



In Our 137th Year



Serving Oconee County



The Oconee Enterprise

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THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER OF Eileen Hale

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Haddon retires from EMC

Local resident had 36 years with the company. Business, **B3**



Dominick's closes its doors

Coronavirus has hurt restaurants. Business, **B3**



Lions keep on working hard

WCA basketball strives for improvements. Sports, **B1**

Coming next week

We'll report on the year's biggest stories.

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North Oconee High School cancer survivor Mary Webb said her parents, Dr. Whitney Webb and Kery Webb, were a godsend during her treatments. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

Musically gifted cancer survivor bangs the drum for more research

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

Glancing at her Led Zeppelin poster, 15-year-old Mary Webb ponders what to play while perched on the throne of a bright yellow drum set whose bass drum bears her name in a cursive signature. She removes her matching yellow beanie, revealing a burgeoning patch of blonde hair atop her once bald head. And in a burst of pure rock-star adrenaline, the swift, rhythmic motions of the drumsticks culminate in an instantly recognizable tune, despite the absence of guitars or backing vocals.

The unmistakable beat of "Stairway to Heaven" thunders through the rooms of the Webb family's Oconee County home.

A few days earlier, Mary was marching a 15-pound bass drum in the Watkinsville Christmas Parade, finishing up her first full year with the North Oconee High School marching band.

Now a sophomore, Mary entered high school with the devastating diagnoses of two brain tumors in September 2020. The larger one was sitting near her optic nerve, causing loss of vision in one eye. The smaller one was near the pineal gland in the brain that modulates sleep patterns. She began chemotherapy immediately and had radiation on her 15th birthday. Much of her freshman year was spent in and out of hospitals.

Mary, who learned how to play guitar in the third grade and moved on to drums in fourth grade before mastering piano and saxophone too, is a legend inside the Titan band room. At school, fellow musicians wear bracelets and sport T-shirts that read, "We March for Mary."

And in the community, Mary is an inspiration for those who are fighting cancer. She has been chosen as a spokesperson for Children's Healthcare Network. Walgreens stores recently featured Mary on their thank-you card that customers received when they



In addition to marching the bass drum for NOHS, Mary is a virtuoso drummer on the kit too. She plans on playing snare drum in the marching band next year. [Submitted photo]

make a donation to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

Earlier this fall, Mary designed the decals for the stockcar of NASCAR driver Chase Elliott as part of a partnership among the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Chase Elliott Foundation and other organizations. Her design included a cancer ribbon and the words "strength," "bravery," "courage" and "hope." The puzzle pieces she included represented the fellowship of child cancer survivors.

Carrie Shepherd, whose son, Henry, is a cancer survivor, spearheaded a national fundraiser for childhood cancer research by selling "Mighty Mary" bracelets.

The Shepherd and Webb families are familiar faces at Relay for Life and tireless advocates of the scientists investigating cures and health care workers treating those battling the disease.

"Unfortunately, more than 500 children were diagnosed with cancer last year at the Aflac Cancer and

Blood Disorders Center of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta," according to the Walgreens donation thank-you card.

While at the hospital, Mary heard stories about people overcoming seemingly impossible obstacles. What kept her spirits high was her faith that God was by her side every step of the way.

Several people who had already finished their treatments came back to line the hallways of the hospital and applaud Mary as she rang the bell to signal her last radiation treatment earlier this spring.

The tumors are gone, but Mary will continue to get scans throughout the school year.

"She has a positive attitude like no other student I've ever worked with," said North Oconee High School Principal Philip Brown. "It doesn't matter what she's going through, her ability to put a smile on her face and make somebody else's day brighter is a talent that's been unmatched."

SEE MARY WEBB PAGE A5

Watkinsville OKs brewery ordinance

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

As societal attitudes toward responsible alcohol consumption have evolved, Watkinsville has allowed the sale of beer and wine, liquor by the drink and most recently adult beverages on Sunday.

As of last Wednesday, entrepreneurs wishing to start a brewery can now come before the Watkinsville City Council to apply for a business license for such an establishment.

The council voted 4-1 to update the city's alcohol ordinance. Council members Christine Tucker, Chuck Garrett, Brett Thomas and Jeff Campbell voted in favor while Councilwoman Connie Massey voted against the motion.

Massey said there are enough places in Watkinsville that already serve alcohol and that she does not want Watkinsville to turn into Athens.

Although a brewery does not have to adhere to the 65-35 food-to-alcohol gross receipts ratio, this ordinance does not allow traditional bars in Watkinsville, said City Manager Sharyn Dickerson.

Those seeking to establish a brewery must procure a conditional-use permit for an enclosed building in a zoning district that allows breweries. Production space shall not exceed 15,000 square feet.

No one under 21 may be allowed inside without a parent or guardian. Special discounts are prohibited except for nonprofit fundraisers.

Adults are allowed to bring in food from a neighboring establishment.

Breweries will be allowed to draft beer for wholesalers and retail package sales in sealed glasses or cans that must be between 12 to 68 ounces.

A brewery license is \$2,500 per annum, and requires obtaining a city and state malt beverages pouring license. A license authorizes the manufacture, on premises, of no more than 5,000 barrels of malt beverage in a calendar year, according to the ordinance.

Campbell said breweries will bring in revenue for the city and attract visitors.

"They are going to complement, rather than compete with, existing restaurants," he said, explaining that restaurants like Chops & Hops cans serve a beer brewed from a local brewery.

In other news, the city held a second reading of an updated charter. The last revision was made in 1983.

"This will require approval from the Georgia General Assembly, and if it is approved will take effect next July," said Watkinsville Mayor Brian Brodrick.

The new charter allows the filling of vacancies by appointment, rather than election, if the vacancy is less than a year remaining on the term. Earlier this year when former Mayor Bob Smith resigned, the city had to pay for a special election.

It gives clearer guidelines for what constitutes a conflict of interests. There's also a provision to change auditors every five years, unless another qualified auditor cannot be retained for a reasonable fee.

The council honored Ed Keegan, who designed a commemorative ornament for Watkinsville's Christmas activities earlier this month.

The city donated \$500 toward the Ashton Hope Keegan Foundation, which provides resources to women working toward educational goals.

SEE WATKINSVILLE PAGE A2



Restaurants like Chops & Hops will be able to sell beer that's brewed from a local brewery. [File photo]

Watkinsville uses federal funds for four-figure bonuses

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

The Watkinsville City Council last week approved "premium pay" for most city employees in the form of a one-week pay bonus and a \$1,000 retention bonus.

The bonuses do not apply to elected officials.

The monies will come from the American Rescue Plan Act, which allows local governments to provide additional pay to essential workers who worked during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Police officers who will receive the \$1,000 Georgia Public Safety Officials and First Responders supplement were not eligible for

the city's \$1,000 retention bonus.

Due to a salary threshold, City Manager Sharyn Dickerson was also not eligible for said bonus, although the City Council did vote to give her the one-week pay bonus.

Of 11 city employees who will receive at least one form of a bonus, four individuals will get more than \$2,000.

The cumulative amount of bonuses given to employees is \$17,244.

The city of Watkinsville is slated to receive a total of \$1.096 million in American Rescue Act funds in two tranches.

Already, the city has earmarked funds for public safety personnel

and stormwater improvements to Harden Hill.

For the premium pay allocation, Watkinsville officials modeled its decision after several other cities that implemented similar bonuses, including the city of Louisville, which has a similar population size of 2,283 residents.

Oconee County is spending much of its ARP funds on broadband services, as well as a grant match for the Wastewater Treatment Plan upgrade, said County Administrator Justin Kirouac.

Last year, the Board of Commissioners also utilized the Coronavirus Relief Fund money

for a lump sum hazard pay for eligible employees.

Those included public safety and employee who "worked front-line during the early part of the pandemic when most the offices were closed to the public," Kirouac explained to The Oconee Enterprise.

Those eligible county employees received a one-time payment of \$1,500 per individual.

Oconee County Schools did not use ARP funding for bonuses, but did employ monies from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act for \$1,000 retention supplements, said OCS Director of Communications Anisa Sullivan

Jimenez.

In addition, the BOE voted on \$1,250 retention supplements, as well as a \$1 per hour raise for custodial, bus and school nutrition staff, out of the school system's general fund.

In a public statement following last Wednesday's meeting, Watkinsville Mayor Brian Brodrick noted that city employees did not receive a raise in the last fiscal year (although end-of-year pay bonuses in the form of one week's pay were awarded last year).

City employees, Brodrick said, "have done a tremendous job despite challenging circumstances."

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

