Coffee County Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Committee Chairman Walt Pridgen was named the 2019 Georgia Farm Bureau YF&R Member of the Year. The award recognizes a member who has an impact on his/her local area and who encourages, educates and leads other young farmers and ranchers. Pridgen manages 11 poultry houses, grows hay and raises cattle. He is president of South Georgia Cattlemen, speaks to other organizations to promote agriculture and volunteers as a judge for area FFA events.

“I realized how important it is to not only be involved, but to advocate, mentor and educate,” said Pridgen, who served as vice president of the Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College YF&R chapter. “It became my goal to be a voice for agriculture, to mentor youth and to educate others on the importance of Georgia’s No. 1 industry.”

Will Cabe of Franklin County and Chy Kellogg of Cobb County joined Pridgen as finalists. The finalists each gave video presentations that were shown at the 2019 GFB YF&R Leadership Conference on Jekyll Island in mid-July, and conference attendees voted to determine the winner.

As the state winner, Pridgen received $250 cash. The two runners-up each received $150 cash.

The GFB Young Farmers & Ranchers program is designed to provide leadership development, educational and social opportunities for farmers between the ages of 18 and 35.
Coffee County Farm Bureau received three awards for its volunteer programs during the Georgia Farm Bureau 10th District annual meeting, held Sept. 12 in Waycross. Derek Pridgen is the CCFB president.

The CCFB Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Committee, chaired by Walt Pridgen and co-chaired by Spencer Highsmith, received the GFB 10th District Outstanding Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee Award.

Among its activities over the past year, the committee celebrated Ag Awareness Week in March. The project resulted in six gardens planted at three elementary schools, reading ag-themed books and giving farm-related presentations to students. Overall, 10 CCFB volunteers, including the CCFB YF&R Junior Board and members of the women’s committee, visited 25 classrooms within seven elementary schools, sharing the story of agriculture with hundreds of students.

The CCFB Legislative Committee, chaired by Donnie Smith, received the 10th District Outstanding Legislative Program Award. The committee’s activities included hosting a legislative dinner to facilitate interaction between local farmers and ranchers and elected officials. Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black, Zach Stokes from Rep. Rick Allen’s office, state Sen. Tyler Harper and state Reps. Clay Pirkle and Dominic Lariccia each presented information to more than 100 farmers and ranchers.

Walt Pridgen received the 10th District YF&R Member of the Year Award, which recognizes a member who encourages, educates and leads other young farmers and ranchers in his/her local area. Walt, who raises cattle, poultry broilers and hay with his father and uncle, also received the state award when it was announced in July.

Founded in 1937, Georgia Farm Bureau is the state’s largest general farm organization and has 158 county offices. Its volunteer members actively participate in local, state and national activities that promote agriculture awareness to their non-farming neighbors. GFB offers its members a wide variety of benefits, including insurance; enrollment in member benefits is optional and not a requirement for membership.

Georgia’s tobacco acreage has significantly decreased

*By John McLemore, County Extension Agent*

As temperatures rise transitioning from the winter to spring season farmers are preparing for 2019 growing season. Farmers’ crop production has been limited by hurricane Irma (2017) and Michael (2018). Though farmers have been awarded disaster relief funds from only Irma, the margin for gain has been minimal. As we go into the 2019 growing season farmers hope for cooperative weather and decent commodity prices.

Due to the nature of the agriculture market which correlates with commodity international trade deals Georgia’s tobacco acreage has significantly decreased -- approximately 40 to 60 percent for the 2019 growing season. Despite the cut in tobacco acreage Dr. Paul Bertrand (retired UGA Extension Tobacco Pathologist), Tony Barnes (Atkinson County ANR Extension Agent), and I are excited to have 12 on-farm trials and one black shank variety trial with farmers in Coffee and Atkinson counties.

The trials are based on the issues farmers face in tobacco production. Growing tobacco requires a lot of inputs to produce a crop, but outputs can be impacted when the crop is wiped out by soil borne diseases. These trials consist of common used chemicals to control these soil borne diseases to measure how it correlates to tobacco yield. Farmers are appreciative of these trials because they help minimize financial loss in their tobacco crop. Participants of the annual Georgia Tobacco Tour will have the opportunity to view these trials in June. These trials will give participants a first-hand experience of how we grow tobacco in Georgia.

There are many articles in today’s media spreading positive and negative things about farmers. However, we are thankful to still have viable agriculture industry which generates a value over $13.75 billion to Georgia’s economy.

If you ate today please thank a farmer.
As Georgia’s fall harvest season winds down, and everyone prepares for Thanksgiving, Coffee County Farm Bureau invites you to celebrate Farm-City Week Nov. 22-28.

Farm-City Week highlights the relationship between Georgia farmers and their partners in urban areas who prepare, transport, market and retail the food and fiber that farmers grow for consumers. Kiwanis International began Farm-City Week in 1955 to increase the understanding of the partnership between urban and rural residents.

Farm days at schools, farm tours, banquets and mayoral proclamations are just a few of the activities county Farm Bureaus will hold in communities across Georgia as their schedules allow to mark this annual event.

“It takes teamwork to stock our stores with food and clothes,” said Coffee County Farm Bureau President Derek Pridgen. “Georgia farmers work year-round to grow cotton and produce the delicious beef, chicken, peanuts, milk, pecans, fruits and vegetables that we all love to eat. Then, employees of agribusiness companies work to prepare, market and transport the food and clothes to stores for consumers. It takes all of us to feed and clothe America.”

Agriculture is Georgia’s largest economic sector, and that status depends on the cooperation between farmers and their partners in town such as their bankers, Extension agents, equipment and supply salesmen.

In 2017, food and fiber production plus the related industries involved with processing and delivering products to consumers contributed $73.7 billion to Georgia’s economy according to the University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development (CAED). Agriculture and its related industries also contributed 392,400 jobs in Georgia in 2017.

According to the USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, in 2017, Georgia farmers led the nation in producing broilers, peanuts and pecans. Georgia ranked second in the U.S. for production of cotton lint and seed and third for watermelons. Georgia ranked in the top ten for production of bell peppers, cantaloupes, cucumbers,

Continued on page 5
tobacco, blueberries, cabbage, eggs, onions, squash, peaches, snap beans and sweet corn.

In 2017, the top ten commodities grown in Georgia were broilers, cotton, eggs, peanuts, timber, beef, greenhouse plants, pecans, dairy and horses.

Farm-City Week is a great time to discuss how the economy impacts farmers and consumers. When you look at the price of groceries, note that in 2017 farmers received on average 14.6 cents out of every dollar spent on food at home and away from home, USDA statistics show. The rest of the dollar goes to wages and materials for food preparation, marketing, transportation and distribution, all of which have increased in price, too.

In 2018, Americans spent an average of 9.7 percent of their disposable personal incomes on food, the USDA reports, which is less than any other country spends. America’s healthy, safe, and consistent food supply is so affordable thanks to the production and delivery partnership between farmers and urban businesses.

Founded in 1937, Georgia Farm Bureau is the state’s largest general farm organization. Its volunteer members actively participate in activities that promote agriculture awareness to their non-farming neighbors. If you would like more information about agriculture please visit www.gfb.org, like Georgia Farm Bureau on Facebook or follow on Twitter at @GaFarmBureau.

Mississippi native joins extension office

Mississippi native joins extension office

The University of Georgia Extension would like to welcome John McLemore as the Agricultural and Natural Resource agent in Coffee County. John is from Hattiesburg, Mississippi where he was raised on a small commercial beef cattle farm. As a youth he was involved in FFA, 4-H, Beta Club, and was an Eagle Scout. As a member of FFA and 4-H he participated in many career development programs which inspired him to pursue a career in Extension.

John earned a Bachelor in Agriculture and Information Science and Master of Science degree in Plant and Soil Sciences from Mississippi State University. John’s thesis project to obtain his master’s degree was to develop heat tolerant cool-season legume species (balansa clover, berseem clover, crimson clover, and hairy vetch) for implementations in early-planted corn in southern Mississippi. His project stemmed from Mississippi farmers’ interest in early-planted corn to avoid heat stress typically between July and October. Cool-season species that are able to germinate immediately following corn harvest are able to sequester residual soil nitrogen from the prior commodity crop. While conducting his research project he learned valuable practices and lessons that will help him better serve the community of Coffee County.

John has been an advocate of agriculture who is eager to teach, serve, reach, and present non-biased research-based information to the community of Coffee County. As a youth and young adult, he has experiences with animals, FFA, 4-H, horticulture, commodity crop production, and collaborating with various organizations. John can be reached by phone (912-384-1402) or at john.mclemore@uga.edu. He began his new role on December 1.
Coffee family begins a new chapter with JMC Tire Company

On Oct. 31, 2018, John Myron Coffee, 19, tragically lost his life in an auto accident. News of the accident shocked the Coffee County community. John Myron was well known and well liked throughout the community. His family owned and operated J&T Tire Company, a business that has become something of an institution in Coffee County.

From the time it opened its doors, the Coffee family business had always been known as J&T Tire. That changed on Labor Day weekend, when J&T Tire officially changed its name to JMC Tire Company after John Myron. “I thought it was appropriate to change the name for John Myron. He was very important to what we do here,” says John Coffee, John Myron’s grandfather.

In addition to changing the name, the Coffees also built a new shop directly behind J&T – officially the fourth location for the tire company. J&T began in 1983 at the corner of Peterson Avenue and College Park Drive – the current location of the Pancho Villa restaurant. In 1988, John moved south of Douglas near the airport. For the last 28 years, J&T had been located on Highway 32 West a few miles outside of Douglas. Though JMC Tire is technically in a new location, you could literally kick a can from the old J&T shop to JMC.

Though the location has changed, everything else remains the same. The Coffee family still owns and operates the shop. And customers can expect the same service and attention to detail the Coffees have always provided. And John still sits behind his desk, laughing and joking with customers. “Everything is the same except the name. You’ll still get the same service here as before. I don’t know if that’s good or bad,” John laughs.

Douglas native Andrew Sawyer named Southeast pecan agent

By Clint Thompson, CAES News

The partnership between University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and the Georgia Pecan Commission yielded a new area pecan agent position for the Southeast District this year.

The two entities co-funded the position that will be filled by Andrew Sawyer beginning May 1. Sawyer will work with growers and county agents in southeast Georgia, while UGA Extension pecan specialist Lenny Wells continues to serve producers in southwest Georgia and statewide.

“I am so excited about this partnership between the pecan industry and UGA Extension. This is a great example of how everyone in the agricultural industry in Georgia works together to identify needs and solve problems,” said Laura Perry Johnson, associate dean for UGA Extension. “Andrew is the perfect person to be UGA Extension’s pecan expert in southeast Georgia. I look forward to seeing the great things that come from this partnership.”

Sawyer has served as the Wilcox County Extension coordinator and Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) agent since October 2017. Prior to that, he was the ANR agent in Thomas County for six years.

“I think it’s going to be a great experience. It’s going to be awesome working with the pecan team,” Sawyer said. “It’s going to be awesome working with the agents. I feel like I know a lot of them. I’ve met so many growers already at the last two pecan meetings in Tifton.”

Sawyer’s addition to the pecan team is timely since there has been an increase in the number of trees being planted in the southeastern part of the state over the past decade. Although the majority of Georgia’s crop lies in southwest Georgia in Mitchell, Dougherty and Lee counties, Tattnall County in southeast Georgia was ranked No. 6 in farm gate value for pecans in 2017 with $16.1 million, according to the UGA Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development.

“The pecan acreage in that part of the state has grown a lot in the last five to 10 years. Some of those areas, it’s a three and a half hour drive one way to get to them and that limits the amount of time you’re able to spend with them on the ground,” Wells said. “It’s going to be very helpful for them and all of us to have Andrew over there and accessible to those growers.”

It’s a critical year for Georgia pecan farmers. Hurricane Michael hit southwest Georgia last October, decimating the pecan industry by causing more than $560 million in direct losses. Producers are currently making decisions about whether they should replant, what varieties to plant and how to overcome low market prices.

“There probably will be more questions that come up this year, more questions that need to be looked at in the field,” said Lanair Worsham, vice chairman of the Georgia Pecan Commission. “It’s going to work well (having Sawyer join the pecan team).”

For more information about Georgia pecans, see https://site.extension.uga.edu/pecan/.

Clint Thompson is a news editor with the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences based in Tifton.
Nicholls High graduate named Director of Agricultural Education

The National Council for Agricultural Education (The Council) has named Dr. James Woodard the Director of Agricultural Education, FFA Board Chair and National FFA Advisor. Dr. Woodard was an FFA member as a student at Nicholls High School and also served as an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Jeff Davis County High School.

Amendments to the National FFA Constitution and Bylaws adopted by the delegates at the 92nd National FFA Convention and Expo stipulated that it is now the responsibility of The Council to appoint this leadership position. Dr. Woodard replaces Dr. Steve Brown, who has served as board chair and national advisor for the past 11 years. Dr. Brown recently retired from his position at the U.S. Department of Education after 39 years of service to the agricultural education profession.

In this role, Dr. Woodard will serve as chairperson of the National FFA Board of Directors, where he will provide oversight for the National FFA Organization. He will advise the National FFA Officers, the board of directors, and the National FFA Delegates and committees on matters of policy and will help the national officers conduct meetings. In this three-year renewable role, he will co-direct the joint governance committee of the National FFA Organization and the National FFA Foundation Board of Trustees and serve as an advocate for issues affecting FFA and agricultural education stakeholders.

Dr. Woodard currently serves as superintendent of the Morgan Charter School Systems in Madison, Ga. His agricultural education and FFA journey began at Nicholls High School in Coffee County. He began his collegiate studies as an agriculture major at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and later completed his Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education at the University of Georgia.

In 2015, Dr. Woodard received his doctorate in education leadership and administration from the University of Georgia. He has been engaged in many capacities involving agricultural education since 1987, when he began his career as a high school agriculture teacher and FFA advisor in Jeff Davis County. He has had an impressive career as a leader in career and technical and agricultural education. Most notably, Dr. Woodard served as state director of agricultural education for the Georgia Department of Education from 2000-05, where he served as advisor for the Georgia FFA Association and president of the board of trustees for the Georgia FFA Foundation. He also served on the National FFA Board of Directors and National FFA Board of Trustees from 2002-05. From 2005-08, he served as state director for Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education in Georgia, where he provided direction for re-engineering career, technical, and agricultural education through the development of Georgia’s Career Pathway System.

As an agricultural education teacher/leader, Dr. Woodard has spent his career in the classroom and in leadership positions providing direction for school systems to expand and improve secondary and postsecondary career and technical educational programming. “I feel overwhelmed with the magnitude of the responsibility bestowed upon me,” said Dr. Woodard. “I am honored to be named to a position that has the opportunity to influence so many current and future FFA members. My life was changed as a result of the leadership and direction provided by former National FFA Advisors. I appreciate their dedication and will work to continue my personal mission: To make a difference in the lives of students to the same degree my ag teacher made in my life.”
The meat and potatoes of ninth grade agriculture

By Zane Cleveland, GWCFC Journalism Student

Recently, the principal at George Washington Carver Freshman Campus (GWCFC), Mr. Abe Morris, put into place a Project Based Learning system (PBL). This system helps students to see the connection between different subjects like Agriculture, English, Language Arts, and Physical Science. The teachers included in this program currently at GWCFC are Mr. Highsmith, Ms. Tanner, Ms. Watts, and Ms. Aycock. Agriculture teacher Mr. Troy Highsmith does his part by helping the children grow potatoes as a learning experience.

The potatoes they will be growing are red Irish potatoes. These are much redder than an average potato, and much better for baking. They planted these potatoes in February and they will be ready to pick near the end of May. Highsmith thinks that this program is extremely valuable, going on to say that it “allows the students to apply what they learn in the classroom.” Hopefully, students at GWCFC will continue to apply what they learn in the field with this newly implemented PBL for generations.

The students will not only be gaining valuable experience in the field, but they will also be able to really taste their hard work. Once the potatoes have been grown, Highsmith and his students will also learn how to make French fries out of them. They will also be enjoying some burgers with their well-earned fries. Hopefully, all the student’s hard work pays off in the form of a delectable five star meal!
15 on-farm trials in Coffee County in 2019

This year there are a total of 15 on-farm research trials. Twelve of the 15 on-farm trials are tobacco research focused on using different chemical formulations to reduce soil borne diseases that our farmers currently face to reduce production lost. We also have two on-farm peanut research trials one is using Valent MycoApply EndoPrime to increase root growth to increase harvest yield, and the other peanut trial is a fungicide trial with five different spray programs commonly used by local farmers.

The last of the 15 on-farm research trials is a cotton variety trial with 12 different varieties to measure their impact on cotton production in southeast Georgia. On the peanut and cotton on-farm research trials, data will be collected on plant emergence, yield, and notes will be taking during the growing season on key plant physical characteristics. On the tobacco on-farm trials ratings will be collected on resistance to several soil borne deceases. These on-farm trials are in cooperation with the University of Georgia specialists, local farmers, Atkinson County ANR extension agent Tony Barnes and agricultural companies; without them these trials would not exist, so thank you very much.
Leadership Coffee class graduates

On Monday, October 28, 2019, the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce recognized the 2019 Leadership Coffee graduates at their monthly meeting. Leadership Coffee is a community leadership development program designed to enhance leadership capacity by preparing a pipeline of skilled individuals ready to continue Coffee County’s legacy as a progressive community in rural South Georgia.

The following professionals graduated the program: Gaye Almon, AFLAC; Dake Berry, Premium Peanut; Anna Chatman, Ycarte Health Career Center; Maria Chavez, City of Douglas; Clearetha Crowder, Douglas National Bank; Michaela Curry, City of Douglas; Donna Davis, Coffee County School System; Rhonda Dorsey, Coffee County School System; Myrtice Edwards, Telamon Corp.; Dr. Jodi Fissel, South Georgia State College; Michael Gowen, City of Douglas; Debra Heveder, Coffee Regional Medical Center; Lisa Mackenzie, Coffee Regional Medical Center; Dawn Maddox, Chancey Heating and Cooling; Jenny McIver, McIver’s Funeral Home; Kim Miller, Coffee County School System; Tommy Ponsell, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College; Cindy Ricketson, First National Bank of Coffee County; Keisha Webb, Unison Behavioral Health; and Chris Wooten, Southwire.

The Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce is grateful for its members and their investment in leadership and community development. The next cohort of Leadership Coffee will begin in April of 2020. Applications will be distributed to all Chamber businesses as well as posted on social media, available on the Chamber website at www.coffeegachamber.com and at the chamber office. For more information on this program and other leadership development opportunities, call the Chamber of Commerce at 912-384-1873 or email chamber@douglasga.org. Business is Brewing in Douglas-Coffee County.

SGSC to offer bachelor’s in Professional, Business, and Technical Writing

Beginning in spring semester 2020, South Georgia State College (SGSC) will launch the new Bachelor of Arts in Professional, Business, and Technical Writing. This is an interdisciplinary program that will provide students with critical knowledge and skills focusing on professional business and technical writing, building on English and other existing courses from SGSC’s current bachelor’s degree in management.

The need for workforce expertise in technical writing for business and industry is based on projections data for national and state employment of entry-level and managerial occupations. These occupations relate to technical writing in fields that include but are not limited to technical writing, marketing, public relations, fundraising, media communications (including electronic media) and research analysis.

“The B.A. in Professional, Business, and Technical Writing goes beyond rhetoric and composition. It prepares students for 21st Century careers in writing, including advertising, multimedia expertise, and digital literacy,” states Dr. [Continued on page 11]
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Joseph Holloway, program chair. “While this interdisciplinary degree prepares students for a number of career paths, most importantly, it prepares students to write and communicate effectively in any career.”

The new Bachelor of Arts in Professional, Business, and Technical Writing expands SGSC’s academic offerings that include Bachelor of Science Degrees in Biological Sciences, Management, Nursing, and Long-Term Healthcare Management. Tuition for SGSC’s bachelor’s degree programs is offered at the same tuition rate as its associate degree pathways. This makes earning a bachelor’s degree from SGSC more affordable than similar bachelor’s degree programs at other colleges or universities.

Two information sessions will be held in October for those interested in the program. The meeting on the Douglas campus will be Wednesday, Oct. 23, in Davis Hall, room 202, from 2 – 3 p.m. The meeting on the Waycross campus will be Thursday, Oct. 24, in the Education Building, room 119, from 2 – 3 p.m.

If you are unable to attend one of the sessions or for more information about SGSC’s new Bachelor of Arts in Professional, Business, and Technical Writing, please contact Dr. Joseph Holloway at 912.449.7587 or 912.260.4252 or by email at joseph.holloway@sgsc.edu.

Musgrove joins Hurst & Hurst

Hurst & Hurst CPAs, a leader of small business support and tax services in South Georgia, is pleased to announce that Mandy Musgrove has rejoined the firm as a staff accountant. With over 15 years of accounting experience, Mandy will help coordinate a multitude of accounting activities including payroll and general ledger application.

She is currently obtaining her Bachelor’s Degree in Accountancy from Georgia Southwestern State University. Mandy has two children, Kara and CJ. She enjoys hunting and building race cars with her dad in her spare time.

Ryan Stone joins Hurst & Hurst

Hurst & Hurst CPAs, a leader of nonprofit and governmental auditing in South Georgia, is pleased to announce that Ryan Stone has joined the firm’s audit department. As a staff auditor, Ryan will work on various engagements with an emphasis on governmental, non-profit and private organizations.

Ryan graduated from Valdosta State University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration in Accounting. Ryan was born and raised in Douglas. He is a former Honor Graduate from Coffee High School. Ryan is set to marry his fiancée, Autumn Rose, next October. He enjoys team roping, hunting, golfing, and sports watching in his spare time.

Founded in 1966, Hurst and Hurst CPAs has built a tradition of excellence spanning over 40 years. H&H specializes in comprehensive audit, tax, consulting and financial planning services for client ranging from individual taxpayers up through large privately owned companies poised for continued success.

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Lott receives Garland Thompson Lifetime Achievement Award

This year for the Chamber of Commerce’s annual awards dinner, the Chamber created a new award category in honor of one who consistently and tirelessly worked to make a positive difference in the lives of those not only in this community but also throughout the region and state -- one who went about his work without any desire to be recognized nor expectation of accolades. Rather, his motivation ran much deeper and without a doubt, was acknowledged with “well done thy good and faithful servant” at the time it mattered most. This award is named the Garland Thompson Lifetime Achievement Award.

Garland Thompson was a true giant within the fields of economic development and agriculture. He played a direct role in the economic development of Douglas and Coffee County and was instrumental in recruiting and/or relocating numerous businesses to the area, including Fortune 500 companies. In 2007, Georgia House of Representatives created a resolution recognizing and commending Garland for his tireless efforts as an advocate for economic development in Douglas and Coffee County. Among the dozens of accolades he received during his lifetime, Garland was inducted into the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Garland passed away on Dec. 17, 2018, following a brief illness, leaving a void in Coffee County and throughout the state that will not soon be filled.

The Garland Thompson Lifetime Achievement award will be bestowed upon a deserving individual whose contributions to this community align with those of his own. This year the individual who is well-deserving, one who also works tirelessly for the good of his community, one whose passion continues to help drive economic development in the Douglas-Coffee County area, and one whose impact can be seen simply by driving through the city.

The first recipient of the Garland Thompson Lifetime Achievement Award is Francis Lott. Francis is a native and lifelong resident of Douglas, graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology 1959 with a degree in Architecture. After graduating from Georgia Tech, Francis Lott served five years as an officer in the United States Air Force, then returned to his hometown of Douglas, where he joined family-owned Lott Builders Supply Co. Beginning in 1981, he established Lott Properties Inc. and led his family’s diversification into real estate development, which grew to over 40 properties, many in Douglas. In addition, Francis was a founding board member of Douglas National Bank, and he served for 22 years on the Board of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. He currently serves on boards for the Community Foundation of Coffee County and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Foundation.

A former chair of the local chamber of commerce, he has tirelessly volunteered his time and money to help drive improved economic growth for Coffee County. In the late 1970s, Francis initiated a community-funded speculative industrial building program in Douglas, which has developed four 100,000 square foot buildings, to date, to help attract industrial prospects. He has developed shopping centers, restaurants, apartments, single-family subdivisions, self-storage facilities, and more. He has been cited as a “driving force” behind formation of the Douglas-Coffee County Jobs Development Council and actively involved in helping recruit industries to the community for 40 years, helping create more than 3,800 new jobs, over time.

In 2004, Francis established an Economic Development Fund, with a $1 million endowment to the Community Foundation of Coffee County (CFCC) to help drive improved economic development and community growth. Francis purchased the abandoned downtown Belk Hudson building in 1998 and completely renovated it in 2004 as a mixed-use business facility. Renamed The ATRIUM, he gifted the building to the Douglas-Coffee County Economic Development Authority in 2014, then designed and built new state-of-the-art Chamber of Commerce offices with 4,000 square feet and a 260-seat event center in the basement.

Mr. Lott’s community efforts haven’t gone unnoticed statewide. Francis is one of only two people to ever receive the Volunteer of the Year award twice from the Georgia Economic Developers Association, in 1995 and again in 2015. He’s also long been a champion of higher education and Georgia Tech, in particular. In 2015, Francis and his wife, Diane, endowed $500,000 to the G. Wayne Clough Georgia Tech Promise Scholarship Program to help provide a debt-free Georgia Tech education for students who otherwise could not afford to attend, with priority given Coffee County residents. Francis also makes frequent visits to local schools, where he’s inspired several high school students to attend college and to apply to Tech, if they do well in math and science. Numerous CHS graduates are enrolled at Georgia Tech with several on Promise Scholarships endowed by Francis and Diane. Most recently, Mr. Lott was honored at the 2018 Gold & White Georgia Tech Alumni Gala as the recipient of the Dean Griffin Community Service Award which recognizes alumni who have performed exemplary community service.
Business is brewing
in Douglas-Coffee County, Georgia
Local attorney, philanthropist receives Jackie Wilson Women in Leadership Award

Lisa Leverette-Lott, an attorney who also operates the Good Deed Club of Coffee County, a local charity that serves children and families, received the annual Jackie Wilson Women in Leadership Award on Thursday, Oct. 10, 2019, at the Women in Business Think Pink event.

The Jackie Wilson Women in Leadership Award celebrates the tremendous impact women have as leaders in their community by honoring an outstanding individual who exhibits an exceptional level of personal and professional standards, excels in business or community service and is dedicated to positively impacting the well-being of Coffee County.

Leverette is a graduate of Coffee High School, South Georgia State College, University of Georgia and Mercer University. She returned to Douglas to serve her community in 2007 and began her law practice, Leverette Law Firm. In 2011, she established the Good Deed Club of Coffee County.

The individual who nominated Leverette for this prestigious award stated, “I believe Lisa Leverette-Lott is very deserving of the Jackie Wilson Women in Leadership Award because she is not only one of the most highly respected and successful attorneys currently practicing in Coffee County, she also serves others to positively impact the community.

While Lisa’s profession is practicing law, she has a deep passion to help those less fortunate and has acted upon this calling by establishing the Good Deed Club of Coffee County. Through this organization, Lisa leads a group of volunteers who work together to meet the needs of children and families who are facing difficult times. They most often receive requests from school counselors and DFACS for basic needs of clothing, shoes, diapers, hygiene items, furniture, mattresses, etc. Lisa selflessly serves her community and is making a positive difference in the lives of others, one child and one family at a time.” To donate to the organization, please contact Leverette Law Firm at 912-383-9392 or visit Facebook at The Good Deed Club of Coffee County.

On behalf of Beta Sigma Phi Alpha Theta Chapter, Terry Cook assisted in recognizing all cancer survivors present and provided information about the numerous services the sorority provides with funds raised by the organization. Services may include transportation to treatments and appointments, assistance with co-pays and fees for visits, assistance with rent and utility bills during treatment, groceries, meals and meal replacement shakes, mammograms, mastectomy bras, breast forms, mastectomy pillows, gowns, and drain pouches for recovery during October being Breast Cancer Awareness month, special speakers for the evening included Dr. Justin Peterson, Coffee Regional Women’s Health and Dr. Eric Anderson, Coffee Regional Oncology, both who provided very informative women’s health-related presentations. Cancer survivor Lori O’Neal shared her journey with cancer from diagnosis to treatment and extended her sincere gratitude to CRMC and Dr. Anderson for the services and treatment opportunities now offered in Douglas.

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surgery, wigs, turbans, caps, scarves, PINK Baskets of Hope, breast health materials and more. For more information about contributing to Beta Sigma Phi, stop by The Pink House located at 311 Columbia Ave in Douglas or call (912)384-PINK or 381-2225 or 501-9697. Everyone is encouraged participate in Passionately Pink Day on Oct. 24.

New shopping center on the way

Tax allocation district vote passes, new shopping center on the way

Maybe the biggest economic development news of the year is construction of Douglas Plaza, a new shopping center slated for the property that used to house the old high school. In order to bring in the new retail center, the city proposed creating a tax allocation district in that location.

In order to create the district, it had to be placed on a referendum for citizens to decide. The TAD referendum was on the ballot for November’s city election. Voters overwhelmingly voted in favor of the TAD 1,889 yes to 334 no.

There are still several meetings that need to take place among the city, county, and school board before construction can begin on the TAD. The plan is to conduct these meetings in early 2020 with construction starting in March.

A number of businesses have signed on to locate in Douglas once construction begins, including Chik-fil-A, Hobby Lobby, Cookout, Marshall’s, Starbuck’s, and Jersey Mike’s.
Coffee High School Band and Show Choir recognized

On Thursday, December 12, during the monthly Board of Education meeting, the Coffee High School Band and Show Choir were recognized for their continued achievements in the Fine Arts.

The high school band, under the direction of Mr. Steve Myers, recently received numerous awards through competition for their performance level and talent. This fall at the Empire Classic in Statesboro, the band earned superior ratings from every judge. The competition band performed in the silver division Class AA and again received superior ratings for each area. The Color Guard, Auxiliary, Percussion and band won Best in Class. They also placed 1st in the Silver Division.

At the Sound of Silver Invitational in Blackshear, the Competitive Group received all superior ratings from all judges once again. The Percussion, Auxiliary and Band were Best in Class, 1st Place in Class AA.

Just recently, five students were selected for the All-District Jazz Ensemble. They are Felix Tinejero - Trumpet, Isai Artiga - 1st Chair Trumpet, Bennett Bush - Guitar, Dominic Taylor - Trap Set, and Joseph DeLoach - 1st Chair Alto Sax. All of the students who auditioned were selected. Many more will be selected for the All-District, All-Region, and likely All-State Concert Bands by the time school starts second semester as auditions are upcoming.

Assisting Mr. Myers at the high school is Alex Cruz and Tania Myers along with the middle school band directors Cory Hobson, David Arambalo and Chorus Director Kaitlyn Moore.

If you happened to attend this year’s Christmas Parade, both the middle and high school bands performed. With two trains coming through town that stopped the parade, the band students had a large time freestyling as they waited. It lasted so long they had time to do the band chant and an extra percussion cadence. “It will be hard to top that experience,” stated Mr. Myers.

In addition to the recent accolades of the high school band members the board of education also saluted the Choral Program under the direction of Tania Myers. The Coffee High Show Choir is known not only throughout Coffee County but throughout the state of Georgia and beyond. Their performances have taken them to Jekyll Island for the state-wide Professional Association of Georgia Educators Conference and the state wide 4-H meetings at Rock Eagle. They have earned numerous awards such as Best in Class and Superior rating at the Panama City Beach Music Festival and Superior Ratings and Grand Champion at OrlandoFest, which took place at Universal studios in Orlando. The Choral Program also had a group selected to perform the National Anthem for the Atlanta Hawks. This fall, Cailey Martinez and Gracee Myers were selected by audition for the Georgia Music Educators Association All State Reading Choir and the All-State Chorus, which is very competitive. The All-State Reading Choir consists of only the top 100 singers from the entire state. The Mixed Choir achieved Superior Ratings at the state Evaluation in Performance as well as Sight-Reading. This past summer, the girls’ trio of Zaria Moore, Cailey Martinez and Gracee Myers went to Macon for the State Literary Meet and placed 1st in the region and 4th in the state. We were fortunate several months ago to have these young ladies perform for our schoolboard meeting.

The Coffee High Show Choir recently performed at the opening ceremonies of the Georgia School Board Association’s annual conference.

Superintendent Dr. Morris Leis, presented the Superintendents Award to both Tania and Steve Myers.

“We are very fortunate to have the talent of Mr. and Mrs. Myers, who have been a part of our district for over 25 years. Having worked in other systems prior to Coffee County, together they have over 30 years of experience.” Stated Dr. Leis. “Many of their former students have gone on to major in music and become educators or performers in their own right.”

The new Clayton Mathis Performing Arts Center and John M. Maley Auditorium is nearing completion on the campus of Coffee High School. This new state of the art facility will certainly compliment the talents of the band, show choir and other areas of fine arts.
Darci Tuten recognized as systemwide teacher of the year

Friday night, during the halftime festivities at the Coffee High football game, Darci Tuten, Coffee County Schools 2019-2020 Teacher of the Year, was formally recognized on the football field in front of the Trojan fans. Escorted by her principal Dr. Rowland Cummings and Superintendent, Dr. Morris Leis, Mrs. Tuten has been a part of the school district since August of 2006, having previously taught for four years at Citizens Christian Academy. Darci currently teaches American and Multi-Cultural Literature as well as Advanced Placement Literature.

Not only does Mrs. Tuten have the distinction as the new system-wide Teacher of the Year for 2019-2020 but she is the 45th Teacher selected as the district celebrates the 45th Anniversary of the Teacher of the Year Program.

As the system-wide Teacher of the Year, Darci will received numerous gifts from gift cards to restaurants, gift shops, clothing stores, car washes, spa and nail treatments as well as monetary gifts from local banks.

Darci was selected from an elite group of educators representing every school within the district. Selected by their colleagues last spring, it is certainly one of the highest honors you can receive. All of the following nominees are to be commended for their excellence in the classroom and their dedication to their students: Morgan Morris, Satilla Elementary; Amie Bennett, Eastside Elementary; Melanie Brunel, Broxton Mary-Hayes Elementary; Shae Hare, Indian Creek Elementary; Angel Anderson, Nicholls Elementary; Deborah Patton, Wiregrass Regional College and Career Academy; Heather Cook, Westside Elementary; Brittany Winters, West Green Elementary; Chandra Green, Coffee Middle School; Eric Nwawel, George Washington Carver Freshman Campus and Marnie Smith, Amph AMAZING ELEMENTARY.
Wiregrass’s Pharmacy program among top in state, nation

Wiregrass President Dr. Tina K. Anderson is proud to share that the college’s Pharmacy Technology program has been ranked number three in the state and eight in the nation by Pharmacy Technician Guide.com website.

The website is designed to help those interested in the field to choose the best Pharmacy Technician programs in the state and nation. This distinction is based on a combination of tuition cost, quality of education, graduation rates, and student friendly services offered by the schools. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of pharmacy technicians is projected to grow 7 percent from 2018 to 2028, faster than the average for all occupations.

Jackie Spriggs, Dean for Academic Affairs for Allied Health, shared this about the program’s placement, “We are extremely excited to be ranked #3 in the state of Georgia and #8 in the nation by Pharmacy Technician Guide. Mr. Frank Barnett, Pharmacy Technology Program Coordinator and Exposure Control Coordinator, has done an outstanding job of ensuring students are prepared to pass certification and enter the job market fully competent in all duties of a licensed pharmacy technician.”

The Pharmacy Technology program is offered on the Valdosta Campus as a diploma or degree program. The occupational courses for the program can be completed in three semesters. Students training will consist of a combination of class, lab, and live work experience. The program is recognized as an accredited program by ASHP (American Society of Health – System Pharmacists). The diploma program qualifies for the HOPE Grant, where students who could receive additional grant monies that can pay for their college tuition and fees.

In addition to being ranked among the top in the state and nation, the program also recently learned they were recognized as an approved program to train students in compounded sterile preparation. Frank Barnett added, “Wiregrass’ Pharmacy Technology Program is an approved training program. Graduates of the program are now eligible to become candidates for PTCB’s Compounded Sterile Preparation Technician (CSPT) exam after one year of in-field experience. The future of pharmacy technicians is promising to continue to evolve as pharmacists are moving into other roles of medication therapy, and pharmacy technicians are being prepared to pick up traditional roles of Pharmacists. Wiregrass Pharmacy Technology Program is prepared for the evolution of the pharmacy technician career field to meet the needs of our service area pharmacies.”

Spring Semester classes start January 8, 2020. To learn more about this program and other programs Wiregrass offers, visit wiregrass.edu.
SGSC officially awarded continual accreditation for Associate and Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs

The Accreditation Commission of Education in Nursing (ACEN) has awarded full accreditation to the South Georgia State College Associate of Science in Nursing program and the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program through spring of 2027. ACEN accreditation is a voluntary, self-regulatory process by which non-governmental associations recognize educational institutions or programs that have been found to meet or exceed standards and criteria for educational quality.

The accreditation process began with the preparation of the self-study report and was followed by a site visit of peer evaluators from institutions throughout the United States. Additional review was conducted by the ACEN Evaluation Review Panel and the final accreditation was made by the ACEN Board of Commissioners. The ACEN is recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) for nursing education programs in the United States and its territories as well as for international nursing education programs.

Dr. Jaime Carter, dean and professor of nursing, states, “The accreditation process is a great indication to our students of the high quality of education, training and preparation they receive to improve health care outcomes. The clinical and educational expertise of our nursing faculty enhances the achievement of nursing students in every aspect of their training whether it is in the classroom, skills laboratory and/or simulation laboratory. Another key strength of the nursing programs lies in the community partnerships.”

SGSC President Dr. Ingrid Thompson-Sellers says of the accreditation “The ACEN Board of Commissioners affirmed that SGSC has the appropriate resources, programs and infrastructure to prepare nurses for the workforce. We are very thankful that we are positively impacting the health care and economic viability of our region and the State of Georgia through higher education programs such as Nursing. At South Georgia State College, we remain committed to working with the University System of Georgia, our faculty and staff and community partners to continue offering high quality, impactful degree programs for students.”

SGSC has a rich tradition of academic excellence through nursing accreditation that began in June 1978 with initial accreditation of the Associate of Science in Nursing program and the new Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program, which received initial accreditation in January 2015. This continuous commitment to academic excellence has contributed to the high first time pass rates on the NCLEX-RN licensing examination and job placement rates. The ACEN accreditation program is founded on the belief that specialized accreditation contributes to the centrality of nursing for the public good and provides for the maintenance and enhancement of educational quality through continuous self-assessment, planning and improvement. Accreditation indicates to the general public and to the educational community that a nursing program has clear and appropriate educational objectives and is working to achieve these objectives. Emphasis is placed upon the total nursing program and its compliance with established standards and criteria in the context of its mission/philosophy as well as current and future nursing practice. The ACEN supports the continuation and strengthening of voluntary specialized accreditation by peers as a principal means of public accountability and ongoing improvement.
Hadley named Wiregrass’s 2020 EAGLE student

Hannah Hadley of Brooks County has been chosen to represent Wiregrass Georgia Technical College as the 2020 Exceptional Adult Georgian in Literacy Education (EAGLE) Student of the Year. EAGLE is a statewide program that recognizes and rewards excellence among students enrolled in adult education programs. The award was announced on November 18 at a reception sponsored by the Valdosta Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce and ERCO Worldwide. This was the 23rd annual event to honor an adult education student from Wiregrass Georgia Technical College.

The EAGLE Award program is a vital component of the Certified Literate Community Program of Georgia, an umbrella organization that brings all sectors of a community together with literacy providers to map out the best use of resources already available. It also seeks to acquire the additional resources necessary to meet local literacy needs.

Hannah was nominated by her Adult Education Instructor Toni Lewis. Ms. Lewis shared this about her nominee, “Hannah is a woman of strong character and believes in the power of education.” After being named the EAGLE winner, Hannah shared her testimony about her journey to the adult education program at Wiregrass. She was a happy teenager and thriving in high school when her mom became ill. She was needed at home and ended up dropping out of school. Being the oldest child, she found herself caring for her younger siblings and her mom. She became a child with adult responsibilities. Her dream of working with children as a career and owning her own daycare seemed lost at the time. Perseverance and hard work have her back on track to fulfill her dreams. She will soon finish her GED® and plans to enroll at Wiregrass afterwards and major in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Hannah will attend the Georgia EAGLE Leadership Institute March, 2020 in Atlanta. The Leadership Institute recognizes and honors those students who have demonstrated superior achievement in adult education classes and programs. The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) through its Office of Adult Education (OAE) sponsors the annual EAGLE Leadership Institute.

The finalists, including the winner are: Hannah Hadley (Brooks County) nominated by Toni Lewis, Charleston Lemon (Coffee County) nominated by Brianna Gillis, and Johnathan McMillian (Lowndes County) nominated by Adann-Kenn Alexander. Laverne Rome representing Workforce Education Support Team, Inc. (WEST) presented Hannah with the award.

South Georgia State College receives approval for new bachelor’s degree in public service

The University System of Georgia’s Board of Regents approved a seventh bachelor’s degree for South Georgia State College (SGSC) during the Regents’ meeting January 8, 2020, in Atlanta. SGSC President Dr. Ingrid Thompson-Sellers is pleased to announce the Bachelor of Science in Public Service Leadership that responds to the SGSC strategic plan, Moving Forward, of developing new academic programs based on the needs of the workforce and community.

The Bachelor of Science in Public Service Leadership will be a highly interdisciplinary, applied learning approach to the study of public and nonprofit service organizations and societal issues addressed and managed by such organizations. The program will emphasize independent research projects and hands-on experiential service internships with community public and nonprofit agencies and organizations in social services, health, government, charitable services, churches and the arts.

Graduates of this program can pursue careers in state and local government, nonprofit work, education, advocacy work, public administration, community development, church lay ministries and social services.

Dr. Rob Page, SGSC’s vice president for academic and student affairs, states, “We are excited about the opportunities that this degree will provide for our students and the positive impact that we believe the graduates of this program will have on our region.”

The need for workforce expertise in social and community service, social work, public relations and fundraising, and administrative services is borne out in current national and state employment projections data for entry-level occupations related to the proposed program. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook Sept. 4, 2019, update of labor data, all of the aforementioned occupations are projected up to 2028 to experience “faster than average” to “much faster than average” growth rates.

The new Bachelor of Science in Public Service Leadership expands SGSC’s academic offerings that include the Bachelor of Science degrees in Biological Sciences (BSBS), Management (BSM), Nursing (BSN), Early Childhood/Special Education (P-5) (ELE/SPED), Long-Term Healthcare Management (BSLTHM) and the B.A. in Professional, Business, and Technical Writing (BAPBW). Tuition for SGSC’s bachelor’s degree programs is offered at the same tuition rate as its associate degree pathways.

For more information about SGSC’s new Bachelor of Science in Public Service Leadership, please contact Dr. Rob Page at 912.260.4203 or by email at robert.page@sgsc.edu.
Wiregrass vice president named to National Board for Concurrent Enrollment

Wiregrass Georgia Technical College’s Dual Enrollment program has been a leader on both state and national levels in the concurrent enrollment field. In 2018 the college received official accreditation by the Accreditation Commission of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), making the college the first in Georgia to earn NACEP accreditation for their Concurrent Enrollment program. Concurrent enrollment is the method of offering college courses to high school students for college credit by credentialing a high school instructor to teach the course content. The accreditation Wiregrass received provides evidence that those courses meet college level rigor, are presented and taught in the same manner as other college faculty taught courses, and that the college is adhering to its policies and procedures with each course taught at the high school. Concurrent Enrollment is one method of delivery for Wiregrass’s successful dual enrollment program.

At the 2019 National NACEP Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, Wiregrass Vice President of Enrollment Management Angela Hobby was appointed to the Board of Directors for NACEP and will serve as the Chair of Engagement Commission.

“NACEP provides colleges and high schools support, guidance, and research based best practices for concurrent and dual enrollment models. They are committed to ensuring that every accredited program is delivering quality college level content in every course, that teachers are receiving the professional development they need to be successful in delivering that content and that student success is at the center of all programs. I am honored to have been appointed to this position with NACEP,” shared Angela Hobby.

Through the Dual Enrollment program at Wiregrass, high school students can take college courses at their high school, online or on a Wiregrass campus. Students may choose to enroll in a degree, diploma, or technical certificate program, or just take core courses. There is no cost for tuition, college fees, or textbooks. No hours taken through the Dual Enrollment program will count towards a student’s HOPE Grant or Scholarship credit hour caps. Last fiscal year, Wiregrass was named number one in the state for enrollment with 3,155 students who earned college credit in the 11 counties Wiregrass serves. For parents this was a total savings of $4.8 million with 27,703 total credit hours earned in the service area.

“I am excited that Wiregrass is working with experts in the field of concurrent enrollment enabling us to learn from the best,” shared Dr. Tina K. Anderson. “I am also proud of the work Angela Hobby is doing and know she will be an asset on their board as she is for us here at Wiregrass.”

About 38 percent of Wiregrass’s dual enrollment students were enrolled in academic core classes with 62 percent enrolled in occupational training programs. The most popular programs at Wiregrass for dual enrollment students last year were: nurse aide/patient care assisting, criminal justice, welding, and culinary arts. The top three high schools with the largest enrollment are Fitzgerald High School (584), Coffee High School (527), and Valdosta High School (415).

Wiregrass is accepting new students for Spring Semester; classes start January 8, 2020. If a parent of a high school student is interested in learning more information they may contact the High School Coordinators by emailing highschoolservices@wiregrass.edu. Information about the Dual Enrollment program can be found on the website at wiregrass.edu.
Excitement and anticipation were growing throughout the basketball gymnasium recently on the Douglas and Waycross campuses as students, faculty, staff and community members waited for the entrance of the new South Georgia State College (SGSC) mascot. Amid cheers and applause, SGSC president, Dr. Ingrid Thompson-Sellers, and student leaders led the new mascot, Talon also known as Tally, onto the court complete with dramatic special effects and lighting. For those in attendance, the dramatic reveal made the experience even more exhilarating.

With the release of the 2019-2024 Moving Forward Strategic Plan, SGSC embarked on a mission to increase awareness of and grow the college for our current and future students. As part of the mission, a plan was put in place to rebrand elements of the college’s identity, beginning with athletics. The new Hawks mascot character was created to be an ambassador personifying the spirit of SGSC on each campus and within the regional community.

The redesigned mascot was crafted after a campus-wide, multi-faceted initiative to create a new mascot that embodied the college’s character while symbolizing SGSC’s sports heritage. A Mascot Advisory Committee was formed to oversee the process regarding the new visual identity and mascot costume. John Hartwell of Hartwell Studio Works was brought in to lead the design project for SGSC and carry it through to completion in order for the college to use the new logo and mascot character in its branding efforts.

Hartwell worked with the committee and other college constituents and developed a new stylization for the SGSC logo to be used on athletic uniforms and branding materials. The new logo incorporates the college’s colors of blue, gray and red, as a nod to the history of our athletic colors of the past. SGSC’s faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members were engaged in determining the name for the beloved new mascot.

The culminating events for the new logo and mascot took place with fanfare and excitement during two of the first SGSC Hawks basketball games of the 2019-2020 season on the Douglas and Waycross campuses. Pregame activities included live remotes with local radio stations, 93.5 Vibe FM and 105.1 KUB FM, and t-shirts decked out with the new Hawk mascot were given to students in attendance. During halftime of each game, the new mascot entered the court escorted by SGSC’s President Dr. Ingrid Thompson-Sellers and the Hawk’s very own student “security force.” The mascot was available for photo “selfies” with fans throughout the game, and encouraged fans to cheer on the SGSC Hawks.

“We are thrilled to welcome Tally to our campuses and the entire region the college serves,” says Dr. Greg Tanner, interim executive director of government relations and athletics. “Having this mascot and the redesigned logo will help the students feel more connected to our school and will serve as a way to engage our potential students and supporters of the college.”

Since the reveal, Talon will now routinely be seen in and around the SGSC community cheering on student-athletes at sporting events, but he will also make special appearances at other college and community events.

For more information on the new logo or Talon, SGSC’s mascot, contact, Dr. Greg Tanner at greg.tanner@sgsc.edu.

Satilla named Reward School, in top five percent of Title I schools

The Georgia Department of Education has named Satilla Elementary School a 2019-2020 Reward School. The distinction of Reward School recognizes that Satilla Elementary was among the greatest five percent of Title I Schools and those who are Title I Targeting Assistance Schools by their increase in student achievement.

Reward Schools also have to maintain the performance of their economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English learners in order to be recognized. Principal Lee Mobley, Assistant Principal Carla Rish and Academic Coach Brandon Bush recently shared a presentation with the school board at the November school meeting on all of the programs they have initiated as it related to their students’ educational improvement.

Students’ academic performance has continued to increase, resulting in this reward.
Wiregrass’s LPN program ranked fifth in Georgia

Wiregrass President Dr. Tina K. Anderson is proud to share that the college’s Practical Nursing program has been ranked number five in the state according to the Nursing Process.org website.

According to Nursing Process.org website, there is expected to be almost 1,000 new job openings for practical nurses across the state each year. Their website is designed to help those interested in the field to choose the best Practical Nursing programs in the state.

Jackie Spriggs, Dean for Academic Affairs for Allied Health shared this about the program’s placement, “We are so proud of our LPN program being recognized as one of the top 5 in the state by Nursing Process.org. Under the direction of Ms. Stevan Van Hook and with the hard work of our dedicated faculty the program enables students to graduate highly capable of obtaining licensure and enter nursing jobs as competent entry level health providers. The LPN program is a rigorous one that requires students to undergo competitive entry. Once accepted into the program students are required to complete approximately 680 hours of classroom/didactic education and also complete 485 hours of clinical practice. This program has a long history of excellence and continues to produce quality nurses.”

The Practical Nursing (LPN) program is offered on the Valdosta, Coffee, and Ben Hill-Irwin Campuses. The program is a diploma program that prepares students to be able to sit for the NCLEX-PN test to become certified. The program is approved by the Georgia Board of Examiners of Licensed Practical Nurses. Students who qualify for the HOPE Grant, and are accepted into the LPN program, could qualify for additional grant monies through the HOPE Career Grant leaving students paying little or no out-of-pocket cost for college.

SGSC contributes over $71 million to the economy in southeast Georgia

A leader in higher education in the southeast Georgia region, South Georgia State College (SGSC) is strengthening its economic health while providing a substantial return on investment to the students, local community and business partners. A recent study of the University System of Georgia’s (USG) economic impact includes SGSC’s contributions to the local economy as over $71 million during fiscal year 2018, an increase of $2.7 million from the previous year.

SGSC impact demonstrates significance for the region as shown in the study compiled by the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University System of Georgia’s Terry College of Business. Students, faculty, staff, alumni and visitors played a role in the more than $71 million recorded as the economic impact of the service area for fiscal year 2018 (July, 2017 through June, 2018). This area includes Coffee, Atkinson, Bacon, Jeff Davis, Ware, Pierce, Brantley and Clinch counties. During fiscal year 2017, SGSC’s total employment impact was noted as 816 on-and off-campus jobs.

“At South Georgia State College, we are committed to strengthening the economic health of our region. This is clearly articulated in our strategic plan and we’ve been very intentional in establishing and maintaining community and regional partnerships for educational purposes. Our communities will continue to thrive as SGSC’s educational and economic impact continues to grow,” says Dr. Ingrid Thompson-Sellers, SGSC president.

In addition, SGSC creates value in various other ways. Currently, the college offers 19 pathways leading to Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. An impressive listing of existing Bachelor of Science degrees in Biological Sciences (BSBS), Management (BSM), and Nursing (BSN) are joined by a Bachelor of Science in Elementary/Special Education and a Bachelor of Science in Long-term Healthcare Management, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Professional Business and Technical Writing. Continuous growth is experienced in the bachelor degree programs as more students choose to remain in the area for the completion of their education before entering the workforce.

The support for the community by the faculty, staff and students remains at an all-time high. More groups are stepping outside of the campus to perform service projects, participate in civic related events and involve educational partners in college activities.

Walda Kight, SGSC vice president of institutional advancement adds, “It’s an exciting time for SGSC, and the latest economic impact figures validate our focus on growth as well as the role our College plays to ensure a healthy, growing economy while preparing the future workforce to serve their employers and our region well.”

The Selig Annual Report is conducted on behalf of the Board of Regents by Jeffrey M. Humphreys, Ph.D., director of the Selig Center for Economic Growth in the University of Georgia’s Terry College of Business. The full report is available here: https://www.usg.edu/assets/usg/docs/news_files/USG_Impact_2018.pdf
Jacquelyn Mallard named Wiregrass Tech Student of the Year

After two rounds of interviews Jacquelyn Mallard, Auto Collision Repair Technology student, was named Wiregrass Georgia Technical College’s 2020 Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership (GOAL) winner.

Jacquelyn has always been driven to fix things that were broken, so she enrolled in the Automotive Technology program at Wiregrass. “What I thought was just a hobby, has turned into a passion and established a prominent path to a promising future,” shared Jacquelyn. She is currently enrolled in Wiregrass’ Auto Collision Repair Technology program after successfully completing the Automotive Technology program. She attributes her success to the hands-on skills training through practical scenarios in completing live work, along with the tactile and kinesthetic curriculum where she received one-on-one support from her instructors. She will be competing in SkillsUSA this year and is a member of the Student Government Association.

GOAL, a statewide program of the Technical College System of Georgia, honors excellence in academics and leadership among the state’s technical college students. Local GOAL winners are selected at each of the state’s 22 technical colleges, as well as one Board of Regents college with a technical education division.

Mallard competed against nine nominees from Wiregrass’ four campuses in Valdosta, Douglas, Fitzgerald, and Sparks before being named as one of the top four nominees, and now college winner. The runners-up were: Rose Sysskind (Practical Nursing) Valdosta Campus, Megan Wolfe (Automotive Technology) Valdosta Campus, and Keith Wright (Barbering) Valdosta Campus.

Jacquelyn was nominated by her Auto Collision Repair Technology Instructor, Roy Bramley. “From day one she came in with a positive attitude, a strong work ethic, and completed all assigned tasks well ahead of her peers. She requested to be my Skills USA collision contestant the first week of class, and has put many extra hours in training while working a part-time job, and running her own business. I know she will be successful in whatever path she decides to take in life and business.”

Mallard will now advance to regional judging in late February. In April, she will learn if she is one of the nine state finalists at the State GOAL Awards Ceremony in Atlanta. A panel of leaders from the business, industry, and government sectors will interview the finalists and choose one to be the 2020 State GOAL winner and the recipient of the GOAL medallion. The grand prize also includes a new car, courtesy of KIA, the statewide corporate sponsor of the GOAL program.

Jacquelyn shared, “I was shocked. It was honestly unexpected and I was just happy to have been nominated. After the initial shock, I felt honored to receive such a prestigious title and completely humbled to be selected to represent Wiregrass. Without the motivation and support from the other students, faculty and staff members, I would not be the student or person I am today to even be in a position to go to the regional competition and serve as a representative. So, I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity and I am excited for what lies ahead.”

For more information about the Auto Collision Repair program and other programs, visit wiregrass.edu. Spring Semester classes start January 8, 2020. It’s time to apply.
Mike Day named Wiregrass Instructor of the Year

Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Welding Instructor Mike Day received the 2020 Rick Perkins Award for Excellence in Technical Instruction, also known as Rick Perkins Instructor of the Year award.

The Rick Perkins Award for Excellence in Technical Instruction is awarded annually. This award is designed to recognize and honor technical college instructors who make significant contributions to technical education through innovation and leadership in their fields. Instructors are nominated for the Rick Perkins Award by their peers. Competition among instructors occurs at the college, regional, and state levels.

Two finalists participated in the interviews, they were: Mike Day (Welding Instructor-Coffee Campus), and Kiva Brownlee (Adult Education Instructor – Ben Hill-Irwin Campus).

Day was nominated by his peers throughout the college. He is described as “one who consistently performs above and beyond the call of duty. Mike’s commitment to his students, his peers, the institution, and to the local employers is unparalleled. His pride in his work, his sense of duty, and his exemplary performance set the example for all faculty and staff. Overall, Mike is a champion of the Wiregrass mission of “workforce development.”

When asked about his reaction to receiving this honor Mike Day responded, “I am so excited to represent Wiregrass as the Rick Perkins Instructor of the Year. I am humbled by all my peers who think so highly of me and our welding program. I have been shown tremendous support from our leadership, administration, and instructional team in everything I have done at Wiregrass right from the start. I hope to represent our team in a manner that truly shows our passion for Technical Education. This honor has been the greatest in my teaching career."

Day also shared his teaching goals in the classroom and welding lab, “learning to weld is learning how to overcome your failures. Success is never final and failure is never fatal. It’s what you do when you fail at a weld that matters, you can’t stop success with a person who never gives up. Always talk with every student, every day, find common ground and grow students’ talents. At the end of the day, if we as instructors can share ethics, hard work, and build confidence, welding is the least of our worries.”

Nicole West, Executive Director of Departmental Affairs, serves as the Rick Perkins Coordinator.

The following instructors were nominated and participated in the selection process for the instructor award (in alphabetical order): Fifi Agyabeng-Dadzie (Biology Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Adann-Kennn Alexxandar (Adult Education Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Jessica Altman (Psychology Instructor- Ben Hill-Irwin Campus), Roy Bramley (Auto Collision and Sheet Metal Fabrication Instructor), Cabot Carlton (Welding Instructor – Ben Hill-Irwin Campus), Jesse Davis (Automotive Technology Program Coordinator – Ben Hill-Irwin Campus), Tim Drexler (Computer Information Systems Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Deanna Edwards (Business Education Instructor – Ben Hill-Irwin Campus), Julia Fountain (Adult Education Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Talarie Giddens (Esthetics Program Coordinator – Valdosta Campus), Garrett Hall (History Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Toby Heard (Automotive Repair Technology Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Karen Hutcheson (Cosmetology Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Cathy Leeman (English Instructor – Ben Hill-Irwin Campus), Jenay Lewis (Adult Education Services Instructor – Valdosta Campus), April Lott (Cosmetology Program Coordinator – Coffee Campus), Dora Nash (Associate of Science Nursing Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Mark Ponder (EMS/Paramedicine Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Jennifer Ray (Radiologic Technology Program Coordinator – Valdosta Campus), Wally Rewis (Welding Instructor – Area Director for Academic Affairs- Valdosta Campus), Jason Richardson (Speech Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Cherlyn Sands-Anderson (Adult Education Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Greta Smith (Criminal Justice Instructor – Coffee Campus), Kayla Tillman (Business Education Instructor – Coffee Campus), Valerie Tisby (Early Childhood Care and Education Instructor – Ben Hill-Irwin Campus), Alison Watkins (Business Technology Instructor - Area Director for Academic Affairs – Valdosta Campus), Scott Watson (Air Conditioning Technology Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Kenya Wiggins (Sociology Instructor – Valdosta Campus), Tabitha Wilcox (Cosmetology Program Coordinator – Valdosta Campus), and Adrienne Young (Practical Nursing Instructor – Ben Hill-Irwin Campus).

Day will represent Wiregrass at the Regional interview competition in February at the Tifton campus of Southern Regional Technical College. All college winners will represent their colleges in April at the state Rick Perkins and GOAL (student of the year program) awards event where the region winners and state winner will be announced.
Wiregrass, GSW answering the need for long-term care management

Within the next 11 years all baby boomers will be older than 65 causing them to outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history according to the U.S. Census.gov. With this increasing number of senior adults the need for more workers in the long-term care field is growing. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Labor the demand for Medical and Health Services Managers will increase in the next 10 years by 18 percent, which is much faster than average. This includes healthcare facilities, including hospitals, and nursing homes.

To help fill this growing job demand, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College has signed an articulation agreement with Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW). The agreement will allow graduates from Wiregrass who complete a two-year degree in nursing or health services to transfer credits to GSW to complete the Long-Term Care Management Degree program. This program will be offered online through GSW allowing students the freedom to continue working, caring for family, and completing a degree without travel to the campus.

Dr. Leisa Easom, RN Associate Dean for Health Services at GSW shared, “This exciting new partnership between Georgia Southwestern State University and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College provides a new career journey in Long-Term Care Management for the Wiregrass graduates that addresses today’s healthcare workforce crisis.”

Wiregrass President Dr. Tina K. Anderson shared, “Georgia Southwestern is a wonderful university, and we are happy to work with them in providing this career path for our students. This will open new career opportunities for both Wiregrass’ current and former students.”

Wiregrass will be accepting new students for Spring Semester during the college’s Free Application Week, November 4-8. Those who apply in person will have their application fee waived. Spring Semester classes start January 8, 2020. To learn more about this articulation agreement and the programs Wiregrass offers, visit wiregrass.edu.
HEALTHCARE

Breast cancer screening event a success

Coffee Regional Medical Center hosted a free breast cancer screening event for women in South Georgia in October to recognize Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The purpose of this event was to encourage women to be vigilant about breast health, to take the proper steps to complete routine breast screening, and, if at risk or age 40 and above, provide a referral for a diagnostic mammogram. A mammogram must be ordered by a physician, therefore this event enabled those without a physician the opportunity to have a mammogram scheduled, if needed or desired.

The most significant risk factors for breast cancer are gender and age. Women over the age of 40 are more likely to develop breast cancer, therefore an annual breast screening is very important to assure early diagnosis and treatment. There are a staggering number of women in our community and throughout the United States who do not seek routine screening. Understanding the need to raise awareness of the value and importance of annual screening, Coffee Regional Medical Center and CRH Oncology Group took the initiative to provide this no-cost, educational event designed to ensure that all patients could be served and educated on all available options in breast health. The screenings took place on two evenings in mid-October, the 17th and the 24th.

“It’s essential to us that we reach as many women as possible with the importance of routine breast screening. This ensures the disease is caught before it reaches an advanced stage,” said CRMC’s board certified oncologist Dr. Eric Anderson. “Catching breast cancer in its early stages leads to improved survival rates and less invasive treatment options.”

Community partners were invited to join Coffee Regional in this event. The Georgia Department of Public Health set up a booth and provided education about options available through the health department. Beta Sigma Phi – The Pink House representatives attended both events and shared their support resources available for women diagnosed with breast cancer in Coffee County. Additionally, CRMC’s Mammography Department, CRH Women’s Center, and a representative from the CRMC Financial Assistance Program were on-hand to educate and assist women with options for scheduling a mammogram when necessary. Many women are not aware of the many resources available to them in Coffee County and this event was successful in educating all participants on the many options.

The community response was outstanding, both events were completely full, and no one was turned away, serving a total of 88 women. Nearly 65 percent of participants either had mammograms scheduled before leaving the screening event or had a follow-up appointment with the Georgia Department of Public Health to take the steps to qualify for the department’s BreastTest mammogram screening program. Each participant was also given a goody bag that included manual breast exam guides and other educational material.

This event would not have been possible without the volunteer work of CRMC’s outstanding team of providers who so willingly participated in the event. Thank you to Dr. Eric Anderson & Danielle Collins, FNP-C of CRH Oncology Group, Dr. Chet Royals of CRH Surgical Group, Debbie Purvis, FNP-C of CRH Family Medicine Group, and Meg Minchew, PA-C and Mandy Bice, WHNP-C both of CRH Women’s Center. Each of these providers volunteered their time and expertise for the manual exams. In addition, many support staff members played vital roles in the event, ensuring everything went smoothly. A special thanks to Kelli Delk, manager of the CRH Oncology Group, for overseeing the event, her hard work and organizational skills really made a difference.

As a community partner, Coffee Regional Medical Center offers educational events, lectures, and screenings throughout the year to Coffee and surrounding counties. To ensure you stay well-informed of any upcoming events, “like” us on Facebook or visit us online at www.CoffeeRegional.org.
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Fellow, American College of Surgeons
Registered Vascular Technologist

Allison Bell, MSPAS, PA-C

Jennifer Spivey, FNP-C

McKenzie Smith, RCS

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HEALTHCARE

CRMC to hold prostate cancer screenings in December

Did you know one out of nine men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in his lifetime? According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), Prostate Cancer is rare in men younger than 40, however the chance of having prostate cancer rises rapidly after age 50. About six in 10 cases of prostate cancer are found in men older than 65. Prostate cancer develops more often in African-American men and these men tend to be younger. Prostate cancer occurs less often in Asian-American and Hispanic/Latino men than in non-Hispanic whites. Unfortunately, the reasons for these racial and ethnic differences are not clear.

Coffee Regional Medical Center will hold its annual prostate cancer screening event in December. There will be two sessions: Thursday, December 5 from 4pm-7pm and Saturday, December 7th, from 8am-11am. No appointment is necessary; simply show up at one of the screening events. There will be a reduced lab fee of $10 which will be for the PSA blood test. The Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) is an antigen found in the blood, therefore the PSA blood test can determine if these levels are elevated and if further testing is needed. An elevated PSA can indicate prostate cancer; however it is important to note that not all elevated PSA levels are caused by cancer. The digital rectal exam will also be included in this screening.

The American Cancer Society’s estimates that over 174,650 new cases of Prostate Cancer in the U.S. for 2019 will be diagnosed. Over 31,620 men will die because they didn’t get an examination or didn’t act soon enough.

CRMC ensures continuity for Dr. Jeffery Dockery’s practice

For many years Dr. Jeffery Dockery has cared for patients and families in Broxton. Dr. Dockery is well known and well thought of not only in Broxton, but throughout the community and especially at Coffee Regional, where he served in several leadership positions on the medical staff, including president in 2016.

Dr. Dockery has made the difficult decision to step away from his practice to work with the Southeast Health District within the Department of Public Health. This change was effective Friday, November 1, 2019.

In an effort to ensure continuity of care for Dr. Dockery’s patients, Coffee Regional is pleased to announce that there will continue to be a provider in the Broxton office who will care for patients and carry on the tradition of community health care so ably started by Dr. Dockery almost 20 years ago.

Coffee Regional Medical Center is focused on access for all, ensuring those communities in its service area have access to quality care. This transition will help to ensure the citizens of Broxton have convenient, local access for both acute and chronic healthcare needs.
Recently, the cardiac catheterization lab at Coffee Regional Medical Center was fully accredited for its cardiac stent PCI Program. This accreditation is a requirement for PCI programs in Georgia. The accreditation followed a review of program data and an onsite visit by clinical representatives from Corazon, Inc., a national leader in program development for the cardiovascular specialty and approved by the Georgia Department of Community Health to conduct accreditation surveys.

In an effort to enhance quality cardiovascular services to everyone in our community, CRMC set out to establish this life-saving program in early 2018. The need for interventional cardiology was evident and Coffee Regional was determined to offer a quality program that was accessible to everyone in our community. Coffee Regional contracted with Corazon, Inc. to facilitate the development of this new PCI Program.

This program assures the 24/7/365 availability of skilled nursing and cardiac catheterization lab staff. This was a vital step as all staff and physicians are required to respond in 30 minutes or less to emergent situations. Staff training, skills testing, and on-call policies are in place to ensure patient safety and timely intervention. Corazon, Inc. was on-hand throughout the planning and development process to guide CRMC and ensure an effective program was being developed in conjunction with guidelines outlined by the American College of Cardiology (ACC), American Heart Association (AHA), and the Society of Cardiovascular Angiography and Intervention (SCAI).

CRMC’s PCI Program began in January 14, 2019.

What is the PCI Program? This is a cardiovascular program that includes Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) services, performed in the CRMC Catheterization Laboratory. This is performed by an Interventional Cardiologist who has specialty training in this procedure. Dr. Glenn Evans, Interventional Cardiologist and Dr. Joel Ferree, Cardiologist, both of CRH Cardiology Group were the lead physicians on this project. These PCI services are vital when a patient presents to the Emergency Room with chest pains, as this procedure can diagnose and treat most heart attacks. If a blockage is found during the cardiac catheterization procedure, a stent can be placed to open that blockage, restoring blood flow to the heart, and increasing patients’ chances of recovery. Percutaneous means “through the skin” therefore this is a minimally invasive procedure, allowing the patient to recover quickly from the procedure.

This full accreditation came sooner than expected due to higher than expected volumes of CRMC’s PCI Program. Corazon, Inc. estimated volumes for 2019. This is a testament of, not only the need for this life-saving program in our community, but also the trust this community has in CRMC and this program.

Based on Corazon’s accreditation cycle, CRMC will be required to undergo a full accreditation survey in two years. Corazon, Inc. will continue to monitor program data to ensure ongoing compliance.

Through this process, Coffee Regional Medical Center has demonstrated a commitment to providing the highest quality and level of cardiac care to all patients in Coffee County as well as all across South Georgia. Coffee Regional Medical Center and CRH Cardiology Group provide comprehensive cardiac care using advanced technology and evidence-based medicine to provide the highest quality care for a range of issues including high blood pressure, arrhythmias, heart valve disease and heart failure. To learn more visit www.CoffeeRegional.org/cardiology

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RIBBON CUTTINGS

Bee Gee Travel

On Thursday, June 6, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the new ownership and ribbon cutting celebration for Bee Gee Travel located at 116 S. Madison Avenue. Several community members, friends and family were greeted by Chamber staff and ambassadors as all gathered to celebrate with new owners, Beverly and Jim Gibbs. Reverend Doug Walker, First Methodist Church, prayed for continued blessings and protection for the beloved downtown business and future travelers. Mrs. Gibbs congratulated former owner, Denise Craft, on her retirement and thanked her for hiring her in 2001 when she began learning the travel industry under Denise’s tutelage. Mrs. Craft expressed sincere appreciation to the community for traveling with Bee Gee and well wishes for the staff as they continue to provide the high-quality services that Bee Gee Travel has delivered since 1983. Commissioners Kentaiwon Durham and Cindy McNeil shared their support on behalf of the City of Douglas, and Chamber of Commerce Past Chairman Stanley Lott shared a few of his personal experiences traveling with Bee Gee and expressed well wishes for their continued prosperity. Be sure to give Bee Gee Travel a call at 912.384.2223 or stop by to see them for your next adventure! Beverly Gibbs and staff, Vicki Pridemore and Amy Odom, will be eager to assist you with all your travel plans. You can follow them on Facebook and find more information on their website at www.beegeetravelconsultants.com.

McKinnon Cattle and Meats

On Wednesday, July 10, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the soft opening and ribbon cutting for McKinnon Cattle and Meats located at 2489 GA Highway 32 West. Owner Gray McKinnon thanked all who were in attendance and shared his sincere gratitude to all who worked diligently alongside him to create a unique farm-to-table shopping experience for the Coffee County community. The Reverend John Commins of St. Andrews Anglican Church prayed for blessings and protection over the business and all who do business with McKinnon Cattle and Meats.

With the grand opening on Friday, July 12, Gray and his staff encourage you to stop by soon between 10:00 - 6:00 to pick up some fresh produce and meat for the grill or to stock up your freezer. McKinnon beef is dry-aged and finished on grain without hormones and antibiotics. Visit McKinnon Cattle and Meats’ Facebook page for more details @mckinnoncattle.

Johnny’s Pizza

Johnny’s New York Style Pizza celebrated the grand opening and ribbon cutting with a multitude of family and friends on Friday, March 15.

 Owners John and Brook Deems shared with the group their gratitude and appreciation for the overwhelming support for their family’s business. John’s shared that his dream for the restaurant for years had been the beautiful historic creamery building in downtown Douglas. His dream became a reality when David Varnedore began renovations of what is now one of the major highlights of our downtown area. Also thanking everyone for their unwavering support and encouragement, Brook shared how grateful their family is for God’s guidance, protection and restoration of John’s health, and that only God could have orchestrated the day of their ribbon cutting on the one year anniversary of John’s heart surgery. On behalf of the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce, congratulations to the Deems family.

Your Décor Outlet

Your Décor Outlet opens with ribbon cutting this past Tuesday.

 Friends and family members gathered to help celebrate the grand opening and ribbon cutting of Your Décor Outlet on Tuesday, October 15 at 511 South Peterson Avenue in Douglas. Store owners Michelle Edmisten and her husband, Police Chief Shane Edmisten, recently moved to Douglas to make it their new home. After searching for the best location to open a business, followed by several weeks working on renovations (previously ProCare Home Healthcare Services), they have transformed the building into a showcase for furniture and home accessories at amazingly low prices.

 Michelle thanked everyone for coming out to support their new venture and looks forward to meeting you soon. She stated, “Think of a Wayfair furniture outlet and that is exactly what we have. We receive new inventory each week and never know what we might have with each shipment. Some of the items may have a small nick or scratch, but almost all are undetectable or easily fixed.” Michelle loves unpacking the treasures to get out on the floor for her customers to enjoy tremendous savings. The Edmisten’s are proud to offer a 15 percent discount to all first responders. Stop by to meet Michelle and her assistant, Tayla, soon. You may discover a treasure for your home!
On April 2, 2019, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the grand opening and ribbon cutting for Make it Personal Monogramming & Embroidery owned by Bree Mercer. Though providing the community with beautiful personalized products for several years, Mrs. Mercer has expanded her thriving operation downtown to 218 S. Peterson Avenue in Douglas.

To help celebrate the occasion, several friends and relatives were in attendance. Pastors Gregory and Jackie Pope from Covenant Church shared words of encouragement and prayed for God’s continued blessings over Bree’s business and new location. Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce Board Chairman Donny Bradshaw and Past Chairman Stanley Lott also shared with the group and offered their support along with several Chamber board members, ambassadors and staff members.

On behalf of the City of Douglas, Commissioner Cindy McNeill offered support, well wishes and thanked Ms. Mercer for her investment in Downtown Douglas. Stop by to see Bree for your personalized graduation gifts and Mother’s Day gifts soon! Give Make it Personal Monogramming & Embroidery a call at 912-327-0833 or visit their Facebook page @MakeItPersonalMonogramming.

On Thursday, May 23, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the grand re-opening and ribbon cutting celebration for Holiday Inn Express and Suites located at 1636 S. Peterson Ave. Following a $1.5 million renovation, the 65-room hotel is beautifully decorated and provides numerous amenities including a well-equipped fitness center, large breakfast area, indoor pool, business center and 150+ seating capacity event center. Several community members, friends and family were in attendance to thank the Patel Family for their investment in the Douglas-Coffee County community.

On behalf of Sanjay Patel and Dinesh Patel and the Patel family, Harsh Patel extended gratitude to the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce for organizing the event, Mayor Tony Paulk, City of Douglas first responders, investors for the project, and especially, Holiday Inn Manager, Tammy Chaney and staff who went above and beyond to meet the needs of their customers throughout the massive year and a half renovation process.

Ms. Chaney’s pastor, Cliff Kirkland from Saving Grace Ministries, prayed for God’s blessings and protection over the Patel Family, staff and future guests. Following the ribbon cutting, the staff provided tours of the facility, hosted a delicious dinner and held a drawing for door prizes. Winners of gift certificates were Cindy McNeil, Michael Lott, and Erica Walker with the grand prize winner of a 50-inch screen smart TV, Megan Rabun.

Be sure to give Holiday Inn Express and Suites a call at 912-384-2100 or stop by to see them at 1636 S. Peterson Avenue in Douglas for accommodation needs for out-of-town guests and events.

On the morning of Friday, September 27, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the grand opening and ribbon cutting for Cow Tippers Burger Company located at 216 North Madison Avenue in Douglas. Many friends and family gathered to support the restaurant’s owners, John Deems, Shawn Knight, Rodney Knight, and Jason Knight. Shawn Knight spoke on behalf of his partners and thanked all those in attendance for their support and encouragement for the new business. He also recognized Jason Knight for serving as the restaurant’s managing partner.

Pastor Chris Watson from GracePointe Church prayed for blessings on the business and all those it serves. On behalf of the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce, Executive VP Lisa Hodge and Board Chairman Donny Bradshaw shared congratulatory remarks for the Deems and Knight families’ new venture of opening a new restaurant in downtown Douglas. City Commissioner Cindy McNeil offered her support for Cow Tippers on behalf of the City of Douglas as they begin this journey. Stop by for a delicious meal at Cow Tippers Burger Company soon! For more information, call 912-292-1479.

Tax Services of South Georgia, located at 806 South Madison Avenue in Douglas, celebrated its grand opening and ribbon cutting on Thursday, January 10 with friends, family and community leaders in attendance. Owner Stephanie Paulk and her fiancé, Shawn Knight, were joined by Pastor Bob Powell of The Sanctuary who shared Scripture and led the group in prayer to ask for God’s blessings on the business. On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, Lisa Hodge and Donny Bradshaw, along with City Commissioner Cindy McNeil, expressed appreciation for their investment in the community. Ms. McNeil also shared sentimental comments about the location as it was the same location her mother operated a sewing machine business for many, many years. Tax season is here and Tax Services of South Georgia is ready and able to assist Coffee County with their tax needs and financial planning. Stop by or give them a call at (912)592-3072.
On Wednesday, November 6, the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting for Unison Behavioral Health Men’s Group Home located at 211 North Street.

The celebration began with opening remarks and a welcome from Chamber Vice President, Lisa Hodge, followed with prayer by Pastor Doug Walker of First United Methodist Church of Douglas. Unison’s Director of Developmental Disability Services, Kevin Rodgers, complimented Coffee County for the cooperative spirit and tremendous support throughout the construction and completion of the new men’s home.

Unison CEO, Dr. Glyn Thomas, thanked the leadership and agencies of Coffee County who have been so supportive of all of Unison’s endeavors. City of Douglas City Manager, Charlie Davis, congratulated Unison’s team for another successful completion of a group home and thanked them for services they provide our community.

The group was blessed to have in attendance a founding member of Unison Board of Directors, Ms. Jerry Ray, mother of Ms. JoAnne Ray Lewis. Ms. Lewis now carries on her mother’s legacy by serving on Unison’s Board of Directors currently. Chief of Police, Shane Edmisten, also serves on Unison Board of Directors representing Coffee County. Unison Behavioral Health is the leading provider of mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services in Southeast Georgia, serving eight counties including Atkinson, Bacon, Brantley, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Pierce, and Ware.

To learn more about Unison Behavioral Health visit https://unisonbehavioralhealth.com/ or call (912) 449-7100.

On Monday, July 15, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the ribbon cutting for Skintastics Skin Spa at their new location, 1100 Ocilla Road in Douglas. On behalf of Dr. Stan Sinclair, Practice Administrator Penny Adams thanked all who were in attendance and shared her sincere gratitude to all who worked diligently alongside them to create a fantastic new location for the business. Ms. Adams introduced Skintastics staff, Aesthetics Nurse and Laser Practitioner Gina Williams, RN; Aestheticians and Laser Practitioners, Ansley Moore Miller and Vanessa Greene; Alyssa Taft, Certified Family Nurse Practitioner; Courtney Adams, Office Manager. Pastor Willie Wilson of Forest Grove Baptist Church prayed for blessings and protection over the business and all who do business with Skintastics Skin Spa. Commissioner Kentaiwon Durham shared words of encouragement on behalf of the City of Douglas and Commissioner of Commerce Board Chairman, Donny Bradshaw, conveyed the Chamber’s thanks to Dr. Sinclair for his investment in the Douglas-Coffee County Community and congratulated them for their continued growth and expansion of their services.

Skin Spa provides aesthetic services, pharmaceutical grade skin care line with anti-aging technology, and mineral makeup products with no chemicals, talc, dyes, perfumes or preservatives ideal for sensitive skin. Aesthetic Services include: Botox and Dysport, Dermal Fillers, Sclerotherapy, Chemical Peels, Micro-Needling, Laser Treatments, Light Pod Neo, Light Pod Era, IPL Treatments, Vascu Touch, Waxing Services, Facials, Microdermabrasion, Micro-facial, and Dermaplaning. The latest addition to their wide array of services is Cool Sculpting, a non-surgical way to contour your body by safely and effectively freezing fat away! For more info call 912.383.0005 or visit them on Facebook @skintasticsskinspa.

Douglas Quality Meats celebrated its grand opening and ribbon cutting on Friday morning, May 17, with a large gathering of friends, family and community leaders. Thomas Nipper shared with the group that he and his friend, David Ammons, decided to partner in opening the meat market after much prayer. David then told the group that he had grown up in the business under his father’s tutelage, Jerry Ammons, who had been a butcher for 50+ years. David now has 29 years of experience and his son, David Jr., is carrying on the legacy. With 12 years under his belt, David Jr. is already training his young son, Bentley.

John Williams, Assistant Pastor of First Assembly of God; Commissioner Kentaiwon Durham; Chamber of Commerce reps, Executive VP, Lisa Hodge and Past Chamber Chairman, Stanley Lott, thanked Douglas Quality Meats for their initiative and investment in Douglas-Coffee County.
RIBBON CUTTINGS

Ricketson’s Crematory

A large crowd of friends and family, along with city, county and Chamber of Commerce officials, joined Alvin and Phyllis Ricketson for the opening of the first crematory service in the Douglas-Coffee County area.

On behalf of the family, Phyllis shared the history of Ricketson Funeral Home which began with Alvin’s dream of coming back to Douglas to open his own funeral home. He, alongside his father, Alvin Sr., (now deceased) opened their first home in 1974 and have continued to expand funeral services to include a 400-seat chapel, monuments and cremation.

Pastor Britt Peavy shared Scripture and prayed for God’s guidance for the Ricketson family as they minister to families during the loss of loved ones. Speaking on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce were representatives President John Henry, Executive Vice President, Lisa Hodge and Past Chairman Stanley Lott, and City of Douglas representatives City Manager Charlie Davis and Commissioner Kentaiwon Durham.

Lil’ Mike’s

On Tuesday, April 16, 2019, the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce was joined by several community members to celebrate the grand re-opening of Lil’ Mike’s Family Restaurant, owned and operated by Michael Clark. Michael credited his mother for his culinary skills and thanked her for continuing to work alongside him in the family restaurant.

On behalf of the City of Douglas, Commissioners Olivia Pearson and Kentaiwon Durham, as well as Police Chief Shane Edmisten, shared congratulatory comments and offered their services to Mr. Clark and his business. The Chamber Board’s Past Chairman Stanley Lott shared his support for the Clark family and thanked them for reopening their business in the Douglas-Coffee County community. Mr. Clark and his staff are now open for business offering a wide variety of food choices at great prices. They’ve also added a convenient drive-through service as well as catering for large or small events.

Give Lil’ Mike a call or stop by the restaurant located at 611 South Gaskin Avenue in Douglas.

South Georgia Anodizing

Business continues to brew strong in Coffee County! For over 40 years, Elixir has been a well-known industry in Douglas that has made a significant impact on Coffee County’s workforce and continued economic development and growth.

Elixir’s first division, Elixir Door & Metal, opened its doors in Douglas in 1979 with the production of high-quality door solutions for the factory-built home industry. In 1986, the company expanded with the launch of Elixir Extrusions, supplying linear and fabricated aluminum components to a variety of markets including construction, transportation, machinery and equipment, electrical, consumer durables and recreational vehicles.

Most recently, the company evolved into the anodizing industry with the opening of another new facility, South Georgia Anodizing (SGA). The plant is a state of the art 110,000 square foot facility located on Roland Sahm Way, which was recently named for the founding father of Elixir Industries. South Georgia Anodizing provides custom anodization, a process of electromagnetically controlling, accelerating and, enhancing oxidation of an aluminum substrate. The tanks are some of the largest available in the country by a job shop at 36 feet in length. The company uses a caustic etch process and can anodize Type 1 and Type 2 clear, black dye and two step electrolytic color.

A grand opening celebration and ribbon cutting was held at South Georgia Anodizing on Wednesday, May 1. Several Sahm family members, along with local business leaders, community members, state, regional and local representatives, attended the momentous occasion and enjoyed a tour of the facility and catered luncheon by Simply Southern.

Donny Bradshaw, Elixir CFO and Chairman of Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce, provided an informative presentation regarding the new expansion and thanked all who contributed to the construction and opening of the facility. South Georgia Anodizing’s managing board includes SGA General Manager Tim Davis, CFO Donny Bradshaw, Roland Sahm, Jr. and Douglas Sahm, Sr.
RIBBON CUTTINGS

EVE

The Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce celebrated a ribbon cutting at EVE, a well-known women’s boutique located in downtown Douglas since 2004. In 2019, Coffee County native Blair Brawner made a decision to return to Douglas to launch her own women’s boutique. She recently became the new owner of EVE and completed an amazing renovation. Brawner shared, “EVE has been a part of the downtown district for 15 years and was a perfect fit for me. It already has a strong reputation for the latest trends in women’s fashion and my goal is to bring a fresh take to the well-established business. Sarah Evans opened the boutique in 2004 and was able to fill a great need for women’s clothing in Douglas. In 2014, Eve Brawner became the owner and was able to increase social media presence which resulted in even more loyal customers. My hope for EVE is to continue what these women began by expanding the inventory with selections that will speak to every woman regardless of size, age or budget.”

Ms. Brawner shared that she is so excited to return to Douglas for this opportunity with so many new people and families moving here and our downtown growing and thriving like never before. “Having the opportunity to be a part of that growth and support of our beautiful town is a dream come true for me,” she stated. Eve is a proud member of the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce and an active participant in Downtown Douglas activities and First Friday events. Stop by EVE soon to see the beautiful renovations, clothing, jewelry and accessories. EVE is located at 200 E Ward Street in Douglas and can be contacted at 912-383-7462. Follow EVE on Instagram and Facebook @shopeve.

New Day Nutrition

On Wednesday, December 18, 2019, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the grand opening and ribbon cutting for New Day Nutrition. Many friends and family gathered to celebrate with owners, Cliffy and Alexa Smith, on this special day in the life of their business. Alexa and Cliffy Smith thanked all those in attendance and recognized the many people who helped them along the way. Pastors Gregory and Jackie Pope of Covenant Church prayed over the business and asked God’s blessings for the Smith family and their new business venture. Stanley Lott, Past Chairman of the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce, congratulated the owners and staff on their grand opening and offered support on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce.

New Day Nutrition is a health and nutrition serving Coffee County with meal replacement shakes and protein-based products. Their meal replacement shakes are under 300 calories and have 30 grams of protein. Their tea bombs burn calories and give you energy using natural, healthy substances unlike many energy drinks. New Day Nutrition will also serve hot beverages, cocoa and coffee, starting next week! Plan on making regular stops here to accomplish your New Year’s resolutions. They Provide customers a free three-day trial pack as well as various nutrition programs. They have everything you need to drop a few pounds and get healthy in 2020. Stop by and see them to learn more at 604 N. Peterson Avenue in Douglas, Monday-Friday from 7:00 am – 4:30 pm and Saturday from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm. Business is Brewing in Douglas-Coffee County, GA.

Fast Cargo Trailers, LLC

On Tuesday, December 17, 2019, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the grand opening and ribbon cutting for Fast Cargo Trailers, LLC. Many friends and family gathered to celebrate with owners, Felipe Guerrero, Thomas Ramirez, and Lupe Martinez. Office Manager and Facility Director Melissa Guzman thanked those in attendance and recognized staff member, Analilia Melia. Pastor Frank Bussey of Empowerment Center International Ministries prayed for the continued growth and prosperity of this business and for God’s blessings over the owners’ business endeavors. Stanley Lott, Past Chairman of the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce, congratulated the owners and staff on their grand opening and offered support on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. Mayor Tony Paulk thanked them for opening their business in Douglas and offered warm wishes for their growth and success on behalf of the City of Douglas. Fast Cargo Trailers is a growing cargo manufacturing company committed to providing the best, fastest, and friendliest customer service around. They encourage you to stop by to see them at 507 Truman Street, Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM or give them a call at 912-493-9148.

LOCAL NEWS & EVENTS

Douglas NOW

DouglasNow.com

The Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting on Monday, November 18 to celebrate the new location of Ben’s Hair Studio at the newly renovated Creamery Building in downtown Douglas located at 105 West Phillips Street Suite 101. Ben Walls, owner and master cosmetologist, has truly mastered his art with over 35 years of experience. Ben is a lifelong resident of Coffee County and is the son of Herbert and Edna Walls. Many will remember Ben’s parents as his mother was also a cosmetologist for over 20 years and his father worked with the City of Douglas when there were only two meter readers to cover the entire city. After retiring, Ben shared that his father went on to work for many years at the creamery, the same property he has now established his new studio. Guests joining the celebration included GracePointe Church Pastor Chris Watson, City of Douglas Mayor Tony Paulk, Chamber of Commerce Past Chairman Stanley Lott, Chamber/EDA President John Henry, Vice President Lisa Hodge, Main Street Director Dave Hughes, Chamber Staff Jennifer Surrency and Hannah Compton, Chamber Ambassador Joe Sports, Broadcast South Matt Baldridge, Mayo Insurance Agency/Country Financial Earl and Kim Mayo, longtime friends and clients, Maudine Wright, Shirley Doyle and Marvin Stafford. Stop by to see Ben at the new beautifully decorated studio or give him a call at (912) 292-6154.

On the afternoon of Friday, September 27, the Douglas-Coffee County community celebrated the grand opening and ribbon cutting for Prestige: Fine Clothing for Men and Women located at 102 North Peterson Avenue in Douglas. Many friends and family gathered to support business owners Lynda Mobley and her son Dudley Mobley. Mr. Mobley thanked all those in attendance for their support and encouragement for the new business. On behalf of the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce, Exec.VP Lisa Hodge and Board Chairman Donny Bradshaw shared congratulatory remarks for the Mobley Family’s new venture of opening a fine clothing boutique in downtown Douglas. Commissioner Cindy McNeil offered her support for Prestige on behalf of the City of Douglas as they begin this venture. Go by and see their terrific selection of apparel for men and women, accessories, and more in the historic, newly restored Varnedore Building across from Atkinson Plaza. For more information, call 912-331-1459.