Uncommon sport draws curious fans

Dragon boat event gathers world's competitors, cultures at Lanier Olympic Park

BY LAYNE SALIBA
lsaliba@gainesvilletimes.com

Early Saturday morning, there weren't many spectators at the International Canoe Federation World Dragon Boat Championship. But Ron and Doris Lewis made sure to get to Lake Lanier Olympic Park right around 9 a.m. to claim a spot in the grandstands, lawn chairs in hand.

After they found a spot, they chatted a bit, and waited for one of the races to start. As soon as it began, Ron Lewis peered through binoculars and followed the dragon boats as they glided across the water toward the finish line. It was the first time he and his wife had watched the sport.

"We always try to find something unusual to go do," said Lewis, a Gainesville native now living in Cornelia.

The Lewises are what they call "full-time RVers" who hop from place to place in their recreational vehicle, spending about a month in each. This month, they ended up in Cornelia and heard about the dragon boat championship and decided to try it out. They went to the opening ceremonies Wednesday, Sept. 12, and made it back to see a morning of races on Sept. 15.

"It sounded interesting, so we just wanted to come see it," Doris Lewis said. "We'd never seen it before. I mean, it's the first time it's been here in America, so we had to come."

As they experienced their first dragon boat races, Doris said it was a little slower than she thought it would be but enjoyed watching the athletes. Both may have been expecting something a little faster after stopping at the Guntersville Lake HydroFest motorboat races in Alabama earlier this summer.

"It's like hearing a jet engine on an airplane when hydroplanes come around," Ron said. "So this is a little more peaceful."

Plenty of other fans enjoyed that peace as the afternoon went on,

■ Please see **FANS**, 4C

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Inside

See more about the Dragon Boat World Championships, **Sports, 1B**

AUSTIN STEELE | The Times

The crowd cheers on athletes during the ICF Dragon Boat World Championships at Lake Lanier Olympic Park on Saturday, Sept. 15.

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FANS

■ **Continued from 1C**

including Brenda Miller and Beth Hefner. They volunteer with the Lanier Canoe & Kayak Club for just about every event; they just finished their 13th year with the Atlanta Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival last weekend.

This time, though, they sat back under the shade of umbrellas and simply observed.

"I think they're doing a great job with this," Hefner said. "We both looked at the volunteer list and considered volunteering but we do it so much we thought we'd just come watch this time, so that's what we're doing. It's nice to just come and watch."

Hefner's daughter, Elle, used to race dragon boats and was impressed with what she saw on the water. After spending Friday at the event with her mother, they couldn't wait for another sweltering day of dragon boat enjoyment.

"I think it's so cool that all the cultures are combined at the dragon boat championships," Elle said. "Everyone from around the world is at this. So I think that's a cool aspect, especially for Gainesville."

9-16-18

ICF Dragon Boat World Championships

Where: Lake Lanier Olympic Park, 3105 Clarks Bridge Road, Gainesville
Racing events: Beginning 8 a.m. today
Closing ceremonies: 7 p.m. today, Smithgall Arts Center Lawn, 331 Spring St., Gainesville; tickets $20
How much: Parking is $10
More info: lanierdragonboat2018.com

AUSTIN STEELE | The Times

Team USA paddlers make their way out onto the dock prior to a race during the ICF Dragon Boat World Championships at the Lake Lanier Olympic Park on Saturday in Gainesville.

ICF DRAGON BOAT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

US picks up three more gold medals

The United States squad continued to perform well during Day 3 of the ICF World Dragon Boat Championships on Saturday at the Lake Lanier Olympic Park in Gainesville.

In the 200-meter distance, the U.S. won in both the junior men and mixed 10-seat sprints on a morning with stiff winds from Hurricane Florence.

The junior men finished with the second fastest time, only behind the senior men's squad from the Phillipines. The U.S. rounded out the day with gold in the masters 40-and-over 20-seat boat, and bronze in the senior mixed 20-seat race.

On Sunday, the 200 finals

■ Please see DRAGON, 2B

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DRAGON

■ Continued from 1B

in the 10-seater and 20-seater will be contested, followed by the 2,000 events, which are held on a pursuit-style oval course.

In other Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club news, three canoeists are competing at the Olympic Hopes Regatta in Poznan, Poland.

Natalie Brunson took bronze with her teammate in the two-person canoe A final.

Also from the LCKC, Aaron Mullican and Stanton Collins have been named to represent the U.S., based on their performance in the four-person kayak and two-person kayak, at the Pan American Canoe Championship in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Mullican and Collins are striving to earn a spot to the 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo.

On Sunday, Nik Miller will compete in the ParaCanoe events.

Compiled by Bill Murphy

9-16-18

Shore Sweep hosts 30th litter pickup at Lake Lanier

BY KAYLEE MARTIN
kmartin@gainesvilletimes.com

More than 1,000 volunteers joined forces across 11 locations Saturday, Sept. 15, in an effort to keep Lake Lanier clean at the 30th annual Shore Sweep event.

Each year, thousands of pounds of trash are pulled from the lake and its shores.

"The event started 30 years ago and at that point consisted of mostly homeowners on the lake who wanted to come together and help keep their community clean," said Wilton Rooks, President of Lake Lanier Association. "Now it has grown to include homeowners, marina employees, those who enjoy boating and other organizations and individuals in or near Hall County."

Items found include water bottles to mannequins, and even an old baby carriage.

Though Shore Sweep is held one Saturday in September, the initiative runs for two to three weeks before the main event.

"We always have several advance drop-off locations around the lake, so if someone wants to help out and they aren't available on the event day, they are more than welcome to collect trash and drop it off whenever they please," Rooks said.

Rooks explained that over the years that the event has been held, more than 1,000 tons of trash has been collected from 700 miles of shoreline. Items found include water bottles to mannequins, and even an old baby carriage.

Michael Thurmond, a member of Free Chapel, came out to help with his church at the Gainesville Marina location, along with several other groups such as the Boys & Girls Club of Hall County.

"We have about 30 church members out here today," he said. "The church enjoys helping the community in any way it can, so when we heard about this event, we thought it would be a good opportunity to serve."

At the Longwood Park location, members of Riverside Military Academy and the Aware Club of Gainesville High School worked with several homeowners on the lake to dispose of trash, including tires, lawn chairs, colorful balls like those used in a

■ Please see LITTER, 2C

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LITTER

■ Continued from 1C

children's ball pit and a waterlogged boat dock flotation device.

David Chamblin, a lake resident and event regular, was unable to attend last year's sweep, but in 2016 his haul totaled 1,500 pounds.

"Usually I'm able to fill my entire barge full of trash. I think this event has had such a great impact on the lake over the years, and will continue to help in the future," he said.

Lake residents Michael Putnam, a Shore Sweep first timer, and Bill Morrison, returning for his sixth year, both came to support the cleanup effort.

"It's amazing to see what all gets pulled out the lake year after year," Morrison said.

"I recently moved to Lake Lanier, but I think preserving its natural beauty is important," Putnam said. "Being able to help with something like this feels very rewarding."

And while volunteer work is serious, it can sometimes be fun. After helping move a dock support, members of the Aware Club at GHS decided to ride it behind a boat back to the drop site.

"After struggling a little bit to get it back into the water because it weighs so much, we might as well have some fun!" club member Dante Wilson said.

'I recently moved to Lake Lanier, but I think preserving its natural beauty is important.'

Michael Putnam
Lake resident

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Photos by **KAYLEE MARTIN** | The Times

Left: After the water is drained, volunteers help push a waterlogged boat dock support into the lake with the help of a boat during the annual Shore Sweep on Saturday, Sept. 15. **Right:** From front to back, Ernest Bickham, Christian Diaz, Camryn Banks and Dante Wilson "surf" on the dock support all the way back to Longwood Park, showing that volunteer work can be fun.

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Some of the trash collected at Longwood Park during the annual Shore Sweep on Saturday, Sept. 15, included plastic balls from a children's ball pit and other plastics.

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KAYLEE MARTIN | The Times

Norman Loyd, a volunteer, throws a chair into a dumpster at the Gainesville Marina site during the annual Shore Sweep on Saturday, Sept. 15.

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SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

The USA 20-Seater senior women's 500-meter team completes a time race Friday, Sept. 14, 2018, during Day 2 of the 2018 ICF Dragon Boat World Championships at Lake Lanier Olympic Park.

ICF DRAGON BOAT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

US continues to shine

Team takes five medals in second day on Lake Lanier

BY SARAH WOODALL
swoodall@gainesvilletimes.com

United States regional dragon boat coach Jim O'Dell had never seen the national team perform to the level it did on Thursday at the prestigious ICF Dragon Boat World Championships.

His many paddlers from the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club represented well, boosting the U.S. to a sweep of four events on Day 2 to take the podium as world champions. And the jubilation continued Friday, as Team USA raked in five more medals (gold, two silvers, two bronze) on Day 3 of the championships at Lake Lanier Olympic Park.

"We've had a lot of podium finishes, which is very, very good. The competition, it's just excellent," said Jim O'Dell, also the high performance coach for LCKC.

Friday's action was comprised of the 500 and 2,000 meter portion. The 20-seat

■ Please see LANIER, 2B

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SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

The German 20-Seater 40-and-over Men's 500-meter team finishes with a time of 2:01.975 Friday, Sept. 14, 2018, during their time race at the 2018 ICF Dragon Boat World Championships at Lake Lanier Olympic Venue in Gainesville.

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LANIER

■ Continued from 1B

senior women's team took home the lone gold of the day for the U.S. with a win in the 500-meter race with a time of 2 minutes, 14.657 seconds, besting Canada by more than six seconds. The 20-seater Masters Men paddled to a silver-medal finish in the 500-meter race.

Meanwhile, the 10-seater senior mixed team (2:11.876) and 20-seater Masters 40-and-over mixed (9:36.528) earned bronze after what was one of many hard-fought, 2,000 meter marathons — juniors included — for the day.

For the 10-seater junior men, their silver-medal (9:34) finish was hard-earned after battling a stout group of paddlers from the Czech Republic.

First-time international competitor and junior Team USA paddler Alec Wilson could still hear those intimidating shouts and the beating drum from the Czech's watercraft gradually become louder from behind.

"That 2K...Definitely the hardest we've ever gone together. There's nothing more we could've done," Wilson said of the race. "We were all pouring our heart and soul into that race, into our paddles."

Fellow junior competitor and LCKC member Aaron Dickson said the Czechs handled the turns at a higher grade to eventually beat host Team USA by a two-second margin. He's still confident in their chances for Day 4.

"The Czech Republic team has been so close to us on so many races," said Dickson, a first-time paddler on the world stage next to Wilson. "It's scaring us a little bit, but I know we're gonna get them on the 200s (Saturday)."

O'Dell has especially taken enjoyment in seeing the camaraderie amongst a diverse Team USA to include his LCKC junior competitors. The longtime coach has even mixed a number of them in some senior division races already.

"It's elevating their game — of course it's gassing them a little bit too," laughed O'Dell. "We had some of our juniors that raced three 2,000s today. That's hard work. So did that cost us a gold versus a silver in the 2,000 meters? Maybe.

"But overall, if it helps the team, so be it."

Dickson will be one of those few junior paddlers to have a hand in the 200-meter portion Saturday. He along with the experienced senior paddlers will give chase to the team representing the Philippines, which claimed two gold medals outright in the senior 500 meter portion Thursday. Behind the Philippines was Hungary, which edged Team USA for silver.

Dickson is certainly looking forward to the challenge.

"The Philippines' senior team is very fast," he said. "Their stroke grade and speed is just ridiculous. I hope we'll be able to keep up, honestly."

Aside from the stern competition, LCKC paddlers like Dickson and Wilson are soaking in their first international competition. One of Wilson's favorite experiences has been his conversations with other national teams.

"You're able to make friends with people across the globe ...The Switzerland team asked us certain customs here, like they didn't know what a sausage biscuit was," laughed Wilson. "The sportsmanship is obviously greatly appreciated. ..We try to be as humble as we can, and hope that other teams show that to us as well. That ultimately makes it a better racing experience."

Seventeen-year-old Dickson, born and raised in Gainesville, still can't believe his first Dragon Boat World Championships has essentially taken place in their own backyard.

"It's kinda weird, taking it in," he said. "But it's at home. It's right here. I mean, we go to the same stores every day, and we do all our workouts here."

Team USA will brace for the next portion of races Saturday — 200 meters. The 200-meter finals and more 2,000 meter finals will commence Sunday, weather permitting.

O'Dell noted that its a tight race with Germany in overall points for the senior and masters paddlers.

"It's gotta be close. ...I think Germany might be ahead of us a little bit for Nation's Cup," the coach said. "But we're not done battling."

9-15-18

Rain fails to dampen an especially sweet win

Photos by SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

United States regional dragon boat coach Jim O'Dell gestures to the crowd at Lake Lanier Olympic Park Sunday, Sept. 16, as the USA is awarded the gold medal in the 10-seat Junior Mixed during the final medal ceremony of the 2018 ICF Dragon Boat World Championships.

Dragon Boat event wraps up with Team USA on top

BY JEFF GILL
jgill@gainesvilletimes.com

Smiles were all around as Jim O'Dell hoisted the Nations Cup among teammates at Lake Lanier Olympic Park on Sunday afternoon, Sept. 16.

For O'Dell, it was especially sweet grabbing the cup, which signifies the highest points total at the 2018 International Canoe Federation Dragon Boat World Championships.

"This is a program on the rebound," said O'Dell, United States regional dragon boat coach. "After Moscow two years ago, nobody — these other nations have talked with me — expected us to do this well."

Team USA shared the closing ceremonies platform with Germany and the Czech Republic as the prestigious event came to a close Sunday. The competition began Wednesday, Sept. 12.

An occasionally steady rain didn't mar festivities, as countries cheered each other during award presentations.

As the U.S. won the top trophy, athletes and other spectators shouted, "USA! USA!"

"We are extremely proud of all our coaches and all our athletes," O'Dell said. "They just did a phenomenal job."

Robyn Lynch, Olympic Park venue manager, was beaming after the event, which involved heavy planning and preparations.

"It's been such a great experience," and to have Team USA come out on top "was even better," she said. "What a bonus."

Lynch said she has gotten positive feedback from the

■ Please see DRAGON, 4A

Above: Team USA dragon boat member Brittany Blundetto, of Philadelphia, holds the Nations Cup awarded to the team. **Left:** Team USA members Ha Nguyen, left, and Heather Mercado take a selfie together during the closing ceremony.

'This is a program on the rebound. After Moscow two years ago, nobody — these other nations have talked with me — expected us to do this well.'

Jim O'Dell, United States regional dragon boat coach

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SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

Spectators stand in the rain at the shore during the 2000-meter events Sunday, Sept. 16, at Lake Lanier Olympic Park during the final day of the 2018 ICF Dragon Boat World Championships.

DRAGON

■ Continued from 1A

visiting countries.

"They thought the event was so well organized," she said. "They loved it here and want to come back."

Teams from 14 countries raced in dragon boats, which are similar to canoes but longer, seating 12 or 22 people, and in various age groups — Junior, Senior and Master, 40-plus and 50-plus.

Team USA had 112 athletes, with 29 coming from Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club. Other Team USA athletes hailed from all over the country, including Arizona, Texas and North Carolina.

One of those was Heather Mercado, a paddler from Texas.

"It's a beautiful (venue) and a great course," she said, after winning a medal.

Even though athletes seemed to fill the stands overlooking Lake Lanier, the event drew some curious spectators, including Helen Weathers, who drove in with her family from South Fulton County.

"We like to embrace anything in the community," she said. "This has been wonderful. My daughter wants to know how to get into it."

The youth movement helped lift Team USA to victory, O'Dell said.

"I honestly think our juniors made a huge impact on this," he said.

O'Dell quickly dismissed the term "up and comers" to describe them.

"They're here," he said, with a laugh.

The World Championships rotate among different cities every two years, with Gainesville the first stop in North America. The 2020 event will take place in India.

As for Lynch, she's busy preparing for other events. The Beginning Racing League will host its Fall Fungatta at the venue Sept. 29.

"There's not a chance to take a break quite yet," she said.

The German 20-Seater Sr. Women finish the 2000-meter race during the final day of races.

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9-19-18

Race, walk, stretch and kick into fall

Get Out file photos | The Times

The Walk to End Alzheimer's event included a 3-mile walk around downtown Gainesville. **Below right:** Wendi Chesnut, left, walks because she was diagnosed with dementia and Jessica Marshall walks for her grandfather, grandmother and friend's father. **Bottom right:** Desiree Goodbar, center, walks with the Edward Jones team.

Stay active this fall and help others at various events

BY LAYNE SALIBA
lsaliba@gainesvilletimes.com

As fall approaches and the weather starts to cool down in North Georgia, there's never been a better time to get outside.

Luckily for Hall County residents, there are plenty of ways to do that by just enjoying the outdoors. Opportunities are available to get active, have a little fun and support a few good causes.

Run

A number of area 5-kilometer races provide some friendly competition and a way to stay in shape.

The RGA Pink and Blue 5K Dash on Nov. 3 at Riverside Military Academy benefits Rock Goodbye Angel, a Gainesville nonprofit that support families of pregnancy and infant loss.

This year's race is a Run & See Georgia Grand Prix event, which encourages runners from around the state to participate. A fun run for children younger than age 9 begins at 8 a.m. The 5K starts at 8:30 a.m.

Registration is $30 and includes a race-day T-shirt and the chance to have an angel baby sign in honor of families who have gone through pregnancy or infant loss placed along the course. To register, visit runsignup.com/Race/GA/Gainesville/PinkandBlueDash.

If a themed race is more your speed, the Braselton Zombie 5K Run and the Boo Run 5K are in Flowery Branch.

The fourth annual Zombie 5K on Oct. 20 will take runners around downtown Braselton while zombies lurk around the corners. The race starts at 8:30 a.m.; registration is $30.

Runners are encouraged to dress in zombie outfits, with a prize given to the best. Awards will go to the top runners in each age group.

To register, visit runsignup.com/Race/GA/Braselton/Zombie5KRun.

Racers dressed in Halloween costumes will flood Flowery Branch for the Boo Run 5K on Oct. 27, hosted by the Flowery Branch Masonic Lodge. Proceeds support area charities. The race drew 525 participants last year.

"The Flowery Branch Masonic Lodge, we contribute to a lot of organizations that have charitable causes," said Chris Eberhart, an event organizer. "Being able to help those local charities, it means a lot."

The race starts at 9 a.m.; cost is $25. Awards will be given to the best runners and best costumes.

To register, visit runsignup.com/Race/GA/FloweryBranch/BooRun5K.

Relax

A couple of events this fall offer a peaceful, relaxing morning for attendees.

Every Tuesday in October, Atlanta Botanical Gardens in Gainesville will host a Tai Chi class for members and non-members. Instructed by Buck Barnes, the classes promise "to increase flexibility and balance in an enchanting setting."

Classes begin at 9:30 a.m. and cost $59 for members, $69 for non-members. The price covers the entire month.

To register, visit atlantabg.org/learn/adult-classes/tai-chi-gainesville.

Yoga also will be offered at Brenau University's Sellars Gallery. Participants can enjoy the beauty of Donald Sultan's artwork while relaxing through yoga. Sultan's work "draws inspiration from the natural beauty of flowers" by creating vibrant paintings and sculptures of lantern flowers and poppies.

Emilie Cook from Find Your Center Yoga in Gainesville will lead the class at 1:30 p.m. Oct. 24, for free; participants need only bring a yoga mat.

To register, contact Allison Lauricella at 770-534-6263 or alauricella@brenau.edu.

Fun

If a 5K is a bit much, the Walk to End Alzheimer's is a good way to get moving to support a good cause. The event begins at 9:30 a.m. Oct. 6 on the downtown Gainesville square.

Up to 600 people are expected to take the 2-mile walk to raise awareness and money for the Alzheimer's Association. There are 52 teams registered, raising $27,154 of the $45,000 goal.

To register, visit act.alz.org/site/TR/Walk2018/GA-Georgia?fr_id=11152&pg=entry.

Gainesville Parks and Recreation will raise money for March of Dimes and its Children at Play Fund. The Kicking for Every Baby fundraiser kickball game Oct. 6 at Lanier Point Softball Complex is $6 per person for teams of at least 10; signup deadline is Sept. 28.

"We are really encouraging kids to come out," said Zandrea Stephens, division manager at Gainesville Parks and Recreation. "If they want to get a team up and come beat some of these adult teams, we would love to see that."

After raising $900 at the beginning of the year, Gainesville Parks and Recreation is hoping to raise even more to be split between the two organizations.

To register, visit gainesville.org/recreation.

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Frances Meadows Aquatic Center will be offering the following classes FREE during the event:

Land Classes - Wellness Room

10am-11am	Zumba
11am-11:45am	Strength in Motion
12pm-1pm	Gentle Yoga

Water Classes - Warm Pool

10am-11am	Water Works
11am-12pm	Gentle Movements
12pm-1pm	Aqua Moving & Grooving

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belk
MODERN. SOUTHERN. STYLE.

ATLANTA Gastroenterology ASSOCIATES™

Lanier Carts & Outdoor

For more information please contact Leah Nelson at LNelson@gainesvilletimes.com, or 770-535-6330.

9-22-18

27th Annual Marketplace

Festive Holiday Shopping!

The Medical Center Auxiliary is very proud to announce it will be joined again in 2018 by Marketplace

Presenting Sponsor

WILLIS INVESTMENT COUNSEL
Principled Investing

We are grateful for Willis Investment Counsel's 10th consecutive year of generous support of this annual holiday shopping event. One hundred percent of the proceeds will benefit **Safe Kids Gainesville/Hall County.**

SAVE THE DATE
Marketplace Preview Party
Thursday, November 1, 2018
6:30 – 9:30 p.m.
Gainesville Civic Center
(Tickets available online at nghs.com/marketplace Oct. 1)

General Admission
November 2 & 3
For more information, please visit **nghs.com/marketplace.**

Chairs
Katie Crumley, Jenny Floyd & Morgan Wood

Great selection of exciting merchants!

9-23-18

FREE TO THE PUBLIC!

The Times
gainesvilletimes.com

HEALTHY AGING EXPO

FRANCES MEADOWS
AQUATIC AND COMMUNITY CENTER

1545 Community Way, Gainesville

Wednesday, September 26th 10am-1pm

VENDORS

1. The Times
2. Northeast Georgia Health System
3. Belk
4. Lanier Carts
5. The Insurance Source / Medicare Man
6. The Times Photo Booth
7. Gainesville Parks & Rec
8. Medical Weight Loss
9. Royal Lakes Dentistry
10. Gastroenterology Associates
11. Watkins Total Health
12. ITN Lanier
13. JB Jams
14. Liberty Utilities
15. ComfortKeepers
16. Manor Lake
17. Rushton and Company
18. Judy Paul - Keller Williams
19. Northeast Georgia Diagnostic Clinic
20. Humana
21. Legacy Link
22. Atlanta Gastroenterology Associates
23. The Spa on Green Street
24. Gainesville Hearing Services
25. The Longstreet Clinic
26. Beverly Hills Massage
27. Mundy Mill Dental
28. The Vitamin Shoppe
29. Senior Life Center
30. BGW Dental

Entertainment by jB JAMS

SPEAKERS:

10:00 AM
Jackson Boyum - *Humana*

10:30 AM
Atlanta Gastroenterology

11:00 AM
Judy Paul - *KW Lanier Partners*

11:30 AM
The Vitamin Shoppe

12:00 PM
The Insurance Source

12:30 PM
Rushton & Company

FREE Health Screenings
Carotid Artery Screening
Blood Pressure Checks

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First 100 receive a goody bag!

Complete a Passport to Prizes for your chance to win! Door prizes will be given out during the event!

BOOTH LOCATIONS ARE NOT FINAL, AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

FRANCES MEADOWS
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9-23-18

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Health Screenings and
Much, Much More!

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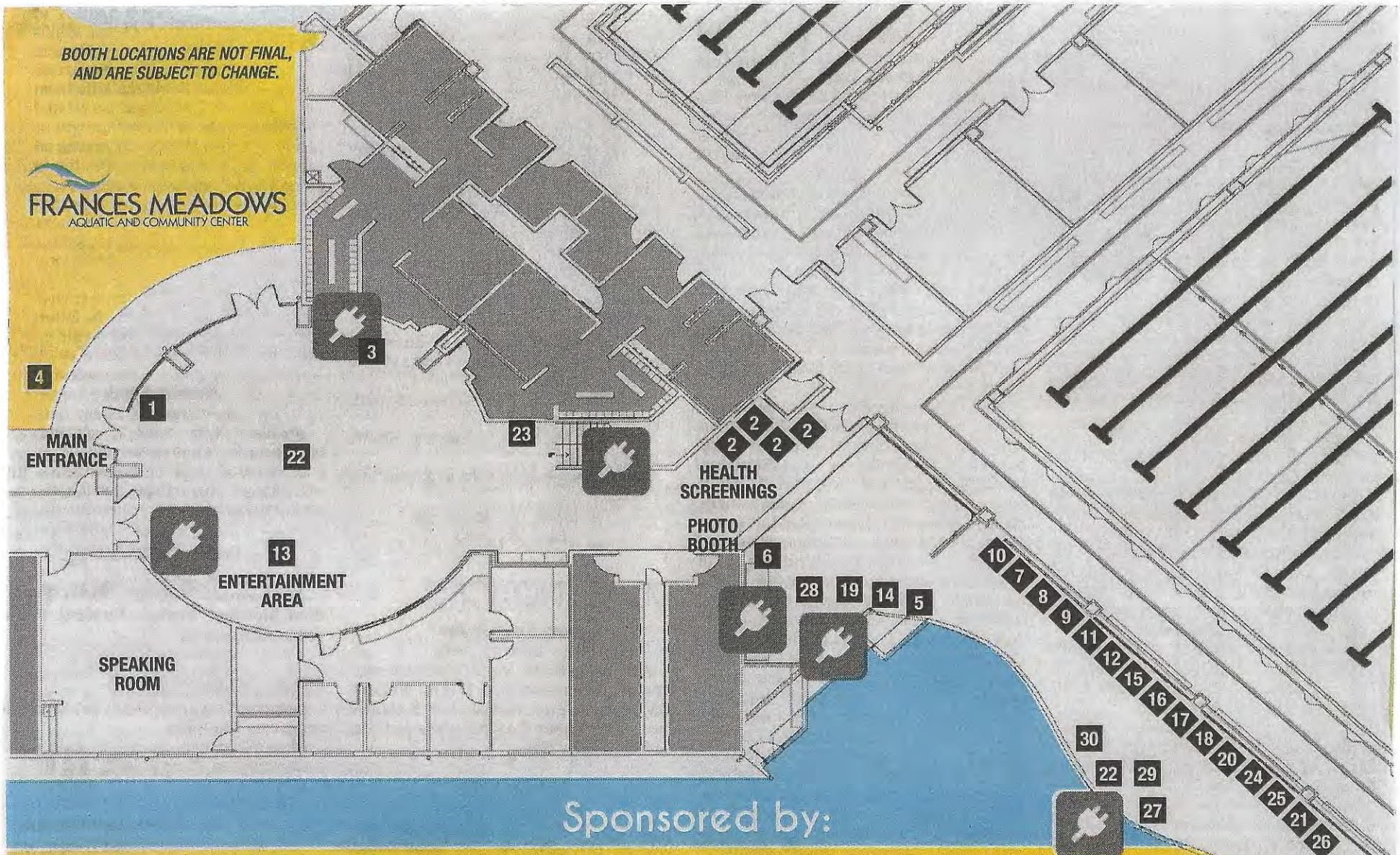

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