Georgetown County Fire/EMS receives improved rating

Georgetown County Fire/EMS has been notified that its fire protection rating from the Insurance Services Office will improve effective Feb. 1, 2014. This change not only means the department’s level of fire protection service has increased, according to the ISO analysis, but it could also earn lower home insurance rates for property owners in the department’s coverage area.

“ISO’s Public Protection Classification Program plays an important role in the underwriting process at insurance companies. In fact, most U.S. insurers — including the largest ones — use PPC information as part of their decision-making when deciding what business to write, coverages to offer or prices to charge for personal or commercial property insurance,” said Francine Yotsko, a manager at ISO.

In a letter to County Administrator Sel Hemingway, Yotsko announced the county’s Public Protection Classification will drop from a 6/9 to a 4/9 in February.

“There’s a big difference between a protection class 6 and a protection class 4,” said Linda Edwards, an insurance agent with State Farm in Georgetown. She couldn’t say how much premiums might be affected by the change, and reductions vary, but residents in the Georgetown County Fire/EMS district should be able to tell a difference with the new rating and they should be pleased, she noted.

Insurance companies will be automatically notified of the change in ISO rating. Any policyholder who doesn’t see the rating corrected when the new rating takes effect should call their agent.

Georgetown County Fire EMS has had an ISO rating of 6/9 since 2003, when the last survey was conducted, said Chief Mack Reed. That was before the fire and emergency medical services departments were combined. The melding of the two departments was one factor that helped improve the rating, he said.

“There are a lot of variables that make up that number,” Reed explained.

Celebrating the season

Looking for fun ways to celebrate the holiday season with your family? Here’s a list of upcoming holiday events in Georgetown County.

Murrells Inlet Community Christmas Parade, 12/1

The annual Murrells Inlet Christmas Parade is set for 3 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 1. It will start at Booty’s Outdoors at Willcox Ave. and head south down Business 17 to the Brookwood Inn at Pendergrass Ave.

All floats will be judged by a panel of child judges, so
At Georgetown County, we want our residents and visitors kept abreast of what’s going on inside their local government. That’s why we created the Georgetown County Chronicle. It’s a vehicle for information about county services and events, important messages from county officials and behind-the-scenes glimpses at how government works.

You can find the Chronicle on our website at www.gtcounty.org or through our Facebook page. If you’d rather have it delivered to your inbox, e-mail jbroach@gtcounty.org with the subject line “send me the Chronicle.”

That’s also the place to send questions and comments about this newsletter and its content. We welcome your feedback and suggestions.
Volunteers, survivors sought for Georgetown area Relay

The next Georgetown area Relay for Life is still almost six months away, but volunteers have already begun making plans, raising funds and signing up teams.

The goal for the 2014 event, scheduled for May 2 at Georgetown High School, is to make it bigger and better than ever, and bring back the level of enthusiasm and community involvement the event enjoyed in the past, said Sheila Spinks, the new Relay chairwoman. She said she wants to get volunteers, cancer survivors and residents from throughout Georgetown County excited about Relay for Life again.

Relay for Life is an annual community fundraising event that supports the American Cancer Society and its efforts to find a cure. Spinks also promises the event will be a lot of fun, with some new activities to be announced early next year.

The event, she added, should be one that unites the community in a common mission. With that in mind, about 20 people who gathered for an introductory volunteer meeting on Nov. 4 selected “Georgetown Strong,” as the theme for this year’s event. They were inspired by the way residents from throughout the county came together after the Front Street fire in September. Spinks said that’s representative of the kind of community we live in, where neighbors come together to help each other when there is need.

The local theme will combine with the national theme for 2014 Relay events: “Finish the Fight,” which recognizes the American Cancer Society’s 100th year of saving lives, the advancements that have been made and the fact that the fight isn’t over yet.

“I want this to be the loudest, most successful event we’ve ever had, because silence won’t finish the fight against cancer,” Spinks said. “Today, two out of three Americans diagnosed with cancer survive to celebrate more birthdays. We want that to be three out of three.”

All volunteers are welcome and Spinks said there are many small ways to help. For more information about becoming a Relay volunteer or other ways to get involved, contact Spinks at (843) 455-5121 or visit www.facebook.com/GeorgetownRelay.

A community kickoff for this year’s Relay is planned for Jan. 7. Details will be announced later in the year.

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**Annual Holiday Book Sale!**

Thursday, Dec. 13
5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 14
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

in the Waccamaw Library Conference Room

Popular Fiction • Cookbooks • Children’s Books • Nonfiction • Humor • Stocking Stuffers • and Much More
Fire departments offer holiday safety tips

What’s a holiday party or even the traditional Christmas morning scene itself without a beautifully decorated tree? If your household, as those of more than 33 million other American homes, includes a natural tree in its festivities, take to heart the sales person’s advice to keep the tree watered.

That’s valuable advice and not just to create a fragrant, winter atmosphere, said officials with Midway Fire Rescue and Georgetown County Fire/EMS.

Christmas trees account for 250 fires annually, resulting in 14 deaths, 26 injuries and more than $13.8 million in property damage. Typically, shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters or matches start tree fires. Well-watered trees are not a problem. Dry and neglected trees can be, said Todd Blomdahl of Midway.

As proof he points to this video clip: http://bit.ly/7kFxJo. From the National Institute of Standards and Technology, it illustrates just how quickly a dry Christmas tree can go up in flames. Within three seconds of ignition, the dry Scotch pine is completely ablaze. At five seconds, the fire extends up the tree and black smoke with searing gases streaks across the ceiling. Fresh air near the floor feeds the fire. The sofa, coffee table and the carpet ignite prior to any flame contact.

Within 40 seconds, “flashover” occurs (that means the entire room erupts into flames, oxygen is depleted and dense, deadly toxic smoke engulfs the scene). Wet trees tell a different story. For comparative purposes, the NIST fire safety engineers selected a green Scotch pine, had it cut in their presence, had an additional two inches cut from the trunk’s bottom, and placed the tree in a stand with at least a 7.6-liter water capacity. The researchers maintained the Scotch pine’s water on a daily basis. A single match could not ignite the tree.

A second attempt in which an electric current ignited an entire matchbook failed to set the tree on fire. Finally they applied an open flame to the tree using a propane torch. The branches ignited briefly, but self-extinguished when the researchers removed the torch from the branches.

“Remember: A wet tree is a safe tree,” Blomdahl said.

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Donate Blood.
It’s safe. It’s simple. It saves lives.

Blood Drive
Wednesday, Dec. 4
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
at the Beck Recreation Center,
2030 Church St., Georgetown

Donors are encouraged to schedule an appointment online at redcrossblood.org. Use the sponsor lookup code GeoCounty. Donors will be entered to win a $1,000 gift card from a home improvement store.

This event is jointly sponsored by Georgetown County government, Georgetown County School District, Georgetown County Water & Sewer District, the City of Georgetown and Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments.

Atalaya Holiday Celebration

Saturday, Dec. 7
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
at Huntington Beach State Park

Come experience this National Historic landmark come alive with decorated rooms, crafts, baked good and live music.

Presented by Friends of Huntington Beach State Park
Korean War veterans receive thanks in 60th anniversary ceremony

The Georgetown County Office of Veterans Affairs had a recognition ceremony for local veterans of the Korean War last month on Veterans Day. About 30 veterans were recognized with a certificate of appreciation from the Department of Defense. A proclamation from the governor was also read. The office decided to have a ceremony for veterans of the Korean War this year to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the war’s end. An armistice ending the war between North and South Korea was signed on July 27, 1953. “The Korean War is often called ‘the forgotten war,’ but we want these men and women to know they are not forgotten, even 60 years later,” said Natrenah Blackstock, the county’s veterans affairs officer. “We are honored to recognize these veterans.”

ISO Rating
Continued from front page

Improvements in training and dispatch, increased personnel and more fire hydrants throughout the county are among factors that contributed to the improved rating, he added.

Davis represents county at state conference

Fred Davis, superintendent of the Georgetown County Environmental Services Division, was a presenter at the Department of Health and Environmental Control’s 7th Annual South Carolina Recycling and Solid Waste Professionals Conference on Oct. 22. The two-day event in Columbia had more than 150 attendees representing 44 different counties within South Carolina.

The agenda was filled with topics such as new developments in municipal solid waste, recycling and best practices used. The conference also allowed a chance to network with affluent professionals in attendance.

In his role as speaker, Davis provided an update on the recent recycling innovations, ongoing programs and new initiatives that are currently underway at Georgetown County’s integrated solid waste facility.

Other topics discussed at the conference included “recyclonomics,” e-scarp recycling, and construction and demolition. Local vendors such as Sonoco, TeleCycle and Pratt Industries also exhibited new products and services that could better serve solid waste and recycling efforts throughout the state.

For more information about the Environmental Services Division, visit www.gtcounty.org.

Find us online!

Whether you’re looking for jobs, the latest news or to contact a specific department, online is a great way to stay updated or get in touch with us.

Visit our website at www.gtcounty.org. You can also find us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. Just search for GtCountySC.
Public Services Department honors outstanding employees

Donny Cummings, building manager at the Georgetown County Judicial Center, was named Employee of the Year by the county’s Public Services Department on Nov. 20.

Cummings is one of four employees in the department who received special recognition during an awards ceremony at Beck Recreation Center.

In addition to managing day to day operations at the center, Cummings manages multiple projects throughout the county. He does every job with coordination, organization and professionalism, said Tracy Jones who presented the award. His outstanding commitment to high work standards, meeting tight construction schedules, and constantly being flexible with scheduling of materials has saved this County much money.

“His ability to keep all of the many facets of his job in order, while supervising the employees who are working on all of the various projects is extremely valuable to the department,” Jones said.

Jeff Darden, an environmental technician, received the department’s Professional Achievement Award. He joined the county as a part-time employee and later earned a full-time position as a driver, proving himself to be a great benefit to his division. Darden recently decided to become educated in a field completely new to him in an effort to fill a need in his division and improve the efficiency of its operations. His current position requires the practical application of waste decomposition, gas laws, pipe fitting, mechanics, electrical troubleshooting and knowledge of air quality regulations. It’s a complete turnaround from where he started, Jones said.

“This employee’s initiative to learn a new discipline is a true demonstration of professionalism,” Jones said.

Sharon Moultrie, an administrative assistant, received the department’s Customer Service Award. She is a longtime county employee whose experience and knowledge of the county’s inner workings is a great benefit to Georgetown County government and the public.

“Her timely responses and cool under pressure manner when dealing with the constant influx of requests is truly an example to be followed,” Jones said.

Moultrie also handles day to day operations of the Public Works division. “She always has a watchful eye and notices discrepancies that when addressed ensure the safety of our operations,” Jones said.

Jerry “Tiny” Tancil, a heavy equipment operator, received a Safety Star Award for remembering to wear his seatbelt while operating a bulldozer. He was recently in an accident in which his bulldozer flipped over when the ground gave way as he tried to push trash up a hill on the landfill. By wearing his seatbelt, which is not a state requirement for off-road vehicles, he helped prevent serious injury.

Calling all photographers

Photographers of all skill levels are invited to enter our “Autumn in Georgetown County” photo contest. We’re looking for scenic shots that show what a beautiful place Georgetown County is during this time of year.

Send entries to jbroach@gtcounty.org.
Read complete terms at www.gtcounty.org.
Demolition complete at MICC

Demolition was completed last month on the old school building that for many years was home to the Murrells Inlet Community Center. A new center is under construction on the same site and that project is also nearing completion. Windows should be going in at the new building in the next couple of weeks, said Beth Goodale, Georgetown County’s director of Parks and Recreation. Installation of plumbing and the fire alarm system are under way. The metal roof is also in the process of being put on. The project is on schedule to be finished early next year with the new center opening in the spring.

Photo courtesy of June Jordan

Way to go, All Stars!

The Georgetown County Parks and Recreation 11- and 12-year old All Star football team, made up of kids from all areas of the county, were district runners-up in Florence last month. They defeated Myrtle Beach and Sumter before falling in the championship to Florence. Team coaches are Jeff Anderson, Donny Cummings, Michael Johnson and Scott Stecz.

Lowcountry Prep students take green pledge

The Georgetown County Public Services Department celebrated America Recycles Day with a presentation at Lowcountry Preparatory School on Nov. 15. Aisha Jones, the department’s environmentalist, taught students the basics of recycling and why it’s so important. Students also took a pledge to recycle and prizes were handed out by Fred Davis, superintendent of the environmental services division. To schedule a similar presentation, email adjones@gtcounty.org.
Filming ordinance is a work in progress, but has right balance

The following editorial is by Georgetown County Administrator Sel Hemingway.

After an experience with a reality TV show left many residents angry and upset this summer, it became abundantly clear that Georgetown County officials needed to put rules and procedures in place to regulate filming within the county’s borders.

What was unclear was how to craft regulations in a way that would stop the kind of activity residents find objectionable without inadvertently eliminating desirable activity at the same time. It was quite a dilemma and we knew it would require some careful balancing as we worked through the process.

We all have to acknowledge that much of the filming that has historically taken place in Georgetown County has been positive. As many residents like to boast, movies such as “The Patriot” and “The Notebook” were filmed in Georgetown County. And S.C. ETV regularly shoots historical, cultural and educational works here. Those are without a doubt the kinds of projects that are good for tourism, good for our economy and should be encouraged.

So county staff and council members worked arduously to find a balance that would achieve both objectives. It was a delicate process and in finding the balance we sought, we were criticized first for crafting an ordinance that was too harsh and then for one that didn’t have any teeth.

Yet ultimately we believe the document we approved in the end was a good compromise and was the right thing for the county at this time. It sets limits on filming, especially in residential areas, yet the strictures aren’t so burdensome as to repel projects. The rules instead ensure filming activities won’t be disruptive to the daily lives of those who live and work in the county.

The ordinance requires firstly that a permit be obtained for any filming activity involving a cast and crew of more than three. This does not apply to school projects or news media. Before this, there was no type of permitting process in place for filming, so there was nothing to revoke or base a fine on if issues arose.

That said, just creating the filming ordinance and application for filming was a big step in solving the problem. That alone serves to limit filming, particularly in heavily populated areas. The ordinance also gives flexibility to the administration and staff in permit approval.

The permit fee was initially proposed at $1,000 — intended as a deterrent for undesirable projects — but on further reflection it was lowered to $200 recognizing that many desirable film projects, such as S.C. ETV’s “Carolina Stories,” have smaller budgets and would be more likely to have been deterred by such a fee. Initially, the ordinance was written to require any project anywhere in the county to provide written notice to residents near the project area at least 45 days before any filming. It was quickly pointed out by a representative of the SC Film Commission that such a requirement was not practical and might again deter desirable projects. The window for projects is usually too small to accommodate a 45-day notification period, the representative pointed out.

We took that into consideration and made adjustments accordingly.

It should be noted that this ordinance, though now on the books and being enforced, is a work in progress. This is a learning process for the county and as we apply the permitting process to future projects, it is certain we will need to make revisions.

We’ll continue to listen to input that may help us improve this process, so the restrictions may loosen in some ways and become more constraining in others. We may also find things that slipped through the cracks in the creation of the ordinance and have the need to close some loopholes.

Whatever changes are made in the future, this ordinance is one that was created with a lot of input, both from those who live in the county and from film industry representatives. A lot of careful thought went into drafting this ordinance and it is a major step toward achieving our goal and serving the public without eliminating economic opportunities that may be brought by filming projects.

County Council helps recognize caregivers

Georgetown County Council Vice Chairman Jerry Oakley was part of a program in Murrells Inlet on Nov. 7 that recognized and offered resources for caregivers. There are more than 66 million unpaid family caregivers providing care for loved ones in the U.S. today and millions of paid caregivers working to keep patients in their homes. Georgetown County issued a proclamation in honor of National Caregivers Month and Oakley read it at the program. Also during the program, awards were handed out to caregivers including John Matthews of DeBordieu and Betty Beaty, who was a caregiver for the late Genevieve “Sister” Peterkin of Murrells Inlet. Matthews and his wife, Dot, care for Dot’s 97-year-old mother, Jo Cerami, in their home.
New museum space impresses

Georgetown County Council members got their first look last month at the future home of the Georgetown County Museum. Though the museum isn’t funded by the county, the building the museum will move into was formerly home to the county’s planning and zoning department. County Council several years ago agreed to let the museum renovate and use the space to accommodate its extensive collection. René King, president of the Georgetown County Historical Society, thanked council for their trust in the society and the museum staff to take charge of the building and use it to benefit the community. The new museum space is equal to facilities of museums in much larger communities.

Sheriff’s Office receives donation for Shop with Santa program

Charlie Campbell of the Dead Dog Saloon in Murrells Inlet presented Georgetown County Sheriff Lane Cribb with a check for $4,000 last month to help fund the Sheriff’s “Shop with Santa” program. The program has Sheriff’s Office employees take underprivileged children in the county shopping, allowing them to pick out gifts for themselves, siblings and other family members. The funds from the Dead Dog Saloon were raised at the restaurant’s 12th annual Sept. 11 Local Heroes’ Benefit. This is also the 12th year the Campbell family has donated proceeds from the event to the Shop with Santa program. Pictured from left are Mike Campbell, Sheriff Cribb and Charlie Campbell.

‘A Christmas Carol’

The Friends of the Waccamaw Library sponsored a production of “A Christmas Carol” by the Hampstead Stage Company of New Hampshire at Waccamaw High School on Nov. 14. The play, based on Dickens’ 1843 novella, was performed by two talented actors, Jerrad Aker and Amanda Thickpenny. Aker is a Charleston native, who graduated from the College of Charleston with a degree in Theatre Performance. Thickpenny recently earned her master’s degree from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, England. Part of the performance included audience participation, both as a whole and as individuals. For upcoming programs from the Friends of the Waccamaw Library, visit www.thefowl.org.
Stables Park hosts its first tournament for colleges

Six student teams participated in the inaugural Tennis on Campus Tournament at the Waccamaw Regional Tennis Center at Stables Park on Nov. 16 and 17. Teams were from Duke University, the University of North Carolina — Wilmington, East Carolina University, Coastal Carolina University and two teams from the College of Charleston. NC State was scheduled to participate, but had to cancel at the last minute.

College of Charleston Team 1 won the round robin format, squeaking out a victory over Duke.

The Tennis on Campus events are relatively new, but are becoming very popular with most colleges largely because of the USTA’s involvement, the support of “club” teams from the universities and that fact that the tournaments are a lot of fun for student athletes, said David Bromberg, tennis pro at Stables Park.

“What makes these events really neat is the format,” he said. “All TOC tournaments use the World Team Tennis format. The format for each match has each team play one set of men’s singles, ladies singles, men’s doubles, ladies doubles, and the final match is always mixed.”

The team with the highest game total wins the match.

“The twist is if the losing team wins the last set of mixed, the match continues until either the winning team wins one game or the losing team ties the score,” Bromberg explained. “If the losing team ties the match score, then both teams play one super tiebreaker — first one to 7 points — for the match.”

Also different than collegiate matches is that the teams are all encouraged to be on the court cheering their teams on, and substitutions are allowed.

“These differences can really generate some exciting tennis,” Bromberg said. “All the students were really happy with the tournament, the facility and staying in beautiful Pawleys Island.”

Waccamaw Regional Tennis Center is currently looking at dates for a spring tournament as well as a fall event.

At top: Students from Duke University participate in the Tennis on Campus Tournament on Nov. 17. At left: A student from East Carolina University takes a swing as his teammates look on. Below: Students participating in the tournament pose for a group picture on the porch at the clubhouse.