

PROGRESS

BUILDING BLOCKS OF BALDWIN COUNTY'S FUTURE
A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNION-RECORDER

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INSIDE

A look at developments in local government, education, business and industry in the last 12 months.



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INTRODUCTION PROGRESS 2017

Welcome to The Union-Recorder's 2017 Progress Edition, a reflective look at growth and development in sectors of Milledgeville and Baldwin County.

We've titled this year's installment "Moving Forward." Inside you'll get a glimpse at some of the new programs and initiatives that are helping to move the local community forward and we also look back at some of the highlights of the past year. Our sections provide a glimpse at the local demographics and the people who make up the community, as well as education, business and industry development and government.

We hope that our 2017 Progress Edition gives readers insight into where several Baldwin County projects and programs are in their development, and that it gives you, our readers, a better sense of the local economic climate and how it is helping to shape the future.

Natalie Davis Linder

NATALIE DAVIS,
MANAGING EDITOR

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PROGRESS 2017 INTRODUCTION

ECONOMIC FORECAST

■ Experts predict a bright economy for 2017

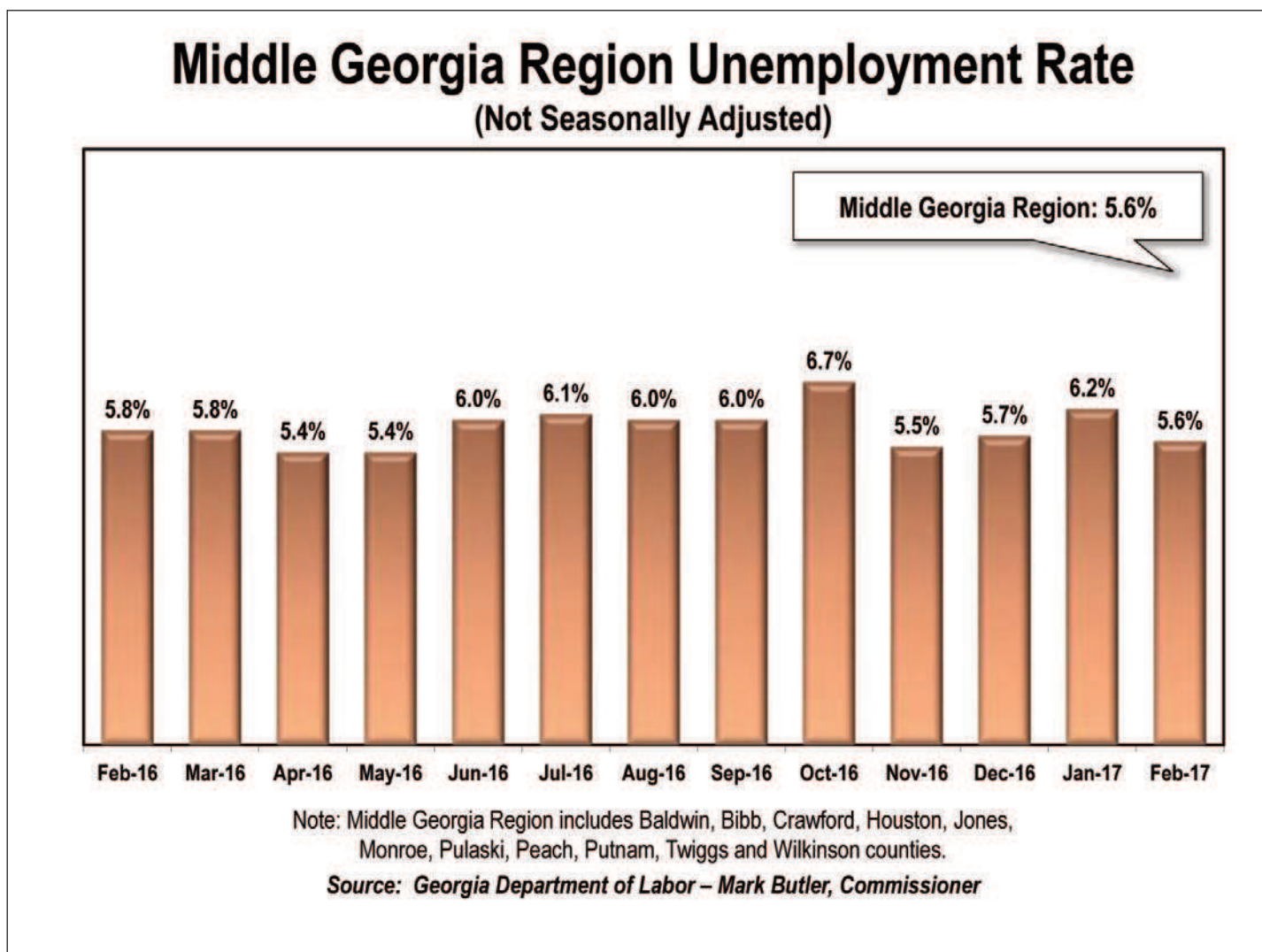
ATLANTA — Georgia's economy will continue its upward trajectory next year and beyond, according to the Georgia Economic Outlook forecast from the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business.

"Many of the same forces that contributed specifically to Georgia's growth in the past two years will be even stronger in 2017," said Dean Benjamin C. Ayers. "First, Georgia has even more projects in its economic development pipeline. Second, Georgia's economy will get more leverage from the housing recovery than the national economy. Third, Georgia's manufacturers will continue to do better than U.S. manufacturers. Fourth, Georgia will see faster population growth."

Thanks to a pro-business political climate that has brought major relocation and expansion projects to the state, Georgia's economy is expected to grow 3.2 percent in 2017, ahead of the nation's 2.6 percent GDP growth rate, Ayers said. He also predicted that nominal personal income will increase 5 percent, and non-farm employment will climb 2.1 percent.

Ayers delivered the forecast, prepared by the college's Selig Center for Economic Growth, to an audience of about 700 business leaders, government officials and chamber delegates.

"The main takeaway is that it's not too late to take advantage of Georgia's economic expansion," Ayers said. "When it comes to landing economic development projects our success reflects cost, logistical and tax advantages that make us



very competitive with other states. Georgia also fields a very competitive team of economic development professionals and is viewed as a place where there's a good working relationship between government and other major players."

However, the state faces some broader economic challenges. A strong U.S. dollar, weak foreign currencies and Federal Reserve inter-

est rate hikes will all tap the brakes on economic growth. The risk of U.S. recession, Ayers said, stands at 35 percent—slightly higher than the last few years.

Complicating the matter is the transition that comes with new leadership in the White House.

"With a new administration in Washington, there will be more economic policy uncertainty. That will

put some business decisions on hold. It may even delay some decisions to expand, or to hire," Ayers said. "But it also brings an opportunity to implement policies that will improve economic growth through tax reform, regulatory relief, and spending on productivity-enhancing infrastructure.

If leaders get it right, the country will benefit substantially."

■ Georgia's unemployment rate declines to 5.1 percent in March

ATLANTA — The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) announced today that the state's seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate decreased to 5.1 percent in March, down two-tenths of a percentage point from 5.3 percent in February. This is the lowest the rate has been since December 2007, the beginning of the Great Recession. In March 2016, the unemployment rate was 5.5 percent.

"The rate dropped as we saw more than 19,000 people become employed and Georgia

employers continued to create jobs," said State Labor Commissioner Mark Butler. "While the monthly job growth was stronger than our three-year average for March, our over-the-year job growth of 131,000 is the best for this period since 2000."

The number of employed workers increased by 19,093, as the labor force grew by 9,627 to 5,020,332. The labor force consists of employed residents and those who are unemployed and actively looking for

jobs. The growth in the labor force led to an increase in the state's labor participation rate of one-tenth of a percentage point to 63.1 percent. The labor participation rate is the percentage of all Georgia residents at least 16 years old who are in the labor force.

There were 9,500 new jobs in March, representing a 0.2 percent growth rate, which increased the total job count to 4,466,100. The growth outpaced the average February-to-March increase of 9,300 for

the previous three years. Most of the gains were in construction, 4,700; professional and business services, 2,600; trade, transportation and warehousing, 1,800; information services, 1,400; leisure and hospitality, 1,200; financial activities, 900; and education and health services, 600. The job gains were offset somewhat by losses in government, 1,800; other services, such as repair and maintenance, 1,000; and manufacturing, 800.

Over the year, how-

ever, 131,000 jobs were added, a 3 percent growth rate from March 2016. The national growth rate was 1.7 percent. Job gains were made in professional and business services, 29,300; leisure and hospitality, 25,800; trade, transportation and warehousing, 18,900; education and health services, 17,300; government, 14,900; construction, 11,200; financial activities, 9,700; information services, 2,900; and manufacturing, 1,600. Other services lost 1,300 jobs.

The number of initial claims for unemployment insurance, a measure of new layoffs, rose by 712, or 2.9 percent, to 25,019 in March. Most of the increase was due to temporary claims filed in manufacturing.

Over the year, claims were down by 2,963, or 10.6 percent, from 27,982 in March 2016, with administrative and support services and manufacturing and construction accounting for most of the decline.

-Georgia Department of Labor

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POISED FOR GROWTH

■ New mega-site, development set community up for future

By CATHERINE DEAN

After weathering the economic downturns of recent years, Milledgeville seems poised to become a state leader in attracting new industry. Along with community partners, the Development Authority of Milledgeville and Baldwin County (DAMBC) is forging pathways that create a positive climate for businesses to put down roots in Central Georgia.

Milledgeville is centrally located in the state and has convenient access to major roadways, the shipping port of Savannah and Hartsfield-Jackson Airport.

"We are in that sweet spot of 1.5 to 2 hours away from Georgia's major business hubs," said Matt Poyner, executive director of the DAMBC.

According to Poyner, the recent completion of the Fall Line Freeway (FLF)



Contributed photos
Existing industry, such as Triumph (pictured above), along with businesses located in the original industrial park further enhance the jobs potential for the local community, in addition to the new Sibley-Smith Industrial Park.

is an asset to companies transporting goods across the state.

"The Fall Line

offers fast, safe, and high-quality roads to ship products throughout Middle Georgia," he said.

The deepening of the port in Savannah is another state project Poyner believes will benefit the

Milledgeville area. "The port project is a game changer," he added. "The largest shipping vessels in the world will be able to bring goods into Savannah, and in turn, the products will be shipped throughout our region."

When reviewing the development progress over the past year, Poyner points to the ability of community leaders — from all sectors — to work together and create an attractive home for new businesses.

"It is not just a few politicians or government officials working together — it's the entire community," said Poyner. "There are three institutions of higher learning located in our city that provide for a quality workforce."

Not only does Poyner praise the achievements of the local colleges, but the Development Authority has also partnered with the Baldwin College and Career Academy and Central Georgia

Technical College. The dual enrollment and credit programs offer high school students the opportunity to begin working toward a career sooner than most.

"The Career Academy is simply a fantastic program that helps young people start their career paths early," said Poyner. "We are very happy to partner with them and help develop bright futures for the participants."

According to Poyner, companies also seek locations where communities show hometown pride. Delegates sent from all over the nation and the world come to Milledgeville to view the infrastructure, landscaping of public properties, and general road maintenance.

"The road resurfacing and other supportive construction the Georgia DOT (Department of Transportation) is currently providing in our city and county is

See **GROWTH**, page 3

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PROGRESS 2017 BUSINESS



Chamber CEO Angie Martin discusses the Young Gamechangers program at a Baldwin County Commissioners meeting held March 21. U-R file photo

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GAMECHANGERS

■ Chamber celebrating '70 Strong in 17'

By CATHERINE DEAN



The Milledgeville-Baldwin Chamber of Commerce (MBCC) is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year by continuing its efforts to strengthen the local economy and champion area businesses.

The Chamber's theme for the year is "70 Strong in '17."

Chamber President and CEO Angie Martin was instrumental in securing an invitation for Milledgeville to participate in the GeorgiaForward's Young Gamechangers (YGC) program. The event will bring 50 young professionals, age 24 to 40, from around the state who will recommend solutions for community challenges.

GeorgiaForward is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working to improve the state through cross-sector and statewide partner-

ships by engaging young professionals and businesses, as well as political, academic, and civic leaders.

"The Milledgeville YGC will consist of one-third from the local community, one-third from the Metro Atlanta area, and one-third from Greater Georgia," said Martin. "Applications are currently being accepted from around Georgia through GeorgiaForward."

Martin served as a participant in the YGC that covered Douglasville/Douglas County. "I witnessed, through participation in the program, how communities can benefit from different viewpoints," she said. "The young professionals who attend Gamechangers can bring innovative solutions to communities

in need of fresh ideas."

After participants are selected, they will attend a meeting in Milledgeville in August to decide the four focus areas. Past focus areas have included education, transportation, and arts and culture. An overnight stay is planned for October, which will include a four-hour bus tour of the entire city and county.

"The bus tour will include all of Milledgeville and Baldwin County," said Martin. "The group will be exposed to both the positive and negative aspects of our community. This is the only way to get an accurate picture of the needs that should be addressed."

The YGC will present the community a detailed report by the end of the year, which

will include a go forward for roadmap, budget, and other steps needed to See **CHAMBER**, page 6

Growth

Continued from page 2

adding another active element we can use to attract new industry," said Poyner. "For big industry to even consider us, we must have great roads and infrastructure."

In the past year, the DAMBC hosted several foreign industry delegations interested in the Georgia's newest mega-site. The site, named Sibley-Smith Industrial Park (SSIP), covers approximately 1,657 acres in Baldwin County, located south of Milledgeville, and

is zoned heavy industrial.

Several years in the making, the park, situated along U.S. Highway 441 bypass, with Norfolk Southern Rail and utilities already on site. Poyner gives credit for the mega-site to the city and county officials' personal dedication to job growth and economic development.

In addition to rail and utilities, the site has also obtained GRAD Certification (the Georgia Ready Accelerated Development Sites Program).

Poyner stresses this certification gives the

site a significant marketing advantage because prospective companies know GRAD certification means extensive due diligence has been completed, and the ability exists to be up and operational in a much faster timeframe.

"The dynamic collaboration of our city and county leadership, to help make this project happen, speaks to their commitment to a legacy of opportunity," said Poyner. "We have indeed made ourselves much more competitive and attractive for global industry."



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BUSINESS PROGRESS 2017



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MOVING FORWARD

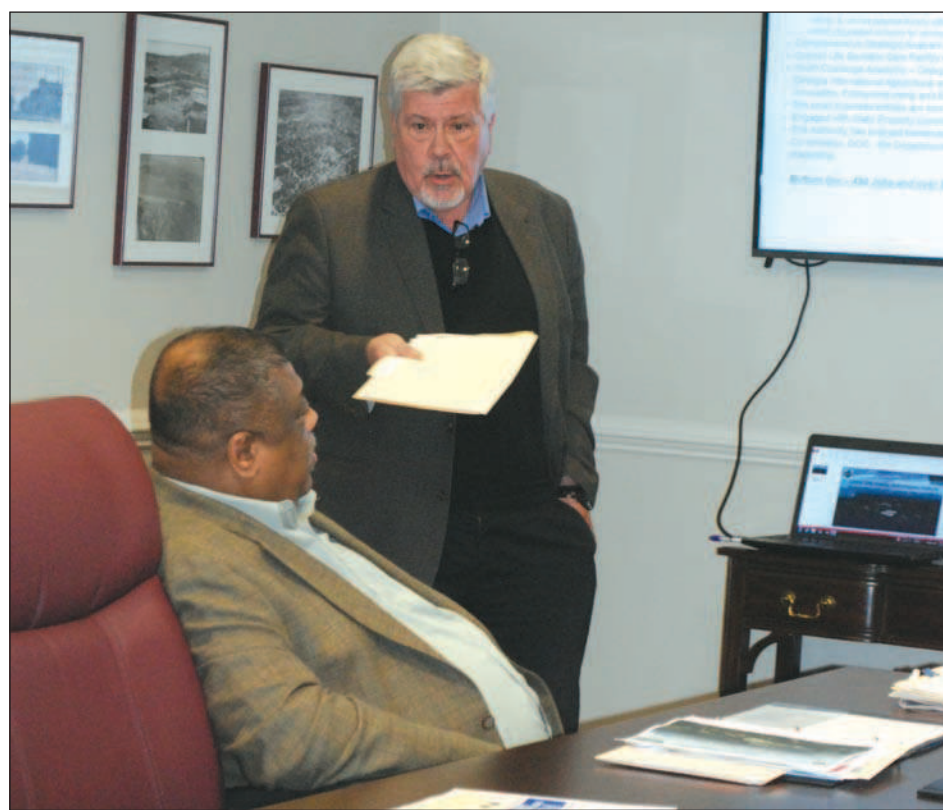
■ CSHLRA forming partnerships, forging ahead

By CATHERINE DEAN

After five years of developing a roadmap to revitalize the campus of Central State Hospital (CSH), many proposed programs are now becoming reality. The Central State Hospital Redevelopment Authority (CSHRA) was created in 2012, by state legislation, and tasked with redeveloping the history campus with a focus on job creation and education.

"We are witnessing plans coming to fruition," said Mike Couch, executive director for CSHRA.

The first class of the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy (NGYCA), which occupies the CSH Boland Building, graduated in March. The NGYCA is an evidence-based program designed to provide opportunities to adolescents who have dropped out of school



Top: Officials gather for a ceremonial ribbon cutting at the Bostick Nursing Center last fall. The 280-bed facility will employ an estimated 330 people. Above: Mike Couch, executive director of the Central State Hospital Local Redevelopment Authority in Milledgeville, talks to Milledgeville City Council about the Georgia International Food Center that would create hundreds of jobs when it is completed and fully operational.

but demonstrate a desire to improve their potential for productive lives.

"The Academy not

only benefits the students by offering a path to better themselves, it also enriches our community by bringing

much-needed jobs,"

added Couch.

The NGYCA was founded in 1993, to give troubled youth the

opportunity to turn their lives around. The 17-month program includes a five-month residential phase followed by a 12-month mentoring period. During the students' time on the CSH campus, they will be put through educational program to either attain a high school diploma or GED.

"Partnerships are essential to the success of the programs and industry that settle on Central State's campus," said Couch. "This includes taking advantage of the institutes of higher learning based in Milledgeville."

The Milledgeville Youth Challenge Academy (MYCA) is a unique model for other such programs around the country. The Georgia Department of Defense and CSHLRA have formed a partnership with Georgia Military College to allow students who finish their high school

diploma before the end of the residential term to attend college classes. The goal of the MYCA, GMC and CSHLRA is for students to graduate the program with one semester of college credit completed.

The Bostick Nursing Center (BNC) is a 280-bed geriatric care facility that will employ an estimated 330 people. It opened last December. The BNC is owned and operated by CorrectHealth, a correctional health care company that currently provides services to jails, prisons, and youth detention centers throughout the Southeast.

"The Bostick Nursing Center will bring a wide-range of jobs to our community including positions for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), other medical staff, and of course administrative

See **CSHLRA**, page 8

Chamber

Continued from page 5
improvement in the

four focus areas. Other communities that have taken advantage of this enlightened program

include Americus, Dublin, Augusta and LaGrange.

The Chamber, along with GeorgiaForward,

is offering sponsorship opportunities for the Milledgeville Young Gamechangers program.

Martin noted that \$50,000 in cash and in-kind donations must be raised to support the expenses of the program.

"We are well on our way to reach the goal through securing donations of meeting spaces and other in-kind contributions," said Martin. "I know we can count on the city, county, businesses and individuals to help us bring the Gamechangers program to our community."

Martin takes great pride in her staff and highlights Jennifer Baggary, marketing and communications director, for being awarded a Regent Scholarship to attend the Institute for Organization

Management-the professional development program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

"Jennifer was one of only six people chosen in Georgia to attend the institute in Nashville in July," added Martin. "We are so excited that she has been awarded this scholarship."

The Regent Scholarship is given to professionals across the county and recognizes each recipient for their involvement in industry professional organizations, community service and professional background. While in attendance, Baggary will have the opportunity to learn about emerging industry trends, how to expand the Chamber's influence, and methods to grow their peer network.

Throughout the year, the Chamber's theme "70 Strong in 17" will continue to be woven into events and publications.

"I am excited about the theme and its logo that we created to show the strength and success of our local business community," said Martin.

Martin emphasized the need to acknowledge achievements of individual businesses — past and present.

"In our spring issue of MBCConnect, we honored previous Small Business of the Year (SBOY) winners from the last 25 years," she said. "We will name the 25th SBOY recipient at the annual Blue Sapphire Gala in June. It continues to be an exciting year to be a part of the Milledgeville/Baldwin business community."

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PROGRESS 2017 BUSINESS

CHANGING TIMES

■ Looking back at some of the past 12 months in local business

March 2016

■ Harmony Hot Yoga opens in Milledgeville. The studio offers Bikram yoga in a heated room to help muscles be better able to stretch.

■ The Central State Hospital Local Redevelopment Authority (CSHLRA) discusses plans for an initiative to revitalize the campus's industrial kitchen and provide advice to local food-related startups.

April

■ A break in one of the city's main 14-inch water lines brought the city to a halt and closed 150 businesses and organizations. The break forced much of the city into a three-day boil water advisory and spurred city officials to purchase a new \$55,000 water pump.

■ Officials at the Baldwin County Airport announce plans for a ramp expansion and a new fuel farm. Officials expressed their hope that the changes would attract more people to Baldwin County.

May

■ National Grocery store chain Aldi opens a location in Milledgeville. The store offers food with an emphasis on health and fresh produce and meat.

July

■ Oconee Regional Medical Center officials sign a contract Grady Emergency Medical Services to be its official provider of ambulance services.

■ Multiple water main breaks force the city into a second boil water advisory. Thirty local businesses are not forced to close after having adopted a special water contingency plan put in place by county officials after April's main break.

August

■ The Southern Economic Leadership Council honors the Milledgeville and Baldwin County Development Authority with two awards at its annual conference in Kansas City, Mo. The awards are given to the Authority's website and marketing video for their effective branding for the local community.



Above: Milledgeville's Exchange Bank opened its newest location on North Columbia Street next to the Kroger Shopping Center in March. Below (from top left): Officials announced plans for a ramp expansion at the airport and a new fuel farm last April. A rendering from architecture firm Kuo Diedrich for what the exterior of the clubhouse at The Club at Lake Sinclair could look like once construction is complete. Jimmy John's Sandwich shop opened downtown in September.

U-R file photo



■ Zaxby's announces plans to move its location directly across Garrett Way on North Columbia Street. The move came after the popular restaurant's continued troubles with space in its parking lot.

■ Dairy Queen announces plans to open a second Milledgeville location. The new location is planned for North Columbia Street across from Dunkin' Donuts.

September

■ Jimmy John's Sandwich shop announces plans for a store in Milledgeville. The shop has since opened and is located on South Wilkinson Street behind Barberito's.

October

■ Five Star Toyota holds a grand opening for its new location across from the Kroger shopping center. The move creates an estimated 50 jobs and follows two years of planning ahead of the move.

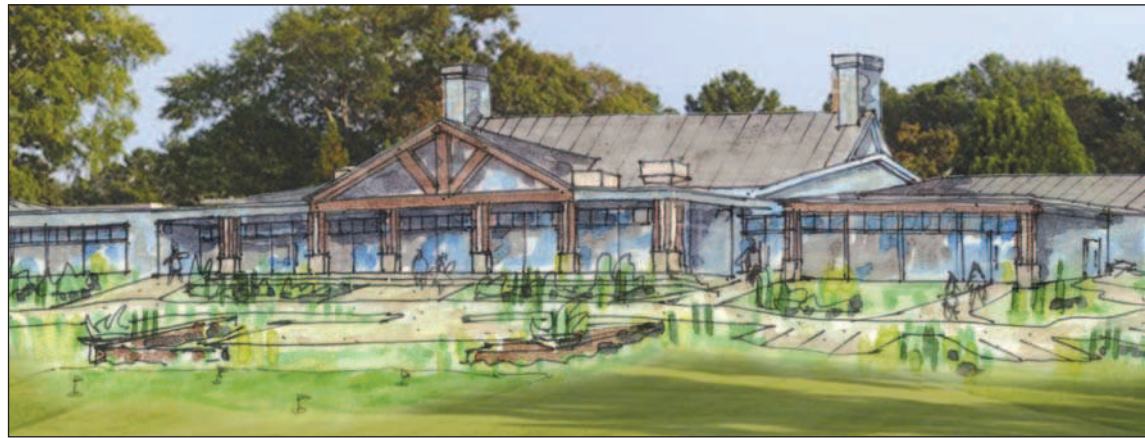
■ AJ's Hot Wings & More, holder of the current U-R's Reader's Choice distinction for Best Wings, Fries, and Burgers, announces plans to expand its northside location. The expansion adds roughly 50 seats to the popular restaurant.

November

■ Jeff Kilgore, son of the original owner of Furniture City, opens his own store, Mattress City. The store is located in the Big Lots Shopping Center behind Taco Bell.

December

■ Kirk's Jerk Kitchen opens as Milledgeville's first



branch.

■ The Octagon Café, another Milledgeville favorite, returns to its original location in the Milledgeville Mall. The move follows 10 years of operation on Heritage Road.

■ Downtown Abby opens its clothing store downtown on South Wayne Street. The store offers a wide selection of "upscale resale clothing" from baby clothes to adult sizes.

Jamaican/Caribbean restaurant. The restaurant offers traditional and homemade Jamaican fare and is located downtown on North Wayne Street.

January 2017

■ Birdcat Barbeque, the latest venture by local restaurateur Frank Pendergast, opens its doors on North Columbia Street near Lake Sinclair. The restaurant counts on its staff Rick Godfrey, President of the Georgia Barbeque Association, and Liam Jenkins, a former executive chef in New Orleans.

March

■ Milledgeville's Exchange Bank opens its newest location on North Columbia Street next to the Kroger Shopping Center. The new

branch becomes the fifth operated by the bank since opening in 1903.

■ Primecare Health Care Services, the Milledgeville-based company that employs more than 200 people across the state, names Mark Bush as its new CEO. Bush takes over after four years as the company's Director of Operations.

■ JCPenney announces plans to close its Milledgeville location. The store is one of 138 the company plans to close nationwide.

■ Big plans are announced for the local country club. Rising out of its ashes under the ownership of Ted Smith and operated by Mike Kelly comes The Club at Lake Sinclair. Demolition has begun and work is underway on the project to revamp the facility and enhance its local presence.

BUSINESS PROGRESS 2017

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

■ New opportunities at CSH campus

By FELICIA CUMMINGS

Revitalizing and repurposing historic real estate such as the hospital grounds of Central State Hospital (CSH) is not an easy task, yet it's one that a group of dedicated people in Milledgeville have been tackling for quite some time, producing positive results.

Through the combined efforts of the Central State Hospital Local Development Authority (CSHLRA) and officials of The City of Milledgeville, the once vacant buildings of CSH's campus are now thriving with new opportunities.

"Finding new businesses and opportunities was very important for our economy here in Milledgeville and we shared a mutual goal with CSHLRA — to bring in more jobs and to turn the economic outlook of our city around after the closing of Central State," said City Manager Barry Jarrett.

For a number of years, CSH was a major employer for several people and the local

economy thrived through from its success; however, changes to mental health treatment eventually led to the closing of the hospital.

Milledgeville was left with nearly 200 empty buildings on a 2,000-acre campus.

After the closing of CSH, the CSHLRA and The City of Milledgeville were faced with the challenge of bringing back the almost 7,000 jobs that were lost.

But there was light at the end of the tunnel.

"The five original doctors who created Central State Hospital created it on hope," said Mike Couch, executive director for CSHLRA. "CSH is still a place of hope and we're working hard to play our part in creating new industry in this community."

Thanks to the collaboration between The City of Milledgeville and CSHLRA, the hospital grounds soon made way for brand new business and educational ventures.

In a recent article from Commercial Connections, a publication of the National Association of Realtors,



U-R file photos

After the closing of CSH, the CSHLRA and The City of Milledgeville were faced with the challenge of bringing back the almost 7,000 jobs that were lost.

Quay Fuller, chairman of the CSHLRA Board of Directors, commented on the difficult task of figuring out what to do with the vacant buildings.

According to the article, Fuller expressed that local government officials, citizens, educational leaders, and business owners all agreed that something needed to be done with the abandoned real estate on the hospital campus, but it was hard for everyone to agree on the same project.

Assistance with the solution to what to do with the vacant build-

ings soon came through the CRE Consulting Corps — a public service initiative of The Counselors of Real Estate.

"One of the most valuable aspects of working with the Consulting Corps was the CRE team's ability to involve key stakeholders, hear multiple points of view, and bring everyone together to support a common vision to revitalize the CSH site," Fuller stated in the article.

The five member CRE team visited Milledgeville, listened to the aspirations of all,

and worked to bring life back to decaying buildings at CSH.

The combined efforts of everyone brought forth new opportunities to CSH's real estate such as Correct Life Geriatric Care Facility, the Youth Challenge Academy, and the Summit Community.

In all, 10 separate businesses are now operating on the hospital's campus, bringing in more than 500 jobs to the area.

The CSHLRA was created in 2012 by Georgia HB 815 with the specific mission of planning for

and executing the redevelopment of the CSH campus.

As they progress forward in to 2017, the group plans to continue working on this mission through the assistance of state and local politicians.

Local representatives like Jarrett and Milledgeville Mayor Gary Thrower are more than pleased with the work being done by the organization.

"I have continually been encouraged by the momentum generated by the CSHLRA in repurposing this facility with a priority on job creation," Thrower said. "They have been both creative and innovative in their approach and relentless in their pursuit of opportunities. The efforts being made on the Central State campus certainly complements all other components of economic development supported by the City."

"It is great to see the opportunities that have come to our city through CSHLRA's efforts and we look forward to see more industry and businesses in the coming years," Jarrett said.

CSHLRA

Continued from page 6
staff," said Couch.

The residents of the BNC are elderly and infirm former state prisoners that continue to receive housing and medical care provided by the state. These residents are under continued care due to a lack of family or other support systems that prohibit their release.

In the past year, strides have been made in the development phase of the Georgia International Food Center (GIFC). The focus of the GIFC will be on food to promote economic growth, expand educational

and research opportunities and cultivate food innovation involving "Georgia Grown" products.


"Again, I must place emphasis on forging partnerships with institutions, businesses, and government agencies that help propel growth in our programs," observed Couch.

Just a few of the many entities partnering with the GIFC include Georgia Tech, Fort Valley State University, the University of Georgia College of Agriculture, Georgia College, the state of Georgia, and the local governments of Milledgeville and Baldwin County.

Couch said he is both excited and optimistic for the future of the CSH campus due to the local and state support it has received.

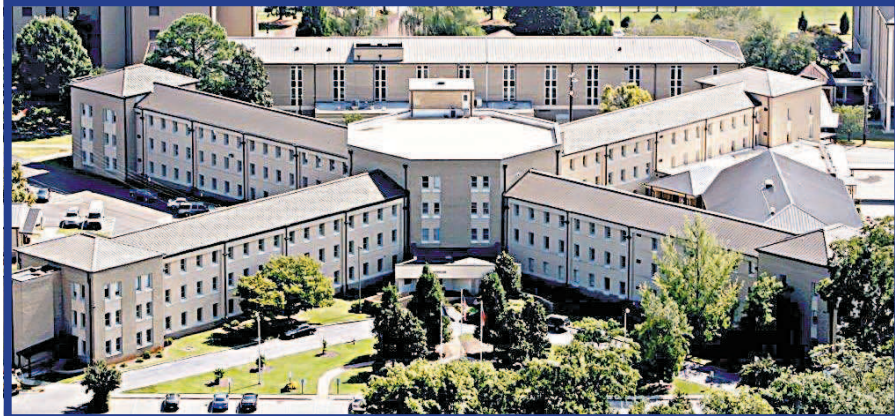
"Gov. Deal and [state] Sen. Burt Jones have simply been incredible advocates for us," said Couch. "Sen. Jones sponsored SR 228, which put the property in local hands."

SR 228 authorizes the conveyance and lease of certain state-owned real properties. "It just makes sense to place the property in the hands of the local redevelopment authority for best utilization," said Jones. "Local oversight and control is the best way forward for Central State."



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PROGRESS

BUILDING BLOCKS OF BALDWIN COUNTY'S FUTURE

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNION-RECORDER

2017

INSIDE

A look at developments in local government, education, business and industry in the last 12 months.

Milledgeville-Baldwin County CHAMBER

CALL FOR 2017 SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR NOMINATIONS

Each year the Milledgeville-Baldwin County Chamber of Commerce recognizes excellence in its small business community by awarding the Small Business of the Year Award to a deserving recipient. The candidates are either nominated by customers or vendors, a fellow member or may self-nominate. The award is presented at the Chamber's Annual Gala and Awards Dinner to be held on June 3 at Magnolia Ballroom.

Nominations must be received by May 5

Email: chamber@milledgevillega.com

Online: milledgevillega.com/2017-small-business-of-the-year

70 STRONG IN 17

GOVERNMENT PROGRESS 2017



The GDOT's Baldwin Safe Routes to School (BSRTS) program, partnered with local nonprofit Live Healthy Baldwin, is working to provide opportunities for children to safely walk and bike to school. A ribbon cutting ceremony for the completed pedestrian bridge was held earlier this year. U-R file photo

PAVING THE WAY

■ GDOT improving local roads and infrastructure

By CATHERINE DEAN

In the past 12 months Milledgeville and Baldwin County have benefited from

the completion of several multi-million dollar projects coordinated by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). The GDOT's Baldwin Safe Routes to School (BSRTS) program, partnered with local nonprofit Live Healthy Baldwin, is working to provide opportunities for

children to safely walk and bike to school. This project is intended to create a nine-mile bicycle/pedestrian trail that will travel east to west, and will connect neighborhoods to schools.

According to Kyle Collins, district communications specialist for the GDOT, a portion of the BSRTS program is now complete.

The pedestrian bridge and sidewalk on Blandy Road—a \$1.3 million project—was completed in early March by Gregory Bridge Company and measures 180 feet by 9 feet, he said.

The sidewalk stretches 1,900 feet from Blandy Hills Elementary to Creekside Elementary, along Blandy Road, turning along South ABC Street and Stadium Drive, up to North ABC Street. There is also a crosswalk linking Blandy Hills and Creekside.

The pathways provide safer travel for teachers, children, and parents frequenting the cluster of schools on Blandy, said Collins.

The much-anticipated Fall Line Freeway (FLF) was completed in recent months and offers travelers a faster route to destinations throughout Central Georgia. The FLF links Augusta, Macon, and Columbus—extending from state line of South Carolina to the Alabama line—and runs through both Wilkson and

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Baldwin counties. One of Milledgeville's most traveled roads, U.S. Highway 441/North Columbia Street, is currently undergoing a \$2.57 million resurfacing project. Beginning at Lakeside Drive and running to Marshall Road, and should be completed by the end of May. State Routes (SR) 22 and 49 also have resurfacing projects in the works. The \$1.66 million resurfacing of SR 22 will begin this summer. See GDOT, page 16A

PROGRESS 2017 BUSINESS



Above: The Convention and Visitors Bureau trolley. Below: The Old Governor's Mansion, Brown-Stetson-Stanford House and Andalusia are among the many local attractions that draw tourists from all over to the community each year.

By the numbers

210,000

The reach of Milledgeville-Baldwin County's labor pool of employees throughout Central Georgia.

Source: Development Authority of Milledgeville-Baldwin County

29 miles

Milledgeville is located 29 miles (46 km) east of I-75 and I-16 and 37 miles (59 km) south of I-20.

Source: Development Authority of Milledgeville-Baldwin County

ADDING IT UP

Local tourism dollars add major economic contribution



\$85M

2015 spending impact of tourism on Milledgeville and Baldwin County's economy.

Source: Georgia Department of Economic Development

770

Number of local jobs created through tourism in 2015.

Source: Georgia Department of Economic Development

Local tourism has a major economic impact on Milledgeville and Baldwin County.

In Baldwin County, 2015 tourist spending generated \$85 million in direct tourists spending.

This spending created \$3.4 million in state tax revenues, generated \$2.5 million in local/county tax revenues and supported 770 jobs.

Each Baldwin County household would need to be taxed an additional \$370 per-year to replace taxes generated by tourism economic activity.

These figures were provided by the GDEcD as a result of a study prepared by the U.S. Travel Association and U.S. Census Bureau.

Tourism drives employment and economic growth throughout the state, making it a vital component in our economic development success, said Georgia Department of Economic



Development (GDEcD) all over Georgia. Our movie fans are going to love it!

The state's official travel guide provides visitors with information on Georgia's tourism assets including trip ideas, attractions, accommodations and events. More than 700,000 guides are distributed annually through the state's 12 visitor information centers, travel and trade shows.

GDEcD partnered with Atlanta Magazine Custom Media, the award-winning publisher of Atlanta Magazine and Southbound Magazine, to produce the travel guide. Georgia has become one of the most sought-after filming locations in the world, said Kevin Langston, GDEcD deputy commissioner for tourism. Visitors come from all over the world to follow in the footsteps of their favorite movie and TV personalities. Throughout the Year of Georgia Film, we will unveil a number of fun and exciting new ways to experience these

\$2.5M

Amount in local/county tax revenues generated through tourism.

Source: Georgia Department of Economic Development

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EDUCATION PROGRESS 2017



U-R file photo
New Blandy principal Pamela Shields introduced 'Starbucks with Shields and Stephens' where parents came by Blandy one Friday a month to both learn about the classroom curriculum and voice any concerns over anything going on in the school.

Local schools K-12

Sinclair Christian Academy
102 Airport Rd.
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 452-4242
Principal: Donnie Coburn

John Milledge Academy
197 Log Cabin Rd NE
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 452-5570
Head of School: Jessica Jones
www.johnmilledge.org/

Georgia Military College Prep
201 E. Greene St.
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 387-4900
Principal: Pam Grant
www.gmcprep.com

Baldwin High School
155 GA Highway 49 West
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 453-6429
Principal: Dr. Cloise Williams
www.bhs4.baldwin.schooldesk.net

Oak Hill Middle School
356 Blandy Road, NW
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 457-3370
Principal: Daymond Ray
www.oak4.baldwin.schooldesk.net

Blandy Hills Elementary
375 Blandy Road
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 457-2495
Principal: Pamela Shields
www.blandy4.baldwin.schooldesk.net/

Creekside Elementary
372 Blandy Road
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 457-3301
Principal: Tracy Clark
www.creekside4.baldwin.schooldesk.net

Eagle Ridge Elementary
220 N. ABC Street
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 457-2967
(478) 457-2478
Principal: Shaun Wells
www.eagle4.baldwin.schooldesk.net

Midway Elementary
101 Carl Vinson Road
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 457-2440
Principal: Antonio Ingram
www.midway5.baldwin.schooldesk.net

Early Learning Center
100 N. ABC St.
Milledgeville, GA 31061
(478) 457-2461
Director: Lori Smith
www.elc4.baldwin.schooldesk.net

NEW FACES, NEW PLACES

■ New leadership took the helm at number of local schools

By GIL POUND

Five local schools, one unexpectedly, came under new leadership either leading up to or during the 2016-17 school year.

On the public school side Oak Hill Middle School, Blandy Hills Elementary, and the Early Learning Center all welcomed new principals.

Daymond Ray took the job at Oak Hill after serving as principal of Telfair County High School.

Pamela Shields came to Blandy from Jackson County's Benton Elementary and Lori Smith took over leadership at the Early Learning Center after working in the state's Department of Early Care and Learning as a state pre-K consultant.

Shields started the monthly Starbucks with Shields and Stephens where parents came by Blandy one Friday a month to both learn about the classroom curriculum and voice any concerns over anything going on



U-R file photo
Donnie Coburn took the helm as the new principal of Sinclair Christian Academy at the start of the 2016-2017 term.

in the school. Big changes are coming to the ELC under Smith after the announcement of the Montessori Academy partnership between the Baldwin County School District and Georgia College. The new, innovative partnership takes off at

the start of the 2017-18 term and serves kids from six weeks to 5 years old.

Although coming from the year before the new principals took over, both Blandy and Oak Hill posted increases when it came to the state's College and

Career Readiness Performance Index that is used to measure school success. All schools in Baldwin County improved, but Blandy had the highest level of improvement moving from an extremely low 49.4 in 2015 to a now passing grade of 62.8. Oak Hill is still just below the pass/fail line with a 59.1, but did improve from its 55.1 mark from 2015.

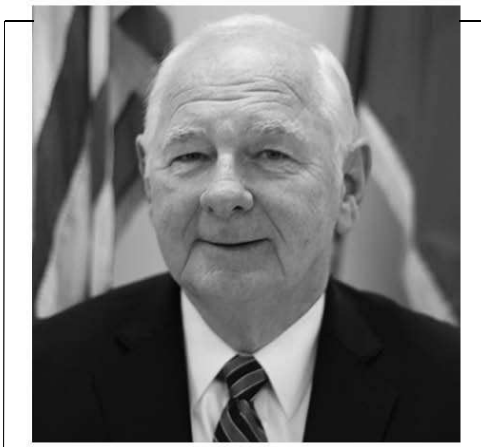
John Milledge Academy underwent an unexpected change about a month into the school year when it was announced the Head of School Mark Hopkins resigned from his position. Personal reasons were cited in a release from the school, and suddenly there was an opening with a large majority of the term remaining at the private school on Log Cabin Drive. In stepped Larry Prestridge and Jessica Jones on a co-interim basis. Prestridge had been headmaster of the school prior to Hopkins and Jones started at JMA in 2004 as a literature teacher before working her way up to head of the upper school the last three years.

In January it was announced that Jones would have interim removed from her title and formally become head of school for the 2017-18 year. She is already making waves as the school announced in February that it would be applying for the lottery-funded pre-K program Bright from the Start through the Georgia Department of Early Care.

Sinclair Christian Academy welcomed new principal Donnie Coburn at the beginning of the 2016-17 school term. Coburn's background included a significant amount of time serving in the Baldwin County School System as both a softball and baseball coach. Coburn and the school recently announced a decrease in tuition and that it would serve students from pre-K all the way through 12th grade next school year.

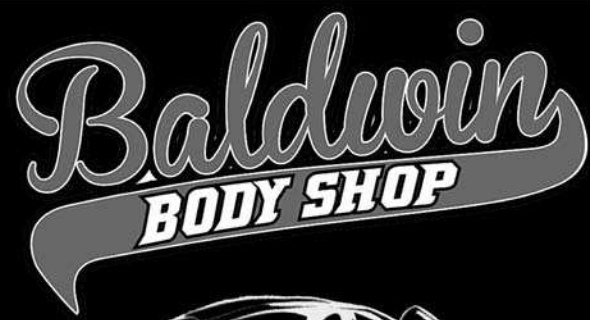
As summer draws closer these five school leaders will be able to say in just a few short weeks that they've completed one full year.

RICK WILLIAMS



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PROGRESS 2017 EDUCATION



Contributed photos

Above: First-year pre-nursing major Chuck O'Neal guides an activity. Below: First-year political science major Ashley Chamlee works with students.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE ■ GC class helps combat bullying at JMA

By WILL WOOLEVER

On several occasions throughout the past year, Georgia College professor Eryn Viscarra and students in her Social Problems GC1Y (one of a group of liberal arts courses required for GC freshmen) have travelled to John Milledge Academy to assist in the school's STAR program.

The initiative, which stands for Students Taking Active Roles, pairs Georgia College students with kindergarten through fifth grade classes at the private school with games, activities and discussions that highlight the harmful effects of bullying, with a long-term goal of fostering healthy social skills among students at the private school.

We typically do two to three sessions depending on the semester, it will usually be a Monday and a Wednesday, said Viscarra. It's about an hour to an hour-and-a-half long program, and what we do is separate [the kids] into grade levels and have Georgia College students that will be a kind of group leader.

We try to focus more on things like teamwork, cooperation, and acceptance, but we try to make it fun through different games and team-building exercises as opposed to standing and telling them don't bully people. The thought is if they work together and play these games together, they'll see that the



kids in their class aren't so bad and are actually pretty cool.

After several afternoon sessions over the past two semesters, roughly 90 students at JMA have taken part in the STAR Club. In leading the various games and activities at JMA, for which they receive credit for Viscarra's Social Problems class, the GC STAR Club students say that although bullying is a very real issue in schools, they have seen the program have a direct impact on kids' social skills.

I worked with the younger kids, specifically the first-graders, and the hardest part was probably just getting them all together and sitting down, said Drew Duffy. We would just play normal games like duck-duck-goose, freeze tag, and red light-green light to get them playing together. When you first get there, you really notice that cliques really do start [at that age]. Even though it's more of a boy-girl kind of thing, if you can get them all together it gets easier from there.

I worked with the

fourth grade boys, and you could definitely see that it wasn't just a split in gender, but in specific groups,

said Paige Watson. When I first got there we were doing a skit, and there was one boy who you could say was the bully of the group who volunteered and said I want to be the bully. When we switched over to playing freeze tag, the split kind of changed because the kids would team up with people they wouldn't normally team up with to stay away from whoever was it toward the end, they ended up working more as a group instead of being split.

In impressing upon students the danger of bullying at such a young age, Viscarra and her students hope to leave a positive impact on their students at JMA for years to come. This sentiment is also shared by JMA's Dean of Elementary Students, Jennifer Aldridge, who has carefully watched the STAR program's progress over the last year.

Honestly, the kids have done a really good job, said

Aldridge, who also serves as one of JMA's guidance counselors.

Having groups like STAR come in and

help the students work through their problems when problems arise, the students are better able

to sit down with each other and talk through them we have a great partnership with STAR.

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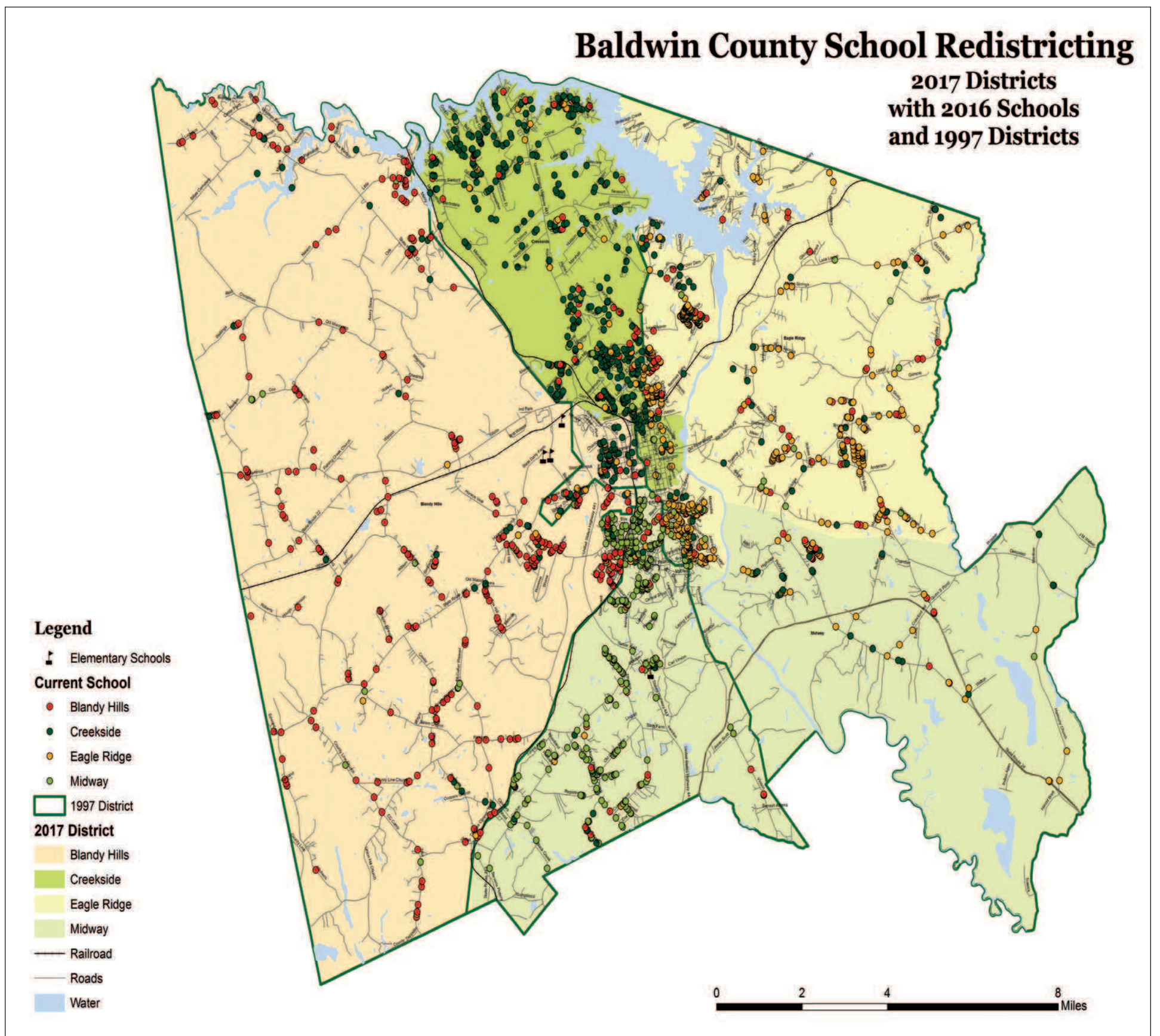
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EDUCATION PROGRESS 2017



A closer look at how the Baldwin school districts have changed.



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PROGRESS 2017 EDUCATION

DISTRICT CHANGES

■ New grade pairings for elementary schools finalized

By GIL POUND

The landscape of elementary schools in the Baldwin County School System will be quite different next school year.

Earlier this year, the board of education voted unanimously to approve Superintendent Dr. Noris Price's recommendations that elementary schools be paired with K-2, 3-5 grade spans and have new attendance zones.

Blandy Elementary will be paired with Midway Elementary and Creekside Elementary with Eagle Ridge Elementary.

The new Creekside/Eagle Ridge zones take up the north and northeast portions of Baldwin County while the Blandy/Midway zones cover from the northwest down to the southeast.

Discussion about the need to redistrict due to overcrowding at Creekside Elementary began in 2015 and carried over to the board retreat last spring. Price and



Superintendent Dr. Noris Price speaks at a forum on the redistricting plans held in January.

U-R file photo

the school board explored options that would reduce the overcrowding and make enrollment more balanced throughout the district. The process involved two community surveys, eight community forums, faculty meetings, faculty surveys and research of other school systems practices.

Price said at the board meeting that pairing schools was just one innovative option brought for-

ward by those that attended previous forums where community members had their input heard on becoming a charter system.

Under the redistricting fifth-graders and their siblings will be allowed to keep attending their school of choice, but transportation would not be provided.

She said she and the board have the interests of all the students in Baldwin County at heart and that success for everyone is the

goal.

School success was the most common issue brought forward by parents throughout the process. Some parents did not want their child to be forced to attend a school that received a failing score on the state's College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). Price was asked if the CCRPI played any role in the final decision to pair up schools.

CCRPI was not a

factor, she said. We didn't even discuss it. I want to say that the CCRPI score is an average of all the test scores so in every school we have students who are performing at a very high level. So it's not like one school has all these high-achieving kids and the rest of the schools do not. They all have high-achieving kids and they all have kids that don't do as well. On a given day at a given time any school can change those results based on how the students perform. But I want to be clear that all of our schools have a very diverse group of students academically... I think there are perceptions and things that, I must be honest, may not have been addressed in the past related to discipline and certain kids acting out, and therefore they have painted every student at Eagle Ridge with that same brush, which is not the truth. In every school we have kids that are challenging and that have behavior issues, so that's not exclusive to Eagle Ridge at all.

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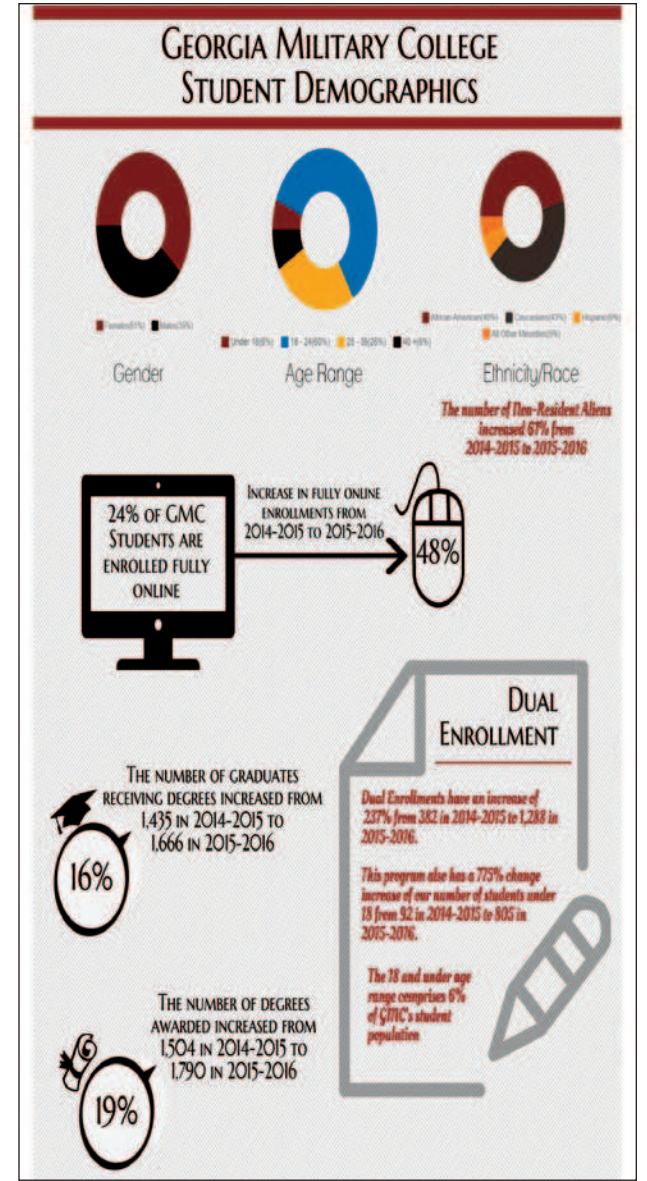
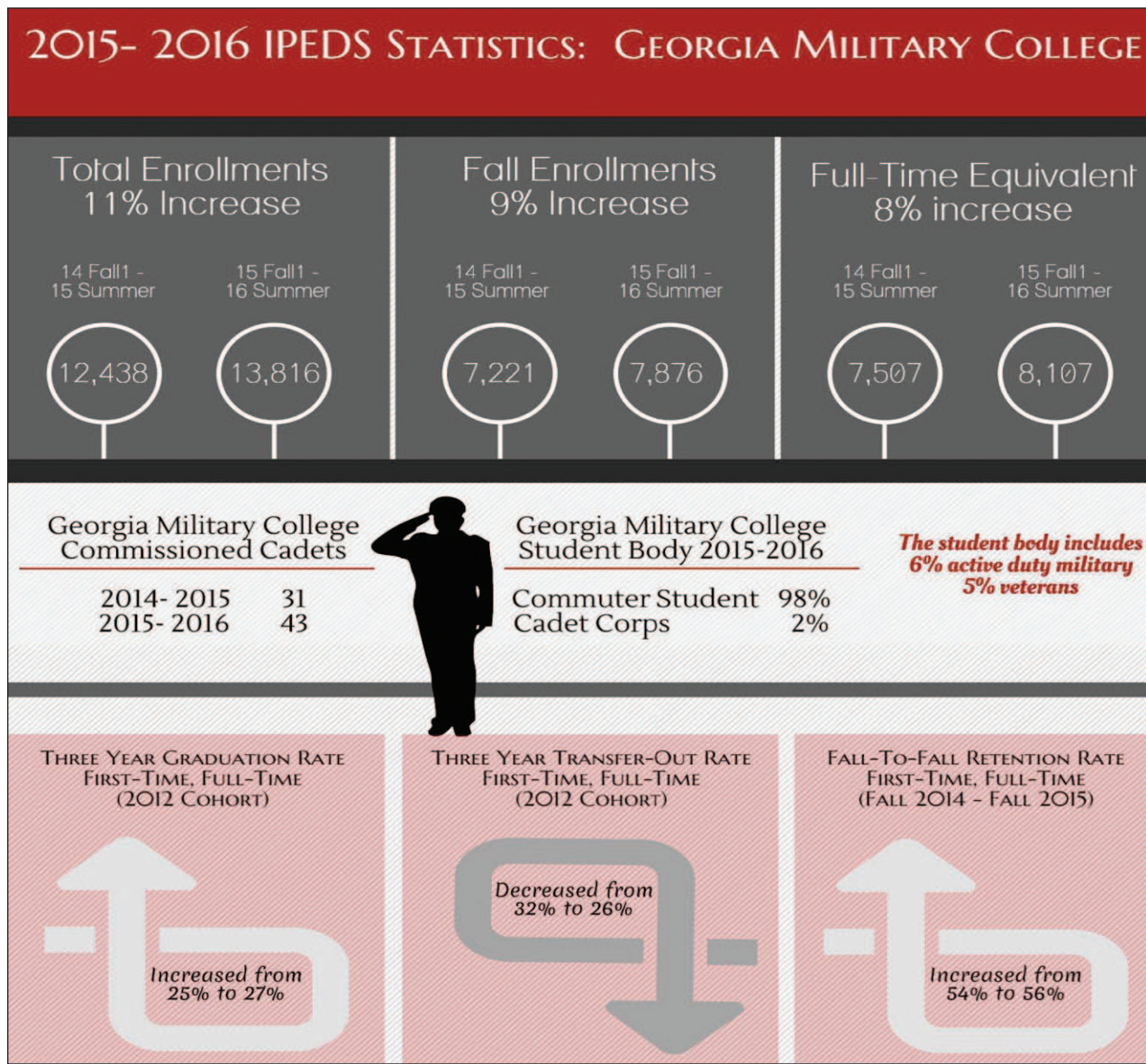
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EDUCATION PROGRESS 2017



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Fall Term	Applied**	Accepted	% of Applied Accepted	Enrolled***	% of Applied Enrolled	% of Accepted Enrolled
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2007	2,878	2,156	75	1,198	42	56
2008	3,384	2,311	68	1,177	35	51
2009	3,663	2,527	69	1,206	33	48
2010	3,646	2,578	71	1,202	33	47
2011	3,431	2,645	77	1,204	35	46
2012	3,609	2,749	76	1,304	36	47
2013	3,792	2,882	76	1,395	37	48
2014	3,965	3,034	77	1,463	37	48
2015	3,967	3,002	76	1,473	37	49
2016	3,980	3,364	85	1,379	35	41

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Mean Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Scores of First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen* Fall Terms 2010-2016 GEORGIA COLLEGE

Fall Term	Number of Scores	Critical Reading Score			Mathematics Score			Total Score		
		GC Mean	Nat'l Mean	State Mean	GC Mean	Nat'l Mean	State Mean	GC Mean	Nat'l Mean	State Mean
2010	899	577	500	488	579	515	490	1,156	1,015	978
2011	766	578	497	485	577	514	487	1,155	1,011	972
2012	881	580	496	488	581	514	489	1,161	1,010	977
2013	795	583	496	490	581	514	487	1,164	1,010	977
2014	740	584	497	488	574	513	485	1,158	1,010	973
2015	672	585	495	490	579	511	485	1,164	1,006	975
2016	557	576	494	493	571	508	490	1,147	1,002	983

GDOT

Continued from page 10A

mer, overseen by Reeves Construction Company, and will include rehabilitating shoulders from the Jones County line east of the Little Fishing Creek bridge in Baldwin for a total of 7.08 miles. Completion of the SR 22 project is October 2017.

Resurfacing of SR 49, also awarded to Reeves Construction Company, is a \$3.3 million project that will span 11 miles from the Jones County line to Elbert Street in downtown Milledgeville.

In addition to current construction, future GDOT projects for the county and city continue to be scheduled. With an estimated completion date of July 2017, the 4.17 miles of milling, plant mix resurfacing, and single treatment paving will begin at U.S. 441 Bypass/SR 29 and extend to SR 22 (Montgomery Street). The \$1.93 million contract was awarded to C and H Paving Inc.

Looking forward to 2018, the GDOT has further improvements planned for SR 49. With a current cost estimate marked at \$8.44 million, the project consists of 2.8 miles of widening beginning west of Felton Drive and extending to the west side of Fishing Creek Bridge in Baldwin County.

The widening of SR 49 is much needed and will be a great asset to Baldwin County, said Collins. When completed, additional center and right turn lanes will be added in the existing passing lane sections.

The widening project will also include construction of urban shoulders curbs, gutters, and sidewalks at Blandly Road on both the left and right side and extending to south of Fishing Creek Bridge. A traffic light is also planned for the intersection of Blandly Road and SR 49.

Once the traffic light is installed at Blandly and 49, it will add yet another layer of safety for the heavily traveled intersection, added Collins.

According to Collins, the improvements to local roads and infrastructures would not be possible without taxpayers and the passing of House Bill 170 the Transportation Funding Act of 2015. The bill provides for additional revenue necessary for funding transportation purposes.

When you see road and highway construction occurring throughout Milledgeville and Baldwin County, you see your tax dollars truly at work, said Collins. The future looks very bright for our region's ability to improve infrastructure.