



# The Oconee Enterprise



## Local contractor didn't get bid

School board chooses Atlanta firm. News, **A3**



## Farmers Market has new leader

Seaton Stiles named manager. Business, **B3**



## Crouse details journey to WCA

Westminster AD dishes on path to Lions. Sports, **B1**

## Coming next week

We'll report more on the murder trial.

## Inside

TWO SECTIONS  
12 PAGES  
17 JUNE 2021

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

# Two on trial for murder of Joey Jackson



Prosecutor Sheila Ross of the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia is the lead prosecutor in the murder trial of Akhemu Dunston and Dallas McCabe. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

It's been almost two years since 19-year-old Oconee resident Joey Jackson was murdered.

"On July 16, 2019, Joey Jackson thought he was going to buy \$30 worth of marijuana from Akhemu Dunston," prosecutor Sheila Ross said Tuesday in her opening statements of a murder trial involving two defendants. "But instead, Joey walked into a trap. Joey walked into a robbing crew—a robbing crew that was assembled by Akhemu Dunston and a robbing crew that was driven by Dallas McCabe."

Following a tussle to retrieve his phone, which was taken by Dunston, McCabe drove off. Jackson was dragged by the car and shot in the left arm by passenger Ryan O'Neal. The bullet reentered into the left side of his upper chest.

"On a dark, Oconee County street around 10 p.m., [Jackson] was left for dead by everyone



Dunston McCabe

inside that car," said Ross. "The next day on July 17, Jackson died of injuries inflicted upon him by people in that car."

In April, O'Neal was found guilty of malice murder and sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole after 30 years. O'Neal was tried separately from Dunston and McCabe. Those two defendants are being tried this week, and each has his own attorney.

A fourth occupant of the car—Akhemu Dunston's brother, Quentin—was also charged with murder, but former Western Judicial Circuit District Attorney

Ken Mauldin dropped those charges in late 2019.

Ross, who tried the previous case against O'Neal, did not inform the jury of O'Neal's guilty verdict but did say he was charged and indicted with murder. The defense attorneys, Benjamin Pearlman representing Dunston and James Rogers representing McCabe, said the same.

In fact, both Pearlman and Rogers argued in their opening statements that O'Neal should be the only one held responsible for Jackson's murder.

"This case is not nearly as complicated as what the government wants you to believe," said Pearlman. "There's one person and one person only who is responsible, and that's Ryan O'Neal."

Pearlman explained that none of the other individuals in the car knew O'Neal had a gun, let alone knew that he was going to use one.

SEE MURDER TRIAL PAGE A2



Defense Attorney James Rogers is representing McCabe. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

# Bank headquarters open for business

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

As the first hometown bank since the Great Depression, Oconee State Bank opened its doors in Watkinsville in 1960. For sixty-one years, it has remained a community bank.

"[We are] making a bold statement about our future that we will be rooted and grounded right here in Watkinsville, Georgia, for as long as we can see in the future," CEO and President Neil Stevens said at Tuesday's grand opening of the bank's corporate headquarters. "As we expand outside the bounds of Oconee County, our headquarters will always remain right here."

Oconee State Bank moved its operations hub from Macon Highway to the intersection of Main Street and Experiment Station Road. The two-story, white-brick building "makes a statement about our vision of being essential to the lives and businesses of the communities we serve," said Stevens.

The building has been dedicated in memory of H. Mell Wells, who served as president of Oconee State Bank from 1979 until his death in 1986. Several bankers told the story of how Wells once drew a building on a napkin and said, "One day, there is going to be the most beautiful building sitting on this hill in all of Watkinsville."

"Daddy loved this community," said daughter Caroline Wells Pence.

Pence, her sister, Susan Wells Brodrick, and their mother,

Virginia Wells McGeary, received special recognition Tuesday as a plaque for H. Mell Wells was unveiled.

McGeary, chair of the board of directors, welcomed hundreds of people to the grand opening celebration.

Oconee Chamber of Commerce President Courtney Bernardi said, "This building is beautiful, but what goes inside of the building is even more important to our community."

In a public statement, Executive Vice President Chief Retail Officer Cristi Donahue, who also oversees facilities, said the project has been a highlight of her career.

"For me and hopefully many others, this building has united our history, our heritage and our future in a profound and visual way," she said, "from the historic hallway that adorns the main corridor to the use of our iconic cupola throughout."

Oconee native Adam Hammond said his grandfather, Herbert Hammond, helped create the bank as an original board member.

"There's no doubt the founders would be proud that OSB is a powerhouse local bank and resolutely spreading its footprint throughout the region," said Hammond. "I'm grateful for the steps OSB has taken to preserve the history of the bank's founding...Everything we do in life is bigger than ourselves, and I'm grateful to descend from such a selfless servant and leader."



The new building was dedicated in honor of the late H. Mell Wells. From left, Susan Wells Brodrick, Caroline Wells Pence and Virginia Wells McGeary. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]



CEO and President Neil Stevens talks about Oconee State Bank's mission at the new corporate headquarters in downtown Watkinsville. [Photo by Michael Prochaska]

# Garrett wins city election

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

Watkinsville Post 1 candidate

Chuck Garrett defeated challenger Carolyn Maulsby in a landslide on Tuesday.

Garrett, an Oconee native who is the asphalt sales manager of Pittman Construction, received 298 votes, compared to 92 votes for Maulsby.

Garrett will be sworn in at Wednesday's City Council meeting. The councilman-elect said that while campaigning, he learned that Watkinsville is a "small town with big-city problems."

"If you have a problem," he said, "let's talk about it...Everybody's problem means something to them, so it's important to be able to listen."

Mayor-elect Brian Brodrick had already won by default when his challenger, Peter Steckel, dropped out of the race. However, Steckel's name still appeared on the ballot, and 35 citizens still voted for him.

"If you are looking for somebody who leads with fear, I'm not your guy," Brodrick said at a candidate forum last month. "I'm a firm believer that at the end of the day, love and hope triumph."

Because this was a special election triggered by the resignation of Mayor Bob Smith, both seats held by Garrett and Brodrick are up for re-election in November.



Garrett



Erin Campbell is glad to have the support of family. Clockwise from left, Katherine, John, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Campbell. [Submitted photo]

# Nonprofit leader fights thyroid cancer

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

BY JULIA FECHTER AND MICHAEL PROCHASKA

When Erin Campbell was diagnosed with thyroid cancer three months ago, she was determined not to let it slow her down. As a mother of three daughters—Katherine, Elizabeth and Charlotte—Campbell wakes up each day with beaming optimism and an enduring sense of humor.

She also continues to aid families as the executive director for Athens Area Diaper Bank, a nonprofit that she and several others started in October 2015. AADS provides diapers to 8,000 children of low-income families.

In January, Campbell knew something was awry when she felt

two Skittle-sized lumps on her neck. A CT scan showed a cancerous tumor in Campbell's thyroid.

"The great news about my specific thyroid cancer is that it grows slowly, and the survival rate is 97 percent," she said.

However, because of the disease's location, Campbell's entire thyroid had to be removed. Before the initial thyroidectomy, a radiologist looked at one of Campbell's CT scans and spotted several suspicious lymph nodes. After more imaging and tests, her surgery plan was changed to include removal of 18 lymph nodes.

Campbell takes medicine to ensure that her body can function normally without a thyroid.

The surgery was the first step in beating the cancer. Campbell also has to take radiation in pill form.

"It's delivered to me in the hospital in a lead box to protect everyone," she said. "And then I have to swallow it."

After taking it, her husband, John, will have to sleep in another room, and he'll have to drop off food at the bedroom door on disposable plates. The isolation required for the treatment isn't easy for Campbell, but she understands it's necessary.

She hopes that the surgery took out most of the cancer and that the radiation treatment can "mop up" any remaining cancerous cells.

As she is on track to beat her cancer, Campbell also reflects on how she lost her mother to ovarian cancer 19 years ago.

SEE ERIN CAMPBELL A3

This issue was mailed Wednesday, June 16, from Watkinsville and Athens, GA. Please inform your post office if it arrives late.



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