12-15-17

Legislators talk priorities

NICK BOWMAN | The Times

Rep. Emory Dunahoo, R-Gainesville, talks about projections for the 2018 state budget during the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's Eggs and Issues breakfast Thursday in Gainesville.

Spending on transportation, teacher pay make list of top issues for coming year

BY NICK BOWMAN
nbowman@gainesvilletimes.com

Transportation spending, teacher raises and cash for rural Georgia — Hall County's state lawmakers on Thursday offered a glimpse of Georgia's 2018 legislative session.

With state government seeing tax revenue climb amid economic prosperity, the issues before state government this year focus on how to capitalize on growth rather than stave off decline.

Times have changed even since 2015, when Georgia had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. But much of the recent economic prosperity has been focused in metro Atlanta — especially along its northern transportation corridors — and lawmakers believe the state needs to invest in rural broadband and health care to help pull rural Georgia along with its capital city.

Barr

The Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's annual Eggs and Issues breakfast featured Sens. Butch Miller and John Wilkinson and Reps. Lee Hawkins, Matt Dubnik, Emory Dunahoo and Timothy Barr running their large audience through the issues and legislation coming up in the 2018 session that begins Jan. 8.

A bigger budget

Right up front was the state's budget, which is expected to grow 5.3 percent next year, according to Dunahoo, R-Gillsville.

"That's the projection. We might be cutting here, cutting there; we might be adding," Dunahoo said.

A 5.3 percent increase over the $22.7 billion budget in 2017 means lawmakers would have an additional $1.14 billion to use in the 2018 fiscal year.

At least some of that new money will go into education, which at $11.6 billion in 2017 represents more than half of the state budget.

Cash for teachers, colleges

Dunahoo said he expects to see an increase of $514 million in state education spending in 2018, or more than 40 percent of the new revenue next year.

"This includes $162 million for a 2 percent rate for our teachers," he said.

In the past two years, lawmakers approved funding for a 3 percent raise to Georgia teachers, though how much of that ends up in teachers' pockets is up to local school boards.

Some of that education spending gets into workforce development and health care issues lawmakers are working on in 2018, including incentives to encourage doctors to work in rural areas and supporting regional technical schools like Lanier Technical College.

Miller

Miller, R-Gainesville, also took a stance against lowering the age requirement of the school tax exemption. The state tax exemption for local property taxes is open to residents at 62 years of age, or

■ Please see ISSUES, 5A

THE ISSUES

State budget
It's expected to grow 5.3 percent next year

Transportation
A 2018 appropriations bill includes $162 million in new funds

Rural health care
Telemedicine could connect patients with doctors

Education spending
An increase of $514 million in state spending is projected

Road construction
The state roads budget could top $2 billion for 2018

Rural broadband
Lawmakers could consider a sales tax exemption for infrastructure

Medical marijuana
It's gaining ground among lawmakers who have seen its health effects

ISSUES

■ Continued from 1A

three years earlier than retirement age.

"If we continue to lower that tax exemption for schools, we will not be able to continue to fund our schools," Miller told the audience. "All of us went to school, and most of us went to a public school. Someone before us paid their taxes in order for us to go to a public school."

New roads, new technology

Gov. Nathan Deal's appropriations bill for 2018, House Bill 44, includes $162 million in new transportation funds. With 2017 transportation spending of $1.7 billion, the new spending will push the state roads budget to almost $2 billion.

Much of that new money is coming from House Bill 170, the 2015 bill that restructured and in most cases raised the state's fuel taxes. The bill's early years have been aimed at much-needed maintenance projects.

Still, there's some new construction in the state thanks to the additional cash. The talk on Thursday, however, was more about transit.

Moderator Perry Barnett asked lawmakers whether they supported adding passenger train traffic to the state's existing heavy rail line.

Hawkins, R-Gainesville, and Dunahoo were solid supporters, with Hawkins going further and saying Georgia needs to expand light rail lines throughout the state.

"In the northern states, they developed this 100 years ago," he said. "Unfortunately, our MARTA system was not developed along the same ideas — going to places of employment — but more about shopping."

Hawkins

A commuter-focused rail line would "move a lot more people more efficiently," Hawkins said.

Miller, however, said in the short term, the state needs to focus on making transit more efficient. Georgia has four major transit systems in metro Atlanta.

"Sure, you can buy a card and ride all of them ... but they don't stop at the same places," Miller said. "You get to one corner and get off of Cobb County transit, well you can't get on the Gwinnett County transit there. You have to walk four or five blocks over. You can't get on SRTA there and you can't get on MARTA there."

He advocated for "an umbrella agency over all four of those that helps coordinate their development."

Rural development

With the state gubernatorial race about to get into full swing, look for calls to help rural Georgia in the 2018 session.

Chief among ideas for state spending are rural broadband, health care and response to the opioid epidemic.

Dubnik, R-Gainesville, said he would consider supporting a sales tax exemption for rural broadband infrastructure.

Faster internet throughout the state would benefit business in general, but rural health care specifically through advances in telemedicine.

Dubnik

Telemedicine allows patients far-removed from hospitals or unable to travel to connect with doctors and other service providers through Skype or another internet-based video portal.

Others said the state needs to invest in scholarships for medical students to receive training in Georgia.

"As we find when children go away to college, if they go to Auburn, where do they end up practicing law or practicing medicine or going into business? Well, they end up in Alabama. If they go to Clemson, they end up in South Carolina," Miller said. "If those doctors come to Gainesville to train, they'll end up in Georgia. We have a deficit of doctors right now, so I think this is a very good plan."

Other issues

■ The panel discussion on Thursday covered a wide range of issues in addition to heavy-hitting budget decisions coming up in 2018:

■ Don't forget about poultry, said Wilkinson, R-Toccoa: "I think we heard this morning that the film industry has a $9 billion impact on our economy. I would ... just throw this in: The poultry industry has a $32 billion impact."

Wilkinson

■ The Religious Freedom Restoration Act is a non-starter: Asked about the chances of RFRA being introduced and passing this year, Dubnik said, "I'll follow the lead of my speaker, David Ralston, who made a comment this week that said, 'No.'"

■ Medical marijuana is gaining ground among lawmakers who have seen its effects. Hawkins said he would consider expanding medically proven treatments using cannabinoids that are low-THC. Meanwhile, Dunahoo said he's seen convincing evidence of its benefits: "When you see children that had ... 100 seizures a day, and they've been allowed to go to Colorado and take this and they're down to zero or one or two, that'll wake you up." 12/16/17

12-24-17

Green Street idea sparks curiosity

Business leaders watching closely as roundabout plan unfolds

BY JEFF GILL
jgill@gainesvilletimes.com

Roundabouts would make some kind of footprint at either end of busy Green Street in Gainesville, but just how much and how it would affect property owners, officials said, are big unknowns right now.

"I've got lots of questions. I just need to know," said Kit Dunlap, president of the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce at 230 E.E. Butler Parkway in Gainesville.

The chamber, which sits where Green Street, E.E. Butler Parkway and Academy Street converge, has been a fixture at that busy traffic spot since the early 1960s.

The other roundabout under consideration by Gainesville and the Georgia Department of Transportation is at Thompson Bridge Road/Ga. 60 and Riverside Drive, near the Gainesville Civic Center.

Concept drawings were unveiled at a Green Street Stakeholders meeting in November at the civic center.

They were produced as part of a study "to determine potential concepts for improvements to Green Street," Gainesville Public Works Director Chris Rotalsky said last week. "This study did not include any specific project engineering; therefore, no specific right of way or property needs have been determined."

Right of way "contacts (with property owners) would not be made until more thorough project engineering is complete," he added.

Still, Dunlap and others know improvements are needed. DOT traffic counts show an average of 34,700 vehicles travel Green Street every day.

"We've got to do something, absolutely," she said. "There are days when we can't even get out of our

■ Please see **GREEN, 6A**

SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

A roundabout has been proposed along Gainesville's Green Street where it meets Academy Street.

12-24-17

GREEN

■ Continued from 1A

parking lot."

David Morrison, Brenau University spokesman, said Brenau's "front door to the campus" is just off the planned roundabout at E.E. Butler. That area includes landscaped walkways leading to an iconic stone column archway featuring school names.

"I think (the roundabout) will have some impact on us," he said. "We just don't know what kind."

Morrison added, however, the roundabout could potentially help traffic access to the campus.

"In theory, it could be very good for us," he said. "We just have to wait and watch. The city has kept us in the loop. We're just eagerly waiting to see what they come up with."

Norman Baggs, general manager of The Times at 345 Green St., said that, "as a business operating on Green Street for a long time, we certainly know the severity of the traffic issues.

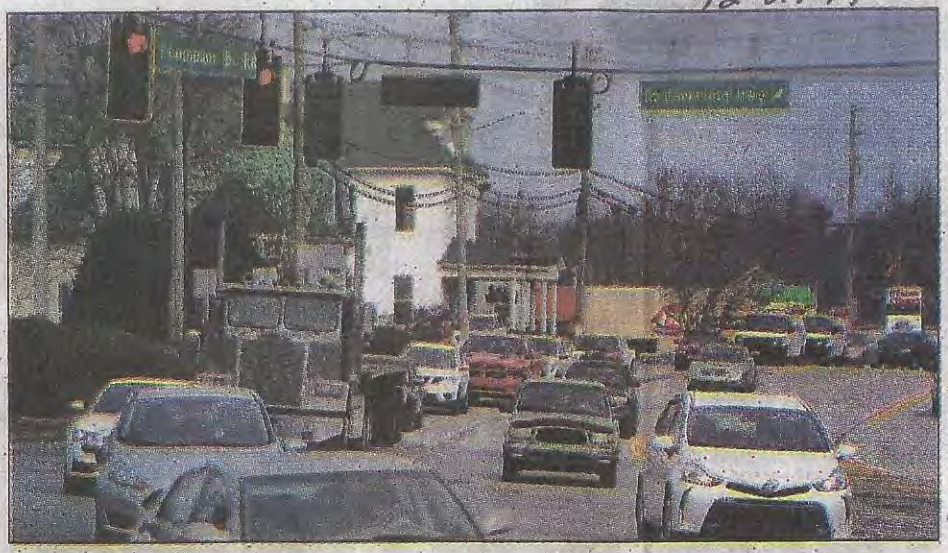
"Our business is unique on the street in that it has a full manufacturing component that requires a lot of truck traffic, and any roundabout or median will have to allow for that. We look forward to seeing a final plan to see how those issues can be addressed as part of an overall effort to improve traffic flow."

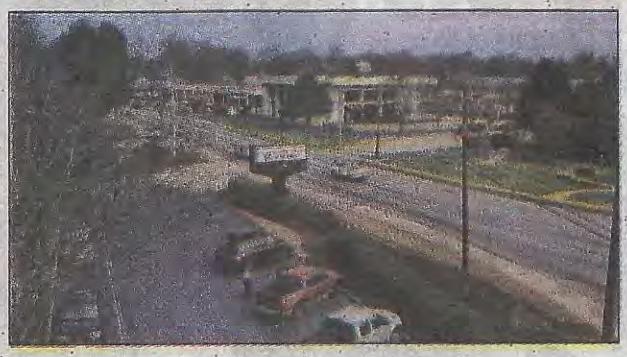
Gainesville itself is a property owner that would be affected by the projects.

"With the concepts that have been presented, we would expect some impacts to the front parking area and lawn of the civic center property," City Manager Bryan Lackey said.

Other property owners off the roundabouts either couldn't be reached for comment or declined comment, saying they knew too little about the project.

Dunlap said she has seen how other area roundabouts have been successful, "but I haven't seen one at that busy a place" as what would be built on Green Street.





A roundabout has been proposed along Green Street at Thompson Bridge Road/Ga. 60 and Riverside Drive, above, and along Green Street where it intersects with E.E. Butler Parkway and Academy Street, left.

Photos by SCOTT ROGERS The Times

Anne Chenault, a Riverside Drive resident who has been outspoken about city traffic improvements, said she thinks the roundabout at Riverside and Ga. 60 is a "bad idea."

"Large trucks need to come up the hill from Thompson Bridge, and I don't think large trucks can utilize a roundabout as well as cars, unless the diameter is made much larger, impinging once again on a residential area," she said.

Chenault added: "The noise as trucks accelerate is also disturbing in a residential area, and there probably will not be any restricted hours for truck traffic or siren screeching. It is already bad enough from the use of (nearby) Enota Avenue."

Frank Norton Jr., whose business, The Norton Agency, sits off Green Street, also has been vocal about proposed fixes along the corridor.

"I'm excited about the roundabouts," he said. "I think that's a good solution. I've used them in other countries. It does take a little bit of thinking and getting used to, but they do seem to move traffic fairly fast."

He's more concerned about proposed fixes on Green Street between the roundabouts, including adding width to each of the traffic lanes, a 5-foot median and slimmer, possibly "meandering," sidewalks on either side.

It's work that could require 8 feet of right of way on either side of Green Street.

Concept drawings also show work along Green Street between the roundabouts "that could ruin the ambience and character of the street," Norton said.

Otherwise, roundabouts have become a trendy piece of infrastructure in Hall County.

A single-lane roundabout opened this fall at Sardis and Ledan roads in northwest Hall County, and a single-lane roundabout opened last year in Flowery Branch.

The DOT also is planning to include a single-lane roundabout as part of widening Lanier Islands Parkway/Ga. 347 from McEver Road to Lanier Islands resort in South Hall.

JOHNNY VARDEMAN
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Christmas '70 brought a few big changes to our region

The Christmas season in Georgia and particularly Northeast Georgia in 1970 was one of highs and lows, triumphs and tragedy, politics, people and significant change.

Jimmy Carter the previous month had won the state gubernatorial race and chose North Georgians to important positions in his administration. Dahlonega Councilman Hoyt Robinson was named state purchasing director, and Calhoun banker Bert Lance would lead the highway department. Lance, whose father Jackson Lance was president of Young Harris College, was a native of Gainesville, having been born in the old Downey Hospital. Dahlonegan Frank Moore became Carter's legislative liaison, a position he continued when Carter advanced to the White House.

In local politics, Don Carter, a distant relative and strong supporter of the new governor, didn't seek re-election to his Gainesville first ward commissioner's seat. That was when radio personality Jim Hartley won the race to succeed him, defeating his former colleague at WGGA, Bill Sellers.

Amilee Graves had been mayor of Clarkesville in the 1960s but wasn't on the ballot in the 1970 election. However, she earned 134 write-in votes to win the post over Pierce Short, whose name was on the ballot but gathered only 110 votes.

Down the road in Cornelia, Ben Crow, who previously served as mayor, regained that office.

Pete Whiten served 12 years as Gainesville city manager but resigned at the end of 1970, to be succeeded by his assistant, Ray Keith.

Gainesville voters also that year voted down a proposal to float $475,000 in bonds to build a new football stadium at Gainesville High School. Meanwhile, the school's football team lost to Dykes in the North Georgia AA championship at City Park. Former Gainesville Coach Graham Hixon had better luck, his Woodward Academy team beating Dykes for the state championship the following week.

That same year, Gainesville Parks and Recreation Board ignored the city school board's request to not develop a park on Wessel Road because it wanted to build a school there. The park at the corner of Wessel and Holly Drive eventually was developed.

Hall County would vote in a referendum in January to provide fire protection for its residents. This came after a private, nonprofit fire department had to turn in its three trucks because it couldn't keep up the payments. The fire department, led by Larry Williams, began in 1962 with one truck and four firefighters. It had four stations when it went out of business.

Tragedy during the 1970 Christmas season included a car-train collision in downtown Lula on Christmas Eve. One of the four killed was a hitchhiker who had just gotten into the 1950 Chevrolet, which was pushed a mile down the track by the 155-car freight train's engine.

Three days later, one person died when a train hit a car in downtown Cornelia.

On the merrier side of the season, store parking lots all around North Georgia were filled with Christmas shoppers. Belk's still had stores in downtown Gainesville and Sherwood Plaza. Roses was in Lakeshore Mall and Sherwood Plaza.

Gibson's Discount Store on Thompson Bridge Road advertised heavily in The Times, selling oranges for a penny apiece, bicycles for $32.88 and Hoover vacuums for $24.88. Its main competitor of the day, Dixie City on West Broad Street, now Jesse Jewell Parkway, where J&J Foods is today, advertised men's suits for $25.

Meanwhile, Hall County Hospital, now Northeast Georgia Medical Center, raised the minimum wage for employees from $1.50 to $1.70 for employees.

Christmas 1970 was the first year First United Methodist Church of Gainesville had a Chrismon tree, members of the church making ornaments symbolizing various aspects of the Holy Birth. The tradition continues today in several churches.

And Helen Short won Belle of the Ball at the Junior Service League's Charity Ball.

■■■

Old adage: A rainy Christmas Day means bountiful crops next year. The 12 days after Christmas predict the weather for the following year, each day representing a month of the year. For instance, if it rains on the second day after Christmas, the second month, February, will be a rainy month, according to the legend.

And for those who still churn their own butter or who remember that chore, some wise veteran churners had this advice: If butter won't come when you're churning, put a penny in the churn. Just be careful when you bite into your buttered biscuit.

Johnny Vardeman is retired editor of The Times whose column appears Sundays. He can be reached at 2183 Pine Tree Circle NE, Gainesville, GA 30501; phone, 770-532-2326. 12/20/12

12-28-17

weekend ahead

Times file photo

Stephanie McClusky, Sarah Pruitt, Cathy Daniel and Amy Bagby jump into the lake together during the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club's 19th annual Polar Bear Plunge. Awards were given for best costume, best splash, best jump and more.

Polar Bear Plunge

When: Noon Jan. 1
Where: Lake Lanier Olympic Venue, 3105 Clarks Bridge Road, Gainesville
How much: $30
More info: 770-287-7888

12-29-17

Hall Board of Realtors collects food, funds for more than 800 meals

The Hall County Board of Realtors raised enough funds and food for 820 meals at its annual food and funds drive supporting the Georgia Mountain Food Bank.

The event took place Dec. 13 at the Gainesville Civic Center. As part of the drive, the group asked the community to donate healthy shelf-stable foods including items low in sodium and sugar and high in fiber or protein.

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January 2018

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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

The Chamber: A Voice for Business

Perry Barnett, CPA
Rushton
Chairman, Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce

As we start a new year, I wish our Chamber Members and the business community a very happy and prosperous 2018. For an unprecedented fifth year in a row, Gainesville-Hall County has been named the top job producing Metropolitan Area in Georgia. I invite you to join us as a voice for business and work to ensure that Gainesville-Hall County remains the top choice to live, play, and do business. Consider making resolutions in both your personal and professional life. Here are some suggested action items to help you achieve them.

Join the Chamber. As an investor in the Chamber, businesses are entitled to a host of benefits offered to members. The dividends from investment are unlimited. From business referrals and your company's listing in the Chamber's online directory to making quality business connections – membership is an investment in your business and the community.

If you're already a member, take advantage! Make sure you are taking full advantage of all the Chamber offers. Join peer groups such as the Human Resource Council, Issues Committee, Healthcare Committee or network during one of the many events: **South Hall Business Coalition on January 16 at Oakwood City Hall** or **Lunch 'n Learn on January 17 at Avenues of Life Counseling and Coaching.**

In addition to dozens of networking opportunities and events, the **Chamber offers programs to assist you personally.** The recent **Eggs & Issues breakfast hosted over 400 members** with interactive panel discussion with our state legislators on issues important to business. Mark your calendar for the **Annual Transportation Forum on March 9** for discussion with transportation officials.

Consider attending one of the monthly **Small Business Success Seminars. The next seminar is January 9** at the Chamber with Phil Bonelli, Wells Fargo, presenting Surviving & Thriving Through Difficulty & Change in Your Business. At the **Social Media Marketing Workshop on January 30** at Brenau University, Caleb J. Spivak, Founder & Editor-In-Chief of What Now Atlanta, will discuss the Leveraging Social Media Influencers to Drive Revenue.

Promote your product or service at the **Business Expo on February 15** or by sponsoring one of the many upcoming Chamber functions such as the **Chamber Chase 5K on March 22**; the **Annual Job Fair on March 21** or a **Business After Hours** at your office. Exposure can be priceless.

The Greater Hall Chamber has been the voice of business for over 100 years. Take advantage now, and Happy New Year!

The Chamber's **24th Annual Eggs & Issues Breakfast** featured discussion with Lt. Governor Casey Cagle and the Gainesville-Hall County Legislative Delegation. (L-R): Chamber Chairman **Perry Barnett**, *Rushton*; **David Lee**, *Jackson EMC (event sponsor);* Rep. **Emory Dunahoo, Jr.**; Rep. **Lee Hawkins**; **Lt. Governor Casey Cagle**; **Kit Dunlap**, *Greater Hall Chamber;* State Senator **Butch Miller**; Rep. **Matt Dubnik**; Rep. **Timothy Barr**; State Senator **John Wilkinson**. 1/2/18

Buy Local at the Business Expo

Business EXPO is Thursday, February 15 at the Gainesville Civic Center with the Annual Business Luncheon, more interactive exhibits and an expanded Taste of Gainesville at Business After Hours. FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC! **Great business exposure – Register for exhibit space NOW!**

Business EXPO 2018

The **Business Luncheon** (11:30 am-1:00 pm) kicks off the event followed by the **EXPO with over 60 exhibitors** and outstanding business-to-business networking and leads development (1:00-6:00 pm). Come enjoy a **Taste of Gainesville** with special menu items from area restaurants at Business After Hours (4:00 pm - 6:00 pm). **Call today for sponsorship opportunities and to reserve your booth space: 770-532-6206.**

Annual Business Luncheon

Bob Swoszowski
Owner & Operator
McDonald's of Northeast Georgia

Learn tips for business growth and development from entrepreneur, philanthropist and community leader **Bob Swoszowski**, owner and operator of McDonald's of Northeast Georgia. Bob is keynote speaker at the **Business Luncheon on Thursday, February 15 at the Gainesville Civic Center**. Bob purchased his first store with a partner in 1973 and now owns 13 McDonald's restaurants. Come hear his keys to success. Cost: $15 Chamber Members; $25 Non-members. Reservations required. Lunch reservations and exhibit information: Mandy Lathem, 770-532-6206 x 115. Email: ***mlathem@ghcc.com***

1/2/18

A day of frosty fun

Families, 'penguin' kick off '18 with Polar Plunge

BY NICK BOWMAN
nbowman@
gainesvilletimes.com

"I had a tuxedo and nothing to do with it," said Tom Diaz, shivering and pale as his tux was dripping with water in the below-freezing air. "What else am I going to do with a tuxedo?"

Jump in a lake dressed as an emperor penguin, of course.

Diaz was starting 2018 with a costumed splash at the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club's annual Polar Bear Plunge at the Lake Lanier Olympic Park, which returned after a year off in 2017 because of low lake levels. He and about 30 other brave adults and children turned out for the frosty dip on New Year's Day.

The club fundraiser lived up to its name in 2018, as Monday stayed below freezing and light snow danced around the docks of the boathouse as jumpers and their friends and family lined up for the jump. Costumes were encouraged but not required, and Diaz turned up in a full tuxedo and penguin mask.

Among the crowd was Jim Isler, 74, who signed up for the plunge after a five-year break. Isler was the oldest jumper on Monday and a hale and hearty man who, when he's not diving into frigid water in his free time, goes skiing and hiking around the country.

"The advantage of being old is I can ski everywhere except Colorado for free," Isler said, chuckling.

More than 40 people signed up for the plunge, but only about 30 turned out on Monday. Some of Isler's friends, who signed up to jump with him, were among those who thought better of getting soaking wet in the freezing cold.

"They all backed out at the last minute," Isler said, smirking while he stood near a heater dressed in shorts and sandals.

The youngest jumper on Monday was James Hughes, 5, who made the plunge with his father, Peter Hughes, and grandfather, Norman Hughes.

After the jumping had begun, James' mother, Malorie Hughes, stood on the dock filming her boys dip into the cold water.

Peter and Norman went first, jumping into Lake Lanier while a very skeptical James clutched his life jacket and kept his feet planted on the dock. With the crowd cheering him on, James agreed to be lowered into the lake by his dad.

"I was very nervous — he's only five," Malorie Hughes said as Peter, Norman and James swam to the ladder to climb from the lake.

Elsewhere on the dock, 18-time jumper George Wangemann watched as others took their turn leaping into the cold water.

Wangemann, dripping but unfazed as he stood on the dock in his swimming trunks, said this year was colder than he expected but that it wasn't the coldest plunge he could remember.

"There was a day (about 15 years ago) we had to shove away some ice on top of the water and it was snowing out," Wangemann said. "The air temp was about 26."

With a high temperature of 30, it wasn't quite that cold on Monday. After the plunging was over, participants were given hot drinks and chili in the boathouse above the docks at the Olympic Park.

Cash raised by the Monday event benefits the operations and programs of the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club.

SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

The Parsons family takes the plunge into the cold water Monday at the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club during the 20th annual Polar Bear Plunge. From left, they are Tom, Anna, Victoria and Jim Parsons. **See more photos, Page 7A**

1/2/18

> 'There was a day (about 15 years ago) we had to shove away some ice on top of the water and it was snowing out. The air temp was about 26.'
> **George Wangemann**

Photos by SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

im Diaz, of Atlanta, climbs from Lake Lanier Monday following his plunge into the cold waters at the anier Canoe and Kayak Club as he participates in the 20th annual Polar Bear Plunge.

Splashing into 2018

Left: Jim Isler, of Lithia Springs, quickly dries himself Monday. **Above:** Caroline Harsh, 8, of Lawrenceville, gets out of a cold waters of Lake Lanier. 1/2/18

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1/7/1

On the Cover

Gainesville Civic Center's 26th annual Bridal Expo is happening Jan. 14 and will include a bridal fashion show and lots of local vendors. And there are plenty of good reasons to go local.
PAGE 42

Photo courtesy
Carrie Jean Photography

1-7-18

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Bridal issue
From gowns to flowers to caterers, what you should know
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5 Tips Your Wedding Photographer Forgot to Tell You

By Carrie Jean Photography

When you're shooting upwards of 20 weddings a year, you start to take note of the patterns that emerge in weddings. In the past four years, I've learned how to deal with everything from difficult parents to drunk guests and all that comes in between. But sometimes as professionals, we forget to loop our clients in on our learned wisdom. So I'm going to give you five of the best tips I've learned since I started this job.

1. If you're getting your hair and makeup done, expect it to run over. It's not that hair and makeup are particularly time consuming (though it can be), it's just that between your sister asking you four times which pair of shoes you prefer and your mom double checking how you like your bouquet and then asking your makeup artist to tone down the eye shadow a bit, lots of little interruptions can add up to being half an hour or an hour behind schedule. Plan ahead, and build in an hour of buffer time into your schedule. The absolute worst thing that happens is you end up finishing early and get to enjoy some quiet time with your best friends.

Bridal expo at Gainesville Civic Center
Photos by Carrie Jean Photography

2. Family portraits are a pain. It's hard to corral a big group of people into a photo, and it's even harder when it's your crazy family. The timing isn't great either. If you do them before the ceremony you are going to want to get it over with as soon as possible so you can get to your dang wedding already. If you do them during cocktail hour, you're going to wish you were at cocktail hour. But trust me when I say they matter. Because while you hired your