



In Our 137th Year

Serving Oconee County



The Oconee Enterprise

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THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER OF Peggy Monroe, Happy Birthday!

THURSDAY • 30 SEPTEMBER 2021



Rotary car show draws thousands

Proceeds support club projects. Lifestyles, **A6**



City approves car dealer

Motors on Main features classic cars. Business, **B4**



Titans top Madison County

North Oconee picks up second win. Sports, **B1**

Coming next week

We'll report on a Watkinsville bypass.

Inside

TWO SECTIONS
16 PAGES
30 SEPTEMBER 2021

- Business **B4**
- Classifieds **B7**
- Crime **A2**
- Crossword **B7**
- Forum **A4**
- Legals **B6**
- Lifestyles **A6**
- Obituaries **B5**
- Public Matters **B5**
- Sports **B1**

Northern Oconee road projects listed

BOC also discusses Presbyterian Village intersection

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

At a Board of Commissioners Town Hall this month, Chairman John Daniell gave a timeline for significant upcoming road projects.

Work on the interchange at Ga. 316 and the Oconee Connector, as well as a Virgil Langford Road flyover are slated for 2024 to 2027. Flyovers at Mars Hill Road and McNutt Creek will begin construction in 2027. A flyover at Julian Drive is expected in 2028.

In addition to the Jimmy Daniell Road interchange, significant road

work will be made at Dials Mill and Dials Mill Extension of Ga. 316 between 2024 and 2025. These projects will make Ga. 316 a "limited-access" highway, Daniell explained.

Dials Mill Plantation Property Owners Association President Sharon Thelen asked why it's necessary to have construction at both intersections when they are less than a quarter mile apart.

"A full interchange at Dials Mill Road is very concerning to us because our subdivision sits very close to the intersection of Dials Mill Rd and Ga. 316," she said at a previous BOC meeting. "GDOT would need to take land from some of the homeowners, and the entrance to our neighborhood may

be impacted as well.

Thelen said an interchange at Dials Mill Road will also increase traffic in a mostly residential area.

Construction of roundabouts where Hog Mountain meets Snows Mill/Rocky Branch and Rays Church/Malcom Bridge roads will occur in 2024. The Apalachee River bridge in North High Shoals will be replaced that year as well.

In the immediate future, road work will begin shortly on the widening of Experiment Station Road.

Daniell told citizens that the Hog Mountain and Union Church road intersection will be signalized and that Simonton Bridge and Rocky Branch roads will be widened this fall.

SEE TOWN HALL PAGE A3



There are plans for a roundabout at the Hog Mountain intersection of Snows Mill and Rocky Branch roads near North Oconee High School. [File photo]



Chosen for Life Ministries offers resources to those who adopt and foster. [Submitted photo]

Nonprofit supporting adoption, fostering celebrates a milestone

BY ALAINA O'REGAN

Chosen for Life Ministries has given away over \$500,000 in grants in the last 10 years. The Oconee non-profit works with churches and families to support fostered and adopted children throughout 12 counties in Georgia.

The organization was founded in 2010 by a group of adoptive families who were looking for ways to support one another.

Chosen for Life Ministries Executive Director Anna Bearden said those families set a goal early on to help support other folks who may be interested in adoption. In 2012, they awarded five families \$1,000 grants to help with adoption costs.

"Since then, as an organization, we've really grown out of that," Bearden said.

According to the National Adoption Foundation, most experts agree that one of the



Andrew and Laura Cooper speak at the 2021 Choosing to Care banquet. [Submitted photo]

principle barriers to adoption is expense. By awarding adoption-support grants to families, Chosen for Life Ministries helps

alleviate the financial burden for those looking to adopt domestically or internationally.

SEE LIFE PAGE A3

OCHS alumnus wins the bronze in Paralympics

Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part series about local Paralympians.

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

It was surreal for Jarryd Wallace to have a decade of hard work culminate in a single race and result in a bronze Olympic medal.

Wallace, a 2008 graduate of Oconee County High School, competed last month in his third Paralympics and ran the 200-meter dash in 22.09 seconds, earning him the medal.

This is his first time making the podium at the Olympics, but his prior athletic feats include three world championships, four world records, as well as ranking sixth in the 400m in the 2012 Paralympics and fifth in the 100m in the 2016 Paralympics.

Wallace comes from a family of athletes. His father, Jeff, was a Southeastern Conference champion tennis player. And his mother, Sabina Horne, was an all-conference distance runner. Both are alumni of UGA, where Wallace himself attended.

In high school, Wallace was a star athlete who was a state champion in the 800- and 1,600-meter. As an upperclassman, he experienced chronic pain that was diagnosed as compartment syndrome, which causes compression of the nerves, blood vessels and muscles. He underwent a number of surgeries but experienced complications leading to dead muscle tissue.

Being on his feet was almost unbearable. In June 2010, Wallace decided to move forward with elective surgery to amputate his right leg below the knee. He



Wallace, a 2008 graduate of Oconee County High School, lives in Pebble Creek subdivision. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

said the No. 1 reason was to become pain free, not to advance his athletic career. But after walking on a prosthetic limb for several months, he began running again. Just over a year after his amputation, he won a gold medal and set a world record at the 2011 Parapan American Games.

Wallace likes to say that even though people can't control what happens in life, they can control how they respond to adversity.

He says that the "why" has to be bigger than the "what."

"There's a bigger purpose in my life," he said, explaining that his goals are not just about his athletic performance but about being a role model and inspiration for others.

SEE WALLACE PAGE A3

School board gets admiration and criticism

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

The first public speaker at the September regular meeting for the Oconee Board of Education praised the school system for its handling of COVID-19 protocols.

"I'm proud to be part of the Oconee school system," said Mitzi Honeycutt, who has an eighth grader and a senior. "Our family appreciates how you are handling the school year by allowing families to choose what is best for them personally."

"Thank you for not getting sucked into quarantines and mandates of any kind," she continued. "Regardless of how loud the noise is, mandates cannot be supported. Thank you for protecting our children against mental health issues,

such as anxiety and depression caused by isolation and division. Thank you for moving forward and not backward."

John Phillips, a parent of two children in the school system, spoke critically of the school board's decision to appoint Kim Argo as chair and Wayne Bagley to a seat without accepting other applications.

When researching the 1964 law that gives the BOE discretion to appoint a board member following a sudden vacancy, Phillips found a legal notice in the Oct. 21, 1964 issue of The Oconee Enterprise. This law changed the BOE from an appointed board to an elected board, with the exception of filling a seat due to a resignation or

death.

"It was intended to give people the vote," Phillips told the BOE. "You have perverted the law by taking a small clause, a loophole if you will, and twisted it for your ill intent."

Phillips called upon citizens to demand that Rep. Marcus Wiedower, Rep. Houston Gaines and Sen. Bill Cowsert repeal the law.

In other news, the BOE approved a \$2.756 million contract with Amacher Bros. Construction Company for an eight classroom addition to High Shoals Elementary School.

■ The BOE voted yes on a \$360,444 contract Northeast

Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency for special education shared services

■ The BOE agreed to purchase three 78-passenger buses and one 72-passenger bus at a combined cost of \$393,818.

It will be funded by funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

■ Chief Financial Officer Liz Harlow reported that recent educational local option sales tax collections are up 25 percent from the same time period a year earlier and that OCS is seeing an overall increase in ELOST revenue compared to last year.

■ At the September regular BOE meeting, the board honored the

following students:

AAAA State Champions boys golf awardees: Luke Jarvis, Ford Haynes, Luke Koenig, Eli Rogers, Hunter Brown, Drew Freeman, Landry Short, Austin Spencer, Will Voyles, Freddy Chappell, Wyatt Flury and Mark Stanaland.

AAAA State Player of the Year: Luke Koenig of NOHS.

AAAA Girls Golf State Champions: Leah Anderson, Camryn Wright, Madi Chappell, Abigail Hill, Mia Vogel, Sarah Fryman, Athena Brooks, Ansley Crowe, Hayley Ade, Payton Herndon and Cathryn Wagner.

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta representative Mary Frances Webb for her design of a NASCAR stock car.

This issue was mailed Wednesday, Sept. 29, from Watkinsville and Athens, GA. Please inform your post office if it arrives late.



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