

The Manning Times

AGRICULTURE

REVOLUTIONIZING AGRICULTURE AI robots aim to transform local farming



TECH. Van Patiluna demonstrates the autonomous defoliator, controlling the precision sprayer through a program on his laptop, which allows farmers to customize applications for greater efficiency and reduced chemical use. (Photo C/O Melissa Foust-McCoy)

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY
mtscreporter@gmail.com

In an ambitious move to modernize agriculture in

South Carolina, researchers at South Carolina State University are combining robotics and artificial intelligence to address the needs of underserved and veteran farmers in Clarendon County and beyond. Their innovative program,

led by Dr. Joe Mari Maja, Senior Researcher and Director of the Center of Applied Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Agriculture, and research assistant Van Patiluna, promises to equip farmers with tools that increase efficiency, reduce

See **FARMING**, Page 4

HISTORY

Manning honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with Day of Observance ceremony

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY
mtscreporter@gmail.com

The City of Manning hosted its annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Observance on Monday morning, celebrating the legacy of the civil rights leader and emphasizing unity and the power of individual action. The event, held at the Billie S. Fleming Sr. Public Safety Building, featured Dr. Kelvin Lemon, principal of Manning High School, as the keynote speaker.

Mayor Julia Nelson opened the program, welcoming attendees and reflecting on Dr. King's impact. "Dr. King was a peaceful advocate for civil rights, and his legacy reminds us that civil rights include protections for all Americans," Nelson said. "All of us should be advocates of civil rights."

Dr. Lemon delivered an inspiring address, focusing on how one person can

make a profound difference. "One person can make a difference," he said. "You may think, I'm just one person, what can I possibly do?" The answer is very simple: start where you are with what you have." Lemon urged the audience to act, whether through "small acts of kindness, challenging the status quo, or simply leading by example."

Reflecting on Dr. King's legacy, Lemon asked the audience to imagine what might have happened if King had refused to take up the mantle of leadership. "What if Dr. King had said, 'No, not me. This is not my fight. I refuse to engage in activities that will cause my family to live a life overcome with fear,'" Lemon said. He emphasized that Dr. King's courage and determination made him a unifying force for the civil rights movement, inspiring others to take action. Lemon also praised Mayor Nelson's leadership since her historic election in 2011 as

See **MLK**, Page 4



VOICE. Julius Ragin III performs "A Change Is Gonna Come" during Manning's MLK Jr. Day of Observance, moving the audience with his heartfelt rendition. (Photo C/O Melissa Foust-McCoy)

MAINTENANCE

Tree trimming in Manning balances safety, aesthetics, and tree health

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY
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Residents of Manning have seen Duke Energy's vegetation management team

at work the last few weeks, trimming the live oaks along Church Street and Brooks Street as part of the utility's seven-year maintenance cycle. The initiative, designed to maintain power line safety and reliability, has sparked conversations about balancing

See **TREES**, Page 4



FOLIAGE. A live oak tree on Church Street displays a distinctive "V" cut in its canopy following Duke Energy's routine trimming to maintain safe clearance around power lines. (Photo C/O Melissa Foust-McCoy)

GOVERNMENT

Summerton Town Council appoints new administrator

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY
mtscreporter@gmail.com

The Summerton Town Council held its first regular meeting of 2025 on January 14, addressing significant developments, including the resignation of Town Administrator Kenneth Geathers and the appointment of Mary Adger as his replacement.

Following an executive session, Mayor Keith Bowman announced the council's unanimous acceptance of Geathers' resignation. "Council, you heard the resignation. Can I get a second?" Bowman asked. The motion was promptly seconded and approved. Geathers, who had been absent from Town Hall for almost two months, declined to comment when contacted by The Manning Times. Bowman did not respond to additional inquiries before the print deadline.

The council swiftly moved to name Mary Adger as the new Town Administrator under a three-year contract. "I'll make a motion to hire Miss Mary Adger as Town Administrator for a three-year period and authorize the mayor to execute any documents that are needed that affect her employment," a council member said. The motion passed without

opposition.

During departmental reports, Police Chief Donell Dixon provided updates on resource constraints and safety initiatives. While the department is fully staffed, Dixon explained that additional part-time officers would improve coverage. "We are fully staffed but would benefit from two additional part-time officers to cover rotations," he noted. He also discussed plans to relocate court proceedings to the old high school for more space, citing an overcrowded docket. The chief proposed exploring a nuisance ordinance to address increasing complaints of strong odors affecting a residential area. "This is something the council needs to review," Dixon added. Dixon emphasized the importance of community safety and urged residents to report suspicious activity through the proper channels. "We ask the community to contact dispatch instead of calling officers directly. This ensures faster response times and proper documentation," he said. Concerns about traffic safety near local parks were also raised, with Dixon committing to measures to enhance pedestrian and vehicle safety.

Public works and infrastructure challenges were outlined in reports from the water and sewer departments. Crews repaired leaks on Furse Road and North

See **SUMMERTON**, Page 5



FORECAST

41 high, 27 low



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OBITUARIES

OBITUARIES

**Mavis
Haley
HOLLIDAY**

Mavis Haley Holliday, 80, widow of Heyward Alvin Holliday, died Saturday, January 4, 2025, at her home.

Born September 24, 1944, in Manning, she was a daughter of the late Charlie Theophilus Haley and the late Mildred DuBose Haley Lewis. She was a retired beautician and a member of Alice Drive Baptist Church.

She is survived by two daughters, Wanda Holliday Wilkes (James) of Opelika, AL and Amy Holliday Hansen (Jeff) of Sumter; seven grandchildren, Crystle Cooper (Tyler), Daren Holliday (Crystal), Kristina Wilkes (Zach Taylor), J. Britton Hansen (Erin), Brandon Hansen (Lauren), Bradley Hansen (Erica) and Sommer Holliday; nine great grandchildren; two sisters, Eleanor Haley Selph of Myrtle Beach and Brenda Haley Flora of Greensboro, NC; and several nephews.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was preceded in death by a son, Daren Alvin Holliday, Sr.; a sister, Hazel Haley DuPre; and a brother, Dalmar Charlie Haley.

A funeral service was held at 2 p.m. on Thursday, January 9, 2025, in the chapel of Stephens Funeral Home with the Rev. Dr. Clay Smith officiating. Burial will follow at Oak Grove Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Daren Holliday, Jr., J. Britton Hansen, Brandon Hansen, Bradley Hansen, Joel DuPre and Tyler Cooper.

Visitation will be one hour prior to the service from 1 to 2 p.m. at Stephens Funeral Home and other times at the home of her daughter, 2710 McCrays Mill Road, Sumter.

Memorials may be made to Alice Drive Baptist Church, 1305 Loring Mill Road, Sumter, SC 29150.

Stephens Funeral Home & Crematory, 304 N. Church Street, Manning, is in charge of arrangements, (803) 435-2179. www.stephensfuneralhome.org

OBITUARIES

**Francisco
Javier
Justo
ANTONIO**

Francisco Javier Justo Antonio, 36, companion of Jacqueline Lopez Santiago, died Saturday, January 11, 2025, at McLeod Hospice House in Florence.

Born July 19, 1988, in Oaxaca, Mexico, he was a son of Agustina Antonio Patricio. He was of the Baptist faith.

He is survived by his mother of Mexico; his companion of Alcolu; four children, Mauricio, Francisco, Daisy and Dahlia; two brothers, Lauriano and Gilberto; two sisters, Luisa and Rosalia; and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. on Friday, January 17, 2025, in the chapel of Stephens Funeral Home with Pastor Jairo Paguada officiating.

Visitation will be one hour prior to the service from 2 to 3 p.m. at Stephens Funeral Home.

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OBITUARIES

**Dr. Roxie
Davis
BRYANT**

Dr. Roxie Davis Bryant, 45, wife of Jeremiah Bryant died Saturday, January 11, 2025 in Concord, NC. She was born May 21, 1980 in Charleston, SC. A daughter of Lee Davis and the late Vernon Rogers Davis.

No public viewing at the funeral home and before service.

Celebrations of life will be held 1:30 PM Sunday, January 19, at Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church, 85 C.E. Murray Blvd., Greeleyville, SC. Burial will follow in Big Spring Cemetery, Greeleyville, SC.

The family will start receiving visitors on Wednesday, January 15th from 1pm-7pm at 1096 McMillian Road, Greeleyville SC.

OBITUARIES

**Daniel
"Dan"
Archie
MCINNIS**

Daniel "Dan" Archie McInnis, 85, died peacefully on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at McLeod Health Clarendon.

Born August 26, 1939, in Sumter, he was a son of the late Archibald McEachern McInnis and Edith Geddings McInnis of Sumter. He was the last surviving sibling of a family that consisted of a younger brother, Kenneth Earl McInnis; a half brother, Alton McInnis; and five half sisters, Evelyn McCoy, Ruby Ross, Agnes Harrelson, Juanita Ledbetter, and Pearl Turner.

On his birthday in 1962, Dan professed his love for Helen Stribling of Union, SC, and they began a 49 year journey that ended with her death in 2012. During their time together, Dan did his best to provide for the emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of his wife, in both the good and bad times, and was especially faithful in attending to her health limitations.

In 1968, God expanded their family with the birth of their first son, Stacey Robert McInnis (Nancy) of Manning. Two years later, a second son, Daniel Neil McInnis (Sherri) of Summerton, was born. His love for his boys was equaled only by the love he had for his four grandchildren, Peyton McInnis Enright (Thomas), Elizabeth Danielle McInnis, Robert Reese McInnis, and Campbell Ayres McInnis. He was affectionately known to them as "Poppy" and his stories, words of wisdom, and unique expressions will be sorely missed.

Dan's talents were numerous and there wasn't much he couldn't fix. In the early 70s, Dan and his nephew, Russell Harrelson, opened a business together providing HVAC services to individuals and businesses of Clarendon County and the eastern portion of Orangeburg County. He spent the bulk of his professional life in this industry and thoroughly enjoyed the many relationships and friendships made along the way.

He was a faithful Christian and served His Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as a long-time member of Clarendon Baptist Church in Alcolu. Over the years, he served as Sunday School teacher and Deacon, but probably received the most satisfaction by doing the little things no one knew about. Fixing the furnace on frigid Sunday mornings, changing light bulbs in the chandeliers dangling high above the sanctuary, and assisting with various plumbing and electrical issues, were ways he used his talents to serve God and others. He also served on the South Carolina Southern Baptist Disaster Response Team and responded to hurricane emergencies in both Mississippi and North Carolina. Additionally, he was a former member of the Clarendon County Volunteer Fire Department and spent many years responding to fires and other emergencies through the Alcolu Fire Station. He was also a 12 year veteran of the Army National Guard and Reserves.

In retirement, Dan found great joy in woodworking and spent most of his days making furniture for his family, friends, and pretty much anyone that had a need. He loved all species of wood but had a fondness for oak and walnut. Nothing pleased him more than to finish a project and admire the grain in the wood. One of his favorite projects was making children's rocking chairs for young families with new babies. Giving those away brought him great pleasure.

The last few years have been marked by numerous health concerns that left Dan somewhat dependent on others. During this time, he was blessed to have two remarkable caregivers and friends in Daisy Graham and Almetta Dixon. Their patience, care, concern, and love had a tremendous impact on Dan and serves as a testimony to how God can use anyone that is willing to serve and minister to others.

A funeral service will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, January 16, 2025, at Clarendon Baptist Church in Alcolu with the Rev. Michael DeCosta officiating. Burial will follow at Trinity Cemetery in Alcolu.

Pallbearers will be Reese McInnis, Thomas Enright, Joseph Pettit, Stephen Clark, Kenneth McInnis and Russ Harrelson.

Visitation will be one hour prior to the service from 2 to 3 p.m. at Clarendon Baptist Church and other times at the home of Stacey & Nancy McInnis, 1575 Doral Drive, Manning.

Memorials may be made to the General Fund of Clarendon Baptist Church, P.O. Box 307, Alcolu, SC 29001.

Stephens Funeral Home & Crematory, 304 N. Church Street, Manning, is in charge of arrangements, (803) 435-2179. www.stephensfuneralhome.org

OBITUARIES

**John
GREEN JR.**

Andrew Mack Reed, 75, widower of Elsie Mae Pend-

The Planning Times | MANNINGLIVE.COM

OBITUARIES

**Alexander
"Alex"
Daniel
SAFFER**

Alexander "Alex" Daniel Saffer, 27, died Saturday, January 11, 2025, at his home.

Born June 27, 1997, in Southfield, MI, he was a son of Joseph Michael Saffer and Bonnie Lynn Gazley Hickman. He was a member of Manning Baptist Temple and a graduate of Manning High School.

He is survived by his father and stepmother, Theresa Saffer, of Warren, MI; his mother and stepfather, Joey Hickman, of Manning; paternal grandparents, Harold Saffer, Jr. of Warren, MI and Carolyn Saffer of Houghton Lake, MI; maternal grandmother, Patricia Gazley of Dallzell; paternal step grandmother, Phyllis Diane Clemons of Effingham; eight siblings, Justin Saffer (Felicia) of St. Joseph, MO, Jeremy Hickman (Alyxis) of Dalton, FL, Nolan Saffer (Jessica) of Fayetteville, NC, Noah Hickman (Amber) of Winter Park, FL, Breanne Hickman of Florence, Ashton Hickman of Manning, Joeii Saffer of Warren, MI and Summer Smith of Hazel Park, MI; a niece, Harper Rae Saffer; and several aunts, uncles and cousins.

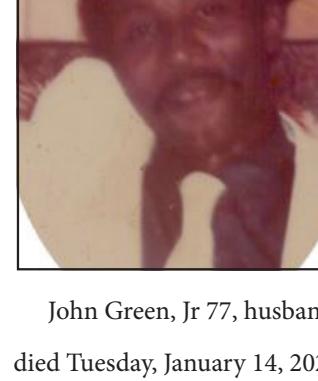
A funeral service will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, January 17, 2025, in the chapel of Stephens Funeral Home with Pastor William Jeffers officiating. Burial will follow at Sumter Cemetery.

Pallbearers will be Bryan Coker, Gavin Bardi, Carson Purvis, Brad Dearing, Nick Gazley and Austin Gazley.

Visitation will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, January 16, 2025, at Stephens Funeral Home and other times at the home of his parents, 1630 Baggette Road, Manning.

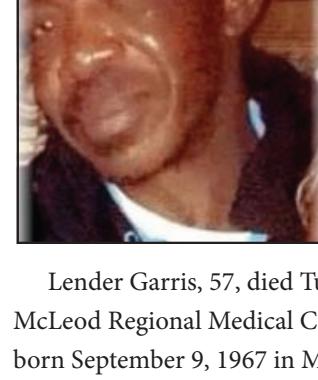
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OBITUARIES

**John
GREEN JR.**

John Green, Jr 77, husband of Annie House Green died Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at McLeod Regional Medical Center, Florence, SC. He was born September 21, 1947 in Hartford, CT. A son of the late John and Lila Mae Felder Green, Sr.

OBITUARIES

**Lender
GARRIS**

Lender Garris, 57, died Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at McLeod Regional Medical Center, Florence, SC. He was born September 9, 1967 in Manning, SC. A son of Mattie Garris.

Funeral services will be held 1:30 PM Sunday, January 19, 2025 at Hayes F. Samuels Sr. Memorial Chapel, 114 N. Church St. Manning, SC. Burial will follow in the Manning Cemetery, Manning, SC.

ergrass Reed died Thursday, January 9, 2025 in Thomasville, NC. He was born March 4, 1949 in Williamsburg County, SC. A son of the late Mack and Annie Whack Reed.

Celebration of life will be held 12 Noon Saturday, January 18, 2025, at The Matrix Ceneter, 4648 Kingstree Hwy. Manning, SC. Burial will follow in Whack Cemetery, Kingstree, Hwy., Manning, SC.

The family is receiving friends beginning Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 2:00 PM til 9:00 PM daily, at his daughter and son in law residence, Latasha and Jessie Calvin, 13100 Plowden Mill Rd. Alcolu, SC.

Hot and cold weather plus the remedy



Bobby Jonte

I was watching a movie the other day. The girl was walking out of a building and she was a rather eclectic type of dresser. She had a scarf, wore wild colored shirts and sweaters and cape like wraps. Her boy friend said "The Way you Dress" Made me wonder about the wardrobe department for the movies.

My wardrobe has been about the same since I was in the seventh grade. Once I found out about Khaki pants and a blue shirt I had it made. Put on a tie and blue blazer and you are set for church, a date, a job or party. Classic good looks never go out of style. Still, it would be something to have some wild clothing.

I saw an old movie about Flash Gordon conquering the Universe. What a great show. Flash Gordon, Doctor Zarkov, and Ming the Merciless; what a show! Without a doubt you could say "The Way you Dress" without fear of contradiction.

Flash would fly spaceship to keep Ming from conquering the universe.

Luckily he landed on a planet with a good atmosphere and temperate climate.

Flash wore short pants, boots and a funky looking shirt.

Some of Ming's soldiers would wear short pants, boots,

and a shirt with what looked like football shoulder pads and a wild looking helmet.

Many of the soldiers carried swords and shields. This was strange because with space ships to

fly between planets,

you would think that they would have some different types of weapons. After all, this was after World War One and they had all sorts of weaponry.

Sometimes Flash would go to a place that was covered with snow and then he would wear snowsuits that looked like they had been on an Everest Expedition. Once they walked out of the snow and back indoors, they would take off the snowsuits and be back in the shorts.

The best accessories of all the costumes are the capes. The capes had some type of flower design on it. I imagine that if the cape were blue, I could substitute the cape for my blazer and I would still be the sartorial giant I think of myself to be. (Ha)

Movie costumes are intriguing because of the look and what did the original audience think was going on? The good thing about Flash Gordon was he could conquer a universe that all the people were snappy dressers and even better, they all spoke English.

I'm just happy that the movies are still on. It is neat to watch our hero get into a terrible predicament and then almost get out and have more trouble heaped upon him.

The next week, he would get out that trouble and still look great in the short pants, and funky shirts. Throw in a space looking helmet or a hat with a big feather on it and you would get to have the fun of looking at the episode and saying "The Way you Dress."

graduation

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FARMING

FROM PAGE 1

costs, and make farming more sustainable. At the heart of their initiative is an array of robots designed to tackle critical agricultural tasks, such as spraying, harvesting, and inventory management. These robots are programmed to work autonomously, reducing the physical labor and time investment traditionally required of farmers. Their capabilities will soon be demonstrated in a series of workshops funded by a recently awarded grant, with sessions planned for summer 2025.

High-tech farming tools in action

One of the program's most significant innovations is an autonomous sprayer capable of reducing chemical use by up to 40% while maintaining crop quality. The sprayer applies defoliants with precision, targeting cotton plants from multiple angles instead of the traditional top-down method. "Normally, sprayers just spray from above, which can miss parts of the plant," Maja explained. "Our system ensures every area is covered while using fewer chemicals, saving farmers money."

Another notable development is the autonomous harvesting robot, which

can be programmed to follow specific paths in a field. Once programmed, the robot can repeat these routes year after year, making it an efficient and reusable tool.

"The good thing about our system is that it's fully programmable," said Patiluna. "Farmers can save the data from one season and use it again the next."

Additionally, drones equipped with RFID readers enable farmers to track plant inventory accurately. These drones can locate tagged plants in a nursery or field, significantly reducing the time and effort required for manual tracking.

"This is especially useful for nurseries where plants are often moved around," said Patiluna. "The drone reads the RFID tags and maps their exact locations, so farmers can easily find what they need."

Supporting local and veteran farmers

The initiative places a strong emphasis on small-scale and veteran farmers. For veterans transitioning to agriculture, the program's high-tech approach aligns with their familiarity with advanced systems.

"Many veterans are already comfortable with technology," Maja said. "That makes it easier for them to adapt these tools to their farming operations."

By focusing on veterans, the program seeks to lower barriers to entry into farming, a field often viewed as inaccessible due to high startup costs and steep learning

curves.

"Veterans and small farmers often face significant challenges when starting or sustaining a farm," said Maja. "This technology is designed to make the process easier and more manageable."

Teaching the technology

Recognizing that new technology can be intimidating, Maja and Patiluna are prioritizing education. The grant includes funding for hands-on workshops to introduce farmers to the robots and drones, demonstrate their capabilities, and teach participants how to incorporate them into their daily operations.

"One of the biggest barriers is that farmers often see technology as too complicated," Maja said. "We're working to change that perception by offering practical, hands-on training that shows them just how easy it can be to use these tools."

The workshops, to be held in Clarendon County and other key locations, including areas near Shaw Air Force Base, will provide farmers with an opportunity to test the technology firsthand.

"Farmers will leave with practical knowledge they can apply immediately," Maja said. "The goal is to show them that this technology isn't something to fear but something that can make their lives easier."

To ensure the program's success, the team plans to collaborate with local

extension offices and agricultural organizations. These partnerships will help identify farmers who would benefit most from the workshops and encourage participation.

A vision for the future

The ultimate goal of the program is to create a more sustainable and efficient agricultural system in South Carolina. By introducing robotics and artificial intelligence to farming, the team hopes to position the state as a leader in modern agriculture.

"This is about creating farming without the physical work," said Maja.

"Farmers can control everything from their computer, where to plow, where to spray, and let the machines handle the rest."

For local farmers in Clarendon County, the workshops represent a chance to embrace the future of farming and gain tools that could transform their operations.

"We want to help farmers see the value of these tools," said Maja. "Technology can make farming more accessible and profitable for everyone, and that's a future we're excited to be a part of."

With workshops set to begin next summer, Clarendon County farmers can look forward to an opportunity to explore the innovative world of AI-powered agriculture, which promises to change the way farming is done.

MLK

FROM PAGE 1

Manning's first African American female

TREES

FROM PAGE 1

mayor. "Her presence and compassion for her constituents, and her love and honor for the role of mayor, have made all the difference in the world," Lemon said.

"I've lived in Manning for 48 years, and I can certainly say I've seen a major difference since she has taken office."

The observance featured musical performances, including Dr. Brenda Clark's rendition of "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" and a moving solo by Julius Ragin III of "A Change Is Gonna Come." Councilmember Ervin Davis led a Unity Prayer, calling for a renewed commitment to collaboration and love.

"Dr. King's life exemplified peace and love," Davis said. "As we honor his legacy, let us work together as one community to make Manning a better place for all."

The ceremony concluded with words of appreciation from Mayor Nelson, who thanked city staff, public officials, and community members for their participation. "Unity and service are at the heart of what makes Manning a special place," she said. "I look forward to continuing to honor Dr. King's legacy with all of you."

The event served as a powerful reminder of Dr. King's enduring vision of equality and unity, inspiring Manning residents to carry his dream forward.

the town's cherished tree canopies with the necessity of utility maintenance.

Duke Energy adheres to a 15-foot clearance requirement around primary power lines, a measure regulated to prevent outages and safety hazards. While the trimming is essential, its visual impact has been more evident on Church Street than on Brooks Street.

"It's not pretty, but it is a necessity," said Scott Tanner, Administrator for the City of Manning. "While it's painful to watch and painful to see, it makes a big difference. If we have a big snow or ice storm next week, it'll make a big difference in restoration efforts. So, it's a necessity. Even though it doesn't look like it, they do try to trim the trees in a healthy way."

Live oaks, known for their resilience and slow growth, are a signature feature of Southern landscapes.

These trees, however, present challenges when growing near power lines.

"Oaks are hardwood, but [they] break really

easy," explained Duke Energy Vegetation Management Project Manager Andrew Baylor. "Once you get a lot of weight, especially if you get ice, it's a bad day."

On Brooks Street, which serves as a focal point for the town's annual Christmas light display, the approach was more delicate. "We specifically asked them to really be careful over there and preserve the canopy, which they accommodated us in doing so," Tanner said. "To me, it's almost not even noticeable what they did along Brooks Street."

Baylor emphasized that Duke Energy's trimming practices follow strict standards set by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). "We always try to cut to our lateral," Baylor explained. "It might be 15, 16, or 17 feet, but we follow ISA standards to promote healthy regrowth."

The live oaks' slow growth ensures the trimmed trees will recover over time, maintaining the area's visual appeal. "Even though it doesn't look like it, they do try to trim the trees in a healthy way," Tanner said. "That doesn't mean they're not aggressive, but they try to do it so the trees will live and grow back."

Church Street required more extensive trimming due to the proximity

of "open wire secondaries," uninsulated wires that pose a heightened risk of outages or fires. "Church Street is a beast of its own," Baylor said. "If you don't trim around them, [the lines] knock themselves out every time they get hit by a limb. The way we cut this year will reduce those risks, and next time, we won't have to cut as hard."

Despite the necessary trimming, Duke Energy worked to protect Brooks Street's Christmas lights. Baylor assured that the technicians carefully avoided limbs where the lights are installed. As a result, the holiday display will appear unchanged when illuminated during the next season. "You will not see any difference next year than you would if you turned them on now," said Baylor.

While the immediate impact may be visually jarring, city officials and Duke Energy stress the importance of the work. "It's one of those things you have to live with every few years," Tanner said. "It makes a big difference when extreme weather hits."

Residents are encouraged to learn more about tree pruning standards and power line safety by consulting Duke Energy or the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff website.



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CLARENDO COUNTY
Economic Development

SUMMERTON

FROM PAGE 1

Shore, replaced damaged pumps at the Urbana station, and performed maintenance across town facilities. "One pump burned out due to clogging, and the second pump cord was also damaged," the report noted, adding that repairs were completed after transporting the pumps to Sumter.

Oliver Environmental Services assured the council that Summerton remained in compliance with all permit

requirements for December. A recent sanitary survey of the town's water systems resulted in a satisfactory rating, though aging infrastructure, such as the Gin Pond Well No. 2 and various pump stations, remains a priority. "The Gin Pond Well was replaced, but additional upgrades are necessary to meet state requirements," the report stated.

Mayor Bowman took a moment to recognize the efforts of town employees who helped brighten Summerton during the holiday season. "The town was lit up a little better this year, and I want to thank everyone who made that possible. The more we do, the better we'll get," Bowman

said, expressing appreciation for the team effort.

The council announced plans for a community cleanup day in early spring and discussed the formation of a Board of Appeals, mandated by state law. Bowman encouraged residents to apply for board positions, which will provide a mechanism for addressing grievances related to local government decisions. Council members also began preliminary discussions on the town's budget calendar, emphasizing the need for early planning ahead of the June 30 deadline.

During the meeting, Bowman also proclaimed January 20, 2025, as

Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Summerton, urging residents to reflect on Dr. King's teachings and contributions. "We call on all citizens to reflect on the words and service of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and consider their responsibility to bring peace, equality, and respect to their homes and their community," Bowman stated.

The next regular meeting of the Summerton Town Council is scheduled for February. Details on Geathers' resignation and Adger's employment contract remain unavailable as of print deadline. The Manning Times will continue to follow developments.

GOVERNMENT

County drafts FOIA policy to enhance transparency and efficiency

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY

mtsreporter@gmail.com

Clarendon County has drafted its first Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) policy to streamline the handling of public records requests, ensuring compliance with South Carolina law while promoting consistency and transparency across county departments. The policy aims to clarify internal procedures and ensure that all departments and elected officials adhere to statutory requirements for processing FOIA requests.

Previously, the county operated solely under state FOIA statutes without a formal local policy. Deputy Administrator Sharmane Anderson explained that this draft policy is designed to unify processes within the county's administration and

improve efficiency. "We wanted to ensure that our staff, our departments, and the county were abiding by everything statutorily required while singing the same song," Anderson said.

The draft includes provisions allowing elected and appointed officials, such as the Sheriff and Coroner, to opt in or out of the county's centralized FOIA procedures. Officials who opt out must manage their own FOIA requests independently, adhering to state law and their respective internal procedures. Anderson cited examples such as the Voter Registration and Veterans Affairs offices, which already operate under their own policies. Requests involving County Council, however, will continue to be processed by county administration, ensuring consistency for these offices.

The policy also establishes clear

timelines and fees for handling requests. It mandates a 10-business-day response period to determine whether records are publicly available, as well as reasonable charges for labor, copying, and redaction of documents. For requests requiring extensive staff time or resources, a 25% deposit may be required.

The public will still be able to submit requests directly to administration or through a standardized online form, making the process accessible and straightforward.

Another critical aspect of the policy is its emphasis on compliance with statutory exemptions, such as protecting personal privacy and sensitive information. The policy outlines procedures for redacting exempt material while ensuring that non-exempt portions of records remain accessible to the public.

"This policy is really for internal

use by our departments and staff to ensure everyone is on the same page," Anderson said. She emphasized that the policy is not intended to change how the public submits requests but to provide clear guidance for county employees handling those requests.

The draft policy is now available online for public review and will be presented to County Council for approval at an upcoming meeting. The timeline for adoption will depend on feedback and council priorities. "This is about accountability and ensuring we're providing the best service to the public while protecting sensitive information," Anderson said.

For more details or to view the draft policy, residents can visit the county's website or contact the administration office directly.

ADVOCATE

Clerk's recommendation leads to \$500,000 lottery win in Manning

submitted

A Manning customer is celebrating a life-changing windfall thanks to a helpful store clerk's suggestion.

The South Carolina Education Lottery revealed that a customer visiting the Carolina Pantry on Sumter Highway struck it rich with a \$500,000 prize after purchasing a \$10 Shimmering Riches scratch-off ticket recom-

mended by the clerk. Hoping for a big win, the customer's wish came true in spectacular fashion.

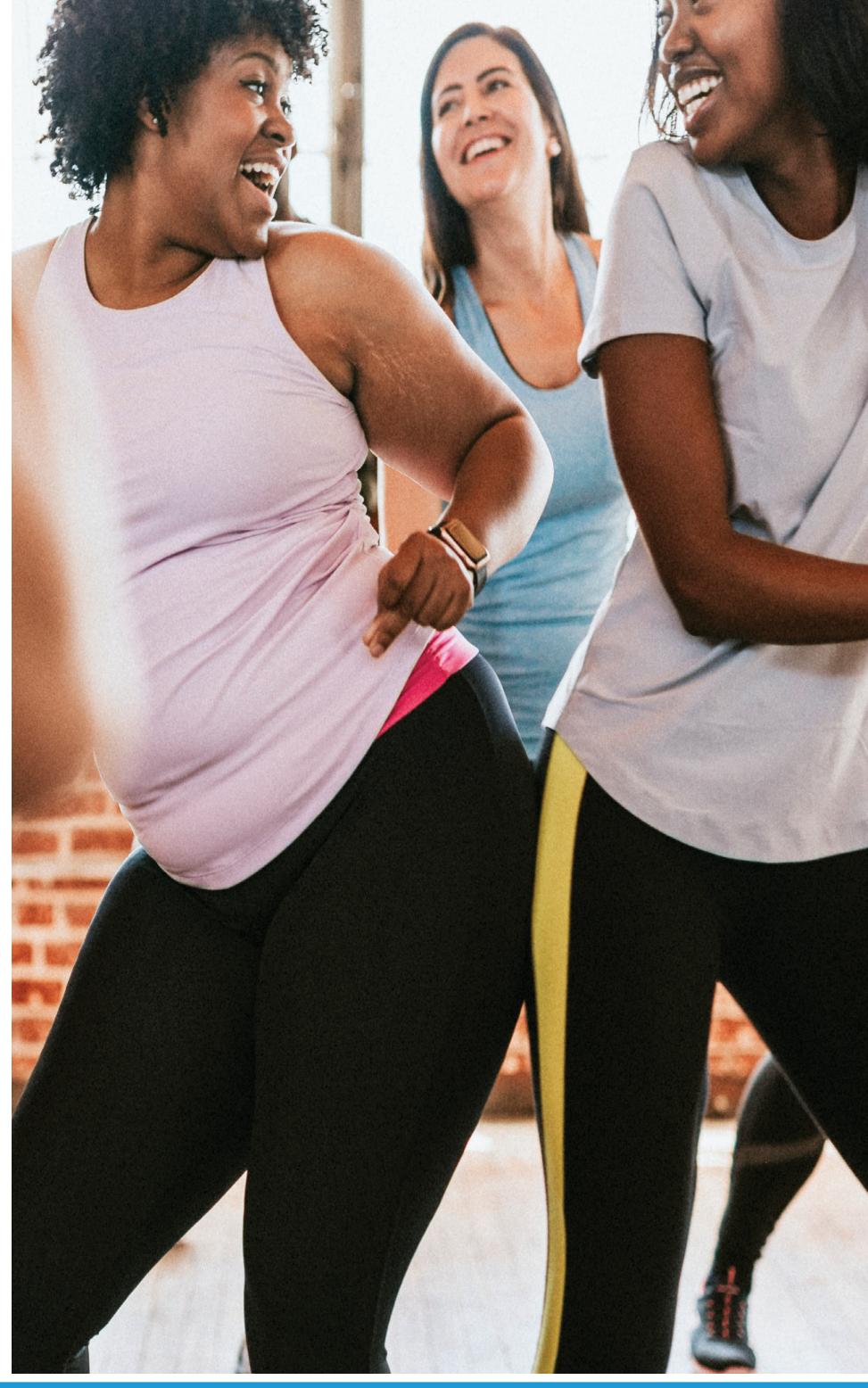
"I fell to my knees," the winner said, describing the emotional moment when they realized they had hit the jackpot. The \$500,000 prize is sure to bring significant changes to their life.

The Carolina Pantry will also share in the excitement, receiving

a \$5,000 commission for selling the lucky ticket.

The odds of winning the top prize in the Shimmering Riches game are a staggering one in 1,128,000, making this win all the more remarkable.

This story underscores the life-altering potential of a single scratch-off ticket—and the value of a good suggestion from a friendly store clerk.



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TATUM is a tan and white, male, Hound/Bully Mix just shy of 4 years old. Tatum has been neutered and is current on vaccinations. He did test positive for heartworms, though. Therefore, Tatum would need to continue treatment with a vet once adopted. Tatum is very sweet and loves attention! He walks gently on a leash and would make a great walking companion! Tatum currently weighs around 55 pounds. He gets along with most dogs but can be selective at times. If there are other dogs in the home, then a meet and greet would be required. Tatum has been at the shelter for just about 3 years now and is ready for his forever family. If you are interested in adopting Tatum, you can get pre – approved to adopt by submitting your adoption application online at www.ASecondChanceAnimalShelter.com. Our adoption fee for dogs is \$125.

JAY is a 1 ½ year old, black, male Domestic Short Hair cat. Jay is extremely friendly and outgoing. He loves to play and is quite active! Jay is current on all age-appropriate shots, has been neutered, and tested negative for Feline Leukemia and Aids. He seems to get along with all other cats. Please stop by the shelter to see this adorable cat. He deserves a loving home! Jay's adoption fee is \$100. If you are interested in adopting Jay, you can get pre – approved to adopt by submitting your adoption application online at www.ASecondChanceAnimalShelter.com.

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LEGALS

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS OF ESTATES
ALL PERSONS HAVING CLAIMS AGAINST
THE FOLLOWING ESTATES MUST FILE
THEIR CLAIMS ON FORM #37ES WITH THE
PROBATE COURT OF CLARENDON COUNTY,
THE ADDRESS OF WHICH IS 411 SUNSET
DR. MANNING SC 29102 WITHIN EIGHT (8)
MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST
PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE TO CREDITORS
OR WITHIN ONE (1) YEAR FROM DATE OF
DEATH, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER (SCPC 62-3-
801, ET SEQ.) OR SUCH PERSONS SHALL BE
FOREVER BARRED AS TO THEIR CLAIMS. ALL
CLAIMS ARE REQUIRED TO BE PRESENTED IN
WRITTEN STATEMENTS ON THE PRESCRIBED
FROM (FORM #37ES) INDICATING THE NAME
AND ADDRESS OF THE CLAIMANT. THE BASS
OF THE CLAIM, THE AMOUNT CLAIMED, THE
DATE WHEN THE CLAIM WILL BECOME DUE,
THE NATURE OF ANY UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE
CLAIM, AND A DESCRIPTION OF ANY SECURITY
AS TO THE CLAIM WILL BECOME DUE, THE
NATURE OF ANY UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE
CLAIM, AND A DESCRIPTION OF ANY SECURITY
AS TO THE CLAIM.

Gamble Family Farms, 5300 Black River Rd., New Zion, SC 29111 has applied to the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services for a Groundwater Withdrawal Permit, under the Groundwater Use and Reporting Act for one (1) proposed agricultural irrigation well(s) located at approximately N 33.835728.

W-80.114267 in Clarendon County, SC. A proposed additional groundwater withdrawal of 106 million gallons per year from the McQueen Branch aquifer has been developed from calculated water use requirements for one (1) agricultural irrigation well(s) on approximately 130 acres. Additional information concerning this application may be obtained from Ashley Carothers by calling (803)898-4220 or e-mail at Ashley.Carothers@des.sc.gov. SCDES invites and will receive comments on the application until 01/23/2025, of close business day. 5:00pm EST. Please submit comments using SCDES's ePermitting webpage. (<https://epermweb.dhec.sc.gov/ncore/external/publicnotice/search>) by navigating to the project and using the "Add Comment" tab at the top of the page. Comments may also be sent to: SCDES/Bureau of Water, Attention: Ashley Carothers, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.

Interested parties wishing to be notified of the final permit decision must make comment on the application and make a request to receive notice of the final decision and must provide the SCDES with correct name and mailing address.

(12/24/24 - 01/23/25) NOTICE OF ABANDONED VEHICLE
Notice of Abandoned Vehicle
Title Holder: Janiah Patterson
Address: 1996 Patriot, Manning SC 29102
Lien Holder: N/A

NOTICE OF ABANDONED VEHICLE
Notice of Abandoned Vehicle
Title Holder: Mid-Atlantic Financial Company
Address: 4592 Uilmerton Rd STE 200, Clemata, (01/23/25)

Make: Chevrolet
Model: Camaro
Year: 2017
VIN Number: 1G1FF1R75H0200620

Please be advised that the above described item that I have at my place of business has been repaired and the amount of the charges as of August 2nd, 2024 are \$100.00. The item listed above has been repaired, towed or stored and must be claimed within thirty (30) days.

Pursuant to Code Section 29/15/10 of the 1976 SC Code of Laws, as amended, this property will be sold at public auction to the highest bidder after thirty (30) days have expired. Sale notices will be posted in three (3) public places for 15 days prior to sale. A copy of this notice will be sent certified mail to all lien holders of record.

Storage charges of \$35.00 per day will be added until this property is claimed and the charges are paid.

West Manning Auto Repair
195 and HWY 261
Manning, SC 29102
803-473-3333
(01/23/25)

Please be advised that the above described item that I have at my place of business has been repaired and the amount of the charges as of September 27th 2024 are \$1674.81. The item listed above has been repaired, towed or stored and must be claimed within thirty (30) days.

Pursuant to Code Section 29/15/10 of the 1976 SC Code of Laws, as amended, this property will be sold at public auction to the highest bidder after thirty (30) days have expired. Sale notices will be posted in three (3) public places for 15 days prior to sale. A copy of this notice will be sent certified mail to all lien holders of record.

Storage charges of \$35.00 per day will be added until this property is claimed and the charges are paid.

West Manning Auto Repair
195 and HWY 261
Manning, SC 29102
803-473-3333
(01/23/25)

MEETING

SLCOG and county urge residents to complete surveys for HUD grant

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY
mtsreporter@gmail.com

Residents of Clarendon County gathered Thursday evening for a public hearing hosted by the Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments (COG) to discuss the Citizens Participation Plan and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Needs Assessment. The meeting, held at 411 Sunset Drive, highlighted the importance of community feedback to secure funding for essential development projects.

Tammy Smith, grants coordinator with Santee-Lynches COG, emphasized that resident input is vital in identifying the county's most pressing needs. Surveys distributed during the meeting are designed to guide funding decisions for projects ranging from infrastructure improvements to affordable housing initiatives. "This is where it all starts," Smith said. "The surveys are our foundation for making the case to HUD for funding."

Smith provided an overview of past grant-funded initiatives, including the demolition of abandoned houses in areas affected by high crime rates. She also noted the success of a now-closed Tenant-Based Rental Assistance program, which helped low-income residents cover rent. However, she stressed that additional programs and funding depend on robust participation in the current needs assessment process. Residents expressed concerns about unmet needs in their communities, including affordable housing, infrastructure maintenance, and access to public services. Smith encouraged attendees to fill out and return the surveys, which are

available both online and in print. "The more responses we gather, the stronger our case for funding," she said, adding that completed forms could be submitted to the Clarendon County Administration Office or emailed directly to the COG.

The Community Needs Assessment survey can be completed online at <https://www.cognitoforms.com/SanteeLynchesRegionalCouncilOfGovernments/CommunityNeedsSurvey>. Alternatively, residents can visit www.santeelynchescog.org and follow these steps:

- Click on the "Government Services" tab.
- Select "Government Services Forms" at the bottom of the dropdown menu.

- Scroll down and click "Community Needs Survey."

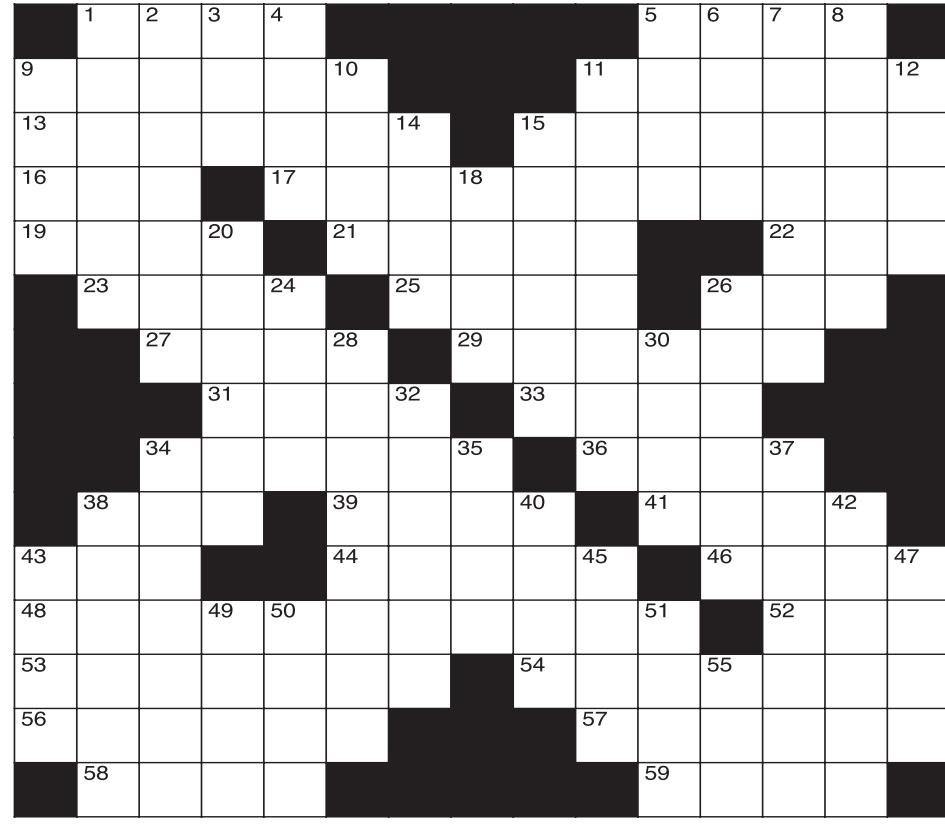
Paper copies of the survey are also available at the Clarendon County Administration Office.

The CDBG program focuses on addressing the needs of low- to moderate-income residents, with grants typically funding infrastructure improvements such as water systems and stormwater drainage. Smith announced that the upcoming grant cycle would prioritize infrastructure, with applications due in the spring.

Lynden Anthony, Clarendon County Administrator, urged residents to spread the word about the survey and the importance of participating in public hearings. "Your input matters," he said. "These are your communities, and this is your opportunity to shape their future."

The hearing concluded with a reminder that participation in council meetings and community forums remains a critical avenue for residents to voice concerns and advocate for local improvements.

GAMEZONE



CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE

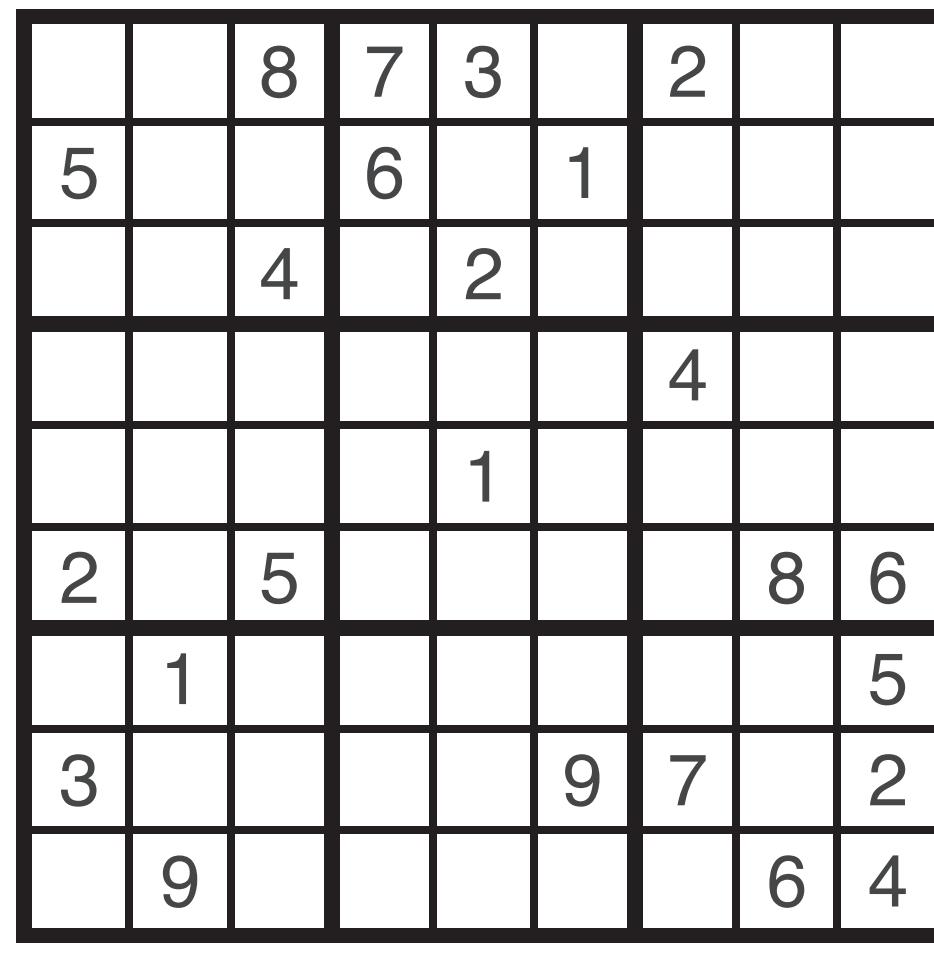
DOWN

1. __ Aires, city	beliefs
2. Coarse grass	30. ZZZ
3. Type of gene	32. One who confines
4. Door handle	another
5. Competition	34. Bishop
6. Muslim ruler title	35. Garlands
7. Hunting expeditions	37. Bird that flies by
8. Large mollusk	the coast
9. Bind securely	38. Optical device
10. Former U.S. presidential candidate	40. Greek goddess of discord
11. 2-point plays in football	42. Some are "Rolling" 43. Formerly (archaic)
12. Breezed through	45. Thrust a knife into
14. Type setting	47. German river
15. Felt for	49. Atomic #26
18. Codified rules	50. Make a grotesque
20. Small dome	face
24. Chevrotain	51. Primordial matter
26. Male reproductive gland	of the universe
28. Controversial	55. Chinese philosophi- cal principle

1. Loser	Rocker	are two
5. Partner to relaxation	34. More than one	
9. Mixing	36. Places down pur-	
11. Winged nut	posefully	
13. Expression of blame	38. Pitching statistic	
15. Vast ocean	39. Type of sword	
16. Comedienne	41. Witnesses	
Gasteyer	43. Body part	
17. Multiply	44. Mixes slowly	
19. Meat from a pig (French)	46. Satisfy	
21. Related	48. Strong belief	
22. Rocker Stewart	52. One's physique	
23. Surprise completely	(slang)	
25. Loon	53. More frightening	
26. Canister	54. Soup cracker	
27. Large, deep-bodied fish	56. Teaches	
29. Takes forcefully	57. One who carries something	
31. Oil cartel	58. Actor Sean	
33. Palmer and Hepburn	59. Changes	

GUESS WHO

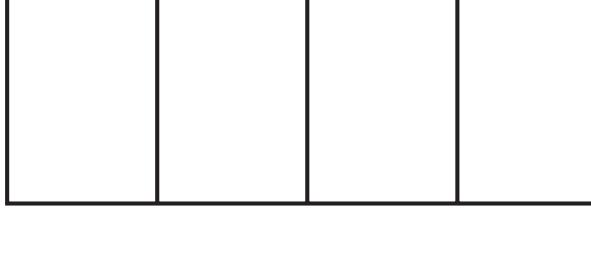
I am a singer/songwriter born in Tennessee on January 19, 1946. I grew up with 11 brothers and sisters in a small cabin. I learned to sing in church. I've released 26 No. 1 Billboard hits during my career, and I'm known as the "Queen of Country Music" as a result.



WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to organization.

L F E I



FUN FACT

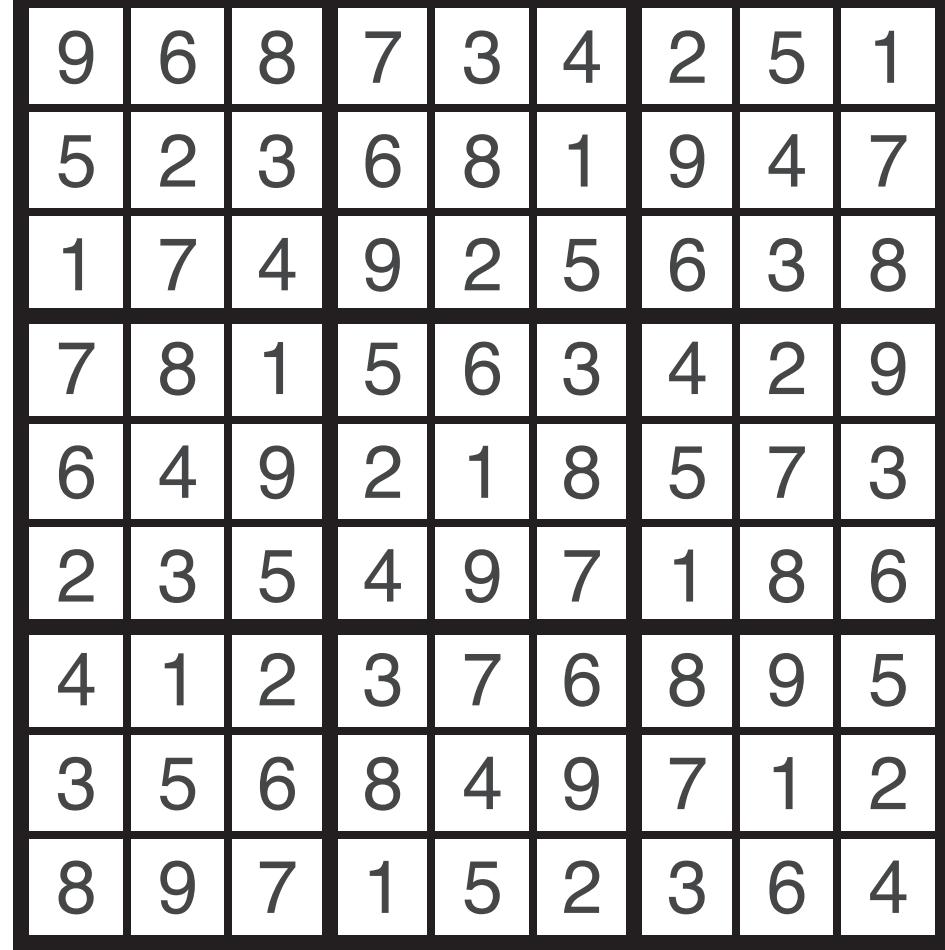
“www” stands for this



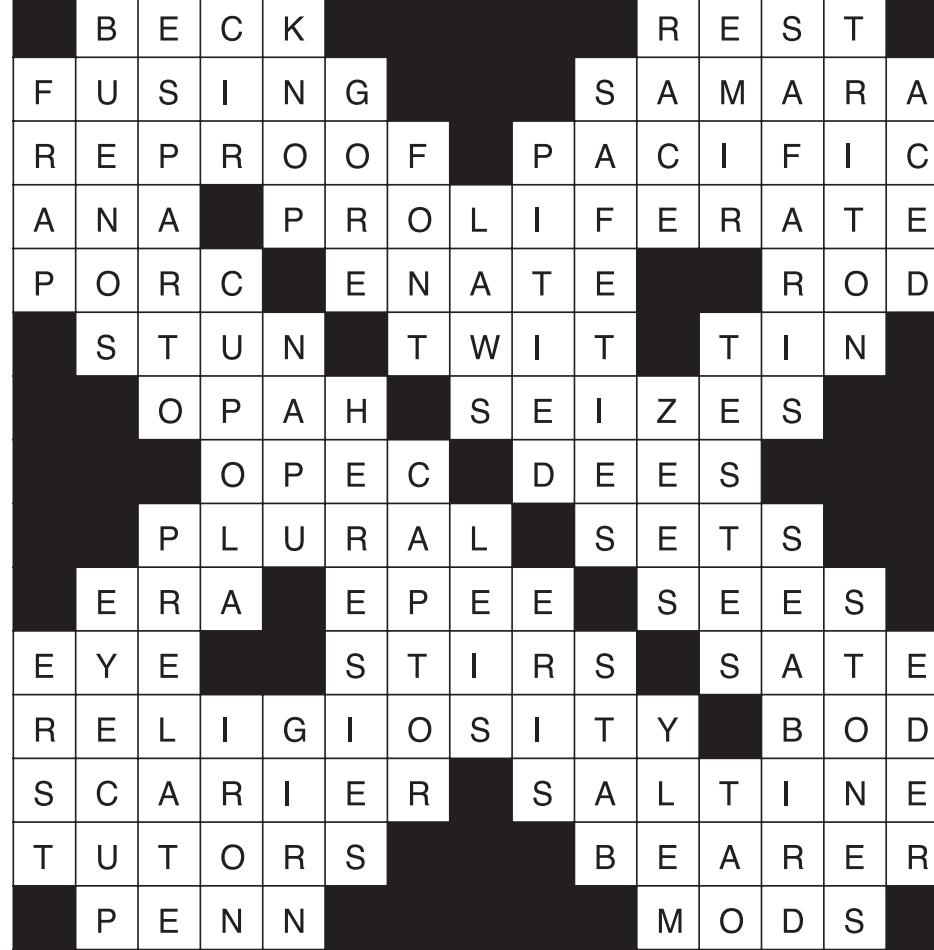
Three black chevron symbols pointing left, arranged horizontally. Each chevron is composed of two parallel diagonal lines forming a V-shape pointing to the left.

DON'T PEEK!

GAME ANSWERS BELOW



WORD SCRAMBLE: LIFE



GUESS WHO: DOLLY PARTON

FUN FACT: WORLD WIDE WEB

E LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

CRIME

Fire damages recently renovated Taw Caw Park

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY

mtscreporter@gmail.com

A fire at Taw Caw Park on December 23 caused extensive damage to the boardwalk near the end of the peninsula, just months after the park completed major renovations to its infrastructure.

Clarendon County Fire Rescue (CCFR) responded to the blaze around 10 p.m., after a passerby reported seeing flames. According to CCFR, the fire consumed multiple sections of the boardwalk, which was originally constructed in the late 1970s and underwent a \$28,000 renovation earlier this year.

"The fire was burning intensely at the far end of the boardwalk," a CCFR spokesperson said. "Due to the remote location, we couldn't get hose lines to the site. We relied on water extinguishers, a bucket brigade, and eventually had to cut out a two-foot section of the boardwalk to stop the fire from spreading."

Firefighters were on the scene for about two hours, working to extinguish the flames. No injuries were reported, and the exact cause of the fire remains under investigation. Officials suspect the fire may have been started by someone attempting to stay warm on the cold night.

"We didn't find any evidence of grills or other equipment, but it's possible that a cigarette

or other small flame could have ignited the dry leaves and brush," the spokesperson added. The damaged section of the boardwalk is currently taped off, and repairs are expected to begin soon. Parks and Recreation Director Paul McCulloch confirmed that the county's general insurance policy will cover the estimated \$11,000 repair costs. Unlimited Enterprises of Turbeville has been contracted to complete the work, which is expected to take about a week.

"The fire could have been much worse given the dry conditions that night," McCulloch said. "We're grateful for the efforts of our firefighters to contain it, and we're committed to making the necessary repairs to reopen the boardwalk safely."

The fire marks a setback for Taw Caw Park, which recently completed renovations to its boardwalks and piers, enhancing the site's appeal for local schools and nature enthusiasts. Despite this incident, McCulloch remains optimistic about the park's future.

"Taw Caw is a beautiful community resource," he said. "We're committed to repairing the damage and ensuring it remains a safe and welcoming place for visitors."

For updates on repairs and park access, visit the Clarendon County Parks and Recreation website at clarendoncountygov.org/parks-recreation.



FIRE. The boardwalk at Taw Caw Park shows a section cut out by firefighters to stop the spread of flames after a Dec. 23 fire caused extensive damage to the structure. (Photo C/O Melissa Foust-McCoy)

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CHURCH DIRECTORY

Alcolu Church of God of Prophecy - Alderman Camp Rd.	Manning United Methodist Church - 17 E. Rigby Street.
Andrews Chapel United Methodist Church - Panola.	Maranatha Pentecostal Holiness Church - Horse Branch Road, Turbeville.
Antioch Baptist Church - Jordan.	Maranatha Seventh Day Adventist Church - 314 W. Huggins St., Manning.
Antioch RMUE Church - Pinewood.	The Master's Place - 7 S. Church Street, Manning.
Apostolic Revival Center - Manning.	McKenzie Tabernacle Church - New Zion.
Bethlehem Methodist Church - Davis Station.	Melina Presbyterian Church - Sardinia.
Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church - Summerton.	Mt. Calvary FBH Church - Boyce Street, Manning.
Biggers AME Church - S.C. 261 East, Manning.	Mt. Carmel United Freewill Baptist Church - 207 Reardon St., Manning.
Briggs Chapel Missionary Baptist Church - Summerton.	Mt. Chapel Baptist Church - Hwy. 260, Manning.
Christ Tabernacle FWG Ministry - Summerton.	Mt. Hope FBH Church - Pinewood.
Church of God by Faith - Davis Station.	Mt. Nebo Baptist Church - Plowden Road.
The Church of God Prophecy - Alcolu.	Mt. Pleasant Union Methodist Episcopal Church.
The Church of God of Prophecy - Home Branch	Mt. Zero Baptist Church - S.C. 261, Paxville.
Clarendon Baptist Church - Alcolu.	Historic Mt. Zion AME Church - Potato Creek Road.
Community Deliverance Temple - U.S. 301 North.	New Bethel Holiness Church - Davis Crossroad, 1287 Starks Drive, Summerton.
Congregation Temple Bethel - S.C. 261 East, Manning.	New Covenant Holiness Church - 3699 Alex Harvin Highway, Manning.
Cornerstone Fellowship Free Will Baptist Church - 2116 Greeleyville Highway, Manning.	New Covenant Presbyterian Church - U.S. 301 South, Manning.
Cross Roads Bible Fellowship - 5546 Paxville Hwy Manning	New Harmony Presbyterian Church - New Harmony Church Road, Alcolu.
Cypress Fork Freewill Baptist Church - Cypress Forks community.	New Hope AME Church - Pinewood.
Deep Creek Pentecostal Holiness Church - Bloomville Highway.	New Light Baptist Church - Davis Station.
Deliverance Ministries - Summerton.	New Start Community Church of the Nazarene - 4686 J.W. Rames Rd, Manning.
Ebenezer Baptist Church - 105 Dinkins St., Manning.	New Town Freewill Baptist Church - West Turbeville Highway, Lake City.
Elizabeth Missionary Bapt. Church - U.S. 301 South, Box 748, Manning.	New Zion Church - Salem Road, New Zion.
Emmanuel Baptist Church - 1794 Old Georgetown Road, Manning.	Oak Grove Baptist Church
Faith Center - Rev. J. W. Carter Road, P.O. Box 233, Manning.	Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church - 2529 Raccoon Road, Manning.
Fellowship of Praise - 8280 Old No. 6 Highway, Santee.	Paxville Baptist Church - S.C. 261 Paxville.
First Assembly of God - 3574 Hwy 260/Lake Road.	Pine Dale Pentecostal Holiness Church - Turbeville.
First Baptist Church - 49 West Boyce Street, Manning.	Pine Grove AME Church - 7779 Kenwood Rd.
First Servant's Church - 6 Keitt St., Manning.	Pine Grove Church - Turbeville, SC
Fourth Crossroads Baptist Church - Off Highway 261.	Prayer House Mission Church - Davis Crossroads, Summerton.
Friendship AME Church - Silver Community	The Presbyterian Church - North Brooks Street, Manning, Dr.
Friendship Presbyterian Church USA - 10123 Black River Rd., New Zion.	Providence AME Church - Mallet Road, Manning.
Global Harvest Church - Hwy 521 North.	Providence Christian Church - Dozier Mallet Road, Manning.
Good Shepherd Baptist Church - 1891 Oak Grove Church Rd.	Restoration Ministries Church of God - Manning.
Goodwill Freewill Baptist Church - 1329 Goodwill Church Rd. Manning.	Rock Hill Baptist Church - Old Georgetown Road, Manning.
Grace Christian Fellowship Church - Raccoon Road, Manning.	Santee AME Church - Dingle Pond Road, Summerton.
Grace Gospel Church - Summerton. Rev. A.N. Adrars.	Santee Baptist Church - Hwy. 260, Manning.
Grace Missionary Baptist Church - 7 E. Keitt Street, Manning.	Sardinia Presbyterian Church - Sardinia.
Great Commission Ministries - 1631 Trinity Church Rd, I-95 & Highway 301, Alcolu.	Seacoast Manning - Weldon Auditorium.
Greater Union Cypress AME Church	Second Baptist Church - Alfred Henry Drive, Manning.
Green Hill Baptist Church - Alcolu.	Shiloh AME Church - Foreston.
Hickory Grove Missionary Baptist Church - 1158 Diggers Rd., Manning.	Society Hill AME Church - 1030 Morella Road, Manning.
Hickory Grove Baptist Church - Turbeville.	Spring Hill AME Church -
Home Branch Baptist Church - Manning.	St. James AME Church -
Home Branch Church of God of Prophecy - 2211 Connor Road.	St. Luke Baptist Church - Foreston.
Holy Rock Holiness Church - Foreston.	St. Mark AME Church - First Street, Summerton.
Hope Lutheran Church - American Legion, Manning.	St. Mary's Catholic Church - N. Cantey St., Summerton.
Horse Branch Freewill Baptist Church - Turbeville.	St. Matthias Anglican Church - North Duke at Canty, Summerton.
House of God - 119 W Huggins St., Manning.	St. Paul Holiness Church - St. Paul.
Howard Chapel AME Church - New Zion.	St. Peter AME - Rimini.
Israelite Holy Temple Outreach Ministry - 125 W. Huggins St., Manning.	St. Phillip RMUE - Old River Road, Pinewood.
Jehovah Jireh Outreach - P.O. Box 13, Manning.	Summerton Baptist Church - East Main Street.
Jordan Methodist Church - Highway 260, Jordan.	Summerton Presbyterian Church - 16 South Canty Street.
Lake Marion Baptist Church - Off Hwy 301, North Santee.	Summerton Southern Methodist Church
Laurel Hill AME Church - 2032 M.W. Rickenbaker Road, Summerton.	Summerton United Methodist Church - Corner of S. Church St. and Briggs St.
Liberty Hill AME Church - Summerton.	Taw Caw Baptist Church - Summerton.
Liberty Free Will Baptist Church - 2761 Liberty Church Rd., Manning.	Trinity AME Church - 39 W. Rigby Street, Manning.
Lighthill Baptist Church - Manning.	Trinity Church - U.S. 301, Alcolu.
Little Star Pentecostal Holiness Church - Juneburn Road, Manning.	Triumph The Church Kingdom of God in Christ - Davis Station.
Macedonia FBH Church - Silver.	Truckers' Christian Chapel - TA Travel Center, I-95, Exit 119.
Macedonia Church of God by Faith, Inc. - 26 Mazyck St., Summerton.	True Way Holiness Church, Highway 521 in Alcolu.
Manning Baptist Temple - Raccoon Road at I-95 and Highway 261.	Turbeville First Baptist Church - 1020 Morris Street, Turbeville.
Manning Church of Christ - 311 E. Keitt St., Manning.	Turbeville Southern Methodist Church - Turbeville.
Manning Deliverance Temple - (Apostolic Denomination) 6422 June Burn Rd, Manning.	Union Community Christian Church - Nesbitt Rd.
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Boys Varsity Basketball
Dynamic duo of Thompson and Robinson lead Manning to victory

Manning won the last time they faced Lake City and things went their way on Friday too. The Manning Monarchs walked away with a 47-40 win over the Lake City Panthers.

Leading Manning to victory were Daniel Robinson and Jordyn Thompson. Robinson went 5 of 12 on his way to 14 points, while Thompson posted eight points and seven rebounds. The dominant performance gave Thompson a new career-high in boards. Another player making a difference was Lovell Stevenson, who scored seven points in addition to 11 rebounds and three blocks.

Manning smashed the offensive glass and finished the game with 13 offensive boards. That strong performance was nothing new for the team: they've now pulled down at least eight offensive rebounds in three consecutive matchups.

Manning's victory bumped their record up to 10-3.

As for Lake City, they have also been struggling recently as they've lost three of their last four games, which put a noticeable dent in their 5-5 record this season.

Coincidentally, the two teams will both be playing East Clarendon the next time they take the court. Lake City will host East Clarendon at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, while Manning will host them at 7:30 p.m. on January 24th.

Scott's Branch Sets Scoring Season-High Against St. John's

Winning is always nice, but doing so behind a season-high score is even better (just ask Scott's Branch). They enjoyed a cozy 62-43 win over the St. John's Islanders on Tuesday. The team's explosion on offense also rewarded the Eagles with their most commanding win of the season. Nyren Bowman was the offensive standout of the matchup as he posted 14 points in addition to eight boards and three steals. JoJo Jackson was another key player, putting up eight points.

Scott's Branch's victory bumped their record up to 5-10. As for St. John's, they dropped their record down to 1-13 with the loss, which was their eighth straight at home dating back to last season.

Both teams will have to hit the road in their

upcoming games. Scott's Branch will head out to take on Charleston Math & Science at 7:30 p.m. on Friday. Charleston Math & Science is strutting in with some offensive muscle as they've averaged 61.3 points per game this season. As for St. John's, they are taking a road trip to square off against Military Magnet Academy at 8:30 p.m. on Friday. Military Magnet Academy also hasn't been messing around on offense: they've averaged 51.5 points per game.

East Clarendon falls to Marion Swamp Foxes

East Clarendon - 47
 Marion - 73

Laurence Manning Academy dominates Hilton Head Christian Academy

Laurence Manning - 70
 Hilton Head - 64

Girls Varsity Basketball

Monarchs 38, Panthers 59

The Lake City (SC) varsity basketball team won Friday's home conference game against Manning (SC) by a score of 59-38.

VOTING

County Council elects new vice chair, approves 2025 budget schedule

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY
 mtsreporter@gmail.com

The Clarendon County Council held its first regular meeting of the year on January 13, welcoming a large audience to its chambers. The agenda included service awards, updates on county projects, and the ratification of the county administrator's contract.

Chairman Jay Johnson, in his first meeting as chair, opened the session with a warm welcome. "Bear with us as we settle into our roles. I'm confident we'll work together to achieve great things for our county," he said.

The meeting began with an invocation delivered by Councilman Billy Richardson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The agenda and minutes from the December 9, 2024, meeting were approved unanimously.

Linda Lemon presented service awards to six employees, recognizing their years of service to Clarendon County. Among the honorees were Christopher D. Brunson and Yolanda Lindler-Martin, each celebrating five years, and Terry Allan Lee Jr., marking 10 years. Charles Eaddy was recognized for 25 years of service, while former Vice Chairman William J. Frierson and Councilman Billy G. Richardson were each honored for their 30 years of dedication.

"Your commitment to our county has not gone unnoticed," Lemon said. "We thank you for your continued efforts to improve the lives of our residents."

During the public comment period, resident Terrey Streath of the Palmetto State Audit group addressed transparency and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) procedures. Streath urged council members to maintain accountability. "Transparency is easy if there's nothing to hide," she said. "We as taxpayers have a right and responsibility for any use of public money. Facilities and profits, they all belong to us."

Streath's remarks coincided with Deputy Administrator Sharman Anderson's presentation of a draft FOIA policy. Anderson explained, "Clarendon County has always responded to FOIA requests in compliance with state law. This policy aims to memorialize our process, ensuring consistency for both staff and citizens." She emphasized that the proposal does not change how citizens submit requests. "We want to set a uniform policy for the county," she added.

Following public comment, Councilman Pat Coker was unanimously elected Vice Chairman for 2025, replacing outgoing Vice Chairman Frierson. "Congratulations to Mr. Coker," Chairman Johnson said. "We're looking forward to your leadership in this role."

County Administrator Lynden Anthony presented the budget schedule for fiscal year 2025/2026. He outlined the critical steps to finalize the county's operational budget by June. "Our first reading of the operational budget will be April 14, 2025," Anthony said. "A budget workshop will follow on April 28, 2025, allowing us two weeks to incorporate feedback. The public hearing and second reading are scheduled for May 12, 2025, and the third and final reading will be June 9, 2025."

Council unanimously approved the proposed schedule. Chief Financial Officer Tammy Rodvansky delivered the financial report, highlighting that general fund expenditures as of December 31 were at 45%, below the expected 50% mark. "Our overall expenses are coming in under budget, which is good," Rodvansky said. She noted that certain departments appeared over budget due to one-time expenses but expected those numbers to balance out soon. Rodvansky also shared encouraging news about Weldon Auditorium. "They had a strong December due to events being moved up from January, and they're expecting an even stronger February," she said. Additionally, she mentioned an anticipated boost from events relocating to Weldon while Sumter's Patriot Hall undergoes renovations.

During the administrator's report, Anthony provided updates on major projects, including the Emergency Operations Center, the Turbeville Fire Station, and the Turbeville Library. He also reported a significant grant for the library.

"Last month, I picked up a check for \$1,750,000 from the Doctors Bruce and Lee Foundation," Anthony said. "That is the largest check I've ever actually gone to pick up."

Lastly, Anthony addressed damage to Taw Caw Park's boardwalk caused by a fire over the holidays. "We're in the process of getting quotes to repair the damage," he said. "It's a beautiful area, and we want to make it accessible again as soon as possible."

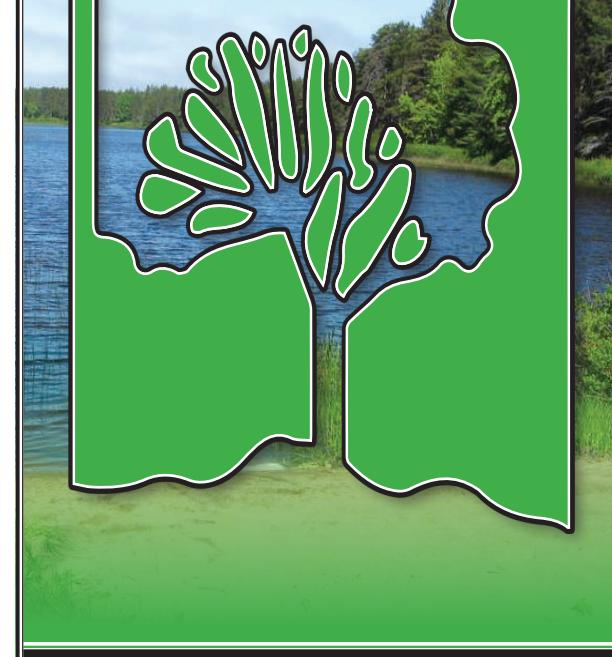
In recreational updates, Anthony noted the start of basketball season and the opening of baseball and softball registration. "It's never too early to get everyone signed up," he said.

Johnson did not provide a formal chairman's report during the meeting, presumably due to his recent start in the role. "To be honest with you, I really don't have anything to report yet. Maybe I'll have something by next month, but it's kind of slim for me right now," Johnson remarked with a lighthearted tone.

The council then entered an executive session to discuss the county administrator's contract. Upon returning, Richardson made a motion to ratify Anthony's contract, which was seconded and approved unanimously.

With all items on the agenda addressed, Johnson adjourned the meeting. "We've started the year on a strong note, and I look forward to continuing this momentum," he said.

The next council meeting is scheduled for February 10, at 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 411 Sunset Drive, Manning.



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NONPROFIT

CARE House opens new facility in Manning

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY

mtscrreporter@gmail.com

The CARE House of the Pee Dee, a nonprofit dedicated to providing child abuse victims with critical resources, officially opened its new facility in Manning on Friday. A ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the occasion, drawing local officials, law enforcement representatives, and community partners who praised the organization's mission to deliver help, hope, and healing to children and families.

The new facility will serve as a one-stop location for child abuse-related services, offering a supportive environment where children can access forensic interviews, medical evaluations, and trauma-focused therapies. The CARE House also provides advocacy and wraparound services designed to guide families through the often complex justice and healing processes.

"A world without children's advocacy centers is a world where families navigate a tangled web of services," said Alice Curry Gallego, Development Director of CARE House. "Here, we ensure no one falls through the cracks by working collaboratively with law enforcement, social services, and other partners."

Since its founding in 2004, CARE House has served over 8,000 children in the Pee Dee region, which includes Florence, Marion, Clarendon, and Dillon counties.

The Manning location expands the organization's reach and brings its essential services

closer to families in need. The center employs evidence-based therapies such as Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, many of which are not otherwise available locally. The facility also includes specialized spaces for forensic interviews. These interviews, conducted by trained professionals using the Child FIRST protocol, aim to minimize re-traumatization and provide crucial evidence for legal cases. Observers, including law enforcement and attorneys, can monitor interviews from a separate room, ensuring the child's comfort and safety.

Clarendon County Chamber of Commerce board member Linda Jackson spoke on behalf of the organization, noting the center's significance. "Your dedication to providing essential child abuse counseling services is a lifeline to our community," Jackson said. "We are grateful for your commitment to making a positive impact."

Meg Temple, Executive Director of CARE House, highlighted the importance of the center's mission. "Children can't help what has been done to them, and someone has to step up to help them move forward," Temple said. "This center ensures that children have hope for the future, no matter their past experiences."

The Manning facility's opening signifies a strengthened commitment to supporting children and families in Clarendon County and beyond. For more information about CARE House or to access its services, visit www.carehousepeeedee.org.



RIBBON CUTTING. CARE House staff, community partners, and Clarendon County Chamber of Commerce members gather for the ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the grand opening of the new Manning facility. (Photo C/O CC Chamber of Commerce)



RIBBON CUTTING. McGruff, CARE House's beloved service dog, proudly sports a blue bow from the ribbon-cutting ceremony. (Photo C/O Melissa Foust-McCoy)

COMPETITION

Laurence Manning Academy's Dancing with the Swampcats returns Jan. 25

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY

mtscrreporter@gmail.com

On January 25, at 7 p.m., Laurence Manning Academy (LMA) will host its third annual Dancing with the Swampcats at Weldon Auditorium. The event, inspired by the hit television show Dancing with the Stars, pairs student-athletes with local dance students for a night of fun, friendly competition, and fundraising for the LMA Booster Club.

"This is actually just our third one," said Ella Clark, LMA's Director of Communications. "We have 11 couples this year. [Male participants] can play any sport—we've had fishing, shotgun team,

soccer, basketball—it doesn't matter as long as they participate in athletics at Laurence Manning."

The event brings together student dancers and athletes from ninth to twelfth grade. Dancers hail from Carolina Dance Academy, Dance Wells, and Miss Libby's School of Dance. "I love that we have girls who take dance lessons at no less than four outside local studios, and they all come together as one," said Dixie Elliott, owner of Carolina Dance Academy and co-creator of the event.

Preparation for the event starts in October when duos are formed. Each pair selects their own music and choreographs their routine, with costumes and music ap-

proved by organizers. "Some start practicing right away, while others wait until two or three weeks before," said Clark. "At least a few kids every year discover talents they didn't know they had. It gives them a chance to step out of their comfort zone and show what they can do."

Elliott praised the students' enthusiasm and willingness to embrace the challenge. "The boys really get into learning the choreography, practicing, and performing," she said. "I overheard one of the male contestants say, 'I haven't sweated this much since football practice!' That says a lot!"

Last year's event raised \$35,000, and organizers hope to exceed that total this year. "Our goal is to meet or exceed [last

year's total]," Clark said. "The support these students get is remarkable. The crowd comes out, and they truly support them."

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students if purchased in advance through the school or from participants. At the door, tickets are \$30 for adults and \$15 for students. "It's not only a super fun time for these kids and an amazing fundraiser for the Booster Club, but also a very entertaining evening for anyone who comes to watch," said Elliott.

For more information, contact Laurence Manning Academy or visit their Facebook page.

BUSINESS

Gig the Barber finds a new home in Clarendon

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY

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Gerald "Gig" Richardson, better known as "Gig the Barber," has found a fresh start and a warm welcome in Clarendon County. After 25 years in Charleston, Gig moved to Manning this past summer, bringing with him not only his craft but a slice of history through his old-school barbering skills.

"I've always gone by Gig," Richardson said. "It was a nickname my grandmother gave me. Gig just fits me better. It's who I am."

Richardson's path to barbering was unconventional. Born in Conway, he grew up in Lexington and joined the Navy in 1988 after graduating from high school. He served as a firefighter until 1995, when Charleston's Naval Base closed, prompting a career change.

"I didn't plan on getting out of the Navy," he explained. "But when the Charleston base closed, I had to figure out what was next. I worked in the car business for a while until a barber named Bert Causey suggested I try cutting hair. At first, I thought he was crazy. I had four kids to support. But, he told me to build a clientele, stay consistent, and the money would come. He was absolutely right."

Richardson completed his on-the-job training under the guidance of Don Watford, a Charleston barber who, at 87, still cuts hair today. "Don taught me everything I know," Richardson said. "I owe him a lot. Without his mentorship, I wouldn't be where I am."

Richardson specializes in traditional barbering services, including haircuts, hot towel shaves, and beard trims. His meticulous approach, honed over decades, emphasizes craftsmanship that many feel has been lost.

"Every haircut comes with a hot towel and straight razor neck shave," he said. "That's the part people miss the most and what makes you a barber, not just a haircare specialist. I've had older gentlemen come in and say, 'Nobody's done that since Mr. Ollie.' Hearing that means everything to me."

When the hustle and bustle of Charleston

became too much, Richardson and his girlfriend, Hannah, began searching for a quieter life near a lake. After months of searching, they found the perfect home in Manning, complete with a shared dock and a spacious yard for their three dogs.

"The people here remind me of growing up in Lexington," Richardson said. "They're kind, welcoming, and supportive. Manning feels like home."

One of his first stops in town was the Shoppe on Brooks, where he found a booth rental opportunity. "Dorothy and everyone here welcomed me with open arms," Richardson said. "I'm the only white barber in the shop, but we're a family. There's no color here, just good people."

Despite initial concerns about finding enough clients, Richardson has quickly become a local favorite. "I thought it would take a year to build a clientele," he said. "But in just five months, I've been blown away by the support. People are coming from Summerton, Sumter, and even further because they've missed having an old-school barber."

His reputation has grown through word of mouth and his grassroots marketing efforts. "Every time I went to the hardware store or the grocery store, I handed out business cards," Richardson said. "The community has been amazing."

Richardson has no plans to leave Manning. "I'll be cutting hair here until I can't anymore," he said. "This is where I'm supposed to be."

As for passing on his skills, Richardson is open to mentoring the next generation. "If the right young person came along, I'd be willing to train them," he said. "Barbering is a lost art, and I'd love to see it thrive again." For Richardson, barbering is more than just a job. It's a way to connect with people and be part of a community. "It's not just about the haircut," he said. "It's about the stories, the connections, and the trust. That's what makes this work so fulfilling."

With his steady hand and warm demeanor, Richardson has quickly earned his place in Manning's history, one haircut at a time. "This is where I want to be," he said. "It feels like home."



BARBER. Gig Richardson gives client Dane a fresh cut. Richardson, who recently moved to Clarendon County, has quickly gained a reputation for his old-school barbering techniques and welcoming demeanor.

(Photo C/O Melissa Foust-McCoy)

FAITH

United Ministries partners with MUMC for Super Bowl of Caring

BY MELISSA FOUST-MCCOY
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For decades, United Ministries has been a cornerstone of compassion in Clarendon County, serving residents in need with essential support. For a second year, the organization is teaming up with Manning United Methodist Church for the annual Super Bowl of Caring, an initiative that transforms Super Bowl weekend into an opportunity to tackle hunger in local communities. United Ministries, founded by locals Ted and Barbara Johnson, has steadily grown to meet the needs of the community. Executive Director Kathy Bryce, who has been with the organization for over 16 years, is passionate about continuing its mission.

United Ministries provides food every three months, access to clothing and household items through a partnership with First Baptist Church's Friendship House, and \$100 toward prescription medication at local pharmacies such as Anderson Pharmacy and Sumter RX.

Additionally, the organization serves homeless residents weekly and operates mobile food pantries twice a month in rural areas, partnering with churches, fire departments, and community centers. Each pantry distributes enough food for 125 families, often exceeding that amount when supplies allow.

In 2023, United Ministries served 12,461 individuals, nearly a third of the county's population. "To Him, we give the glory," Bryce said. The Super Bowl of Caring, founded in 1990 at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina, has grown into a national movement. Inspired by a simple prayer to remember those in need during Super Bowl festivities, the initiative has raised over \$193 million in food and donations for hunger-relief charities nationwide.

Locally, Manning United Methodist Church leads the effort. Donations, including canned goods, bags of rice, and monetary contributions, are doubled through matching funds. In

2023, the campaign raised over \$5,000 for United Ministries.

"Anything donated—whether a can of food or a \$100 bill—is doubled, making a significant difference for families in need," Bryce explained.

This year's campaign will accept donations through early February, with all proceeds benefiting United Ministries.

While the Super Bowl of Caring plays a vital role in supporting United Ministries, the organization has year-round needs, including rice, dried beans, mac and cheese, peanut butter, jelly, canned fruit, and canned vegetables. Bryce also mentioned a pressing need for a new refrigerator to store perishable donations.

"We rely on the generosity of individuals, churches, civic groups, and grants," Bryce said. "Whatever the need is, I pray about it, and within days, someone brings it through the door. It's the most amazing place to work."

Bryce highlighted the support of the Lions Club of Manning, which helps with unloading trucks, staffing pantries, and distributing food. "If it wasn't for the Lions Club, we wouldn't be able to do what we do," she said.

The community's generosity shines through in other events as well, such as the post office's annual food drive. "It's an incredible testament to the heart of this town," Bryce said.

Community members can contribute to United Ministries by donating non-perishable food items, funds, or a working refrigerator. Monetary donations can be mailed to United Ministries, P.O. Box 73, Manning, SC 29102. Volunteers are always welcome to assist with food distribution and other activities.

For Bryce, the mission remains deeply personal. "God tapped me on the shoulder 16 years ago, and I've been here ever since," she said. "Our town is growing, and so is the need, but together, we can make a difference."



CARING. A young participant at last year's Super Bowl of Caring event at Manning United Methodist Church sits with a can of green beans. (Photo C/O Kelly Gottheiner)

COMPETITION

East Clarendon's night of dancing highlights several stars

BY KATHERINE HUTCHINSON

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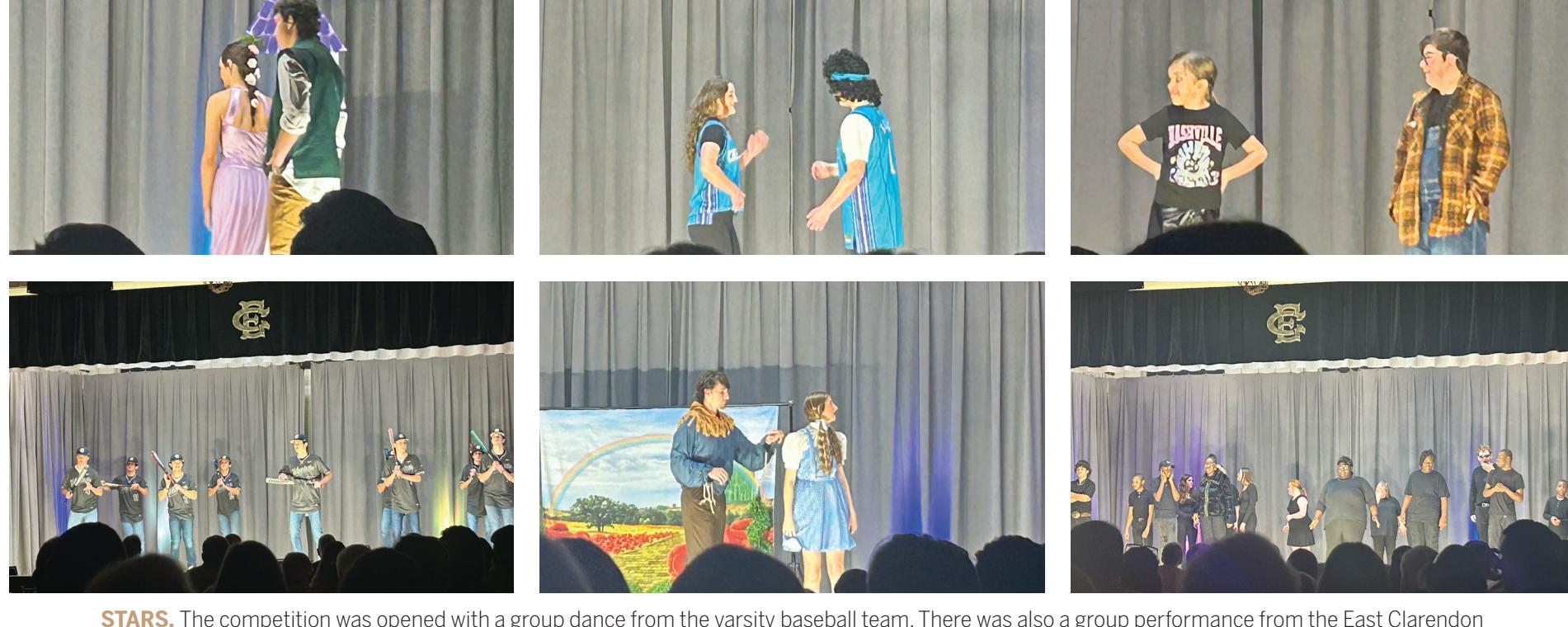
East Clarendon Middle/High School held a

Dancing with the Stars competition Saturday, Jan. 18 to raise money for the athletic booster club. Several pairs from the high school, and one from the middle school, showcased their skills on the dance floor with unique and dazzling rou-

tines. Through ticket sales and donations, the event raised almost \$30,000 which will be used to buy new baseball equipment and more. Congratulations to all the winners of the event.



STARS. Every competitor gathered together on the stage, anxiously awaiting the announcement of the winning pairs. (Photo C/O Katherine Hutchinson)



STARS. The competition was opened with a group dance from the varsity baseball team. There was also a group performance from the East Clarendon special education class. The other competitors danced in pairs, donning unique and fun costumes. (Photos C/O Katherine Hutchinson)

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