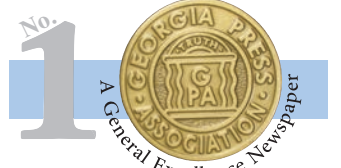




In Our 137th Year

Serving Oconee County



The Oconee Enterprise

50 CENTS • VOLUME 138 • NUMBER 38

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER OF Judy Edmondson. Happy Birthday!

THURSDAY • 23 SEPTEMBER 2021



Children lead Constitution Day

Kids put on an impressive show. Lifestyles, A6



5K to help first responders

Oconee rallies around fire rescue. News, A3



Oconee tops Thomasville

Warriors notch big win over Bulldogs. Sports, B1

Coming next week

We'll report on long-term transportation projects.

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Father of murder victim speaks fondly of his son

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

Six months ago, 23-year-old Elijah Wood was shot to death late at night while working at the Macon Highway RaceTrac.

As of press time Tuesday, the murder remains unsolved.

"Elijah was a kind person who enjoyed meeting new people, spending time with his family and was a devout Christian," Sheriff James Hale said this week. "He loved spreading God's word."

In an interview between Hale and Elijah's father, Todd Wood, Elijah's knack for memorizing



Wood

scripture was inspiring for his family.

One of the Bible verses Elijah memorized was Proverbs 2: 1-5, which states, "My

son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding...then you will understand the fear of the Lord and

find the knowledge of God."

Todd explained, "It's not 'scared' fear; it's 'awe' fear."

Todd's daily prayer is that the guilt of committing the heinous crime against his son will cause the person responsible to confess.

"We are not going to stop working this case until we find a suspect," Hale told Todd. "And then we will continue to work the case after that to make sure we put that suspect where he's supposed to be."

SEE WOOD PAGE A2



Westminster Christian School junior Owen Weatherly, left, and senior Widener Norris, right, speak about the community spirit of the school. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

Pupils give testimony on school experience

State of the Schools event highlights both public and private institutions

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

When he was in the fourth grade, Owen Weatherly, now a junior at Westminster Christian Academy, learned that his father had stage 4 colon cancer.

"Westminster was so gracious to us," said Weatherly, explaining that his classmates would deliver meals to his family and pray for them.

On the hardest night of his life when his father died, his peers were there for him. And the whole school showed up to the visitation and funeral.

"I don't think we could have gotten through it," said Weatherly, who spoke last Thursday at the Oconee Chamber of Commerce State of the Schools luncheon. Organized by the Chamber and hosted by Prince Avenue Christian School, this was a chance for Chamber members to learn more about area schools, both public and private. And while Oconee County Schools Superintendent Jason Branch and private school leaders spoke about their respective system or school achievements, the real stars of the event were the students.

Westminster Christian Academy senior Widener Norris talked about the Governor's Honor program and a leadership role with an advanced physics class. Weatherly also leads a middle school Bible study on his own.

"We believe that God has a unique plan for each one of the 365 students," said Head of School Jared Clark. "We partner with parents and cultivate spiritual and academic growth to allow them to become all that God wants them to be."

Clark said there's an expectation that the school community invests in each other through good times or bad times.

That can also be said of Prince



OCS Superintendent Jason Branch talks about academic achievements. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

Avenue Christian School. Eighth grader Bella Rosenthal shared how supportive the school community was when her uncle died in a plane crash.

"They opened up their arms and helped me get through that hard time in my life," she said. "They prayed over me. It made me feel like I have a family here."

Rosenthal said PACS is a welcoming place to talk about God and both the struggles and joys of life. One of those joys was acting in a play based on a Disney movie.

"One place I feel like I really belong is the theater," she said, giving credit to the PACS Fine Arts Department.

Fifth grader Coleman Ficken said he has grown academically, athletically and spiritually.

SEE SCHOOLS PAGE A7



North Oconee High School student Mary Webb designed the racecar for NASCAR driver Chase Elliott. [Submitted photo]

North Oconee cancer patient designs NASCAR stock car

BY MORGAN PHILLIPS

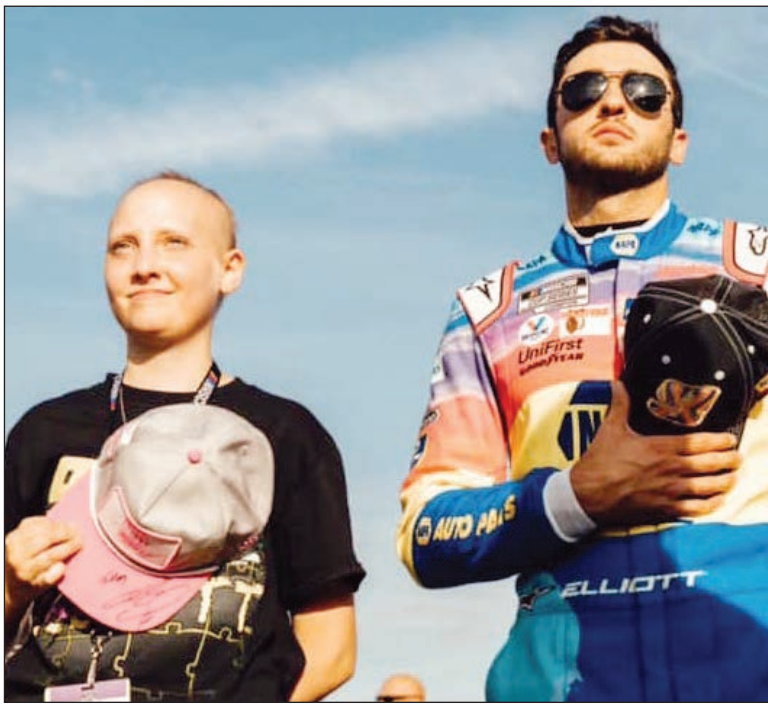
After being diagnosed with cancer at 14 years old, Mary Frances Webb found solace in art.

"If I was ever stressed out, I would draw," she said. "Even if it was just a little doodle, it always helped. And I felt like I could put the emotions that I was feeling into that art."

Earlier this month, Webb, now 15 and a student at North Oconee High School, watched NASCAR driver Chase Elliott race a car at the Cook Out Southern 500 that she herself designed.

Through a partnership among the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Chase Elliott Foundation and other organizations, Webb's artwork was seen by tens of thousands of people at the Darlington Raceway in South Carolina.

SEE WEBB PAGE A3



Webb was invited to the Cook Out Southern 500 in Darlington, South Carolina, earlier this month. [Submitted photo]

Teen ranks in the Paralympics

Editor's note: This is part one in a two-part series about local Paralympians. Next week, we will report on Jarryd Wallace, who earned a bronze medal.

BY MORGAN PHILLIPS

MeiMei White, a 17-year-old Para Swimming World Series gold medalist who was born with a birth defect that required ampu-

tating her right leg at 2-years-old, became a Paralympian on Aug. 25 in Tokyo, Japan.

She swam the 100-meter breaststroke for the SB8 classification and finished the race in 1 minute, 32.83 seconds.

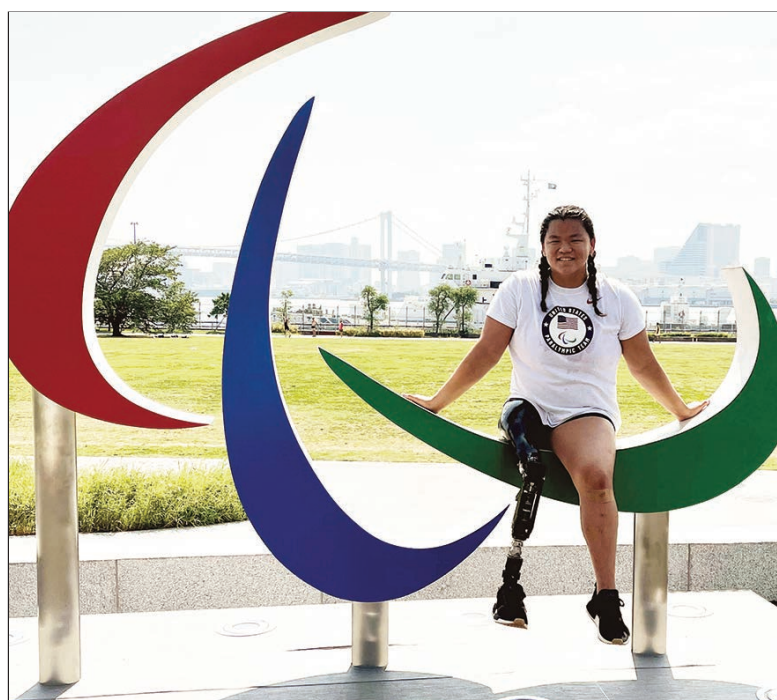
"It's been a dream of mine since I was 8," White said. "To be there was very surreal and very exciting."

"And I'm a Paralympian now," she continued. "It's so weird to say that now, but it's super exciting."

Although her race time was the best she's had in about two and a half years, White at first was hard on herself.

"I put a lot of pressure on myself, and when I didn't get the time that I wanted, I was so angry," she said. "But after 24 hours, I was like 'Okay, 11th—that's not too shabby ... Not many people can say that they're 11th in the world, and the people who are in front of me are only in front of me by half a second.'"

SEE MEIMEI PAGE A3



MeiMei White is a 17-year-old Oconee swimmer who competed in the Paralympics this year. [Submitted photo]



Athens Academy students Davis McLanahan, left, and Popi Marquez, right, share how the school has helped them grow academically. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

This issue was mailed Wednesday, Sept. 22, from Watkinsville and Athens, GA. Please inform your post office if it arrives late.

