

# The Oconee Enterprise

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THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER OF Laura Whitaker

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From left, Diane Southwood (Army), Kathleen Miller (Army), Jennifer Hope (Army), Marlena Deck (Army), Kelly Poe (Air Force), Melissa Giardini (Navy), Wendy Schuchardt (Army) and Erin Pesti (Marines). Not pictured is Joy Segars, an Army veteran. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

## BOE runoff is Tuesday

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

Early voting for the Board of Education runoff and other runoffs continues through Friday at the Oconee Elections Office beside the Oconee County Courthouse. Hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

On election day, voters will go to their respective precincts from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The people who voted at Antioch Christian Church (previously known as the Antioch precinct) last year will now be voting at Poplar Springs Baptist Church as the Colham Ferry precinct. Those who voted at Nations Church last year (previously known as the East Oconee precinct) will now be voting at Oconee County Civic Center at the Civic Center polling precinct.

In a primary runoff, voters must vote the same ballot style as in the primary. Those who did not vote in the primary or those who voted nonpartisan may select any ballot style for the runoff.

The Republican ballot has two races. Running for U.S. House District 10 are Mike Collins and Vernon Jones. Running for Oconee Board of Education Post 3 are Ryan Hammock and Julie Mauck.

Hammock has a degree in marketing from the University of North Georgia Dahlonega campus and an MBA from The Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia.

During his MBA program, he completed additional coursework, on mergers and acquisitions, as well as entrepreneurship. He currently serves as senior vice president and middle market manager at Pinnacle Bank.

Mauck has a degree in criminal justice administration with a minor in psychology and Spanish.

She has a paralegal certification with honors and an emphasis in litigation management. She attained her real estate license in 2002 and is a practicing Realtor.

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## Watkinsville DAR honors female veterans

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

In 1978, a U.S. Navy ad in "TV Guide" caught teenager Diane Southwood's attention. She mailed her application, but because her hometown didn't have a Navy recruiter, an Army representative called her back. Southwood proudly served her country as a member of the U.S. Army.

On Saturday, the Bishop resident was one of about a dozen female veterans honored by the Rev. John Andrew Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

A day earlier, the organization's Service for Veterans Committee met with social workers from the Charlie Norwood Veterans Affairs Medical Center HUD-VASH program (rental assistance and clinical services) to distribute treats and gift cards to 14 female veterans.

Rev. John Andrew Chapter, NSDAR members Dory Brown and Pam Hendrix enjoyed hearing the stories of each woman who was honored.

Sarah Marlena Deck, for example, was an Army nurse for The Walter Reed Army Medical Center when soldiers came home from Vietnam. At the time, Deck was a scholarship recipient out of a pool of 1,000 applicants.

Female military service members were much more of a minority back then than they are now. While proclaiming June 12 as Women Veterans Day, Watkinsville Mayor Brian Brodrick noted that today, women make up 16 percent of personnel serving active duty and 19 percent of the National Guard and reserve forces.

Not until the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, which

was signed into law by President Harry S. Truman, were women officially acknowledged as veterans or members of the military branches.

However, women served in the military even before America became a nation, said Brodrick. During the American Revolution, women picked up arms beside their husbands. Deborah Sampson even enlisted under the disguise of being a man.

In researching women in the military, the city of Watkinsville discovered that Loretta Walsh, who joined the U.S. Navy in 1917, was the first woman to enlist under no disguise at all.

During World War II, nearly 400,000 U.S. women enlisted in support positions with the military and close to 500 were killed in action, said Brodrick as he read a lengthy proclamation.

"After the war, all military branches had been reduced in numbers, and Russia was rising in strength," said Brodrick. "It was evident the U.S. needed a solution other than a peacetime draft to increase their military member numbers.

Political leaders finally realized that half of the civilians were willing but unable to serve. This led to the Women's Armed Service Integration Act."

The Rev. John Andrew Chapter, NSDAR meets Sunday afternoons once a month at 2:30 p.m. at Oconee Veterans Park.

Formed out of the Elijah Clarke Chapter, the Rev. John Andrew Chapter is one of the newest chapters in Georgia with a 15-year anniversary coming up this year.



City of Watkinsville presents a proclamation for Women Veterans Day. From left, Cherie Frankson, Pam Hendrix, Brian Brodrick and Dory Brown. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]



U.S. Air Force veteran Kelly Poe was honored by the Rev. John Andrew Chapter, NSDAR. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]



Voting machines have new privacy filter screens. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

MAILING LABEL

## ESP's Miracle League makes national news

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

"Summer means baseball," Lester Holt of NBC Nightly News said on a newscast last week. "And there's one league making America's pastime accessible to all. And it's inspiring America."

"I'm going to try to hit the ball, and if the ball gets hit, I'm going to run for my life to first place," an ESP'er joyously shouted at the grand opening of the ESP Miracle League baseball field and playground last week.

"Here, they have truly leveled the playing field," Holt proclaimed on the broadcast.

ESP CEO Laura Whitaker said the dream for kids of all abilities to play together has come to fruition.

"In this game, smiles are like grand slams," said Holt. "And miracles really do come true."

Alex Perry, director of development and marketing at ESP, recently told Alexia Ridley of WUGA, "It's the culmination of four years of dreaming, fundraising [and] planning."

The day of the opening, Whitaker walked a child into the Playground of Possibilities and watched in awe as the young girl played.

"It was perfect," said Whitaker. "Perfection is found where belonging resides. And here is a place everyone

belongs."

Another child, Mariah Avila, hasn't been on a playground since she went through treatment for a brain tumor. The grand opening of the Miracle League complex was a "happy day for her, for us all."

God is so good, and so are all the

people He used to make this happen," said Whitaker.

"Thank you to ESP and all the donors and visionaries who made this day that changed the trajectory of Mariah's life forever," said her mother, Jennifer Avila.

SEE ESP PAGE A8



A memorial statue honors ESP'ers who have passed away. When it's finished, there will be a sculpture piece of a child getting out of a wheelchair. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]



Laura Whitaker introduces Dakota Sykora, whose late father, Joe, was instrumental in making ESP's dreams come true. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

This issue was mailed Wednesday, June 15 from Watkinsville and Athens, GA. Please inform your post office if it arrives late.

