



# The Oconee Enterprise



## Bogart DAR sells veteran wreaths

Wreaths will be placed in December. News, **A3**



## Teen shows and rides horses

Student cares for farm animals. Lifestyles, **A6**



## Bridges works at championships

OCHS announcer calls title games. Sports, **B1**

## Coming next week

We'll report on the progress of Wire Park.

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Matthew Bright received the Civil Air Patrol's Gen. Carl A. Spaatz Award at the Gwinnett County Squadron Hangar. From left, Rep. Houston Gaines, Maj. Gen. Thomas Carden, Bright and Col. Jeffery Garrett. [Photo by Melanie Conner]

## Teen earns prestigious Civil Air Patrol award

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

At 17, Matthew Bright has already mapped out his career. The precocious North Oconee High School graduate plans to attain his pilot's license, enroll in the Aviation Institute of Maintenance in Duluth and obtain an associate degree in aircraft maintenance. From there, he will enlist in the military and use the GI Bill to earn a bachelor's degree. Ideally, he would like to join the U.S. Air Force. However, there is a shortage of pilots in every branch of the military, so he will weigh his options when the time comes.

"I want to serve my country," he said. "It's worth it, because it's helping my country stay safe."

Bright plans on spending 20 years in the U.S. Armed Forces before transitioning to the private sector.

"I have an idea of where I want to go," he said. "I have an ending spot and a beginning. I don't have the middle."

To pay for pilot training and col-

lege, Bright has been working at Webber Coleman, a Watkinsville custom cabinetry business.

He also stays busy as a cadet with Civil Air Patrol, America's Air Force civilian auxiliary. After five years of hard work, he has earned the Gen. Carl A. Spaatz Award, named in honor of the first chief of staff of the United States Air Force who commanded the Allied air campaign against the Nazis.

The Gen. Carl A. Spaatz Award is the Civil Air Patrol's highest cadet honor that is presented to those who have demonstrated excellence in leadership, character, fitness and aerospace education. On average, only five cadets in one thousand earn the Spaatz Award, according to the official CAP website.

Bright and his father, Michael, are the first father-son pairing to have earned the Spaatz Award in a long time. Bright's grandfather was a submarine commander and his great-grandfather an aircraft mechanic during World War II.

Civil Air Patrol conducts search



Amy Bright, left, and Michael Bright, right, congratulate their son, Matthew, center. [Photo by Melanie Conner]

and rescue missions, provides disaster relief and assists with foreign aid.

"It's taught me how to be a leader," said Bright.

Following Sept. 11, Civil Air Patrol plans were the only non-military aircraft allowed in the air-

space. Members captured the first high-resolution photographs of Ground Zero. Those volunteers also provided blood and medical supplies, as well as transportation support in response to hurricanes Katrina and Sandy and other national emergencies.



Golden Pantry's concept plans for its new Bishop location show a remodeled store that's 5,000 square feet. [Submitted rendering]

## Golden Pantry rebuilds beloved Bishop store

### Headquarters has moved locations

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

Golden Pantry's building permit has been approved for reconstruction of the store in Bishop that burned in April 2020, said Oconee County Planning and Code Enforcement Guy Herring.

The company had begun work on an approximately 5,000-square-foot store, which is about 1,800 square feet larger than the old store. Construction is expected to be complete by the end of the year.

The store will re-use the existing gas pumps, which were saved thanks to Oconee Fire Rescue.

Branded as "the first of Golden Pantry's next generation of neigh-

borhood stores," the new store will have a wider variety of freshly prepared meals, a more open floor plan, a large walk-in beer pantry, a single-occupancy family restroom in addition to male and female restrooms and multiple checkout lines.

"We have spent the past year making sure we get this new design right, both for Bishop and for the future of Golden Pantry," said Golden Pantry President Robert Griffith. "This new store will in many ways capture the essence of what makes Golden Pantry special - great food, friendly service and easy access to the goods the community needs."

The iconic logo will remain, but the interiors will feature a new color palette and design.



Golden Pantry has begun work on a new store in Bishop. [File photo]

## Tax hike expected

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

The Oconee Board of Commissioners is rolling back the millage rate, but it won't be enough to prevent a tax hike due to rising property values.

The existing millage rate is 6.686 for unincorporated areas and 7.616 for incorporated areas of the county.

In August, the BOC intends to adopt a millage rate of 6.65 for unincorporated residents and 7.59 for incorporated residents.

That will translate to a tax increase of 4.99 percent for unincorporated parts of the county and 6.14 percent for incorporated areas.

Across the county, there has been an increase of about \$134 million in assessed property values.

The millage rate will be adopted at the Aug. 3 BOC meeting, which starts with a tax hearing at 5:30 p.m. Public hearings are scheduled on July 6 at 6 p.m. and July 27 at 6 p.m.

In other county news, new aerial imagery captured in January is available on qPublic. Aerial imagery was last updated in 2016. Images, which are four times higher resolution than previous ones, show new and rerouted roads.

The BOC is accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, which helps farmers keep their land in agricultural use. Farms are ranked based on national and state criteria.

There will be a meeting to discuss the application process July 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the J. Phil Campbell, UGA Research and Education Center. Applications are available from the NRCS Office, located at 1291 Greensboro Highway, or by calling (706) 769-3990.

Oconee County's application submission deadline is Sept. 30, and applications may be delivered to Gerald Grace at the NRCS Office or at the Oconee County Extension Office, located at 1420 Experiment Station.

The Oconee County Farmland Preservation Committee will rank the applications for presentation to the BOC at its Nov. 30 meeting. The BOC will then vote on the recommendation at its Dec. 7 meeting. For more information, visit [nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov).



The Oconee Enterprise resident cat Shelley Winters is manning the newspaper herself this week. [File photo]

## Enterprise closed today and Friday

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

The offices of The Oconee Enterprise are closed today and Thursday while its employees are on vacation.

Messages may be left by calling (706) 769-5175, and information can be sent via email to respective employees. A staff box can be found on the top left corner of page A4. Correspondence may also be left in our mailbox outside the front door of our office at 26 Barnett Shoals Road.

Enjoy your Independence Day safely.

Please send your Fourth of July photos to Editor Michael Prochaska at [businessnews@oconeeenterprise.com](mailto:businessnews@oconeeenterprise.com). First and last names are required for those who are pictured.

This issue was mailed Wednesday, June 30, from Watkinsville and Athens, GA. Please inform your post office if it arrives late.

