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ABOUT THE COVER



Jonathan and Natalie Newsome are the owners of the Owl's Nest at 116. Photo by Holly Knight. See full story on page 30.

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Our cover story for this issue of Sandersville Scene magazine takes us inside Owl's Nest at 116, a relatively new downtown business created by husband and wife team Natalie and Jonathan Newsome. This couple has put together a wonderful space to showcase the works of artisans, including themselves, featuring everything from vintage and handmade jewelry to original artwork and pottery. As the store's logo reads, everything inside is 'Handmade, Reclaimed, Unique.' We hope you enjoy writer Branyan Towe's piece on Owl's Nest at 116, and of course, stop by sometime and check it out for yourself. Also in this issue, find out how one Washington County resident's creativity has connected him to a former U.S. President. You'll also discover the story behind how Allison Wilkinson uses her pageantry platform to help children and how her message is gaining ground and reaching new heights.

As always, we love hearing from you. Drop us a line and tell us what stories you'd like to see featured in an upcoming issue.

Until next time, enjoy and take care.



Natalie

Natalie Linder
Editor

Arts & Entertainment CALENDAR

ATTRACTIONS

Old City Cemetery

First documented burial in 1831. Located on the corner of West Church Street and Virginia Avenue in Sandersville, the site is on the National Register of Historic Places for its significant Civil War history. Historical figures buried at the site include former Ga. Lt. Gov. Thomas W. Hardwick, world-renowned surgeon William Rawlings, Central of Georgia Railroad president Benjamin James Tarbutton, the Rev. J.D. Anthony and Coleman R. Pringle, known as the Father of Prohibition in Georgia. For more information, visit www.sandersville.net or call (478) 552-6965.



Old Warthen Jail

Visit Georgia's Oldest Jail on state Route 15 North in Warthen. For more information, call (478) 552-3288.

Hamburg State Park

With modern-day facilities amidst reminders of days gone by, Hamburg State Park offers a mix of history and outdoor recreation. Anglers can enjoy lake fishing for largemouth bass, crappie and bream, as well as boat ramps and a fishing pier. Campers will find shaded campsites along the edge of quiet Hamburg Lake fed by the Little Ogeechee River.



Charles E. Choate Exhibit

A look at the life and work of the architect and builder and the official Georgia Historical Plates Display. Washington County Chamber of Commerce, 131 W. Haynes St., Sandersville. For more information call (478) 552-3288.

Brown House Museum

A private residence during the Civil War where Gen. Sherman spent the night of Nov. 26, 1864, 268 N. Harris Street in Sandersville. For more info, call

(478) 552-3288.



Revolutionary War Park

Visit the Revolutionary War Park on state Route 15 South of Tennille. For more information, call (478) 552-3288.

Old Jail Museum and Genealogy Research Center

Visit the Genealogy Research Center, 129 Jones Street, Sandersville. Open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



To get your event in the calendar, please email thembee@unionrecorder.com.



Photo by Leah Bethea

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 (478) 552-0464

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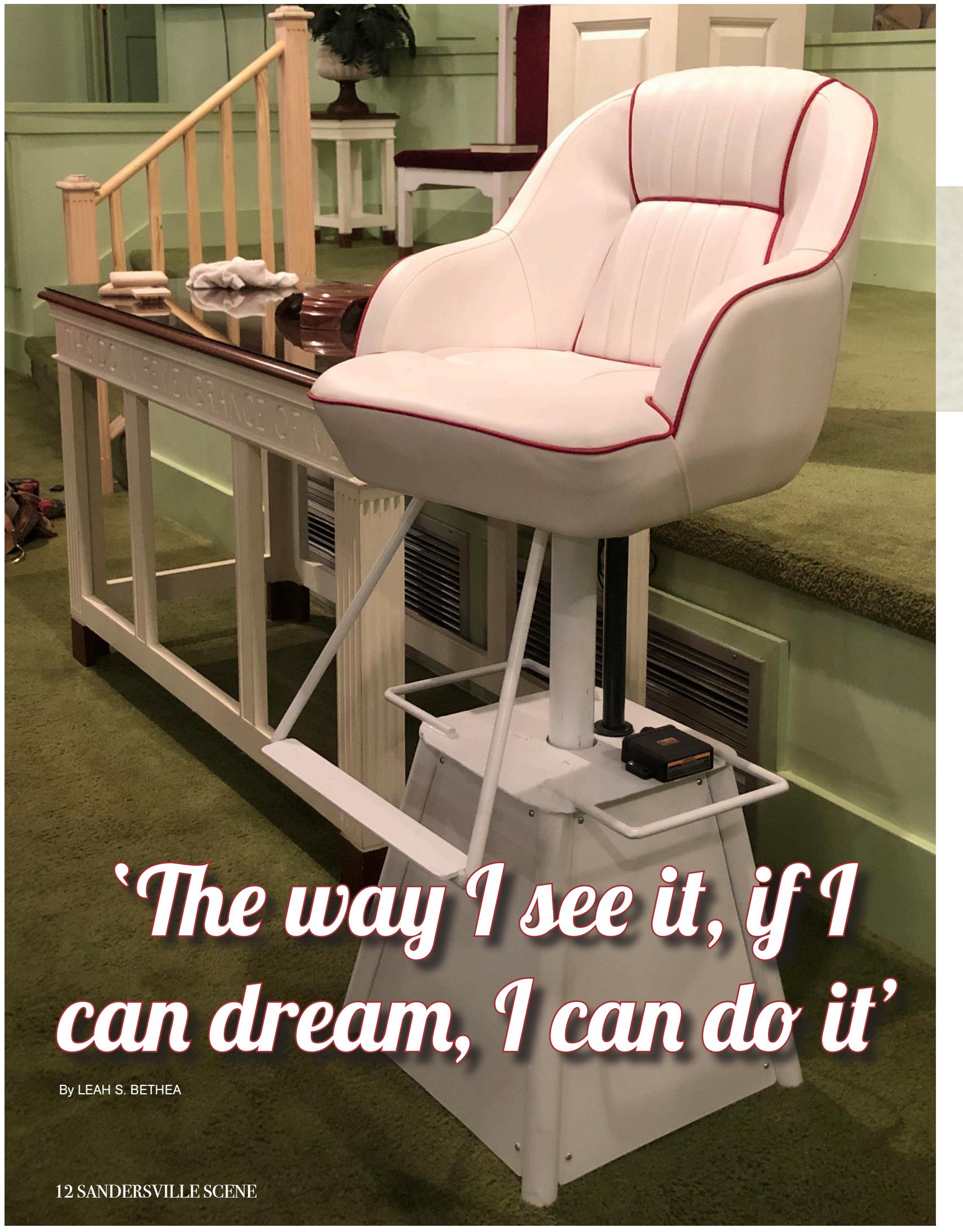
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*'The way I see it, if I
can dream, I can do it'*

By LEAH S. BETHEA

Washington County man's knack for inventing leads to special project for former U.S. Pres. Jimmy Carter

What began as a childhood hobby for Russ Brown recently led him to a job of presidential proportions.

Brown, 48, of Washington County, was tapped a few months ago to craft a chair that former U.S. Pres. Jimmy Carter now sits in to teach his renowned Sunday School class at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Ga. Carter, 94, has taught the class for decades and needed a chair that would be more accessible and comfortable due to the physical demands of age.

Brown, who owns his own construction company, says it all came about when he met a man in Macon who was friends with Jill Stuckey, media director at Maranatha Baptist Church. He told Brown that Stuckey was looking for someone who could make handrails to assist Carter with getting into the pulpit, but Brown thought he could do better. He had an idea for a specialized seating system that would benefit the former president.

Stuckey says the 39th president needed something he could sit down in, in a low position, that would elevate, something that would be very comfortable yet extremely stable, that could swivel, and that had armrests and a footrest. She says she also needed a fairly quick turnaround time. She shared those specifications with Brown.

"He said, 'Oh, well that's a boat chair.'"

Working alongside friend and machinist Shawn Leverett, the two came up with an innovative chair that includes a marine boat seat, a cattle gate opener to elevate it, a remote control from a wench, and a 12-volt battery. Construction of the chair was completed in December and Carter has been using it since.

"President Carter loves it," Stuckey says.

Stuckey says Carter teaches two Sundays out of every month. Though he did have to take some time off recently to recover from a broken hip, he returned to teaching in early June. He has been teaching Sunday School ever since his days at the U.S. Naval Academy. Stuckey says she has been in Carter's Sunday School class for more than 20 years.

"He's just the best Sunday School teacher ever," she says. "He has worldwide experience from his years in office."

She says people start lining up as early as Saturday night to hear him teach and if hopefuls are not in line by 4 a.m. they will likely be in the church's overflow room. Stuckey says attendance averages 350 to 500 guests on the Sundays when Carter teaches, and about 25 to 35 on the Sundays he doesn't.





Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, remain active in initiatives including eradicating disease and mental illness, and promoting world health and world peace.

“What better person to teach your Sunday School class? He knows the Bible backward and forward and utilizes real-world examples.”

While Brown has worked on several innovate jobs, this was definitely the most high profile.

“It’s an honor to be able to do it for him,” Brown says of Pres. Carter. For Brown’s part, invention is something that has been a part of his life for as long as he can remember.

“All my life I’ve been inventing and tinkering with stuff,” he says. Brown says even before he was old enough to go to school, he remembers using his dad’s old tools to make wooden go-carts. Then, at age 14, he took the motor and mechanism off of his dad’s garden tiller and put it on his bicycle.

“It would run 45 miles per hour,” Brown laughs. “That was the first thing I ever did and from there I was hooked.”

Several years ago, he even made a customized wheelchair for his mother, a double amputee, to assist her in getting out in her



yard and flower beds more easily.

Brown worked for Burgess Pigment for 20 years and says that working on different Kaolin Parade floats alongside his co-workers gave him some of his best experience in innovation. He says the company won several “best overall” awards, and one particularly memorable float was a remote-control one that employees could walk beside.

Brown now manages his own construction company, Construction 3:23 LLC. He says he aims to model his work and life around Colossians 3:23 — “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”

“Everything I touch I try to do it just like I’m doing it for the Lord.”

Brown says while he was honored to make a chair for a former president, it was just as important to him that Carter uses the chair to continue in ministry.

Brown says there are plans for him to be able to go and meet Carter. He says he hopes to talk with him about Oconee Outreach, a local initiative Brown is involved with that parallels Carter’s Habitat for Humanity.

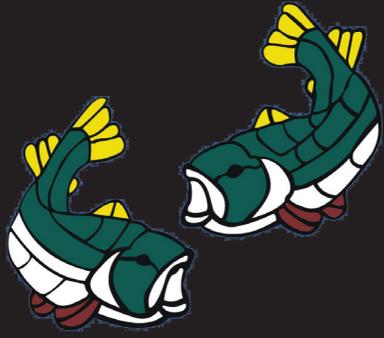
“I’m excited about meeting him.”

For Brown, there are likely plenty more inventions to look forward to in the future. As long as there are machines, pulleys, gears and ideas, the possibilities are limitless.

“The way I see it, if I can dream, I can do it,” he says. “I love building dreams.”



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Queen of bags

Pageant queen helps bring awareness to foster children

By BRANYAN TOWE

Alison Wilkinson started pageantry in 2015 after the birth of her youngest son, Tucker. She considered it a fun incentive that encouraged her to work harder to lose post-pregnancy baby weight. Her oldest son, Judson, is adopted, and she knew her platform would focus on adoption and fostering awareness.

“Over that next year, I found out more about foster care and needs associated with it. I read an article on children receiving trash bags when entering foster care and was just taken back by this reality,” Wilkinson says. “I confirmed this with my mother-in-law who works for DFCS (Department of Family and Children Services) and knew I had to stop it here in Georgia.”

That inspired Wilkinson to create the Queen of Bags initiative in October 2016 and it continues to the present

day.

Wilkinson credits her family as her biggest inspiration.

“Everything I do, I do for them. They are the reason I am who I am. My parents and in-laws, as well as my siblings, have always been so supportive of my dreams and the dreams I have for my family,” Wilkinson says. “My husband, Eric, and my boys, Judson and Tucker, show me every day how to be a better person through their love and support for both my pageantry and the Queen of Bags. I want other children to feel as loved and as special as I try to make my boys feel every single day. My love for them helps me show love to others.”

A number of things helped shape Wilkinson, including her faith and her parents.

“I never knew I would be an adoptive mother, or have



infertility issues, or be a pageant girl, but I know God has a lot of plans we never imagine for ourselves. My parents have always taught me that I can do and be whoever I want to be if I just believe in myself,” Wilkinson says. “Through infertility, I found my beautiful son, Judson, and then a second miracle through Tucker. I feel that my strong Christian faith instilled by my parents paved the way in making me the person I am today.”

During her free time, one will most likely find Wilkinson with her husband and two sons. They love being outside together and her sons have helped her with the Queen of Bags initiative as they have grown.

Her sons give Wilkinson the drive that she needs to keep going.

“Everything I do is for my children and because of my

children. I know there are so many children in the foster care system that need love and support. Seeing the love and joy that my children bring me gives me the encouragement to continue helping others,” Wilkinson says.

Wilkinson’s hopes for her legacy is tied to some of the most important things in her life — family, faith and children.

“I want to be known as someone who loved and gave back to others. My Meme was known throughout the county as the lady who gave all the children crocheted Santa Clauses and Easter bitties every year and who made barbecue sauce, squash relish, and fire and ice pickles. She never charged, she did it out of love for others, setting an example of how a Christian woman should treat others,” Wilkinson says. “I want to be that type of Christian woman that others remem-



ber for the love and support I gave to others, especially children.”

Through the initiative, Wilkinson has raised funds and supplies for 530 book bags across 11 counties in Georgia and recently into Florida. The bags are filled with items like teddy bears, blankets, hygiene kits, coloring book and crayons, and then given to children in foster care. In addition, she also donated

130 Easter baskets in Washington, Baldwin, Putnam, Jasper and Jones counties over the last two years and 32 blessing bags to children while teaching children about being more eco-friendly.

The Queen of Bags initiative is statewide, with Wilkinson donating bags all across Georgia, and it recently expanded into Florida. She hopes to continue expanding across

the United States and beyond, while also spreading awareness through pageantry. Wilkinson is working with friends in various states to try and expand the initiative.

With everything that the Queen of Bags initiative has accomplished, one might think it would be hard for Wilkinson to pick a favorite project she has done, but she has an idea.

“National Adoption Day — I absolutely love getting the supplies together for the bags and seeing the numbers grow. The city of Sandersville recognized National Adoption Day through a proclamation during City Council and my children got to see this,” Wilkinson says. “A group of my friends got together and helped me get the bags stuffed and then I spent the next week making deliveries to

various DFCS over Middle Georgia. Seeing the looks on the employees’ faces when I made the deliveries was an amazing feeling.”

In terms of what people can do to help, Wilkinson notes that she and the initiative are always looking for donations.

“I am currently working to turn the Queen of Bags Initiative into a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. I desperately need funding to make this happen,” Wilkinson says.

Community members can also donate new and unused items to be used for the bags such as teddy bears, fleece blankets, coloring books and 24-count crayons.

To find out more visit Wilkinson’s website, <https://www.allisonwilkinson.org/>.



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and
Salutatorian Gracie Brantley

255676-1



GMC awards students at academic honors assembly

Thursday, May 23, 2019, was no ordinary evening for the 19 graduates of Georgia Military College's Sandersville Campus. Their commencement ceremony was held at 6:30 p.m. at the Washington County EMC.

The venue, which seats approximately 200, was full, with only a small amount of standing room remaining. The support, love and admiration for these students filled the room from all directions; families, faculty, staff and administration.

A 2019 graduate, Bethany Knowles, sang

a particularly mesmerizing and powerful rendition of the national anthem. It was clear that she felt every word. Magic filled the air. Those in attendance knew they had just witnessed something special. The quality of the GMC graduates and their many talents and gifts were on full display.

Commencement speaker, Dr. Jean Sumner, encouraged the students to "always make a great first impression."

She shared practical wisdom; information clearly appreciated by the audience and students present, as all were attentively riveted

on her every word. She shared that she wants them to go out into the world, but return to appreciate, give back and grow the "small town" of Sandersville as only they can.

We appreciated having wonderful support from our main campus in Milledgeville. A special thanks to the main campus in Milledgeville, Dr. Mike Holmes who conferred the degrees, Dr. Jeannie Zipperer who awarded the Distinguished Graduate student, SPC Angela Seals and Craig Portwood, who proudly inducted graduates into the GMC Alumni Association.



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Trojan Battery team leaders receive training at OFTC

After identifying a need to better support key members of their company, Trojan Battery, a battery manufacturer in Sandersville, called upon local partners – Oconee Fall Line Technical College (OFTC) – to assist in addressing their key needs through customized training.

“I was introduced to OFTC’s Manager of Business and Industry Services, Roger Byrd, at the College’s Career Expo,” shares Kathryn Cooke, Senior Human Resources Manager for Trojan Battery. “I briefly spoke of our needs and Roger stated he would be happy to share some information on available training with me.”

After receiving the proposed training information, Cooke was confident that OFTC had the expertise to meet their needs. “The proposed topics were exactly what we needed,” she says. “There was no point to look any further.”

Customized Training

As a customized training partner, members of OFTC’s Business and Industry Services Team met with and listened to the specific needs as outlined by Trojan Battery in order to create the best possible training.

“We asked Kathryn to relate examples of existing training gaps and designed the

course content and schedule based on client need and availability of personnel to be trained,” Roger shares.

“It was great to feel that we were partnering in this endeavor,” Cooke adds. “So often you are presented with a ‘take it or leave it’ scenario.”

Fourteen Team Leaders were identified by Trojan Battery to participate in the customized training in order to provide skills development and enhancement.

“Our Team Leaders are the first point of contact for the employees who run the jobs on each shift,” she said. “Their job is difficult on the best of days. This was an opportunity to show our support in a very tangible way.”

Trojan’s Team Leaders attended training every Tuesday – in two cohorts to fit their shift schedules – for eight weeks. They covered topics on: leadership goals, managing change, communication for leaders, time management, managing difficult situations, creative problem solving, team building, and diversity and inclusion.

At the conclusion of the training, Trojan’s Team Leaders were recognized with an on-site graduation ceremony and reception to honor their completion of their commitment to leadership development.

“We were very happy to partner with Trojan Battery in order to help meet their training needs,” shares Kim David, OFTC’s VP for Economic Development. “Customized training allows us to specifically meet the articulated needs of our client partners while utilizing the depth of expertise offered through our resources at OFTC.”

“Customized training can be conducted on a wide array of topics from skilled training in partnership with our academic instructors to classroom instruction in leadership, soft skills, or computer applications,” David adds. “Additionally, a number of safety training topics are also customizable to a company’s needs.”

Some examples of previous customized training conducted by OFTC are: Leadership training for local governments; Excel and Access training for local hospitals, banks, and mining companies; Blueprint Reading, Shop Math, Electrical and Mechanical training, and Skills Validation/Assessment for local manufacturers.

For more info on Customized Training opportunities through OFTC, visit the Business and Industry/Safety Programs page on the OFTC.edu or email Roger Byrd at rbyrd@oftc.edu.

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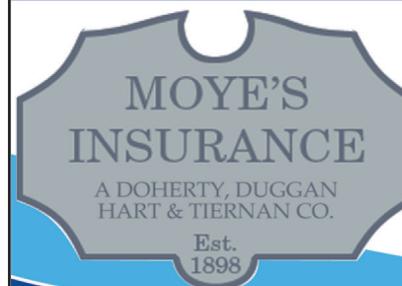


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Lighting up the sky

By BRANYAN TOWE

Each year, on the Saturday before July Fourth, the Davisboro Fire Department hosts The City of Davisboro July 4th Festival. Assistant Chief Brent Palmer was a young boy when the event started, but he remembers its humble beginnings.

“A lot of the firemen got together and used to go to South Carolina and just buy random fireworks, put together a little fireworks show for the town,” Palmer recalls. “That’s where it started at, just going and buying what they could pool the money together and go

buy. Now it’s turned into, I think at last count, we were seeing somewhere between a \$10,000 to \$13,000 show, depending on the year and what is raised between the city and donations and things like that.” The event has gone from a small-town show to one more professional with Pyrotecnico, a certified pyrotechnics company.

The local firefighters typically begin serving barbecue plates, hamburgers, hot dogs, and all the fixings around 10 o’clock in order to draw in the crowd before lunchtime. The proceeds from the food sold by the Davisboro Fire Department are a part of a fundraiser to



DAVISBORO JULY FOURTH FESTIVAL GETS READY TO DAZZLE

help get equipment for the firemen, which includes helmets and vests. Other vendors are also at the festival with items for sale as well.

While some parts of the festival may cost money, the event itself is free, with live music from Subject to Change, a band from Texas. There is also cornhole available to play, as well as some rides. Attendees can often be seen throwing footballs and frisbees around during the event.

Then, of course, the fireworks are the highlight of the evening.

Event coordinator David Cobb and others work hard at organizing the festival, with planning meetings starting in January and running through July. The funds for the event come from a variety of areas.

"The event is funded through sponsors of the event, through the city of Davisboro, the fire department, and through the funds that the vendors pay for their slot," Cobb says. "So, it's a public/private partnership type situation."

Cobb and the fire department are very involved with every aspect.

"As far as physically involved, all of it. We do from the vendors, cooking and selling hamburgers, hot dogs, barbecue plates, to the shooting of the fireworks and clean up," Cobb says.

There are additional volunteer organizations that help out as well, including Broken Shackle Ranch boys' home, Mighty Man Ministries

and Freedom Fighters of Georgia, all based in Davisboro.

"The great thing about coming to our show is, most people have Fourth of July traditions and this is not on the 4th. So, you can come see us and still do your Fourth of July from wherever you're from," Brent Palmer explains.

Palmer is not sure what the turnout for this year's festival will be.

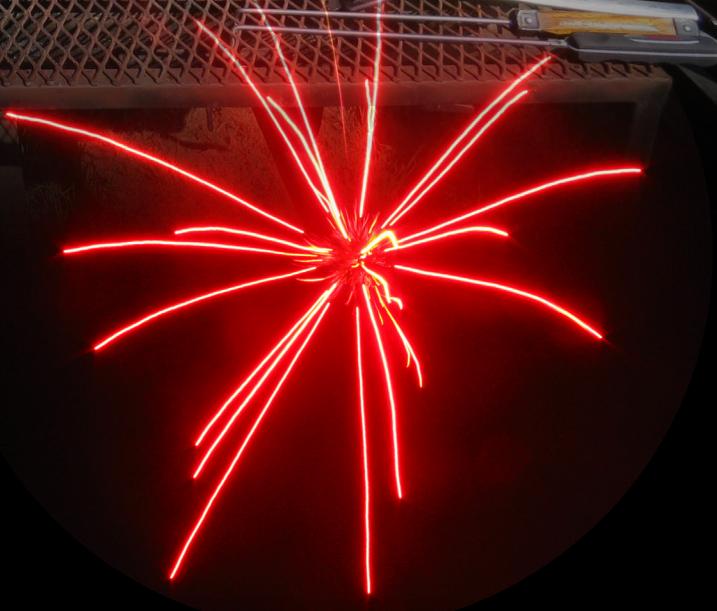
"The exact number is very vague because we have our regular crowd that comes in throughout the day that has always bought food from us and at night, you can't find a place to park inside Davisboro," Palmer says. "Granted, Davisboro's not a huge town, but the streets are packed, it's hard for us to move around and get stuff set up and get stuff moved around, because everybody shows up."

The fireworks are a big part of the festival and David Cobb offers this little preview of what to expect.

"I know we have a great show planned. I think we have about \$11,000 worth of fireworks that will go to the moon in 13 to 18 minutes," Cobb says. "We plan it out way ahead and our group that does this, they've been doing this for a bunch of years. I'm one of the shooters and almost all of the people in our department are certified shooters. So, we've just been doing it for so long and love it, really try to make it bigger and better and more interesting."



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“The great thing about
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One of a kind

Downtown business, Owl's Nest at 116, an extension of Newsome family's home and lifestyle

By BRANYAN TOWE

Photos by HOLLY KNIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Downtown Sandersville welcomed a new business last September, an art gallery that doubles as a gift shop.

Owl's Nest at 116 is owned and operated by husband and wife duo Natalie and Jonathan Newsome. The couple met in Atlanta, Ga. before moving to Jonathan's family farm and getting married in the family pecan grove in 2002. In the years since, they have added two children, a daughter, Josephine, 6, and a son, William, 3, to the family.

At Owl's Nest at 116, patrons will find all sorts of items for sale, such as vintage jewelry and essential oils. Also available for purchase is original artwork created by Jonathan, pottery and jewelry handmade by

Natalie and one of a kind woodcrafts.

Business hours fluctuate because the Newsomes have two children, but Owl's Nest at 116 is open most Fridays and Saturdays, as well as by appointment. Any hour changes are posted weekly on Owl's Nest's social media pages.

Owl's Nest at 116's art gallery features paintings created on both wood and canvas by Jonathan. Also in the gallery are vintage oil paintings, the earliest of which Natalie thinks is from the 1890s, that have been shipped from the United Kingdom and from other parts of the U.S.

When asked how the business got started, Natalie Newsome explained that Jonathan's growing business



played a part in it.

“My husband, Jonathan Newsome, has a business as well, Ohoopee Reclaimed, LLC. He specializes in custom heart pine flooring and reclaimed lumber. We have both been creatives for a long time, and with the business expanding, a storefront seemed like a natural next step. With the support of our small community, we have received a warm reception since our opening of September of 2018,” Newsome says.

She says the model for the business is reflected in the business’s logo.

“Our logo reads ‘Handmade, Reclaimed, Unique.’ This really sums up the model of our business,” Newsome says. “Functional pottery, beautiful reclaimed woodcraft and rare vintage finds combined with Jonathan’s beautiful paintings create a cohesive collection that is truly one of a kind.”

As for the origins of the store’s name, Natalie recalls the early days of her marriage to Jonathan and the purchase of their 1880s farm home in Washington County. They began renovations 2002 and it took more than seven years to finish.

“The house sat for a whole spring before we could revisit the open dormers that had been exposed when we pulled the chimneys away to move the house. That spring we went into the attic to access and a beautiful white barn owl had a nest with two baby owls inside. We decided the fate of our house’s title was ‘Owls Nest.’ Jump to 2018, our new business was ready to open and we hadn’t decided a name. It really was an extension of our home and lifestyle. With the physical address of 116, it seemed a natural fit,” Newsome says.

Newsome says that Owl’s Nest at 116 has received a lot of support from the local community.

“Once we opened our shop, I really just thought that it would be kind of a hobby shop for me, where I just go

in and do a little bit here and there,” Newsome says. “But I honestly couldn’t keep up with the production of pottery, Jonathan sold many paintings. People want to buy local and they want to buy from local artisans. I guess you don’t really realize it until you’re able to have a space like that.”

She also has goals in mind for the business to achieve in the next year. One, in particular, is to expand to more online sales. She also wishes to showcase Sandersville’s artistic potential.

Natalie loves to be able to create and do the thing she loves each day and says she enjoys seeing the impact it has on her children.

“I feel so lucky that my children see their parents creating something and truly love what they do,” Natalie says. “To be able to love what you do and have a sense of pride in what you have produced is such a rarity, and I believe helps to feed a natural desire that so many of us have.” When asked what her favorite item that the store makes or sells is, Newsome found it hard to choose. She enjoys finding vintage jewelry and art but also loves watching the progress that her husband has made in his painting since his days at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Newsome also loves hand building pottery, which you can see her doing in videos on the Owl’s Nest at 116 Facebook page.

In terms of what sort of legacy she would like her business to have, the Newsome’s hopes are tied to a number of factors.

“I hope that mine, as well as other small town artists and businesses, will be remembered by their efforts to further the artistic movement in the disappearing small downtowns of the south,” Natalie says. “These beautiful downtowns are being forgotten with new larger shops and stores and the buildings that were built with such love and attention so long ago are all but disappearing.”



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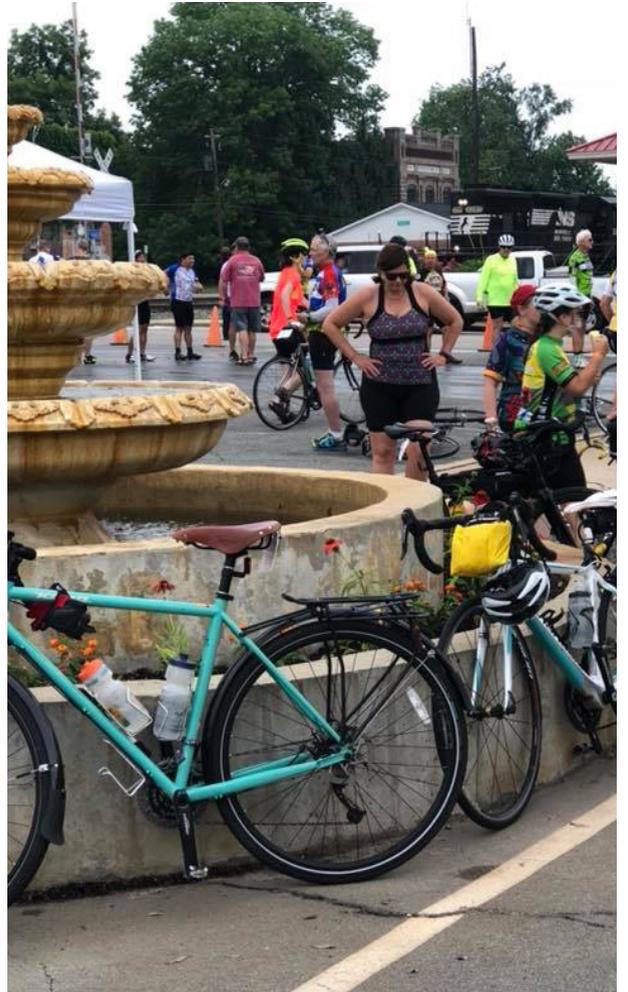
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Sightings

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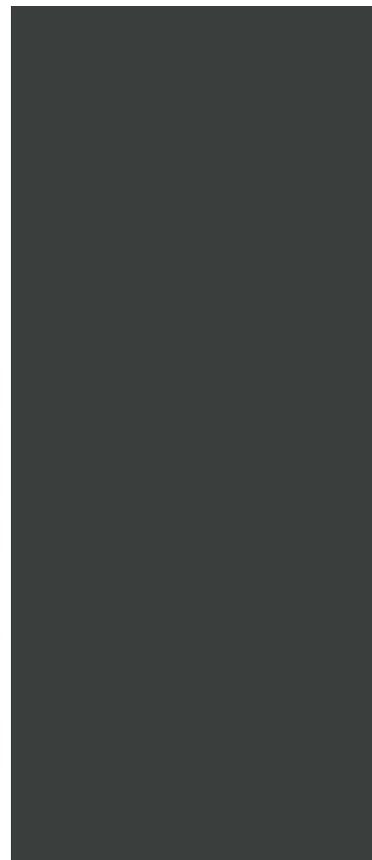




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Sightings

April Business After Hours





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Sightings

March Business After Hours





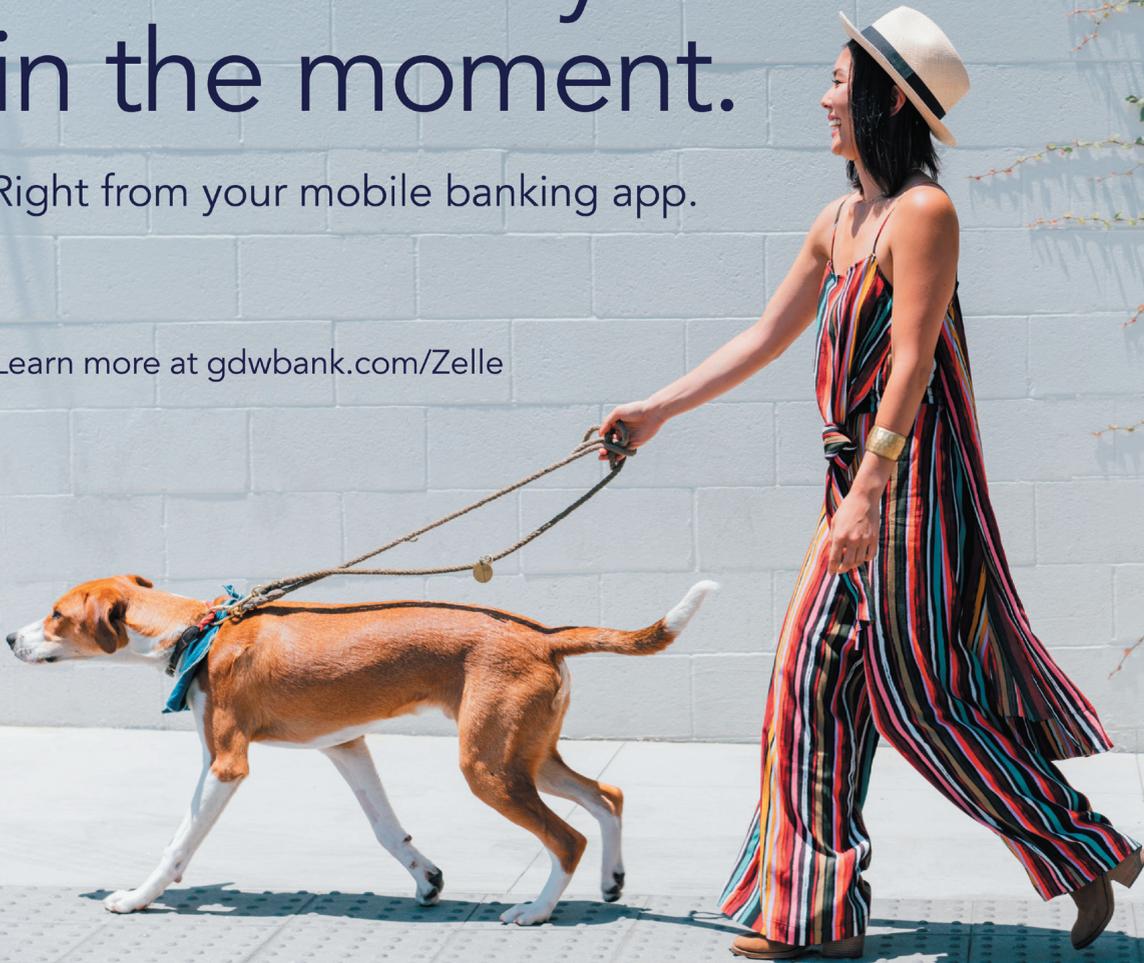


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