



# The Oconee Enterprise



## Firefighter teaches safety

Volunteer gives talk at school. **Lifestyles, A8**



## BOC denies development

Shipping container project rejected. **Business, B3**



## Working toward championships

Area golfers train with same coach. **Sports, B1**

## Coming next week

We'll report on the city's dispute with a business.

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# BOC approves 100-bed assisted living facility

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

Several weeks after the city of Watkinsville approved a 60-unit senior living complex in downtown, the Oconee Board of Commissioners gave a unanimous thumbs up on a 100-bed assisted living facility just outside the city limits.

Speaking on behalf of the property owner, Frank Pittman of Pittman Engineering said the future development off Moreland Heights Road will be locally man-

aged and pay property tax, "which is obviously good for all of us who live here."

Also, the assisted living development will generate about 50 jobs, he said at a previous Planning Commission meeting.

The BOC's rezone from Office Business Park to Office Institutional Professional also allows for 20,000 square feet of office space on 8.4 acres.

Frank Pittman of Pittman Engineering said the assisted liv-

ing component will be the first priority and the office building will have a secondary use.

Both buildings will be one story in height. The senior living complex, which will have four separate pods, will measure 73,842 square feet. At completion, the project is valued at about \$10 million.

Pittman said he considered the rezone a "down zoning," as the previous zoning classification allowed for 88,000 square feet of

office space. The new development will generate an estimated 483 trips per day (senior living and office combined), which is about a third of the estimated trips under the previously approved zoning, said Pittman.

Moreland Heights Road will undergo improvements at the developer's expense. Oconee Planning and Code Enforcement Director Guy Herring said a zoning buffer is not required for the houses across the street, but there

will be landscaping across the frontage of the development.

Prior to the BOC's vote, the Oconee Planning Commission had given a favorable recommendation.

This development will be in close proximity to Presbyterian Village Athens, a continuing care retirement facility off Macon Highway, as well as Waters Walk, a Watkinsville senior living facility to be built at the intersection of Water and Durham street.



BOC Chairman John Daniell, left, watch EMA Director C.J. Worden and Animal Services Manager Crystal Berisko reveal renovations at Oconee Animal Services. [Photo by Julia Fechter]

## Animal shelter gets a makeover

BY JULIA FECHTER AND MICHAEL PROCHASKA

In lieu of a traditional ribbon cutting, Animal Services Manager Crystal Berisko and EMA Director C.J. Worden ceremoniously unclipped a leash in front of the newly renovated and expanded Animal Services building last week. They playfully called it an "unleashing."

The facility now has more space for animals and humans, as well as a freshly painted blue exterior.

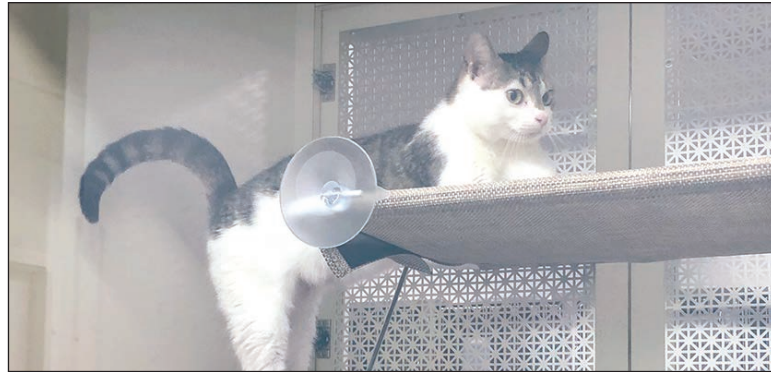
"We couldn't have done it without everybody's support," said Berisko. "This will sustain us for the next 20 plus years."

The county government funded both of the shelter's two renovation phases. In total, the project cost \$899,542. Work was completed in early May, said County Administrator Justin Kirouac.

Individuals using wheelchairs can easily enter the building with front sidewalks now ADA-complaint.

The front lobby gained some additional square footage complete with polished concrete floors and some farmhouse-style pet artwork.

SEE ANIMAL SERVICES PAGE A7



Visitors to Oconee County Animal Services can view adoptable cats through window displays. [Photo by Diane Baggett]



Animal Services Manager Crystal Berisko debuts the shelter's expanded lobby area. [Photo by Julia Fechter]

## Oconee remembers its fallen veterans

BY JULIA FECHTER

"It's foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather, we should thank God that such men lived." Brig. Gen. John Gentry said at the annual Memorial Day program at Oconee Veterans Park. He was quoting the late Gen. George S. Patton.

"He provided the reason why we recognize those that paid the ultimate sacrifice by serving something greater than self, and that's serving liberty," Gentry added.

The Oconee resident and officer in the Georgia Army National Guard filled in as the keynote speaker this Monday at the service that's organized by the Oconee Veterans Memorial Foundation. Hundreds of veterans, active duty personnel and their families attended, while many others watched online.

From World War I until the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, 39 of Oconee's own have paid the ultimate sacrifice while fighting for their country.

"Why did we subject ourselves to rigorous training, no weekends off, deployments and missing birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, sporting events and others?" Gentry asked, rhetorically. "Every veteran that stands or sits here with us today...was willing to give their life if need be in defense of freedom."

Gentry said that conflicts are becoming increasingly shaped by challenges to "free and open international order" from revisionist powers like China and Russia, who want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian models.

SEE MEMORIAL DAY PAGE A6



Scott Collins places a memorial wreath on behalf of the Georgia Society Sons of the American Revolution. [Photo by Harrison Bagley]



Jackson J. Guest, saluting, and T.L. Collins honor their wreath from the 9th Infantry Division Association, which they placed in memory of those killed in action on March 18, 1967. [Photo by Julia Fechter]

## Triplets graduate from Oconee County High School

BY JULIA FECHTER

Smiling and dressed in blue regalia, triplets Caleb, Ethan and MaKayla Ward and cousin Bryce Jenkins relished revisiting old teachers and classmates at Colham Ferry Elementary School just three days before graduating from Oconee County High School.

As they reflected on fond times with CFES classmates, they recreated one partially special moment at the suggestion of Bryce's mother, Melanie. The four gathered to recreate a picture taken on their first day of kindergarten.

"My aunt is a teacher at Colham Ferry," said Bryce, "so she was able to do the recreation pictures of us in our cap and gowns. It was such a special thing to do."

The Wards' mother, Amy, said the senior walk lets children show their former teachers what they've accomplished. The triplets were born four months apart from Jenkins and have been close to



The Ward triplets will attend the University of North Georgia Oconee campus. From left, Caleb, Ethan and MaKayla. [Submitted photo]

him their whole lives. "There's never a dull moment with him," MaKayla said. Though they were in separate classes growing up, Ethan said that they would meet up with

Jenkins daily before school. Jenkins added that they would "go on adventures around the neighborhood," be it in his drivable toy John Deere gator or on the swing set and fort.

"Our grandparents live right down the road, too, so we've enjoyed many family gatherings over the years," he added. "I remember one time in particular when we all gathered at their

house to watch old family videos on film."

Now, the triplets will attend the University of North Georgia's Oconee campus together in the fall.

Caleb will study sports analytics. Ethan plans to major in sports marketing and later transfer to Kennesaw State University. MaKayla will major in psychology.

After dual enrolling at Athens Technical College two years ago and just graduating, Jenkins plans to earn an associate's degree in automotive technology from the same institution.

MaKayla cherished the senior walk because of the opportunity to look back on the relationships and meaningful experiences at Colham Ferry Elementary.

"I was so excited to look back at how far I had come and see the people that started me on that journey," she said.

This issue was mailed Wednesday, June 2, from Watkinsville and Athens, GA. Please inform your post office if it arrives late.

