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Calendar

Every Saturday – Georgetown Farmers Market on Screven St. from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Aug. 6 – Board of Zoning Appeals meeting, 5:30 p.m. at Howard Auditorium.

Aug. 7 – Blood drive, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Howard Recreation Center, 1610 Hawkins St.

Aug. 20 – Georgetown County Planning Commission meeting, 5:30 p.m. at Howard Auditorium.

Aug. 25 – Georgetown County Council meeting, 5:30 p.m. at Howard Auditorium. Council only meets once this month.

Aug. 27 – Georgetown County Council workshop, Howard Auditorium.

Sept. 7 – Georgetown County offices and facilities are closed for Labor Day.

The Georgetown County Chronicle



A monthly e-newsletter produced by Georgetown County, S.C., for its residents and visitors.

Volume 8, Issue 10

August 2020

Reassessment wrapping up; notices to go out in September

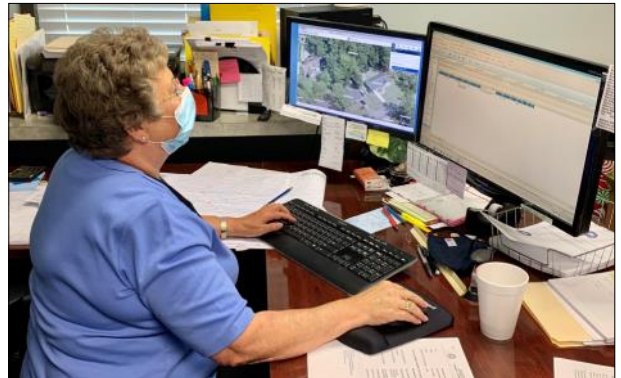
The process for property reassessment in Georgetown County this year was hindered — like so many things — by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff in the Assessor's Office had initially hoped to be through with reassessment by June, but were just entering the final stages in the last days of July.

"It caused a big delay," said Assessor Susan Edwards. "But we're pretty much back on schedule now and we have everything lined up so we can hopefully get the notices out to property owners in September."

Appraisers started doing field work last year, but had to stop in March when the State and Georgetown County declared a State of Emergency surrounding the spread of the new Coronavirus. The staff in the Assessor's Office was assigned to work from home at that time, using traditional appraisal methods.

The Assessor's Office ended up using Pictometry, an aerial imaging process that allows users to view locations from multiple angles, to complete the bulk of appraisals. Pictometry allows appraisers to view properties from above, but also see the fronts and sides of buildings and locations on the ground.

See "Reassessment," Page 6



Assessor Susan Edwards reviews properties at her desk using Pictometry software. The bulk of appraisals for the 2020 reassessment have been done virtually due to COVID-19.

What is reassessment?

Reassessment takes place every five years and is mandated by the state. It is the process of reappraising the value of properties to bring them current based on recent sales values and building costs. However, values are capped at 15 percent as long as a home is occupied by the same owner (if the home is sold, that cap goes away and is reset after the purchase). Owners are notified in writing of any change in value of \$1,000 or greater.

Emergency Manager stresses importance of having a hurricane plan

As the calendar flipped from July to August, Georgetown County officials were making preparations for what was looking increasingly likely to be the first hurricane of the 2020 season to impact the S.C. coast.

Hurricane Isaias was upgraded from a tropical storm to a category 1 hurricane late on July 30. The next morning, Georgetown County Emergency Management was gearing up to put into motion plans for activating the county's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during a pandemic. Luckily, it's something

the division had been preparing for since the pandemic started this spring. Normally, an activated Emergency Operations Center is packed with people as representatives from county departments and partner agencies come together to launch a coordinated effort to deal with an approaching or occurring emergency and the recovery that comes after.

Brandon Ellis, Georgetown County's Emergency Services Director, knew early on this year would be different. To help avoid the spread of COVID-19, the Emergency Oper-

ations Center will be manned by a skeleton crew, with nearly all staff working remotely.

As the county made its preparations, Ellis encouraged residents to do the same.

"Ideally you want to start getting your hurricane plan and your kit ready before there's a storm out there, but once we're tracking one, it really becomes a matter of 'the sooner the better,'" Ellis said.

Residents are advised to review their personal safety plans and consider actions they would need

See "Preparedness," Page 6

IN MEMORIAM: County mourns longtime Council Chairman Johnny Morant

Johnny Morant Sr., a former longtime representative of District 7 on Georgetown County Council, passed away on Sunday, July 12, after a long illness. He was 69.

Mr. Morant was born Dec. 5, 1950, to David and Helen Morant of Plantersville. They instilled in him a sense of responsibility and love for family and community. He was named for his grandfather, who is remembered as a noble man with a kind and gentle spirit. In these respects, the grandson followed in his grandfather's footsteps.

A 1969 graduate of Choppee High School, Mr. Morant participated in school debates, was a member of all honor clubs and was active on the high school basketball team and glee club. He attended Savannah State College, where he obtained a degree in political science, and met and married his wife, Janice. He went on to continue his studies at the University of Illinois, where he earned his law degree.

Mr. Morant spent two years working in Richland County as an assistant solicitor before moving back to the coast and taking a position with the Horry County Solicitor's Office. In February 1980, at the age of 29, he became Georgetown County's first full-time assistant solicitor. In that role, he had the sole responsibility in representing the State in the district family court.

His service didn't stop there. He served as the chairman of the Waccamaw Workforce Investment Board, and was a member of the Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments Board and South State Bank Advisory Board. In 1993, he was elected to Georgetown County Council, where he served for 25 years, including as Council Chairman from 2008-2018. He listed his proudest accomplishments as those that improved the quality of life for communities, including bringing sewer access to Browns Ferry, Choppee, Annie Village and Plantersville, and bringing needed parks and recreational opportunities to communities across the county. He also quietly volunteered his legal services pro bono to those in need. His legacy lives on through the changes he wrought.

Mr. Morant later went on to create Morant and Morant, LLC, a law firm in Georgetown, along with brother and law partner Louis. He was a member of Mt. Carmel United Baptist Church and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. On council and in his com-



Johnny Morant

munity, he was known as a quiet but firm leader, who brought order to a room with ease and inspired confidence just by his presence.

"There have been moments, I think, when people considered quietness to be a weakness. But Johnny, in his quiet way, let you know in no uncertain terms the route that we should take," recalled Austin Beard, a friend who served on Council with Mr. Morant and who spoke at his burial service. He added that Mr. Morant's leadership was invaluable to the county and improving the quality of life for its residents in the last decades.

"It's a true testament to his leadership that we were able to accomplish the kind of significant projects we did," said Sel Hemingway, former County Administrator and a longtime friend of Mr. Morant. They served on Council together before Hemingway was hired as administrator. "I've admired his leadership and ability to remain calm in heated circumstances, even to the degree of calming me in some cases," Hemingway said.

The loss of Johnny Morant is a blow to the entire Georgetown County Community, and those who knew him say he will surely go down in history as one of

the county's greatest leaders.

As was his way, Mr. Morant brought the focus from himself back to the community in a speech during his County Council retirement party in 2018. "The community has done a lot for me, has helped me throughout," he told the crowd gathered to celebrate him at that time. "It isn't about me or the council. We're trying to do things that unite all of us. It's about the community."

Mr. Morant is survived by his devoted wife, Janice; two children, Nedra of the home; and Johnny Jr. (Davita) of Raleigh, N.C.; two grandchildren, Simone and Johnny III; seven brothers and sisters: David Morant, the Honorable Louis R. (Dr. Marthana Grate) Morant, Maggie M. (Eddie) Brown, all of Georgetown, Annaline M. (Harry) Rhodes of Columbia, Barbara M. Dancy and Carrie L. Morant of West Haven Conn., Marva L. Morant-McFadden of Hamden, Conn.; three sisters-in-law, Barbara Briggs of Savannah, Ga., Gloria Hurt of Jonesboro, Ga., Deborah Bartley (Jimmie) of Savannah Ga.; one brother-in-law, Leroy Warnock of Savannah Ga.; nieces, nephews, other loving relatives and many friends.

Get the Chronicle

At Georgetown County, we want our residents and property owners kept abreast of what's going on inside their local government. That's why we created the Georgetown County Chronicle. It's a vehicle for information about county services and events, important messages from county officials and behind-the-scenes glimpses at how government works.

You can find the Chronicle on our website at www.gtcounty.org or through our social media accounts. If you'd rather have it delivered to your inbox, e-mail jbroach@gtcounty.org with the subject line "send me the Chronicle."

That's also the place to send questions and comments about this newsletter and its content. We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

www.gtcounty.org

Mask ordinance in effect



Maya Morant of Georgetown County Economic Development recently participated in the county's Mask Up campaign on social media.

Residents, businesses and visitors in Georgetown County are reminded that face masks are now required by local ordinance in many locations across the county.

Masks or other facial coverings that cover the nose and mouth must be worn in businesses, including grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants and retail stores. Restaurant patrons are exempt while dining, but employees must wear a mask at all times while having face-to-face interaction with the public.

The ordinance was passed by County Council on July 2 and can be viewed in its entirety at gtcounty.org.

Under the ordinance, businesses are required to post written notification at their main entrance notifying customers of the mask requirements. A free sign for businesses to use may be downloaded at gtcounty.org. That website also has information on how to wear a mask properly and how to care for masks, as well as guidance for businesses enforcing the ordinance.

The ordinance contains medical and religious exemptions for masks. However, business owners may still ask those exempt from wearing a mask to leave the premises. The Americans With Disabilities Act allows restrictions when an individual would pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others. As of June 2020, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has said the COVID-19 pandemic meets the direct threat standard. For those with exemptions, businesses should try to engage customers with a reasonable accommodation, such as curbside pickup.

The mask ordinance will be in place for 60 days, unless terminated sooner by council. Anyone found in violation of the ordinance may be fined for each offense.

Region's four healthcare providers issue plea for residents to wear masks

An open letter to our communities:
Our region is experiencing a health emergency unlike any we've seen in our lifetime. Too many people are sick. Too many are dying.

We, the health care systems that proudly serve our communities, stand united in response to the COVID-19 crisis. And, as we stand together, we ask you to stand with us.

The thousands of physicians, nurses and health care professionals who have cared for your families in sickness and in health now find ourselves in a fight that we need your help to win.

Please, for the health and safety of our region, wear a mask. Avoid large gatherings, observe social distancing and wash your hands. These simple steps, when taken by all of us, will slow the spread of COVID-19.

It's critically important that we take action now. Our hospitals are at or near capacity. Our emergency departments and critical care units are full as we care for a surge of COVID-19 patients.

Through it all, our dedicated caregivers are performing quiet acts of heroism daily. We celebrate with every

patient who recovers, and we grieve with every family whose loved one is lost to this devastating virus.

Since this pandemic began, you have wrapped us in your love and prayers. We thank you for that. Your support has sustained us. Now, we've come together as our region's health care providers to ask you for something more. Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Observe social distancing. It *does* matter. It *will* save lives.

We're standing together to slow the spread of COVID-19. Stand with us.

In service to you,

Bruce Bailey,
President and CEO,
Tidelands Health

Bret Barr,
President and CEO,
Conway Medical Center

Mark Sims,
CEO
Grand Strand Health

Monica Vehige,
Administrator
McLeod Loris Seacoast Hospital

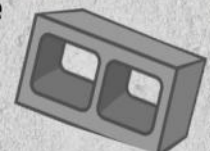
Concrete Recycling

Cinder blocks, bricks, and other building materials may be recycled at the landfill!



Be sure to use gloves and protective gear when handling the materials

The concrete may be repurposed at the landfill to create roads!



Library presents digital lecture series on Georgetown County history, culture

Beginning in late July, the Georgetown County Library system introduced a new local history series for the social distancing age. The series, which will run through Aug. 27, is broadcast live on the library system's Facebook page and features lectures by local specialists who will explore different elements of our county's deep and diverse history and culture.

Because of COVID-19 concerns, library meeting rooms remain closed to public gatherings. But the library wanted to continue offering its popular local history talks. Thus "DigiBridge," as the online presentations are known, was born. The presentations will provide engaging educational content for library patrons and community members, while also enabling folks to contribute to real-time Q&A sessions following each presentation on Facebook Live.

All presentations will take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2 p.m. and will be free to watch and participate in. To view the presentations live, go to the Georgetown County Library Facebook page at the scheduled date and time: <https://www.facebook.com/Georgetown-County-Library-103748677057>. You do not have to have a Facebook account to watch. In addition, if you miss one of the presentations on Facebook Live, all 10 presentation will be made available for later viewing at your convenience on the Georgetown County Library YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/GeorgetownCountyLibr>.

The DigiBridge lecture series is sponsored by a \$7,500 Bridge Grant from South Carolina Humanities. Funding for the Bridge Grants has been provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act economic stabilization plan.

"We are indeed grateful for the stalwart support of SC Humanities. This generous grant has enabled us to continue our humanities program-

ming throughout our mainly rural, diverse, and small-town county," said Dwight McInvaill, Library director.

The grant is designed to engage independent scholars who are very knowledgeable about Georgetown County's special local heritage. The scheduled presenters include a host of respected names, who will speak to a rich range of subjects including the area's Gullah heritage, maritime history, ghost lore, a notable female indigo planter, and several important African American voices.

Presentations already available to view in the archives include:

- "Georgetown Historic Ghost lore" with Elizabeth Huntsinger.

- "Stony the Road We Trod: 12 Notable Black Georgetonians" with Steve Williams.

- "A Continuum of Spirits: A Pictorial Presentation of Gullah Life in Georgetown County" with Vanessa Greene.

Upcoming lectures include:

- **Tuesday, Aug. 4:** Vennie Deas Moore presents "Traveling the Historic Waters of Georgetown's Winyah Bay."

- **Thursday, Aug. 6:** Justin McIntyre presents "The History of the Battleship USS *South Carolina*, America's First Dreadnought."

- **Tuesday, Aug. 11:** Marilyn Hemingway presents "Continuing the March for Social and Economic Justice in Georgetown County."

- **Thursday, Aug. 13:** Zenobia Washington Harper presents "The Gullah Dream Keeper."

- **Tuesday, Aug. 18:** Bud Hill presents "Indigo Girl Eliza Lucas Pinckney: One of the Most Influential Women in American History."

- **Thursday, Aug. 20:** Laura Herriott presents "The History of Wilma's Cottage on Sandy Island."

- **Tuesday, Aug. 25 or Thursday, Aug. 27:** Dedric Bonds presents "The Legacy of Georgetown's Committee for African American History Observances (CAAHO)."

New library branch on track for completion this autumn



As shown above, the Southern Georgetown Community Library continues to take shape. Barring any unforeseen delays, plans are to begin filling the space with books and furniture by early fall. The new library will open with a full collection of books, thanks to one of its sister branches. The Friends of the Waccamaw Library donated \$15,000 for books for the Southern Georgetown Branch, with the Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation agreeing to match the funds.

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Carvers Bay: (843) 545-3515

Adult summer reading challenge wraps up Aug. 17 with prize drawing

Are you an adult who likes reading, Bingo and free food? If so, then we've got some terrific news for you: There's still



time to participate in the Waccamaw Library's Adult Summer Reading Program and get entered into a drawing to win a Chick-Fil-A gift card!

Getting started is easy. Just download a packet at gtcounty.org, email kcorey@gtcounty.org to request a packet, or call the Library at (843) 545-3623 to schedule a time to stop by and pick up your packet in person. Each individual is limited to one Bingo card and one entry per person.

To get Bingo, all participants have to do is read, write or get involved with the library and its programs online. You can claim a square for reading an e-book, a graphic novel, a biography, a book from your childhood, or something that you wouldn't ordinarily read, and others. Writing challenges include writing about memories, writing a short fiction story, or chatting with others on the GCL Readers' Lounge Facebook Group about books.

If this sounds fun, sign up and get started on your bingo card now! You also get a free customized bookmark charm for participating. Completed Bingo cards must be turned in by 5 p.m. Aug. 17 to be entered into the prize drawing.

For more information, contact the Library or visit <https://georgetowncountylibrary.sc.gov/>.

Census takers ready to go door-to-door

The U.S. Census Bureau recently announced that census takers will start visiting homes in Georgetown County that have not yet completed the census beginning in mid-August. The Bureau is targeting the week of Aug. 9 to begin the door-to-door visits.



Residents at homes for which the census has already been completed should not receive an in-person visit. For those who would rather avoid an in-person visit, the 2020 census is easier than ever before to complete. This is the first year the census can be completed online. Just visit 2020.census.gov. Residents can also complete the census via phone by calling (844) 330-2020. It only takes a few minutes.

All census takers will be wearing masks and following local public health guidelines when they visit homes. The goal of all census takers is to help families make sure everyone in their home is counted in the 2020 census, which has a wide range of benefits for our community. All census takers will have an ID badge with their photograph and a U.S. Dept. of Commerce watermark. They will also carry census bureau bags.

To learn more about the 2020 census and why it's important for our county, visit gtcounty.org/census.

FIGHT the BITE



To request mosquito control service in your area, leave a message at (843) 545-3615.

Protect yourself:

- Wear light-colored clothing. Mosquitos are attracted to darker colors.
- Spray yourself and children with repellent.
- Wear long sleeves and pants if possible.

Reduce breeding sites:

- Drain or eliminate sites that have standing water.
- Reduce and eliminate garbage in drain areas.
- Be sure to repair window and door screens.



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Virtual Bingo helps senior citizens stay connected during pandemic

With Georgetown County's Senior Centers still closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees with the county's Bureau of Aging Services are finding new ways to help seniors stay engaged and connected with each other.

According to a recent report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 or older are considered to be socially isolated. In order to help combat this among Georgetown County's senior citizens, BOAS employees have started a weekly "Virtual Bingo" series to connect seniors over the phone and internet utilizing a software similar to Zoom.

Coretha Grate, the staffer in charge of the Virtual Bingo events, said that seniors have been excited about this new program.

"They're very excited to be able to hear voices that they haven't spoken to in a long time," Grate said. "They had fun and said that the ability to interact with their friends was something they've really been missing."

For many local seniors, the congregant meal programs and other activities offered at county senior centers was their primary means of socialization. The programs have been cancelled since March due to the threat of COVID-19.

So far, the Virtual Bingo events have been limited to seniors from the Georgetown senior center, with about eight seniors participating so far. With two successful events under their belts, BOAS staff plans to expand to include seniors from the other county senior centers in the coming weeks. Even though the series is called "Virtual Bingo," there will be other games played as well.

"What a lot of people don't know is that we have continued to keep our seniors engaged throughout the closures of our senior centers," Grate said. "We have been sending out puzzles and word games to their homes twice a month, and it's our hope that these events will further serve our efforts to keep our seniors minds' active."

Virtual Bingo events are held every Friday from 11a.m. to noon. Seniors who have not already received information on how to join should be receiving information in the coming weeks.

Closure Notice

Pond Road will be closed from Journeys End Rd. to Hyacinth Loop to accommodate road work Aug. 3-21. We apologize for any inconvenience.



Reassessment

Continued from Front Page

Edwards said she and staff were so pleased with the quality of the images and the efficiency of virtual appraisals that the department will likely continue using them in the future, after COVID-19.

"The only time we've really gone out since March is to look at new construction. The new construction has to be measured and viewed by the appraisers," Edwards said.

Once all valuations have been entered into the county's appraisal system, those numbers will be sent to the state for approval. When the state has signed off, the county will proceed with sending out reassessment notifications to property owners.

Upon receipt of the letter, property owners have 90 days to file an appeal if they believe the reassessed value is incorrect. Appeals

should be accompanied by any documentation that may help show the value is greater or less than appraised.

Edwards said there is no need to hire a professional appraisal agency when beginning an appeal.

"You certainly can, but in most instances, there's no need to spend that money. Just give us a call and let us take a look first and evaluate everything for accuracy. Many questions can be resolved that way," she said.

Even if an appeal is pending, property owners should be aware they still have to pay their taxes by the deadline to avoid a penalty. However, residents can call the Assessor's Office to request an "80% bill" if you choose to pay your taxes before the appeal is ruled on.

Learn how to contact the Assessor's Office by visiting the Tax Services section of the county website at gtcounty.org.

Preparedness

Continued from Front Page

to take if the storm threatens our area:

- Be sure your emergency supplies kit has enough bottled water and non-perishable food to sustain each family member for three days. Include a weather radio, flashlight, extra batteries, chargers, toiletries, change of clothes, blankets or sleeping bag, rain gear and appropriate footwear. Don't forget necessary medications for family members, and food, water, medicine and other items for any pets. Also include copies of important documents, such as birth certificates and insurance policies.

- Prepare your home for tropical storm conditions by making sure gutters are cleaned, storm drains are clear and any lawn furniture can be secured.

- Keep cell phones and mobile devices charged in case of power outages.

- Know Your Zone. Residents in coastal counties can find their hur-

ricane evacuation zone instantly by visiting scemd.org/KnowYourZone or downloading the SC Emergency Manager mobile app.

- Stay tuned to local media for the latest advisories from the National Weather Service and National Hurricane Center (NHC), as well as state and local emergency management officials.

- Follow trusted, verified sources for the latest news and be prepared to follow the instructions of state and local public safety officials.

Residents should also make plans where they will evacuate should an evacuation be needed this hurricane season. Again, make sure to include pets in all plans.

The official 2020 S.C. Hurricane Guide is available for download at scemd.org and can be found locally at any Walgreens, select Piggly Wiggly locations and coastal DMV offices.

For updates during any existing or potential emergency situation, make sure to check gtcounty.org and to follow [gtcounty](https://www.facebook.com/gtcounty) and [GCEMD](https://twitter.com/GCEMD) on Facebook and Twitter.

GCEMD gets new communications support trailer thanks to grant

Georgetown County Emergency Management recently received a \$250,000 mobile command and communications support trailer, thanks to a grant from the Pee Dee Health Care Coalition. The grant paid 100% of the cost.



The trailer will have multiple uses, including serving as a redundant communications asset by providing both backup cellular and satellite backup for phones and internet. The trailer was delivered in June. Emergency Management staff installed additional equipment and resources and put the newly equipped trailer in service on July 31.

"We are very grateful for this wonderful grant and our partnership with the coalition," said Brandon Ellis, Georgetown County's director of Emergency Services. "This trailer is a needed asset for us and will help us support routine response operations, as well as major events, including hurricanes and tornadoes.

The project was initiated by previous Emergency Manager Sam Hodge, who retired last fall, and implemented by Ellis.

Sheriff establishes Citizens' Review Board

Carter Weaver, Sheriff of Georgetown County, has established a Citizens' Review Board and will meet with an advisory group Wednesday to implement selection of its members.

The five-member board will review Use of Force and Disciplinary Actions taken by the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office and make written recommendations to the sheriff from their findings to protect the public interest and promote the integrity of the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office.

"This review board is another step in my commitment to representing all people in Georgetown County," Sheriff Weaver said. "The culture of my office will be one of enforcing the laws consistently and compassionately, and I cannot ensure that without direct feedback from those we serve."

Citizens' Review Board members will be selected by the Black River United Way for a two-year term, which can be renewed for an additional two-year term. One member will be a retired law enforcement officer or have at least five years of law enforcement experience. All must be residents of

Georgetown County during their terms. The sheriff will appoint a liaison from his staff to present cases and disciplinary actions. Meetings will be open to the public, and notice will be provided in advance. The agenda will include a time for public comment.

The board will be charged with pursuing the following principles and objectives:

- Seeking social and racial justice;
 - Engaging in community outreach and amplifying the voices of the socially, politically, and economically disenfranchised;
 - Listening to and building cooperation between all stakeholders to find and develop common ground and public purpose;
 - Championing just, equitable, and legitimate policing policies and practices; and
 - Processing complaints, reviewing police practices and internal investigations, issuing findings, writing public reports, and making recommendations.
- Board meetings will be held on the last Wednesday of every month at the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office, 430 N. Fraser St., Georgetown.



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We are sorry that The Friends Center store is closed, but you can still get books and gifts and help us by going to thefriendscenter.square.site while the store is closed.



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Partnership helps bring broadband to rural Georgetown County

Georgetown County Economic Development has been working with HTC to bring broadband services to the county's most rural areas – an action that will provide a powerful movement forward for rural residents and workers.

Broadband is high-speed internet that is used in most of our daily activities. Whether it's surfing the internet for clothing or trying to pull up lesson plans from schools, broadband has shaped the way we view life today. Areas that don't have broadband are at a severe disadvantage in many respects. This can cause vast disparities for different parts of the world, and even between communities within the same county.

"Without access to broadband, entire communities are increasingly left behind in today's information-driven economy," said Sonny Perdue, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. "By connecting our communities, we are reconnecting Americans with one another and helping to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the economy."

In South Carolina, at all levels of government, there is recognition of how important broadband is for residents, and the potential for growth it presents across the state.

"Broadband connectivity is a powerful catalyst for economic and social advancement. It is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity, critical to ensuring a level playing field for those in rural areas," said Gov. Henry McMaster. "Emergency response, healthcare access, education—all rely increasingly on internet access."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced in February that it has invested \$9.1 million in broadband for rural communities in the state of South Carolina.

For Georgetown County, this can be a giant leap for access to vital parts of everyday life. Residents have voiced that without internet, they have limited choices when it comes to running a business or working from home. This is a proven problem, especially with statewide restrictions on business operations and travel in place due to COVID-19. Many rural residents have typically relied on libraries or their office spaces for high-speed internet, but now many such facilities are closed.

"I can only use the internet to run my credit card machine," said Ravi Vijay, the owner of Plantersville General Store in the Plantersville community. "If I wanted to use

the internet to attach it to a phone line, I would have to disconnect my credit card machine to have it move at a certain pace."

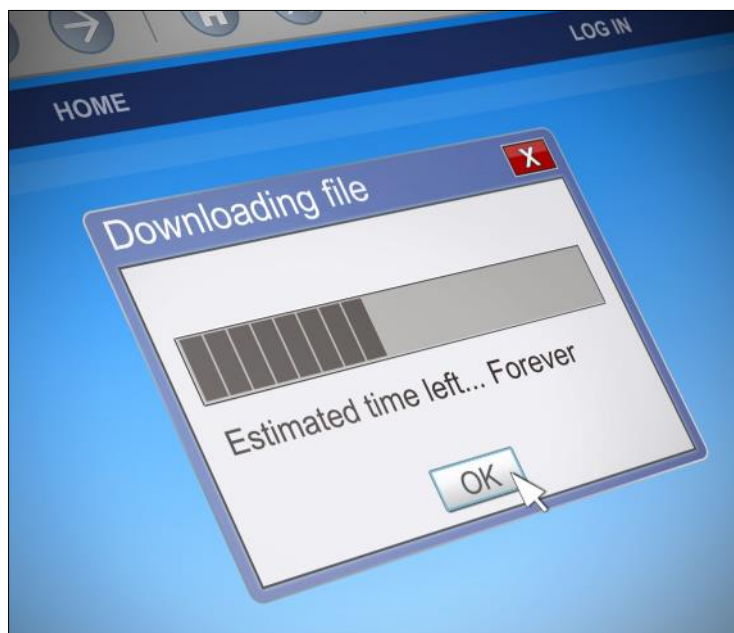
Another resident who resides in the Plantersville community reported having to turn their router on and off multiple times throughout the day to keep a connection.

"It will work for a few minutes, but it doesn't stay for long and only one person in my home can use it at a time," said Georgetown County Council Member Louis Morant.

Experiences during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have shown more than ever that reliable broadband is essential for our rural communities. With schools going fully online for the remainder of the year, many students and teachers are left behind because of the lack of having reliable internet service or having internet service at all. This has highlighted how internet service has transitioned over the years from luxury to necessity, and is now considered nearly as vital as water, electricity and telephone services.

"As our society moves forward, more things are becoming remote and are providing an opportunity for those who can permanently work from home," said Brian Tucker, Georgetown County's director of economic development. "This cannot happen in rural areas without the installation of reliable broadband."

Bringing opportunities to rural parts of the county has been a focus of Georgetown County Economic Development for some years now. Thankfully, with government funding, HTC has been able to run fiber to schools in the county, with a focus on enabling residents to tap in and have reliable internet in their homes. This will help residents have a better understanding of broad-



band and how it can help with everyday activities. Communities that have not had reliable access to internet from their homes would be able to work from home in such times as these, and also have better cell-phone service to connect with loved ones and business contacts wherever they are.

Georgetown County Economic Development hopes increasing opportunities will also increase the number of young people who choose to remain in the county and join the workforce after they finish school – and perhaps lure back some who have already moved away.

"As we know today, our youth thrive best in areas where wireless service is available, as well as high speed internet," Tucker said. "This improvement to broadband may also lead to more tech companies potentially investing in the area. Broadband has been one of the forces behind tech companies investing in rural areas in other parts of the world, transforming those areas into thriving communities."

Charleston and Berkeley counties have already started connecting homes to high speed internet. Debbie Turbeville, the South Carolina director for the USDA's Rural Development division, pointed out that broadband helps children better compete academically with students in areas where high-speed internet is more accessible. She also pointed out how it will attract businesses

See "Broadband," Page 10

News from our Veterans Affairs Officer

By David Murphy

Hello Veterans! I hope you had an enjoyable 4th of July. I'm sure you are well aware of the rising COVID-19 numbers in our area. Please continue to practice your social distancing.

Our office is still processing claims via email, fax and over the telephone. Again, if you need to come to our office to conduct any business, we require that you wear a mask. If possible please call our office prior to coming.

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center and all its clinics continue to limit the number of face-to-face appointments in its sites of care to those that are clinically necessary in order to provide the safest environment for Veterans and staff alike. As cases of COVID-19 continue to rise across our communities, the center's no visitor policy remains in effect. It has also not re-integrated volunteers into its operations. This includes VSO claims operations and appointments. It is important that we minimize traffic in facilities to only patients receiving medical care or treatment and staff, follow universal masking at all sites of care and practice social distancing.

Ralph H. Johnson VAMC would also like the veterans to know that if you feel sick and need to come to the emergency room, please call the **Telephone Advisory Line first at 843-789-6400 or 888-878-6884**. You will be connected to a nurse who will discuss your symptoms over the phone and will let you know if you need to come to the emergency room.

If you have a claim pending that requires you to have a C & P



Murphy

exam and at least 30 days have passed and you still have not been scheduled for an exam, please either email me at dmurphy@gtcounty.org or give me a call at 843-545-3330. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the VA and its contracted affiliates are trying to get veterans scheduled in a timely manner.

On Aug. 4, the Coast Guard will celebrated its 230th birthday. Since 1790, the U.S. Coast Guard has kept the nation's waterways safe, playing a critical role in national security.

The U.S. Coast Guard patrols our coasts for drug smugglers, human trafficking and both domestic and international terrorism. As the bad guys (and girls) have gotten more savvy with technology, the Coast Guard has developed sophisticated, effective technology to combat crimes on the water and at our ports. It's a 24/7 job.

Today, let's give the U.S. Coast Guard the love it deserves.

Remember to please continue to practice your social distancing and wear you mask outdoors and in public places.

Proud to Serve,

David Murphy, Manager,
Georgetown County Office of Veterans Affairs

Sign up for emergency alerts!

Don't miss out on important information that could keep you and your family safe. Sign up to receive emergency alerts specific to your address from Georgetown County Emergency Management Division via email or phone. Sign up for this free service at www.gtcounty.org (look for the link near the top of our home page).



For the protection
of our sea turtles &
other wildlife please

LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS
ON GEORGETOWN COUNTY BEACHES!

Umbrellas



Tents



Hammocks



Beach Toys



Picnic Tables



Chairs



All items must be picked up off the beach at the day's end, including chairs, tents, toys and, of course, any food packaging or other litter. Litter laws are strictly enforced. Any items left on the beach at the end of the day are considered abandoned and may be removed.



LIGHTS OUT!

SEA TURTLES DIG THE DARK

- Turn out beachfront lights after dusk
- Close blinds, curtains in beachfront homes
- Do not disturb nesting females or hatchlings by using flashlights, flash photography or lanterns at night
- Fill in any holes in the sand at day's end



See more local beach regulations at www.gtcparks.org

Georgetown County, South Carolina County Government

Numbers to know

(All begin with area code 843)

Animal Control, 546-5101

Assessor, 545-3014

Auditor, 545-3021

Clerk of Court, 545-3004

County Council, 545-3058

Coroner, 546-3056

Elections, 545-3339

Finance, 545-3002

Planning and Zoning, 545-3116

Probate Judge, 545-3077

Register of Deeds, 545-3088

Sheriff, 546-5102

Treasurer, 545-3098

P.O. Box 421270
129 Screven Street
Georgetown, S.C. 29440-4200

Phone: (843) 545-3063
Fax: (843) 545-3292



County names Deputy Administrator, Emergency Services Director

At the beginning of July, Georgetown County Administrator Angela Christian announced two key staffing changes, including the creation of a Deputy Administrator position. The position will be filled by Wesley Bryant, who will also continue to serve as County Attorney.

In his new role, Bryant will also take over oversight of the county's IT department and airport.

Bryant has served as Georgetown County's attorney for 13 years. He is a graduate of the Citadel and the University of South Carolina Law School. He and his wife Katy live in Georgetown. They have four children.

Christian also promoted Brandon Ellis, the County's Emergency Manager, to Director of Emergency Services, a position that has been vacant for the last decade. He will continue to serve as Emergency Manager, but will also now oversee the county's two fire departments.

A graduate of Francis Marion University, Ellis started his ca-



Wesley Bryant

reer in emergency services as a part-time and volunteer firefighter in Mullins. He later became the Marion County Director of Emergency Management. Following this role, Ellis was hired by the S.C. Emergency Management Division as a regional emergency manager, before being hired as Georgetown County Emergency Manager last fall. Ellis lives in Pawleys Island with his wife, Brittany, and two daughters.



Brandon Ellis

Christian said she believes these changes will help improve the efficiency and functionality of Georgetown County government, helping the county to better serve its residents and visitors.

Christian joined the county as its new administrator at the end of March. To read more about her and her vision for Georgetown County, check out our May 2020 newsletter in the archives at gtcounty.org/news.

Broadband

Continued from Page 8

and help hospitals, as well as colleges.

There are five USDA programs in place for rural areas:

The ReConnect program provides loans, grants, and a combination of the two. These are given to telecommunications service providers, municipalities, and cooperatives to facilitate broadband deployment in areas that have little to no service.

The Community Connect program provides the grants that deliver broadband to underprivileged areas. These grants fund broadband infrastructures and connections at local community centers.

The Rural Broadband Program provides loans to construct, obtain, or improve facilities and equipment. This was reauthorized by the 2018

Farm Bill, or the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 under the Rural Development section.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine are two programs combined into one that help rural communities obtain the technology, training, and equipment to connect with their local doctors and educators for services.

These programs will provide workshops to communities and help residents understand how to use these services.

"We are definitely looking forward to greater things with rural broadband in Georgetown County," Tucker said. "Broadband access would provide a great impact to the county in the area of jobs/business acquisitions, schools, medical facilities and other community related functions. It's a must for rural areas."

If you would like to know how to get HTC coverage, please contact Brian Tucker or Maya Morant at (843) 655-2312 or (843) 461-6871.