line were added. All core vinyl window products are capable of being manufactured in the Swainsboro facility. The Swainsboro location currently employs 216 people. Wincore continues to grow and is expecting to surpass \$200 million in gross sales in 2024. Of its 12 original founders, 6 remain actively employed with the company helping it continue to grow and succeed. Wincore manufactures vinyl windows for both new construction and repair/remodel projects, though the vast majority of its sales are for repair/remodel projects. Windows can be ordered in a variety of styles, including single hung, double hung, picture window, slider, and casement. Customers can also order vinyl patio doors that are purchased from an outside vendor and assembled in-house, as well as garden windows, bay/bow windows and geo-

metrics. In addition, customers can order a variety of color options for both the interior and exterior of their windows and doors. Wincore also manufactures fiberglass entry door systems that can be made in a number of styles and with a variety of options. These include single doors and double doors with side lites, transoms, decorative glass options, and several different color options for both the interior and the exterior of the door. Wincore's products are sold to a variety of customers, including distributors, dealers, specialty installers, and contractors. The Company believes that the service it provides is what sets Wincore apart from its competitors.

The Person of the Year award was presented to Butch Frye. Some 25 years ago, Butch Frye moved his wife, Melonie and their two sons to Swainsboro to assume the role of Emanuel County School Superintendent. According to his sons, who spoke in honor of their father and presented him with the award, the recipient had a knack of putting the right people together to get the job done and had the ability to always bring out the best in everyone whether at work, at church, or busy in community activities. During the presentation, along with some good-natured ribbing, Zac, Peyton, and their father all had an opportunity to display their love for this area, for their wide circle of family and friends and especially for each other. Mr. Frye's many contributions and



**FRYE WITH HIS WIFE AND SONS
ALONG WITH WARNOCK AND DEVANE**

achievements are known both locally and throughout the State and have had immeasurable impact in the field of education as a teacher, administrator, advisor, and later as consultant to many, many school systems. In accepting the honor, Frye made it clear his highest honor was that of husband and father. He concluded by expressing his humility and gratitude for being named recipient of the award, but more so for the people, experiences, associations and opportunities that have been part of his life in this community for the past 25 years.

On that note, the celebration of 69 years of Chamber of Commerce activity, involvement, dedication and guidance for Emanuel County and her citizens came to an end. The commitment and the work, however, never stops and we look forward to the leadership and service that this organization and its members will continue to provide.

STAR Students and

Teachers

Black, Campbell named STAR student and teacher at DEA

by METTER ADVERTISER

David Emanuel Academy senior Josie Grace Black has been named STAR Student and has selected Donna Campbell as her STAR Teacher.

Josie is the daughter of Joshua and Jessica Black of Swainsboro and has been attending DEA for five years. She is active in varsity cheerleading, Beta Club and WINGS and is a dual enrollment student.

During her time at DEA, Josie has received a number of accolades. She was named Most Spirited in varsity cheerleading for 2021-22 and 2023 and received the AAA Award in cheerleading in 2021-22. She had the Highest Academic Average in 10th Grade and is a member of the SAT 1100 Point Club. She was named Most Improved in cheer in 2020-21 and has received the American Citizenship Award, the President's Award and Kindness

Award. An Honor Roll student, she is also a class secretary.

Josie is also busy outside of school. She attends and is an active member in the youth group of Hillcrest Baptist Church, "where I get to worship my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," she said. She is also on the Citizens Bank Student Advisory Board. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with friends and family, reading, painting and playing the piano.

After graduation, she plans to attend Southeastern Technical College for a career in nursing and then further her education at Georgia Southern University.

Josie selected Donna Campbell as her STAR Teacher for a number of reasons.

"I have learned so much in the five years she has taught me," Josie said. "She teaches math in a way that is very effective while giving the classroom a lighthearted atmosphere. She truly cares (Continued on page 54)

Wincore named Business...

(From page 52)

about her students and will do everything she can to help them succeed.

"Mrs. Campbell always is willing to go out of her way to offer extra help before and after school to anyone who needs it. She doesn't only teach us math but also life lessons that I'll always value. I've enjoyed my time as a student under her so much and will always greatly appreciate having her in my life."

A math teacher at DEA for six years, Campbell has been in education since 1986, teaching in Tattnall County one year and Emanuel County for 29 years. She also taught part-time at East Georgia State College for 10 years. She teaches 8th-grade pre-algebra, Honors Algebra I, Honors Geometry, geometry and pre-calculus. This is her second year being selected as STAR Teacher.

She has lived in Georgia for the past 50 years. She and her husband have two married sons and four grandchildren. She attends Hebron Primitive Baptist Church and is a member and past president of the Beta Beta Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma Honor Society for Women Educators and a member of the Georgia Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

In her spare time she enjoys spending time with family, quilting, cross stitching, baking, reading, crocheting and traveling.

"Teaching chose me at an early age," she said "I remember playing school at home as a young child;

I always helped any classmate 'figure out' problems or whatever topic they needed extra help in. I guess that is why I encourage my students to 'help' each other, which could be re-explaining a topic in his or her own words or supervising the other student to work out a problem."

Campbell said her favorite part of teaching is, "Watching my students understand the concepts that I have taught them and then returning to tell me where they finally used some concept in their life because, as students, they could not understand why they needed to learn so many 'things' -- all those bright-eyed smiling faces when the concept finally clicked!"

Of her selection as STAR Teacher, Campbell said it feels "incredible! Josie Grace is the kind of student who makes teaching easy! She asks questions when she needs clarification. Josie Grace practiced her skills until she was satisfied with her results, which always ended in an 'A.' She would ask for problems to work as practice for quizzes or tests.

"Josie Grace is a highly-motivated young lady. She accepted my challenge of always do your best. I am so proud of her efforts in learning mathematics. Josie Grace has a facial expression that allows me to know that what I stated or asked needed clarification. She is the type of student that will ask questions in class when needed. She has become an independent learner, which is what a teacher wants for all his/her students to be-

come."

Jose-Lara, Reynolds named STAR student and teacher at SHS

Ricardo Jose-Lara is a 17-year-old senior at Swainsboro High School. He is the only child of Anbertha Lara-Ortiz and Ricardo Jose-Monjaraz. Ricardo plans to attend college and after college graduation, hopes to be able to support his parents. In August, Ricardo plans to attend Georgia Southern University to pursue a degree in electrical engineering.

Ricardo has achieved Honor Roll every semester since 9th grade. He has also received multiple Highest Average awards for multiple subjects, each year of high school. Of those, he is most proud of attaining the highest average in Honors American Literature and Advanced Placement US History. Additionally, in his AP US History he was able to achieve college credit by passing AP exam with a 4.0. Last year, Ricardo was recognized as a UGA Certificate of Merit recipient. "I have chosen Selena Reynolds as my STAR teacher as she helped me in my application to college which I would have otherwise been clueless about. She is also the teacher I feel the most comfortable talking with," stated Jose-Lara.

Selena Reynolds is a social studies teacher at Swainsboro High School. A graduate of Metter High School, Mrs. Reynolds attended Brewton-Parker College and earned her bachelor's degree in history education in 1996. After teaching



DEA STAR STUDENT BLACK AND STAR TEACHER CAMPBELL



SHS STAR STUDENT JOSE-LARA, STAR TEACHER REYNOLDS WITH WARNOCK AND DEVANE

her first year at Portal High School, Mrs. Reynolds came to Swainsboro High School in 1997. She later earned her master's and educational specialist degrees in secondary social science education from Georgia Southern University. Throughout her career, she has been named a National Board Certified Teacher, earned gifted endorsement, and received certification to teach AP U.S. History. She was named Swainsboro High School's and Emanuel County's Teacher of the Year for the

2006-2007 school term, and she was selected as STAR Teacher for Swainsboro High School and Emanuel County in 2021. She currently serves as the instructional coach for Swainsboro High School. Mrs. Reynolds is also a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an international society for women educators.

Being a classroom teacher allowed Mrs. Reynolds to have the opportunity to interact directly with students and develop important rela-

(Continued on page 54)

Wincore named Business...

(From page 54)
 tionships while sharing her passion for history. Having the opportunity to teach Ricardo Jose-Lara and be selected as his STAR Teacher is certainly one of the highlights of Mrs. Reynolds' career. She was not surprised to learn that Ricardo was named STAR Student, but that did not diminish her enthusiasm for his great accomplishment. He has such intellectual promise, and Mrs. Reynolds is confident that he will go on to achieve great things at Georgia Southern University. Although Ricardo can appear to be quite reserved at first, he has much creative talent, and his quick wit make him a joy to have in the classroom. He is just as talented in reading and comprehending complex texts and writing powerful essays as he is at solving complex math problems. Ricardo thrives on challenge and puts forth his best effort with each and every task. He always remains humble; yet he consistently strives to do better. He is certainly a "STAR" for Swainsboro High School.

Sasser, Holmes named STAR student and teacher at ECI

Will Sasser, son of Ron Sasser and Jessica Sumner, is a senior at Emanuel County Institute.

Will has many outstanding academic accomplishments during his high school career. He was awarded highest average honors in Honors Chemistry. Will is president of

ECI's Technology Student Association where he, along with his teammates, was awarded State Champion in the On-Demand Video competition. He has served as vice president and Public Relations Chairman for Future Business Leaders of America. Will has participated in many FBLA region and state competitions earning awards for Business Achievement Awards Capstone Completion and Sales Presentation.

He is a member of Senior Beta Club, One-Act Play, 21st Century Leaders, Citizens Bank Student Advisory Board, and ECI's Student Council. He was voted Most Intelligent by his senior classmates. Will has also received the University of Georgia's Certificate of Merit.

Will has been enrolled in dual enrollment since his sophomore year in high school. While at East Georgia State College, he received an invitation to join the Phi Theta Kappa chapter of the National Honor Society and the Bobcat L.E.A.D. Society.

Will plans to attend the Georgia Institute of Technology to pursue a degree in Architecture. He was afforded the opportunity of an internship with James W. Buckley & Associates. This hands-on opportunity granted Will the ability to work directly on the current updates that are now underway at ECI. He has learned many valuable skills that have benefited him greatly and cemented

his choice in a future career.

Will has chosen Mrs. Dorene Holmes as his STAR teacher. When thinking about Miss Dorene, Will says, "I couldn't have done it without her." Whether it's to help with a misunderstood math concept or lending an ear for a teenage problem, Miss Dorene is always there. Will went on to say that, "Not only is she an excellent teacher, but she has that amazing ability to turn a student's bad day into a good one." He will never forget the impact that she has had on his high school career.

Mrs. Dorene Farnum-Holmes is a mathematics teacher at Emanuel County Institute. Mrs. Holmes is a 1990 graduate of Pennsylvania State University earning a degree in Health Policies and Administration. She is married to Mr. William Holmes and has three children, Hally, PJ, and LJ Farnum.

Mrs. Holmes began her teaching career as a substitute for Emanuel County Schools. She was then hired as a paraprofessional and served in this capacity for several years. An opening presented itself and she was offered a job as a part-time math teacher. With this opportunity, Mrs. Holmes completed the Georgia TAPP program to earn her teaching credentials. Since then she has gone on to teach Algebra 1 and 2, Geometry, SAT Prep, College Readiness, and Pre-Calculus.

Mrs. Holmes was se-



ECI STAR TEACHER HOLMES AND STAR STUDENT SASSER

lected as ECI's Teacher of the Year for the 2016-2017 school year. She was also previously chosen as STAR teacher in 2018 by Tiernan Johnson.

Mrs. Holmes cannot think of any other student who has personified the role of STAR student as Will

Sasser has. In her opinion, Will Sasser is a motivated and determined student. He is one who sets a goal and will not stop working until it is accomplished. Mrs. Holmes says, "Will is an exceptional student who will thrive with any given opportunity."

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