

Advertise Here

Display Your Business in a Prime Location

*Front Page Banner Ad is subject to limited availability. Contact us to reserve your spot & ask about pricing. Email us at thenewsobservereditor@gmail.com or phyllis.keaton@yahoo.com

The News Observer

"Local news means the world to us."

The Vienna News and The Unadilla Observer

The Legal Organ of Dooly County; serving Byromville, Dooling, Lilly, Pinehurst, Unadilla and Vienna.

VOLUME 124 • NUMBER 02 • Price \$1.00 tax included

THURSDAY, JANUARY 08, 2026

INSIDE THIS WEEK:

19th Annual Leslie Burden-Mathis Scholarship Fund Musical Extravaganza 2

Arrest Prevents 'Prison Drop' 2

St. Paul Chapel Chartering Approved 3

Celebrating Dooly K-8 Academy Lifelong Learners..... 5

Charles Nance Receives AJC First Team All State Honors 6

Lady Bobcats Bring Home the Victory against Wilkinson County 6

Community Calendar 3
Legals 5

Bull and Boar BBQ Named Grand Champion at Hog Drop



Photo By Tim Franzén

Grand Champion Bull and Boar BBQ and the winner of \$10,000 in cash, a traditional trophy and special wood carved Champion keepsake fondly called the 'Michael Jordan Hog Drop trophy carved by Chad Gainey.

By Tim Franzén
News Observer Reporter

The Ninth year of the Annual Hog Drop New Years Eve in Unadilla was highlighted by BBQ competition, dirt bike stunt show, Strange Bedfellows in their first appearance as fire breathing performers, Street Bike Tommy and Cowboy Kenny 690 who first made an appearance three years ago.

Another annual tradition is the appearance of Robinson's Racing Pigs, Rock Wall Climb, Mechanical Riding Bull and inflatables. Musical entertainment was provided and enjoyed by 'The Bozwellz' a group who tour throughout Georgia and have become a tradition each New Years Eve playing rock and blues.

Mayor Myron Mixon held his Georgia Barbecue Association Style Cooking awards called, "The Unadilla Shoot-Out" inside the open air pavilion. The Grand Champion on the night was Bull and Boar BBQ who not only received the traditional trophy and \$10,000 in cash but also carried off a special wood carved Champion keepsake fondly called the 'Michael Jordan Hog Drop trophy.' It measured over six feet high, carved by Chad Gainey who once again displayed his chainsaw wood sculpture artistry. 'Bull and Boar' also placed fourth in Chicken and Brisket and seventh in Ribs.

The Hog Drop 2025 Fourth place winner of at least \$540 and the title of Wild Child was-Only Cans Competition BBQ.



Photo by Kenny Mercer

Fireworks lit up the sky in Unadilla at Midnight New Years Eve.

Other teams that placed during the competition were Chunky BBQ who placed fifth in chicken, along with Bad Rooster in third, Zipps BBQ in second and Bourbon and Blues BBQ with the first place trophy in chicken. In Ribs, the cooking teams of Hold your Horses, Only Cans Competition BBQ, Zipps BBQ, Chunky BBQ and Under Construction BBQ in

first place.

In the Shoulder competition, placing fifth through first were Snake Holler BBQ, Zipps BBQ, Smoking Wizard, County Line Swine and Bad Rooster BBQ with a first place finish. In Brisket fifth through first place: Puck Brothers

**HOG DROP
CONTINUED PG 2A**

Committed to Caring for Those Who Have Helped Our Community



By the City of Vienna, GA

As we wrap up the 2025 season, the City of Vienna Community Development Department reflects with gratitude on a year of progress, service, and community impact. We were especially proud to donate items to local assisted living facilities and senior citizens, reaffirming

our commitment to caring for those who have helped build our community. We hope each of you enjoys a safe and joyful New Year.

On behalf of Kaleb D. Green and the entire Community Development Department, along with Mayor Eddie Daniels, City Council, and the dedicated

staff of the City of Vienna, we extend our sincere appreciation for your continued support and partnership.

We look forward to strengthening these relationships and serving our community in the year ahead. From our city family to yours, Happy New Year.

Unadilla Fire Rescue Report for December

By Kenny Mercer

UFR responded to 13 calls during Dec. 2025 and a total of 129 for the year. Dec 2, there was a false alarm at Lasseter Tractor on Highway 41. Also Dec. 2, units responded to a vehicle fire on I-75 at exit 117 southbound. Tuesday, Dec. 9 officials offered assistance to the scene of an accident on I-75 at exit 121 southbound. Thursday, Dec. 11 there was a report of an electric

equipment arc at Dollar General. There was a false alarm call to Plunkett Road on Dec. 14 and units assisted Houston County Fire to battle a wildland fire on Fuller Road.

Unadilla Fire Rescue also responded to a structure fire Tuesday, Dec. 23 on Cherry Street and to a false alarm at Lineage logistics. Christmas Day proved to be a busy one as units assisted with fighting wildland fires on Grovania Road providing

assistance again to the Houston County Fire Department, a Wildland Fire on Taylor Road and another Wildland fire on Ransom Road. Friday, Dec. 26 units fought a Wildland fire on Hodge at Kersey Road helping Houston County Fire bring that blaze under control that was threatening 16-acres of land.

The month ended with one call New Years Eve to Circle K, but no incident was found.

Happy New Year To Our Dooly County & Surrounding Communities



By RN Cyndi Mercer

As we welcome a new year, I want to wish each of you a healthy, happy, and prosperous year ahead. Please stay safe and make thoughtful decisions as you celebrate with friends and family. May we all carry the lessons learned and the blessings received into the year to come.

As your Dooly County Nurse Manager, I also want to acknowledge the challenges many families are facing with rising insurance costs. Please know that you are not alone.

Our health department is here to help you navigate your healthcare journey with more affordable options, including lower cost lab services and preventative care designed to help

you maintain and manage your health.

Preventative care and early detection matter, and we are committed to helping our community access quality care in ways that are practical, affordable, and supportive of your overall well being.

Here's to a new year focused on health, prevention, and taking care of one another. We look forward to continuing to serve you and your family in 2026. Warm wishes for a safe and healthy New Year from your Dooly County Health Department Staff.

We welcome walk-ins. Let us help you make 2026 the healthiest year for you. For more information, call 229-268-4725 or go by the office at 204 West Union Street in Vienna.



Mathis Family Holds 19th Annual Lessie Burden-Mathis Scholarship Fund Musical Extravaganza



Photo By Tim Franzén

The Mathis Family Choir that was organized under the leadership and guidance of musician and musical director and Mrs. Mathis' grandson, Curtis Mathis. The choir only performs once a year at the extravaganza.



Photo By Tim Franzén

Pictured is one of the two of this year's Lessie Mae Burden-Mathis Scholarship Fund recipients Zoey Sinyard who attends Kennesaw State University.

By Tim Franzén
News Observer Reporter

The Lessie Mae Burden-Mathis Scholarship Fund Musical Extravaganza was held this past Saturday. It was established in 2005 by Mrs. Mathis' children and grandchildren as a tribute to her life as a dedicated musician who faithfully served churches in the Dooly County community for over forty years. The Mathis Family Choir only performs once a year for this program that is held on the first Saturday in January. That is the date that Ms. Lessie passed away on Saturday January 3, 2004. So since her passing occurred on the first Saturday in January of that year, the event is always held the first Saturday in January in her memory.

Each year since 2005, one or more \$500 scholarships have been awarded to Dooly County High School graduating seniors to assist in continuing their post secondary education. The recip-

ients of this year's scholarships were Zoey Sinyard who attends Kennesaw State University.

She was unable to attend but sent along a letter with her mother Sabrina Sinyard Holmes that said, "It is with immense pleasure and appreciation that I bring greetings. I have completed my very first semester of college with a goal of obtaining a degree in Political Science and I cannot be more elated. Attending college has always been in my plans, but I was not prepared for the complexities of what it takes to get there, a whirlwind of things to do from registration, orientation, food plans to housing. Thanks to a plethora of support from my family and organizations like the Lessie Mae Burden Foundation, I am well on my way making my dreams come true. I truly wish that I could be there to celebrate what this foundation has done for so many students in Dooly County. In my quest to gain knowledge



Photo By Tim Franzén

Felita Mathis-Bryant who presented La'Asyia Collier with her Certificate of Scholarship. Miss Collier attends The Fort Valley State University.

of the world, I will hold steadfast to my faith."

La'Asyia Collier was also celebrated at the extravaganza as she received her Certificate of Scholarship from Felita Mathis-Bryant. During her years spent at

Dooly County High School, she served on the intergovernmental association, was a member of the DCHS band and an athlete in basketball and track and field. She attends The Fort Valley State University with a major in

biology with a 3.4 grade point average.

Felita Mathis-Bryant commented that, "Mrs. Mathis' great grandchildren, high school graduates, Ledecia Mathis, Daniel Grant and Dontavious Furlow were the scholarship honorary for the year."

To further commemorate Mrs. Mathis' life, the Scholarship's Fund CEO and founder, the late Lessie Mathis Hicks who was the oldest daughter of Lessie Mae Burden-Mathis had been given a vision to sponsor a Musical Extravaganza the first Saturday of January of each year

at Mrs. Mathis' home church, Forest Chapel Baptist Church in Pinehurst, Ga.

At last year's service, Lessie Mathis Hicks, who passed away August 25, 2022 was honored. At that time, family members Rosa Davis, Eddie Hicks and Cynthia Hicks were presented with plaques in her memory. Mr. Earl Clark led the congregation in hymns of praise at the beginning of the program. Following the musical extravaganza, refreshments were served in the Heritage Dining Hall at Forest Chapel Baptist Church.

HOG DROP

CONTINUED FROM 1A



Photo By Tim Franzén

Street Bike Tommy and Cowboy Kenny 690

BBQ, Bull and Boar BBQ, third-Only Cans Competition BBQ, Countryside BBQ and and in First place-Cool Hand Que.

The Hog Drop in Unadilla debuted back in 2016 and Mr. Mixon exclaimed proudly that, "This is probably for a small town, the best New Year's Eve celebration you'll find right here."

The evening was culminated by the countdown to midnight, the hog drop and fireworks to ring in the New Year, fireworks to celebrate the beginning of 2026. For more information about Chad Gainey's wood sculpture, visit: <https://www.chadgaineysculpture.com/>.



Photo By Tim Franzén

The Bozwellz have become a tradition at the Hog Drop New Years Eve in Unadilla.



Photo By Tim Franzén

Fire breathing team-Strange Bedfellows



Photo By Tim Franzén

A brave participant riding the Mechanical Riding Bull.

If you'd like to contact Robinson's Pig Paddling Porker about their racing pigs, call 352-514-4864, or visit them on facebook. The email address is racingpigs@juno.com.

Photo Contributed
The Hog Drop would not have been complete without Robinson's Racing Pigs.



Arrest Prevents 'Prison Drop'

By CCSO

Crisp County Sheriff's Office deputies responded around 7:30 p.m. Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 to a stopped vehicle at the intersection of Georgia Highway 300 South and Old Albany Road. Deputies made contact with the driver, later identified as Hunter Watson, who was found asleep behind the wheel with a handgun located under his leg.

During the investigation, deputies observed numerous indicators consistent with an attempted "prison drop," an illegal operation involving the delivery of contraband into correctional facilities

using unmanned aerial vehicles (drones). A search of the vehicle revealed large quantities of tobacco, vape devices, alcoholic beverages, drone batteries commonly used to power UAVs, and other items frequently associated with prison drop activity.

Deputies also located suspected methamphetamine, suspected synthetic marijuana, drug paraphernalia, and a firearm. Watson admitted to recent methamphetamine use and stated he had been paid to transport items to another location. This arrest successfully disrupted and prevented a potential prison

drop, stopping contraband before it could reach a correctional facility.

Hunter Watson, a 26-year-old male from Moultrie, Ga. was transported to the Crisp County Jail and is charged with: Trading With Inmates Without Consent of Warden or Superintendent, Receipt, Possession or Transfer of Firearm By Convicted Felon, Possession of Firearm or Knife During Commission of Crime, Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Schedule I Controlled Substance and Possession and Use of Drug Related Objects.



Unadilla FireRescue Calls in 2025

By Senior Firefighter Kenny Mercer

UFR responded to 12 Structure Fires, 20 Grass Brush Wildland Fires, 12 Vehicle Fires, eight EMS Medical Assist Support, four Electrical Equipment Arc-Shorts, 10 Vehicle Accidents, six smoke scares-burn complaints, one tree down, four natural gas-LP leak odor, one fuel spill, one power line down, one landing zone setup for Air Evac, 12 false alarms, 16 no incident found at dispatch address and 20 dispatched and cancelled enroute calls during 2025.

CIS at DCHS Hosting Wings and Things

Dooly County High School

WINGS & THINGS

DCHS Parent & Community Night



Join us for a Xzaby's-themed family night focused on connection, support, and partnership!



Together, we build a stronger school community!

January 12, 2026
5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
715 3rd Street Vienna, GA 31092

What to Expect?

- Learn how our CIS Coordinator, Ms. Clayton, serves DCHS
- Discover resources available for parents and families
- See how we are bridging the gap between school and community
- Connect with school staff in a welcoming environment



By Chiquita Granville

The DCHS Communities In Schools (CIS) program will be hosting Wings and Things Monday, January 12 from 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. at the high school in Vienna. This parent and community event will have a Xzaby's-themed family night focused on connection, support and partnership, building relationships, strengthening connections with our students

beyond the classroom. We look forward to creating a welcoming space filled with conversation, encouragement, and community. Stay tuned, we're excited for what's ahead. Participants will learn how our CIS coordinator Ms. Clayton serves DCHS, discover resources available for parents and families, see how we are bridging the gap between school and community.

Seventeen Complete Advanced EMT Program at South Georgia Tech

By SGTC

South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) recently honored 17 graduates of its Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT) program during a pinning ceremony held in the LaPorte Auditorium at the college's Crisp County Center. The event was attended by more than 50 family members and friends, who gathered to celebrate the students' accomplishments.

Instructors Chad Mays and Brittany Bertelson led the ceremony, recognizing the students for their dedication and hard work throughout the semester. Mays served as the keynote speaker, commending the class for their teamwork and perseverance.

"This group truly bonded over the course of the semester," said Mays. "They supported one another through the challenges of

both the classroom and clinicals. Brittany and I are very proud of each and every one of them."

Students recognized in the ceremony were Brody Barnes of Parrott, Rebekah Bowen of Byromville, Roger Hall of Sylvester, Sebrina Hicks of Dawson, Matthew Holden of Weston, Melanie Hosford of Reynolds, Dykerius Howard of Albany, Tiffany James of Ellaville, Braxton Jones of Ellaville, Aaron Long of Parrott, Abigail Patterson of Unadilla, Samantha Poisson of Montezuma, Todd Poisson of Montezuma, James Purvis of Sylvester, Dillan Tunney of Americus, Joseph Warren of Vienna, and Samuel Williamson of Albany.

Over the duration of the program, the class logged more than 1,700 hours of clinical experience. As part of their hands-on training, students started 205

St. Paul Chapel Chartering Approved

By Pastor Katie Griffis

In case you missed the announcement in church last Sunday, we have officially been approved for chartering! A big thank you to everyone who had the vision, worked, toiled, and participated in every aspect of St. Paul Chapel. Each and everyone of you that loves our sweet church are a part of why we have been successful in this

process.

This Sunday, January 11 we will be celebrating the Baptism of the Lord Sunday and at that service of hope and renewal in the new year, we will also be celebrating the renewal and new phase of life for St. Paul Chapel.

We will be honored to have Bishop Robin Dease and our District Superintendent, Rev. Jeff Cook, in attendance and

participating in worship and the chartering of St. Paul Chapel UMC. Part of the joy of worshipping at St. Paul Chapel is that we get to do it on the holy ground of the Dooly Campground.

We get to witness lives being changed and life giving moments for hundreds of people who come to these spaces. That weekend, the campground will

be hosting a group who will be using the rest of the campground. While that means we get to be a small part of witnessing God's amazing glory in all he does at the campground, it also means that our Chartering Celebration will be delayed until later in the spring.

We are planning a fun and festive day at a later time and those details will follow.

Soup-er Bowl LX

Contributed

Last year, in lieu of a traditional 'pounding' of the new pastor's pantry, (a Methodist tradition of giving pounds of pantry staples), St. Paul Chapel joined with Byromville UMC to supply food for our neighbors in need.

Again, we fight hunger at home and celebrate the Soup-er Bowl Sunday, February 8, 2026 with our friends and ministry partners at the Byromville UMC and Byromville

Community Food Pantry.

This year the mission coordinators are supplying paper grocery bags with shopping lists for shelf-hardy staples that will last a year. The food bank uses these donations for the needs that do not meet the criteria of the funding criteria of the Middle Georgia Community Food Bank poverty guidelines.

Items that are popular are low-sodium canned vegetables; peanut butter; macaroni and cheese; rice; cooking oil; canned

fruit; and canned meats (tuna and chicken). Bring your donations in the brown grocery bags and drop them off curbside on Sunday mornings at St. Paul from now until February 8, 2026.

One of our volunteers will assist with heavy bags and will make sure the food makes it to Byromville UMC for the Soup-er Bowl luncheon following worship on Sunday, February 8, 2026.

Georgia Mortgage Assistance Program Announces Final Application Deadline

By DCA

Atlanta, GA. (December 30, 2025) – Funded through the Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF), Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Georgia Mortgage Assistance (GMA) program is closing to new applications after helping nearly 12,000 Georgians remain in their homes and preventing over 1,600 foreclosures statewide.

The GMA program will stop accepting new applications on March 31, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. All application packages must

be complete and fully submitted through the Georgia Mortgage Assistance application portal at GeorgiaMortgageAssistance.ga.gov by this deadline.

Customer Service representatives are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to answer general questions about Georgia Mortgage Assistance programs.

Applicants who need assistance completing their application should contact Customer Service before March 13, 2026, to schedule an appointment for support by phone or in person

at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Atlanta office.

Applications must still be submitted by March 31, 2026, to be considered for assistance.

Email: HAF@dca.ga.gov (Please include your name, address, and phone number)

Phone: 770-806-2100, or toll free 1-877-519-4443

Mail: Georgia Mortgage Assistance c/o Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs 60 Executive Park South, NE, Atlanta, GA 30329-2231

Applicants are encouraged to retain copies of their submitted application materials and proof of delivery or receipt for their records.

Georgia Mortgage Assistance is a federal program with limited funds program. Not all eligible homeowners may receive assistance before funds are exhausted, and submission of an application does not guarantee approval or availability of funds. For more information, visit GeorgiaMortgageAssistance.ga.gov.



Pictured are recent graduates of the SGTC Advanced Emergency Medical Technician at the Crisp County Center with instructors Chad Mays (back left) and Brittany Bertelson (back right).

IVs, administered 181 medications, and had over 600 patient contacts.

The AEMT program prepares students to provide advanced

levels of pre-hospital emergency care, and graduates are equipped with the skills needed to serve their communities as highly trained first responders.

South Georgia Technical College offers a variety of programs in the public safety field, including Basic and Advanced EMT, Paramedicine, and Crim-

inal Justice. To learn more or apply, visit www.southgatech.edu. Spring Semester registration is January 6, and classes begin January 7.

Dooly County Community CALENDAR

email: thenewsobservereditor@gmail.com



Christ Chapel Bingo Night in Byromville

Enjoy Bingo Game night on the second Thursday of every month starting at 6:00 p.m. in the Byromville Municipal Complex. This is for individuals 55 and older. Free entry-fellowship-games and prizes.

Town of Dooling Meeting

The Town of Dooling-Town Meeting will now be held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month starting at 6:00p.m. (Except for the months of July & Dec. when no meeting will be held.) If you plan to bring an issue to the board, please contact the Mayor in writing a week before the town meeting to be placed on the agenda.

Dooly County Library

1200 East Union St., Vienna Mon. - Thurs. 9AM-6PM Fri. 9:30A.M. - 4P.M. Closed Saturday. Thursdays - COLOR & CHAT. Color books and colored pencils will be provided

or you can bring your own. For more information contact Jill Kloberdanz, library manager library at 229-268-4687.

The Elizabeth Harris Library

Unadilla Location:

Tues-Thurs 8:30AM-6PM

Friday 9AM-4PM

Saturday 9AM-12PM Noon

Byromville Location:

Tues-Thurs 2:30PM-5:30PM

"An Hour of Encouragement"

Pastor Dean and the New Poplar Spring Baptist Church would like for you to join us every Wednesday night @7pm for "An Hour of Encouragement" on our Conference Call line. Please dial (253) 993-3761. (TNS)

Bethlehem Baptist Church

Worship With Us Each & Every Sunday. Worship starts at 11:00am. Bible Study on each Sunday at 5:00pm. Jerry Jamal Sanders, Sr., Pastor. (TNS)

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Your Guide To Local Houses of Worship

Athens Hill Baptist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-4883

AOH Church of God Vienna, GA 229-268-1903

Bakersfield Baptist Church Vienna, GA

Bay Point CME Byromville, GA

Bethel Baptist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-2848

Bethlehem Baptist Church Byromville, GA 229-433-2102

Big Poplar Baptist Church Unadilla, GA

Brown Chapel Baptist Church Unadilla, GA 478-627-9466

Byromville Baptist Church Byromville, GA 229-433-2505

Byromville Methodist Church Byromville, GA 229-321-9292

Camp Creek Baptist Church Unadilla, GA 478-627-3929

Vienna Church of Christ Vienna, GA 229-268-1994

Vienna Church of God Vienna, GA 229-268-1404

County Line Baptist Church Unadilla, GA

Destiny Worship Center International Ministries Vienna, GA (478) 273-8112

Dooling Baptist Church Byromville, GA

Double Branch Freewill Baptist Church Unadilla, GA

Drayton Baptist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-8456

Drayton Wesleyan Church Vienna, GA, 229-321-9292

Ebenezer Baptist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-2964

Evangelistic Tabernacle Church

NAPA Brooks Auto Parts
229-268-2700
313 W. Union St., Vienna
Open Through Lunch
Eddie Conner, Manager

THE CITIZENS AGENCY
"Dependable Insurance"
121 N. 3rd Street
P.O. Box 486
Vienna, GA 31092
229-268-2800

Akin Insurance Agency, Inc.
Local People. Local Service. For a Lifetime.
Proudly Serving Dooly County for more than 10 years!
Corner of Union & 3rd
229-268-4751 • Vienna

Chad Weesner INSURANCE AGENCY
Vienna, GA

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church Byromville, GA

Richwood Baptist Church Vienna, GA

Pleasant Valley Baptist Church Pinehurst, GA 229-645-3713

Reedy Branch Baptist Church 740 Church Avenue Byromville, GA

Riverview Baptist Church Vienna, GA

Shady Grove CME Church Vienna, GA

Shiloh Methodist Church Vienna, GA

Smyrna Baptist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-6852

Snow Methodist Church Unadilla, GA

St. John Baptist Church Vienna, GA

Springhill Baptist Church Vienna, GA

St. Luke CME Lilly, GA

St. Mark's Baptist Church Vienna, GA

Tippettville Baptist Church Vienna, GA

Trails of Faith Deliverance Holiness Church Vienna, GA 229-268-4377

Turkey Creek Baptist Church Lilly, GA

Unadilla First Baptist Church Unadilla, GA 478-627-3615

Unadilla United Methodist Church Unadilla, GA 478-627-3330

Vienna Congregation Vienna, GA

Vienna First Baptist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-4386

Vienna Methodist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-4207

Church

Vienna, GA

Mt. Olive Baptist Church Byromville, GA

Mt. Moriah Baptist Church Unadilla, GA

Mt. Vernon Baptist Church Vienna, GA

Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church Vienna, GA

New Bethel Baptist Church Unadilla, GA 478-627-3775

Mt. Zion CME Vienna, GA 229-268-6013

Northside Missionary Baptist Church Vienna, GA

New Bethel CME Pinehurst, GA

Pinehurst Baptist Church Pinehurst, GA

Pinehurst Methodist Church Pinehurst, GA

Pleasant Hill Freewill Baptist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-8746

Church

Vienna, GA

Mt. Olive Baptist Church Byromville, GA

Mt. Moriah Baptist Church Unadilla, GA

Mt. Vernon Baptist Church Vienna, GA

Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church Vienna, GA

New Bethel Baptist Church Unadilla, GA 478-627-3775

Mt. Zion CME Vienna, GA 229-268-6013

Northside Missionary Baptist Church Vienna, GA

New Bethel CME Pinehurst, GA

Pinehurst Baptist Church Pinehurst, GA

Pinehurst Methodist Church Pinehurst, GA

Pleasant Hill Freewill Baptist Church Vienna, GA 229-268-8746



NEIL JOINER
Columnist

Joiner's Corner WISH LIST

Here's my wish list for 2026, plus I'll share a secret for helping some wishes come true.

I wish for a cure for male pattern baldness. That idea came right off the top of my head. I just need some seed money.

I wish for a vaccine for lying politicians. Lying would result in Pinocchio-style noses, their length in proportion to exaggeration. Perhaps long noses in our nation's capital might point them toward honest debate.

"I'd like to teach the world to sing." Coke had a delightful advertising jingle which included those lyrics. I'm a mediocre singer, but I'd like to post some songs online which I wrote years ago. Our triplets enjoyed them for a while so perhaps other children would too.

"I've got some friends I'd like to see again." That wish is from the theme song of a television series Then Came Bronson. Michael Parks, the motorcycle-riding star of the show, was a hero to many teenage boys during my youth. That tune has been stuck in my head for decades. Sometimes I sing it

while meandering down country roads in my truck.

I wish to become as good a man as my dog believes I am. Harriet's opinion is no doubt influenced by regular walks and treats. Even without rewards though, dogs give mankind more credit than we deserve.

I wish to rid the woods we love of nandinas, cherry laurel, palmetto, briar vines, and kudzu. We've made some progress but have a long way to go. We won't conquer them in 2026, but wishing doesn't have to be limited by reality. Hopefully the list will remind me of wishes I can work on.

I wish to put in a shallow well with a hand pump in those same woods. I've been planning this for a while. Maybe I'll get past the planning and have fresh water at our picnic site.

I wish Charlie Brown would kick the football through the uprights. Lucy has tricked him too many times by pulling it away. The kid deserves a chance, as do all children.

I wish people on news shows would stop habitually respond-

ing to questions by first saying, "That's a great question." There are occasional queries which deserve compliments, but not routinely. It's fine to ask, "Do you believe the snow will impact travel?" but it doesn't rise to the level of journalistic greatness.

I wish Netflix would offer G or PG rated versions of movies and other fare. Otherwise decent shows which include crude language could be cleaned up with dubbed lines. I've suggested this to Netflix before. My letter must have gotten lost.

While we're on that subject, I wish influential people would stop using vulgar expressions. Entertainers, athletes, coaches, and even Presidents have gravitated toward conversational vulgarity. Some of the most prominent of today's leaders are setting poor examples for the leaders of tomorrow.

I'm not out of wishes, but I am out of space, so here's my first and second place. I'd like to teach the world to sing, and I've got some friends I'd like to see again. Work is the secret to helping some wishes come true, so make your own list and let's see how we do.

Two more wishes before I close, though last perhaps the best. Happy New Year to you all. May our wishes which are worthy all be blessed.

and bless us beyond measure. Psalm 34:15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.

Then I close this article with one of the most uplifting scriptures in the Bible: Rev. 21:3,4 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Praise the Lord forevermore. He loves us to heaven and back. Until next time.



TIM LEWIS
Columnist

In The Garden With A JANUARY GARDENING CHECKLIST PART TWO

As we saw last week, even in the doldrums of winter, there are quite a few garden tasks to tackle. Herewith are some more of these to consider this month in this brand new year.

Here in middle Georgia, colorful annuals can still be planted even if the weather is cold. Flowering cool-season annuals make an immediate impact in a bare landscape. Plant dianthus, pansies, violas, snapdragons, ornamental kale, and parsley.

All of these prefer a sunny spot. Plant on a sunny day when the soil is more likely to be warm, and water the plants immediately. Purchase larger plants, those in 3-inch or larger pots. Plants in smaller pots will stop blooming as they try to establish roots. It is best not to install "six-pack" plants. They are too small to survive and thrive in the cold.

Don't worry if pansy leaves look dreadful in the cold morning hours; they will recover by noon as moisture fills their leaves. Pansies protect themselves during cold weather by wilting their leaves.

Remove faded blooms from plants periodically. This procedure, called deadheading, is especially important for pansies and violas. These produce

many more flowers if dead-headed on a regular basis.

You vegetable gardeners know that soil preparation is critical to the success of your garden. A thorough tilling of the soil is necessary each year to break up clumps of soil and old root balls. If the garden has not been cultivated for a few years, weeds and insects will have built up in the soil. Consider tilling garden beds now. This will expose to the cold any potentially harmful overwintering pests and weed seeds. It will also loosen compacted soil, improving air and water flow for plant roots.

It is that time of year when some gardeners dream of establishing their own fruit orchards. Before you do, be aware of some very important requirements for fruit trees. In order for a plant to produce fruit, the flowers must be pollinated. Some fruit trees are self-fruitful (self-pollinating). This means that pollen from a single plant is sufficient to pollinate the flowers on it. Other fruit trees are partially self-fruitful or even self-incompatible. Follow these general pollination guidelines when deciding whether you need one of more of each.

- Apple: plant at least two different varieties

- Blueberry: plant at least two different varieties
- Bunch grapes: self-fruitful
- Fig: self-fruitful
- Muscadine grapes: plant at least two different varieties; one must be self-fruitful
- Peach: self-fruitful
- Pear: most are self-fruitful
- Plum: plant at least two different varieties
- Raspberry and blackberry: self-fruitful

Fig bushes that have become too large for their space can be severely pruned now.

- Cut main branches by one-third to one-half their length
- Cut back older, less productive branches to encourage new, fruit-bearing growth

- Remove suckers from the base, any branches growing inward, and any crossing branches

- Cut back to a bud or smaller branch, avoiding long, bare stubs that invite decay

- Be aggressive. Figs can tolerate heavy pruning. Don't be afraid to cut back significantly to promote vigor

Severe winter pruning removes old fig wood, meaning you'll likely lose the early summer breba crop and have fewer main crop figs until the new wood matures. Expect lots of new, juvenile growth, which is what produces the main fig crop in the fall. Severe winter pruning keeps the bush smaller and sturdier and easier to manage.

I trust this checklist will aid you in your gardening exploits this month.

Tim Lewis is a Georgia Green Industry Association Certified Plant Professional, gardening writer, and former Perry High School horticulture instructor. He can be reached at (478)954-1507 or timlewis1@windstream.net.



DR. LANIER ROBERTS
Columnist

Writings From The Heart THE LONG, LOVING ARM OF GOD

When it seems that God has forgotten us----He hasn't. When the bottom seemingly has fallen off the edge of a cliff, that's when we grab hold of the scriptures and hold on to what we have learned in our Christian walk from day one. God cares for us and will NEVER forsake us. Let's take a gander at Psalm 122: 1,2 I will lift my eyes to the hills. From whence comes my help?

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Then we realize how many things God is to us in Psalm 18:2 The Lord is my Rock, and my fortress and my Deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my high tower.

After we see what God is to us, we see this next scripture jump off the pages of the Bible

and bless us beyond measure. Psalm 34:15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.

Then I close this article with one of the most uplifting scriptures in the Bible: Rev. 21:3,4 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Praise the Lord forevermore. He loves us to heaven and back. Until next time.



BILLY POWELL
Columnist

Parables To Ponder LINCHPIN OF SALVATION

If Jesus had not been born to a virgin, He could not have atoned for our sins. The angel Michael said to Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Upon hearing this, Mary asked, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" At that time, Mary and Joseph had not engaged in a conjugal relationship. The virgin birth of Jesus made possible the uniting of 'full deity' and 'full humanity' in one Person.

All descendants of Adam are guilty of possessing a sinful nature. Since Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, His virgin birth temporarily broke the unending chain of 'original sin' that has passed to all men. The

Savior "was tempted as we are, yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus never succumbed to the wiles of the devil during His 40-days in the desert. At Jesus' trial, Pontius Pilate said, "I find no fault in this Man."

No human being can pay the penalty for another's sins. Let's say a convicted murderer is scheduled for execution. If another man volunteered to die in his place, it is conceivable that the volunteer could die for the murderer. Even so, this volunteer could not die for the collective sins of mankind--which encompasses individuals previously deceased, those currently living, and those yet to be born. In one fell swoop, Jesus died for all humanity. One drop of His divine blood was sufficient to pay the penalty for all sin.

Jesus was fully human. His hometown people recognized

Him as an ordinary man. They called Him the carpenter's son. Jesus had a human body: He "wearied" at the well in Samaria, He "thirsted" on the cross, and He was so "weakened" after the Roman beatings that Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry His cross. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared in a human body. The disciples touched His hands and feet; He even ate broiled fish with them. Jesus possessed a transcendental resurrection body and could suddenly appear and disappear.

Summary: Jesus did not have a human father, but was conceived in the womb of Mary, a virgin. She became pregnant through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was engaged to Mary, but had no sexual relations with her. The virgin birth made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity in the Savior. Jesus is fully capable of assuming your sins and giving you a new relationship with God. He offers this invitation: "Behold I stand at the door (of your heart) and knock!"

Yes, We Need More Auditors

Charlie Harper
Guest Columnist

Career day in elementary school was a bit awkward. I was accustomed to blank stares from folks, kids and adults alike, when I responded to what my father did for a living. I could recite that he was "the Assistant Regional Audit Director for Health and Human Services". For much of my childhood I had no idea what that title meant either.

I can recall my Dad trying to explain it to my sixth grade class. "I'm an auditor". More blank stares.

Other parents had more relatable jobs. We of course, living in Fayette County, had a Delta pilot. I'm pretty sure we had a fireman. My Mom was a nurse. Dad did his best to explain his role.

Adults always had an easier time mis-understanding what Dad did. "An auditor? With the Federal Government? I always file my taxes on time!"

No, he wasn't "that" kind of auditor. He focused on government agencies, internally, for 22 years.

Dad switched his major to accounting when an injury cut his football career short. He went to work for the U.S. Government right out of college.

In those days, those younger and single got sent on longer travel assignments. Dad got to spend about 6 months each in Alaska, then Hawaii, then Puerto Rico, with a significant

amount of time traveling within the Pacific Northwest, auditing local Authorities receiving money from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Alaska was his favorite.

By the time I came along, he was doing much shorter trips and only when necessary. I can recall him spending quite a bit of time going back and forth to Columbia South Carolina. He was the Government's expert witness in a prosecution of someone who had been misappropriating funds.

In later years, I recall a few stories about that trial and a couple of others. He was fully familiar with the role of someone who had to bring the receipts, literally, to show malfeasance.

He was also well versed in the arts of defense attorneys who would try to obfuscate the issue and/or throw him off his game. He looked at that as a challenge just as much as he did when he had suited up to football. He understood the importance of game day.

Those he worked with were a close knit group. My middle name is from his boss who had become a father figure after his own dad had died. One of them was an "uncle". I am honored to have known quite a few of them.

I miss being taken to dinners when they got together to reminisce and tell old war stories. To a person, they were honorable. They defended the govern-

ment's money as if it were their own, because it was. They understood that stealing from the government was stealing from taxpayers - Stealing from us.

Dad loved his job until he didn't. The last few years were challenging.

Expectations and workloads increased. The tools to do the job became more scarce. Competence in those newly hired was lacking, but those folks got promoted just the same. All those factors and more increased stress levels.

One of those in Dad's inner circle had a breakdown. Others had severe medical issues. Dad ultimately decided instead of trying to hang in eight more years to reach retirement that life was too short. He spent the next decade owning a hardware store.

When Dad left the government's employment in the early 1980's, the public was still capable of being outraged over spending scandals. Those my age or older can remember news stories about \$600 hammers and \$7,000 coffee pots. The backlash was real, even if the cost accounting was just sloppy.

By the time I did a stint in a government contracting role about two decades ago, a procurement scandal involving tens of millions in documented fraud, waste, and abuse could barely get anyone's attention. I know this, because I spent almost two years trying to esca-

late the problem within proper channels. It was viewed as just the cost of doing business.

A couple of budget cycles ago, one of the priorities was to give the IRS enough additional funds equivalent to the cost of hiring 87,000 additional auditors. The stated goal was to make sure the right amount of money was being taken from us to give to the government.

The American people are now coming to the realization that systematic fraud has been occurring throughout the federal government. Those who have spent careers believing the "Defense Industrial Complex" is the only place money can go to be misdirected into

private profits are enduring a huge wakeup call as to the size and scope of where our tax money is actually spent. It appears states are not just complicit, but actively engaged in expanding the theft.

If we were to actually add 87,000 federal employees anywhere, I would agree that they should be auditors - just not those on the side of collecting the funds. The American people need to have assurance that when their hard earned tax dollars are paid, they go to where they were intended- and achieve promised results. We need more competent and honorable people on the inside, doing that job again.

DO YOU NEED TO ADVERTISE?

Email or Sales Rep.,
Phyllis Keaton at
phyllis.keaton@
yahoo.com
or call her at
(229)938-6253

Ask about advertising rates.
This newspaper comes out weekly on Thursdays, Deadline is Friday/noon the week before.

Deadline for legal submission is Friday Noon prior to First publication. Email word document to editor@ganevobserver.com

LEGALS

Please enter "LEGAL NOTICE" in the email subject headline. Please be sure to have your contact information listed. Most legal notices run \$15 per 100 words Per publication. Plus a \$10 affidavit fee.

STATE OF GEORGIA, COUNTY OF DOOLY.

Under and by virtue of the power of sale in a certain Deed to Secure Debt from **JAMES F. BRANCH, Grantor, to 1ST FRANKLIN FINANCIAL CORPORATION**, Grantee, dated the 31st day of January, 2022 and recorded in Deed Book 645, Page 54-57, Clerk's Office, DOOLY County Superior Court, said Deed to Secure Debt having been given to secure a Note dated the 31st day of January, 2022 in the sum of **\$27,246.57**, there is due to be sold by the undersigned at public outcry, during the legal hours of sale on the **first Tuesday in February, 2026, to-wit: the 3rd day of February, 2026**, to take place at the steps of the DOOLY County Courthouse, Hawkinsville, DOOLY County, Georgia, to the highest and best bidder for cash, the following described property:

ALL THAT IMPROVED TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND being parallelogram containing approximately 3.247 acres lying and being in Lot of Land No. 251 in the Seventh Land District of Dooly County, Georgia; said tract being more particularly described as follows: To obtain the point of beginning, start at the intersection of the center line of State Route No. 27 and the center line of Dooly County Road No. 91. From said point, thence proceed along said center line of Dooly County Road No. 91, South 00°22'51" East a distance of 2,521.85 feet to a point; thence proceed North 89° 00' 00" East a distance of 30 feet to a point in the East right-

of-way line of said Dooly County Road No. 91; thence proceed along said right-of-way line North 01° 00' 00" West a distance of 100 feet to a point, said point being the point and PLACE OF BEGINNING OF THE WITHIN DESCRIBED TRACT. From said point and PLACE OF BEGINNING, thence proceed, first course, North 89° 00' 00" East a distance of 345 feet to a point; thence proceed, second course, South 01° 00' 00" East a distance of 410 feet to point; thence proceed, third course, South 89° 00' 00" West a distance of 345 feet to a point in the aforementioned East right-of-way line of Dooly County Road No. 91; thence proceed, fourth course, along said East right-of-way line North 01° 00' 00" West a distance of 410 feet to the aforementioned point and place of beginning. Said tract comprising the 2.066 acre parcel delineated in plat of survey for James A. Braxton prepared by Earl D. Rained, dated 29 December 1993, revised 13 January, 1994 and recorded in Clerk's Office Dooly Superior Court in Plat Book 11, at Page 10, and the 1.181 acre parcel delineated in plat of survey for Mrs. Ferol A. Vaughn, prepared by William A. Pryor, Georgia Registered Land Surveyor, bearing plat date of December 12, 1969 and recorded in aforementioned Clerk's Office in Plat Record 5 at Page 87. The aforementioned plats being by reference thereto incorporated herein for a more complete description. Being the same property conveyed from Calvin Renault Towns and Lisa

Ann Towns to Branch Agricultural Transport, Inc. by deed dated October 17, 1995 and recorded in Deed Book 203 at Page 289 in the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court of Dooly County, Georgia.

The debt secured by said Deed to Secure Debt and Note has been and is hereby declared due and payable in full because of default pursuant to the terms of said Deed to Secure Debt and note. Notice has been given to enforce provisions for collection of attorney's fees and foreclosure in accordance with the legal requirements and the terms of the Deed to Secure Debt and Note. The indebtedness remaining in default, the sale will be made for the purpose of applying proceeds thereof to the payment of the indebtedness secured by the Deed to Secure Debt, accrued interest and expenses of the sale and other sums secured by the Deed to Secure Debt, including the attorney's fees and the remainder, after applying said proceeds to other indebtednesses owed by Grantor to Grantee, if any, shall be applied as provided by law.

To the best of the undersigned's knowledge and belief, the property is in the possession of **JAMES F. BRANCH and said property will be sold as the property of JAMES F. BRANCH**. Said property will also be sold subject to all outstanding ad valorem taxes, street improvements, and easements or restrictions of record, if any, unpaid water or sewage bills that constitute a lien against the property whether due and payable or not yet due and payable and which may not be of

record, the right of redemption of any taxing authority, any matters which might be disclosed by an accurate survey and inspection of the property, and any assessments, liens, encumbrances, zoning ordinances, restrictions, covenants and matters of record superior to the Deed to Secure Debt first set out above. The undersigned will execute a deed to the purchaser at said sale as provided in the Deed to Secure Debt. 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 Deed to Secure Debt.

The law firm of Emmett L. Goodman, Jr. for Plaintiff is acting as a debt collector attempting to collect a debt. Any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 44-14-162.2, the name, address and telephone number of the individual or entity who shall have the full authority to negotiate, amend or modify all terms of the above described mortgage is as follows: DELORIS L. O'NEAL, P.O. BOX 1933, AMERICUS GA 31709, TELEPHONE: 229-924-5393.

1ST FRANKLIN FINANCIAL CORPORATION as attorney-in-fact of JAMES F. BRANCH EMMETT L. GOODMAN, JR., LLC 544 Mulberry Street, Suite 800 Macon, Georgia 31201-2776 Telephone: (478)745-5415 1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, 2026

0763-VNO

NOTICE OF TRADE NAME REGISTRATION

The undersigned does hereby certify that **MHP Cleveland, LLC**, a Georgia limited liability company, is conducting business as 2690 Arena Rd., Unadilla, GA 31091 in Dooly County in the State of Georgia, under the trade name of "**Southern Trails RV Resort**" and that the nature of the business is ownership, operation and management of a recreational vehicle park and other related activities and that the names and addresses of the persons, firms or partnerships owning and carrying on said trade business are:

President or Owner: Vad Yazvinski
Phone number: 706-575-5262
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, 2026
0765-VNO

NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS OF CHARLES G. SPEIGHT, SR.

All creditors of the Estate of Charles G. Speight, Sr., deceased, late of Dooly County, Georgia are hereby notified to render their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all persons indebted to said Estate are required to make payment to me.

This 9th day of December, 2025.
/s/ David Speight
Executor of the Estate of Charles G. Speight, Sr.
Kim H. Stroup
Attorney for the Estate of Charles

G. Speight, Sr.
James-Bates-Brannan-Groover-LLP
231 Riverside Drive, Suite 100
PO Box 4283
Macon, Georgia 31208-4283
12/18/2025, 12/25/2025,
1/01/2026, 1/8/2026
0760-VNO (56221.0001)

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE OR RIGHT TO REDEEM

Take notice that: **KIM SMITH**
The right to redeem the following described properties, to wit: All and only that parcel of land designated as **Tax Parcel U 2 3 4, lying and being in the City of Unadilla, Dooly County, Georgia, described in Deed Book 512, Page 271, the description contained therein being incorporated herein by this reference, located on Oak Street.**

The tax deed to which this notice relates is dated the 6th day of December, 2016, and is recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Dooly County, Georgia, in Deed Book 562 at Page 57.

The property may be redeemed at any time before January 30, 2026, by payment of the redemption price as fixed and provided by law to the undersigned at the following address: 100 Sumter Street, P. O. Box 178, Oglethorpe, Georgia 31068.

Please be governed accordingly.
JON L. COOGLE
Attorney at Law
12/25/2025, 1/1, 1/8, 1/15, 2026
0762-VNO

Celebrating Dooly K-8 Academy Lifelong Learners



Contributed

Dooly K-8 is proud to spotlight members of our teaching staff who have recently graduated with advanced degrees. We are excited about their commitment to continued learning and how their dedication will directly support student growth



and success.

We proudly recognize our graduates: Mrs. Tomesia Taylor, Georgia Southwestern State University-Education Specialist in Elementary Education.



Mrs. Alvita Lewis, Georgia Southwestern State University-Education Specialist in Elementary Education. Mrs. Angelica Thompson, Georgia Southwestern State University-Education



Specialist in Middle Grades Education. Mrs. Tekeria Neal, Valdosta State University-Masters in Elementary Education. Ms. Jamia Bennett, Georgia Southwestern State University-Bach-



elor of Science in Elementary Education. Mr. Rody Velasquez, Georgia Southwestern State University-Bachelor of Science in Physical Education. Congratulations to

all of these outstanding educators. We are proud of you and grateful for the impact you continue to make in the classroom.

Bishop, Bipartisan Specialty Crop Caucus Urges Equitable Relief For Specialty Crop Producers

By Tim Franzén
News Observer Reporter

WASHINGTON — Specialty Crop Caucus Co-Chairs Rep. Sanford Bishop (GA-02), Rep. Jim Costa (CA-21), Rep. David Rouzer (NC-07), and Rep. David Valadao (CA-22), joined by 103 Members of Congress, sent a bipartisan letter to the House and Senate Agriculture Committees urging immediate and equitable relief for specialty crop producers.

The letter comes in response to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program, which allocates \$11 billion to row crop producers, and \$1 billion is reserved for specialty crops and other commodities, with little clarity on payment structure or timing.

Specialty crops—including fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture products—represent one of the most economically significant and labor-intensive

sectors of U.S. agriculture, generating more than \$75 billion annually in cash receipts. Yet specialty crop producers continue to face rising costs and market disruptions without receiving proportional relief.

Between 2020 and 2025, specialty crop growers paid:

- 25% more for pesticides
- 31% more for fuel
- 37% more for fertilizer
- Nearly 50% more for labor

These cost increases were not matched by comparable increases in crop prices, placing significant strain on growers across the country.

In their letter, the Members stress that while USDA has stated that \$1 billion will be reserved for specialty crops, details regarding eligibility, payment formulas, and timelines remain unclear. The co-chairs urge the Agriculture Committees to press USDA to ensure these funds are distributed quickly, fairly, and in a manner that reflects the unique structure of specialty crop op-

erations.

"Specialty crop growers contribute over \$75 billion annually to the U.S. economy, yet they continue to face rising input costs, limited access to labor, trade disruptions, and other unprecedented challenges. As USDA rolls out the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program, we urge the Agriculture Committees to ensure that the \$1 billion set aside for specialty crops is distributed quickly, fairly, and equitably, so growers can continue producing for our nation and remain globally competitive," said the bipartisan Specialty Crop Caucus Co-Chairs.

"After months of uncertainty, specialty crop growers urgently need clarity and meaningful relief, and we appreciate the Specialty Crop Caucus for elevating this issue and making clear that specialty crops must be included in any relief package for American agriculture," the co-chairs of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance said. "Specialty crops are both an economic engine

and the source of the most nutritious foods in the American diet, but current policies fail to reflect their importance to public health and food security. We strongly support the Caucus's call for USDA to act swiftly, provide transparency, and build on proven relief models such as the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops Program (MASC) and CFAP-2 to ensure assistance reaches growers quickly and fairly. Specialty crop growers cannot afford further delay, and we urge congressional leadership and the Administration to move immediately to deliver proportional, transparent, and timely relief that reflects the economic significance and unique cost structures of specialty crop agriculture."

Previous programs, including the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP-2) and the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) Program, demonstrated tailored formulas and streamlined delivery systems ensure relief reaches producers effi-

ciently.

The Members emphasize USDA should build on these proven models as they proceed with implementation of the FBA Program. The Specialty Crop Caucus is calling on congressional leadership and the Administration to prioritize parity, transparency, and urgency, ensuring specialty crop producers receive the support necessary to remain competitive, sustain rural economies, and continue supplying safe, affordable food to consumers nationwide.

Background: USDA Farmer Bridge Assistance Program Announced December 8, 2025:

- \$12 billion total in assistance
- \$1 billion designated for row crops
- \$1 billion reserved for commodities not covered by the FBA Program; payment timelines and details are still being finalized based on market impacts and economic needs.
- Payments for row crops are expected as early as February 28, 2026

Rising costs for insurance, with reports of refusals to pay claims, could spur legislation

By Ty Tagami
Bureau Chief

Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Like just about everything, the cost of insurance has been rising, fueling frustration that state leaders say they want to address.

Policy holders complain of expensive insurance that does not pay out as promised. At the same time, insurers see an unat-

tractive market in Georgia.

Georgia ranked 50th in profitability for insurance companies last year among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, said Robert Hoyt of the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business.

Hoyt, speaking at the final hearing last week of a committee of lawmakers concerned about insurance costs, said low

profits can drive insurers from the market, reducing competition.

Profits were down 8.7% in the state versus 7.8% average gains nationally, he said. That kind of imbalance encouraged companies to take their business elsewhere.

"Less availability can lead to higher prices," he said.

The House of Representatives'

Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Insurance Rates met for a final time in Gwinnett County on Thursday after holding hearings in Atlanta, Savannah and Macon.

Despite the discouraging statistics from last year, the lawmakers heard some positive news.

Three companies recently announced reductions in their auto policy premiums, according to

state Insurance Commissioner John King.

Safeco Insurance Company of Illinois is cutting rates 5.1%, Safeco Insurance Company of Indiana is reducing them 4.9% and Liberty Mutual Personal Insurance Company is lowering rates by 5.7%.

King attributed the reductions to the state's anti-fraud efforts and to the "lawsuit abuse re-

forms" lawmakers adopted earlier this year, a reference to tort law changes that were a priority for Gov. Brian Kemp during the last legislative session.

The legislation passed largely along party lines, with Democrats arguing it shielded insurers from liability and denied claimants adequate legal redress.

Charles Nance Receives AJC First Team All State Honors



By Athletic Director Brandon Dawkins and DCHS Assistant Principal Chiquita Granville

Congratulations to Charles Nance on receiving First Team All-State honors as selected by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC) Sportswriters and Coaches. This prestigious recognition reflects Charles' hard work, dedication, and outstanding performance. Well deserved congratulations on an incredible achievement."

DCHS Assistant Principal Chiquita Granville added, "We had an amazing time traveling to support one of our very own, Charles Nance, as he earned the incredible opportunity to compete

in the Minority Coaches Association of Ga. Rising Seniors Junior Bowl.

It serves as a development event for athletic, academic, and social growth, attracting college recruiters and highlighting local talent, often played around late December-early January.

It's a significant regional event separate from the national NFL Senior Bowl, giving juniors a chance to shine before their senior year. Watching Charles represent his school, his community, and himself was nothing short of inspiring.

Opportunities like this are a testament to believing in what's possible. We are so proud of you, Charles."

Lady Bobcats Bring Home the Victory against Wilkinson County

By Tim Franzén
News Observer Reporter

The Bobcats traveled to Perry following the holiday break to take on the Panthers in a non-region game last Friday and lost 69-54. Dooly County's Jamonte Taylor early in the season is the leading scorer averaging 16 points per game, while Charles Nance is effective off the boards with 11 rebounds.

The Lady Bobcats meanwhile were dominated losing 69-9 to the Lady Panthers who are a AAAA region school, while Dooly County is a Region Four single A Division II school. Both teams then boarded buses to Irwinton, Ga. Saturday, Jan. 3 to take on Wilkinson County in non-region matchups.

When the smoke cleared, it was the Lady Bobcats coming out on top over the Wilkinson County girls 39-31. However in the nightcap, it was the Warriors who were victorious over the Dooly County boys 65-26. Dooly County will be hosting rival Wilcox County in the DCHS gym Friday night, Jan. 9 beginning with the girls game at 6:00 p.m.

Then both teams will be entertaining another rival Hawkinsville Saturday afternoon, Jan. 10 with the Lady Bobcats tip off against the Lady Red Devils at 3:00 p.m. At press-time, the Lady Bobcats were 6-3 overall and 3-0 in the region, while the boys were 3-5 overall with a Region 4-A Division II record of 1-2 thus far.

INSURANCE CONTINUED FROM 5A

Lawmakers on the House committee heard complaints about insurers who refused to pay claims because, the critics said, state laws did not hold them to account.

"Insurance companies expect policyholders to pay their bills on time, every time," said a woman who sued her insurer after months of battling over repair costs from a fallen tree. "When it's their turn to pay, there are often no real consequences for delay or denial."

Auto repair companies talked of insurers who refused to pay the full cost to repair cars to manufacturers' standards.

They shared stories about owners who fought insurers for months and finally paid out of pocket, desperate to get their vehicles back.

"The insurance company will drag their feet," said Frankie Johnson, owner of Styles Auto Care in Cartersville. He said his customers had shared hundreds of their email threads with insurers that illustrated their predicament.

Companies want to delay the repair process, he said, "hoping that everyone will just give up."

Johnson sized up the situation: "The current rights of the consumer are not much."

There were similar stories about tactics

in medical care.

Rachael Auyer, of the Georgia Society of Orthotists and Prosthetists, had a client who lost her leg below the knee in an automobile collision. An avid marathoner, the 39-year-old teacher was denied a running prosthesis, Auyer said, because it was not deemed medically necessary. Auyer said the Rome woman, a special education teacher, also had to hop to the bathroom because the insurer did not deem a shower prosthesis to be medically necessary.

"Physicians don't determine medical necessity," Auyer said, "insurance companies do."

Rep. Matt Reeves, R-Duluth, chaired the study committee. He said in an interview that lawmakers will be scrutinizing prices, profits and the way claims are processed.

Reeves, who serves as vice chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said the state needs to review its fines for insurance companies that act in bad faith to ensure penalties are significant enough to deter misbehavior.

Insurance affordability will likely inspire legislation during the legislative session that starts in January, he said. "I think it'll be a robust session on insurance."

FA's Brooklin Cromer Signs with Georgia Southern East



Contributed

Fullington Academy announced recently that Brooklin Cromer was to be honored during a signing ceremony and will be attending Georgia Southern East. The celebration was held in

the Fullington Academy gym Wednesday, Jan. 7.

According to reports, "Georgia Southern East is a consolidation of Georgia Southern University and East Georgia State College forming a single university with a new 'East

Georgia' designation. 'Georgia Southern University, East Georgia Campus in Swainsboro was effective January 1, 2026 to expand access, streamline services and leverage strengths in the region."

Lady Trojans Excited to Get Into Region Play

By Head Coach Van Bailey

Coming back from the break we had the chance to go up to John Hancock Academy and play in their holiday tournament. It put us up against Briarwood Academy, a real good team out of Warrenton, Ga. ranked sixth or seventh in AA.

That means we would have played three of the top seven teams in AA at this point in the year. We came out a little sluggish offensively. We just couldn't get anything going from the outside.

Carli Gibson had a great night and ended up leading us in scoring with 16 hitting some key shots against their man-to-man defense and did some good things early, taking advantage of back doors and some give and go opportunities.

We came out jumping out to a 9-5 lead and it was 18 at the half. At that point, we were playing pretty well and I knew our defense would need to adjust and I knew it would come down to if we could make our open shots on the outside in the second half.

Unfortunately, our defense did not play as fundamentally sound as I would have liked, giving up some easy baskets to them in the second half that came back to haunt us. We just could not make our layups and our open

looks and just went stone cold in the second half falling behind 28-24 at the end of the third quarter.

Then in the fourth quarter, we just could not score with only one field goal and ended up losing 42-28. Going in, if you told me we would play them within 14, I'd probably would have been happy.

After the game was over, I would have told you we let one slip away and could have probably won this one if we could have gotten a few things offensively going better and tweaked a little of our defense and been more fundamentally sound. We did a good job of boxing out, but we still got beat on the boards and an area we've got to fix going into region play.

The effort from the girls was there and you can never question their effort and unfortunately, I didn't go our way. We also had a big game from Evelyn Fletcher who did a great job on the boards and took advantage of some back doors to score some points for us. Leading us in rebounding was Claire Shugart with 10 and had a good night.

Just a few areas again that we've got to 'tweak', a little bit on offense and scoring that we need to work on. Our defense is showing up every night and holding teams to some of the lower points, I think the offense will come around.



Photo by Bonnie Huesler
#14 Caroline Akin

Excited to get into region play that started Tuesday, Jan. 6 at home versus Grace Christian.

Then we board buses down to Westwood in Camilla, Ga. Friday, Jan. 9 for another region opponent and just get ready for the second half of the season playing the games that really count and see what we can do. At press-time, the Lady Trojans had an overall record of 7-4.

Trojans Focusing on Strong Showing in Region

By Tim Franzén
News Observer Reporter

Fullington Academy under the leadership of Head Coach James Martin are looking forward to the beginning of region play this week against Grace Christian Tuesday at home, then traveling to Camilla, Ga. Friday to play Westwood. The Trojans last Friday played AA school Briarwood as part of a John Hancock Holiday Tournament following New Years Day.

The Buccaneers who are in the Freelance Region came away with the victory over FA 56-46. The Trojans started off sluggishly on offense in the first quarter scoring only five points. However, the team surged in the final three frames scoring 16 before half, 10 after halftime, then 15 in the fourth quarter. Fullington also was in action Saturday, Jan. 3 against Milledgeville Athletic Club as part of the tournament and came out on the short end of a 53-49 score against the Bears.

The Trojans played the first region game of the season at home against Grace Christian Academy Tuesday, Jan. 6 then will be on the road in Camilla, Ga. Friday, Jan. 9 against Westwood in another region battle. At press-time FA was 6-8 overall.



#35 Senior Garlan Godfrey

Photo by Bonnie Huesler

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

Stay connected to your community and support local journalism!

(478) 825-2432

