



The Georgetown County Chronicle

A monthly newsletter produced
by Georgetown County, S.C.,
for its residents and visitors.

Volume I, Issue 3

November 2012

Inside this Issue

- Statement on Eight Oaks Park, Page 2
- Tips to avoid identity theft, Page 4
- Program brings digital arts to schools, Page 6
- Halloween photos, Pages 8 and 9
- Youth basketball sign-up, Page 10

Calendar

Nov. 2 – Free public screening of “Red Tails” at Howard Auditorium, 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 – Red Tails event at the Georgetown County Airport honoring the Tuskegee Airmen. Displays and demos start at 9 a.m. Main program begins at noon.

Nov. 6 – Election Day. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Nov. 12 – Veterans Day parade begins at East Bay Park, 4:15 p.m. See page 3

Nov. 13 – County Council meeting, 5:30 p.m. in the old courthouse.

Library use continues to grow in technology age

It doesn't take much more than walking through the door at the Georgetown County Library's main branch to see that the public's reliance on libraries hasn't diminished in the age of iPads, Kindles and the Internet.

The nature of some of the services offered has changed a bit, but libraries remain community havens where any person can go to put their hands on the tools to gain knowledge and, if they need to, find help locating or using those tools. On any given day, people of all ages, races and backgrounds can be found browsing bookshelves, using computers and participating in educational programs ranging from sign language classes to workshops on blogging.

“Technology has transformed libraries,” said Dwight McInvaill, county library director. “Since the early 1990s, with the graphical Web brows-

er, libraries realized that technology was going to be a key service. The library was the first agency in Georgetown County to have Internet service and the first to provide free public-access computers. Since that time, the demand for technology has grown

and increasingly occupies more of our space and staff.”

During an average month at the library, users log about 5,700 computer sessions and 3,600 hours of use at the county's four
See “Libraries,” Page 7



Attendees at a job fair hosted by the library this summer. The event drew about 150 people.



Stables Park open in Litchfield

Fields, a running path and tennis courts are open for business at the new Stables Park. Ribbon cutting ceremonies took place Oct. 22 for the Waccamaw Regional Tennis Center and the Waccamaw Regional Field Complex. The facilities will be home to Waccamaw High's tennis and cross country teams. Pictured at left, county officials and others who worked on the park celebrate after the ribbon is cut at the field complex. See more photos on Page 12.

Tournament-level facility will also see plenty of local use

EIGHT OAKS PARK

Recent concerns from citizens have brought to light some misconceptions about Georgetown County's newly constructed baseball and softball complex, Eight Oaks Park, and its accessibility to residents.

The county would like to make it clear Eight Oaks Park will be an integral part of the county's recreational offerings and a valuable resource for county residents.

When Georgetown County conceived plans for Eight Oaks as part of the county's Capital Improvement Plan a number of years ago, the opportunity to host baseball and softball tournaments was prominent in the minds of county officials. A

tournament-level venue was seen as an economic opportunity for the county — a way to attract new visitors, many of whom would hopefully become repeat visitors, and bring revenue to local businesses.

Though open only a few months, Eight Oaks is already seeing success in that capacity, having been host to five tournaments, attracting thousands of visitors from around the state and the Southeast, and generating significant visitor spending.

It's a blueprint the county plans to duplicate at other new facilities, including Stables Park in Litchfield.

However, for all the attention directed recently to tournament play, Eight Oaks is first, and foremost, a community

park like other parks operated by Georgetown County.

Many residents were unfortunately given the impression that wasn't the case as we tried to communicate our plans for the park.

We didn't explain that, like other parks in the county, Eight Oaks is used for local league play. When the season starts up again next spring, the fields will be packed with boys and girls learning and enjoying the sport via the county's recreational teams.

It will also be available to local adult leagues.

While the teams enjoy the fields, friends and family of the players will fill the stands and make use of amenities for visitors to the park.

It's true: the gates at Eight

Oaks are locked when the park is unattended. That's an effort to avoid vandalism and unintentional damage to the facility.

It's to keep the facility beautiful and appealing, so it can continue to be enjoyed by local residents and attract tournaments.

While Eight Oaks is not the facility for a pick-up baseball or softball game, the county offers a number of community and regional parks that are available for this purpose.

Moreover, the citizens of Georgetown County can be assured that Eight Oaks is open and available to the people in this community and will be used extensively by Georgetown County residents.

EMPLOYEE UPDATES

Glenda Long, is Georgetown County's new grants and projects accountant. She replaces **Russ Reinhardt**, who resigned to devote his attention to family matters.

His last day was Oct. 5.

"The county was fortunate to hire

Reinhardt Russ to do the county's grant accounting five years ago," said John Porter, who was Reinhardt's supervisor. "Russ has shown that there's a lot more to being a good grants accountant than knowing debits and credits. He excelled in establishing strong working relationships and trust with the county de-



partments who do the hard work of actually writing the grant applications."

Long, who lives in Andrews, was previously the county's accounts payable supervisor.



Long

The move is a promotion for Long. She has been employed with the county for six years and the finance department for five years. She started her career with the county as an accounting clerk for Public Services.

"Russ will be a hard act to follow, but ... I hope to continue providing the quality service that (people) have become accustomed to," Long said.

Get the Chronicle

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.

3,500 absentee ballots cast, office gears up for big Election Day turnout

At the start of the last week of October, more than 6,400 requests for absentee ballots had been made to the Georgetown County Office of Voters Registration and Elections. Nearly 3,500 absentee ballots were cast between Oct. 8 and Oct. 29, said Donna Mahn, director of Voters Registration and Elections.

That's nothing compared to the turnout anticipated at precincts across the county on Election Day, Nov. 6. Georgetown County residents will vote on a capital project sales tax and a representative for the new 7th Congressional District, as well as county offices including auditor and clerk of court. District 5 residents will also choose between three County Council candidates. For more information or to see a sample ballot, visit the Voter Registration and Elections page at gtcounty.org.



People wait their turn to cast absentee ballots in the Georgetown County Office of Voters Registration and Elections.

Public reminded of holiday closings for November, December

Georgetown County public offices and facilities will close for Veterans Day on Monday, Nov. 12.

This includes all library branches and recycling centers.

This is the first of several closings scheduled for the holiday season in November and December, and into the New Year.

County offices and facilities will also be closed Nov. 22 and 23 for Thanksgiv-

ing, and Dec. 24, 25 and 26 for Christmas.

Offices and facilities will be open for business on New Year's Eve, Monday, Dec. 31, but will close for New Year's Day.

Please keep these closings in mind when conducting business of a timely nature with the county in the coming months. For operating hours and more information, visit gtcounty.org.

Veterans Day parade is Nov. 9 in Georgetown

Georgetown's annual Veterans Day Parade honors all veterans, but this year special emphasis is being placed on Veterans of the Korean War.

"They've been forgotten for too long and deserve more recognition," said Paige Sawyer, a parade organizer.

The parade will be Friday, Nov. 9, and begins at 4:15 p.m. at East Bay Park, where participants will begin assembling at 3:30 p.m. All Korean War veterans are asked to assemble at the front of the parade and ride together on provided vehicles.

Families who have lost a loved one may ride on a special float to honor their sacrifice to our country.

The parade will proceed from the park up Front Street to Wood Street. Participants are responsible for their own banners, flags and signs.

"We're hoping for a large turn out so please encourage all veterans to participate in the parade," said past VFW Post 6444 commander Richard Hathaway. "We're also asking their families and friends to line up on Front Street and salute our veterans on this special occasion when our country remembers them and their sacrifices."

Local merchants and residents are asked to display American flags, banners and bunting throughout the weekend.

For information, call Hathaway at 546-3765, Franklin McCray at 237-3187, Marty Alfonsi at 546-4500 or Sawyer at 546-3745.

Save the Date...

FREE ride to the first 100 visitors

RED TAILS

Also join us for the movie...

Red Tails (the movie)
Date: November 2, 2012
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Howard Auditorium

Contact Information:
 Amanda Stirgwort
 Georgetown County Airport
 Phone: (843) 545-3619
astirgwort@gtcounty.org

- Meet & Greet with the original Red Tails
- Static Aircraft Displays
- Young Eagles Program
- Model Airplane Demonstrations

RED TAILS EVENT

Date: November 3, 2012
Time: 9:00 a.m. Static Displays
12:00 p.m. Presentation

Georgetown County Airport Corporate Hangar

Georgetown County Public Services

Sheriff's Office releases tips for avoiding identity theft

With the holidays approaching, now is a great time to brush up on ways to avoid falling victim to identity theft.

The public should be aware of the tricks identity thieves use, so they're less likely to fall for scams or make it easier for people looking for personal information, according to the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office.

Identity theft is a serious crime that occurs when an individual's personal information is stolen and used without the owner's knowledge to commit fraud or other crimes. This can cost the victim significant time and money, and can

destroy the victim's credit.

The Sheriff's Office recommends the following steps from the Federal Trade Commission for deterring identity thieves:

Shred financial documents and paperwork with personal information before throwing away.

Protect your Social Security number. Don't carry your Social Security card in your wallet or write your Social Security number on a check. Give it only if absolutely necessary or ask to use another identifier.

Never click on links sent in unsolicited e-mails. Instead, type in a web address you

know. Use firewalls, anti-spyware and anti-virus software to protect your home computer. If you use peer-to-peer file sharing, check the settings to make sure you're not sharing sensitive or private files. Visit onguardonline.gov for more information.

Don't give out personal information on the phone, through the mail or over the Internet unless you know who you are dealing with. Avoid disclosing personal financial information when using public wireless connections.

If you suspect identity theft, immediate action is needed. To learn more, visit gcsheeriff.org.

Common tricks used by identity thieves

1. Dumpster diving. They rummage through trash looking for bills and other paper with personal information on it.
2. Skimming. They steal credit/debit card numbers with a special storage device when processing your card.
3. Phishing. They pretend to be financial institutions, companies, etc., and send e-mail or pop-up messages to get you to reveal personal information.
4. Hacking. They hack into your e-mail or other online accounts.
5. "Old-fashioned" stealing. They steal wallets, purses, mail, pre-approved credit card offers, etc.



Joseph Wilson, left, and Craig Smith are recent MANTA graduates.

Deputies graduate from training center

Two Georgetown County Sheriff's Office Dive Team members recently graduated from the Mid-Atlantic Narcotics Training Academy (MANTA) in North Carolina.

Deputies Craig Smith and Joseph Wilson graduated on Sept. 28.

MANTA is a state-based facility sponsored by the N.C. National Guard Counterdrug Task Force where quality training can occur in a secure, hands-on environment. Law enforcement agencies from Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia and California attended this prestigious and intensive training, which takes place over six days.

Training included an underwater crime scene investigation course where topics consisted of teaching fundamental skills in problem solving, executing search patterns, victim recovery and emergency procedures, as well as the operation of specialized equipment used in these missions.

"The specialized training our deputies received prepares them for demanding dives such as in harsh conditions, where the pressure to perform is high and many risks on a variety of levels are involved," said Carrie Cuthbertson, a spokeswoman for the Sheriff's Office.

Midway turns 50! Celebration set for Dec. 2

Georgetown County's award-winning Midway Fire and Rescue turns 50 next month and we're celebrating at the department's headquarters station in Litchfield.

The public is invited to join us at 2 p.m. Dec. 2, to learn about the station's history, browse photos and hear tales from some of the folks who were there at the beginning.

"They'll explain how we got to where we are from starting out with one truck in a service station garage," said Bob Beebe, spokesman for Midway.

Mike Mock, a former Midway chief, is among past employees expected to be in attendance. He remembers being the station's only career firefighter, in charge of about 25 volunteers and living in an apartment above the fire station, then located on Highway 17 near the Shell gas station. The department didn't even have any radios. The phones were answered by clerks at the Litchfield Inn and Seagull Motel, who would call all the volunteers one by one.

Gov. Nikki Haley comes to Georgetown



Gov. Nikki Haley paid a visit to Georgetown County on Oct. 17, stopping at the Georgetown County Business Center in Andrews, where she took a tour of SafeRack, gave a brief speech and posed for pictures with SafeRack employees. Above, left, the governor chats with Wayne Gregory, Georgetown County's director of economic development. Above, right, Rob Honeycutt, the company's co president, gives Haley the guided tour.

Nov. 4 is time to change batteries in smoke detectors

Daylight Saving Time ends on Nov. 4 and while folks are setting their clocks back an hour is also an ideal time to change batteries in smoke detectors.

This minimal effort could easily mean the difference between life and death, said officials with Georgetown County Fire/EMS and Midway Fire and Rescue. Every year lives are lost in homes without smoke detectors or those homes with a non-functioning smoke detector. In a study conducted by the National Fire Prevention Association, nearly 96 percent of households reported

having at least one fire alarm. Yet the U.S. Fire Administration reports residential fires make up nearly 83 percent of all civilian fire deaths. The culprit is usually a disconnected or dead battery.

For help with smoke detectors or for more information, call Georgetown County Fire/EMS, 545-3271, or Midway, 545-3620.

Fire officials also advise caution with heaters as the weather turns colder. Keep trash and other combustibles away from heating systems. When using an electric heater, make sure not to overload circuits.

Want to know more about the proposed Capital Project Sales Tax?

Get the facts at gtcounty.org or book a speaker for your group's next meeting. Call 545-3164.

Free iPad workshops at the Waccamaw Library



Learn the basics and get the most out of your iPad!

Nov. 6, 13 and 27, 5-6 p.m.



FIND US ONLINE



Visit our website at www.gtcounty.org or find us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Look us up at [Facebook.com/GtCountySC](https://www.facebook.com/GtCountySC) and [@GtCountySC](https://twitter.com/GtCountySC).



A walk on the Beach

The start of cooler weather in Georgetown County doesn't mean the end of beach weather. At right, a couple and their dog walk along a stretch of Hobcaw Beach.



Photo/Jackie R. Broach

Library program brings digital arts into local schools

A new outreach program offered by the Georgetown County Library system gives teachers a chance to bring video production and photography lessons into their classrooms.

Sponsored by the Best Buy Children's Foundation and the Friends of the Georgetown County Library, the program opens a wide range of opportunities for teens and tweens in Georgetown County schools.

The way the program is set up, the library supplies the equipment and training for students, while the teacher picks the project, which can be anything from a mini-documentary about the Great Depression for a social studies class to a scene from King Lear for a drama club, said Heather Pelham, who is in charge of the program. Training and work on the project take one week. Lessons are tailored to the length of each individual class.

Available workshops include:

Digital photography. Students learn to shoot photos using exciting angles and camera settings, add special effects and improve shots with Photoshop.

Digital videography. Students learn to use digital video cameras, tripods, microphones and specialized lighting. They'll edit their work with iMovie and make DVDs of the final project.

Ace Reporters. After learning interviewing techniques and news story elements, students will film news stories and create a news show.

Drama Shop. This class focuses on dramatic angles and lighting, blocking and acting techniques specific to TV. Students will shoot and act in a production.

For information, email hpelham@gtcounty.org.

Emergency Management launches social media initiative

With the popularity of internet-based social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, continuing to grow, Georgetown County Emergency Management has recognized social media as a valuable tool.

County Emergency Management agencies have created social media pages in an effort to reach members of the public who do not turn to traditional media outlets for information.

Using Social Media can provide real-time emergency updates, links to media releases, weather notifications, video footage and photos.

"This is a way we can reach people who do not watch the news or who do not have weather radios," said Sam Hodge, Georgetown County Emergency Manager. "People are on these sites constantly, and social media is a great way to provide lifesaving infor-

mation before, during and after an emergency event."

There are many Social Media sites that provide tons of information, but Hodge recommends



the following official pages:

- FEMA — [facebook.com/FEMA](https://www.facebook.com/FEMA), twitter.com/FEMA, [youtube.com/FEMA](https://www.youtube.com/FEMA)
- SCEMD — [facebook.com/SCEMD](https://www.facebook.com/SCEMD), twitter.com/SCEMD, [youtube.com/THESCEMD](https://www.youtube.com/THESCEMD)
- Georgetown County Emergency Management Department — [facebook.com/GCEMD](https://www.facebook.com/GCEMD), twitter.com/GCEMD, [youtube.com/GCEMD](https://www.youtube.com/GCEMD)

The public can also find links to valuable information on Georgetown County Government's general social networking pages. Visit us at [facebook.com/gtcountysc](https://www.facebook.com/gtcountysc) and twitter.com/gtcountysc and [youtube.com/gtcountysc](https://www.youtube.com/gtcountysc).

Libraries

Continued from Page 1

branches. In the last fiscal year, there were about 70,550 sessions logged, including 30,860 in Georgetown, 19,900 in Andrews and 13,700 at the Waccamaw Library.

The computer centers are almost always full with people checking e-mail, doing research, working on résumés or conducting job searches. Those centers provide a vital service for young people and adults who don't have access to a computer at home, McInvaill said.

There are still plenty of people checking out traditional books, movies and CDs, and looking at newspapers and magazines. But they can also borrow Kindle reading devices at Georgetown County library branches.

Each device comes preloaded with a selection of books.

Through the Palmetto Library Consortium, the public can use the county library website to access a digital media library which includes audio and e-books, which they can load onto their own devices, including smartphones, tablets and mp3 players.

Records show 50,540 people borrowed 163,959 items at county libraries in the last fiscal year. That includes 550 people a month who borrowed electronic materials.

"I don't know what our family would do without the library," said Debbie Justice, a Maryville resident and mother of three. She started bringing her oldest child, Deanna, to the library nearly 20 years ago for story time.

"We were there every week for all the different programs," Justice said.

Then, when the Justice children started homeschooling, the family increasingly found more uses for the library. Deanna is 22 now and Justice's sons, Matthew and Caleb, are 17 and 15, but their appreciation of the library and its many resources never diminished. It's still a place to go for knowledge and enjoyment. Matthew and Caleb enjoy the gaming room and special programs on subjects including technology and videography. Deanna is an avid reader and checks out books by the stack.

"I don't know what we'd do with her without the library. It would get very expensive, that's for sure," Justice said.

For more information, visit georgetowncountylibrary.sc.gov

More about services and resources offered by the Georgetown County Library system:

Workforce training

"In times of economic hardship, Americans turn to – and depend on – their libraries and librarians," McInvaill said.

When a community is struggling economically, libraries are part of the solution, providing access to books and online resources for families that help support entrepreneurship and retraining.

He refers to libraries as "America's great information equalizers," places where people of all ages, races and backgrounds can find and freely use a diversity of resources and find expert guidance to help them.

The Georgetown County Library last year opened a small business center at its main branch with the aid of grant funding. It offers workshops and a special collection of computer software and books geared toward helping small business owners and those interested in starting a small business, as well as job seekers.

This summer, the library's main branch had its first job fair, which drew 150 people to the library to take advantage of the Small Business Center, résumé-writing classes, practice interview sessions and an auditorium filled with employers.

"Some folks left with jobs, others left with knowledge; more left with renewed self confidence," McInvaill said. "These are all good things here during very tough times."

Heritage Center and Digital Library

Recording parts of local history that might otherwise be forever lost is another focus of Georgetown County libraries. The main branch has a local history room bursting with books and documents, but library staff is also using technology to chronicle the unique and diverse history of the area and the stories of those who lived it. In recent years, the library has filmed video interviews on several topics to preserve tales and experiences of individuals for future generations. World War II veterans and survivors of the

Great Depression are among those who were interviewed. The interviews can be borrowed at library branches, and they're also shown in Heritage Hall, a café-like area where library users can check-out laptops, or bring in their own, and sit to enjoy coffee, soak up some of the area's local history or go about their online business.

The Digital Library is a project the county is extremely proud of. It has preserved entire collections of local historic images and newspapers, and made them available online. Most of the collections document the history of those who lived in the county from the 18th Century to the early 20th Century.

Book-A-Librarian

This special program provides one-on-one assistance with research or technology projects. Library users can schedule 30-minute or 60-minute time slots with a reference librarian to get help with anything from writing a term paper to learning to use e-mail or a new e-reader. Reserve an appointment at the main branch's reference desk or by calling 545-3302.

Scholars Forum

Adults of all ages are invited to come out for presentations from a variety of speakers on a wide range of subjects including art, archaeology, history, music, medicine and much more. Meetings are every Tuesday at 10 a.m. in the auditorium at the main branch. Some meetings include field trip activities. There is no fee to participate. See a schedule of upcoming programs on the library's website.

BYTES

The Bunnelle Youth and Technology Series, better known as out BYTES program, combines learning and skill development with fun things teens love. They can come out to play



Patti Burns organizes book shelves at the library in Georgetown.

video games, but also to participate in workshops to find out how video games are made and what job opportunities are available in the game development field.

The BYTES program has game tournaments, video production classes and a club where teens can learn about creating anime and graphic novels. There are also workshops on blogging, résumé writing, and the latest gadgets and apps.

Overdrive

The Overdrive digital media library, which includes audio and e-books, is available to all Georgetown County library cardholders. Browse the catalog online, then download and burn them to a disc or transfer to a portable device. There are also digital download stations at the Georgetown and Waccamaw branches. Materials are available in a variety of formats.

For more information, visit the "find a book" page on the library website, georgetowncountylibrarysc.gov.

TRICK-OR-TREAT!

The young and the young at heart celebrated Halloween at county events this week



Want to see more photos? Check us out at www.facebook.com/gtcountysc and on Instagram!

Household hazardous waste collection day a success

The Georgetown County Public Services Department collected more than 150 cans of paint, fertilizers, pesticides, fluorescent light bulbs and various other household chemicals on Oct. 6.

That's when it had its annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day at Midway Fire and Rescue in Litchfield. Together with Midway and Cub Scout Troup 396 of Murrells Inlet, the department aided 30 participants in helping to keep Georgetown County's local waterway clear of harmful chemicals.

The County Public Services Department's Stormwater Division hosts a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day event each year to promote the stewardship of clean water. Each item collected means one less chemical entering the County's waterways and ground water systems which ultimately degrades the environment.

Georgetown County is designated by the Envi-

ronmental Protection Agency (EPA) and South Carolina's Department of Health and Environmental Control as a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Operator. As such, the County must be in compliance with their MS4 permit allowing discharges of stormwater through ditches and pipes into large water bodies. Hosting activities that involve the public in actively reducing non-stormwater discharges into local water bodies are a requirement of the County's permit.

The Public Services Department thanks all who participated and helped make this event a success: Michael Morris, Midway Fire and Rescue; Linda Mock, County Auditor, Tracy D. Jones and Terri L. Davis from Stormwater Division, Fred Davis, Environmental Services; Sullivan Jones and Will Keelin, wolf cubs working on their "No Trace Behind" badge, from Troup 396 Cub Scouts of Murrells Inlet.



Georgetown County Parks & Recreation Youth Basketball!

www.gtcounty.org



Register now for Youth Basketball!

Ages 5-17 ~ Age control date is 9/1
(Must be required age for sports program on or before this date)

Last day for registration is 11/30/12
Register online or at a local recreation office

Fee is \$25 per person*

*There are reduced lunch and free lunch rates
Check with staff to see if you qualify

***Parents look for the Santa Hotline form soon at your school! ***



Georgetown County
Department of Public Services



Free Commercial Paper Recycling Program Application

Business Name:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Recyclable Paper/Fiber Material:

Anticipated Tonnage:

Requested Start Date:

Contact Person:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Cell phone or alternate contact number:

Send Application to:
Georgetown County Environmental Services
201 Landfill Dr. Georgetown, SC 29440
Office: (843) 545-3443
OR
Fax: (843) 545-3483
OR
Email: fsumpter@gtcounty.org

Holiday card contest entries sought

Georgetown County Parks and Recreation is looking for entries in its holiday card contest. The contest is open to kids and teens in the county.

Entries should be submitted on the blank side of a white 5x8 index card. Entrants should print their full name, age, school, grade and teacher's name on the opposite side of the card.

Recreation department staff requests that only universal holiday themes be used.

The winning design will be used as Georgetown County's official holiday card for 2012.

All entries must be submitted by the child's school. Turn entries in to the front office by Nov. 7.

For information, call 545-3275 or visit gtcounty.org.

Youth basketball sign-up under way



Sidney Gray and Joey Manigault of Georgetown County Parks and Recreation put out basketball registration banners. For more information, see Page 10.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Surf Fish Rodeo: The 9th annual Surf Fish Rodeo will be at Huntington Beach State Park from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Nov. 10. Entry fee is \$40. Prizes will be awarded to fishermen placing 1st, 2nd or 3rd in the following categories: Spot tails, whiting, bluefish and flounder. A grand prize will go to the participant who catches the overall largest legal size fish. For information, contact Kyle Bullcock, 235-8755.

Christmas Parade: The annual Murrells Inlet Christmas Parade begins at 3 p.m. Dec. 2. The route starts at Wilcox Avenue and travels down Business 17, ending at Pendergrass Avenue. For information, call 357-2007 or visit murrellsinletsc.com.



Georgetown County Parks and recreation staff spent a recent weekend volunteering at the Hugs for Horses annual horse show. Hugs for Horses is a nonprofit therapeutic riding program for kids with special needs.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS CLAIMING LEGAL RESIDENCY OR HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

Illegally claiming tax credits and discounts is a serious matter that can come with hefty financial consequences when violators are caught. Beginning March 31, 2013, Georgetown County will begin actively seeking out violations of this type. Taxpayers found to be claiming discounts they are not entitled to – including lower tax rates on property claimed as a primary residence and the Homestead Exemption tax credit – will receive corrected bills for the current tax year and the year prior.

Georgetown County is offering taxpayers who report such violations before March 31, 2013, an opportunity to pay a lesser amount. Taxpayers who come forward before the deadline will receive a corrected bill for the current tax year only.

The law allows property owners to claim a lower tax rate (4% instead of the regular 6%) on a home that serves as their primary residence. Taxpayers can claim only one primary residence. Additionally, people 65 and older or who are disabled, and who have lived in the state for a full calendar year and own their home, may qualify for the Homestead Exemption tax credit. Georgetown County is happy to help qualifying property owners take advantage of these special programs. However **any change** in the ownership of real property could affect eligibility and should be reported to the Assessor's office.

Changes that could affect eligibility include:

- Any change in ownership
- Death of a property owner
- A property has sold or a new deed is prepared
- A property owner has married or surviving spouse has remarried
- A property owner has divorced or legally separated
- A property is being rented out for more than 14 days.

Qualifications for a legal residency discount or Homestead Exemption vary on a case-by-case basis. The County Assessor or Auditor will be able to help you determine whether you still qualify.

If you suspect you are receiving a tax discount or credit you don't qualify for, please call the Assessor's office at (843) 545-3017. A staff member will be happy to help you determine your eligibility.

Whatever happens on Election Day, funding for port dredging is vital

By Bob Anderson

Every Georgetown County voter probably has many reasons to vote either for or against a referendum on a 1-cent Capital Project Sales Tax that will appear on the ballot Nov. 6. The value of projects on the list, including recreation facilities and libraries, varies dramatically from person to person.

But there's one project on that list that without exception will benefit every single person who lives, works and plays in Georgetown County: Dredging of the Georgetown port.

At the top of the projects list is \$5.5 million toward the \$33 million cost of dredging, which would deepen the port's channel to 27 feet. For many months now Georgetown County staff — the administrator, the economic development director and others — have investigated thoroughly the potential impacts of dredging, accounting for a number of variables. After reviewing their findings, I'm reasonably confident that's a project the county should be putting its money into. That's why regardless of what happens with the Capital Project Sales Tax on Election Day, I'll be committed to identifying local funds to make sure dredging comes to pass.

Proponents of dredging have long touted the economic advantages for Georgetown County: Jobs, more companies doing business here and more money being spent with existing local businesses. Georgetown County staff, with aid from a 2010 report from economist Donald Schunk, put real numbers to those predictions.

Schunk's 2010 report forecasted a total of 42 new jobs for the area for every increase of 500,000 tons annually. That prediction includes 23 new jobs directly at port service providers and 19 new jobs dispersed throughout the local economy. For the same annual increase in tonnage, the report also calls for a total of \$1.3 million annually in new local household income and \$4.4 million

in total local economic output. These impacts are over and above the economic impacts that would stem directly from the location of new businesses in the region as a result of dredging.

There are currently three industries that ship a combined annual total of 600,000 tons through the Port of Georgetown via barge. The port could add four new industries and increase shipping volume to 1 million tons a year under the current economy if the port is dredged to 27 feet, according to conservative estimates from Georgetown County staff. That would create 34 new jobs and \$1 million in new annual household income, figures from county staff show. The total economic output would be \$3.5 million.

The numbers are even more promising when factoring in an improved economy. Under that scenario, it is anticipated the port would attract an additional three new industries, bringing the total to 10, with an annual shipping volume of more than \$1.4 million tons. That would create 67.8 new jobs and \$2.1 million in new annual local household income. Total local economic output would be \$7.1 million.

Of course, there's no crystal ball, and thus no guarantees, but based on my work with county staff and what they've shown me, there's plenty of cause to have confidence in these figures.

So, let's turn our sights now to return on investment.

Assuming the county invests the \$5.5 million in dredging, and using the local economic output of \$3.5 million from the 2010 Schunk report, we can predict a breakeven point after 1.5 years. That's the scenario that uses current economic conditions. With an improved economy, payback could occur in less than eight months. Given the fact that the balance of the \$33 million total cost of dredging

is taxpayer money, it would take just under nine and a half years under the current economy and just over four and a half years with an improved economy to break even based on the county's estimates.

It should also be noted that dredging is a recurring effort. In other words, once the channel is dredged to the planned 27 feet, we will be faced with maintaining the channel depth. The annual cost to maintain the depth will not be as expensive, but it will still be significant! The good news is that if we can reach the one million ton annual import/export threshold, we will be placed on the federal list of ports that are eligible for federal dollars to cover the annual maintenance costs. Getting federal dollars is not guaranteed, so if we are not fortunate enough to get the federal money we can ask the state for funds allocated for maintaining ports to fund the effort. If we are unsuccessful with that effort, we will have to consider our own revenue as a means of maintaining the port if it makes sense.

After looking hard at the industries that are interested in using our port — and, by the way, they have asked to remain anonymous — I have come to the conclusion that it makes sense to find the \$5.5 million that the state has asked us to provide, whether the sales tax referendum passes or not.

There is, of course, risk in moving forward with this endeavor, but after working with county staff for the past six months on fact-finding, which at times has not been easy, I have come to the conclusion that we need to give this a try. We are one of the few counties in this great nation that is blessed with a natural port. I vote to take the risk and spend the \$5.5 million. We need to keep our working age folks in Georgetown County by creating an environment that is conducive to attracting business — large and small!

Bob Anderson is the representative for Georgetown County Council District 6.



Bob Anderson

Georgetown County, South Carolina

County Government

Numbers to know

Animal Control, 546-5101

Assessor, 545-3014

Auditor, 545-3021

Clerk of Court, 545-3004

County Council, 545-3127

Coroner, 546-3056

Probate Judge, 545-3077

Sheriff, 546-5102

Treasurer, 545-3098

P.O. Box 421270
129 Screven Street
Georgetown, S.C. 29442-1270

Phone: (843) 545-3063
Fax: (843) 545-3292

Find us on the web!
www.gtcounty.org



PHOTO CORNER



Tennis, anyone?

Stables Park is now open and being put to good use. Clockwise from above: A Waccamaw High tennis player practices at Stables; the ribbon cutting at the tennis center; participants in a free tennis play day; lessons are available for players of all ages; the Waccamaw High tennis teams at the ribbon cutting; and the Waccamaw High cross country teams.

