



GEORGETOWN COUNTY MONTHLY

A publication for our residents and visitors APRIL 2025



Pedaling Forward

Celebrating 30 years of Bike the Neck's community-driven legacy

This year, Georgetown County celebrates a major milestone in active transportation and community planning—the 30th anniversary of Bike the Neck. What began as a small grassroots movement has become a beloved trail network spanning more than 20 miles, offering residents and visitors alike a safe, scenic way to explore the Waccamaw Neck by bike or on foot.

The idea for Bike the Neck was born in 1993 during a casual lunch between two friends.

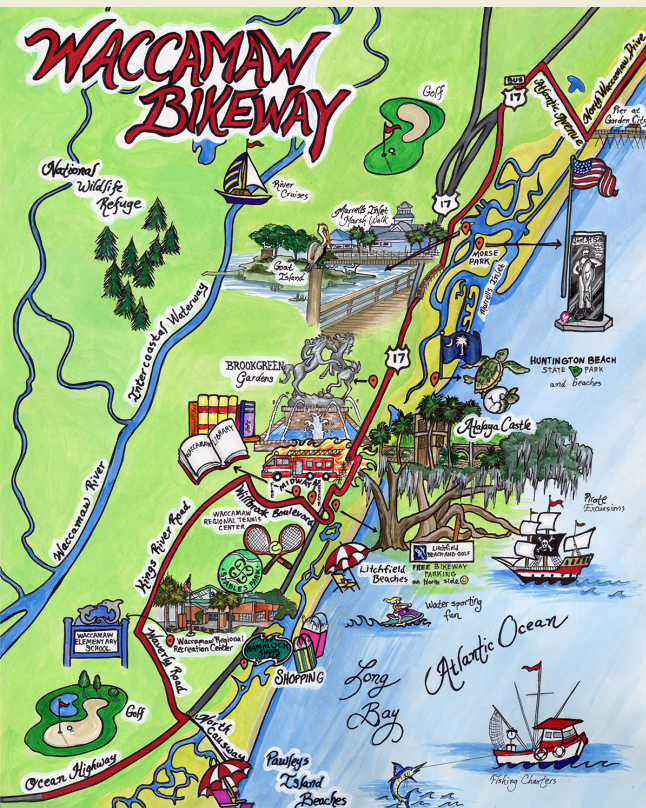
"We had to drive two and a half miles, each of us in different directions. And we said, boy, we could have done this on bicycles. Instead, we've used gas, we've been out on the road," recalled Linda Ketron during a segment this month on Georgetown County's "First Friday" podcast.

That conversation quickly turned into action. By Valentine's Day of 1994, the first official meeting was held to begin planning bike paths along the Waccamaw Neck. The effort was led by Ketron, who continues to champion the initiative.

Over the decades, their vision transformed the region. What started as a hope for a safer, healthier and more connected community has developed into a popular and widely used trail system.

"The trails are used by everyone—from commuters and families with kids to seasoned cyclists and tourists," said Beth Goodale, Georgetown County's Director of

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Top: A photo from 2006 shows Linda Ketron and others at a National Trail Days event at Huntington Beach State Park. Above: A map of the Waccamaw Bikeway by Artist April Bensch.

Inside this issue:



Community concerns abound about the redevelopment of the former paper mill site.



Three county beaches are in the running to be named the best beach in S.C. Vote for your favorite.



A training session on May 9 will prepare residents interested in serving as shelter volunteers.

County, City look ahead to redevelopment opportunities at former paper mill site



The IP mill sits idle since operations ceased at the end of last year.

In the wake of the recent closure of the International Paper mill, Georgetown County and the City of Georgetown are keeping a close eye on the future of the property and the potential it holds for economic growth and job creation.

Though the site is privately owned and no redevelopment plans have been formally announced, local officials say they are optimistic about what lies ahead and are committed to supporting opportunities that will benefit the community.

“This is a prime industrial site with a long legacy in our community, and it represents a significant opportunity moving forward,” said Georgetown County Council Chairman Clint Elliott. “We look forward to future discussions with prospective developers or companies about the property’s next chapter. While the zoning currently allows for heavy industrial use, our focus remains on economic development and job creation that aligns with community needs.”

Officials acknowledged community concerns circulating online regarding the nature of potential redevelopment and emphasized that no specific business or industry has been confirmed for the property at this time.

“We understand that people care deeply about what happens next at this site – and we do, too,” said Georgetown Mayor Carol Jayroe. “But it’s important to note that this is private property. Our role is to be available, supportive, and collaborative when opportunities arise, and to advocate for outcomes that are in the best interest of our residents and local economy.”

The mill site has drawn significant attention in recent months following International Paper’s announcement in late 2024 that it would cease operations at the facility after nearly 90 years in Georgetown. The closure affected more than 670 employees and left a lasting impact on families and businesses throughout the region.

Since then, Georgetown County has been working with local, regional, and state partners to assist displaced workers and promote economic resiliency. That work is ongoing, with a focus on creating new employment opportunities and attracting investment.

“This is a transformative moment for our community,” Elliott said. “We’re committed to navigating it with transparency, collaboration, and an eye toward a brighter economic future.”

People reported posing as officials

Earlier this month, Georgetown County was made aware that an individual or individuals may have been posing as a county employee or contractor of the county to access private properties in the guise of performing inspections. In one reported case, the person even presented a professional-looking business card.

County employees performing inspections will have an ID issued by the county and will also be driving county vehicles with the county logo on the door and a unique vehicle number on the front side panel that identifies what department they belong to.

If residents have questions or concerns about someone on their property claiming to be there on behalf of Georgetown County, call the department they say they are working for to verify, or call the HR Department. Department numbers are available on our website at gtcounty.org.

You can also call the Georgetown County Sheriff’s Office at 843-546-5102 if you have concerns about someone on your property.

Landfill to close early on April 30

The Georgetown County Landfill will close at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 30, to allow for a system upgrade at the scalehouse. Normal operations are scheduled to resume Thursday, May 1.

Please plan accordingly.

Recycling center operations will not be impacted. We apologize for any inconvenience.

About this publication

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 Georgetown County Monthly.

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 our newsletter on our website at www.gtcounty.org/newsroom 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.

County, Red Cross join forces for shelter volunteer training

As hurricane season looms and disaster risks remain ever-present, the American Red Cross and Georgetown County Emergency Services are partnering to prepare the community through an important initiative: local shelter volunteer training. The effort culminates in a one-day boot camp on May 10 at the county's Emergency Operations Center, located at 2222-C Highmarket St.

The Red Cross plays a vital role in the county's disaster response operations, particularly when it comes to managing emergency shelters during fires, hurricanes, and other crises.

"They're a crucial partner," said Brandon Ellis, Georgetown County's Director of Emergency Services. "When an event happens, they help us open and manage shelters, ensuring residents have a safe place to go."

However, a significant hurdle remains—volunteer recruitment. "Ninety to 96 percent of our workers are volunteers," said Irene Branyard, the Red Cross' Regional Program Lead for Training in South Carolina. "We lost a lot of that base after COVID, and we're working hard to rebuild it."

Recognizing that lengthy commitments are no longer feasible for many, the Red Cross has adapted. Volunteers are now asked to commit to just three 12-hour shifts, either consecutive or non-consecutive, and within their local county or a 50-mile radius.

"We're hoping this makes it easier for more people to say yes," Branyard said. "Whether you have a part-time job, family obligations, or just a few spare days, there's a role for you."

The shelter training boot camp, scheduled for May 10 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., will provide attendees with the basic



A training session on May 10 will prepare new volunteers to assist with shelter operations during a disaster.

tools needed to assist in a shelter during a disaster. It also includes hands-only CPR training—something that could save a life in or outside of a shelter environment.

"The more people we can equip with CPR skills, the better chance we have at making our community safer every day," Ellis said.

Participants will leave the training ready to serve—and more confident in their ability to respond in a crisis. Branyard emphasized that training doesn't stop there. "We train, train, train. That's how we ensure volunteers know what to do, where to go, and how to help—before disaster strikes."

Registration for the May 10 training is available at <https://bit.ly/gtownshelter>.

In an era of increasingly frequent emergencies, every trained volunteer becomes a vital part of Georgetown County's resilience.

"We can't do this alone," said Branyard. "Our community depends on each other—and right now, we need your help."

www.trilogyoutdoorsmedia.com

GEORGETOWN COUNTY
FISHING RODEO
YOUTH
Saturday May 10th
at 8(Eight)OAKS PARK
8am SPECIAL VIP GUESTS ONLY
9am to 12pm Free Fishing For All Youth
TACKLE, RODS, AND BAIT SUPPLIED

SCDNR, Georgetown County Parks & Recreation, and Trilogy Outdoors Media present the **2025 FREE Kids Fishing Rodeo** ***Special thanks to Inlet Rocks Bait & Tackle, Elvis Services, and to SONIC of Pawleys Island for their generous donations to the event***

Lunch Provided By
SONIC

Bait and Tackle Provided By
INLET ROCKS
ELVIS
SALT T
GRAND STRAND FISHING RODEO

TRIOLOGY OUTDOORS
ELVIS
SALT T
GRAND STRAND FISHING RODEO

QR CODE

WACCAMAW CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH
MIND AND BODY HEALTH AND WELLNESS
FAIR

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025
9:00AM-2:00PM

HOWARD CENTER 1610 HAWKINS ST.
GEORGETOWN, SC 29440

This event is Sponsored by
Waccamaw Center for Mental Health & Georgetown County
Parks and Recreation

DMH

GEORGETOWN COUNTY, SC

Three County beaches in the running to be named state's best

Once again three of the most popular beaches in Georgetown County – Huntington Beach State Park, Litchfield Beach and Pawleys Island – are in the running for a USA Today/10 Best contest to name the “Best Beach in South Carolina.”

Pawleys Island won this same contest last year. In that same poll in 2024, Litchfield Beach finished in fourth place, with Huntington Beach claiming fifth place. Those wins put three of the Hammock Coast’s (the county’s tourism marketing brand name) beaches in the Top 5 of South Carolina beaches.

The USA Today/10Best Readers’ Choice travel awards offer the public an opportunity to narrow the initial list of 17 nominees down to the “10 Best.”

The 2025 contest began on April 21 and will conclude on Monday, May 19, at 11:59 a.m. The Top 10 winners will be announced on Wednesday, May 28, at noon.

To cast a vote for your favorite Hammock Coast beach — Pawleys Island, Litchfield Beach, or Huntington Beach State Park – go to:

<https://10best.usatoday.com/awards/best-beach-in-south-carolina/>

Everyone can vote once per day and on all their devices: desktop and laptop computers, smart phones or tablets.

The USA TODAY 10Best Readers’ Choice Awards highlight top-notch attractions and businesses, providing readers with trusted recommendations.

This is not the first time a Hammock Coast community or attraction has been nominated in a USA Today/10 Best contest. Georgetown topped the Best Coastal Small Town contest in 2018 and was nominated again for many years.



A family plays on one of Georgetown County's beautiful beaches.

Murrells Inlet reached No. 6 in the Best Small Town in the South contest. Brookgreen Gardens and Huntington Beach State Park have also been nominated in contests that have yielded top results.

The latest Hammock Coast win was only weeks ago when Caledonia Golf and Fish Club came in fourth in a national poll to name the Best Public Golf Courses. Caledonia was the only South Carolina course to make the Top 10 and one of only two in the South to make the Top 10.

“It’s important to vote each day – and on all your devices: computers, phones, tablets, etc.,” said Mark Stevens, Tourism development director. “Each vote is important, as this is a very competitive contest voted on by folks from all over the U.S. I’d love to see one of our beaches top the list again!”

Waccamaw Neck Branch
Library

Tom Yawkey Wildlife
Center Tours

Thursday, May 1st
or
Wednesday, May 14th
9:30AM-2:30PM

Reservation required--
call Ms. Washington @
843-545-3623
Space limited

Must drive own vehicle to
South Island (10 miles South
of Georgetown)
Bring water and
a bagged lunch

Georgetown County Main Library

Mother's Day
Tea Party

Wednesday May 7th
10:30
Auditorium
Registration required.

843-545-3311 or
843-545-3310

Airport breaks ground on runway reconstruction project May 2

Georgetown County officials, airport staff and project partners will gather at the Georgetown County Airport this Friday to break ground on the reconstruction of Runway 11/29 — a major project aimed at enhancing safety and operational capabilities at the county's airport.

The groundbreaking coincides with South Carolina Aviation Week, serving as Georgetown County's contribution to recognizing the vital role aviation plays in the state's economy and infrastructure.

This project is particularly exciting, because Runway 11/29 is a secondary runway, and secondary runways are not usually eligible for FAA funding. As a result, most are in very poor condition.

"The leadership at the state Aeronautics Commission recognized this as a safety issue and created a new program that would allow 90% of projects to be funded through state support, making it feasible for local governments to complete these projects," said Georgetown County Airport Manager Jim Taylor. Runway 11/29 will be the first secondary runway in the state to take advantage of this new program.

Originally installed in 1942 by the military during World War II, Runway 11/29 has never been resurfaced. Over time, the original construction — which included asphalt laid over tree stumps and roots — led to significant surface deterioration. Voids and sinkholes have formed across the runway, creating serious safety concerns.

"We're proud to take this important step in making the airport safer and more reliable for all users," Taylor said. "This reconstruction ensures that pilots have a safe crosswind runway available and allows for continued



Runway 11/29, a secondary runway, is currently pocked by potholes.

operations if maintenance is needed on our primary runway."

The total cost of the project is \$6.3 million. The construction contract was awarded to Ben Cox Company, LLC, of Andrews.

The Georgetown County Airport, established in 1942 and transferred to county ownership in 1947 under the Surplus Land Act, has steadily grown in importance as a general aviation facility. It serves private pilots, business travelers, and visitors seeking access to the Grand Strand and coastal South Carolina, and it is increasingly positioned as a key location for aviation-related economic development. Over the past five years, Georgetown County has invested approximately \$15 million in airport improvements with support from the South Carolina Aeronautics Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration.

"This project would not have been possible without the leadership and support of the South Carolina Aeronautics Commission," Taylor added.

Friends of Waccamaw Library (FOWL)

presents

Blossoms for Books

Celebrate Spring with Visits to 8 Local Gardens
Saturday, May 17 10-4

Tickets will go on sale March 31st
at the Friends Center
and online at www.thefowl.org

Tickets are \$35 for Friends Members
\$40 for Non-Members and Day of.

Garden
Tour
Today

Tour begins at Waccamaw Library
41 St. Paul Place
Pawleys Island 29585

(to pick up your wristband/maps)

Carpooling Raffle

All proceeds benefit our
Waccamaw Neck Branch Library



Newly realigned Murrells Inlet Boat Landing Ribbon Cutting & Dedication

Friday, May 9
 11 A.M.
 4139 Hwy. 17 Business
Murrells Inlet

Members of the public
are invited to join us
for a brief ceremony
celebrating the project's
completion.



@gtcounty @gtcparks



gtcounty.org

→] Bike the Neck

Parks and Recreation. “It’s become part of the fabric of life here.”

While the original goal was to create safe, alternative transportation routes—especially for underserved communities including Parkersville, where many rely on bicycles as their primary mode of transportation—the project has also dramatically enhanced recreational opportunities. In fact, early planning was spurred in part by a desire to prevent further tragedies: several cyclists lost their lives on Highway 17 in the decade before the project launched.



Linda Ketron

Today, the trail extends over 20 miles, and while many gaps have been filled, the work continues. Volunteers and county leaders alike have their eyes on what’s next—though some of those ideas remain aspirational.

One once-envisioned expansion involved creating a bicycle and pedestrian ferry to carry riders across the water to East Bay Park, complete with high schoolers pedaling rickshaws to ferry visitors into downtown Georgetown for shopping and dining. While the concept was submitted years ago as part of an ambitious grant proposal, it wasn’t funded. Still, the dream lives—an example of the creative vision that has fueled this project from the start.

“That’s the thing about Bike the Neck—it’s not just about where we’ve gone, but where we hope to go,” Ketron said.

The trail’s continued popularity requires ongoing care. “We’re currently planning a major resurfacing project in the Huntington Beach and Litchfield areas,” Goodale noted. “Some sections have been around long enough that they’re starting to show their age.”

The county handles the majority of maintenance, but community involvement is still strong. Ketron laughed as she recalled still getting calls from residents reporting downed trees. “That tells me people care—and that’s a good thing.”

Bike the Neck is also a designated segment of the East Coast Greenway, a 3,000-mile trail-in-progress stretching from Maine to Florida. While the Greenway prefers more direct routes, Georgetown County’s section was designed with local needs in mind.

“Our route meanders because we want families and schoolchildren to feel safe using it,” said Ketron. “It’s not about speed—it’s about safety, access and community.”

The trail’s impact has inspired surrounding communities to create their own connected paths and events. Murrells Inlet and Plantersville, for example, now host popular rides that draw hundreds of participants annually. A parking area recently opened at the Murrells Inlet trailhead, and other additions are underway, including safety connectors and school route improvements in the Pawleys Island and Petigru areas.



County and state officials came together on April 25 to officially open the new parking area for the bikeway that runs along Business 17 into Huntington Beach State Park. Users of the path, which runs from the Horry County line down Business 17 and throughout Litchfield and Pawleys Island, had long been clamoring for more parking for the bikeway. The parking area, made of pervious pavement, cost a total of \$515,000 with \$325,000 coming from the state. SC Rep. Lee Hewitt, Sen. Stephen Goldfinch and Santee Cooper helped secure funds. “This project is a gateway to Murrells Inlet and Pawleys Island, encouraging exercise and sightseeing of our natural habitats,” said Georgetown County Council Member Stella Mercado. Special thanks go to Rep. Hewitt, Sen. Goldfinch, Santee Cooper, Georgetown County Public Services and Parks and Recreation departments, contractor ARC of Murrells Inlet, architect Bolton and Menk of Myrtle Beach, Murrells Inlet 2020, and of course Linda Ketron and Bike the Neck.

“We’ve come a long way, but there’s more to do,” said Goodale. “From expanding to maintaining and improving what we have, the trail continues to grow—just like the vision that launched it.”

After three decades, Bike the Neck remains one of Georgetown County’s most successful grassroots movements—one that has improved safety, enhanced recreation, and fostered a sense of place along the Waccamaw Neck. As Ketron puts it, “It’s about connection—between people, neighborhoods, and communities. And that’s a legacy we’ll keep building on.”

CHILDREN'S STORYTIME
 Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays
 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Carvers Bay Library
 13048 Choppee Rd, Hemingway,
 SC 29554

Broach wins six state awards



Georgetown County Public Information Officer Jackie Broach brought home six awards from the SC Press Association's Annual Contest in Columbia this month. Georgetown County earned top honors in the Associate Division — which includes agencies, nonprofits and businesses from across the state — including:

- 1st Place Feature Writing for a story on Gary Richards, whose smile and spirit have taken flight at the Georgetown County Airport;
- 3rd Place Feature Photo for the image accompanying Gary's story;
- 3rd Place Best Publication for the county's monthly newsletter;
- 3rd Place News Writing for an article on the naming of the Waccamaw Library Auditorium in honor of Jean Cross;
- 2nd Place News Photo for a photo of Melissa Jefferson during the parade held in her honor after her Olympics wins;
- 3rd Place News Photo for a shot of the Northern Lights in Plantersville.

Broach, a former journalist with publications including the Coastal Observer, has led Georgetown County's Public Information office since 2012. She is a FEMA-certified Master/Executive PIO and was among the first PIOs in the nation to receive the Public Information Officer professional credential from the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

Happy Retirement!



Georgetown County bid farewell recently to two esteemed long-time employees as they left the 9-to-5 life behind for retirement. On March 31, Deputy Auditor Jessie Duncan (left) celebrated her last day on the job after 40 years of dedicated service to Georgetown County and its residents. Her colleagues in the Auditor's Office honored her with a drop-in party on March 28. On April 22, Sheryl Gibbs retired after 15 years of dedicated service in our Public Services Department, where she worked on the custodial team. She was always kind and helpful in her work and will be missed by staff members across the county. Her colleagues in Public Services hosted a drop-in celebration for her on her last day. We wish both of these outstanding ladies much happiness in their retirements and thank them for their years of service.

UPCOMING BLOOD DRIVES

- Murrells Inlet Community Center will host the Blood Connection from 9 a.m. to noon on May 5. \$10 will be given to Hugs for Horses for each donation. Sign up at thebloodconnection.org.
- Waccamaw Regional Recreation Center will host a blood drive with the American Red Cross from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on May 14. Sign up redcrossblood.org.
- The Waccamaw Library will host the Blood Connection from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 22. \$10 will be given to the Friends of the Waccamaw Library for each donation. Sign up at thebloodconnection.org.

First Friday

with Georgetown County



New episodes on the first Friday of every month. Join us as we discuss topics important to residents of our county. Listen on YouTube or anywhere you normally stream and download podcasts.

ANTHUAN MAYBANK WEEKEND



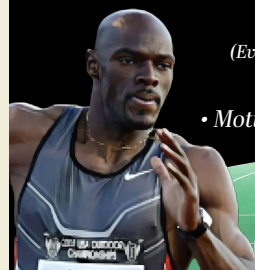
Friday, May 2

- 10 a.m. — Senior Sports Classic at Maybank Track
- 3 p.m. — GOAT Hike in the Historic District (Meet at Seven St. Courthouse parking lot)

Saturday, May 3

(Event begins at 9 a.m. at Maybank Track Field)

- Youth Track Expo
- Motivational Speech and Meet & Greet



<< Numbers >>
TO KNOW

(All begin with area code 843)

- Directory, 545-3063
- 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
- Public Works, 545-3438
- Probate Judge, 545-3077
- Recycling/Solid Waste
545-3463
- Register of Deeds, 545-3088
- Sheriff, 546-5102
- Stormwater, 545-3524
- Treasurer, 545-3102

P.O. Box 421270
129 Screven Street



Golden GOATs take on Bridge 2 Bridge

Three members of Georgetown County's senior centers recently participated in (and completed!) the Georgetown Bridge 2 Bridge Run on March 29. Pictured from left are Sarah Butler, Virginia Holladay and Linda Graham. The three are part of a senior walking group through the senior centers called the Golden GOATs who meet up regularly to log miles under the county's GOAT (Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trails) program. "These are some of my champions that participate in anything and everything I suggest," said Angie Weaver, senior program specialist with Georgetown County Parks and Recreation. "They willingly have volunteered to work the Breast Cancer Walk as well as participated in the walk. They excitedly jump at the opportunity to represent our team in any event the county hosts, as well as participate in all of the GOAT Herd challenges."



Celebrating National County Government Month

Georgetown County is celebrating National County Government Month (NCGM) throughout April to showcase how the county supports residents and builds healthy, safe and vibrant communities.

The highlight of the county's celebrations was again the Georgetown County Taxpayer Academy, which returned on Thursdays in April for its third year. The Taxpayer Academy is an annual free program offered through Georgetown County that aims to help county residents learn more about their local government, its extensive operations and how taxpayer dollars are put to use. It aims to be both fun and informative for residents. This year's class has 14 enthusiastic participants.

The county also highlighted some of its outstanding employees throughout the month on its social media accounts, showcasing how they impact our community on a daily basis.

Additionally, Georgetown County Council approved a proclamation in support of County Government Month. [View the proclamation on our website.](#)

"Georgetown County is committed to serving our residents through innovative programs and essential services," said County Administrator Angela Christian. "National County Government Month is an opportunity to highlight the ways we are working to enhance quality of life, support our community, and build a stronger future

for all who call Georgetown County home."

Georgetown County has made great strides over the past year to perform more efficiently and better serve the public, including getting a Capital Project Sales Tax referendum on the ballot, which was ultimately approved by voters; breaking ground on a new detention center; receipt of awards of excellence across multiple departments; obtainment of a national accreditation by the Sheriff's Office and an international reaccreditation by the Public Services department; cyber security initiatives; and much more.

Since 1991, the National Association of Counties (NACo) has encouraged counties across the country to raise public awareness about county roles, responsibilities and services during the month of April. NCGM is an opportunity to celebrate the vital role that county governments play in improving the everyday lives of residents.

For more information about services offered by Georgetown County, upcoming events and more, visit gtcounty.org.

If you're interested in our County Government Month staff profiles, [view the album on our Facebook page.](#)

