



The Oconee Enterprise



Parents proud of their sons

Oconee the Magazine profiles the Johnson family
Special insert



Private dam in poor condition

Local government doesn't want to pay. News, **A3**



Ricketts reflects on time at PACS

Prince AD details program growth. Sports, **B1**

Coming next week

We'll report on the Bishop Golden Pantry plans.

Inside

TWO SECTIONS
12 PAGES
24 JUNE 2021

- Business..... **B3**
- Classifieds..... **B5**
- Crime..... **A2**
- Crossword..... **B5**
- Forum..... **A4**
- Legals..... **B4**
- Lifestyles..... **A6**
- Obituaries..... **A5**
- Public Matters..... **B3**
- Sports..... **B1**

This issue was mailed Wednesday, June 23, from Watkinsville and Athens, GA. Please inform your post office if it arrives late.



Last two defendants guilty in 2019 murder

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

On Monday evening, an Oconee County jury found Akhemu Dunston and Dallas McCabe guilty of felony murder in the death of 19-year-old Joey Jackson two years ago.

Judge Lawton Stephens sentenced the defendants to life in prison with the possibility of parole after 30 years plus five years to run concurrent for lesser charges.

Jackson was shot July 16, 2019. He thought he was going to purchase 3.5 grams of marijuana for \$30 from Dunston, but Dunston ended up stealing Jackson's phone while seated in the passenger side of a Pontiac

G8. While trying to get his phone back, Jackson was dragged by the car as the driver, M c C a b e , accelerated.

During the tussle, another passenger, Ryan O'Neal, pulled out a 9 mm handgun and shot Jackson in the arm. Due to the positioning of his arm, the bullet also entered Jackson's upper chest. Because of the loss of blood and a head injury, it took Jackson two hours to make it 100 yards to his grandparent's home at the intersection of



Dunston



Dallas McCabe, center, was the getaway driver. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

Whippoorwill Road and Cumberland Drive. His grandparents called 911, and Jackson died

in a hospital the next day.

O'Neal, who was tried separately, was also sentenced to life with the possibility of parole in April. In the case of Dunston and McCabe, neither the prosecution nor the defense informed the jury that O'Neal had already been found guilty.

Dunston's arrest earlier this year for being party to the crime of a rape while he was supposed to on house arrest was also not discussed with the jury.

"This [murder] case is why we have party to a crime," prosecutor Sheila Ross said in her closing statements on Monday. "Everyone who participated in this murder can be held responsi-

ble for it....

You can't get away with murder by bringing some friends with you."

Ross told the jury, "This is not a contest of who's the worst; they are all bad."

She said Dunston was the glue of the botched robbery; he brought O'Neal and McCabe together. She also established that they are affiliated with East coast subsets of the Bloods, a well known street gang.

A gang expert testified about hand signs, clothing and lingo of gang culture, including the phrase "money move," which is another way of saying robbery.

SEE MURDER TRIAL PAGE A5

City again seeks grant to connect park to downtown

Progress made on Miracle League

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

After having been denied a state grant, the city of Watkinsville will re-apply for a state grant in order to finance a greenway that would run behind the Oconee County Courthouse and connect with Harris Shoals Park.

The city's contribution of an approximately \$2 million project would be 25 percent, or roughly \$500,000. At a meeting last Wednesday, the city council put this item on the consent agenda, whereby discussion is usually brief or limited. The council had already planned on spending the money when it voted on the grant application last year. The city was informed in March that it did not receive the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Grant.

Watkinsville Manager Sharyn Dickerson said the pre-application process starts Aug. 2 and closes Oct. 15. She anticipates a decision by spring 2022. The \$500,000 contributed by the city would come from sales tax revenue.

A greenway connecting downtown



A new walkway leads park visitors to the playground and eventually to ESP's forthcoming Miracle League Field. The city would also like to build a pedestrian path to downtown. [Submitted rendering]

Watkinsville to Harris Shoals Park was one of the main projects listed in a city transportation study several years ago.

In related news, the sidewalk from the park's parking lot to the playground and City Hall is now open. Eventually, this sidewalk will connect to a new playground and a handicap-accessible baseball field known

as Extra Special People's Miracle League Field.

"Work on that part of the project should be completed before year end," Mayor Brian Brodrick said in a public statement.

In other news, the people who have been displaying Black Lives Matter signs across from the Courthouse are not required to have

a permit, according to Dickerson.

"Citizens may exercise their right to free speech and assembly within the city limits as long as they are not affecting the health and safety of other citizens," she said. "Based on what we have observed of their rallies to date, they are in compliance with that."

In addition to swearing in Mayor

Brian Brodrick and Councilman Chuck Garrett, newly appointed solicitor Kevin McFarlin also gave his oath of office.

Councilman Brett Thomas is asking citizens to display their patriotism through flags. The city has purchased dozens of flags that will be flown next week in honor of the Fourth of July.

Mother beats cancer with strength and faith

Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part series about cancer survivors

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

As owner of Cottage Hair Salon, Jenny Skelton has styled all sorts of hair – from brunettes to blondes and from bobs to bouffants. But the hair that nearly brought her to tears was that of a cancer survivor.

Several months ago, a woman who had battled breast cancer came into her salon and said, "I want you to be the first person to cut my hair since it has grown back."

The client had come to Skelton because she saw Skelton's own struggle with cancer on Instagram.

After weeks of chronic fatigue, severe pain in her back, neck and head, shortness of breath and a lump in her throat, Skelton discovered last year that she had a tumor the size of a cantaloupe under her left breast plate. It was diagnosed as large B cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Doctors informed her it was an aggressive cancer, but it was highly curable. In the summer of 2020, Skelton began her first chemotherapy treatment at Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center. She ended up doing another round of treatment that required a port implanted in her chest, as well as radiation earlier this year.

Before the diagnosis, Skelton thought her fatigue and pain could be stress related. When she woke up with night sweats, she assumed it was her hormones.



Jenny Skelton is the owner of Cottage Hair Salon and a survivor of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. She is a mother of two daughters: Faye, center, and Harper, right. [Submitted photo]

But then she had difficulty breathing and swallowing, which were symptoms of the tumor blocking half of her trachea.

Skelton was only 38 with no family history of cancer. She's also a single mother of two young girls.

"There's no way I'm going to

let this take me away from my girls," Skelton said to herself. In addition to science and medicine, she prayed every day.

"I prayed He would keep me on this Earth," Skelton said. "I have so much to live for and to do."

Her little ones see her as a role

model for how to face hardship with hope and grace.

"In the darkest of times, there is still a light at the end of the tunnel," Skelton said. "Even in anyone's darkest moments, don't ever forget there is a reason God put you on this Earth. Keep your head up and keep a positive outlook on life."

For Skelton and her family, hope was as strong a medicine as the chemotherapy. She witnessed her tumor go from the size of a cantaloupe to a tangerine to a walnut to nonexistent.

"It feels amazing, like God has given me a second chance at life," she said. "I think as humans, we take life for granted every day. Life is precious."

Celebrating her remission, Skelton and her two girls just got back from St. Simons.

They are also celebrating the end of their first school year in Oconee County Schools.

When she was diagnosed last summer, Skelton was living on the east side of Athens but had a goal of getting her children into OCS.

Thanks to a Realtor friend of hers, she went forward with putting her house on the market in between rounds of chemotherapy.

They found a nice townhome in Triple Creek subdivision, and her oldest was able to start fifth grade at Malcom Bridge Elementary School.

Skelton was resolute that she wasn't going to let cancer stop her from pursuing her goals.

SEE CANCER SURVIVOR PAGE A5



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

Enterprise closes for one week

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

The offices of The Oconee Enterprise will be closed Friday, June 25 through Sunday, July 4 to allow its employees to take a 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. First and last names are required for those who are pictured.