



IN THE NEWS

December 2016

Parks & Recreation Programs
Frances Meadows Aquatic and Community Center
Gainesville Civic Center
Lake Lanier Olympic Center
City / County Issues
Miscellaneous



Gainesville Parks and Recreation Agency
830 Green Street
Gainesville, GA 30501



FAMILY EVENTS

THIS WEEK

Candlelight Tours of McDaniel Farm

When: 7 p.m. Dec. 1, 2, 8, 10, 16, 17, 18, 20 & 21
Where: 3251 McDaniel Road, Duluth
Cost: \$8
More info: www.gwinnettEHC.org

Athens-Clarke County Downtown Parade of Lights

When: 7 p.m. Dec. 1
Where: The corner of Hancock Avenue and Pulaski Street, Athens
Cost: Free
More info: 706-613-3625 or athensclarkecounty.com/parade

Flapjack fundraiser with Santa for Relay for Life

When: 8-10 a.m. Dec. 3
Where: Applebee's, 1705 Browns Bridge Road, Gainesville
Cost: \$7 per person
More info: 770-297-1220

Christmas at the Fort

When: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 3
Where: Fort Hollingsworth-White House, 2307 Wynn Lake Road, Alto
Cost: \$5 parking
More info: 706-949-1487 or 706-244-1239

Reindog Parade

When: 11 a.m. Dec. 3
Where: Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave. NE, Atlanta
Cost: \$15 per dog, \$18 at the door. Maximum two dogs per owner
More info: www.atlantabg.org

Christmas for the Kids

When: 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Dec. 3
Where: Green's Tavern, 4856 Hog Mountain Road, Flowery Branch
Cost: 1 unopened/unwrapped toy or donation
More info: 678-725-1747

Flowery Branch Christmas Tree Lighting and Roll 'n' Stroll Parade

When: Noon Dec. 3
Where: Main Street, Flowery Branch
Cost: Free
More info: 678-398-1387

Christmas in the Mountains Lighted Parade

When: 5 p.m. Dec. 3
Where: Downtown Cleveland, 59 S. Main St., Cleveland
Cost: Free
More info: whitecountychamber.org or 706-865-5356



For Get Out

The family Christmas tree is adorned with popcorn, apples and homemade decorations for the candlelight tours taking place this holiday season. Guests may enjoy touring the family farm and learning about historic Christmas customs and traditions.

Christmas on Green Street

When: 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4
Where: Gainesville Civic Center, 830 Green St., Gainesville
Cost: Free
More info: hchsgeorgia@gmail.com or 770 503-1319 or www.hallcountyhistoricalsociety.org

UPCOMING

Holly Jolly Holiday

When: 10-11:30 a.m. Dec. 13
Where: Rocksprings Park, 291 Henderson Extension, Athens
Cost: \$4 for Athens-Clarke County residents, \$6 for non-residents
More info: www.athensclarkecounty.com/leisure

Breakfast with the Grinch

When: 9:30-10:30 a.m. Dec. 17
Where: Rocksprings Park, 291 Henderson Extension, Athens
Cost: \$6 for Athens-Clarke County residents, \$9 for non-residents
More info: www.athensclarkecounty.com/leisure

Disney Live! Mickey & Minnie's Doorway to Magic

When: 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Dec. 17 and 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Dec. 18
Where: Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, 2800 Cobb Galleria Parkway, Atlanta
Cost: \$20 and higher
More info: 800-745-3000 or www.ticketmaster.com

Silent Partners throw party to collect toys

Unwrapped gifts go to children in need

BY KAYLA CANADA
For Get Out

While some sing "All I Want for Christmas is my Two Front Teeth," Silent Partners for the Kids will sing a different tune as the organization collects toys during its Christmas event.

The ninth annual Christmas for the Kids will be from 1-5:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3, at Green's Tavern in Flowery Branch. It will feature live music, children's games, raffles and auctions. Santa will even make an appearance.

Auction items include jewelry, sports memorabilia, grills and ceiling fans donated by Progressive Lighting. Silent Partners will raffle off a 55-inch flat screen television, gift cards and gift baskets.

And the tavern at 4856 Hog Mountain Road in Flowery Branch will run a special discount.

Admission to the annual event is an unwrapped toy for children in need.

The unwrapped gifts, which also were collected from barrels at area businesses from the public, will be divided among the nonprofit's partnering organizations.

One partnering organizations this year is Hillside Children's Hospital in Atlanta, a hospital for children with emotional and behavioral issues.

"They have partnered with us since the beginning," said Kelli Lynch, secretary of Silent Partners.

"They actually show us what we do. We've helped build a cafeteria and expand their

Christmas for the Kids

When: 1-5:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3

Where: Green's Tavern, 4856 Hog Mountain Road, Flowery Branch

Cost: 1 unopened/unwrapped toy or monetary donation

More info: 678-725-1747

library."

Two other partners are the Court Appointed Special Advocate program of Rockdale and Hall counties and Gwinnett Early Childhood program.

The charities bring Silent Partners lists of children and their ages for toys. While two of the partner agencies hand out the gifts, Silent Partners delivers the toys to Hillside hospital and sponsor a party with the children.

Any extra toys are donated to the American Legion in Buford.

According to its Facebook page, Silent Partners for the Kids Inc. is a nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to helping children of all ages in their time of need, through community and specially organized events in and around Atlanta and surrounding communities.

Lynch said she thinks the organization is different than others because of the people it helps. The organization also does not turn any group down for assistance.

"We try to help the community that we're in," Lynch said. "A lot of charities don't give back to the community they're in. But helping people out — single moms at Christmas time — that's what it's about."

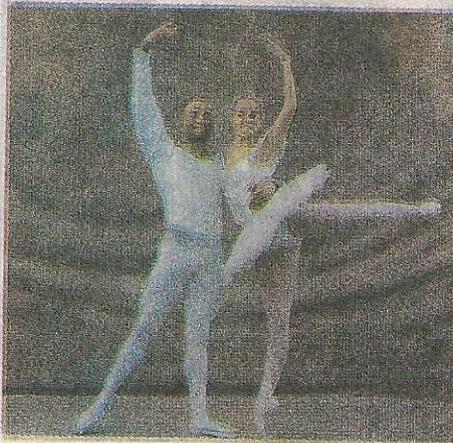


GET OUT

WEEKEND AHEAD

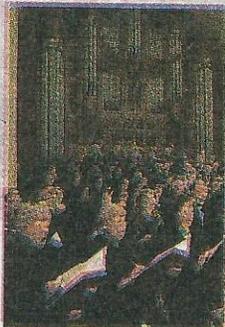
Northeast Georgia's entertainment guide

FRIDAY



'The Nutcracker'

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 2; 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3; and 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4
Where: Pearce Auditorium, 500 Washington St. SE, Gainesville
Cost: \$20-28 adults, \$16-24 seniors, \$14-20 children/ students
More info: www.gainesvilleballet.org/performances or 770-532-4241



Piedmont College Singers 'Lessons and Carols'

When: 7:30 p.m. Dec. 2-3
Where: Piedmont College Chapel, 1021 Central Ave., Demorest
Cost: Free
More info: 706-778-3000

SATURDAY

Christmas at the Fort

When: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 3
Where: Fort Hollingsworth-White House, 2307 Wynn Lake Road, Alto
Cost: \$5 parking
More info: 706-949-1487 or 706-244-1239

Christmas in the Mountains Lighted Parade

When: 5 p.m. Dec. 3
Where: Downtown Cleveland, 59 S. Main St., Cleveland
Cost: Free
More info: whitecountychamber.org or 706-865-5356

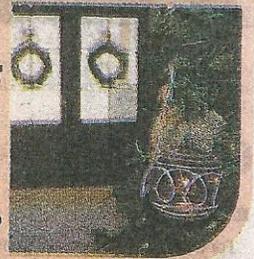


Flowery Branch Christmas Tree Lighting and Roll 'n' Stroll Parade

When: Noon Dec. 3
Where: Main Street, Flowery Branch
Cost: Free
More info: 678-398-1387

Christmas Town & Country Tour

When: 5:30-8:30 p.m. Dec. 3
Where: 201 Dean St., Clermont
Cost: \$20 advance, \$25 at the door
More info: 770-983-1759 or www.clermontga.com



2016 Jingle Jog 5K

When: 9 a.m. Dec. 3
Where: 5517 Main St., Flowery Branch
Cost: \$30 advance and \$35 race day
More info: www.active.com



SUNDAY

Christmas on Green Street

When: 4:30 p.m. Dec. 4
Where: Gainesville Civic Center, 830 Green St., Gainesville
Cost: Free
More info: hchsgeorgia@gmail.com or 770-503-1319 or www.hallcountyhistoricalsociety.org



Green Street shut down for Sunday parade

Times staff reports

Green Street and part of Thompson Bridge Road/Ga. 60 will be closed from 3:30 p.m. to 8 or 8:30 p.m. Sunday as part of the annual Christmas on Green Street.

The usually busy thoroughfare will be closed from E.E. Butler Parkway at Academy Street to Enota Avenue as it juts off Ga. 60, Gainesville police Sgt. Kevin Holbrook said Thursday.

Side streets, featuring parking for the event, will be open, he said.

The free event starts at 4:30 p.m. with the Christmas-style parade down Green Street beginning at the Gainesville Civic Center. It will conclude at 7 p.m. with the Rotary Club tree lighting at the intersection of Green Street and Academy Street.

Other activities include narrated tours of the historic homes and family-friendly activities.

This year's event will have more floats than previous years, officials have said, and feature 29 singing and dancing groups, including the East Hall Viking Band and the Atlanta Freedom Band.

Children may have their pictures taken with Santa. They may also meet princess and superhero characters or check out a Jurassic Park car. Other child-friendly events include a petting zoo and fudge-making demonstrations.

Free mini-train rides will chug around The Times parking lot, and the press will be running for anyone to see.

The Times also will have a free photo booth with professional photographer and serve as the police command center with lost and found, first aid and information.

The Quinlan Visual Arts Center will be open for its annual Handcrafted for the Holidays event, selling art and crafts from local artists.

For more information, contact the Hall County Historical Society at hchsgeorgia@gmail.com or call 770-503-1319.

12/31/10

Rain can't stop Christmas tradition



Photos by SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

Despite the rain, the Hall County Historical Society's Christmas on Green Street begins with a parade Sunday evening.

Residents brave bad weather for annual parade, visit historic homes

BY JEFF GILL
jgill@gainesvilletimes.com

The crowds were light in number, but spirits were high as holiday revelers made their way through a soggy, cold Christmas on Green Street Sunday night.

"It's a family tradition. We've always come out here," said Brooke Green of Lula.

She and Brian Green and their 11-year-old daughter Abbie bundled up at their car as they waited for the parade, a highlight of the annual event, to start.

The weather wasn't a factor for the Greens — and handfuls of others — as they watched the parade travel Green toward E.E. Butler Parkway at Academy Street, even as the light rain became a downpour.

"This is Germany. This is German weather," said Andreas Engel, giving a quick assessment of the event.

"We read that there was something going (Sunday) and that there was a Christmas parade, so we wanted to check it out," said his wife, Annika,



Jon Pope waves at Christmas parade participants Sunday evening as he holds an umbrella for Kristy Davies and son Welles.

■ Please see CHRISTMAS, 6A

12/15/14

CHRISTMAS

■ Continued from 1A

holding their baby, 3-month-old Leander. "It's interesting to us to see how Americans celebrate Christmastime."

Andreas' job with IMS Gear brought the family to the U.S. six months ago.

The Engels had stopped after the parade at The Times, which featured a free photo booth and a room where visitors could write letters to Santa Claus.

Gustavo and Perla Perez brought their daughter, 5-year-old Chloe, who said she especially enjoyed seeing the camel walking in the parade.

"We come every year, so we (can't) miss it," Perla Perez said.

Normally heavily traveled Green Street was closed to traffic for the event, so people could freely cross back and forth to visit historic homes lining the road.

"When this all started, it was for the people in the community to be able to come and be up close and see the homes," said Martha Hodge of the Hall County Historical Society, which has sponsored the event for 15 years.

One of the popular attractions was at The Fudge Factory's corporate offices, where Jason Young and Ryan Hornung demonstrated making fudge.

"Everybody repeat after me, 'I love that fudge ... and I will never go on a diet, so help me fudge,'" they said in a crowd participation moment.

Carol Krider Burkett, dressed in period costume, greeted people as they entered a white clapboard home housing law firms Gillsville Law and Ibrahim & RAO.

She said she enjoys the event, even though it seems to rain every time she participates.

"I love the people, the children," she said. "It's the season. It's beautiful."

'When this all started, it was for the people in the community to be able to come and be up close and see the homes.'

Martha Hodge
Hall County Historical Society





Photos by SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

Top: John Kelley takes in the events Sunday evening during the annual Christmas on Green Street with his dog Toby. **Above:** Rain forces Santa Claus inside a Gainesville Fire Department truck. **Right:** Carol Krider Burkett greets visitors while dressed in period costume to the historic house that is home to law firms Gillisville Law and Ibrahim & RAO. **Below:** Alex Soto walks along Green Street. **Below right:** Visitors needed to don their raincoats while watching the parade and visiting the historic homes.





Sold Out!

Eggs & Issues

Greater Hall Chamber's Annual Legislative Forum

Thursday, December 15

7:30 am - 9:30 am

Gainesville Civic Center

Featuring

Lt. Governor Casey Cagle
and the Gainesville-Hall County
Legislative Delegation

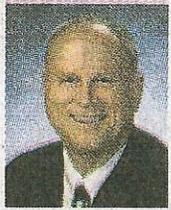


Casey Cagle
Georgia Lt. Governor

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Butch Miller
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Lee Hawkins
27th House District



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29th House District



Emory Dunahoo
30th House District



Timothy Barr
103rd House District

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Over 400 Chamber Members Attending!

Reservations Required • Sold Out Event

Details: Gerri Collins, 770-532-6206 x 106

Email: gcollins@ghcc.com

Online: GreaterHallChamber.com



12/15/16

2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

What's old is new again



Photos by **SCOTT ROGERS** | The Times

State Rep. Emory Dunahoo, R-Gainesville, center, speaks Thursday morning during the annual Eggs & Issues breakfast at the Gainesville Civic Center. Dunahoo, along with state Sen. Butch Miller, R-Gainesville, right, and Representative-elect Matt Dubnik took questions from those who attended the sold-out event.

State lawmakers to tackle more of same issues in 2017

BY JOSHUA SILAVENT
jsilavent@gainesvilletimes.com

When it comes to the 2017 state legislative session, “carryover” is the operative word.

From the water wars and tax reform to medical cannabis and guns on campus, what’s old is new again.

Hall County business leaders got a preview of the upcoming session of the Georgia General Assembly at the annual Eggs & Issues breakfast hosted Thursday morning at the Gainesville Civic Center by the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce.

“Coming into the 2017 legislative session, Georgia’s economy and budget are in a much better position with more than \$2 billion in reserves,” said Tim Evans, vice president of economic development at the local chamber. “The upcoming General Assembly will have a focus on workforce and career development, including funding for the new Lanier Technical College campus.”

But it’s not just local industry and business that could benefit at the hands of a resurgent conservative movement.

With a Republican-controlled Congress and White House, businesses should feel energized by the prospect that regulations are likely to be loosened and the Affordable Care Act is likely on its way to the morgue, according to U.S. Rep. Doug Collins, R-Gainesville.

“It’s amazing how this community comes together ... it’s great to be a part of growing together,” Collins told the audience numbering in the hundreds.

State Rep. Lee Hawkins, R-Gainesville, the dean of the delegation from Hall County now that Carl Rogers has retired from the state House, said repealing the ACA would have a significant impact on Georgia’s own budget.

Medicaid is a big item without having expanded it under the ACA, he said, with about 1.1 million children, and 1.8 million individuals overall, covered by it in the state.

Moreover, efforts to support growth in graduate medical training residencies, such as a new program being developed at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville, rely on federal health care reimbursements.

Hawkins said the top health care committee in the General Assembly would begin meeting before the legislative session formally kicks off Jan. 9.

For Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, R-Gainesville, making higher education more affordable



Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle speaks Thursday morning. The sold-out event also featured the Gainesville-Hall County legislative delegation.

‘Coming into the 2017 legislative session, Georgia’s economy and budget are in a much better position with more than \$2 billion in reserves.’

Tim Evans
Vice president of economic development at the local chamber

and spurring economic development — not just through retention and recruitment of existing businesses, but through innovation, too) are critical to meet the demands of a growing population that now exceeds 10 million.

“We are not short of challenges,” Cagle said, but with those come more opportunities to “create more economic engines to fuel the chance for everyone to experience the American Dream.”

Access to clean drinking water is a battle waged in the past, present and future.

Collins said Georgia has a leg up on Florida and Alabama in its legal fight over water, and state lawmakers said they support developing additional reservoirs to counter water shortages in a drought like the Northeast Georgia region is currently experiencing.



Attendees of Thursday morning’s event received a 2017 Hall County calendar.

Lawmakers said they supported state-funded reservoirs and additional increases to the Lake Lanier pool volume.

Gov. Nathan Deal left his mark on a busy and controversial legislative session last spring.

For example, he vetoed bills that would have expanded the right for permit holders to carry concealed weapons on college campuses, as well as a bill that sought to expand “religious freedom” but which opponents, including prominent business leaders, said would increase discrimination against gays and lesbians.

But those vetoes don’t mean these bills are dead and buried forever.

Rep. Emory Dunahoo, R-Gainesville, said

■ Please see ISSUES, 5A

12/11/16



Photos by **SCOTT ROGERS** | The Times

U.S. Rep. Doug Collins, R-Gainesville, speaks Thursday morning during the annual Eggs & Issues breakfast at the Gainesville Civic Center. The event featured the the Gainesville-Hall County legislative delegation taking questions and speaking on the upcoming legislative session.

ISSUES

■ Continued from 1A

highlighting certain restrictions, such as prohibitions on carrying in a dormitory and age limits, could get the “guns everywhere” bill passed this time around.

“I’m a firm believer in it,” he added.

For state Sen. Butch Miller, R-Gainesville, the “devil is in the details.”

Guns, he said, can be a bad combination on a college campus rife with “hormones” and alcohol.

“Unintended consequences can be powerful,” Miller said.

The fight over access to medical cannabis to treat eight approved medical

conditions is likely to return as well.

Lawmakers quashed a bill last spring to expand the conditions the drug could be used to treat, and a majority of Republicans have, thus far, been hesitant to allow the manufacturing and distribution of medical cannabis in the state.

Miller said it’s sometimes a good thing for bills to die the first time around so that they can be tweaked and gotten right the next time. He expects that could be the case with medical cannabis this year.

Dunahoo said he continues to support allowing the manufacture and distribution of the drug in the state so that those with the legal right to access it can be assisted.

“Until we walk in their

shoes, we need to make sure it is easier to walk,” he said.

Hawkins cautioned, however, that any use of cannabis, even for conditions approved in Georgia, remains illegal under federal law, and it is unclear how a new administration in the White House will approach the issue.

Whether to legalize gambling in the state is another thorny question that will likely get renewed attention this year, lawmakers agreed.

Hawkins said he expects to see legislation drafted.

But at the end of the day, it’s an issue likely to be decided by voters in a statewide ballot referendum, Miller said.

“When it’s a difficult question, politicians want to let you vote,” he added.

12/11/16

GAINESVILLE

City gets clean '16 audit results

Gainesville received a clean or "unmodified" opinion on its fiscal year 2016 audit.

Revenues for the year were up 2.9 percent from 2015, with increases in property, sales and other taxes.

Expenses were up, too, with the bulk of the 5.9 percent increase seen in fire department, engineering and stormwater spending.

Total operating revenue was up 3.6 percent and operating expenses increased 6.4 percent, with cost of services rising by nearly \$830,000.

The city began its 2017 fiscal year on July 1 with a general fund budget of \$33.5 million.

New funding to support Olympic Venue plans

Gainesville is planning to provide more than \$11,000 in additional funding to support the implementation of a master plan for the Lake Lanier Olympic Venue.

The funds will be used to conduct an environmental assessment for the park as the governing body, Gainesville Hall '96, seeks a state-funded grant for future construction projects and upgrades.

Improvements already made include renovations to facilities, docks and the tower.

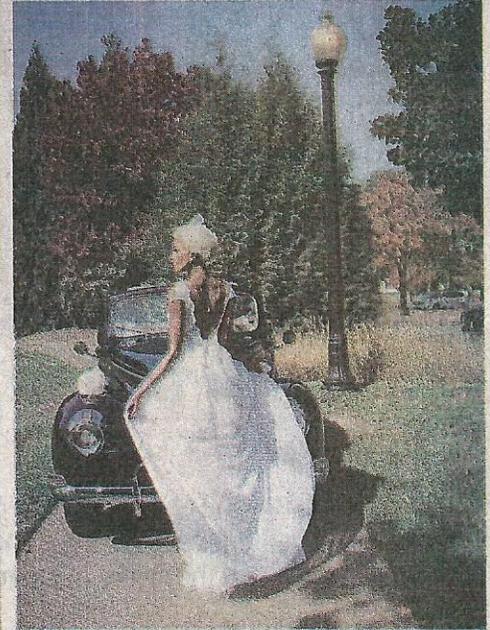
Hall County will cover the other half needed to fund the assessment, which will be reviewed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Times staff reports

12/17/16

GAINESVILLE CIVIC CENTER

PROUDLY PRESENTS



Bridal Expo

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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GAINESVILLE

Portion of Wilshire Trails Park to be closed for 3 days

Part of Wilshire Trails Park in Gainesville will be closed today through Thursday for the park's latest trail replacement.

A 300-foot section of the park starting at Ridgewood Avenue going toward Ivey Terrace Park is set to be closed during that three-day period, according to Gainesville Parks and Recreation.

No detour or bypass is available for pedestrians.

Gainesville Parks and Recreation said it has already replaced "significant portions" of Wilshire Trails within the past year, adding that replacements are done in segments to be cost-effective and respectful of the public's use of the park.

For more information on the trail replacement, call 770-531-2680.

Times staff reports

12/20/16

Cities, county divvy up services

Tax revenue on line as local governments negotiate who manages, delivers

BY JOSHUA SILAVENT
jsilavent@gainesvilletimes.com

The stakes are high as Gainesville, Hall County and other local governments prepare for negotiations in 2017 over who delivers various services to local residents, such as public safety, water and road maintenance, and how these services are managed.

Millions of dollars in tax revenue are on the line.

"The intent is to minimize the duplicity of services and (minimize) double taxation on citizens,"

Gainesville City Manager Bryan Lackey said. "Now, that's the simple part of it."

Local governments will likely find agreement on how to deliver the vast majority of approximately 50 services, but negotiations over a few critical items could prove difficult.

Cities are pushing more and more to provide basic services like water or sewer, and they are becoming less reliant on the county for various maintenance projects.

And as more land in unincorporated parts of the county is annexed

into local cities, Hall government is feeling the pinch.

As a result, county government could lose revenue in several areas, such as sales taxes and business license fees, as its tax base shrinks.

"It's hard (to deal with) when we've got a large budget," Commissioner Jeff Stowe said.

But certain mandates, such as courts and criminal justice, remain the purview of the county.

Two new areas of service that will need to be addressed this time around include public transportation and affordable housing pro-

grams, Lackey said.

The service delivery plan coincides with a comprehensive plan update that the county and local cities are undertaking, which is designed to guide growth. Both plans were last updated in 2004 and must be finalized by the end of June.

The comprehensive plan update is seen as critical in addressing affordable housing demands by reviewing zoning, setback and minimum lot size requirements.

Economic development, maintaining historic districts and qual-

ity of life issues are among the most pressing concerns.

The plan update could help direct investment in new community centers and parks, commercial businesses and residential development.

Stowe said he expects city managers and county administrators to tackle areas of common ground first when it comes to the service delivery plan before digging into areas that could complicate negotiations.

And public input meetings will be held next year.

12/20/14

Polar plunge postponed once again

Lanier Canoe, Kayak Club moves date due to low lake levels

BY EMILY WILLIAMS
ewilliams@gainesvilletimes.com

Those looking to ring in the new year with a splash will have to wait a few weeks.

The annual Polar Bear Plunge at Lake Lanier has been postponed again this year.

The plunge was delayed last year because of flooding. This year, the opposite has occurred. Dangerously low water levels because of drought have forced the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club to postpone the event until early February.

"We didn't want to just outright cancel the event," incoming LCKC President Tracy Barth said. "We wanted to postpone it, because it is a tradition and we want to see that tradition carried on."

Along with low water levels, Barth said debris sticking up from the water and just below the surface made conditions unsafe for a traditional New Year's Day jump. This year will be the 20th anniversary of the annual club fundraiser.

Last year, about 75 jumpers dove into the icy cold waters in February, but Barth said the event typically brings in 125

Polar Bear Plunges

Unicoi State Park and Lodge

When: 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 31

Where: Unicoi State Park and Lodge, 788 Ga. 356, Helen

Cost: \$10 individual, \$25 family, \$5 parking fee

More info: friendsofunicoistatepark@gmail.com or 800-573-9659

Lake Lanier Olympic Park

When: February

Where: Lake Lanier Olympic Park, 3105 Clarks Bridge Road, Gainesville

More info: www.lckc.org

participants. She said many local residents, including Gainesville City Councilman George Wangemann, have participated nearly every year.

Barth said recent rains have helped increase water levels, but the club wants to be sure the levels are safe before confirming a rescheduled date. She said waiting until February will also ensure jumpers get the most out of the experience.

"It's always colder in February," she said. "So that makes it a true frigid jump."

For more information, visit



Get Out file photo

Stephanie McClusky, Sarah Pruitt, Cathy Daniel and Amy Bagby jump into the lake together at last year's Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club's 19th annual Polar Bear Plunge at Clark's Bridge Park. Awards were given for best costume, best splash, best jump and more. This year's event will be in February because of low levels of the lake.

www.lckc.org.

For residents who can't wait that long, Unicoi State Park and Lodge will have its Polar Bear Plunge on New Year's Eve at 788

Ga. 356 in Helen.

The Unicoi plunge will take place at 9:30 a.m. Dec. 31 with a bonfire and hot chocolate to warm up jumpers. Registration is

\$10 per person or \$25 per family along with a \$5 parking fee.

To register, email friendsofunicoistatepark@gmail.com or call 800-573-9659.

OUTDOOR EVENTS

THIS WEEK

North Georgia Zoo Tree Toss

When: 1-3 p.m. Dec. 26-30

Where: North Georgia Zoo, 2912 Paradise Valley Road, Cleveland

Cost: \$28 adults, \$26 children

More info: 706-348-7279 or www.northgeorgiazoo.com

UPCOMING

Polar Bear Plunge

When: 9:30 a.m. Dec. 31

Where: Unicoi State Park and Lodge, 1788 Ga. 356, Helen

Cost: \$10 per person, \$25 per family, \$5 parking

More info: 800-579-9659 or friendsofunicoistatepark@gmail.com

First Night

When: 6 p.m. Dec. 31

Where: Dahlonega Square

Cost: \$10

More info: dahlonegafirstnight.org

First day hikes

When: All day, Jan. 1

Where: Georgia state parks

Cost: Parking varies

More info: gastateparks.org/events

Jordan's Run for Riverside 5K

When: 9:30 a.m. Jan. 7

Where: 2001 Riverside Drive, Gainesville

Cost: \$20 advance registration, \$35 on race day

More info: rungsingup.com/jordansrun

Naturalist Walk

When: 10-11 a.m. Jan. 7 and Feb. 4

Where: Sandy Creek Nature Center, 205 Old Commerce Road, Athens

Cost: Free

More info: 706-613-3615 or athensclarkecounty.com

Georgia's state parks mark new year with Jan. 1 hikes

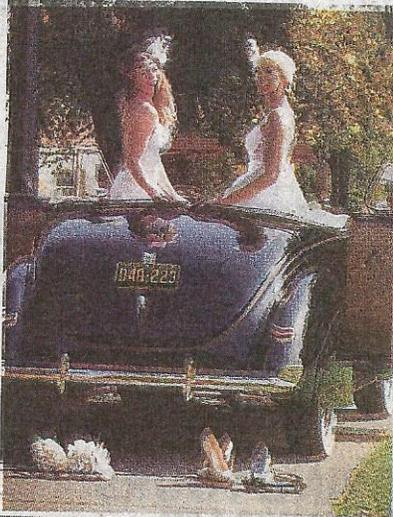
All across the country, park rangers are inviting Americans to start the new year with a hike.

In Georgia's State Parks and Historic Sites, dozens of guided treks will allow friends and families to connect with nature and each other. It is part of a nationwide initiative from America's State Parks to get people outdoors, with hundreds of hikes scheduled in all 50 states.

Georgia State Park officials say winter is a scenic time to enjoy trails because the open canopy means hikers can see farther through the woods. Ranger-led hikes on New Year's Day are listed on GeorgiaStateParks.org/events.

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