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The Leader Tribune

Peach County's Newspaper

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2026

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Magnolia Garden Club Flower Fantasy returns to showcase the importance of reduce, repurpose, recycle

By Zoe Hammond
News Editor

PEACH COUNTY, Ga. — After taking a year off, the Pineola Farms Flower Fantasy has returned to Peach County with a message about how to better help the environment by reducing waste and recycling.

On Saturday and Sunday, April 25 & 26, the Fort Valley Magnolia Garden Club hosted the Flower Fantasy at the historic Bassett Homeplace on Pineola Farms, owned by Paul and Delise Knight. This year's theme was "Reduce, Repurpose, Recycle – Treating Our Environment Better," with each room featuring different installments to highlight pollution and ways to combat it.

The front porch's installation, "Composting: Turning Waste into Wonder," highlighted the importance of composting kitchen scraps such as eggshells and coffee grounds. Composting organic matter and turning it into rich, nutrient-packed compost reduces landfill waste and instead enriches the soil.

The installation throughout the front hallway, "Our Choices, Our Planet," highlighted the reality of excess littering by showcasing dying plant life sur-



Photo by Zoe Hammond
A table cloth made of recycled newspapers and vases made of rubber boots and tinned cans

rounded by litter, including plastic bags, plastic bottles, and similar packaging. When speaking about the installation, Knight emphasized that this was a call to action to recycle, so as to play a vital role in the conservation

**FLOWER FANTASY
CONTINUED PG 9A**

Peach County Fire Department deployed aid to South Georgia to assist with the Pineland Road Fire



By Peach County Fire Department

On Wednesday, April 22, the Peach County Fire Department deployed two personnel and a 5,000-gallon water supply truck to South Georgia to assist with the Pineland Road Fire impacting Echols and Clinch counties. Upon arrival, crews were im-

mediately assigned to assist with structural protection efforts. The fire has grown to over 30,000 acres, making it a significant ongoing incident.

Additional personnel were deployed today to relieve crews currently operating on the scene and to ensure continued support.

Pictured:
Photo 1: Sergeant Christopher Nix and Volunteer Firefighter David Noles
Photo 2: Firefighter Jonathon Jones and Byron Firefighter Issac "Trey" Walker
Thank you to Byron Fire Department for providing personnel to assist in the operation.

Questions are being raised concerning allegations of hostile work environments against the city of Fort Valley

By Zoe Hammond
News Editor

FORT VALLEY, Ga. — Questions are being raised about allegations of hostile work conditions against the City of Fort Valley after grievance documents detailing incidents involving the firing of several top city officials earlier this year were made public.

The firings of former Police Chief DJ Flores, Assistant Chief Michael Bostic, and City Administrator Gary Lee took place earlier this year in January. The terminations have been scrutinized for months by citizens

and elected officials, with questions about the process and the authority behind the decisions.

Multiple formal complaints from within the Fort Valley Police Department allege an increasingly hostile work environment, with documented tensions rising between December 31, 2025, and January 13, 2026. One complaint, filed by Flores, claims that the period before his dismissal included actions that allegedly undermined his authority as chief of police, both publicly and privately.

**HOSTIL WORK
CONTINUED PG 2A**

Family members remember Ava Little for her "kindheartedness, devotion to others"

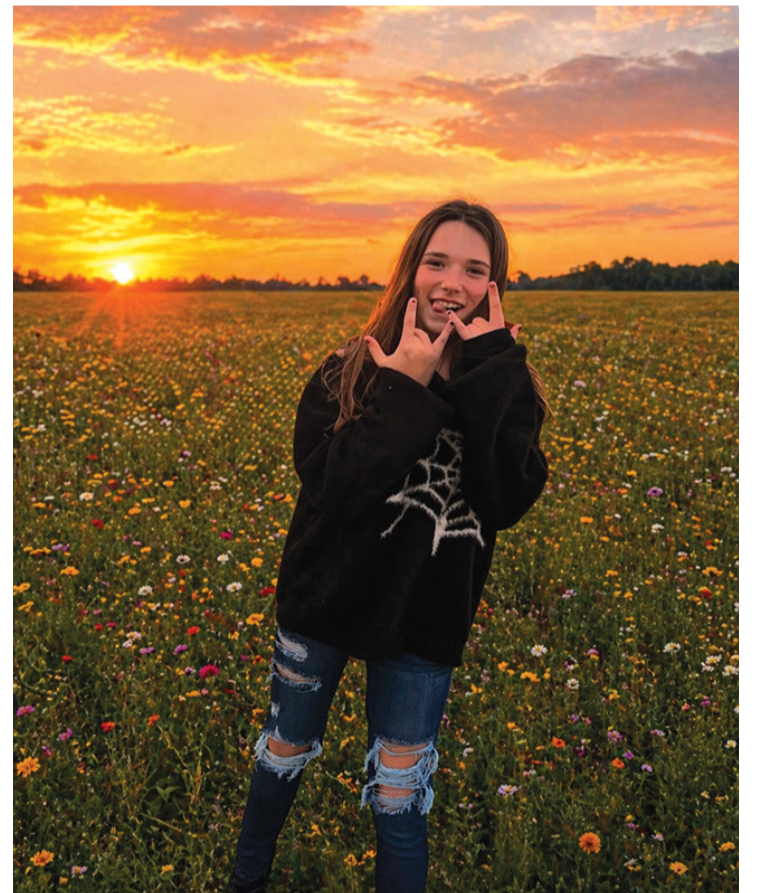


Photo Contributed by the Little family
Ava Little in a flower field at sunset.

By Zoe Hammond
News Editor

PEACH COUNTY, Ga. — It has been two months since the death of 12-year-old Ava Klaira Little. In that time, her family has been working to raise awareness about bullying and childhood mental health while remembering and honoring who Ava was.

Ava died by suicide on Feb. 25, 2026, after prolonged bullying at school.

Brandy Little and Lisa Sanders, Ava's mother and grandmother, sat down with The Leader Tribune to talk about Ava's life and how her loss has affected their family.

"I feel like it's getting lost of who Ava is. How she loved to sing and dance and how she was such a free spirit. I'm really upset that my baby is not here. I'm upset, I feel like something could have been done. I'm upset that it's been two months since she's been gone and nothing has changed," Little said. "I feel like

I'm not being heard and if us adults aren't being heard, then why should we think that our kids are being heard?"

Little described Ava as a truly loving and caring soul, the kind of person who lit up a room, saying she brought warmth to everyone around her, always offering kindness and support.

"She loved life. She loved everybody. She didn't want anybody to feel excluded. She was good with small kids at softball tournaments and when we'd have friends over. They would swarm to her, you would see her walking around with five or six younger kids and she's helping—they would see her do a backflip and she would try to help them," Little said.

Both Sanders and Little discussed how Ava had been teaching herself sign language, saying it was a way that Ava could make sure no one felt excluded.

**LITTLE
CONTINUED PG 8A**



**Peach County is under a Burn Ban until
May 22, 2026 by Administrative Order of
the Georgia Forestry Commission.**



Get Ready For Battle of Byron this Weekend!

By Battle of Byron/FB

Get ready, Middle Georgia... because the Battle of Byron Festival 2026 is almost here and this year is going to be bigger, louder, and more unforgettable than ever before.

On Saturday, May 2nd, 2026, Downtown Byron will come alive from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM for a full day of non stop fun, laughter, and community spirit and the best part? It's completely FREE!

This isn't your average festival. The Battle of Byron is where friendly competition meets hometown pride. All day long, you can expect our signature games and challenges that bring out the kid in everyone!

Crowd favorites like the tricycle race, sack races, hippity hop races, egg races, and the Men's

Prettiest Legs Contest. Whether you're competing or just watching, you're guaranteed to have a blast.

If you love music and entertainment, we've got you covered. Enjoy a live DJ, three incredible local bands, The Varden, Backseat Hooligans, and The Veal, and an exciting performance from magician Evan Dupree that will have the whole family amazed.

Hungry? Come ready. We're bringing in 14 food trucks serving festival favorites along with around 100 vendors offering unique products, handmade goods, and one of a kind finds.

And that's not all!

Check out the car show, explore Downtown Byron, grab some custom BoB merchandise, and soak in the energy of a

community coming together for something special.

The Battle of Byron isn't just a one day event, it's a tradition that dates back to 1979, revived in 2023, and now stronger than ever.

It's about bringing people together, making memories, and celebrating everything that makes our community great.

So bring your family, bring your friends, come spend the day with us.

Downtown Byron, Georgia
Saturday, May 2, 2026
10:00 AM - 6:00 PM

You don't want to miss this... trust me!

The Battle is back... are you ready?

Photos Contributed

Past images from The Battle of Byron and what you can expect to find.



HOSTIL WORK

CONTINUED FROM 1A

State Representative Patty Marie Stinson has previously stated to The Leader Tribune that the current city charter does not grant the mayor and city council the authority to fire the police chief; that responsibility falls to the city administrator. She warned that if the council took said action, it could raise serious legal concerns under the existing charter.

Following the terminations earlier this year, Mayor Reeves stated that the city administrator was terminated first, followed by the police chief.

In addition to the grievances filed by Flores, other documents raised further concerns

about alleged interference involving a warrant issued for Councilwoman Sandra Marshall.

Earlier this year, Marshall was charged with assault by the Fort Valley Police Department after an alleged heated dispute with her apartment complex manager. According to the records, the warrant was officially filed on January 13 and signed by a Peach County Superior Court judge.

A Fort Valley Police Department officer stated that he was directed to enter the warrant into the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) system for validation by the assistant

chief at that time. However, the grievance documents provided allege that Mayor Reeves contacted the police department requesting that the warrant be removed.

The document further states that another call was allegedly made, roughly 15 minutes later, by the mayor with the same request. When those efforts were unsuccessful, documents state the mayor sent the city administrator to the police department to pursue the matter further.

The Leader Tribune reached out to Mayor Reeves for comment, but has not received a response.

City of Fort Valley welcomes Chief of Police David Wilson

By Zoe Hammond
News Editor

The City of Fort Valley has officially hired David Wilson as the Fort Valley Chief of Police.

Photo Contributed

Juanita Bryant and Laronda Eason with City of Fort Valley David Wilson.



City of Fort Valley welcomes Fort Valley Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief

By Zoe Hammond, News Editor

The Fort Valley City Council welcomed the new Fort Valley Fire Chief, Brandon Walker, and the Fort Valley Assistant Fire Chief, Melvin Oates



PUBLIC NOTICE

City of Byron Invitation for Bid

The City of Byron Georgia invites the submission of sealed bids for:

Manchester Place Subdivision Stormwater Improvements

Bids Due – Thursday, May 28th at 10:00 A.M. EST at
Byron Municipal Complex,
401 Main Street, Byron Georgia 31008

Copies of plans and bidding documents may be obtained from GWES, LLC by emailing william.jones@gwesllc.com. Further inquiries can be made by visiting the City of Byron Public Works Department at 401 Main Street, Byron Georgia 31008 or by phone at 478-956-3600. The City of Byron reserves the right to reject any and all bids and waive technicalities in the bids received.

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The Peach County Board of Commissioners will be accepting Sealed Bids for the Sullivan Road Improvements in Peach County, GA.

Closing date for Sealed Bids responding to Request for Bid (RFB) No. 26-004 shall be May 1, 2026 at 11:30 a.m. Bids will be opened in public without discussion on May 1, 2026 at 11:45 a.m. at the Peach County Board of Commissioner's Office, 213 Persons Street, Fort Valley, GA 31030. Bid amounts will not be released until the Board of Commissioners has awarded the project to the winning contractor.

Work includes the import, placement, and compaction of ±5,375 C.Y. (in place) structural fill for the road, realigning, and paving ±3,380 L.F. of Sullivan Road. Work will begin at the apron from Electric Avenue and extend for approximately .39 miles north. The existing dirt road portion of Sullivan Road, south of Russell Parkway, will consist of .25 miles of road construction. Additionally, drainage improvements, utility relocations, erosion / sediment control, and final stabilization are part of the work at each site.

A Pre-bid meeting will be held April 15, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at the Sullivan Road project site. Attendance at the pre-bid meeting is required.

The complete RFB package will be available by contacting Morgan Hoffmann at (478) 476-0700, morgan@tpointeng.com

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Bond in an amount not less than five percent (5%) of the Base Bid. Performance Bond and Payment Bond, each in the amount of one hundred percent (100%) of the contract amount, will be required of the successful bidder. Bond must be written by an acceptable Surety Company licensed to do business in the State of Georgia and listed with the Department of the Treasury.

See Instructions to Bidders for additional bidding requirements.

Peach County reserves the right to reject all bids, to waive informalities, to re-advertise and/or to award any bid that is in the best interest of Peach County.

Mail or deliver Sealed Bids to:
Jillian Bowen, Administrator
Peach County Board of Commissioners
ATTN: RFB # 26-004
213 Persons Street
Fort Valley, GA 31030

Candidates for Georgia governor present to manufacturers' forum

By Ty Tagami
Bureau Chief

Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — With weeks to go before Georgia's primary election, nearly all the leading candidates for governor attended a forum Tuesday in hopes of distinguishing themselves from their competitors.

Only Keisha Lance Bottoms, a Democrat and former Atlanta mayor, skipped the event at The Battery Atlanta hosted by the Georgia Association of Manufacturers.

Republicans Chris Carr, Brad Raffensperger, Burt Jones and Rick Jackson delivered messages about their support for industry. So did Democrats Derrick Jackson, Michael Thurmond, Jason Esteves and Geoff Duncan, while also calling for more government spending, especially in health care.

Duncan, who was a Republican when he was Georgia's lieutenant governor, switched parties after clashing with President Donald Trump over the 2020 election. He said his transition away from the GOP had enlightened him on a Demo-

cratic "toolkit" that could be expensive while also helping millions. As governor, he said he would be "looking for opportunities to stop ignoring poverty," using the state's ample reserves to help pay for pre-kindergarten, assistance for the poor and Medicaid expansion.

He acknowledged the financial advantage of two of the leading candidates on the Republican side.

"Rick Jackson and Burt Jones are having to light \$100 million on fire to punch each other in the face," he told reporters after his time on the stage.

Jones, Duncan's successor as lieutenant governor, helps run a profitable family gas company. Jackson, a health care entrepreneur, entered the race with no background in government.

Jackson painted his outsider status and wealth as an asset.

Politicians sometimes do the wrong thing to please their donors, he said. "The only reason I'm running is to represent people that don't have a voice. I could care less about what donors say. I can actually afford to do the right thing."

Jones said the day's discussions

about policies on affordability, energy and taxes were ultimately less determinative than a gut check by voters.

"Everybody's talking about the same thing," he said. "And so at the end of the day, the voters have to decide who it is that they think can best execute on these promises."

Chris Carr, the Georgia attorney general, delivered a similar line but with a twist that seemed aimed at Jackson and Jones. He said a rich guy and a rich guy's dad were trying to buy the election, but "candidate quality matters."

Carr said he supported a "humane" approach to immigrants brought here as children and that he would keep a state tax credit for affordable housing. He took a harder line against data centers than other Republicans, saying no community should have one "cramped down their throat."

Raffensperger, the Georgia secretary of state, appealed to older voters, saying he would support eliminating income

FORUM
CONTINUED PG 11A

Not All Calories are Created Equal



By Wade Yoder
LT Columnist

Calories are all measured the same throughout our food system, however the speed at which they enter the bloodstream can make them very different from each other! Some calories are very easily absorbed, and their energy becomes rapidly available in our bloodstream without a lot of work on the part of our digestive tract and is usually from sugary or starchy foods.

Most of the high glycemic or sugary foods that cause these sugar spikes are also the ones that make it hard to lose body fat. This is due to the circulating sugar in our blood, and it locks up the process of burning fat for energy until the sugar and insulin levels drop back down in the blood. When this happens your body will look for energy to make up for the low blood sugar and can release stored energy from our fat cells thus reducing their size.

Most of the fast-absorbing calories are from foods that are either sweet, taste sweet or rapidly brake down into a starchy mush in the mouth. When we eat this especially when combined with a sugary drink, it will rapidly enter into the blood, raising blood glucose/sugar levels.

When these calories rapidly enter the blood stream, our insulin will transport them to either working muscle or fat storage and it does this (in order to keep stuff from getting sticky and toxic in all the places our blood goes to). When insulin is not doing this properly, we have what we know as insulin resistance or diabetes. An active lifestyle helps keep blood sugar levels in check and takes a big burden off our insu-

lin-producing pancreas!

It's not always a bad thing to use these fast absorbing and easy to digest calories, especially when we are going to be physically active after eating these calories. The body converts food into blood glucose for the purpose of supplying energy to working parts of the body and when we get active after eating something that is sugary or rapidly converts to sugars (such as starches) it allows us to burn these calories off as they enter the blood.

Remember: inactivity after eating easy to digest calories causes our body to store this excess spike of calories in our liver and fat cells. And this helps cause a fatty liver and enlarged fat cells!

The above does not apply to someone following an extended period of not eating, such as fasting, our body will rapidly suck up these calories (as long as it's not overdone) to feed, refuel and nourish our vital organs and skeletal muscle.

When we eat foods that break down slowly such as dark colored vegetables, beans, lean proteins etc. it helps slow the release of energy into our system and is a much better form of fuel prior to periods of inactivity or very slow activity.

These foods that break down slower also have a higher thermic burn rate than the fast-absorbing foods, meaning our body will burn a lot of calories digesting these slower digesting foods!

Example: grilled chicken breast, steamed broccoli, brown rice and beans vs. snicker bar and soda. Even though about an equal amount of calories, the prior will take much longer to digest and will also burn a lot more calories throughout the digestion process than the snicker bar and soda will.

Kindling is great when used at the right time in starting a fire, but it will rapidly fizzle down and die out if not continually fed, but if we use real logs and only use a little kindling to kick start our fire, we will have a constant source of heat and energy that lasts long term.

Georgia Looks to Early Literacy Reform to Improve Reading Outcomes

By J. Thomas Perdue, GA
Public Policy Foundation

While a great deal of focus on education policy in Georgia has revolved around school choice policies and education finance, there are significant changes taking place inside the classroom as well.

Georgia has joined several states in addressing early literacy, that fundamental period for students that typically begins around age 5. Students who fall behind in reading early are far less likely to graduate from high school. The need is urgent: In the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), just 30% of Georgia fourth graders rated "proficient" or better in reading. Georgia's average score was roughly in line with the national average, which is no real consolation when the national benchmark still leaves too many students below basic reading proficiency.

In this year's legislative session, the General Assembly passed House Bill 1193, the Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026. This bill expands the use of literacy coaches, strengthens direction around early reading instruction and pushes earlier identification of students who are falling behind.

This effort is part of a broad shift in education policy. States across the country—especially Georgia's neighbors in the South—have recently moved toward early reading reforms that emphasize structured literacy, explicit attention to phonics instruction, stronger teacher support and earlier intervention for struggling students. The best-known example of this is Mississippi, where literacy re-

forms helped produce some of the nation's most notable reading gains.

Mississippi offers an example of how literacy-based reforms can improve outcomes. Its 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act emphasized early reading and paired it with classroom support such as universal screeners, diagnostic assessments, intensive interventions for students with reading deficiencies and literacy coaches in targeted schools. This became a blueprint for similar reforms and the catalyst for what came to be known as the "Mississippi Miracle," or the rapid improvement of its students' performance.

After Mississippi adopted the Literacy-Based Promotion Act, its reading performance improved markedly over time. Its NAEP scores for fourth grade reading climbed from 49th in the country in 2013 to ninth by 2024. The state also now consistently ranks highly in reading scores among economically disadvantaged and minority students.

Louisiana pursued similar literacy reforms including requiring a statewide K-3 literacy screener, offering free science-of-reading training for teachers and leaders, and providing guidance on the use of literacy coaches. These reforms also focused on moving away from cueing-based reading instruction, which relies on context such as pictures and other clues instead of phonics to teach words. Its fourth grade NAEP reading score rose from 210 in 2019 to 216 in 2024, making it one of only two states where fourth graders outperformed their pre-pandemic reading and

math results.

Another example is Tennessee. The Tennessee Literacy Success Act requires districts to use foundational literacy instruction with a phonics-based approach, administer universal K-3 screeners, adopt aligned instructional materials and submit literacy plans for state approval. Tennessee's 2024 implementation review reported that English language arts scores and universal screener results continued positive trends.

Efforts like these are not a one-to-one comparison with Georgia's literacy effort. In fact, HB 1193 is not Georgia's only recent literacy-based reform (take 2018's HB 538, for example). It's also not true that such legislation is a magic formula for success. Some commenters, such as the Progressive Policy Institute's director of education policy Rachel Canter, have recently pointed out that Mississippi's achievements did not come from teaching phonics alone. Rather, they came from a broader raising of standards that emphasized accountability and featured disciplined implementation.

Canter specifically mentioned Georgia's prior efforts to implement literacy standards as having implementation issues. She said Georgia did not carefully narrow the reading screeners it approved, and that the Georgia Department of Education's original list had 16 options of widely varying quality. She added that this problem helped prompt a 2024 bill aimed at limiting the approved tests.

She also asserted that the Georgia Department of Education has been reluctant to force

districts to change their practices. In other words, Georgia adopted parts of the Mississippi approach on paper without the same level of accountability and implementation discipline.

Canter also notes that Georgia lawmakers have recognized some of those implementation problems and tried to address them through follow-up legislation. Indeed, HB 1193 requires unified literacy plans across districts and attaches stronger consequences to early intervention and promotion decisions.

The attention to literacy-based learning in state policy is certainly vulnerable to over-reaction. American Enterprise Institute Senior Fellow Robert Pondiscio noted that "miracle" stories are symptomatic of a fad-driven culture in education, and that they, "depend on the premise that success lies not in the slow work of building systems, but in the one magical lever we have somehow failed to discover and pull." Canter has even described the Magnolia State's progress as more of a "Mississippi marathon" in recognition of the long-term dedication to reform that it represents.

While such cautions and qualifications are critical, they should not obscure the fact that literacy-based learning has proven to be a key piece in improving student outcomes, so long as it is complemented by disciplined implementation and persistent accountability. Without a foundation of reading proficiency, too many Georgia students risk falling behind for years to come.

An Undecided Voter Is Not An Uninformed Voter

Charlie Harper
Guest Columnist

Early voting for Georgia's partisan primaries and judicial elections has begun. The polls that ask "If the election were held today" now matter, as the election is being held most days in person and each day by mail between now and May 19th.

Many of the polls we've seen thus far show "undecided" is either winning or showing a strong placement in the top contests. Tens of millions have already been spent, and a lot of voters thus far are just shrugging.

Consultants will tell those who asked these may be "low propensity voters" who may not even show up at the ballot box. They will also suggest they'll break mostly in line with those who already have formed an opinion. What they will never say is that these voters haven't seen a message that engages them where they are, how they live, and that addresses the problems they actually face in their daily lives.

Every credible campaign has a plan, and a message. They then devote their resources to amplifying that message. In primaries, that message is crafted to reach

"the base". Those who consider themselves in that prized voter group know their value, and treat it somewhat like a negotiating position, and somewhat like a hostage situation.

During each election, "the base" has more and more demands of those who seek their votes. The result is that the hard-core members of each party move the goal posts further and further from the middle.

"Undecided" shouldn't be interpreted as "uninformed", as the hard core partisans usually dismiss them as being. A voter who mistakenly tells an activist that they're undecided will usually get a bit of a condescending lecture on their candidate's talking points, as if the undecided voter just arrived here from Mars yesterday.

There's almost never a question prior to that such as "what do you know about the candidate or their positions?". They give no thought to ask "what concerns do you have about this race that would help you make up your mind?"

The folks who move the goal posts are so invested in the game that they've forgotten that the "normies" who eschew cable news and/or social media and

just want to live their lives might have unaddressed concerns of their own. In addition they may actually be turned off by much of the red meat rhetoric being served by the campaigns and their surrogates.

Undecided voters are often looking for something to vote FOR. This is complicated by today's default position of negative campaigning. One need to look no further than the Republican side of the Governor's race, where the top two contenders have spent tens of millions to tell us what a horrible person the other is.

Candidates need to be reminded that the public already has a low opinion of the political profession before the mudslinging even starts. A constant negative drumbeat that "the other guy is bad" just drags down the image for all, rather than elevating the accuser above the fray.

Then there's the "I'm going to change the way Washington (or Atlanta) works pitch. The Governor, as head of an executive branch, can actually do that. Washington, however, is filled with Senators and Congressmen who promised to go up there and fix things. Literally no one who thinks this promise through

believes someone with 1 of 100 votes or 1 of 435 votes is going to change the way Washington works as a freshman member. By the time they have enough seniority to do that, they'll more likely be part of the system than a conduit to changing it.

The "undecideds" have seen and heard all of this before. Meanwhile, the issues of the campaigns have become more focused on partisan fever dreams and their promises have become hyperbolic if not farcical. The premise that an undecided voter isn't paying attention needs to be turned on its head.

Many of my professional, working adjacent to politics friends are undecided on several of the major races. They're not undecided because they aren't paying attention. They're undecided because they are, and do not like what they see.

Many members of "the base" of each party will vote early. The race between now and May 19th is to convince and convert undecided voters. I suggest candidates and campaigns start listening to the citizens who aren't yet in their camps, rather than pretending another few million spent on what they're already doing will convince them.

The Leader Tribune

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OUR GOALS

The Leader Tribune is published proudly for the citizens of Fort Valley, Byron & the surrounding area and its goal is to produce quality, profitable, community oriented newspapers that you, our readers, are proud of. We will reach that goal through hard work, teamwork, loyalty, and a strong dedication toward printing the truth.

HOW TO SUBMIT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We encourage readers to submit letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 350 words and must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. All letters printed in The Leader Tribune will appear with the writer's name and hometown - we do not publish anonymous letters. The newspaper reserves the right to edit or reject letters for reasons of grammar, punctuation, taste and brevity. Letter writers are asked to submit no more than two letters per person per month. We cannot guarantee that a letter will be printed on a specific date. The Leader Tribune prefers that letters be typed. Letters to the editor are published in the order they are received as space permits. There are three ways to submit a letter to the editor

E-mail it to news@theleadertribune.com, mail it to The Leader Tribune at 109 Anderson Ave, Fort Valley, GA 31030, or drop it off at 109 Anderson Ave in Fort Valley - Monday through Friday.

OUR POLICIES

Signed letters to the editor welcomed. Please include address and phone number. Liability for an error will not exceed the cost of space occupied by the error. We cannot be responsible for return of pictures or material unless stamped, return addressed envelope is included.

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Drought In The Landscape



By Jeff Cook
Extension Agent

I hope that by the time you read this we have all gotten a little bit of rain. This has definitely been the driest spring that I can remember since I started paying attention. It will take more than a few showers to get out of this

deficit so here are some tips to help you in your landscape.

General Watering Tips

- When watering, wet the soil to a depth of about 6-8 inches which is about one inch of water. Infrequent watering of turfgrass encourages shallow roots that do not handle drought well.
- Three to five gallons of water, or less than one minute of watering with a garden hose, will saturate the root zone of a plant.
- Established shrubs can survive with one 30 second hand-watering into their root zones every 2-3 weeks.
- When installing new plants, especially large trees and shrubs, build a shallow soil berm

(2-3 inches high) so that water can be directed to the plant's root zones.

- Trickle, drip or soaker irrigation systems provide adequate water for plant growth and reduce the amount of water used by 80-90%. Most of these systems put out 1-3 gallons of water per hour, and the water goes right to the plant's roots where it is used.
- Before deciding how long to run your watering system, test it to see how much water it puts out over a desired time period.
- Watering plant leaves and/or stems increases your chances of pest problems, especially diseases. Also, it wastes water because very little to no water

is absorbed through these plant parts.

Ornamental Plants - Watering Needs

- Many southern landscape plants can tolerate drought conditions for several days and even weeks once they are well-established (after first 2-3 years). Examples: crape myrtles, junipers, many holly varieties.
- Most annuals, perennials, and many shrubs (azaleas, rhododendrons) are shallow rooted and therefore have high water demands. Water them more often but limit the size of these

COOK
CONTINUED PG 5A

Eyeball to Eyeball with a Water Moccasin



By Billy Powell
Parables to Ponder
LT Columnist

I have had a number of frightening encounters with snakes, but this incident was the scariest. Many years ago I had a boat and enjoyed fishing in the Flint River. On this particular fishing trip, my son, Bill, about 13 years old at the time, and I launched the boat at the old River Ferry just outside Marshallville, Georgia, and headed downstream toward Montezuma. We fished several hours during the morning hours and returned that afternoon. As we approached the Ferry where we would park the boat, I turned off the engine about 25 yards before reaching shore, so there would be no unused gas left in the carburetor, and began coasting toward the

docking area. I apparently cut the gas too quickly, because the boat didn't reach the shore. I tried frantically to re-crank the engine, but without success. We found ourselves drifting in the river without propulsion. I looked up and we were heading straight for an overhanging bush thicket at water's edge. As the boat slammed into the bush, three huge water moccasins fell from its limbs. One hit the water with a big splash. One dropped right pass Bill's shoulder, hit the boat and bounced into the water. The third moccasin, almost as big around as a stove pipe, landed in the center of the boat, atop the well area. He was less than 3 feet away. He looked at me with those cold, menacing eyes and I looked nervously at him. I was petrified with fear and didn't know whether to stay in the boat or jump out. With two other deadly leviathans lurking in the water nearby, jumping out didn't seem like a good idea. Staying in the boat didn't either, because one bite from that monstrous snake packed with all that poisonous venom, and I wouldn't live long enough to receive medical attention. I thought about hitting him with the pad-

dle, but the paddle was on Bill's side of the boat. I hollered to Bill to hit the snake with the paddle. Bill swung and missed as the slithering snake lurched toward me. Just as I closed my eyes expecting the monster to be in my lap, I heard another splash. The sinister, beady-eyed moccasin, which represented my worst nightmare, abandoned ship and jumped in the water. Was I relieved! Bill and I were visibly shaken. It was several minutes before we could regain our composure. From that day forth, we never cut the engine when approaching the river's edge, regardless of how much fuel was left in the engine.

God sent serpents as divine punishment against the Israelites, who began to complain during their desert sojourn. As they trudged through the wilderness, vipers hiding in the sand would bite them without warning. A bite from a viper meant paralysis and certain death. God heard Moses' intercessory prayer and responded by instructing him to build a bronze serpent and set it upon a pole. The life of anyone bitten by a snake could be spared by looking at the bronze serpent.

COOK

CONTINUED FROM 4A

planting areas.

- If planting color areas, such as annuals/perennials, concentrate them in containers or planter boxes, and use some water-holding polymers in your mixes.

- Water newly planted trees and shrubs BEFORE well-established mature plants. They will need at least 1-2 good waterings per week, to get rooted and to insure their survival.

- Hold off on the installation of new plants during the driest months of the year (usually June- end of August).

- Plants growing in shade generally require less water than those in full sun.

Avoid Plant Stress

- Do not fertilize drought stressed plants. Fertilizers are salts which dehydrate plant roots when the soil is dry. Encouraging plant growth during a drought is not what you want. New growth requires the use of even greater water resources.

- Drought stressed plants are weakened and more prone to pest attacks.

- If applying pesticides, follow label precautions and do not apply to a plant that is already wilted or during the hottest hours of the day.

- Avoid unnecessary pruning. Pruning stimulates new growth which again requires more water.

Mulch

- Install a 3-4 inch layer of organic mulch (leaves, pine straw, etc.) over plant root zones to conserve soil moisture.

- Mulch entire root zone 6 inches out from the stem to the tip of the plant's drip-line (ends of its branches).

- Do not pile mulch on lower stems or it will encourage rotting and pest problems such as voles.

Trees

- Do not fertilize drought-stressed or weakened trees.

- Water deeply by establishing soaker or drip hoses at the tree drip-line (branch tips). Provide one to two good soakings per week.

- Do not water at the base of trees or onto foliage.

- Watering leaves in the daytime can cause leaf scorch and watering leaves at night promotes leaf diseases, like mildew, and leaf spots.

- Establish natural areas or mulch islands under your larger, valuable trees.

- Leave an air space at trunks, but place mulch over as much of tree root zone as feasible.

- Limit plant competition by not over-planting in tree root zones.

This article was originally written by Gary R Peiffer, County Agent in NW District. Contact me if you have any questions or comments. 478-862-5496, 478-825-6466, or maciv@uga.edu



CHURCH & LOCAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

email: news@theleadertribune.com

APRIL 25

ANNUAL GALA CELEBRATION

The Fort Valley/Savannah District Missionaries will host the Annual Gala Celebration honoring Mrs. Thomasenar P. Miller this Saturday, April 25, 2026, at 2:00pm at The Temple. This is a formal event. We will have fellowship, dancing by DJ Mixmaster, food, and entertainment by The World-Famous Comedian Jack O. Davis. Tickets are \$20 each. Contact Fredrena Brown at 478-951-3495

USHER'S TEMPLE CME AND THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA EXTENSION PRESENT

THE EXPANDED FOOD & NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM (EFNEP)

Each Wednesday at 11:30am in April. Virtually on Wednesdays in May at 11:30am thru May 20, 2026.

The program helps Georgia families eat better for less! EFNEP offers practical nutrition and physical activity information, food safety education, food resource management strategies, and recipe demonstrations within community settings. Come to enjoy a free lunch and learn new recipes. Location: Usher's Temple CME, 411 Railroad Street, Fort Valley, GA 31030, 478-825-5106

USHER'S TEMPLE CME CHURCH

411 Railroad Street, Fort Valley, GA 31030. 478-825-5106.

Join us each Sunday morning with Pastor Tawanna B. Harris and members at 9:30am for Sunday School followed at 11:00am with holy worship service. You may join us virtually via Facebook Live and Youtube. Bible study is each Wednesday in person at 12:00 and virtually at 7:00pm via Zoom.

FOOD PANTRY DISTRIBUTION AT ST. PETER A.M.E. CHURCH ANNEX

Food Pantry Distribution at St. Peter A.M.E. Church Annex, 502 State University Drive, Fort Valley, GA.

Fourth Thursday of each month (January-October) and Third Thursday of November and December. Call (478) 825-8452 for details.

BAHA'I COMMUNITY OF PEACH COUNTY

The Baha'i Community of Peach County warmly invites you to an interfaith devotional and discussion via Zoom on the second Wednesday of each month, 7:00 - 8:00pm. The purpose of the gathering is to build friendship and unity. No contributions are solicited or accepted. If you're interested, email us at peachcobahais@gmail.com, and we'll send you an invitation!

COME PRAISE THE LORD OVER ZOOM

Sundays 10am - 12noon. Wednesday nights 7pm-8:30pm. Meeting# 2059432744

Code 75b6h8
Host James Manning (Elder)

CHRISTIAN FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH

"Connecting People to Christ"

Rev. Bobby J. Roberson, Pastor
478-822-9897. 1735 Hwy 341 North, Fort Valley, GA 31030

FORT VALLEY METHODIST CHURCH

301 W. Church Street
(478)825-2762

Join us each Sunday at 10:55AM for Christian fellowship and a spirit-lead service with our pastor, Rev. Herb Flanders. Sunday School for all ages begins at 9:45AM. Nursery is available for infants and younger children.

FT VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (behind Courthouse)

Come & worship in a casual atmosphere at 5:00pm each Sunday. Our weekly pastor will be the Rev. Dr. Bryan Whitfield, a Presbyterian minister who also teaches at Mercer University. For any interested, we will have weekly **Sunday School Bible Study starting at 4:00pm** in the room off the sanctuary. Come and join us for an exciting summer. Brenda Rackley 478-283-1356.

FRIENDSHIP MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

2560 Willow Lake Road,
Fort Valley, GA 31030.

GRACE HOUSE COMMUNITY FOODBANK

Open Tuesdays and Thursdays. 9:00am - 12:00pm. Located behind Fort Valley Court House, 203 Central Ave., Fort Valley. Phone: 478-825-2562 (TFN)

GREATER FAITH BABIES MINISTRIES

1000 Tulip Drive, Fort Valley. Sunday School at 8:30am
Morning Worship at 10:00am
Wednesday: Free Fellowship Meal at 6pm

60 Minutes Bible Study from 7:00pm -8:00pm Come and fellowship with us!

HOSTING ANGLICAN INQUIRERS' CLASS

Led by Father Matt Harlow
Learn the basics of the Christian Faith while enjoying a meal and fellowship.

We will cover theology, history, liturgy, and more!
To register contact Fr Matt at harlowmatthew@gmail.com
https://www.middlelegaanglican.org

THE LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH OF FORT VALLEY

Looking for a church? Pastor Tony Wood invites you to come visit us. Bring the kids for Children's Church!
Sunday School at 9:30. Sunday Worship at 10:30.

SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH located at 309 Central Avenue, Fort Valley, GA 31030. The Rev. Harriette Simmons Ballard.

Services every Sunday at 9:00am with Coffee Hour following in Robinson Hall.

ST. JULIANA'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

BAHA'I FAITH

"This is the changeless Faith of God eternal in the past, eternal in the future."

Baha'u'llah

For more information
peachcobahais@gmail.com
www.bahai.us

804 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.
Phone:(478) 825-7127
Sat., 7:00pm Spanish Mass
Sun., 9:00am English Mass;
11:00 am Spanish Mass
Weekday Mass: Tues., - Thurs. 6:30pm

Confessions: Thurs., 6:00pm;
Sat. 6:30pm; Sun. 10:30am
Adoration: Thurs., 7:00pm;
Sat. 8-9am; Sun. 6:00pm

ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1000 State University Drive across from the first entrance to FVSU.

We hold morning prayer services, at 10:15am Sundays. Eucharist (Communion) is on second Sundays at 11am.

Please donate to our Little Free Pantry on Charlesvoix St. behind the church (or take food if you are in need). For more info, go to our Facebook page or contact Anna Holloway 478-397-4678 and leave a text message.

SAINT PETER A.M.E. CHURCH 502 State University Drive, Fort Valley GA 31030

Join us for a rewarding Worship Experience at "The Rock" each Sunday at 10:00AM. Our pastor is Rev. Anthony Dixon. You may also join us via YouTube and Facebook. Weekly Bible Study every Wednesday at 7:00p.m.

Bianca Ballard (478)825-8452.

SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH OF FORT VALLEY

1101 East Church St, Fort Valley, GA 31030

Please join us as we continue to seek to save them that are lost! Our weekly schedule is:

Sunday School at 10:00 A.M.
Sunday Worship at 11:15 A.M.
Bible Study at 7:00 P.M. - Tuesdays

To contact us, please leave a message at (478) 825-7581 or send email to secretary@shilohbaptistfortvalley.org or write us at the above post office box.

TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH

505 State University Drive, Fort Valley, Georgia 31030

Trinity Baptist Church welcomes you to join us in holy worship service each Sunday morning at 11:00 am. Sunday School is scheduled at 9:30 am. and Bible Study at 7:00 pm. on Wednesday, currently on Zoom. (Contact us at the above number for Zoom access information.)

Also, we invite the participation of children in our Godly Girls and Champs Ministries. Godly Girls, ages 8-15, meets Wednesday at 5 pm; Champs on Thursday at 6 pm. in Church Annex. Transportation is available. We look forward to having you join us soon!

For additional information, call 478-825-7349.

Obituaries

Bobby Ray Cummings Sr.

Bobby Ray Cummings Sr., 84, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, April 16, 2026. Visitation will be held on Sunday, April 19, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at Rooks Funeral Home, 109 West White Road in Byron. A graveside service will be on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 11:00 AM at Oaklawn Cemetery, 720 South Camellia Boulevard in Fort Valley. Rev. Chet Cooper will officiate.

Bobby was a member of Crossroad Bible Church of Fort Valley. He was a man of faith who regularly attended church at Crossroad Bible Church and Christ Community Church of Appling in Baxley, GA. He will be remembered for his love, loyalty, kindness and passion for Chihuahuas. Bobby was an automotive enthusiast with other passions for: marksmanship, fishing, and trips to the mountains with his wife. While our hearts ache with his absence, we take comfort in knowing Bobby is at peace, celebrating his homecoming, and holding his wife once again.

Bobby is survived by his children, Bobby R. Cummings Jr. of Fort Valley, GA, Vince Cummings (Sue) of Claxton, GA, Tracy Allgood Cummings of Baxley, GA; grandchildren, Elizabeth Wheelless of Baxley, GA and Natalie Rancourt (Jacob) of Raeford, NC; sister, Patricia Archer and family of Tennille, GA; in-laws, Bobby Moody (Diane) of Hodges, SC; dog, Kelly Cummings of Baxley, GA.

Bobby was preceded in death by his wife,



Delores Cummings of Fort Valley, GA; father, Lehman Cummings of Perry, GA; mother, Mary Lizzie Stringfield Cummings of Fort Valley, GA; cousins, Foch Cummings Jr. of Fort Valley, GA, and Billy Cummings (Jo) of Butler, GA.

Special thanks to Pam & Andy Willard and their family for going above and beyond assisting with his care!

In lieu of flowers, family respectfully requests donations be made to Crossroad Bible Church, 243 Marshall Mill Road, Fort Valley, GA 31030. Rooks Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

By Ty Tagami
Bureau Chief

Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — U.S. Rep. David Scott, a Democrat who made history as the first African American to chair House Agriculture Committee, has died, his office announced Wednesday.

Scott, 80, had represented the 13th congressional district for

nearly a quarter century, representing much of the area south and east of Atlanta.

"To the public, he was a devoted leader who spent more than 50 years serving his community, the state of Georgia, and the American people," his office said in a statement Wednesday afternoon. "He will be remembered not only for his leadership but for his kindness, compassion, and enduring im-

pact on those around him."

David Albert Scott was born on a farm in Aynor, S.C., a month after Germany's surrender in World War II and two months before Japan would surrender.

He graduated from Florida A&M University and earned an MBA from the University of

DAVID SCOTT
CONTINUED PG 8A



Gov. Kemp Declares State of Emergency in Response to South Georgia Wildfires

By the office of Governor
Brian P. Kemp

ATLANTA – Governor Brian P. Kemp today declared a State of Emergency for 91 Georgia counties in response to the ongoing wildfires in South Georgia. The governor also directed the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) and other relevant state agencies to mobilize all necessary resources to assist with active response efforts in the southern region of the state. The State of Emergency, found at <https://gov.georgia.gov/executive-action/executive-orders/2026> will remain in effect for 30 days, unless otherwise renewed.

“With much of Georgia remaining in extreme drought conditions, wildfires have already surpassed the state’s 5-year average and continue to spread,” said Governor Brian Kemp. “My team and I are working closely with Georgia State Forester Johnny Sabo and his team, along with federal, state, and local officials, to ensure we are doing everything possible to combat the fires and provide assistance to affected communities. We are praying for the families who have lost their homes in these devastating conditions, as well as for the first responders working around the clock.”

The State of Emergency is in addition to the State Forester’s Burn Ban Order issued earlier today for the same 91 counties. The burn ban will remain in effect for 30 days, unless otherwise extended, and prohibits, among other activities, prescribed burns as well as the burning of yard debris and agricultural material in the affected area.

The State of Emergency allows for the Georgia Department of Defense to mobilize Georgia National Guard troops and resources for response and recovery efforts. Air assets and Guardsmen are being activated and deployed to the

affected areas.

Among other provisions, the State of Emergency order also prohibits price gouging.

State Action and Response:

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) declarations for the Pine-land Road Fire burning in Clinch and Echols Counties and the Highway 82 Wildfire burning in Brantley County. A federal Incident Management Team (IMT) is also being called up to assist with response.

All relevant state agencies are assisting with ongoing response efforts, including the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which is providing three helicopters with fire suppression capabilities; a D6 Dozer and operator for debris removal; two Type 2 Water Engines and four team members; and ten Game Wardens to assist with evacuations, GFC investigations, and clearing burned structures and debris. The Georgia State Patrol (GSP) is providing three helicopters to support wildfire response efforts. Additionally, the Georgia Department of Agriculture is assisting with livestock relocation in impacted areas.

Wildfire Safety and Preparedness Guidance:

For current wildfire information and emergency updates, visit gates.org/current-wildfire-information-and-resources/.

A live-time map of the active fires and response can be found at <https://georgiafire.com/public/>.

GFC will provide ongoing updates via its website and social media accounts. Residents are encouraged to heed directives and information from their local authorities and Emergency Management departments.

GFC State Forester Burn Ban



Man Found Guilty of Raping Victim During Game Night

By the office of Anita R.
Howard, District Attorney

Peach County, Ga. — A Peach County jury returned a guilty verdict on Thursday, April 23, 2026, finding Janylin Tywon Smith, 25, guilty of one count of Rape.

On the night of January 19, 2020, Smith, a friend of the victim, raped her following a game night held at her residence. Smith was the only male in attendance that evening, as the other women believed he was not attracted to females.

During the gathering, the victim and her friends consumed various alcoholic beverages as part of a group game, and she became intoxicated. She went to sleep, and upon waking, discovered Smith lying next to her and a used condom on a

nearby desk. After going to the rest room, she found that her underwear had been removed and experienced physical pain in her lower body. She had not given consent to the sexual contact. When confronted, Smith apologized to the victim via text message.

In a subsequent interview with law enforcement, Smith admitted to having sexual intercourse with the young woman and disclosed that he had developed romantic feelings for her, despite her not sharing those feelings.

“I want every member of this community to see what happened in that courtroom today,” said District Attorney Anita Howard. “A young woman who was violated by someone she trusted, in a place where she

should have been safe, stood up and told her truth. She carried a burden that was never hers to carry, and she carried it with grace. My heart is with her as she continues to heal, and my commitment to survivors like her will never waver.”

Law enforcement officers and various witnesses traveled from across the state of Georgia to testify at trial. Smith faces a maximum possible sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole. He was taken into custody immediately following the reading of the verdict. His sentencing hearing will be scheduled at a later date.

The case was prosecuted by Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Taylor Wilson and Assistant District Attorney Hannah Frantz.

Lt. Governor Burt Jones and Senate HHS Republicans Champion Healthcare Access and Funding

By the office of Lt.
Governor Burt Jones

ATLANTA | Today, Lt. Governor Burt Jones, with the support of Senate Republican members of the Georgia Senate Health and Human Services Committee, issued a statement recapping the committee’s work on behalf of healthcare systems, providers, and Georgians over the past four years.

“I want to thank Chairman Ben Watson, his Republican colleagues on the committee and all Senate members who supported the Senate’s work and leadership on healthcare issues over the past four years,” said Lt. Governor Burt Jones. “By working with Governor Brian Kemp, we prioritized innovative programs to draw down additional federal funding, expanded insurance coverage for Georgians across the state, and increased residency slots and graduate medical education funding, while ensuring mothers across Georgia received additional postpartum care. These are just a few of the ways we have continued to ensure that every Georgian has access to affordable and appropriate health care regardless of their zip code. I am proud of the work we have done, and our record speaks for itself. When we work together and put the people of Georgia first, promises are kept and lives are changed for the better, ensuring a healthier future for all Georgians.”

“Lt. Governor Jones has demonstrated real leadership in advancing care for Georgians,” said Senate HHS Chairman Ben Watson. “His focus on accountability and proven strategies like growing graduate medical education to train physicians is exactly what a growing state like Georgia requires to expand access to care. Thanks to Lt. Governor Jones, Georgia has built a strong foundation, grounded in

strategic investment and measurable outcomes, from which to continue improving access and affordability for all Georgians.”

The following list reflects Georgia Senate Health and Human Services Committee Republican members who echo the statement and fully support the work done by Governor Brian Kemp and Lt. Governor Burt Jones: Chairman Ben Watson, Vice-Chairwoman Kay Kirkpatrick, Secretary Ed Setzler, Senator Matt Brass, Senator Bill Cowser, Governor Floor Leader Bo Hatchett, Senator Mike Hodges, Senator Chuck Hufstetler, Majority Whip Randy Robertson and Senator Brian Strickland.

Legislative and Regulatory Priorities and Successes:

- Supporting reapplications and funding for State Directed Payment Programs helping support healthcare expansion and workforce development across the state. As of March 2026, the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) received approval for six renewed and four new State Directed Payment Programs (DPPs), directing an estimated \$4.5 billion in funding to eligible hospitals and providers.

- Supporting Pathways and Governor Kemp’s Administration on innovative waiver initiatives to provide insurance coverage for Georgians.

- Prioritized the modification of statutes relating to the state’s certificate of need (CON) processes by creating new exemptions for equipment procurement, rural hospitals, reopening of existing facilities, perinatal services and birthing centers.

- Coverage for couples wishing to start a family by requiring every health benefit policy to include coverage for expenses related to starting fertility preservation and clarifying that

nothing in Georgia law prohibits a service from providing, or a family from obtaining, in vitro fertilization.

- Expanding access to the Georgia Rural Hospital Tax Credit Program for additional rural hospitals like the one located in Irwin County.

- Supporting student loan repayment for a variety of healthcare professionals providing services to underserved youth or who practice in an unserved geographic area.

Budget and Funding Priorities and Successes:

- The Senate championed the support of mental health services and law enforcement by appropriating \$409M for the construction of a 300-bed mental health services hospital.

- Prioritized 900 New Options Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP) slots for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- Supported Governor Brian Kemp’s priority to appropriate \$50M for the funding, design, and construction of the University of Georgia Medical School.

- Appropriated over \$33M in state general funds to support hospitals serving rural Georgians and their financial solvency.

- Prioritized growing Georgia’s healthcare workforce by appropriating over \$52M for Graduate Medical Education (residency slots, start-up funds for residency programs, fellowship slots/programs). Of this \$52M, over \$34M was for GME programs serving rural Georgia.

- Appropriated over \$24.5M for efforts to improve Maternal and Infant Health.

- Addressed Medicaid Rate Increases totaling \$225,205,448, including ABA and Autism Services Therapy totaling \$21,266,643.

Utility Commission Positions Announcement

Fast Paced and Progressive Public Power Utility
Providing services in the areas of Electric, Water, Wastewater, Telecom, and Gas
Seeks an Experienced, Highly Motivated, and Creative Team Members

Finance Support Specialist \$22.75 - \$23.00

The Finance Department Support Specialist provides cross-functional support to the Finance team including the Billing Technician, Staff Accountant, and Accounting Coordinator.

This position assists with billing operations, accounting processes, and administrative finance tasks while also supporting Customer Service during peak periods or as needed.

This role requires strong attention to detail, organizational skills, and the ability to manage multiple priorities in a fast-paced environment.

Qualifications:

Education & Experience:

- Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree in Accounting, Finance, Business Administration, or related field preferred
- 1-3 years of experience in accounting, billing, or administrative support preferred
- 1-3 years of experience in customer service is a plus

Skills & Competencies:

- Strong attention to detail and accuracy
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office
- Experience with accounting software preferred
- Team-oriented with the ability to work independently

To apply please send your resume to: hrmanager@fvutil.com

Legals

Legal Advertisements

E-Mail: legals@gtn.org

E-Mail Attachments: Word Text Format

Legal Fax: 478-825-4130

AD DEADLINES: Friday's at 12:00 Noon

Information concerning legals call: 478-825-2432

Legal advertisements are published each Wednesday in The Leader Tribune newspaper, the designated legal organ of Peach County and the City of Fort Valley, City of Byron.

For information concerning billing, please contact The Leader Tribune at (478)-825-2432. Notice is published after 12:00 Noon on Friday will be billed for publication on the following day.

Legal ads may be sent via Federal Express for Saturday delivery. Legal ads may be sent via email to legals@gtn.org, please use word document or pdf text. Many legal notices are billed at the rate of \$15.00 per 100

words or a portion thereof for each insertion for the first four insertions. Some specific types of ads, such as divorce, articles of incorporation, articles of merger, petition to adopt, name changes and DUI notices have fees based on the number of times the notice is inserted. All rates are set by the Georgia General Assembly.

For billing purposes, every word shall be counted as one word including words such as: the, of, and, etc. Grouped numbers shall be counted as one word.

The deadline for foreclosure notices and tax sales for publication is Thursday the week before the first publication. Publisher's Affidavit fee is \$10.

LT26-049 IN THE PROBATE COURT OF PEACH COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA IN RE: ESTATE OF DIANE E. COLES, DECEASED ESTATE NO. 2024-ADM-7027 NOTICE

The petition of personal representative for leave to sell property in the above-referenced estate having been duly filed,
TO: AUDREY EDWARDS: 904 AIKEN DR. APT B PORT WENTWORTH GA 31407

This is to notify you to file an objection, if there is any, to the above-referenced petition, in this Court on or before MAY 6, 2026.

BE NOTIFIED FURTHER: All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections. All objections must be sworn to before a notary public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact probate court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be held at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.

Kim Wilson
Judge of the Probate Court.
By: Katrina Corbin
Clerk of the Probate Court
205 WEST CHURCH STREET
FORT VALLEY GA 31030
478-825-2313
April 22, 29, May 6, 13, 2026

LT26-033 IN THE PROBATE COURT OF PEACH COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA IN RE: ESTATE OF KAJ'ONJ ELIZABETH WILLIAMS, MINOR ESTATE NO. 2026-MGDN-724 NOTICE TO: ANY AND ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

You are hereby notified that KEIAH ZARRAI WILLIAMS AND KYMBERLI ZYANNA-JERMAE WILLIAMS has filed a Petition seeking to be appointed temporary guardian(s) of the above-named Minor. All objections to the Petition to the appointment of a temporary guardian or the appointment of the Petitioner(s) as temporary guardian(s), must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections, and be filed with this Court no later than fourteen (14) days after this notice is mailed, or ten (10) days after this notice is personally served upon you, or ten (10) days after this notice is published. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or Georgia probate court clerk and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact Probate Court personnel for the required amount of filing fees.

NOTE: If a natural guardian files a timely objection to the creation of the temporary guardianship, the Petition will be dismissed. If a natural guardian files an objection to the appointment of the Petitioner(s) as guardian(s), or if a parent who is not a natural guardian files an objection to the Petition, a hearing on the matter shall be held at a later date. If no objection is filed, the Petition may be granted without a hearing.

KIM WILSON
Judge of the Probate Court
By: KATRINA CORBIN
Clerk of the Probate Court
205 WEST CHURCH ST
FORT VALLEY GA 31030
478-825-2313
April 8, 15, 22, 29, 2026

LT26-064 LEGAL NOTICE

A public hearing, with public comment heard, will be held by the Peach County Planning Commission on a zoning map amendment request for +/- 190.71 acres known as tax parcel number 049B 046 located at 287 Highway 96, Fort Valley, Georgia. The request is to rezone from R-AG Residential/Agricultural District to M-1 Whole Sale and Light Industrial District for the purpose of a distribution warehouse.

The hearing will be in the Public Meeting Room of the Board of Commissioner's Office located at 213 Persons Street in Fort Valley on May 21, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. Recommendation from the Planning Commission will be presented to the Board of Commissioners on June 9, 2026 at 6:00 pm during the regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

The re-zoning application for this parcel is on file and available for review. All interested parties are encouraged to attend.
April 29, 2026

LT26-056 IN THE JUVENILE COURT OF PEACH COUNTY, GEORGIA IN THE INTEREST OF: JUVENILE FILE #47499-J T. N., SEX F, AGE <1, DOB 11/08/2025, CASE #111-2026J-031 CHILD UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE NOTICE OF SUMMONS TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, TESSA NEAL, MICHAEL MARQUEZ, UNKNOWN FATHER, AND ANYONE ELSE CLAIMING TO HAVE A PARENTAL INTEREST IN SAID MINOR CHILD

You are notified that a Dependency Petition with Custody Placed with Maternal Grandparents was filed against you in said court on 4/21/26, an Order for Service by Publication was entered on 4/17/26.

YOU ARE COMMANDED AND REQUIRED TO BE AND APPEAR before Peach County Juvenile Court, held at Peach County Courthouse, Ft. Valley, Georgia on 4/28/26 at 9:00 o'clock a.m., and on 6/23/26 for a final hearing following publication. Serve an answer on Petitioner's Attorney, James E. Patterson, P.O. Box 1006, Forsyth, Georgia 31029. You may obtain a copy of the petition by contacting Peach County Juvenile Court Clerk.

WITNESS the Honorable Judges of this court, this 21st day of April, 2026.
Whitney Nelson
CLERK, PEACH COUNTY COURT CLERK

LT26-048 NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS STATE OF GEORGIA COUNTY OF PEACH IN RE: SYLVIA MAUD LONGO All creditors of the Estate of Sylvia Maud Longo, deceased, late of Peach County, are hereby notified to render their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment to the undersigned.

April 13, 2026
Judge of the Will of
Executor of the Will of
16 Taunton Street
Southington, Hartford, CT 06489
Robert T. Tuggle, III
Daniel, Lawson, Tuggle & Jerles, LLP
Post Office Box 89
Perry, Georgia 31069
April 22, 29, May 6, 13, 2026

LT26-058 Underwood's Towing, Inc will sell the following court ordered vehicles to the highest bidder on Saturday, April 11, 2026 at 10:00 AM at the office of Underwood's Towing, Inc, 210 New Dunbar Road, Byron, GA 31008. There is a \$25.00 paperwork fee for each vehicle. 2001 TOYOTA CAMRY 4T1B-G22K71U070745 April 29, May 6, 2026

LT26-040 NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS STATE OF GEORGIA COUNTY OF PEACH IN RE: LYNWOOD "JACK" DOLES All creditors of the Estate of Lynwood "Jack" Doles, deceased, late of Peach County, are hereby notified to render their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment to the undersigned. April 6, 2026 Bonnie Slaton Doles Executor of the Will of Lynwood "Jack" Doles 1370 Doles Road Fort Valley, GA 31020 Robert R. Lawe n Daniel, Lawson, Tuggle & Jerles, LLP Post Office Box 89 Perry, Georgia 31069 April 15, 22, 29, May 6, 2026

LT26-051 LEGAL NOTICE Applicant, Valley Grove, LLC, Perry, Georgia and owner, Valley Grove Development, LLC, Perry, Georgia have requested annexation and zoning of +/- 5.0 acres of Parcel F02D 001 located on Orange Street from Peach County R-AG, Agricultural Residential District to City of Fort Valley R2, Residential District. The Mayor and City Council will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6:30 pm at Fort Valley City Hall, 204 West Church Street, Fort Valley, Georgia to consider an annexation with a zoning designation of R2, Residential District. The zoning recommendation will be presented to the City of Fort Valley Mayor and City Council at regularly scheduled meetings at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, and Thursday, May 21, 2026, at Fort Valley City Hall, 204 West Church Street, Fort Valley, Georgia 31030. All interested parties are invited to attend to voice their opinion on this matter. April 22, 29, 2026

LT26-059 IN THE JUVENILE COURT OF MONROE COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA IN THE INTEREST OF: A.S., SEX M, AGE 9, DOB 06/27/2016, CASE #2026-JV-JR-0043 M.S., SEX F, AGE 11, DOB 10/10/2014, CASE #2026-JV-JR-0044 CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, MEGAN SHELLEY (mother); RICKY LEE SHELLEY (legal father); AND ANY ONE ELSE CLAIMING A PARENTAL INTEREST IN THE ABOVE CHILDREN.

You are notified that a Petition for Dependency as to the Parents concerning the above children was filed against you in said court on 4/22/26, and by reason of an Order for Service entered by the court on 4/22/26, **YOU ARE COMMANDED AND REQUIRED TO BE AND APPEAR** before the Monroe County Juvenile Court, for a hearing at the Monroe County Justice Center, Forsyth, Georgia on 5/14/26, and 6/18/26, at 8:30 o'clock a.m. Serve an answer on Petitioner's Attorney, James Patterson, P.O. Box 1006, Forsyth, Georgia 31029. You may obtain a copy of the petition by contacting the Monroe County Juvenile Court Clerk.

WITNESS the Honorable Judges of this court, this 22ND day of April, 2026.
Linda y Taylor

CLERK, MONROE COUNTY JUVENILE COURT
April 29, May 6, 13, 20, 2026

LT26-038 IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF PEACH COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA IN RE the Name Change of: Anita Joyce Miller, Petitioner Civil Action Case Number 26-V-151 NOTICE OF PETITION TO CHANGE NAME OF ADULT Anita Joyce Miller filed a petition in the Peach County Superior Court on April 2, 2026 to change the name from Anita Joyce Miller to Khadijah Amina Muhammad. Any interested party has the right to appear in this case and file objections within 30 days after the Petition was filed. Anita Joyce Miller Petitioner Pro se 3132 Carver Drive Fort Valley, GA 31030 April 8, 15, 2026

LT26-046 IN THE PROBATE COURT OF PEACH COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA IN RE: ESTATE OF WILLIE LANIER, JR., DECEASED ESTATE NO. 2019-ADM-6131 NOTICE IN RE: Petition for Discharge of Personal Representative TO: Aleshia R. Lanier and Deandra McKay This is to notify you to file an objection, if there is any, to the above referenced petition, in this Court on or before May 13, 2026.

BE NOTIFIED FURTHER: All objections to the Petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or before a Probate Court Clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact Probate Court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be held at a later date. If no objections are filed, the Petition may be granted without a hearing.
Kim Wilson
Judge of the Probate Court
By: Katrina Corbin
Clerk of the Probate Court
205 West Church St.
Fort Valley, GA 31030
478-825-2313
April 22, 29, May 6, 13, 2026

LT26-054 IN THE PROBATE COURT OF PEACH COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA IN RE: ESTATE OF BENJAMIN ANTHONY VASILE, MINOR ESTATE NO. 2026-MGDN-7271 NOTICE TO: ANY AND ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

You are hereby notified that KEENA RAE FARRINGTON has filed a Petition seeking to be appointed temporary guardian(s) of the above-named Minor. All objections to the Petition to the appointment of a temporary guardian or the appointment of the Petitioner(s) as temporary guardian(s), must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections, and be filed with this Court no later than fourteen (14) days after this notice is mailed, or ten (10) days after this notice is personally served upon you, or ten (10) days after this notice is published. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or Georgia probate court clerk and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact Probate Court personnel for the required amount of filing fees.

NOTE: If a natural guardian files a timely objection to the creation of the temporary guardianship, the Petition will be dismissed. If a natural guardian files an objection to the appointment of the Petitioner(s) as guardian(s), or if a parent who is not a natural guardian files an objection to the Petition, a hearing on the matter shall be held at a later date. If no objection is filed, the Petition may be granted without a hearing.

KIM WILSON
Judge of the Probate Court
By: KATRINA CORBIN
Clerk of the Probate Court
205 WEST CHURCH ST
FORT VALLEY GA 31030
478-825-2313
April 29, May 6, 2026

LT26-034 NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE UNDER POWER OF SALE NOTICE OF SALE UNDER POWER CONTAINED IN SECURITY DEED STATE OF GEORGIA, COUNTY OF PEACH

Pursuant to a power of sale contained in a certain security deed executed by Kayce Cauthen, hereinafter referred to as Grantor, to The United States of America acting through the Rural Housing Service or successor agency, United States Department of Agriculture, its successors and assigns, dated June 27, 2008, and recorded on July 2, 2008 in Deed Book 407, beginning at page 662, of the deed records of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Peach County, Georgia, and by virtue of a default under the terms of said security deed, and the related note, the undersigned attorney-in-fact for the aforesaid Grantor (which attorney-in-fact is the present holder of said security deed and note) advised hereby will sell at public outcry before the door of the courthouse in Peach County, Georgia, or at such place as has or may be lawfully designated as an alternative location, within the legal hours of sale, for cash, to the highest bidder on the first Tuesday in May, 2026, all property described in said security deed including but not limited to the following described property All that tract or parcel of land situated, lying and being in Land Lots 174 and 175 of the Ninth (9th) Land District of Peach County, Georgia, being known and designated as Lot 39, of a Subdivision known as HERITAGE POINTE, Phase 1, according to a plat of survey a copy of which is of record in Plat Book 26, Pages 22-23, Clerk's Office, Peach Superior Court. Said plat and the recorded copy thereof are incorporated herein by reference thereto for all purposes.

Said property may more commonly be known as **101 Jaime Court, Fort Valley, GA 31030** Said property will be sold on an "as-is" basis without any representation, warranty or recourse against the above-named or the undersigned.

The sale will be subject to the following items which may affect the title: any outstanding ad valorem taxes (including taxes which are a lien but not yet due and payable); any matters which might be disclosed by an accurate survey and inspection of the property; any assessments, liens, encumbrances, zoning ordinances, restrictions, and all other matters of record prior to the said Security Deed.

The sale will be conducted subject (1) to confirmation that the sale is not prohibited under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code and (2) to final confirmation and audit of the status of the loan with the holder of the Security Deed. Dawson Management is the entity with full authority to negotiate, amend and modify the terms of the Note and Security Deed, and it may be contacted at: Address: 3775 Venture Drive, Duluth, GA 30096 Phone: 770-962-4981 To the best of the undersigned's knowledge and belief, the party in possession of the property is believed to be Kayce Cauthen, or tenant(s). United States of America, acting through the Rural Housing Service, its successors and assigns, United States Department of Agriculture, as Transferee, Assignee, and Secured Creditor as attorney-in-fact for the aforesaid Grantor Please note that if any borrower or obligor has received a discharge in a bankruptcy case filed under Title 11 of the United States Code, no personal liability will arise from this foreclosure action against that individual.

This foreclosure action is being pursued solely against the real property to enforce the lien created by the Security Instrument. Respectfully, Marinossi Law Group, P.C. 16415 Addison Road, Suite 725 Addison, TX 75001 (401) 234-9200 (401) 398-2594 THIS LAW FIRM MAY BE HELD TO BE ACTING AS A DEBT COLLECTOR, UNDER FEDERAL LAW. IF SO, ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE A-4870726

April 8, 15, 22, 29, 2026

LT26-050 AUCTION PUBLIC SALE NOTICE OF SALE. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE UNDERSIGNED INTENDS TO SELL THE PERSONAL PROPERTY DESCRIBED BELOW TO ENFORCE A LIEN ON SAID PROPERTY PURSUANT TO THE GEORGIA CODE SECTIONS 10-4-210 to 10-4-215. The undersigned will sell at public sale by competitive bidding on Wednesday, April 29, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. online at www.storage.treasures.com, property found in the following units

Unit A30 Korey L. Moss
House hold Items

Unit C34 Tiffany M. West
House hold Items

Unit E20 John W. Ellison, Jr.
House hold Items

Tenants have the right to redeem prior to the PEACH MINI STORAGE PUBLIC SALE - AUCTION- PEACH MINI STORAGE
April 22, 29, 2026

LT26-028 NOTICE OF SALE UNDER POWER STATE OF GEORGIA PEACH COUNTY WHEREAS, Diane E. Coles, as borrower(s), executed a SECURITY DEED to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as grantee, as nominee for Taylor, Bean & Whitaker Mortgage Corp., Lender which was dated 6/25/2008, and recorded on 6/29/2009, in Book 425, Page 882, securing the payment of a Note in the amount of \$58,811.00 in Peach County, Georgia Register of Deeds

NOW, THEREFORE, notice is hereby given that the entire indebtedness has been determined due and payable as provided in said Security Deed by the Holder, and by virtue of the power of sale and authority vested in it, will on 6/2/2026 sell at public outcry to the highest bidder for cash during the legal hours of sale before the door of the courthouse of Peach County, Georgia of Peach, the following described property situated in Peach County, Georgia, to wit:

ALL THAT TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND LYING AND BEING IN LAND LOT 141, 9TH LAND DISTRICT OF PEACH COUNTY, GEORGIA,

BEING KNOWN AND DESIGNATED AS LOT 10, GREEN VALLEY ESTATES SUBDIVISION, CONTAINING 1.012 ACRES, MORE OR

LESS, ACCORDING TO A PLAT OF SURVEY PREPARED BY THOMAS W FUTRAL, III., DATED MARCH 9, 1999, RECORDED IN

PLAT BOOK 21, PAGE 248, CLERK'S OFFICE, PEACH SUPERIOR COURT. SAID PLAT AND THE RECORD THEREOF ARE

INCORPORATED HEREIN FOR ALL PURPOSES.

TOGETHER WITH THE 1998 SOUTHERN HOMESAK SERIES MOBILE HOME, SERIAL NO. DSD4AL21873A AND DS-D4AL21873B

WHICH IS PERMANENTLY ATTACHED TO THE PROPERTY.
Tax Parcel ID: 030 019
Being real property commonly known as **151 BUCKEYE ROAD FORT VALLEY, GA 31030**

The debt remaining in default, this sale will be made for the purpose of paying the debt and all expenses of this sale including attorney's fees (noting intent to collect attorney's fees having been given).

Said sale will be made subject to the following items which may affect the title to said property: All restrictive covenants, easements and rights-of-way appearing of record, if any; all zoning ordinances; matters which would be disclosed by an accurate survey or by an inspection of the property; all outstanding or unpaid bills and assessments for street improvements, curbing, garbage, water, sewage and public utilities which may be liens upon said property; and any outstanding taxes, assessments and other liens superior to the security deed being foreclosed hereby.

The best knowledge and belief of the undersigned, the above-described property is in the possession of the borrower and/or other persons with the consent and acquiescence of the borrower.

Except to the extent that the Holder may bind and obligate Mortgagors to warrant title to the Property under the terms of the Security Deed, conveyance of the Property shall be made without any representations or warranties whatsoever, express or implied. All sales are "as is," where is.

The entire purchase price is due and payable at the option of the auction in the form of certified funds. Insufficient funds will not be accepted. Amounts received in excess of the winning bid will be refunded to the seller upon request. This property is being sold with express reservation that the sale is subject to confirmation by lender or Subtitle Trustee.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 44-14-162.2, the name, address and telephone number of the person or entity who shall have full authority to negotiate, amend, or modify all terms of the above-described mortgage is as follows
Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC, 500 N. State College Blvd., Suites 1030, 1300 & 1400 Orange, CA 92868, Telephone No.: 800-561-4567

The foregoing notwithstanding, nothing in O.C.G.A. § 44-14-162.2 shall be construed to require Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC to negotiate, amend, or modify the terms of the Security Deed described herein.

Please be advised that the trustee may require entity or trust bidders at this trustee's sale to provide information, documentation and/or certification of the vesting instructions and the data required to be reported pursuant to FinCEN regulations effective for transfers of residential real property to covered transferees on or after March 1, 2026. The required information must be provided to the trustee before a deed under power will be recorded for transfers. The Buyer may be required to pay charges associated with the gathering and reporting of information to FinCEN. Additional information regarding these regulations and the required transferee information and certifications can be found at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/08/29/2024-19198/anti-money-laundering-regulations-for-residential-real-estate-transfers> and https://www.fincen.gov/ire-fags#D_5

Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC as Attorney in Fact for Diane E. Coles

Attorney Contact:
Tromberg, Miller, Morris & Partners, PLLC
3000 Langford Road, Building 100
Peachtree Corners, GA 30071
Phone: 404-793-1447
Fax: 404-738-1558
TS #26-39538

THIS COMMUNICATION IS FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.
April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, May 6, 13, 20, 27 2026

LT26-057 IN THE JUVENILE COURT OF PEACH COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA IN THE INTEREST OF: FILE #7477-J K.J., SEX M, AGE 16, DOB 8/4/2009, CASE #111-2026J-007 M.T. JR., SEX M, AGE 13, DOB 08/21/2012, CASE #111-2026J-008 CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE NOTICE OF SUMMONS TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, MONTERIO TRIPPLETT, SR., AND ANY OTHER PARTY CLAIMING TO HAVE A PARENTAL INTEREST IN SAID MINOR CHILDREN BORN TO CORNELIA RO-HAVEN JAMES.

YOU ARE NOTIFIED that the above styled action seeking the termination of the parental rights of the parents of the named children was filed against you in said Court on 4/21/26, by reason of an Order for Service by Publication entered by the Court on 4/17/26;

YOU ARE HEREBY COMMANDED AND REQUIRED to appear before the Juvenile Court of Peach County, Georgia, in Fort Valley, Georgia, on the 12th day of May, 2026 at 9 o'clock a.m. for a status hearing (attorney appointment only) and on the 23rd day of June, 2026 at 9 o'clock a.m. The second hearing is for the purpose of determining whether your parental rights should be terminated. The effect of an order terminating parental rights under **O.C.G.A. Section 15-11-284** is without limit as to duration and terminates all the parent's rights and obligations with respect to the child and all rights and obligations of the child to the parent arising from the parental relationship, including rights of inheritance. The parent whose rights are terminated is not thereafter entitled to notice of proceedings for the adoption of the child by another, nor has the parent any right to object to the adoption or otherwise to participate in the proceedings.

A copy of the petition may be obtained by the parents from the Clerk of the Juvenile Court at Peach County Courthouse, Fort Valley, Georgia, during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30 o'clock am until 5:00 o'clock p.m. exclusive of holidays. A free copy shall be available to the parent. Upon request, the copy will be mailed to the requester - parents or alleged parents only. The child is in the present physical custody of the Petitioner, the Peach County Department of Family and Children Services.

The general nature of the allegations is termination of the parental rights

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that while respondents' pleadings are not mandatory, they are permissible and you are encouraged to file with the Clerk of this Court and serve upon Petitioner's attorney, James E. Patterson, Attorney at Law, P.O. Box 1006, Forsyth, Georgia 31029-1006 an answer or other responsive pleading within sixty (60) days of the date of the order for service by publication.

WITNESS THE HONORABLE Judge of said Juvenile Court.

This 21st day of April, 2026.
Whitney Nelson
(Deputy) CLERK, JUVENILE COURT OF PEACH COUNTY, GEORGIA
April 29, May 6, 13, 20, 2026

LT26-042 Legal Notice

Notice to Debtors and Creditors
All creditors of the estate of Felicia Yolanda Burden late of Peach County, deceased, are hereby notified to render in their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment.
This 7th day of April, 2026
Name: Oliv a Smith
Title: Attorney
Address: 8424 Adair Street, Douglasville, GA 30134
April 15, 22, 29, May 6, 2026

LT26-026 Legal Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Planning and Zoning Commission for the City of Byron, Georgia, will convene a public hearing on May 5, 2026, at 5:00 P.M. The meeting will be held in the Office of the Mayor located on the second floor of the Byron Municipal Complex. The purpose of this meeting is to consider amendments to Appendix A - Land Development, Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations of the Municipal Code of Byron, Georgia, including but not limited to, amending repealing, and replacing Part IV - Zoning Regulations, Article II Zoning, of the Municipal Code of Byron, Georgia, to include section 2A-1 district: Agricultural area, section 3 R-1 district: Low density residential area (single-family), section 4 R-2 district: Medium density residential area, section 5 R-3 district: High density residential area (multi-family), subparts thereof.

Notice is also given that the Planning and Zoning Committee recommend approval of the above-mentioned amendments to Appendix A- Land Development, Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations of the Municipal Code of Byron, Georgia, the Byron City Council will convene a public hearing on May 11, 2026, at 6:00 P.M. The meeting will be held in the Council Chambers located on the second floor of the Byron Municipal Complex. The purpose of this meeting is to consider the recommendations and amendments to Appendix A- Land Development, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations, including but not limited to, amending, repealing, and replacing.

All citizens of the City of Byron and interested parties shall have the opportunity to be heard at a public hearing and participate in the proposal. Call the Planning & Zoning Office, at 478-956- 5555, for further information.
April 1, 29, 2026

LT26-045 IN THE PROBATE COURT STATE OF GEORGIA ESTATE NO. 2026-ADM-7266 IN RE: ESTATE OF HAZEL DIANNE ABNEY PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION

NOTICE

TO: ANY AND ALL INTERESTED PARTIES and to whom it may concern: BRIANNE DUSOLD has petitioned for BRIANNE DUSOLD to be appointed administrator(s) of the estate of HAZEL DIANNE ABNEY, deceased, of said County. (The Petitioner has also applied for waiver of bond and/or grant of certain powers contained in O.C.G.A. §53-12-261.) All interested parties are hereby notified to be sworn to file an affidavit petition shall not be granted. All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections, and must be filed with the Court on or before May 6, 2026.

BE NOTIFIED FURTHER: All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact probate court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be held at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.

This April 10, 2026
Kim Wilson, PROBATE JUDGE
By: /s/ Katrina Corbin
Clerk of the Probate Court
205 West Church Street
Fort Valley, Georgia 31030
(478) 825-2313

ATTORNEY: Tim J Thompson
(478) 471-9900
April 22, 29, May 6, 13, 2026

LT26-055 IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF PEACH COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA

In re the Name Change of: Gwendolyn Denise McLeod, Petitioner
Civil Action Case Number: 26-V-0175
NOTICE OF PETITION TO CHANGE NAME OF ADULT
Gwendolyn Denise McLeod filed a petition in the Peach County Superior Court on April 17, 2026, to change the name from Gwendolyn Denise McLeod to Gwendolyn

LITTLE

CONTINUED FROM 1A



Photo Contributed by the Little family
Ava Little at a basketball game.

Little stated that Ava was devoted to her family and friends. Ava has three siblings, an older sister and two older brothers, all of whom she loved dearly. Little explained that Ava and her older sister were best friends, and Ava was her sister's biggest cheerleader.

"We have rules in our house and if your room wasn't clean by Friday, you couldn't go out for the weekend. She [Ava] would sometimes clean her sister's room if her sister had practice or something, because she wanted her sister to be able to go and do stuff with her," Little said.

According to Little, Ava loved the outdoors. She would often go hunting and fishing with her family or spend time in the garden, growing something new. The Little family would often go hiking in the mountainous areas of Tennessee to spend quality time together, something Ava loved.

"She loved plantin'. We have a big garden at home and sometimes she would take seeds and just plant them in random spots, but whatever she planted always grew," Little said. "We would have pumpkin growing way away from our garden by the porch."

Little said that Ava was involved in multiple extracurricular activities, including softball, baseball, basketball, and kickball; she had joined the Byron Middle School track and field team that year. She also participated in cheer leading at both school and Ms. Patricia's School of Dance and Gymnastics. Ava had been looking forward to starting high school and playing volleyball.

"She was looking forward to volleyball. She couldn't wait until she got into high school. Her and her friend wanted to do volleyball. She was like 'Y'know they don't have that at the middle school and that's not right,'" Little said. "She even talked about going—at the beginning of the school year—and talking to see if they could get something at the middle school for volleyball. Because that was something she really wanted to do."

Ava was described as exceptionally creative by both her grandmother and mother. She often made bracelets and key chains to sell at school sporting events. They recounted the many times Ava would take old clothing and craft them into something new, such as a dress made out of old jeans.

"She loved to do crafts, any kind of crafts. She was an entrepreneur, so when we went to softball games—she had her own little bag—she would make bracelets and sell them at softball tournaments and she would

leave with \$100 or \$200. We would make key chains with the shrink-it paper," Little said.

According to Little and Sanders, Ava absolutely loved animals, with one of her favorite animals being rabbits. She was planning to go to the University of Knoxville in Tennessee for veterinary sciences.

Little reminisced that Ava was a mama's girl and explained that when her children were young, she would often draw a cross across their foreheads and would pray over them.

"When all my babies were little, I would make a little cross across their eyebrows, and they didn't know it, but almost every time I've done it, I would pray over them," Little explained, pantomiming drawing a cross on her forehead, down her nose, and across her eyebrows. "All my kids are getting older, she [Ava] would climb up in my lap and put her head back—she's the only one that would let me still do it—and she loved it. She would lay there, and it was relaxing to her, but she didn't know how much it meant to me."

Little discussed the times she and Ava planned for her first tattoo, as they planned to get a matching set when Ava was old enough. They were still debating on a final design.

"She had so many plans. We were supposed to get our first tattoo together, we'd been looking for a year or two. We were gonna get matching tattoos, we looked at a whole lot, we never decided that's the one. We thought we had more time," Little said.

Little recently got a tattoo in Ava's memory, a small heart near her wrist that has one of Ava's nicknames, 'Ava Bear,' in her daughter's handwriting in the middle of the heart.

The story behind the tattoo is that when her daughters were young and nervous about going to Pre-K, Little would draw a heart or star on their hands, and they would draw a heart or star on her hand. She told them that if they pressed their mark, she'd feel it and would press back.

"I would draw a heart or star on their hand, and they would draw a heart or star on my hand, and I'd tell them if you miss me, all you have to do is touch it, and I'll feel mine, and I'll touch mine," Little explained. "Well, Ava got mad one day because when she was washing her hands, hers came off. So, I said okay, and I started drawing it on their wrists, and they would draw mine on my wrists. We'd done that for a long time. They would hop in the car and [ask], 'Mama, did you feel me touch it today?' 'I did, baby, I did! Did you feel how many times I

touched mine?'"

After a moment, Little started to talk about Ava's upcoming birthday and the unfairness that Ava won't be here to celebrate it. Ava would have turned 13 in May 2026.

"Ava had a lot of life. She had a lot to offer this world. Bullying and the lack of accountability took all that from her. I'm angry. I'm so angry," Little said. "I've been shopping for her birthday in the store and online. I keep seeing stuff and I'm like 'I need to get this for Ava' and sometimes, for a split second, I'll put it in my cart... I'm like 'Oh, I can't get this for her.' So, instead, I'm gonna buy stuff for her resting spot for her 13th birthday. That's not right. I shouldn't be doing that."

Little continued saying that children deserve to be able to go to school and to learn and thrive in a safe environment. She emphasized that when a child comes forward with a problem or concern, they deserve to be heard.

"These kids, they deserve to go to school, they deserve to be safe. They deserve to be able to go and get an education. Our kids deserve to thrive. They deserve to be heard and taken seriously. What might seem like it's not a big deal to adults or administration, to that child it's a big deal. If they're coming to you, it's a big deal. It takes courage for a child to come and ask for help, but then if they keep asking for help and nothing gets done, then what's going to happen? They stop asking, cause they see nothing changes," Little said.

Both Little and Sanders spoke of how Ava's death has greatly affected them and their family. Their loss has affected nearly every aspect of their life, having to adjust to a new normal that doesn't feel right. Little said that she and her husband no longer sleep in their room, but instead sleep in the living room to be closer to their children.

"Even when we're busy, I mean—We'll see a sunset or how beautiful the sky is, just random moments, and he'll just break down," Little said. "Some days I don't want to leave the house. Some days I can see her running around the corner, she grew up there. Some days I feel close to her and I want to be at home and be surrounded by the memories. Other days it's just so hard to bear, I just wanna run as far away as possible."

Little mentioned her other children and how Ava's death has been affecting them as well.

"It's affected all of us tremendously... Ava would be the first to take up for her brother. Her brother has a disability. She would be the first to take up for him. She would go outside and play basketball with him all the time. He sings about her all the time, y'know, he makes songs about her," Little said. "I caught him—about two weeks ago—playing basketball by himself and then he just stopped and started crying."

Little recounted what she had said in the Board of Education's April board meeting earlier this month, that she had pulled her soon-to-be 18-year-old son, who was set to graduate this year, out of school because of bullying. She stated that when her son mentioned what happened to Ava to his friends, they laughed.

According to Little, Ava's older sister often has moments that send her back to the day that

Ava died.

"My daughter—my 14-year-old—anytime there's an ambulance, fire truck, anything like that, she will go back to that day. It's a trigger for her," Little said. "We used to [say] 'Oh, it's 11:11, make a wish!' Well, now every time she sees that it's 11:11 she's like 'Momma, the only thing I wish for, I know it won't come true.'"

Little has talked to her elder daughter about being home schooled; however, for her daughter, school is the only place that still feels relatively normal, according to Little. As her 14-year-old daughter and Ava were in separate grades, they didn't see each other during the school day.

Little stated that an incident occurred soon after Ava's death, alleging that the bullies who had targeted Ava had attempted to start a fight with her other daughter.

Little discussed how difficult it has been for her to adjust to Ava's loss. She says she often has trouble eating or sleeping. When she or her children have been invited to something, she will try to go but often cannot stay long, especially in the case of birthday parties.

"She should be here. We should be picking out her birthday cake. We should be planning her birthday party; she'd probably want it at the new jump-park place," Little said. "I can't even go to birthday parties. I've been invited to three birthday parties and I try to go because I want to watch my daughter have fun. I want to be present in my kids' lives like I always have been. All my kids deserve to still have happiness. But I can't, I've tried. I end up having to leave because my baby should be here. We should be planning her birthday, not a candlelight vigil."

When asked about how she felt regarding the recent board meetings that she has attended, she had a response concerning the conduct she's experienced during these meetings.

"I do feel like—with the board meeting—they write out the rules for parents and speakers to follow as far as you can't name-call, you can't point fingers, you can't point blame, the list went on. But when they spoke, that's exactly what they'd done," Little said. "I do feel like they didn't pay attention when any of us spoke. Even after I brought it to their attention that they weren't paying attention, it still continued, which is a slap in the face to all the parents."

She continued, highlighting a moment at the April board meeting, stating that she has not called out a board member by name and is instead calling out the board as a whole, and asking them to listen.

"I feel like—and it's been said by a board member—that he feels like he was getting called out. I have not called anyone out by name, I've made sure that, even the bullies I call out by name. But when it comes to the board, I am calling out the board as a whole because they are elected officials. They are the people that can help this community and help our kids. If they feel individually targeted, then that is not my fault," Little said.

Little said that she felt there was a disconnect between the board and parents, with both sides feeling like the story is one-sided.

"They said they feel that it is very one-sided and that's how I feel. I feel like instead of hearing me out, hearing out all these parents that not only attend the meetings but then parents that are commenting on social me-



Photo Contributed by the Little family

Ava Little.

dia," Little said. "If they really wanted to help their community, then hear us out. Hear what we're saying. This isn't a one-person issue. So do something. Don't try to push the blame on something else."

Sanders pointed out that when an emergency or natural disaster occurs, it's addressed immediately. The same needs to be done now.

"When you have a natural disaster, anywhere in the country, they address that disaster immediately. This is a national disaster and it's been two months and nothing has been addressed," Sanders said.

Little pointed out that until something changes, parents and school officials have to raise children to prepare them for society. She stated that children have to be held responsible for their actions. Little also stated that she believed that parents should be held accountable when they continue to let their children bully others after having been notified of said bullying.

Both Little and Sanders stated they thought that the times for the Board of Education meetings should change to after hours to benefit parents' and family members' schedules. They pointed out that many parents work and cannot adhere to the set schedule of board meetings and school governance meetings, which take place during the workday.

Both Little and Sanders have concerns over the phone ban in schools, saying that their children can no longer document incidents of bullying or contact them if something is wrong.

When asked if she thought Ava had a message for the community, Little stated that Ava would want to encourage kindness and to help others.

"I think she'd want everybody's voice to be heard. I think she would want everyone to know that it takes more time and energy to be mean than it does to be nice and to treat people the way that you want to be treated," Little said. "To help the kids that are asking for help, to help the kids that aren't asking for help that you see need help."

Little believes that children

would benefit from a mandatory mental health class, as well as teachers receiving more training on mental health to better recognize the signs and how to help students deal with it.

Little has a message to the other parents in Peach County, especially those who have children who are experiencing bullying.

"Don't stop. Don't stop speaking up. Don't stop advocating for your child, even if you pull them out of school. I feel like you still need to keep speaking up because it could help somebody else's child. Keep standing up, even if you have to say the same thing 1,000 times, keep on until something is done," Little said.

"The community has been really awesome. I do appreciate everything they've done, but I need for them to not just keep fighting for their kids but to help us fight for Ava. For justice for Ava and for change for all of our kids. This isn't yesterday's news. We have to keep speaking up, until something actually changes."

At the time of the meeting, Little was working to create flyers that would compile local, statewide, and national information and resources that would benefit parents and students, including school information, mental health resources, and the like.

Little is also working to set up a Meet-and-Greet with the candidates that will be running for the Board of Education seats this year, as three of the five seats will be up for election. More information will be provided later on.

For more information and resources about bullying and how to address and stop the issue, go to stopbullying.gov and school-safety.gov.

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing mental health-related distress, you can contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by calling or texting 988. The Suicide and Crisis Lifeline can also be reached online at 988lifeline.org. 988 is confidential, free, and available all day, every day, all year round. Remember, you are not alone, and there are people who can help.

DAVID SCOTT

CONTINUED FROM 5A

Pennsylvania and them started an advertising business.

Three years after finishing his studies, he worked on Andrew Young's successful congressional campaign.

Two years later, in 1974, he won his own election to the Georgia House, serving there nearly a decade before switching to the state Senate. He served there until winning his own successful

congressional campaign in 2002.

In 2020, the U.S. House Democratic caucus named him chairman of the Agriculture Committee, a key position for a lawmaker from a state like Georgia where agribusiness is significant.

He was up for election this year, when a new crop of graduates from Georgia's General Assembly decided to challenge him.

Scott faced six opponents in the May 19 primary, one each from the state House and Senate.

Early voting starts Monday. That does not leave enough time to remove Scott's name from ballots, according to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger's office.

Voters will see notices at polling places that say any votes cast for Scott

will not count, a spokesman for Raffensperger's office said. Similar notices will be sent to absentee by mail voters, the spokesman said, adding that Gov. Brian Kemp will call a special election to fill the remainder of Scott's term.

But Scott's death put politics on hold. "Today, politics fades and humanity remains," said Everett Blair Jr., a former Gwinnett County school board

member who is running in the Democratic primary to succeed Scott.

U.S. Sen. John Ossoff said in a statement that "Georgia is a better place thanks to the service of Congressman Scott."

Scott was married to Alfreda Aaron Scott. They had two daughters, Dayna and Marcy, and two grandchildren, Kimani and Kaylin.

FLOWER FANTASY CONTINUED FROM 1A



Photo by Zoe Hammond

Garlands of plastic bags hang from the ceiling to showcase the prevalence of consumption culture.

and preservation of the planet.

In the dining room, the installation "A Fresh Table for a Greener Tomorrow" showcased recycled newspapers as a tablecloth and up-cycled tin cans and old rubber boots as vases for floral arrangements. According to Pineola's website, the display "reminds us that reducing waste, reusing what we have, and recycling creatively can turn an ordinary meal into an extraordinary statement: small changes at our own table can make a big difference for our world."

The owners' bedroom installation, "From Waste to Wildlife: A Garden of Second Chances", featured re-purposed and recycled materials to make habitats for birds, bees, and butterflies, such as glass bowls transformed into birdbaths and butterfly feeders. The room highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces for pollinators, which help the environment.

The installation throughout the pantry, "Room of Renewal: From Waste to Wonder," had lines of plastic bags hanging from the ceiling as well as cylindrical towers made of plastic bags. The room was meant to "illustrate the staggering volume of plastic shopping bags we consume and discard each year—highlighting the overwhelming impact of our throwaway culture."

In the twin bedroom, the installation "Making a difference" showcased hundreds of empty plastic water bottles made to look like a waterfall. The installment was meant to emphasize the overwhelming volume of single-use plastic that is used on a daily basis. At the center of the installation is a single reusable water bottle, displayed amid a lush floral arrangement. According to Pineola's website, "This striking contrast delivers a clear message: one reusable bottle can replace thousands of disposables, slashing plastic waste and breathing new life into our environment—one mindful choice at a time."

The last room of the tour was the kitchen with the installation, "The Final Room: You Are the Change," which featured a mirror surrounded by vibrant floral arrangements. The installment is meant to create a moment to reflect on the small, everyday actions that can greatly impact the planet.

"This is your moment of reflection. You're not just a visitor—you're part of the solution. The beauty around you exists because of small, everyday ac-



Photos by Zoe Hammond

Flowers and butterflies.

tions. We hope you are inspired and feel empowered, knowing the future you just experienced begins with you," the website states.

The proceeds from the Flower Fantasy greatly benefit the community as well as those interested in horticulture, as portions of the money go towards scholarships through the Garden Club of Georgia, the Sensory Garden at Masee Lane Gardens, and various local community projects that the Fort Valley Magnolia Garden Club undertakes.

In addition to the multiple installations throughout the Bassett Homeplace, there were vendors that were selling a variety of goods such as plants, honey products, pottery, jewelry, and more.

Throughout the two days, there were multiple speakers present to discuss the importance of Eco-stewardship. On Saturday, Josh Taylor of Everyday Farm & Garden started the day by discussing composting, vermiculture, and soil health.

Later in the day, Jody Kemp, the Young Farmer Teacher at Peach County High School, talked about the versatility of raised garden beds and how they can benefit people with mobility problems. He also highlighted that raised garden beds can easily be inter-cropped, so as to provide an attractant for pollinators.

Around 3:00 p.m. Linda May, the outreach coordinator for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) Wildlife Resources Division, came to talk about creating backyard habitats for birds. She talked about how people can help birds by providing food, water, shelter, and nesting spaces.

On Sunday, Nikki Taylor of

Everyday Farm & Garden discussed herbs and edible weeds, saying that all plants have a purpose and some plants that get a "bad rap in the garden have benefits to both us and pollinators."

Later that day, Joe Money—a certified beekeeper through the UGA Master Beekeepers program—spoke on the importance of bees in the environment and ecosystem. He also discussed the reason for the population decline and ways to help the pollinators thrive.

Knight took a moment to discuss how this year's theme came about and how the Magnolia Garden Club went about designing the concepts.

"The State Garden Club—this year's president—is very much about recycling, repurposing, treating our environment better. So, we kind of spun off of what her platform is and decided this would be a good thing for us to do," Knight said. "At first, we weren't sure how we were going to pull that off. Y'know how are you going to make plastic bottles look like they're anything. So, we all put our heads together and came up with this concept."

Knight was thrilled with the turnout, as many of the members were concerned that there would be less attendance due to the Magnolia Garden Club taking a year off, as well as many events taking place across Middle Georgia.

"Well, so far this morning it's been really, really good. You know we were real concerned because we did skip last year. We did three years in a row and skipped last year. When you have an off year, you're not sure what it's going to be like," Knight said. "We have a lot of competition this weekend, the strawberry festival is going on and there's



Photo by Zoe Hammond

Plastic bottles coalesce to form a waterfall, highlighting the overwhelming volume of single-use plastic used on a regular basis



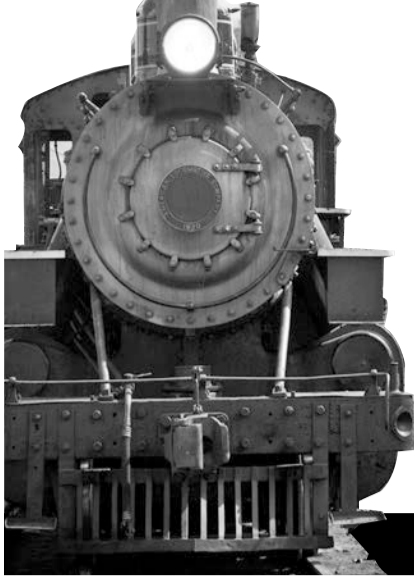
**PCHS Recognized
2026-2027 Teacher of
the Year & Support Staff
of the Year**



By PCHS

Peach County High School recognized its 2026-2027 Teacher of the Year, Coach Rogers Harris, and its Support Staff of the Year, Mrs. Judy Messer.

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Trojans Roll Into Round Two with Dominant Doubleheader Sweep

By Chris McKenzie
Sports Reporter

The Peach County Trojans baseball team left no doubt in their opening round of the GHSA AAA State Playoffs, delivering a commanding doubleheader sweep over Stephenson High School to punch their ticket to the second round in emphatic fashion.

Game one was all Trojans from the first pitch, as Peach County exploded for a 15-0 victory in just three innings. The Trojans set the tone early with three runs in the opening inning before unleashing a massive offensive surge in the second. Ten runs crossed the plate in that inning alone, fueled by timely hitting and relentless pressure on the bases. Highlighting the inning was a towering two-run home run off the bat of Wyatt Blanton, igniting the dugout and energizing the home crowd.

Peach County added two more runs in the third inning to cap off the run-rule victory. On the mound, Evan Rush was sharp and efficient, securing the

win while the Trojans' defense remained flawless, holding Stephenson scoreless and limiting any offensive momentum. Aggressive baserunning throughout the game kept the Jaguars on their heels and created scoring opportunities at every turn.

If game one set the tone, game two only amplified it.

The Trojans carried their momentum into the second matchup, overpowering Stephenson once again with a decisive 17-0 victory in four innings. Peach County wasted no time getting started, plating four runs in the first inning and continuing to apply pressure with three runs in each of the next two innings. A seven-run explosion in the fourth inning sealed the sweep and showcased the depth and firepower of the Trojans' lineup.

Every batter in the order contributed, as the Trojans' offense remained red-hot from top to bottom. Their aggressive approach on the basepaths once again proved to be a difference-maker, consistently turning singles into scoring oppor-

tunities.

On the mound, Avery Horne delivered a dominant performance, racking up nine strikeouts while shutting down the Jaguars' offense. His command and poise highlighted a complete team effort that combined strong pitching, airtight defense, and explosive hitting.

With the sweep, Peach County advances to the second round of the GHSA AAA State Playoffs, where they will return home to Fort Valley for another high-stakes matchup. The Trojans are set to host Southeast Bulloch in a doubleheader on Thursday, April 30 at 4:00 PM. If necessary, a deciding game will be played Friday, May 1 at 5:00 PM.

Riding a wave of momentum and firing on all cylinders, the Trojans look poised to continue their postseason run. The Black and Gold faithful can expect another exciting chapter as Peach County battles for a deeper push into the state playoffs.

Lady Trojans' Remarkable Season Ends, Legacy of Excellence Remains

By Chris McKenzie
Sports Reporter

The postseason journey for the Peach County Lady Trojans soccer team came to a close in the first round of the GHSA AAA State Playoffs, as they fell to Heritage Catoosa in a hard-fought matchup. While the result was not what the team had hoped for, it does little to overshadow what has been a truly outstanding season for the Lady Trojans.

Peach County entered the playoffs with high expectations after compiling an impressive 17-2 overall record and dominating region play en route to a region championship. Week after week, the Lady Trojans showcased their skill, discipline, and determination, establishing

themselves as one of the top teams in the state classification.

Throughout the season, the Lady Trojans built their success on a balanced attack and a resilient defense. Whether it was high-scoring performances or tightly contested battles, the team consistently found ways to win, including several clutch victories that highlighted their composure under pressure. Their ability to remain unbeaten in region play speaks volumes about their consistency and focus.

Facing Heritage Catoosa in the opening round proved to be a tough challenge, as playoff competition often brings out the best in every team. Despite their efforts, the Lady Trojans were unable to advance, bringing an end to a memorable cam-

paign.

Even in defeat, the pride surrounding this Peach County squad is undeniable. The players, coaches, and supporters have much to celebrate, as this season will be remembered for its achievements, resilience, and the standard it sets for future teams. From their region title to their dominant regular season, the Lady Trojans have left a lasting mark.

As the final whistle sounds on the 2026 season, one thing is clear — the Peach County Lady Trojans have built a foundation of excellence that will continue to inspire. The community stands firmly behind them, proud of a team that represented Fort Valley with heart, determination, and class.

FORUM

CONTINUED FROM 2A

taxes on retirement benefits while capping property tax increases that outpace the rise in Social Security checks. He told reporters that one solution to the health care crisis could be "charity clinics" where doctors have a "sliding fee structure" based on what patients can afford.

State Rep. Derrick Jackson, pointed to his leadership roles in the military and at General Electric and said he supported Medicaid expansion, a standard refrain among the four Democrats.

Jason Esteves, a former Atlan-

ta school board chair and state senator, appealed to younger voters, saying he represented a "new generation of leadership." Like nearly every candidate, he said a solution to Georgia's workforce challenges would be to expand alternative pathways to a job. He said he would support tax credits for apprenticeship programs.

Most from both parties agreed that Georgia needs to steer more youths toward trade schools.

Michael Thurmond, who had perhaps the most expansive resume of the day, led the DeKalb County School District out of

an accreditation crisis when he was an unconventional hire as superintendent over a decade ago. He went on to become the elected CEO of DeKalb.

Before all that he was the elected labor commissioner during the Great Recession, leading him to boast that he had connected more Georgians with a job than any candidate.

"White collar, blue collar, no collar. It's not the color of the collar," he said, "but it's the green in the dollar that makes all the difference."



By Peach County
Recreation Department

Join us for an Inclusive Family Support Fair where every person is celebrated, supported, and valued!

Saturday, May 16, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM at North Peach Park, 461 West White Rd, Byron, GA

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At Peach County Parks & Recreation along with The Arc Macon, we believe strong communities are built through inclusion, connection, and support; and this day is all about bringing that to life.

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From Fort Valley To The NFL: Noah Whittington's Dream Ignites In Houston

Chris McKenzie
Sports Reporter

The journey doesn't always follow the spotlight—but sometimes, it makes the story even greater.

Moments after the conclusion of the 2026 NFL Draft, former Peach County Trojan standout Noah Whittington received the call that would change his life. The explosive running back earned an opportunity with the Houston Texans as an undrafted free agent, proving once again that heart, grit, and relentless work ethic can open doors to the biggest stage in football.

From his early days in Fort Valley wearing the black and gold for Peach County High School, Whittington showed flashes of greatness. A dynamic running back with vision, speed, and toughness, he quickly became a name to remember. That same drive carried him beyond high school, launching a collegiate career that would span from Western Kentucky University to the national spotlight at University of Oregon.



Photo PCHS Facebook Page
A past football image of Noah Whittington from the PCHS Class of 2020.

At Western Kentucky (2020–2021), Whittington began building his foundation. But it was in Eugene, Oregon where he elevated his game to another

level. As a leader for the Ducks starting in 2022, he became a reliable force in the backfield—consistent, explosive, and clutch when it mattered most.

By the end of his collegiate career, Whittington had compiled an impressive résumé:

- 523 carries
- 2,950 rushing yards
- 5.6 yards per carry
- 21 rushing touchdowns

And he didn't stop there.

As a versatile weapon, Whittington made his presence felt in the passing game as well, hauling in 544 receiving yards and adding 4 receiving touchdowns—proving he's more than just a ball carrier. He's a complete offensive threat.

Now, the next chapter begins. Houston.

Training camp will be the proving ground. Every rep, every carry, every moment will matter as Whittington fights to earn a spot on the Texans' roster. The path of an undrafted free agent is never easy—but it's built for players like him. Players who thrive on proving doubters

wrong.

Back home in Peach County, pride is overflowing. From coaches to teammates to an entire community that watched

him grow, there's a shared belief that this is just the beginning.

Noah Whittington isn't just chasing a roster spot—he's chasing a dream.

And if his journey has shown anything...

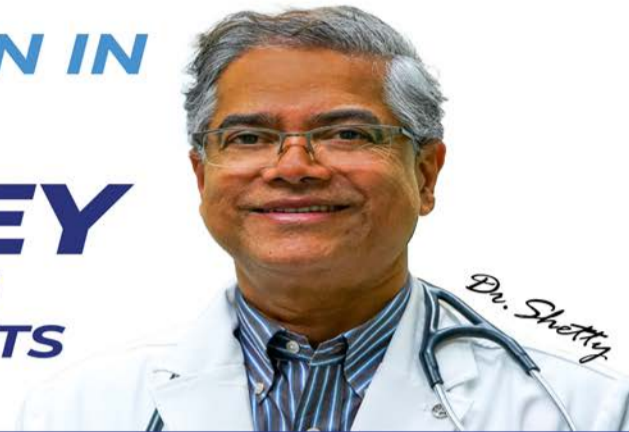
He's more than ready for the fight.



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Trojans Advance: Peach County Soccer Moves On to Second Round of State Playoffs

Chris McKenzie
Sports Reporter

The Peach County Trojans boy's soccer team is marching on in the GHSA AAA State Playoffs after securing a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Lumpkin County in the opening round.

In a tightly contested match-up, the Trojans showed resilience and composure under pressure, finding the back of the net twice while holding off a determined Lumpkin County squad. With the match hanging

in the balance late, Peach County's defense stepped up in a big way, protecting the narrow lead and sealing the postseason win.

The victory marks a significant step forward for the Trojans, who have battled through a competitive season to earn their place in the state bracket. Now, with momentum on their side, Peach County turns its attention to the second round.

The Trojans are set to face West Laurens High School on Wednesday, April 29, in what

promises to be another intense playoff showdown. With a trip deeper into the state playoffs on the line, Peach County will look to build on its strong defensive effort and capitalize on scoring opportunities.

As the stakes continue to rise, the Trojans are proving they have both the grit and determination to compete with the best in Class AAA. Fans can expect another exciting chapter as Peach County continues its postseason run.



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