



The Georgetown County Chronicle



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

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Calendar

Jan. 9 – County Council meeting, 5:30 p.m., Howard Auditorium, 1610 Hawkins St.

Jan. 10 – Webinar on Land Use Element of Comprehensive Plan, noon. See Page 3.

Jan. 12 – Sheriff's Office hiring event, 9 a.m. See page 4.

Jan. 15 – County offices and facilities are closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Jan. 17 – Public hearing regarding land disturbance permit for a Refuel station in Pawleys Island, 6 p.m. See Page 5.

Jan. 18 – Planning Commission meeting, 5:30 p.m., County Council Chambers, 129 Screven St.

Jan. 22 – County Council District 6 Drop-in with Council Member Stella Mercado, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Waccamaw Regional Recreation Center. See Page 3.

Jan. 23 – County Council meeting, 5:30 p.m., Howard Auditorium, 1610 Hawkins St.

Volume 12, Issue 4

January 2024

Whale project flies out of Georgetown Airport



Right whale mother and calf, photographed from the air. Photo credit: Clearwater Marine Aquarium Research Institute, taken under NOAA permit #26919. Funded by the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

The Southeastern coast of the United States is a critical habitat for the endangered North Atlantic right whale, and the Georgetown Airport is playing a small role in important research on these majestic creatures.

With a population believed to number only 356 individuals, right whales are closely monitored and protected by dedicated research organizations, including the Clearwater Marine Aquarium Research Institute's Right Whale Aerial Survey Team. The team is funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and has surveyors assigned to coastal areas of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The SC team, led by Jess McCoppin, is stationed in Pawleys Island and flies almost daily out of the Georgetown Airport from mid-November to mid-April.

"We basically just go up every good weather day in our planes and we're flying over the ocean on track lines that are set up," McCoppin said. "We're looking for any large whales, but specifically North Atlantic right whales."

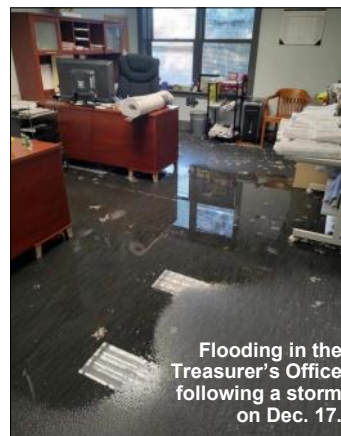
See "Right Whales," Page 10

Flooding in historic courthouse forces relocation of tax office

Real estate tax deadline extended to Feb. 15

A storm that dropped more than a foot of rain in under 24 hours has caused a major disruption for the Georgetown County Treasurer's Office during one of their busiest times of the year.

When staff returned to work after the Dec. 17 storm, it was to find their offices at the back of the historic Georgetown County Courthouse flooded. The roof above was unable to adequately drain off the huge amounts of water that fell in such a short period, allowing water to come in through the HVAC system and dropping a deluge — as well as part



Flooding in the Treasurer's Office following a storm on Dec. 17.

of the ceiling — into the Building and Stormwater offices on the second floor of the courthouse and the

Treasurer's Office below. Changes to the roof design are being made to prevent this from happening again.

All of the affected offices had to be temporarily relocated to emergency quarters. It was an inconvenience for all three departments, but particularly the Treasurer's Office, as this is the time of year when residents are trying to pay taxes.

The department was already under pressure after software issues delayed the sending of tax bills, frustrating staff and residents. Being forced to move to an emergency location in County Council Chambers didn't help matters. The temporary quarters has only three phone lines,

See "Taxes," Page 9

IN MEMORIAM: County mourns colleague killed in vehicle accident

Eric Dwayne Sabb died on Dec. 4, 2023, following a tragic car accident. He was 43 and resided in the Annie Village community of Georgetown.

Mr. Sabb was born on Sept. 1, 1980, to Mrs. Pearlina and the late Mr. Jerome Sabb. He was the youngest brother of five siblings. His father and oldest brother, Stanley Sabb, preceded him in death.

In March of 2004, he welcomed a beautiful baby girl, Eriel. He was later joined in matrimony on March 24, 2010, to his love, Taneika, and they welcomed four beautiful children together. He attended Georgetown County Schools and later furthered his education and training with the Job Corps Training Program. He was a current student of Horry-Georgetown Technical College in Conway and was on track to complete his CDL certification by Christmas.

He was employed as a recycling truck driver with Georgetown County Environmental Services. Mr. Sabb had such a positive spirit; people along his route looked forward to seeing him smile. His tall stature only further highlighted his charming, genuine and kind spirit.

As a youth, he attended Macedonia FBH church and later St. Mark FBH church in Awendaw, where his dad pastored. The singing foundation Eric gained in church extended to adulthood because he loved to sing, though he always remained humble about the musical talent he possessed.

He was an avid Carolina Panthers fan and he also loved fishing, cooking on the grill and spending time with his family and friends.

Those left to cherish his memories and presence are: his beloved wife, Taneika Sabb; his children, Eriel Sabb of Kingstree, Ericka Sabb, Erieyona Sabb, Erietasia Sabb, and Eric Sabb Jr., all of the home; his mother, Mrs. Pearlina Sabb of Georgetown; his siblings, Abrian (Ladra) Sabb of Georgetown, Yolonda (Michael) Woodard of Columbia, and Angel (Jamar) Ellis of Greer; sister-in-law Tiffany (Andrew) James of Conway; maternal aunts and uncles, Rebecca (Hezekiah) Williams and Linda (Ervin) Jones, both of Georgetown; paternal aunts and uncle, Bertha Drayton and Lillian (Andrew) Nelson both of Georgetown; great-aunts Mary Rice, Susan Winns, and Julia Rice all of Georgetown; nieces and nephews, Aviyan (Laquitton) Myers, Shaquana Sabb, Abrian Sabb, Darius Sabb, Lannaisa Sabb, LaTanya Sabb, Petra Sabb, Ramiyah Woodard, Michael Woodard Jr., Elijah Woodard, Dasani Woodard, Emery Ellis, Eden Ellis, Eva Ellis, and Elena Ellis; great-nieces and great-nephews, Gabrielle Mccrea, Ahleiria Myers, Jeremiah Myers, and Ishmael Satterwhite; a special cousin reared like a brother, Keith Belin; and a host of close cousins, family, dear friends and co-workers.



Eric D. Sabb
1980-2023

County introduces video podcast for residents

Georgetown County launched a new public information initiative this month with the first episode of a new podcast, "First Friday in Georgetown County."

On the podcast, county officials have the opportunity to talk about issues, programs, events and more that are of interest to county residents and visitors. The first episode features three topics: a conversation with Treasurer Miriam Mace and Auditor Ken Baker about property taxes; an overview of a new trails program with T.L. Staub of Georgetown County Parks and Recreation; and a discussion about two proposed sales taxes that will be on the ballot this November with Walt Ackerman, director of administrative services. Public Information Officer Jackie Broach is host.

The video podcast can be viewed on Georgetown County's YouTube channel at youtube.com/gtcountysc. Audio-only versions can be streamed or downloaded at gtcounty.castos.com, or anywhere you normally subscribe and listen to podcasts.

An update on renovations at the Georgetown Library is among topics planned for February's podcast.

Hands-only CPR training offered

Georgetown County and the American Red Cross are working together to put more CPR-trained individuals in the community. The Red Cross is offering three free hands-only CPR courses this month at branches across the county.

Courses are Jan. 9 at 11 a.m. at the Southern Georgetown Library in the Sampit area, Jan. 11 at 3 p.m. at the Andrews Library and Jan. 12 at 10 a.m. at the Waccamaw Library. The training will make participants better able to respond in the event someone around them has a cardiac emergency. Learn more at redcross.org/handsonly.

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, sign up at gtcounty.org by clicking the "News & Alerts" icon on the home page.

If you have questions or comments about this newsletter, please contact Jackie Broach at (843) 545-3164 or jbroach@gtcounty.org. We welcome your feedback.

www.gtcounty.org

Join the herd and take a hike with Parks & Rec.'s new GOAT program

On Jan. 5, Georgetown County Parks and Recreation announced a new program to help get people outdoors, moving and exploring. They call it the GOAT program, an acronym for Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trails. The program encourages residents to “join the herd” and walk, bike or run a group of 10 trails — with more trails to be added in the future. Eventually, the addition of river trails to the program will also add paddling to the mix.

“The idea is to promote the natural beauty of our area and get more people out on the trails we’ve developed throughout the county,” said T.L. Staub, who manages and maintains the department’s trails.

The program incorporates trails and routes in a variety of environments to make the program more broadly appealing. In Rocky Point Community Forest, off Choppee Highway, herd members can choose from four wooded trails and two additional routes ranging from 1.3 to 4.5 miles.

“We have approximately 16 miles of trails already developed just at Rocky Point with 7.7 more miles of trails and routes to be devel-



oped here in the next couple of months,” Staub said.

“Again, these trails are mostly grass and woods.

You’ll see a lot of wildlife, real pretty areas along Choppee Creek and the river.”

Five trails are located within 8 Oaks Park on Highway 521 between Georgetown and Andrews. There’s a 1-mile grass loop within the park, along with several more rustic trails. The 10th trail runs along the edge of Stables Park on Petigru Drive. For those looking for something more urban, there are routes in the Georgetown Historic District, along the Marsh-Walk, down roadways and along the beachfront.

Residents can sign up to be part of the herd online at gtcparks.org, and receive information about the program, including when new trails are added and when special outdoor activities and events are scheduled. Herd members will also get an as yet undetermined prize if they complete designated routes that are part of the program. Membership in the herd is free and open to all.

Staub said people are encouraged to form groups to participate in the program and give their group a name. There are no rules about how big or small the group can be, but he asks participants to please keep the group names clean and family friendly.

“It’s just something to make it a little more fun,” Staub said.

Participants are also encouraged to log their hikes using a mapping app, such as Strava or AllTrails.

Look for more information about the GOAT program coming soon along with details on new trails and opportunities for group paddling excursions, hikes and more.



Council District 6 Drop-in

Meeting with County Council Representative Stella Mercado

Council Member Stella Mercado will be stationed at the Waccamaw Regional Recreation Center to meet with constituents throughout the day Jan. 22.

Residents can drop in at their convenience to chat with their council representative one-on-one.



Monday
Jan. 22
11 a.m. until 5 p.m.

at
Waccamaw Regional Recreation Center
83 Duncan Ave., Pawleys Island



BROWN BAG LUNCH WEBINAR ON LAND USE ELEMENT

If you missed our Dec. 13th public input meetings, here's another chance!

Scan here to register



For more information visit gtcounty.org/complan

landuse@gtcounty.org

(843) 545-3158

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 10 @ NOON

Online Presentation of current progress on the Land Use Element of Georgetown County's Comprehensive Plan.

Did you know you can watch Georgetown County Council meetings online?

Watch at [YouTube.com/GtCountySC](https://www.youtube.com/GtCountySC).

Walk with Ease program keeps seniors moving

Georgetown County senior citizens collectively walked more than 850 miles in a new walking program introduced last fall by Georgetown County's Bureau of Aging Services.

The program, called Walk with Ease, is a community-based physical activity and self-management education program from the Arthritis Foundation. It aims to reduce the pain of arthritis and improve overall health, while increasing balance and strength.

Participants receive a guidebook with tools to help participants develop a walking plan customized for their needs, stay motivated, manage pain and learn to exercise safely. Group sessions meet three times per week for six weeks. The goal is to walk for 30 minutes at each session, said Angie Weaver, the county's senior program coordinator. Participants can also choose to walk more often on their own.

Weaver said the program emphasizes safety and taking precautions so participants don't overdo it. The goal, after all, is to improve pain. "We don't want people to hurt worse afterward," Weaver said. "We want them to enjoy it and continue that walking."

Group walks take place in the mornings on the track at Beck Recreation Center. Some group members may make it around the track once or twice in a session, while others do many more laps. There's no pressure, Weaver said. Everyone goes at their own pace and is encouraged to keep a pace at which they can still hold a normal conversation.

After the success of the initial program, Weaver said she plans to begin registering for another round this winter. She would also like to expand the program to other parts of the county, including Pawleys Island.



Participants in the Walk With Ease program make their way around the track at Beck Recreation center on a cold morning. The program lasts six weeks and will soon start registering new participants.

Senior Centers are located all across the county and have a variety of programs to keep seniors active and engaged. Centers are open to all residents ages 60 and up. In addition to daily congregate dining, here are some of the new programs coming up at county senior centers:

- Tai Chi classes. Seniors will have the opportunity to learn more about the ancient Chinese exercise that offers arthritis relief through slow, gentle movement.
- Pre-diabetes education. Tideland Health will offer a year-long program designed for people with pre-diabetes who are at high risk of Type 2 diabetes and who want to lower that risk.
- Knitting. Each center will have an hour-long session to learn to knit by hand. Cost is \$12 to cover materials.
- Gameshow Night. Participants will play "The Price is Right," "Family Feud" and more.

For more information about programs and activities for seniors, call (843) 545-3196 or email aweaver@gtcounty.org.

WINTER
Reading Challenge
**JANUARY 8TH-
FEBRUARY 26TH**

PICK UP YOUR READING CHALLENGE SHEET AT THE REFERENCE DESK

WACCAMAW NECK BRANCH LIBRARY

TURN
IN YOUR CHALLENGE SHEET TO THE REFERENCE DESK BY FEBRUARY 26TH TO BE ENTERED IN A RAFFLE FOR A GIFT CARD!

**HIRING
EVENT**

ALL POSITIONS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

430 N. FRASER STREET, GEORGETOWN
TESTING BEGINS AT 9 AM AND 12 PM

Thinking about joining our team at the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office? Come take the tests and interview with us.

Minimum age for Corrections Officers: 18 years Patrol Deputies: 21 years
PLEASE BRING A VALID GOVERNMENT PHOTO ID

Library to show conservation documentary as part of Hammock Coast Birding Festival

Birdwatchers will flock to Georgetown County next month for the 2nd annual Hammock Coast Birding Festival, taking place Feb. 9-11. On the lineup of events is a showing of "Purple Haze: A Conservation Film," at the Waccamaw Library on Feb. 9 at 12:30 p.m.

This stunning documentary focuses on the plight of purple martins in South Carolina. After millions of years of evolution, treacherous migrations, and forming a unique relationship with humans, North America's largest swallow species, the purple martin, has managed to become almost completely dependent on man-made nesting structures to nest and rear their young. Captain Zach Steinhauser has taken it upon himself, after spending years guiding folks to North America's largest Purple Martin roost, to chase these birds across their range to understand exactly how this species put themselves in this position and discover a lost culture of bird-loving enthusiasts across the Purple Martin's range.



After the screening, Steinhauser will be available for a Q&A session with the audience. The screening is co-sponsored by the Friends of the Waccamaw Library and is free and open to the public. The Library is located at 41 St. Paul Place, Pawleys Island.

Georgetown County is home to more than 300 species of birds and has been named by Southern Living as one of the best birding sites on the East Coast. This year's Birding Festival will feature a keynote speech by Patrick McMillan, celebrated naturalist and author. Full more about the Hammock Coast Birding Festival, which will feature an array of exciting programs, visit <https://hammockcoastsc.com/birding-festival-schedule-of-events/>.

The Friends of the Waccamaw Library are pleased to announce



The 2024 Litchfield Tea and Poetry Series



Monthly presentations through April, each featuring thought-provoking poets with S.C. connections.



Programs are free, open to the public and start at 10 a.m. at the Waccamaw Library.



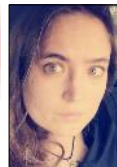
New this year: an Open Mic event will follow the featured poet's presentation at every session.

January 11: Billy Baldwin



An award-winning novelist, poet, biographer and historian, Baldwin is a coastal S.C. literary institution. He has spent nearly his life in McClellanville, where he worked as a shrimper, oysterman and shipbuilding. His poems reflect in-depth knowledge of the local landscapes and histories, as he explores the workings of an "all-encompassing life force" through the marshlands and creeks, and out into open water. Read more at gtcounty.org/newsroom.

February 15: Jessica K. Hylton



Hylton is Artist in Residence at Coastal Carolina University. She is also author of the chapbook "The Great Scissor Hunt," and her work appears in "East Coast Literary Review," "Lavender Review" and "Panoply," among other venues. According to Jess Hager, Hylton's poetry is "full of turbulent inner dialogue — a war within the poet's mind — stuck straddling the fence between lust and love, forgiveness and hate, grand images and mundane trivialities of daily life ..."

March 14: Hastings Hensel



A resident of Murrells Inlet, Hensel's poetry collections include "Ballyhoo," "Winter Inlet," and chapbook "Control Burn," which won the Iron Horse Literary Review Single-Author Competition. Mary Jo Salter counts Hensel as "one of the most accomplished young poets now writing in this country." Hensel earned his MFA from John Hopkins University and is a senior lecturer in English at Coastal Carolina University. He is owner of River Reader Kayaking.

April 11: Richard Allen Taylor



Taylor, of Myrtle Beach, is author of three poetry collections, including "Armed and Luminous" and the recently published "Letters to Karen Carpenter." His poems, articles and reviews have appeared in numerous publications. His work has been described as "traversing the music of his universe while navigating the complexities of love, loss, aging and dying" with "poems created not as comic relief from sorrow, but as natural reflections on life, myth and art."

Topic:
Refuel Pawleys Beaumont

BE PART OF THE DISCUSSION

STORMWATER PUBLIC HEARING

The Georgetown County Stormwater Division will have a public hearing regarding the land disturbance permit for Refuel Pawleys Beaumont.

JAN. 17, 2024
6 P.M.

WACCAMAW REGIONAL RECREATION CENTER
83 Duncan Ave.,
Pawleys Island



For more information,
call 843-545-3265
or send an email to
rbutler@gtcounty.org

Free series at Waccamaw Library offers tips for ‘healthful living’

A series returning to the Waccamaw Library this month aims to help people learn to live healthier, happier lives. Starting on Tuesday, Jan. 16 at 10 a.m., the 2024 Friends of the Waccamaw Library Health & Wellness Series will feature a range of helpful advice on how to achieve and sustain good physical and mental health.

The series will take place on Tuesdays from Jan. 16 until March 19, and will cover topics such as how to prevent elder abuse, how to improve wealth management, how to take advantage of the healing powers of hemp and CBD, how to achieve lasting health benefits through daily meditation, and how to best treat urologic symptoms and pain. All programs are free and open to the public. The Library is located at 41 St. Paul Place, Pawleys Island. All programs except the final one begin at 10 a.m.

The schedule for this season is as follows.


- In the first session on Jan. 16, Andrew Cripps, program coordinator for S.C. Safe Seniors, will offer an informational session on how to recognize the signs of elder abuse in order to protect their safety and well-being. Cripps is a proud Navy veteran who is now committed to helping seniors stay safe from exploitation through S.C. Safe Seniors, a program sponsored by the Medical University of South Carolina.
- On Jan. 23, Pawleys Island financial advisor Michael Turner, M.B.A., will provide an economic perspective on healthful living with his presentation on how to gain positive financial control over your future by managing retirement funds. Over the past 15 years, Turner has helped clients journey from working full-time to enjoy-

ing retirement. Through asset management, budget review and control, and spending analysis, he has helped enable clients to retire with a lifestyle they enjoyed while minimizing unnecessary spending.

- On Jan. 30, John Wilson will discuss the benefits of hemp and CBD for better health and healing. In 2021, Wilson established Islander CBD on Highway 17 Bypass in Murrells Inlet in order to offer the Waccamaw Neck community a wide variety of high-quality CBD and Delta 8 products.

- On Feb. 6, spiritual director Gregory M. Kay will demonstrate the many health benefits of practicing regular meditation. Science has shown meditation can create emotional and physical benefits, such as managing stress, reducing negative emotions, lowering resting heart rate, lowering resting blood pressure, improving sleep quality, increasing relaxation, and increasing creativity. Meditation may also be helpful in managing symptoms of certain medical conditions, especially those that are worsened by stress.

- Finally, on March 19 at 6 p.m., Martha Boone, M.D., a doctor who provided exemplary care for many years for her urology patients at Tulane University and in private practice, will draw vital insights from her recent book “The Unfettered Urologist: What I Never Had Time to Tell You in a 15-Minute Office Visit.” Dr. Boone will provide crucial information that she did not have time to share with patients within the narrow scope of an office visit, combining alternative treatments and conventional medicine to aid common urologic conditions. In dispensing this inside information, her goal is to help community members embrace healthier living, enabling them to save healthcare dollars for prevention and treatment or to more effectively utilize the healthcare system when professional medical treatment is needed.



**2024
FEBRUARY PRESIDENTIAL
PREFERENCE PRIMARIES**

**DEMOCRATIC PPP:
FEBRUARY 3, 2024**

**Early Vote Period:
January 22 - February 2
8:30 am to 6pm**

Excluding Sunday

**REPUBLICAN PPP:
FEBRUARY 24, 2024**

**Early Vote Period:
February 12 - February 22
8:30 am to 6pm**

Excluding February 18, 19, & 23

EARLY VOTE CENTERS

- Andrews Recreational Center: 220 S Cedar Ave, Andrews SC 29510
- Choppee Recreational Center: 8259 Choppee Rd, Georgetown SC 29440
- Waccamaw Recreational Center: 83 Duncan Ave, Pawleys Island, SC 29585
- Elections Office: 303 N Hazard St, Georgetown SC 29440

For more information: 843-545-3339
www.gtcounty.org/vote

The Friends of the Georgetown Library present...

TUESDAYS WITH...

ARCHAEOLOGY

ON SOUTH ISLAND

with Jodi Barns
Heritage Trust Archaeologist
for SC Department of Natural Resources

January 16th at 10:00AM

**Winyah Auditorium
1200 Highmarket St, Georgetown**

French film festival returns

Beginning Jan. 26, the Waccamaw Library will resume its popular screenings of foreign films with the return of the French Film Festival. The six screenings will take place on the final weekend of January and the first weekend of February in the DeBordieu-Cross Auditorium inside the Library, which is located at 41 St. Paul Place, Pawleys Island. On Fridays, screenings will begin at 6 p.m., while on Saturdays and Sundays, screenings will start at 2:30 p.m. The French Film Festival is sponsored by the Friends of the Waccamaw Library in partnership with the Institut Français. All screenings are free and open to the public.

This year's lineup of movies showcases an excellent mix that offers something for everyone—comedy, romance, drama, even classic slapstick—and all these extraordinary foreign films are well worth seeing on the Library's large screen. This year's slate of movies will also include a powerful Ukrainian film, "Homeward," on Feb. 2. Philip Whalen, professor of history at Coastal Carolina University with an expertise in modern and contemporary European history, will provide a brief introduction to the historical and cultural background of the film.

The full schedule for the festival is as follows:

- Jan. 26, "In Safe Hands" (2018). A heartwarming drama, with comic touches, that follows a baby boy through the foster-care and adoption process.
- Jan. 27, "Final Set" (2020). At age 37, a once-famous professional tennis player decides to return to the French Open for one last chance at glory, against the advice of his wife and mother. He perseveres, facing his own demons as well as a young tennis prodigy who disturbingly reminds him of his younger self.
- Jan. 28, "Le Chef" (2012). This delicious comedy pokes fun at foodie snobbery while honoring the art of those who cook well for others, as it pairs a self-taught, up-and-coming talent with a salty, star chef in the high-stakes world of French haute-cuisine.
- Feb. 2, "The Midwife" (2017). A bittersweet drama about the unlikely friendship that develops between Claire, a hardworking midwife, and the lively mistress of Claire's deceased father. Official Selection at the Berlin International Film Festival.
- Feb. 3, "Homeward" (2019) [Ukrainian film]. A father and son from a Crimean Tatar family transport the body of a deceased older son and brother from Kyiv in order to bury him in Crimea. The film was screened at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival and selected as Ukrainian entry for Best International Feature Film for the 2020 Academy Awards.
- Feb. 4, "Mr. Hulot's Holiday" (1953). A delightful, lighthearted classic comedy that centers on Mr. Hulot's vacation at a beachside hotel, where he accidentally, but good-naturedly, manages to create all kinds of havoc.

See page 8 to learn about a program on Feb. 1 intended to add context to some of the films.

Knowlin receives service award



Congratulations to Deputy Kendaydrilla Knowlin, who has received the Eagle Officer of the Year Award from the Grand Strand Community Law Enforcement Appreciation Committee. Knowlin, Chief Wayne Owens, right, and Captain Melvyn Garrett, left attended the CLEAC Awards Ceremony with her at the Sands Ocean Club on Dec. 2. The award is given each year to a law enforcement member who exemplifies community service and commitment.

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 the Georgetown County Emergency Management Division via email or phone. Sign up for this free service at gtcounty.org or call (843) 545-3213.

*Is getting in shape part of
your new year's resolution?*



**Georgetown County Parks and Rec.
has plenty of programs to help!**

- Weight and cardio rooms
- League sports
- Zumba
- Stretching
- Line dancing
- New programs added regularly

Call (843) 545-3532 for information

'Haute Couture in the Lowcountry' to feature in First Thursday lineup

The popular Friends of the Waccamaw Library First Thursday Speaker Series returned for another much-anticipated run this month with a presentation on the Vietnam War. It was the first in what promises to be an exciting lineup!

The First Thursday series is one of the Library's featured programs. Although subjects of presentations are eclectic, most highlight a facet of local or Lowcountry culture. Presentations are held in person in the DeBordieu-Cross Auditorium at the Waccamaw Library, located at 41 St. Paul Place, Pawleys Island. All First Thursday events begin at 10 a.m. on the first Thursday of the month and are free and open to the public. Arrive early to enjoy piano music performed by Tom Santopietro. If you miss a presentation, videos are available afterward on the Georgetown County Library YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/GeorgetownCountyLibr>.

The schedule for the series is as follows.

- Feb. 1. Margaret L. Keneman, Ph.D., "Haute Couture in the Lowcountry: French Culture in South Carolina." As context for the Library's 2024 French Film Festival, Keneman, assistant professor of French at the College of Charleston, will share her experiences cultivating French language and culture in Lowcountry SC. Among other outreach activities, Keneman is liaison for the Alliance Française de Charleston and helped relaunch their popular cinema club in the wake of the pandemic.

- March 7. Jodi A. Barnes, Ph.D., "The Archeology of South Island: A Gullah Geechee Perspective." Located at the mouth of Winyah Bay, South Island is full of history. Native Americans, including the Winyah, Waccamaw and Pee Dee likely hunted, fished and gathered there. Later, planters from nearby plantations, such as Hume and Daisy Bank, built summer homes there. After the Civil War, a Gullah community with a church and a school was created on South Island. Barnes, an archeologist with the SCDNR Heritage Trust Program, will discuss what archeological research on South Island reveals about Gullah life there.

- April 4. Ray McManus, Ph.D., "Why We Write." Author of five poetry books, McManus founded a creative writing outreach program that places writers in schools across South Carolina. Winner of the 2023 Artist Award from the SC Arts Commission, McManus is Division Chair of Humanities at USC Sumter, Writer-in-Residence at the Columbia Museum of Art, and former Chair of SC Academy of Authors.

- May 2. Victoria Richardson, "Secrets of the Garden: Growing Plants in the Coastal South." Richardson worked as a horticulturalist for 17 years at Brookgreen Gardens, where she also served as Coordinator of Outreach Programs. Hear her insider insights on growing plants in the coastal South, drawn from her expert experience tending Brookgreen's world-famous expanses.

- June 6. David Emory Shi, Ph.D., "The Pursuit of Happiness: Why Is It So Darn Hard?" What exactly is the condition of happiness that we seek? And why is it so difficult to sustain? Noted author, historian, and leader in higher education Shi will explore various notions about happiness, past and present, and encourage us to reassess our own ideas about what truly matters. Shi served as the 10th president of Furman University from 1994 to 2010. His numerous honors and awards include being elected to Phi Beta Kappa, receiving the Presidential Leadership Award from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and being named *Greenville Magazine's* Business Person of the Year. His books on American history, sustainability, leadership, and happiness have sold almost three million copies.



2024
GEORGETOWN COUNTY
POLAR PLUNGE
OCEANFRONT LITCHFIELD INN
1 NORRIS DRIVE, PAWLEYS ISLAND
2.3.24
Registration 10 am | Costume contest 11 am
Plunge at 11:30 am



When you join the **Polar Plunge**, you help athletes with intellectual disabilities to experience the life-changing benefits of participating in **Special Olympics**, at no cost to themselves or their families.

Donate

or raise \$50 and take the plunge with us!

<https://give.classy.org/2024GeorgetownPlunge>



For more information contact:
MSgt. James Ketcham at Georgetown County Sheriff's Office
jketcham@gtcounty.org or 843-546-5102

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Taxes

Continued from Front Page

making it difficult for staff to answer all the calls that come in and nearly impossible to return voice messages left when callers can't get through.

While the office is displaced, the best way to reach staff in the Treasurer's office is via email at taxinfo@gtcounty.org. Taxpayers can also expedite tax payments by paying tax bills online at georgetowncountysctax.com/#/.

Since bills were mailed out late, the state has also agreed to allow Georgetown County to extend the deadline for real estate taxes to be paid without penalty.

Georgetown County Auditor Ken Baker and Treasurer Miriam Mace announced last month that the S.C. Department of Revenue granted an extension, allowing payment of 2023 real estate property taxes to be accepted without penalty through Feb.

15, 2024. Since notices went out late, the county wanted to allow taxpayers extra time to get their payments in. Late fees will begin being assigned Feb. 16.

The Feb. 15 deadline will include all final installment payments as well.

"We appreciate the taxpayers' understanding as we continue to navigate our new software," Baker said.

The Building and Stormwater Departments also remain in temporary quarters. Both are fully operational, but like the Treasurer's Office, Stormwater is advising residents that email is the best way to get in touch right now. Residents can email the Stormwater Department at stormwater@gtcounty.org.

The Building Department is temporarily operating out of the conference room across from the Planning Department. Residents can email the department at bldpermits@gtcounty.org.

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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

Parks & Rec., 545-3320

Planning/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

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



Right Whales

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The S.C. team consists of McCoppin and two observers, Alayna Robertson and Theresa Ciralo. So far this season, the project has had three mom and calf pairs, which is especially exciting, McCoppin said. Two of the three were spotted off the S.C. coast.

On flying days, the team spends 8 hours in the air, surveying the length of the S.C. coast to about 30 miles offshore.

"We're just looking for whales all day. And we see a bunch of other cool stuff, too, like sharks and turtles and dolphins. But it's the right whales we're looking for," McCoppin said. Their purpose is two-pronged.

When they spot a whale, the first thing they do is immediately notify vessels in the area via a team member on the ground. That team member will send out a "whale alert," which notifies government and commercial boats that a whale is in the vicinity. Vessel strikes are a leading cause of whale mortality, so alerts are aimed at getting vessels to slow down when whales are near and helping prevent such accidents.

The team's secondary purpose is data collection for long term research initiatives.

"These whales have been in an unusual mortality event since 2017, which basically means a bunch more are dying than usual," McCoppin explained. "There's already only 356 left that we know of, so we're collecting a lot of data on individuals — who is where, what babies are being born to who, and so on.

"The right whale is one of the most endangered large whale species, so every one matters," McCoppin continued.

On each flight, one team member will be assigned to photograph whales that are spotted. The pilot will circle, allowing the photographer to position right over the whale for the photo. Ideally, they want to be able to shoot from directly overhead, capturing the unique pattern of rough, calcified skin patches found on each right whale's head. These patches are called callosity and are as unique to a right whale as a fingerprint is to a human, allowing researchers to identify each whale.

Generally two team members go on each flight, while another stays behind to act as the ground contact. While one on the flight photographs, the other acts as data recorder.

A final part of the program's mission is public awareness and outreach. For many people — even those who live along the coast — they don't know that right whales live right off shore or that their numbers are so few. The program helps



Pictured from left are Jess McCoppin, SC team leader; observers Alayna Robertson and Theresa Ciralo; and Melanie White, project manager and Georgia team leader in front of the airplane they fly out of the Georgetown Airport on an almost daily basis. Photo courtesy of Nathan Wilkes/US Army Corps of Engineers.

create interest and awareness, as well as public involvement. For example, there is a whale hotline (877-WHALE-HELP) where members of the public can report whale sightings. Individuals can also make reports to the Coast Guard via channel 16 or through the Whale Alert app. McCoppin's team was able to locate and observe a whale recently thanks to a public report through the hotline.

"If you don't know what kind of whale it is, that's fine," McCoppin said. "Just call it in and they can send an alert out. If we're flying in the general area, we can go try to check it out and collect data from the sighting too."

For anyone who is interested in learning more about the program and/or following along with McCoppin and their team this season, there are several ways to connect.

- The Clearwater Aquarium website has a Right Whale Research page. Check it out at <https://mission.cmaquarium.org/research-institute/right-whale-research/>.
- Follow the Clearwater Marine Aquarium on Facebook. They regularly post photos and updates from the Right Whale program. They recently posted a photo of a mother and calf spotted east of Cumberland Island, Ga.
- The aquarium posts calving updates each season on its website at <https://mission.cmaquarium.org/2023-2024-right-whale-calving-season/>.
- Learn more about McCoppin and other members of the research team at <https://mission.cmaquarium.org/research-institute/cma-research-team/>.
- Watch a video on a day in the life of the survey team members at www.facebook.com/ClearwaterMarineAquarium/videos/its-worldwhaleday-follow-along-for-a-day-in-the-life-of-our-right-whale-aerial-s/522250570036648/.