

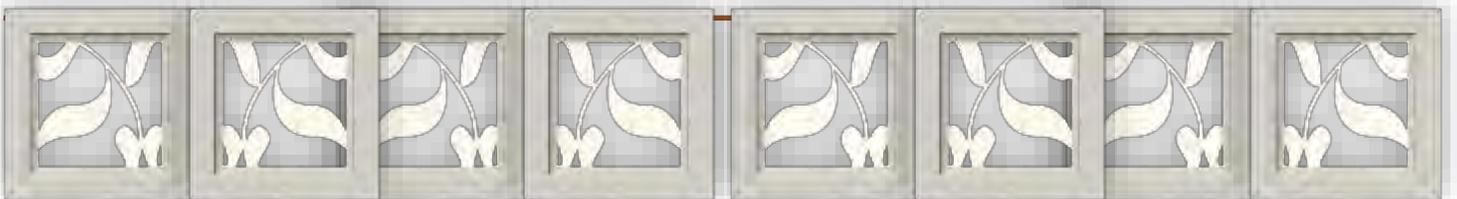
IN THE NEWS

February 2019

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



Best of Hall winners announced



Christine Edge, left, and Bart Edge, right, co-owners of Edge ATA Martial Arts, pose in a photo booth with their award during the Best of Hall event at the Gainesville Civic Center on Thursday, Jan. 31.

Photos by
AUSTIN STEELE
The Times

Kathleen Canavan-Lima, left, and Elizabeth Esteves, co-owners of Oba! Brazilian Cuisine, take a selfie with their award during the Best of Hall event.



2-1-19

AROUND TOWN

NEW YEAR NEW YOU

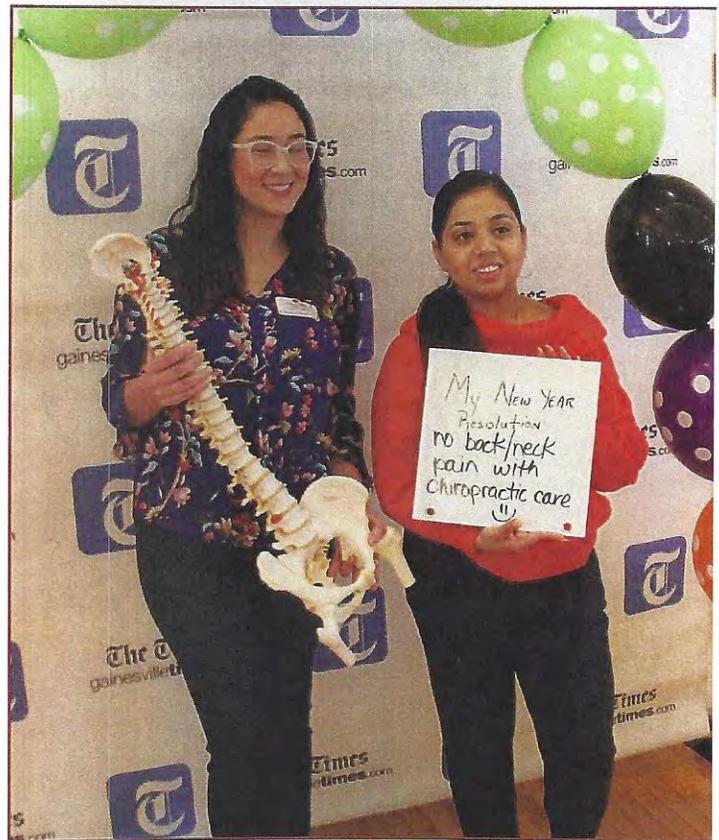


The New Year New You event held at Gainesville Civic Center was fun and informative for all.

2-3-19

AROUND TOWN

NEW YEAR NEW YOU



The New Year New You event held at Gainesville Civic Center was fun and informative for all.

2-3-19

• In 2019, the **UGA Small Business Development Center Gainesville** is challenging you to work **ON** your business, rather than **IN** your business. Contact the SBDC about any training of interest or if you would like to set up an appointment to work with one of their consultants. 770-531-5681.

Email: mknight@georgiasbdc.org

• The Chamber's 2nd Annual **Healthy Hall Awards of Excellence Luncheon** on February 27 will spotlight those in the healthcare industry making a significant impact on our quality of life through excellence in health and wellness. Nominate an individual, business or organization at SurveyMonkey.com/r/HealthyHallAwards. Reservations: Amanda Lewis, 770-532-6206 x 111 or email: alewis@ghcc.com

• **Hall County** announced continued restoration efforts at the **Healan's Mill** project with the purchase of 96 additional acres of land and restoration of the water wheel and flume at the historic grist mill. Some 170 years ago the mill served as a source of power for the community, grinding wheat and corn and turning timber into boards. The final phase of the project includes a Visitor's and Heritage Center with exhibits of what life was like for those who lived when the water-powered mill was in its peak of operation. healansmill.org

• **Turner, Wood & Smith Insurance** has relocated from the Downtown Gainesville Square to its new corporate headquarters located at 1515 Community Way in Gainesville. Founded in 1905, the agency employs 30 people and offers commercial, personal and employee benefit business throughout Northeast Georgia. twsinsurance.com

• **Junior Achievement (JA) of Northeast Georgia's** Business Hall of Fame Gala held earlier this month highlighted the careers and public service of **Dallas Gay** and **Betty and Frank Norton, Sr.**, three of our community's most outstanding citizens. Through JA, in partnership with the education and business communities, over 17,000 students will be instructed by corporate volunteers and high school students on the fundamentals of free enterprise, business ethics, personal economics and workforce development. georgia.ja.org

★ • **Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club (LCKC)** announces **Zsolt Szadovski**, a Hungarian Kayak World Champion medalist, as new head coach. LCKC continues the 1996 Olympic legacy of

promoting flatwater canoe and kayak sports on Lake Lanier, offering recreational opportunities as well as feeder programs for the U.S. National Teams for flatwater racing in dragon boat and canoe/kayak. lckc.org

• **Gainesville First Methodist Church** will host **Life Line Screening** on March 13. The Life Line 5-test package catches health problems before they go too far. The cost is \$149 and checks for risk of stroke, cardiovascular disease and other chronic conditions. Join the 8 million people who have been screened! Call 844-591-7170 to register and receive a \$10 discount or visit lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle

• **Gainesville Theatre Alliance's February Festival of Theatre** offers something for everyone with two productions: *Noises Off* and *Men on Boats*. Tickets are \$12-24, depending on patron age and seat location. Call the Box Office, 678-717-3624, or buy online at gainesvilleTHEATREalliance.org

• **Liz Coates** has been named executive director of **Good News Clinics** in Gainesville. Coates, an ordained Christian minister, previously served as the non-profit's community engagement director. The clinic provides free medical and dental services to qualifying low-income individuals and families, supplying some \$8-\$10 million in free medication, 12,000 medical appointments and 6,500 dental appointments annually. goodnewsclinics.org

• A groundbreaking for **Auto Metal Direct's (AMD)** new \$15 million Distribution and Fulfillment Center in Gateway Industrial Centre was held in February. **Carroll Daniel Construction** will build a 318,000 square-foot facility on a 30-acre site adjacent to the newly announced Inland Port Terminal. AMD, a distributor of auto body panels and trim for classic cars and trucks, imports many of their parts and components by container from a manufacturing partner in Taiwan. autometaldirect.com

• **Northeast Georgia Physicians Group Internal Medicine** practice opened in January and is accepting new patients. The practice offers routine and preventive health evaluations, immunizations, EKGs, physicals, lab services and same-day sick appointments. 770-219-8583. ngpg.org/internal-medicine-gainesville

GOT NEWS?

Email: kwest@ghcc.com

2-7-19

February 2019

Friday, February 8
Economic Development Council
7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. | Chamber

Tuesday, February 12
Small Business Seminar
"Turning Millennials & Generation Z into Brand Advocates" presented by **Kem Henderson, Delta Community Credit Union**
7:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. | Chamber

Tuesday, February 12
Ambassadors Council
3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.
2 Dog Cafe | Gainesville

Wednesday, February 13
Human Resources Council
11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Luna's Restaurant | Gainesville

Friday, February 15
Arbor Day Celebration
10:00 a.m.
Atlanta Botanical Gardens Gainesville

Tuesday, February 19
WomenSource Power Breakfast
Guest Speaker: **Angela Middleton**
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. | Chamber

Tuesday, February 19
Vision 2030 Board of Directors
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. | Chamber

Tuesday, February 19
Business After Hours
Sponsored by **Northeast Georgia Physicians Group Internal Medicine**
1285 Sims Street | Gainesville

Wednesday, February 20
Issues Committee
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. | Chamber

Wednesday, February 20
Lunch 'n Learn
Guest Speaker: **Tony Roland, Trusted Partner Marketing, Inc.**
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
New Holiday Inn Express
Dawsonville Highway | Gainesville

Thursday, February 21
Chamber Executive Committee
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. | Chamber

Thursday, February 21
Annual Business EXPO Luncheon
Featuring **Amanda Wilbanks, Southern Baked Pie Company**, and sponsored by **Delta Community Credit Union**
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Gainesville Civic Center

Thursday, February 21
Business EXPO
Presented by **MegaPrint**
1:00 - 6:00 p.m. EXPO
4:00 - 6:00 p.m. A Taste of Gainesville
Gainesville Civic Center

Tuesday, February 26
Healthcare Committee & South Hall Business Coalition with presentation by **Anthony Williamson, President, Northeast Georgia Medical Center Braselton**
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.
NEGAMC Braselton

Wednesday, February 27
Network Over Coffee
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Chick-fil-a Robson Crossing

Wednesday, February 27
Healthy Hall Awards Luncheon
Presented by **NEGA Health System**
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Brenau Downtown Center

Thursday, February 28
Chamber Board of Directors
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Gainesville Civic Center

MARCH 2019

Tuesday, March 5
Agribusiness Awards Breakfast
7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.
North Hall Community Center

Thursday, March 7
Annual Transportation Forum
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
University of North Georgia

Tuesday, March 12
Business After Hours
Sponsor: **McGarity's Business Products**
5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
870 Grove Street | Gainesville

Get all the details and register for events online: www.GreaterHallChamber.com

Greater Hall Chamber Business EXPO

Thursday, February 21

1-6 pm | Gainesville Civic Center

No Admission Fee
Open to the Public
Shuttle Service

Thursday, February 21

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Business Luncheon

Reservations Required

1:00 - 6:00 pm

Business EXPO

Free & Open to Public

4:00 - 6:00 pm

A Taste of Gainesville

\$5 entry fee

Business EXPO



2019

– Win Great Prizes –
Drawings All Day Long!

- Over 60 Exhibitors
- Networking
- Leads Development
- A Taste of Gainesville
- Door Prizes & Drawings
- Business EXPO is FREE
- Open to the Public

Presented by

MEGA PRINT
SIGNS • GRAPHICS • PRINTING

Delta
Community
CREDIT UNION

Business After Hours A Taste of Gainesville Thursday, February 21

4:00-6:00 pm at the Business Expo
Menu Specialties from Local Restaurants

2 Dog Restaurant | Fajitas Mexican Restaurant
Gainesville Seafood Market | Sliced
Chicken Salad Chick | Panera Bread
Mountain Fresh Creamery | RLM Affairs



Amanda Wilbanks, founder and CEO of Southern Baked Pie Company, is the keynote speaker at the **Business Luncheon on February 21**, (11:30am-1pm) at the Gainesville Civic Center. Reservations Required. **Space limited.** The **Business EXPO** follows with 60+ exhibitors and door prizes. Local restaurants will serve special menu items at Business After Hours and **A Taste of Gainesville (4-6pm)**.

Business Lunch Reservations & EXPO Exhibit Information: 770-532-6206.

Business EXPO



2019

Thursday, February 21

Business Luncheon | 11:30am - 1pm

Business EXPO | 1pm - 6pm

A Taste of Gainesville | 4pm - 6pm

Gainesville Civic Center

Business Lunch Reservations

OR Exhibit Info: 770-532-6206

Presented by

MEGA PRINT
SIGNS • GRAPHICS • PRINTING

ALLIANT
HEALTH PLANS

Delta
Community
CREDIT UNION

My Honda
HONDA

LANIER
TENT & EVENT RENTAL

Spectrum
ENTERPRISE

SCR Consulting Services, LLC
Security • Compliance • Risk

EVENTS

Miller's

access
WDUN

H
Hayes James

The Times
gainesville**times.com**

IN-KIND & DONATIONS

Highland Mountain Water & Coffee

Coca-Cola of Gainesville • Tribe Transportation

2-7-19

2-7-19

Take the Plunge
for the One
You Love

What: Rescheduled Polar Bear Plunge

When: Registration opens at 10:45 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 9

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

How much: \$30 per person, \$90 for family of 4

More info: www.lckc.org



Times file photo

Tom Diaz, of Atlanta, wears a penguin mask and full tuxedo Monday, Jan. 1, 2018, as he participates in the 20th annual Polar Bear Plunge at the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club.

2-7-19

Upcoming Chamber Events

Tuesday, February 12
Small Business Seminar
7:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. | Chamber

Friday, February 15
Arbor Day Celebration
10:00 a.m.
Atlanta Botanical Gardens Gville

Tuesday, February 19
WomenSource Power Breakfast
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. | Chamber

Tuesday, February 19
Business After Hours
NGPG Internal Medicine
1285 Sims Street | Gainesville

Wednesday, February 20
Lunch 'n Learn
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Holiday Inn Express | Gainesville

Thursday, February 21
Business EXPO
1:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Gainesville Civic Center

Tuesday, February 26
Healthcare Committee & South Hall Business Coalition
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.
NGMC Braselton

Wednesday, February 27
Healthy Hall Awards Luncheon
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Brenau Downtown Center

Details & Register Online
GreaterHallChamber.com

2-7-19

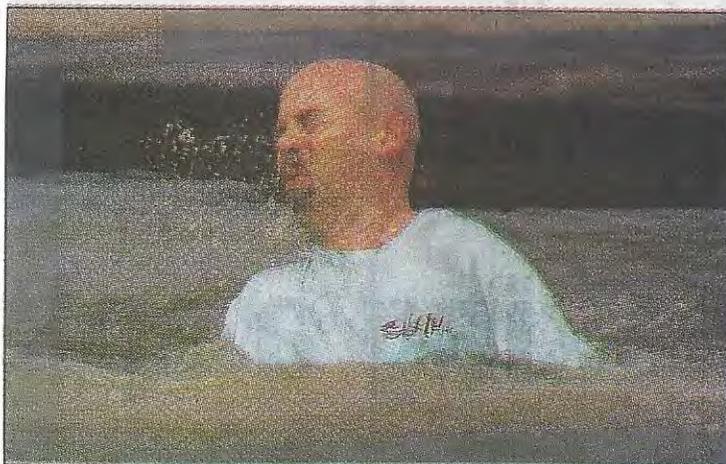
Making a splash



Photos by **AUSTIN STEELE** | The Times

From left to right, Jim Yates, Ariana Jeffery, Olivia Nichols, and Izzy Gewin, jump into the lake during the Polar Bear plunge at Lake Lanier on Saturday, Feb. 9.

2-10-19



Greg Owen shakes off some water after jumping into the lake during the Polar Bear plunge at Lake Lanier on Saturday, Feb. 9.

AUSTIN STEELE
The Times

2-10-19

Polar Bear Plunge goes off without a hitch, despite warm temps

BY LAYNE SALIBA

lsaliba@gainesvilletimes.com

Tom Diaz showed up to the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club's annual Polar Bear Plunge Saturday at the Lake Lanier Olympic Park in his normal attire: a full tuxedo with an emperor penguin mask, a top hat and a cane.

After this year's event, which raises money for the club, was postponed due to flooding, Diaz, a Chamblee resident, traveled west to take on the Cave Spring Polar Plunge in Cave Spring, Ga. He said he does a few plunges each year, but the one on Lake Lanier is his favorite.

"I was hoping there would be more costumes here," Diaz said, laughing, with his mask and cane in hand and top hat under his arm as he prepared to jump. "But this one's unique because you have to know how to swim. This one is the best because there's the challenge of having to swim."

The temperature was in the low 50s and organizers for the event said the water was around 60 degrees. The 17 participants, who took the leap from the dock into the water and climbed up the ladder as fast as they could to get out, thought otherwise.

The Parsons family from Flowery Branch was at the plunge for their second year in a row. They are hoping to make the Polar Bear Plunge a new tradition. Ana Parsons brought along a couple of friends who took part for their first time on Saturday.

"It was really cold," Olivia Nichols said after getting out of the water, a towel draped across her shoulders. "I got out of that water as fast as I



Tom Diaz jumps off the dock into the lake while wearing a penguin costume during the Polar Bear plunge at Lake Lanier on Saturday, Feb. 9.

could. I normally don't get on docks that fast, but I did this time. We want to jump again."

So that's exactly what they did. Parsons, Nichols and Izzy Gewin took another chilly dip into the lake.

"Why not," Gewin said. "It's fun."

After all, that's why the family was there. Victoria Parsons, Ana Par-

sons' mother, said it's an iconic event and it's all about the fun of the family standing side-by-side on the edge of the dock, waiting to leap.

"It's the anticipation of standing on that dock, not knowing how cold it's really going to be until you jump in," said Thomas Parsons, Ana

■ Please see **POLAR, 2C**

POLAR

■ Continued from 1C

Parsons' father.

That anticipation was too much for Wimsee Siegel, who was at the event for her first time. She stood on the bank near a boat and watched as everyone else jumped into the lake. She volunteers at the club and said she needed to observe everything before she thought about signing up next year.

"I just love their expressions," Siegel said as the Parsons family raced back to the dock after coming up from the water in its first jump. "It's fun to see the people and their anticipation, excitement and watch it all the way through."

Still donning his tuxedo after his jump and watching others take their jump, Diaz said he was happy he came out to the event this year.

"It's not as cold as last year, that's for sure," he said.

After all was said and done, everyone gathered in the

boathouse — each one with a bowl of chili in hand, some with hot chocolate or coffee — in an effort to warm up as awards were handed out.

This year's best jump went to Elizabeth Clauson and Greg Owen, who jumped as a pair. The Parsons family and friends, seven people strong, won best splash and Diaz won best costume. The youngest jumper was Ariana Jeffery (11) and the oldest was George Wangemann (67), who has taken the leap 19 times.

2-10-19

2-10-19



KELSEY RICHARDSON The Times

Officials have closed the ballroom at the Gainesville Civic Center until this damaged beam in the ceiling can be replaced.

Civic Center ballroom closes after damaged beam found

BY KELSEY RICHARDSON
krichardson@gainesvilletimes.com

Gainesville Parks and Recreation has closed the ballroom in the Civic Center after discovering a damaged beam in the attic that supports the ceiling.

Melvin Cooper, director of Gainesville Parks and Recreation, said the issue is isolated to the ballroom and does not affect the remainder of the building.

He said the Civic Center staff first noticed the problem the morning of Feb. 8 when they spotted a slight crack in the ceiling above the ballroom.

Michael Graham, deputy director of Gainesville Parks and Recreation, said the agency has looked at what events it can accommodate at the Civic Center without using the ballroom.

"We definitely want the Daddy Daughter Dance to happen," he said.

The 19th annual daddy daughter dances, Ties & Tiaras, are scheduled 6-8:30 nightly Feb. 26 through March 1.

Graham said Gainesville Parks and Recreation will keep its options open and consider other locations — besides the Civic Center — as it reschedules events.

Graham said a structural engineer is working to fix the problem, and should finish the remediation plans by the end of the week. He hopes to meet with construction companies early next week.

Once the remediation plans arrive, Graham said Gainesville Parks and Recreation should have a more established timeframe for the repairs.

The number of events affected wasn't immediately available.

The historic building, which was built in the 1940s, underwent major renovations from 1990-1992. But the damaged beam was part of the original 1946 construction, according to Gainesville Parks.



Times file photo

Isabella Constant dances at the 2017 Gainesville Parks & Recreation Daddy Daughter Dance at the Gainesville Civic Center.

19TH ANNUAL DADDY DAUGHTER DANCE

When: Tuesday Feb. 26, 6 p.m.,
Wednesday Feb. 27, 6 p.m., Thursday
Feb. 28, 8:30 p.m., Friday March 1, 6 p.m.

Where: Gainesville Civic Center Ballroom
860 Green St. NE, Gainesville, GA

More info: (770) 535-6865

How much: \$50 to \$60 per couple, sibling
discount available

2-14-19

Gainesville Water Resources seeks city council help; city to honor longtime Park Dept. employee

By [Marc Eggers](#) Anchor / Reporter

Posted 12:40PM on Thursday 14th February 2019 (4 hours ago)

GAINESVILLE – The Gainesville Water Resources Department is busy - busy at both ends of their operations: handling new installations and maintaining existing infrastructure.

The Gainesville City Council heard at its work session Thursday morning a pair of resolutions illustrating that situation. One resolution addressed the installation of new water meters, as many as 1,600 expected over the next year or more; the second resolution progresses efforts by the department to repair or replace existing water infrastructure, some almost a century old.

Water Resource Project Manager Jarrett Nash presented a resolution to the council that outsources \$2.1 million worth of new water meter installation work to Classic City Mechanical, Inc. of Winterville, Georgia.

“Growth continues, which is a great thing for the community,” Nash told council members, “but our meter installations that we took back in-house during the time of very slow growth, has been consuming a huge portion of our resources and manpower, so we would like to move that back out into the contract world.”

Classic City Mechanical has done work for the city in the past and allowing them to take over water meter installations will free up city personnel to handle other concerns, according to Director Linda MacGregor. “There’s a lot of new construction going on and we identified the installation of new meters as a very predictable piece of work that can be contracted out...and that frees up our internal forces for the more one-of-a-kind, need-to-know-a-lot-of-details-about-the-system work.”

James Farmer followed Nash, presenting a resolution requesting \$300,000 for Phase II of the Water Resource Department’s project upgrading and replacing underground infrastructure items downtown.

The funds requested by Farmer would be used for the design phase of the overall project.

“This project will continue the replacement of the aging water and sewer and storm sewer lines... along Washington Street, Spring Street, Green Street and Bradford Street,” Farmer told city council.

“This will include old cast iron water mains, the clay sewer mains, corrugated metal storm drains; these have all reached the end of their design life expectancy,” Farmer explained.

Farmer said that he was working with other utilities (electrical, telephone, fiber optic, etc.) to assure that affected roads would be closed for excavation only once, “...so that we don’t have to go back later and dig up anything...to minimize any impact due to our construction.”

Once a design is completed and approved, it will be early 2020 before actual construction work begins.

Gainesville Water Resources seeks city council help; city to honor longtime Park Dept. employee | Access... Page 2 of 2
MacGregor said after the work session that a timeline for the construction needs to be realistic. The downtown utilities are our oldest utilities, and so we don't know of problems today...but we know they are old."

The city council will vote on the funding for the two resolutions on Tuesday, February 19, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

NEW FACILITY WILL BE NAMED TO HONOR LONGTIME PARK EMPLOYEE

Gainesville City Manager Bryan Lackey told the city council at their work session Thursday morning that the Park and Leisure Department Board had decided to name the new youth sports complex - now in the planning stage - after longtime department employee and current director Melvin Cooper.

Cooper [announced in October that he would be retiring](#) at the end of May, 2019.

"The Park and Rec Board, working along with the city council, wanted to go ahead and name that park after Melvin Cooper to honor his 47 years of service and what he has meant to the youth of this community," Lackey said after the work session.

"We were able to surprise him Monday night at a Park and Rec Board meeting. We're really thrilled to do that, wherever that park ends up being," Lackey said. He added that funding for the complex had already been approved and would be paid for with SPLOST VII revenues.



Gainesville Water Resources Director Linda MacGregor

<http://accesswdun.com/article/2019/2/763932/gainesville-water-resources-seeks-city-council-help-city-to-honor-longtime-park-deptemployee>

© Copyright 2015 AccessNorthGa.com All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed without permission.

Mayor focuses on progress, projects in State of City address

BY MEGAN REED
mreed@gainesvilletimes.com

Gainesville Mayor Danny Dunagan outlined the city's response to growth and emphasized its strong economy in his annual State of the City address Tuesday.

He thanked the city's employees, who he said have had to "do more with less," as the population has grown about 20 percent since 2010 and departments find their budgets getting a little tighter.

But Dunagan also said the city has made investments where necessary, such as the \$12.5 million new Riverside Water Quality Building, which allowed Gainesville Water Resources to treat almost 7 billion gallons of water for almost 50,000 customers in 2018.

The city also is using special purpose local option sales tax funds to pay for \$25 million in projects for public safety, transportation and recreation. A new Fire Station No. 2 and youth sports complex are both in the design phase, Dunagan said. SPLOST is a countywide 1 percent sales tax that has been approved by voters for capital projects.

Officials want to promote a healthy downtown, he said, and efforts will also focus on midtown and connecting downtown Gainesville with surrounding areas.

"We want to continue the close-knit community feel of the square into the rest of downtown, which includes midtown, the Brenau district, Green Street and our historic neighborhoods," Dunagan said.

He praised events like Christmas on Green Street for bringing the community together.

He said the city's purchase of the land on the southern end of the Jesse Jewell Parkway pedestrian bridge gave the city control over the future of that important spot between downtown and midtown. The city also owns the former Hall County Jail site in midtown.

"We commit to you that we will hold out for the highest quality development on these properties," Dunagan said.

The Highlands to Islands trail, a proposed countywide trail network, will eventually stretch from Longwood Park on Lake Lanier through the downtown square and Roosevelt Square, cross the pedestrian bridge to the Midtown Greenway, connect to Chicopee Woods and lead to the University of North Georgia. Dunagan said the city will soon put the next phase of this trail project out for bid.

He also said the city's parks have stayed busy — last year, the parks department held 37 special events and accommodated for 60,000 fitness visits at Frances Meadows Aquatic Center, which turned 10 years old. Parks Director Melvin Cooper will be retiring in May after 47 years with the city.

Gainesville's economy is doing well, Dunagan said, and that is expected to continue with companies like Fox moving in and the Northeast Georgia Medical Center's new residency program. The city will have a hand in that economic growth, too, with 1,300 acres of city land planned for a new business park off of Allen Creek Road.

Dunagan said that while he is proud of the work that has been done, he also is anticipating seeing what will come next.

"We are off to another busy year and looking forward to see what 2019 brings," he said.



Dunagan

Lake Lanier Rowing Club Youth Program



Join us this Spring – 8th Grade through High School
Students Invited - Indoor and outdoor fun!

- No experience needed
- Open to young men and women under the age of 18
- Teamwork, sportsmanship and fun!

Upcoming OPEN HOUSE DATES: *(for parents and students)*

Saturday, February 23, 2019 | 10AM – Noon

Monday, February 25, 2019 | 6:00PM

LLRC Boathouse, 3105 Clarks Bridge Road, Gainesville

Spring Program Dates

February 25 - May 18, 2019

PRACTICES: Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays | 4:30 – 6:30PM

Saturdays at 10:00AM

Sign up today on our website: www.lakelanierrowing.org 2-20-19

March of Dimes event brings people to tears

BY KELSEY RICHARDSON
krichardson@gainesvilletimes.com

Dry eyes were scarce during the March of Dimes Kickoff Luncheon on Tuesday, Feb. 19 at the Gainesville Civic Center.

Even Jerious Norwood, former Atlanta Falcons running back, couldn't help but shed tears when he shared his story of spending time at the neonatal intensive care unit and receiving the support of the March of Dimes team.

"You see me crying here," Norwood said. "You say, 'Well, look at that big old strong football player; he ain't supposed to be crying.' Well, guess what? The baby has got my heart. That's what's meaningful to me."

■ Please see MARCH, 4A
2-20-19



Ryan and Abby Burle speak during the March of Dimes kickoff luncheon Tuesday, Feb. 19, at the Gainesville Civic Center. The Burle family triplets were born 16 weeks early at 24 weeks and are this year's Hall County March for Babies ambassador family.

2-20-19



Former Atlanta Falcon Jerious Norwood, wife Stephanie and son Jett are introduced Tuesday, Feb. 19, at the Gainesville Civic Center during the March of Dimes kickoff luncheon.



Abby Burle and daughter Maggie stand up Tuesday, Feb. 19, at the Gainesville Civic Center during the March of Dimes kickoff luncheon. The Burle family is this year's ambassador family for the March for Babies fundraiser.

Photos by
SCOTT ROGERS |
The Times

2-20-19

MARCH

■ Continued from 1A

Norwood's son Jet was born three weeks early on Jan. 7, 2019. He said his son's heart rate was abnormally high and his body temperature ran low.

Norwood said he was a part of a March of Dimes team last year but now he has "really" become a part of the team. Teams raise money to help babies born prematurely.

Throughout the event, people made commitments to starting fundraising teams for the March of Dimes' annual charitable event, the March for Babies.

The local march is set to take place Saturday, April 27, at Longstreet Clinic at 725 Jesse Jewell Parkway in Gainesville.

One by one, parents stood in front of the luncheon crowd, expressing the impact the NICU and March of Dimes had on their children.

Abby and Ryan Burle of Gainesville spoke of their family's journey through many surgeries and setbacks in the NICU.

As the 2019 March of Dimes ambassadors for Hall County, the couple brought along their triplets — Maggie, Miller and Max — who were born 16 weeks early.

Maggie spent 142 days in the NICU, and Miller and Max stayed 158 days.

Abby said many describe the NICU as a rollercoaster. But she said contrary to a rollercoaster, no one waits in line and no one chooses a seat on this ride; it is thrust upon them.

"The closest I can get to understanding is a pitch black room, knowing there

March for Babies

What: Annual charitable walking event sponsored by March of Dimes

When: 8:30 a.m. Saturday, April 27

Where: Longstreet Clinic, 725 Jesse Jewell Parkway, Gainesville

are obstacles throughout the whole room and not knowing the obstacles you're going to hit," Abby said. "And, you have one match. You hope it lights. That's what it feels like as a parent."

Never did she expect to have triplets, nor did she anticipate their early arrival. Abby said she received amazing prenatal care at Northeast Georgia Medical Center.

She expressed appreciation for Dr. Cynthia Cabrera, the hospital's neonatologist who has spent many years saving babies.

"I learned a new level of desperation as a person and as a parent in a space where nothing I have is enough for my babies to be safe," she

said through teary eyes. "That is why I'm thankful for people like Dr. Cabrera."

Abby said she decided to partner with March of Dimes because of its community support and awareness that is paving the path for prematurity. She believes her children are alive today because of the nonprofit's sponsored research and fundraising efforts.

Debbie Childress, development manager of the March of Dimes in Hall County, said the nonprofit's supporters gather money year-round to fight for the health of mothers and their babies. She said most of the fundraising for the March for Babies happens before the actual event.

She encourages people to donate to the March for Babies by visiting www.marchforbabies.org and selecting Hall County in the events tab.

For more information about March of Dimes in Hall County, contact Childress at dchildress@marchofdimes.org.

2-20-19

Gainesville City Councilwoman Bruner won't seek re-election

•
•

By Marc Eggers *Anchor / Reporter*

Ruth Bruner makes her announcement not to run again

GAINESVILLE – 2019 will be the final year on the Gainesville City Council for longtime community servant Ruth Bruner.

She made her decision public at Tuesday evening's voting session moments after Mayor Danny Dunagan presented the annual State of the City address. Most would agree that many of the highlights mentioned in the mayor's speech could be traced back to Bruner's 16-year involvement on the council.

The South Carolina native has lived in Gainesville since 1974, and after nearly a decade on the city's school board Bruner made the decision to run for city council in 2003. At that time the position of mayor was rotated among city council members: Bruner took her turn in 2010 and served Gainesville well as the city's top executive for the next two years.

Bruner said after Tuesday's meeting, "After nearly twenty-six years of service, which I've loved, I've really enjoyed it, I feel like it's time for somebody new to come in with some new ideas and let me have time do some of the things I want to do. It's been a joy and I appreciate the support of the citizens."

When asked what memories of her time on the council stood out she said, "I'm real proud of our emphasis, that we're doing so much to support the Lake Lanier Olympic Center. That is such a great legacy from the (1996) Olympics and also such a great spot for rowing and canoeing and kayaking."

“I was really one of the champions to get that started, to get some emphasis, back several years ago,” Bruner shared. Bruner also said building the Frances Meadows Center was something she was proud to have been a part of.

Her time on the council, she said, has not been without some controversy. She said, “When we bought the jail that was controversial; when we built the bridge that was controversial. Yet I feel like that was the right thing to do and I’m glad we did those kinds of things to sort of spur growth in midtown and downtown.”

“When we moved here in ‘74 the Square was kind of dead, there was not much going on. It was real quiet downtown; now it’s vibrant and parking is better with the new (expanded) deck and you can just see a lot of life and activity...a lot of young people downtown, and that’s great, and I’m proud of that.”

While Bruner did not disclose any names, she did say that she had talked to a couple of people who were interested in filling her Ward 5 seat. Those conversations, she said, led to her announcement being made now so those individuals can have ample opportunity to organize their own campaigns.

“I think we’re going to have some good candidates...(so I announced now) so they could be really thinking about it and planning and not wait until August...I think it’s going to give them time to make their plans.”

Cooper 'humbled' by naming legacy

New youth sports development in Gainesville will be named after retiring parks director

BY MEGAN REED

mreed@gainesvilletimes.com

A new youth sports complex in Gainesville will be named after longtime city parks director Melvin Cooper, who will be retiring in May after 47 years with Gainesville Parks and Recreation.

"Totally shocked, very humbled and feeling very undeserving," Cooper said of his reaction to learning the complex would bear

his name.

The complex was supposed to be off of Allen Creek Road near the Allen Creek Soccer Complex, but initial drilling hit solid rock at the 190-acre site, land the city already owned.

"We're currently analyzing other locations through the city manager's office and the city attorney," Cooper said.

Sales tax funding of \$6.75 million has been set aside for the

project. The dollars will come from the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax VII, a penny sales tax approved by voters in 2015. In 2016, the Gainesville City Council approved \$450,000 in impact fee revenue, which comes from new construction fees, for the design of the complex.

The Lawrenceville firm Lose &



Cooper

Associates has been hired for the project.

Plans for the complex include six baseball fields, batting cages, a playground and pavilion, trails, and two fields that could be used for football, soccer or lacrosse.

Cooper said travel ball and tournaments at the complex could boost economic development, and having more

fields in the city would help with scheduling. Often games are running late into the evening due to a lack of space, he said.

In the department's 2018 fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018, 2,365 children participated in youth sports in the city.

Youth programs include baseball, softball, lacrosse, volleyball, cross country, cheerleading and tennis.

GAINESVILLE JAYCEES AWARDS



Photos by **AUSTIN STEELE** | The Times

Left: John Simpson is recipient of a Jaycees award. **Right:** Jenny Floyd is the recipient of a Jaycees award. Both received the honor at the Chattahoochee Country Club on Thursday, Feb. 21.

Young Man and Woman of the Year chosen

BY KELSEY RICHARDSON
krichardson@gainesvilletimes.com

Jenny Floyd and John Simpson have proved their stewardship to the community countless times.

As a result, people greeted the two with loud applause when they were announced as the Gainesville Jaycees' Young Woman and Young Man of the Year on Thursday, Feb. 21 at the 74th annual awards ceremony at the Chattahoochee Country Club.

"I'm thankful for you," Simpson

said to the crowd of fellow Jaycees. "Because of you, I don't want to go anywhere else. I want to stay here and I want my daughter to be raised in Hall County, Gainesville city and it's because of the people who make our town something to be proud of."

As the assistant head of school at Lakeview Academy, Simpson strives to make a difference in the lives of his students.

"The students there are his kids," Drew Echols, last year's Young Man of the Year recipient said. "I am in awe

at how much they love and respect Coach Simpson. He disciplines when he must, but he also defends them when it's necessary. From many of us in this room, thank you, John, for what you do."

Some of Simpson's accomplishments include becoming an ordained minister at Lanier Christian Church, working as the chairman of Gainesville Parks and Recreation and receiving the Silver Shovel Award in 2017

■ Please see **AWARDS, 9A**

2-22-19

AWARDS

■ Continued from 1A

from the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce.

Meanwhile, Bethany Magnus, last year's Young Woman of the Year, described Floyd as a leader

who makes others want to follow her.

"She is humble and works hard and in doing so inspires others to pitch in," Magnus said.

She said Floyd has spent 10 years on the board for Gainesville's Gateway Domestic Violence Center. Floyd works with the nonprofit to fight against domes-

tic violence and create a safe environment for victims of abuse in Hall County.

Working as the board chair at Sisu Integrated Early Learning in Gainesville, she aids the nonprofit in providing a place where children with special needs can learn to interact alongside their peers.

Magnus said Floyd has

shown through her service at Sisu, that she will do what is needed, no matter how large or small the task.

"Our young woman often laughs, saying that people ask her to serve because she can't say no," Magnus said. "But, I think it's pretty clear as people ask her to serve because she will do the job and she will do it well."

2-22-19

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHALLENGE

CHAMPION SPONSOR



Northeast Georgia Health System

THANK YOU TO THIS
WEEKS PRIZE SPONSOR



FRANCES MEADOWS
AQUATIC AND COMMUNITY CENTER

Lake levels trigger temporary marina and ramp closures



SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

The walking trail alongside Lake Lanier at Longwood Park is closed Friday, Feb. 22, as high water levels cover the sidewalk.

Total rainfall in Gainesville reached 5.62 inches in January

BY KELSEY RICHARDSON
krichardson@gainesvilletimes.com

Marinas, lake trails and boat ramps are feeling the full effects of this year's winter precipitation, and some have had to temporarily close down until Lake Lanier's water level decreases.

In Gainesville, the total amount of rainfall for January reached 5.62 inches, according to the National Weather Service Forecast Office. For January 2018, Gainesville received a total of 2.7 inches.

Marinas on both the northern and southern ends of the lake have shut down their gas docks for the weekend.

As of 3 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22, Lake Lanier's water level reached 1,075.12 feet above sea level, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Last year the

Closed boat ramps, parks and trails

- Holly Park boat ramp, 2603 Old Thompson Bridge Road, Gainesville
- Laurel Ridge Trail, East Bank Park Road, Buford
- Longwood Park lake walk, 20 Pearl Nix Parkway, Gainesville
- Little River Park boat ramp, Little River Park Road, Gainesville
- Thompson Bridge Park boat ramp, 372 Dunlap Landing Road, Gainesville
- Simpson Park boat ramp, 3235 Simpson Park Road, Gainesville
- Little Hall Park boat ramp, Little Hall Road, Gainesville
- Nix Bridge boat ramp, 3600 Nix Bridge Road, Dawsonville
- Thompson Creek Park boat ramp, 570 Thompson Creek Park Road, Dawsonville
- West Bank Park, north of Buford Dam

■ Please see RAINFALL, 6A



SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

Thompson Bridge Park's boat ramp is completely submerged Friday Feb. 22, as recent non-stop rainfall have caused flooding in parks around Lake Lanier.

RAINFALL

■ Continued from 1A

highest level for the month rose to 1,070.57 feet above sea level on Feb. 21. Lake Lanier's full pool level is 1,070 in the winter.

C.J. Denning, gas dock manager at Gainesville Marina and Boat Sales, said she hopes to open up the business by Monday, but it all depends on the lake levels.

She said the amount of water isn't

typical for this time of year, but it does happen. December 2017, Denning said, was the last time the marina had to close down its gas dock.

"We're not so much worried," she said. "Thank goodness it's February and not the middle of the summer."

On the southern end of the lake, Lazy Days at Holiday Marina is also experiencing the impact of the high water levels. Jenna Collier, Lazy Days office manager, said closing the gas dock is more of an inconvenience for customers than a hindrance to the marina.

Julie Butler-Colombini, marketing and communications manager for Gainesville Parks and Recreation, announced Friday temporary closures of Longwood Park's lake walk off of Pearl Nix Parkway and the Holly Park boat ramp on Old Thompson Bridge Road.

"As of now only two are affected, but we are monitoring other lake access points," Butler-Colombini said. "Should those rise to the point they're unsafe, we'll close those as well."

Numerous boat ramps operated by the corps also are closed.

2-23-19

Coalition looks to draw visitors to square

Businesses, city moving forward amid friction over changes downtown

**BY MEGAN REED
AND KELSEY RICHARDSON**
mreed@gainesvilletimes.com
krichardson@gainesvilletimes.com

Downtown businesses are taking it upon themselves to bring foot traffic back to Gainesville's square after the relocation of the Gainesville Spring Chicken Festival and Beach Bash.

Forming separately from Main Street Gainesville, business owners banded together in January

2019 to establish the Gainesville Business Coalition.

"We're wanting to bring more family-friendly events to the square like concerts, festivals, car shows and a talent show," Aimee Hoecker, Downtown Drafts co-owner, said, noting that some newer businesses came downtown with the expectation of having the city-sponsored events on the square.

While the Gainesville Business Coalition and Main Street Gaines-

ville aim to work together moving forward, the coalition was launched out of frustration with the direction of Main Street — moving two high-traffic festivals away from the square, red tape for hosting or getting involved with public events and a sleepy website and social media presence.

Meanwhile, the city's loosening of liquor laws on the square, even peeling back open-container laws to allow people to carry alcohol in public in a "downtown dining dis-

trict," has made hosting events outside of the structure of Main Street easier.

Main Street Gainesville, as a division of the Gainesville Convention and Visitors Bureau, is funded by the city's hotel and motel tax revenue. The budget for the current fiscal year is about \$174,000. The program's purpose is to support downtown businesses, and it is managed by Kristen Redmon, who was hired in August 2017.

Main Street sponsors several

downtown events each year, including Jingle Mingle, First Friday concerts and Mutts on Main.

Membership in Main Street is tiered for \$25, \$100 or \$250 a year. Benefits include placement in Main Street's annual coupon book, event consultation services, promotion on Main Street's social media accounts and access to grants — depending on the level of membership. Some businesses that are members

■ Please see **COALITION, 4A**

2-24-19

COALITION

Continued from 1A

include Downtown Drafts, Mule Camp Tavern, Avocados and Purple House Gallery, according to the Main Street website.

Ordonez, owner of Love Is All You Knead, praised Main Street Gainesville's hosting of events in downtown, but said the coalition seeks to increase the amount of activity on the square.

The group's business owners are planning a St. Patrick's Day weekend festival — the break-out event for the coalition — and organizing an additional event that will take place on the square during the Gainesville Spring Chicken Festival.

Like Main Street, the coalition has set a voluntary membership fee for businesses in the downtown core.

Ordonez said every event the coalition puts on will benefit a charity. The group hopes to raise 80 percent of its funding from business owners and the rest through sponsorships and grants.

Dorsey Danielson, manager of the upcoming ChopBLOCK Food and Spirits, said the coalition isn't aimed at pushing out Main Street Gainesville but forming a mutually beneficial relationship.

"I think it's difficult for one organization to be everywhere all the time," she said. "I think it's difficult to see every single facet when they've already got a lot going on. We can be a help to them to where when they've got so much on their plate, we can get the edges and help push the square forward in a tandem-teamwork effect."

Nikki Perry, city of Gainesville's communications and tourism director, said Tuesday at a Main Street Coffee Break event that there was a "lack of knowledge" about Main Street Gainesville but that she views the Gainesville Business Coalition as an asset.

"I think it's really timely because one of our initiatives this year, starting fresh in January, was to get more business involvement in Main Street," Perry said.



SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

The Gainesville Business Coalition is looking to move more family-friendly events to the square.

"The fact that this has organically occurred, to me says that it's right."

Perry said the city can assist the coalition with some of its new initiatives, possibly including access to grant funding.

"We want to encourage businesses and other organizations to promote themselves and promote downtown," Perry said. "We don't want people to feel like this is our downtown. This is their downtown."

She said she does want to make sure the marketing of downtown stays uniform as the coalition begins work.

"I want us to have a unified voice with the marketing of downtown Gainesville to make sure that that voice is heard loud and clear as to who we are, what our image is and what we offer downtown," Perry said.

Main Street America, a nationwide downtown development program, certifies Main Street Gainesville every year. Other nearby cities with Main Street programs include Dahlonega, Jefferson and Toccoa. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs oversees Main Street on the state level.

Main Street's current service boundaries are bordered by Academy Street, Jesse Jewell Parkway and E.E. Butler Parkway.

Redmon said she is working with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to get Main Street's official

boundaries widened to include midtown Gainesville and the area near Brenau University.

Perry said these areas are included in most residents' ideas of downtown, as the city found in its 2015 Downtown Strategic Plan.

But Main Street's boundaries do not include Longwood Park or Lake Lanier Olympic Park, the sites for the Spring Chicken Festival and Beach Bash this year. The Gainesville Convention and Visitors Bureau will be the sponsor for Beach Bash, while Perry said many city departments collaborate to host the Spring Chicken Festival.

Perry and the city argue these events had to move due to the impending construction of Parkside on the Square, a multi-use development that will have retail and restaurants on the ground floor with 32 condominiums above. Parkside will be on the "fourth side of the square," in front of the Main Street parking deck and facing Spring Street.

Perry said that while downtown Gainesville has lost two events ahead of the construction of Parkside, businesses should benefit when it is complete because it will bring more people into the square.

"These are more customers for our businesses, and there will be a whole first floor of new businesses, new restaurants. Yes, we have had to move two events out

of the downtown area, but look at all we're gaining from this development," she said. "We're gaining 32 new condos that are going to be filled with people and visitors, then a whole new range of businesses that are going to attract more people to downtown."

To compensate for the Spring Chicken Festival and Beach Bash leaving downtown, Main Street will this summer sponsor two movie nights on Roosevelt Square, which sits just off of the Gainesville square. Two movies, one for adults and one for children, will be shown each evening.

Roosevelt Square is not suitable for the Spring Chicken Festival, Perry said, because the trailers and cookers used in the chicken cook-off would tear up the grass. And for the Beach Bash, bringing in sand could also kill the lawn.

Main Street hopes to use Roosevelt Square for future downtown events, though, as it could be an alternate space when the fourth side of the square is no longer available.

"Most cities have a town green that can host festivals and events, and this is the perfect location because it's right between two parking decks," Perry said. "It's right in the heart of downtown."

Jingle Mingle will be on a Saturday this year, rather than a Thursday, to attract more visitors, Perry said.

The Gainesville Convention and Visitors Bureau

has also hired a new digital communications coordinator who will start on Feb. 25. Perry said she hopes to start a redesign of the Main Street Gainesville website with the new fiscal year, which will start in July. And the downtown square, Roosevelt Square and the Midtown Greenway now have free Wi-Fi, and the "distrx" app for smartphones has information about events and attractions.

Also, Redmon said Mule Camp Market, Gainesville's traditional fall festival organized by the Gainesville Jaycees, is not leaving downtown.

Organizers of Mule Camp have adjusted its layout to compensate for the construction of Parkside. The festival could be shifted farther

north, going a little farther down Bradford and Main streets, Redmon said.

Redmon said that even on nights when there aren't special events, she sees more people staying on the square in the evenings. With more restaurants, the square stays busy at night, and shops are motivated to stay open later, she said.

ChopBLOCK's Danielson said working together helps make that happen.

"This to me, this is my town," she said. "Anything that I see that has the potential to make it better for the people that live here and the people that work here, I'm absolutely behind. I think that it has to be a team effort."

Times staff Nick Bowman
2/24/19 contributed.