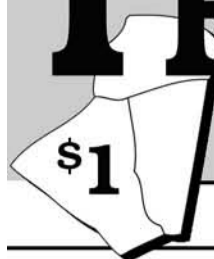


# TRI-COUNTY CONNECTOR



The Montgomery Monitor | The Soperton News | The Wheeler County Eagle

Vol. 138 No. 09

Vol. 112 No. 09

Vol. 103 No. 09

February 26, 2026

## Residents express concerns with comprehensive plan direction

**‘This plan is required by the state, and we work on this plan for no charge to the community.’**

—Anna Weaver, HOGARC Planning Director

By **LOGAN REYNOLDS**  
Staff Reporter

Multiple Treutlen County and Soperton residents expressed concerns regarding several aspects of the joint five-year comprehensive plan during the plan’s first public hearing in the Treutlen County Public Library on Feb. 19.

A five-year comprehensive plan is required by Georgia state law and is a necessary component for grant applications. The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC) is assisting Treutlen County and Soperton with the writing of the new comprehensive plan, and two of their representatives hosted the public hearing.

“This plan is required by the state, and we work on this plan for no charge to the community,” said HOGARC Planning Director Anna Weaver.



Treutlen County Clerk Angie Hooks speaks to Tony King and Michael Kight on Thursday, Feb. 19 outside the Treutlen County Public Library. The meeting had to move outside of the library, as the building had to close at 6 p.m./LOGAN REYNOLDS



Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC) Regional Planner Frank Kastl and Planning Director Anna Weaver speak to attendees of the comprehensive plan public hearing on Thursday, Feb. 19/LOGAN REYNOLDS

The public hearing was designed to allow residents to add their input to the planning process and express potential concerns or offer suggestions for the plan.

One resident who attended, Eddie Watts, said

the county and city’s expansion efforts did not address fundamental problems with living in the area, such as poverty and declining populations.

“We’ve got people in this town right now that want to get out of this city,” said

Watts.

Watts blamed the population issue on a lack of industry in the area, citing his employer, Micro International, and “two places to

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Continued on page 2



Several Montgomery County students from fourth to sixth grade are pictured with their certificates from their 4-H projects during the Board of Education’s monthly meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 17/LOGAN REYNOLDS



Treutlen County clerk, Angie Hooks, was appointed the GCCA District 9 Director/SPECIAL PHOTO

## Treutlen Co. clerk appointed GCCA District 9 Director

SPECIAL TO TRI-COUNTY CONNECTOR

At the Georgia County Clerks Association Spring Conference on Jekyll Island earlier this month, Angie Hooks, Treutlen County Clerk, was appointed as the District 9 Director for the GCCA.

Angie has worked in local government for 26 years, including nine years as the County Clerk. Angie stated, “As the County Clerk for Treutlen County, I work closely with my Board, helping to ensure our county’s infrastructure and financial processes run smoothly and responsibly. I’m passionate about local government because it’s the level of government closest to the people and affects our entire community. I care deeply about serving our community with integrity and transparency.”

**MCBOE**

Continued on page 2

## MoCo BOE debates new lawn care provider

By **LOGAN REYNOLDS**  
Staff Reporter

The Montgomery County Board of Education considered several bids for a new lawn care provider for school grounds during their regular meeting on Feb. 17 in the Board of Education Office’s auditorium.

According to Montgomery Superintendent Dr. Ronda Hightower, following “lots and lots of conversations, lots of work on a lot of people’s parts,” the board’s decision on a new lawn care provider came down to bids from four companies.

A central question regarding the decision was whether the companies would be allowed to subcontract the spraying of pesticides out to third parties. While Dr. Hightower said there was “conflicting information” on the subject, she had received an email from the Georgia Department of Agriculture stating companies would not be allowed to subcontract the spraying.

“I know there’s conflicting information out there, but I do know we need to move ahead and get a lawn care company taking care of our grounds because our grounds are continuing to dete-

riorate,” said Dr. Hightower.

Dr. Hightower recommended the board accept a bid from GG’s Landscaping for \$99,333.30. Board Member Susan Beard offered a motion to accept the bid, with a second from Board Chairman Henry Price.

However, Board Member Allen Williamson objected to the bid from GG’s Landscaping, citing concerns that the owner allegedly had a full-time position at the Jeff Davis County School System. He argued if the owner already had a full-time position, then the owner would not have time to properly maintain their

school grounds.

Williamson was also not comfortable with the prices of the other bids, so instead, Price suggested withdrawing the previous motion and redoing the bidding process, now with the knowledge of the pesticide spraying.

Board Member John O’Conner offered a motion to authorize Dr. Hightower to spend up to \$9,000 to maintain school grounds in the interim, which passed unanimously.

However, Williamson asked to retable the issue near the end

Periodical — Mail Label

## Soperton man pursues longtime passion with Big Dawg BBQ



Barry Watson, founder of Big Dawgs BBQ, stands with his primary grill on Wednesday, Feb. 18 at his home in Soperton. Watson aims to enter the business in cooking competitions as well as catering/LOGAN REYNOLDS

By **LOGAN REYNOLDS**  
Staff Reporter

Barry Watson, founder of Big Dawgs BBQ, owns three grills and has a longtime passion for grilling, yet the idea of cooking professionally has not always been a part of his life.

A Laurens County native, Watson began working in the textile industry before moving over to the Department of Corrections, where he spent 20 years.

“I always said I’d never get in corrections, but then, eventually, that’s the only thing you could have that had a regular income,” said Watson.

After his time with the Department of Corrections and a five year period working security for Best Buy, Watson, now 62, retired in September 2025. Over these years, his love of grilling would be heightened by a certain television program.

“I’ve always liked grilling food, and then I ran across BBQ Pitmasters on television, and I was hooked ever since then,” said Watson.

BBQ Pitmasters was a reality television show which ran for seven seasons between 2009 and 2015 on TLC. The show follows various barbecue cooks who compete in competition cooking, a premise he found enticing.

Watson was not just a passive viewer. The show taught him the differences between barbecue cooking and regular grilling, as well as several techniques to employ while cooking to improve his skills.

“I learned some techniques from watching Pitmasters, and I learned different styles, how to use different rubs, wood, smoking as opposed to grilling, things like

**BIG DAWG BBQ**

Continued on page 2



Phone: (478) 272-5522 | Fax: (478) 272-2189  
Email: TriCoConnector@gmail.com  
Address: 115 S Jefferson St., Dublin, GA 31021  
Mount Vernon and Soperton Office Dropboxes  
Alamo Farm Bureau Office Drop-Off

**Are you interested in contributing to the Tri-County Connector?**

We are always looking for great stories, photos, articles and writers. Contact us if you would like to contribute and help preserve local journalism.

**Annual Subscription Rates**

In-County Rate: \$31  
Out-of-County Rate: \$37  
Out-of-State Rate: \$41  
Senior Citizen Rate: \$29

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
Continued from page 1

eat” as reasons for people to live in the city.  
“Talk all over this town is it’s getting harder to live in this city,” said Watts.  
Residents also expressed concerns about a potential consolidation of Treutlen County and the city of Soperton, which was included in discussions of the comprehensive plan. Many of those concerns stemmed from conflicts with city ordinance enforcement, which Watts described as “harassment,” and worries those conflicts would continue post-consolidation.  
“This is headed to a dictatorship, where it’s headed,” said Ronald Strickland. “It’s a dictatorship with the county and the city. City’s already got it, or started it, and the county’s following behind.”  
Strickland’s grievances with the City of Soperton stem from

ordinances passed in 2025 targeting junk cars in the city. His business, Strickland Brother’s Tire & Auto, was subsequently affected by the enforcement of the ordinance.  
“My beef is not with you,” said Strickland, speaking to the HOGARC representatives. “My beef is not with any of you. My beef is with the mayor of this town, the council and the county commissioners.”  
According to the HOGARC representatives, consolidation is not an active goal for either county or city, but rather is an ongoing discussion between the two parties which predates the current board of commissioners. Consolidation would also require a vote by residents, rather than a decision by the local governments.  
Both parties plan to construct a new building to house county and city first responders, which will be funded by grants. According to Hooks, the

search for the necessary grants is ongoing.  
Phillip Morris suggested the county and city should prioritize optimizing internal budgets and spending to correct what he perceived as wasteful spending.  
“I think they’re throwing away money that we shouldn’t be spending in some of these departments,” said Morris.  
Residents were also displeased at the lack of attendance by any Treutlen County commissioners or Soperton city council members. According to Hooks, the commissioners all had prior engagements, such as work or other meetings, which prohibited them from attending.  
The HOGARC members assured the attendees their concerns would be delivered to local government leaders despite their absence.  
“We’re not here sitting as a barrier between you and com-

missioners,” said Weaver. “We are here to take notes of whatever you said, and we will tell that to the commissioners.”  
However, the presenters and Clerk Hooks agreed local government leaders should be in attendance, and assured attendees they would be in future meetings.  
The meeting also experienced scheduling issues, as the public hearing was scheduled for 5 p.m. while the Treutlen County Public Library closed at 6 p.m. Attendees moved outside to continue the meeting in a more casual fashion, and organizers promised to find an alternate location for future meetings.  
The comprehensive plan’s steering committee will hold two meetings on March 19, with the second at 5 p.m. serving as a second public hearing. Residents may also fill out an online survey to provide input on the planning process.

**PASTOR'S VIEWPOINT**

By CHARLES "BUDDY" WHATLEY

Maybe you remember the last page of Guidepost Magazine was a short article called “The Quiet Disciple” about people doing great things in the background quietly and without any fanfare. Today’s scripture is the Bible’s version of the quiet disciples: Mary and Joseph obeying the call of God, Simeon waiting on the promises of God and Anna watching for the coming of God. Our Dawson Street Methodist version of “The Quiet Disciples” is “growing in love, sharing in worship and reaching out in prayer.  
Let’s begin with Mary & Joseph in Luke 2.22-23:  
*The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification, as the Law of Moses commanded. So, they took the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: ‘Every first-born male is to be dedicated to the Lord.’*

Mary and Joseph are obeying the call of God. Maybe you remember Joseph comes from the Hebrew Yosef meaning “God adds” or “God increases.” And Mary comes from the Hebrew Miryam meaning “beloved rebellion” or “bitterness.” As the virgin mother of Jesus, she is both “beloved,” and as an unwed mother a bit “rebellious.” But that will turn to “bitterness” when her son dies on a cross for our sins.  
And now they have come in obedience to (in the Greek) “parastesai,” meaning “to set before” or “to present” their son to God. It’s the image of a lighthouse; the keeper must keep the glass clean and the wick trimmed. Mary and Joseph keep their glass clean, and their wick trimmed by a simple act of obedience and in doing so, they enable both Simeon and Anna to see God. In the same way, when you and I are obedient to God – when we pray or read the Bible or support the church and mission projects, or simply do what is right, we enable the people around us to see God.  
Simeon sees God in Luke 2.25-26:

*At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s promised Messiah.*

Simeon was not simply waiting, he was “prosdchomenos” in the Greek meaning “active expectation.” Imagine arriving at the airport to meet a spouse or a child coming home from a long trip. The word for that is “prosdchomenos” or “active expectation.” It was something Simeon lived with every day of his life until the day he saw Jesus!

Charles “Buddy” Whatley is a retired Methodist pastor serving the Dawson Street Methodist in Thomasville, Ga.

**MCBOE**  
Continued from page 1

of the meeting. Board Vice-Chair Eugene Ward offered a motion to accept the lowest bid from Scott’s Lawncare, which passed unanimously.  
The previous budget authorization was also rescinded.  
The board also authorized the hiring of two new members of staff. First, the board hired a new head football coach, Gabe Gay, following the departure of their previous coach, Karaem Hess, for Mitchell County.  
“I would like to prethank the Board of Education for putting trust in me, and Dr. Hightower, Dr. Barrow and Mrs. McNeal, and I thank the good Lord for opening this door, this avenue for me,” said Gay.  
Board Member Beard offered a motion to accept Gay’s hiring, which passed unanimously.  
Secondly, the board hired Dr. Jo-ne Bourassa as the new principal of Montgomery County Elementary School. The pre-

vious elementary school principal, Candace Keen, transferred to the role of middle school principal.  
“I will tell you what kind of person she is,” said Dr. Hightower when introducing Dr. Bourassa. “She is the most tenacious person I have ever seen.”  
Dr. Hightower and Dr. Bourassa worked together in Lawrence County for eight years. Dr. Hightower recounted a story in which Dr. Bourassa surprised her by locating a large wrench during a leadership retreat, inspiring Dr. Hightower to create the Golden Wrench Award.  
The award, according to Dr. Hightower, rewards durability, adjustability and dedication. Dr. Bourassa was the first recipient.  
“You just can’t imagine the honor that I have standing here in this room with these board members, and with prospective students, and parents and colleagues,” said Dr. Bourassa. “I

just can’t wait.”  
Board Member Beard offered a motion to accept Dr. Bourassa’s hiring, which passed with Vice-Chair Ward against.  
In other action items, Board Member O’Conner offered a motion to purchase a new activity bus for \$103,000. Williamson offered some concerns regarding the distributor, as they were a new distributor against established vendors the school had purchased from in the past, but the motion passed unanimously.  
Board Member Beard offered two motions to approve the first and second readings of multiple policies respectively, which both passed unanimously.  
The board also recognized multiple students from fourth to sixth grade who won certificates from participating in 4-H projects. According to Montgomery County 4-H Extension Office agent Lauren Stanley, two seniors who participated will move on to the state con-



Evan Hardeman poses with his Star Student award during the Montgomery Co. Board of Education’s monthly meeting /LOGAN REYNOLDS

gress in Atlanta.  
In addition, the board recognized Evan Hardeman for achieving Star Student.

**BIG DAWG BBQ**  
Continued from page 1

that,” said Watson.  
Watson’s desire to enter competitions was eventually encouraged by his wife, leading to the creation of his own barbecue venture: Big Dawg BBQ.  
“Me and my wife, having a conversation last year before I retired, and I’ve been talking about this for years, and finally, she told me she’s very supportive, be she was like, ‘Honey, do it or stop talking about it,’” said Watson.  
Big Dawg BBQ has two functions; firstly, it acts as a vehicle for Watson to enter competitions in the vein of BBQ Pitmasters. Last year, Watson en-

tered a Soperton competition and won two first place awards for his ribs and chicken.  
“One of the guys that was competing, I used to work with him when I worked with the Department of Corrections, and he told me after the contest, he said, ‘Now, Watson, I’m down here with \$1,000 worth of equipment,’” said Watson. “You come in here with this Wal-Mart special, and you beat all of us. That tells me you know what you’re doing.”  
According to Watson, his wife would later say the grill was from Home Depot, not Wal-Mart.  
Watson and his wife also became competition judges in order to better understand what

judges would be looking for during events.  
Secondly, Watson hopes to move the business into catering for local residents and events. Big Dawg BBQ has not had much catering work yet, but did hold a fundraiser for a boston butt and a turkey for a church member in need.  
“One of the winners won the turkey, the other one won the boston butt, and they both told me how much they enjoyed it,” said Watson.  
He plans to offer a small collection of meats, primarily ribs, boston butt and ham, alongside a few side items. One side he intends to make is a version of mac-n-cheese which he says helped him to begin liking the

dish.  
“Now myself, I don’t like mac-n-cheese, but when I found that recipe and started doing that one, I love it,” said Watson.  
Ultimately, Watson aims to provide a small local service to the community, even offering to cater certain charity events free of charge. He has no major plans for potential growth, preferring to wait and see where events take him and Big Dawg BBQ.  
“Just trying to keep it small right now, and then just see what happens,” said Watson.

**2026-2027 MCES pre-k, kindergarten registration**

**SPECIAL TO THE TRI-COUNTY CONNECTOR**

**MCES Kindergarten Registration 2026-2027**  
\*Must be 5 years old on or before Sept. 1, 2026. Registration appointments are only needed for students who are not currently enrolled in MCES PreK or Montgomery Co. Headstart. Appointments can be made by calling the school at (912) 583-2279 beginning on March 2. Students currently enrolled in MCES pre-k or Montgomery Co. Headstart are automatically registered, and parents will be notified of any needed documents.  
Documents needed include a certified copy of birth certificate, social security card, proof of residency, Certificate of Eye, Ear, & Dental Exam (Form 3300), Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231).

**MCES Pre-K Registration 2026-2027**  
Applications available from March 2 to March 27. Pick up at the Montgomery County Board of Education. All forms & required documents due by Friday, April 10. Special onsite registration day will be Thursday, March 5, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Montgomery County Elementary Pre-K Wing. Look for the signs and balloons. The Montgomery County Health Department will be onsite to help families complete Form 3300 (Hearing, Vision & Dental). Children must be four years old by Sept. 1, 2026 and must be potty trained.  
Completed pre-k registration form, certified birth certificate, social security card, proof of Georgia residency (example: utility bill in parent /guardian name), Georgia immunization Form (3231), Georgia Eye, Ear & Dental Form (3300), copy of Medicaid or Peachcare card and copy of parent’s driver’s license. For questions, contact Leigh Anne Helms at (912) 583-2301 EXT. 1210

**WINGS**  
Three quarters of battered women who are employed are harassed at work by their abuser either by phone or in person  
272-8000 or 800-WINGS-03

**ESTATE TAG SALE**  
1869 Florida Ave., Soperton  
Friday March 6 1 pm – 5 pm  
Saturday March 7 9 am – 2 pm  
Sunday March 8 1 pm – 4 pm  
f Goff Estate-Sales Estatesales.net

**PROMISE OF HOPE MINISTRIES**  
**Promise of Hope, Inc.**  
God’s Answer for Chemically Dependent Women  
www.promiseofhopega.org  
phone (478) 676-4673

**Attorney Brian Arnold**

**ARNOLD & ARNOLD**  
1607A Rice Ave. Dublin, GA 31021 478-272-2300  
111 E. Cherry St. Cochran, GA 31014 478-934-4561  
544 Mulberry St., Ste. 619 Macon, GA 31201 478-745-9644  
Call 1-478-272-2300 for FREE CASE EVALUATION

**Social Security Disability Help**  
Experienced and Specialized Legal Representation  
• Specializes in Social Security Disability Law  
• Previously Worked for Social Security Disability  
• No Fee unless you are granted Disability Benefits  
• Successfully Represents Clients at Disability Hearings  
• Files Disability Appeals at all Levels

**ERIE HOME**  
Trust the Nation’s #1 Roofing Contractor  
Award-Winning Roofing and Customer Service  
ERIE ROOFING Since 1976  
LIMITED TIME OFFER  
**50% OFF Installation**  
FREE ESTIMATE  
**SCHEDULE TODAY!**  
Call 1.866.939.2151  
**CALL TODAY! 1.866.939.2151**  
New orders only. Does not include material costs. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Minimum purchase required. Other restrictions may apply. This is an advertisement placed on behalf of Erie Construction Mid-West, Inc. (“Erie”). Offer terms and conditions may apply and the offer may not be available in your area. If you call the number provided, you consent to being contacted by telephone, SMS text message, email, pre-recorded messages by Erie or its affiliates and service providers using automated technologies notwithstanding if you are on a DO NOT CALL list or register. Please review our Privacy Policy and Terms of Use on homeservices.compliance.com. All rights reserved. License numbers available at eriehome.com/retelicense/

**POND STOCKING**  
Pre-Order NOW!  
803-776-4923  
**FISH DAYS**  
Call to find your nearest pick-up location.  
@Southland Fisheries



## DID YOU KNOW ... Did the man credited with creating the game Monopoly actually invent it?

By JACK BAGLEY  
Georgia Trust For Local News

*Did you know...*  
... the word "money" is relatively new in English? While the concept of money has been around since humans first figured out exchange systems, the actual word didn't appear in English until the 14th Century. It was derived from the Latin word moneta, which was another name for the Roman goddess Juno. Why Juno? Because the Romans first minted coins near Juno's temple around 300 BC. (Money is also relatively rare in my wallet.)

... three presidents died on July 4, and one was born that day? Presidents John Adams (1735-1826), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), and James Monroe (1758-1831) all died on the fourth of July in their respective years, while Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933) was born on Independence Day. (A popular day for more than one reason, it seems.)

... the man credited with inventing the popular board game Monopoly didn't actually invent it? Charles Darrow (1889-1967) is credited with inventing the game, which he sold in 1935 to Parker Brothers and thus became a millionaire. But Darrow did not invent the game. Rather, he found a game made in 1904 called The Landlord's Game, created and patented by Elizabeth Magie (1866-1948), and developed his own version based on it. The games are very similar in many ways (both, for instance, have railroads, utilities and even a jail), but when Magie tried to sell her game she was told it was too complicated and too overtly political. Magie's game was created to illustrate the economic teachings of Henry George (1839-1897), a progressive economist who felt that unchecked capitalism was dangerous. Darrow discovered Magie's game when a friend taught him to play, and he made several cosmetic changes to it, then patented it and sold it as Monopoly. While the game made Darrow a very wealthy

man, Magie only received \$500 for her original work, and no credit toward the creation of Monopoly. Additional trivia note: Lest you think Darrow a thief for taking Magie's original game and using it to make his own, you should know that her patent on The Landlord's Game, issued in 1904, had expired by the time Darrow patented his version in 1935. (No good deed goes unpunished, it is said.)

... penguins swim faster than they walk? Birds, of course, fly faster than they walk, but penguins cannot fly. So they make up for it with their swim speeds. A penguin can swim between five and six miles per hour, with bursts of up to 15 mph. Their walking (waddling?) speed is between 1.7 and 2.4 miles per hour. (Well, what's there to walk to in Antarctica?)

... a businessman once made half a billion dollars in one day? Howard Hughes (1905-1976) sold his 75% holdings in Trans World Airlines in 1966. Hughes received a bank draft for \$546,549,171 in return for the holdings that day. (Some guys have all the luck.)

... the fire extinguisher was invented in the early 19th century? Captain George William Manby (1765-1854), a British author and inventor, created the first portable fire extinguisher in 1818. Manby's design held three gallons of potassium carbonate under compressed air pressure. (Buckets of water were used prior to 1818.)

... a breed of shark can live in fresh or salt water? The bull shark is able to live in both kinds of water because it is able to regulate salt and other substances in its blood. A shark attack in a freshwater creek in New Jersey in 1916 is attributed to a bull shark. Bull sharks have also been found in the Mississippi River.

... kilts are not native to Scotland? They originated in France. (I'm glad they migrated.)

*Now... you know!*

## Mt. Vernon Garden Club celebrates Valentines Day at recent meeting



SPECIAL TO THE TRI-COUNTY CONNECTOR

The Mt. Vernon Garden Club had the sweetest February meeting full of fellowship, celebration and Valentine cheer. We were honored to install our 2026 officers: President - Susan Beard, Vice President - Kathy McCall, Secretary - Jennifer Sikes, Treasurer - Nina Thompson, Chaplain - Gail McDaniel, and Photographer - Maureen Reynolds.

We are so excited about all that Susan and this wonderful leadership team have in store for our club in the coming year. Their enthusiasm and love for the Garden Club have us looking forward to a beautiful season ahead. We also shared our heartfelt appreciation for Linda Page and her faithful leadership these past two years. Linda has served our club with such grace, dedication, and steady guidance, and we are truly grateful for the time, energy and heart she poured into our organization.

Our flower of the month was the lovely violet. Kathy McCall shared how this delicate bloom symbolizes faithfulness, humility and devotion. What a perfect re-



Mount Vernon Garden Club celebrated Valentine's Day at their February meeting/SPECIAL PHOTO

minder for February and for friendships that continue to flourish. The club members were surprised by decorations that were absolutely beautiful. Crisp white tablecloths were sprinkled with red hearts, and the head table featured a stunning centerpiece of white hydrangeas. The room felt elegant, festive and thoughtfully prepared by this month's hostesses, Linda Page and Betty Braddy. You could truly feel the love and care in every detail. The meal was delicious and enjoyed by all, topped off with the most delightful red velvet cupcakes for dessert. It was the perfect Valentine treat!

We also enjoyed a wonderful presentation by Dr Roger Byrd, Associate Professor of Behavioral Sciences at Brewton-Parker Christian University on his new book, There Is My Country - Georgians Who Followed the Sun. His stories of Georgians who moved west were fascinating and inspiring. Those interested in purchasing the book may contact him for more information or can be found on Amazon.

All club members agreed that the February meeting was a beautiful afternoon celebrating leadership, friendship, history and the joy of gathering together.

## Fast cars, notes and hoarding

"How do you let someone know that you want to race?" my daughter, only 8 years old at the time, asked from the back seat.

"The customary way," I replied, "is to make eye contact with the driver next to you and rev the engine."

"Can we do that?" the little voice behind me said.

Unfortunately, the driver stopped at the red light next to us was a sheriff's deputy in his patrol car, so we did not race that day.

This interaction occurred two years ago, on Aug. 8, 2024 to be precise. I know that because I wrote it down and I came across the note recently. It pays to write things down. Somewhere in a vast, and steadily growing, archive of notes, drawings and scribbles is a contract I had drawn up that said my little girl could not get married until she was 40 years old. I signed it, she signed in (in kindergarten penmanship) and I may have gone as far as getting it notarized.

My wife scolded me and reminded me how old, or young rather, I was when we tied the knot. I kept the paper anyway; it will make a fun wedding present, hopefully 30 years from now.

But back to cars. I've always been very utilitarian when it comes to vehicles, and had I tried to start a drag race I would



THE NEW SOUTHERN DAD

By KYLE DOMINY

have not only gone to jail but also lost the race. I've ever been impressed much by fast cars or felt the need for speed. That could change if I ever find myself behind the wheel of a car designed for something besides hauling kids and groceries around.

I am long past due for a car upgrade, but, like drawings by kids, I can't seem to part ways with my 15-year-old SUV. It's almost old enough to get its own driver's license. Call me a sentimental person with slight hoarding tendencies.

The first internal combustion engine automobile land-speed record was set back in 1902. The vehicle and its death-defying driver astounded the world by going a whopping 76 mph. Can you imagine living in a world where the speed record is

now common interstate cruising speed? What an age to be alive. The current land speed record stands at roughly 763 mph and was set in 1997 by driver Andy Green. Green strapped himself into a seat attached to two jet engines and tore through the Nevada desert.

My car starts shaking a little at 70 mph, so I reckon I won't be challenging the record, current or past. And I should probably be more worried about keeping my daughter from behind the wheel of a fast car and not so much about how old she is when she gets married. Sixteen years old is right around the corner.

If she plays her cards right, she could inherit my car. Maybe by then I'll have a vehicle built for speed. And I am going to challenge her to a race.

# TIME TO GET STARTED!

**Inground • Aboveground • Spas  
Patio Furnishings • Pool Supplies**

**Complete Water Testing Facilities**

**State Licensed & Insured**

**With 43 years of experience to back us, we stand behind our product!**

**OVER 3500 POOLS INSTALLED!**  
We build our own pools and never subcontract out the work.

- Weekly Maintenance Available, No Contracts!
- Liner Replacements (with 20 yr warranty)
- Pool Renovations
- CPO's on Staff (Certified Pool Operator)

**MID STATE POOLS & SPAS**

2273 Veterans Blvd.  
Dublin, GA  
**478-275-0506**

**FINANCING AVAILABLE**  
3 Locations To Serve You!  
**DUBLIN, SANDERSVILLE & VIDALIA**

**NEW HOURS:**  
Mon. - Fri. 9:00am - 5:00pm

TELESCOPE CASUAL  
MARQUIS  
LOUISIANA  
Pawleys Island

www.pawleysislandhammocks.com

# See the USA II

It appears that Chevrolet is bringing back its delightful commercial from the 1950s when it sponsored The Dinah Shore Show. You may remember her singing that uplifting commercial jingle that resonated across America:

*See the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet, America is asking you to call. Drive the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet, America is the greatest land of all.*

It made me feel patriotic to sing along with Dinah Shore and dream about visiting the varied landscapes of our great country. I loved the backdrop of scenes that showcased our beautiful country and aspired to connect with those scenes I saw in those Chevy commercials. Fortunately, that has often worked out.

Today the Chevy commercial features 26-year-old country singer Brooke Lee, a native of

Charlotte, singing those lyrics of yesteryear, sitting in a Chevrolet Silverado ZR2 that was air lifted to the top of Castle Rock, Utah.

The scenes – like Brooke’s good looks and smooth, resonant voice – are inviting and make you want to find a Chevrolet, set yourself in motion, and see the U.S.A., truly “the greatest land of all.” I fantasized about owning a Chevrolet convertible and “seeing the U.S.A.” while listening to Dinah Shore sing those time-honored lyrics and driving through the badlands of South Dakota, the Grand Canyon, the Rockies, the St. Louis Arch, the cottages of New England, the Shenandoah Valley, and “way down yonder in New Orleans,” among other great American landscapes.

When reflecting on such geographical highlights, I think about how much fun travel can be. It is illuminating to see the pyramids



LORAN SMITH

along the Nile, the Cotswold’s, the Swiss Alps and the Eiffel Tower – not to mention the pure pleasure of driving along the Seine and seeing the hills that “are alive with the sound of music.” To feel the mist that envelops you while you listen to the roar of the crashing waters of Victoria Falls makes you pause and reflect on how small you really are.

Rome and its ancient sights, which inspire the heart and soul.

Immersing yourself in a U.K. country pub that was built before your great grandfather was born. To ride in a press car for a leg of the Tour de France and to ski the Swiss Alps, even in the summer. Enjoying lunch on a patio by a canal in Bruges are among the things which fill you with thanksgiving and humility.

There is so much to experience in this great world but seeing the U.S.A. over the years ranks with the best. You can’t drive your Chevrolet to the great places in Europe and other landscapes of the world’s continents.

And one should never overlook what is under one’s nose – in my case, the many wonderful places that abound in the state of Georgia.

Simple things like finding your way to a fishing spot on the Chattahoochee River in North Georgia. I have never been there and done that without reciting the enduring words of our wonderful native poet, Sidney Lanier:

*Out of the hills of Habersham,  
Down the valleys of Hall,  
I hurry amain to reach the plain,  
Run the rapid and leap the fall.*

You get a warm feeling when you leave the hills of Habersham and find your way to the Georgia coast and reflect on the poet’s other masterpiece, “The Marshes of Glynn.” When I count my blessings, I always offer thanks to having fished in the Hills of Habersham and the Marshes of Glynn.

Then there is the Okefenokee, one of the world’s great treasures.

Not only should all Georgians visit this invaluable swamp but we should also all join hands to ensure that it not be disturbed by any commercial venture or activity.

If you choose to see the U.S.A., as the Chevy commercial recommends, don’t forget about the treasures in the state of Georgia. They rank among the best.

# Georgia Senate budget asserts priorities as well as highlights change

The Georgia Senate passed their amended budget last week, marking a customary milestone in the forty day session of the Georgia General Assembly. As the yet to be passed annual budget sets spending for the fiscal year that begins July 1st, it is customary for legislators to amend the budget passed last year for this current year to reflect unforeseen spending needs and/or create tax rebates in years of surpluses, or make spending cuts and adjustments if tax revenues are falling below projections.

State budgets begin with a spending plan submitted to the legislature by the Governor, which can be considered a “very strong suggestion”. Officially in the legislature’s eyes, the budget begins with the House under the supervision of Appropriations Chairman Matt Hatchett of Dublin. Once passed by that chamber, the Senate takes their turn with a plan demonstrating their priorities with stewardship from their Chairman Blake Tillery of Vidalia.

The details are then negotiated by a conference committee of both chambers with input by the Governor’s office. While officially a product of the legislature, conferees never forget that the Governor – even in his lame duck year – holds a line item veto pen.

A big ticket addition from the Senate is getting a lot of attention, as it is large enough to change both the budget discussion as well as the state’s current and future spending priorities.

A capital outlay for a new state mental hospital was added in the Senate’s spending plan, at a cost of \$409 million. The need for this hospital and the politics surrounding it will be the subject of a future column. If you can’t wait for that, ask a local law enforcement officer or medical first responder what they deal with almost every day and you’ll likely get a full throated preview.

Today, however, we’re using this major addition to highlight the politics and process of the budget and the legislature itself. Change is begetting change.

While his veto pen keeps the folks who understand power shifts from considering Governor Brian Kemp a lame duck, forces remain in play for a transition of power before a new Governor submits the next budget plan. Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones who presides over the Senate hopes to be the one drawing up that plan.

Appropriations Chairman Tillery is one of four Senators elected for this legislative term who wish to move into the Lieutenant Governor’s office and wield his gavel, including Senators Steve Gooch of Dahlonega and Greg Dolezal of Cumming, as well as former Senator John Kennedy who resigned earlier this year to focus full time on his campaign. Kennedy and Gooch served as President Pro Tem and Majority Leader respectively but ceded those titles under GOP caucus rules to run for higher office.

Budgets must be balanced, and new spending means other priorities for new spending must be cut or eliminated. While keeping the Governor’s proposed



CHARLIE HARPER  
GEORGIA POLITICS

income tax rebates up to \$500 per household and the House’s added property tax rebates to homeowners, the Senate trimmed a proposed one-time bonus of \$2,000 for state employees to \$1,250.

While it’s easy to draw some lines between the aspirations of those looking to higher office and the assertion of Senate priorities, it’s important to look at the Senate as a whole, including those who will qualify next week for the offices which they currently hold – and plan to keep for at least two more years.

The Senate, after all, is viewed as a “collaborative” body, as its constitutional structure and rules grant less autonomy to one leader as the House does to the Speaker, and instead disperses power among the members and the Lieutenant Governor.

Senator Larry Walker III of Perry is the President Pro Tem, and is elected by Senators of both parties. As such, he represents the entirety of the Senate when he presides and is officially a bipartisan leader.

Enacting a Republican agenda is the official responsibility of Senator Jason Anavitarte of Dallas. One should add that this responsibility includes the re-election of caucus members who help enact GOP policies.

The other Senator with outsized responsibilities in a committee authorized structure is Senator Matt Brass of Newnan. Brass chairs the powerful Rules Committee, which determines which bills will see the floor for a vote, or die in committee. Senators often will rely on the Rules Chair-

man to flex institutional power when they want the House to take up a certain bill, or wish to hold a controversial bill until there is consensus on how best to proceed with a floor vote.

Many will rightly be following those campaigning for higher office for both motivations and to measure success. Key to understanding how this will work, however, is following the two elected this year to lead the chamber and the majority caucus, as well as the one Chairman who has been granted the authority by his peers to make, brake, or break a bill as the main gate keeper.

The collaboration so far has held. The Senate passed their version of the amended budget 49-1, with the House then making the customary vote to disagree and move to conference. The variables at play are the level of spending for each line item, or if some of the big ticket items get moved to the next annual budget when new checks can be cut on July 1.

# Fine Print by Stacey Abrams: The machinery of voter suppression

Mass voter purges and voter challenges are often falsely described as “election security” or “maintenance” – familiar language with problematic intent.

In reality, these actions against electors are about control. These efforts are meant to target voters that certain politicians don’t like, forcing citizens to repeatedly prove their right to vote and making participation in democracy a calculated risk. Add restrictive ID rules, especially for young voters and people of color, and the pattern is clear: discourage participation and shave the margins before Election Day ever arrives.

Here in Georgia, we have seen this play out before with purges that kicked thousands of lawful voters from the rolls, the closure of polling places in rural communities that make it harder to cast a ballot, and stricter rules on absentee voting that affect the elderly, the disabled and student voting. That context matters when we look at what just happened in Georgia.

On Jan. 28, the FBI raided the Fulton County elections office, seizing hundreds of boxes of election materials from the 2020 cycle. Later, Trump started calls to “nationalize” elections, which would defy Article I of the Constitution by shifting control of elections from states and localities to the federal government.



The timing of his demands should alarm anyone who cares about democracy. These actions come as the Republican administration faces growing backlash – from aggressive immigration raids to economic instability.

For months, officials aligned with this administration have pressured states to hand over voter data. States as varied as New Hampshire and California, among 18 others, have refused. Georgia did, too, because election law clearly limits who can access these records and how they’re protected. Those safeguards exist to prevent intimidation, manipulation and abuse.

Fulton County matters because of who lives there. Nearly 1 million people – predominantly Black, Latino, Asian and immigrant – call it home. Georgians know Fulton County is also the backbone of Democratic participation in Georgia. If someone wanted to challenge voters at scale or quietly disqualify people before

an election, this is exactly the kind of data they would want. And this seizure was the best way to get it.

Now place this alongside an increasingly aggressive immigration enforcement regime, including the proposed ICE warehouse in Social Circle. In mixed-status families, voter registration by naturalized citizens can unintentionally put loved ones at risk. Expanded enforcement discretion – often based on language, ac-

cent or appearance – turns ordinary civic participation into something that feels dangerous.

In the South, that discretion maps directly onto race. In Georgia, the state with one of the nation’s largest immigrant and refugee populations, we become a crucible for how to steal elections and futures.

This is how a democracy is hollowed out.

In the “10 Steps to Autocracy and Authoritarianism” framework, people may still be allowed to vote, but the outcome is shaped in advance – by deciding who stays registered, whose eligibility is challenged and whose vote is quietly discarded. That’s the difference between the right to vote and the ability to vote.

Our response must be simple and urgent. Check your voter registration reg-

ularly. Help others do the same. Treat talk of “voter maintenance” not as routine paperwork but as a warning sign that demands immediate collective action. Volunteer as a poll worker and start conversations about the importance of elections today.

In Georgia, we have been shown again and again that voter suppression starts

here. For once, let’s get ahead of the assault and prove that Georgia is also where it ends.

*Stacey Abrams is a best-selling author, entrepreneur and host of the podcast “Assembly Required.” She previously served as minority leader in the Georgia House of Representatives.*



## Tri-County Connector

Published every Wednesday by the Georgia Trust for Local News

DuBose Porter, Publisher Emeritus  
Pam Burney, General Manager  
Kyle Dominy, Weekly Managing Editor  
Logan Reynolds, Staff Reporter

The Official Legal Organ of  
The Montgomery Monitor  
Mt. Vernon, GA 60445 - (USPS 362-220)  
tricoconnector@gmail.com

Periodicals postage paid at the Mt. Vernon, GA Post Office and at additional mailing offices.

The Soperton News  
Soperton, GA 30457 - (USPS 501-500)  
tricoconnector@gmail.com  
Periodicals postage paid at the Soperton, GA Post Office and at additional mailing offices.

The Wheeler Co. Eagle  
Alamo, GA 30457 - (361-220)  
tricoconnector@gmail.com  
Periodicals postage paid at the Alamo, GA Post Office and at additional mailing offices.

478-272-5522

Subscription Rates:  
One Year in County \$31 - Senior in County \$29  
Out of County \$37 - Out of State \$41



From left: Anna Beth Ethredge, Derionna Madison, Layton Johnson, Martin Wynn, Clay Ryals, Kaitlyn Morgan, Zoey Vann, Layla Vann, Taft Oliver, Emberlyn Keene, Remi Bateson, Eliza Bateson, Fletcher Bateson and Haisley Kinnett pose on Feb. 14 following the 41st annual Wheeler County 4-H and FFA Hog Show/SPECIAL PHOTO



The 41st Annual Wheeler County 4-H and FFA Hog Show's grand champion was Anna Beth Ethredge, the reserve champion was Layla Vann, third overall was Zoey Vann, fourth overall was Anna Beth Ethredge and fifth overall was Clay Ryals /SPECIAL PHOTOS

# 41st Annual Wheeler County 4-H, FFA Market Hog Show

## SPECIAL TO THE TRI-COUNTY CONNECTOR

On Saturday, Feb. 14, the Wheeler County Show Team hosted their local show. There were fourteen students and twenty-two pigs at the show. These students get their show pig projects in October or November and raise them through the show season at the end of February. During this time, students learn about record keeping, hard work, and responsibility while raising their show pig projects. They complete record books that include immunization records, a narrative about their show pig projects, feeding records, pictures, and a written response explaining what medicine withdrawal times are and why they're important. These record books are judged and the placings were as follows: first place – Anna Beth Ethredge, second place – Layton Johnson, third place – Remi Bateson, fourth place – Martin Wynn, fifth place – Zoey Vann, sixth place – Kaitlyn Morgan, seventh place – Derionna Madison, and eighth place – Layla Vann.

The show began at 10:00 a.m. with Senior Recognition. This year, we had two seniors, Anna Beth Ethredge and Zoey Vann. Zoey Vann has been showing for the past six years, and some of the highlights of her show career include winning Grand Champion three times and showmanship at the local show, participating in the parade of champions last year with her crossbred gilt at the state show, winning third overall bred and owned purebred gilt and finishing Reserve Champion in Sr. showmanship at the 2025 GA National Fair as well as being on a state winning team in FFA. Zoey is the daughter of T.J and Jessica Vann. After graduating, she plans to attend Oconee Fall Line Technical College where she will pursue a degree in Cosmetology.

Anna Beth is daughter of Pat and Rebecca Ethredge and has been showing pigs for 10 years. Some of her fondest memories showing include winning Division 1 with her crossbred gilt at the 2021 GA National Fair and participating in the grand champion drive, winning third overall duroc gilt at the 2023 state show as well as winning Grand Champion and Showmanship at the local show and being

on a state winning team in FFA. AB will attend GA Southern University next fall where she will pursue a degree in nursing. Zoey and Anna Beth will be missed, we would like to say thank you for being dedicated members of our show team.

In the Novice Showmanship class, Remi Bateson was the champion showman. Layla Vann won the Junior Showmanship class. In the Intermediate class, Layton Johnson placed first. Anna Beth Ethredge won the Senior Showmanship class. This year, we had two 3-year-olds that participated in the Pee Wee Showmanship Class, Haisley Kinnett and Taft Oliver

The weight classes followed showmanship beginning with the purebred pigs. In class 1, Layla Vann placed first with her 240 pound Duroc barrow. Layla also won class 2 with her 276 pound Duroc gilt. In class 3 crossbreds, Zoey Vann placed first with her 218 pound pig. Anna Beth Ethredge and her 231 pound gilt won class 4 of crossbreds. Anna Beth Ethredge also took first place in Class 5 with her 260 pound gilt. Clay Ryals and his 285lb gilt won class 7.

In the championship drive, Anna Beth Ethredge won Grand Champion with her gilt from class 5. Layla Vann took Reserve Champion with her class 1 winning Duroc. Third Overall was Zoey Vann from class 3. Anna Beth Ethredge was also Fourth Overall with her class 4 winner. Clay Ryals took home Fifth Overall with his gilt from class 6.

Our show would not be possible without our wonderful sponsors. This year, we had over 50 sponsors that supported our students and their show pig projects! The Boss Hog Award is given to the student that raises the most money for the show. Zoey Vann won with Anna Beth Ethredge coming in second place. The Wheeler County Show Team also receives support from the Wheeler County FFA and 4-H. Thank you to Bryant Oliver, Les Bateson, Hannah Snively, Nicole Thornton, and Darby Connell for all you do for our students. Clay Corbett from Echols County was the show judge. He is a farmer from Echols County. He purchases and places over 200 show pigs each year to exhibitors in the southeastern United States.

## Legals

### Treutlen Co. Legals

**S26-013**  
**IN THE PROBATE COURT OF TREUTLEN COUNTY**  
**STATE OF GEORGIA**  
**IN RE: ESTATE OF Jerry Bird, DECEASED**  
**ESTATE NO: 26-P-11**  
**PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION NOTICE**

TO: Whom it may concern:  
 Evie Jean Beasley has petitioned to be appointed administrator(s) of the estate of Jerry Bird, deceased, of said County. (The petitioner has also applied for waiver of bond, waiver of reports, waiver of statements, and/or grant of certain powers contained in O.C.G.A. § 53-12-261.) All interested persons are hereby notified to show cause why said petition should 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 March 24, 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 scheduled at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.

**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 scheduled at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.

Tiffany McLendon  
 Judge of the Probate Court  
 650 Second street  
 Suite 101  
 Soperton, GA 30457  
 912-529-4320  
 February 26, March 5, 12, 19, 2026

**S26-012**  
**IN THE PROBATE COURT OF TREUTLEN COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA**  
**IN RE: ESTATE OF Wesley Wadley, DECEASED**  
**ESTATE NO. 26-P-6**  
**PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION NOTICE**

TO: Rico Wadley and Consuelo Wadley and to whom it may concern:  
 Kristopher Wadley has petitioned for Kristopher Wadley to be appointed administrator(s) of the estate of Wesley Wadley, deceased, of said county. (The petitioner has also applied for waiver of bond, waiver of reports, waiver of statements, and/or grant of certain powers contained in O.C.G.A. § 53-12-261.) All interested persons are hereby notified to show cause why said petition should 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 March 4, 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 scheduled at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.

Tiffany W. McLendon  
 Judge of the Probate Court  
 By: Clerk of the Probate Court  
 650 Second Street, Suite 101  
 Soperton, GA 30457  
 912-529-4320  
 February 12, 19, 26, March 5, 2026

**S26-007**  
 State of Georgia  
 County of Treutlen.

**Notice to Debtors and Creditors**  
 All creditors of the Estate of Linda Ricks, late of Treutlen County, Georgia, 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 28th day of January, 2026.  
 Estate of Linda Ricks  
 Blakely Sutton Dennard, Executor  
 1748 Florida Avenue  
 Soperton, GA 30457  
 Margaret Greer Evans  
 Attorney at Law  
 State Bar No. 488189  
 (478) 272-2885  
 February 5, 12, 19, 26, 2026

**S26-011**  
**IN THE PROBATE COURT OF TREUTLEN COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA**  
**IN RE: ESTATE OF JAMES E. SHARPE DECEASED**  
**ESTATE NO. 26-P-7**  
**PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION NOTICE**

TO: whom it may concern:  
 JAMES ALLEN SHARPE, SR. has petitioned for James Allen Sharpe, Sr. to be appointed administrator(s) of the estate of JAMES E. SHARPE deceased, of said county. (The petitioner has also applied for waiver of bond, waiver of reports, waiver of statements, and/or grant of certain powers contained in O.C.G.A. § 53-12-261.) All interested persons are hereby notified to show cause why said petition should 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 March 17, 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 scheduled at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.

Tiffany W. McLendon  
 Judge of the Probate Court  
 By: Clerk of the Probate Court  
 650 Second St., South #101  
 Soperton, GA 30457  
 (912) 529-4320  
 February 12, 19, 26, March 5, 2026

**S26-005**  
**IN THE PROBATE COURT OF TREUTLEN COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA**  
**IN RE: ESTATE OF Linda Jane Beard, DECEASED**  
**ESTATE NO: 26-P-3**  
**PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION NOTICE**

TO: Whom it may concern:  
 Laura Ivy Lico has petitioned for Laura Ivy Lico to be appointed administrators of the estate of Linda Jane Beard, deceased, of said county. (The Petitioner has also applied for waiver of bond, waiver of reports, waiver of statements, and/or grant of certain powers contained in O.C.G.A. § 53-12-261.) All interested persons are hereby notified to show cause why said petition should 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 March 4, 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 scheduled at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.

Tiffany W. McLendon  
 Judge of the Probate Court  
 650 Second Street South, Suite 101  
 Soperton, GA 30457  
 912-529-4320  
 February 5, 12, 19, 26, 2026

**S26-008**  
**STATE OF GEORGIA**  
**COUNTY OF TREUTLEN**  
**IN RE: ESTATE OF BOBBY RAY PHILLIPS, DECEASED.**  
**All creditors of the estate of Bobby Ray Phillips, deceased, late of Treutlen County, are hereby notified to render their demands to Richard M. McNeely, attorney for Barbara V. Phillips, Executor of the Bobby Ray Phillips Estate, at P. O. Box 767, Swainsboro, Georgia 30401, according to law, and all persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment of any indebtedness due the estate.**  
**This 22nd day of January, 2026.**  
**RICHARD M. MCNEELY,**  
**Attorney for Barbara V. Phillips,**  
**Executor of the Bobby Ray Phillips Estate**  
**Richard M. McNeely, P.C.**  
**P. O. Box 767**  
**Swainsboro, Georgia 30401**  
**(478) 237-4225**  
 February 5, 12, 19, 26, 2026

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY!**  
**(478) 272-5522 | tricountyconnector.com**  
**TriCoConnector@gmail.com**

**Georgia**  
**LOCAL MATTERS STATEWIDE CLASSIFIEDS**  
 Publish your classified ad in more than 60 Georgia newspapers for only \$350.  
**Call Georgia Newspaper Service: 770-454-6776**

**HOME IMPROVEMENT**  
 Replace your roof with the best looking and longest lasting material - steel from Erie Metal Roofs! Three styles and multiple colors available. Guaranteed to last a lifetime! Limited Time Offer - up to 50% off installation + Additional 10% off install (for military, health workers & 1st responders.) Call Erie Metal Roofs: 1-866-939-2151

**BATH & SHOWER UPDATES** in as little as ONE DAY! Affordable prices - No payments for 18 months! Lifetime warranty & professional installs. Senior & Military Discounts available. Call: 1-833-781-0206

**WATER DAMAGE CLEANUP:** A small amount of water can lead to major damage to your home. Our trusted professionals dry out the wet area and do repairs to protect your family and your home's value! If you have water in your home that needs to be dried, call 24/7: 1-833-871-2090. Have zip code of service location ready when you call!

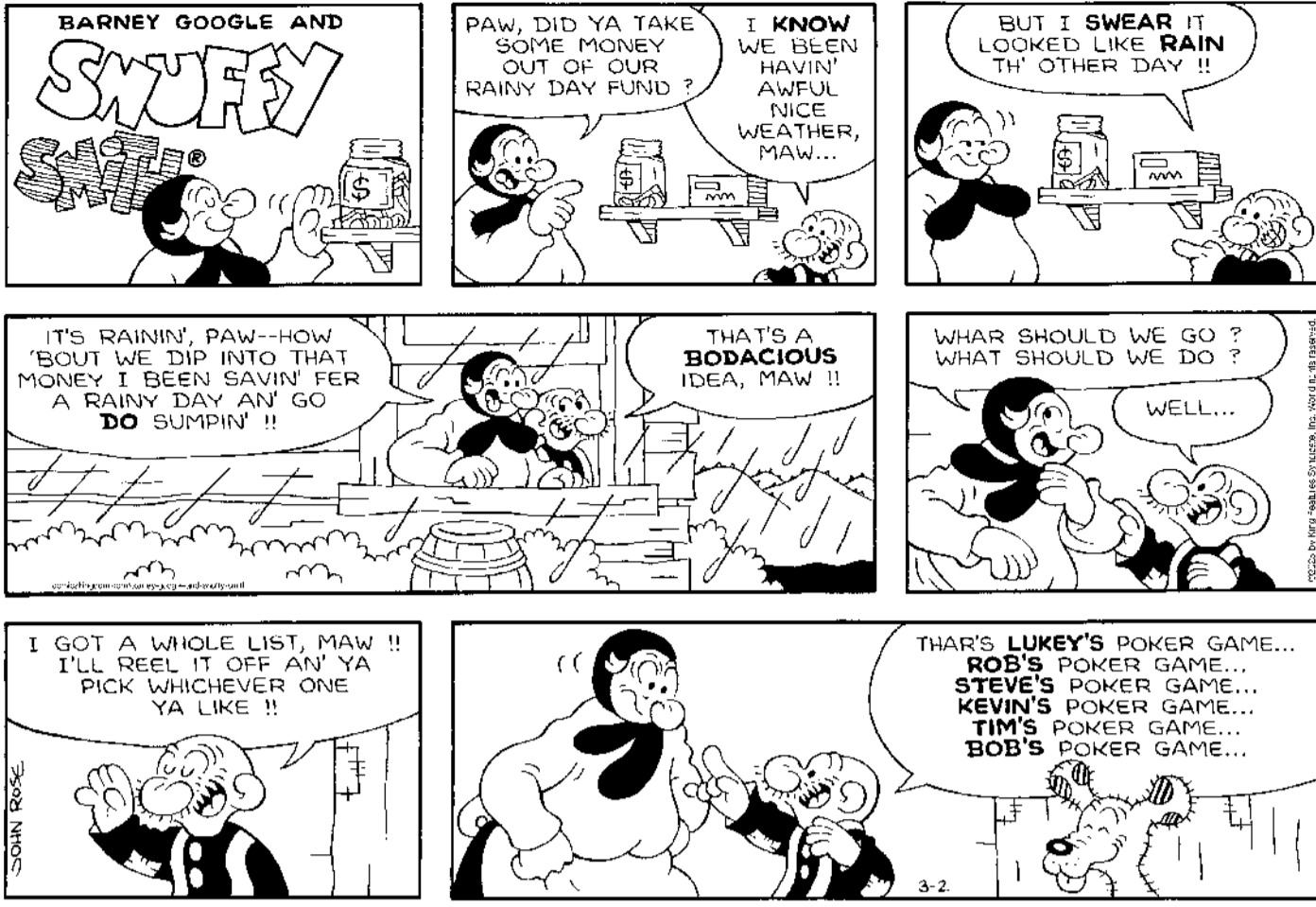
**ELECTRICAL SERVICES:** Reliable & experienced. Competitive rates. From simple household problems to installing a brand new electrical system, we can take care of it all! Call now and have the zip code of the service location when you call! 1-833-399-6566

**NEED NEW FLOORING?** Call today schedule a FREE in-home estimate on Carpeting & Flooring. Call Today! 1-833-641-6602

**PEST CONTROL: PROTECT YOUR HOME** from pests safely and affordably. Roaches, Bed Bugs, Rodent, Termite, Spiders and other pests. Locally owned and affordable. Call for service or an inspection today! 1-833-406-

**2021** Have zip code of property ready when calling!  
**HOME BREAK-INS** take less than 60 SECONDS. Don't wait! Protect your family, your home, your assets NOW for as little as 70¢ a day! Call 1-833-890-1269  
**SunSetter.** America's Number One Awning! Instant shade at the touch of a button. Transform your deck or patio into an outdoor oasis. Up to 10-year limited warranty. Call now and SAVE \$350 today! 1-877-740-0337  
**MISCELLANEOUS**  
**YMT Vacations.** Over 50 guided tours available. Affordable, social and stress-free travel designed for mature travelers. Our tours include accommodations, transportation, baggage handling, sightseeing, entrance fees, a professional Tour Director and select meals. For a limited time SAVE \$250 on all tours. Call YMT today. 1-855-548-2623  
**BANKRUPTCY RELIEF!** Help stop Creditor Harassment, Collection Calls, Repossession and Legal Actions! Speak to a Professional Attorney and Get the Help You NEED! Call NOW 855-968-5222  
**BEHIND ON YOUR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS?** Threatened with foreclosure? Denied a loan modification? Let us help! Call the Homeowner Relief Line to speak with a mortgage specialist. 844-797-7162  
**Wesley Financial Group LLC** Timeshare Cancellation Experts Over \$50,000,000 in timeshare debt and fees cancelled in 2019. Get free informational package and learn how to get rid of your timeshare! Free consultations. Over 450 positive reviews. Call 866-411-5215

**SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS.** Unable to work? Denied benefits? We Can Help! Strong, recent work history needed. Call to start your application or appeal today! 877-627-2704  
**Moving Out of State?** Licensed and insured, full-service nationwide movers. Call now to get a free, instant price quote on your next move. 1-866-590-6443  
**DONATE YOUR CAR TO KIDS.** Your donation helps fund the search for missing children and preventing abduction. Accepting Cars, Trucks and Vans. Fast Free Pickup - Running or Not Maximum Tax Donation - Call (888) 515-3813  
**TV/INTERNET**  
 Get DISH Satellite TV + Internet! Free Install, Free HD-DVR Upgrade, 80,000 On-Demand Movies, Plus Limited Time Up To \$600 In Gift Cards. Call Today! 1-866-369-1468  
**COMPUTER ISSUES? FREE DIAGNOSIS by GEEKS ON SITE!** Virus Removal, Data Recovery! 24/7 EMERGENCY \$20 OFF ANY SERVICE with coupon 42522! Restrictions apply. 844-739-4842  
**WANTED**  
 We Buy Houses for Cash AS IS! No repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy three step process: Call, get cash offer and get paid. Get your fair cash offer today by calling Liz Buys Houses: 1-877-399-2113  
**TOP CASH PAID FOR OLD GUITARS!** 1920-1980 Gibson, Martin, Fender, Gretsch, Epiphone, Guild, Mosrite, Rickenbacker, Prairie State, D'Angelico, Stromberg. And Gibson Mandolins / Banjos. 1-833-641-6792



**SAN — : SHIPS IN MAGIC MAZE • THE SPANISH ARMADA**

RMJHEBYVTQOOLIG  
DBBYWJLTRJEPMSK  
IFDEOUNABETSEAB  
YSOCRAMOBRAWULS  
QOMKDNILZOMFDVB  
ZX **BUENAVENTURA** W  
USQOPPIRNIESLDJ  
HFDCA YITDMRRIOW  
VTSQSIULROPBORN  
LKIHFECBEAZYALC  
WOC SICNARFMVUGS

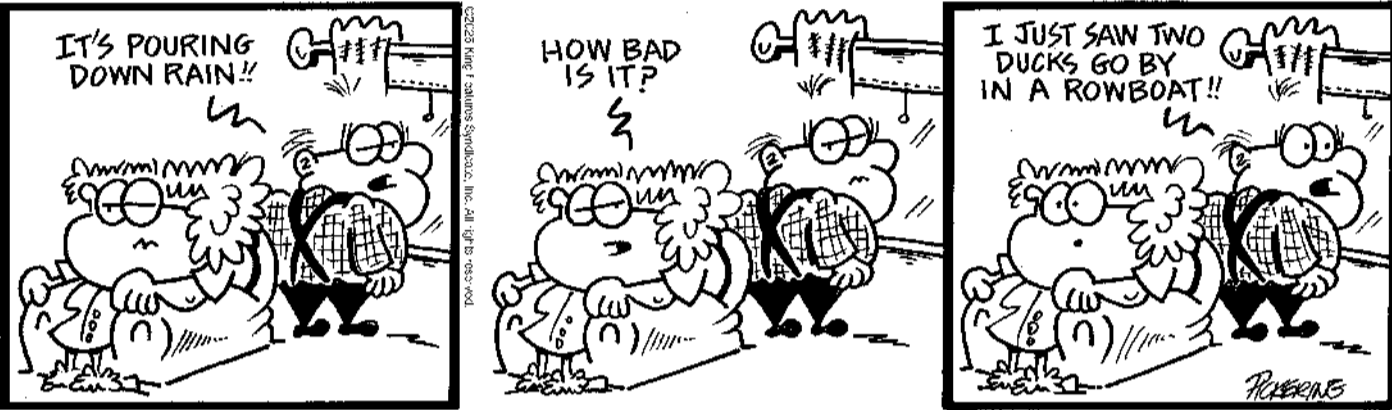
Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally  
Unlisted clue hint: CALIFORNIA CITY SAN —

- |              |          |         |          |
|--------------|----------|---------|----------|
| Bernardo     | Felipe   | Lorenzo | Mateo    |
| Buenaventura | Gabriel  | Luis    | Pedro    |
| Cristobal    | Jeronimo | Marcos  | Salvador |
| Esteban      | Juan     | Martin  |          |

©2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

**The Spats**

by Jeff Pickering



**Out on a Limb**

by Gary Kopervas

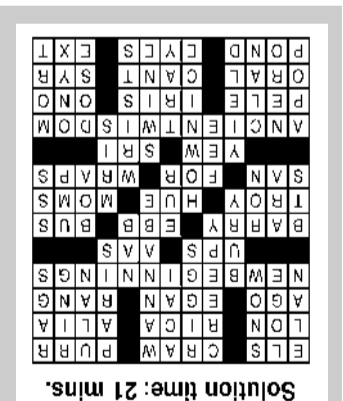


**Just Like Cats & Dogs**

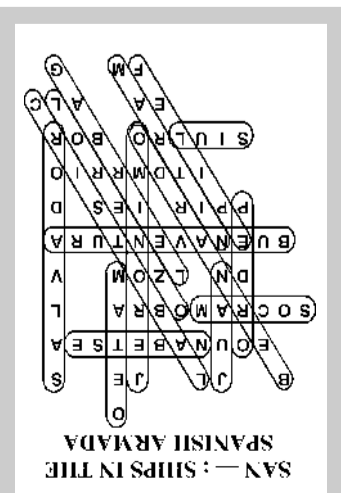
by Dave T. Phipps



"We've translated that signal from outer space. ... Someone's wife wants him to pick up a loaf of bread on the way home from Mars."



Solution time: 21 mins.  
ANSWERS  
— King Crossword —  
CROSSWORD ANSWERS



ANSWERS  
MAGIC MAZE ANSWERS

**King Crossword**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13					14		
15			16					17		
18		19					20			
		21				22				
23	24	25			26			27	28	29
30				31				32		
33			34				35			
		36				37				
38	39	40			41			42	43	44
45					46			47		
48					49			50		
51					52			53		

**ACROSS**

1 Golfer Ernie  
4 Gullet  
8 Engine noise  
12 Horror star Chaney  
13 Costa —  
14 Inter —  
15 Past  
16 Novelist Jennifer  
17 Pealed  
18 Fresh starts  
21 Boom times  
22 Small batteries  
23 Humorist Dave  
26 Flow out  
27 Depot vehicle  
30 "Iliad" setting  
31 Shade  
32 Spring honorees  
33 — Salvador  
34 Supporting  
35 Rolled-up sandwiches  
36 Evergreen tree  
37 Hindu honorific  
38 Age-old knowledge  
45 Soccer leg-end  
46 Spring flower  
47 Plastic — Band  
48 Verbal  
49 Quitter's word

**DOWN**

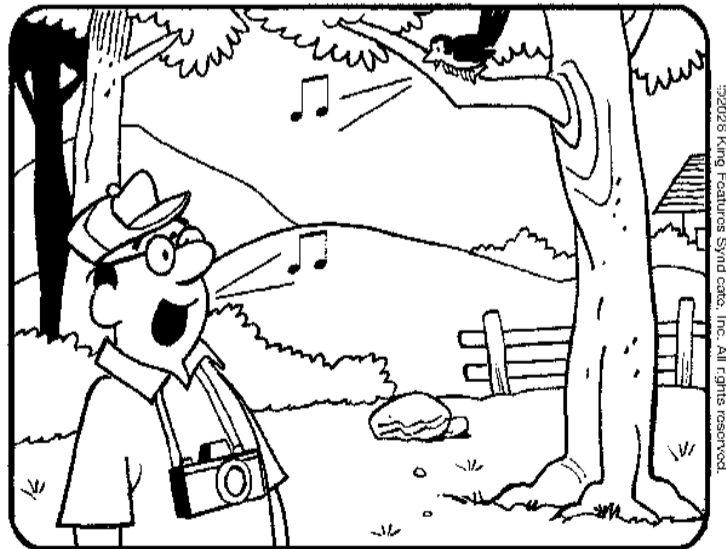
1 Flair  
2 Theater section  
3 Winter fall  
4 Eerie  
5 Bobby who lost to Billie Jean King  
6 Smoothie berry  
7 Hopeful  
8 Seine city  
9 — Bator  
10 Saturn feature  
11 Cleaning cloths  
19 Conceal, in a way  
20 Arrest  
23 "Dynamite" band  
24 Notre Dame coach  
25 Harry Potter pal  
26 Where Ger. is  
27 Large snake  
28 Ref  
29 Radiator sound  
31 "That's wonderful!"  
32 Hosp. scans  
34 Charge  
35 Places for bracelets  
36 Relinquish  
37 Pigs  
38 Per person  
39 Roman emperor  
40 Family  
41 Tea carrier  
42 Rx amount  
43 Cameo stone  
44 Humorist Sahl

© 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

**HOCUS-FOCUS** BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Camera is lower. 2. Music note is higher. 3. Rail is thicker. 4. Cap is different. 5. Hill is added. 6. Tree trunk is thicker.

**WIGGINS FOOT & ANKLE ASSOCIATES, P.C.**  
Specializing in Diabetic Foot Care • Corns Callouses • Hammer Toes • Bunions • Warts Ingrown Toe Nails • Aching Feet • Heel Pain  
205 Arlington Drive • Vidalia • 537-2559  
AVAILABLE 5 DAYS A WEEK  
MON.-FRI. 8:30 A.M.-5 P.M.  
Mark Wiggins, D.P.M.