

The Covington News

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2024



THE STORY OF YOUR LIFE SINCE 1865

COMMUNITY

Volunteers recognized at CPD ceremony

READ MORE ON PAGE A7



HIS WORD

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

JOSHUA 1:9 NIV



RAMS SWEEP 'SKINS

Newton baseball downs Social Circle in double-header last week.

READ MORE ON PAGE B1



File Photo

Suspect arrested, second warrant issued in Elme Apartment shooting

PHILLIP B. HUBBARD | MANAGING EDITOR

NEWTON COUNTY --- Newton County deputies arrested a person on Feb. 27 in relation to a shooting that occurred at the Elme Apartments in Covington.

Robert Smith, a 20-year old of Conyers, was arrested and charged with aggravated assault (family violence), possession of a handgun during the commission of a crime, possession of marijuana with the intent to distribute and tampering with evidence.

According to the Newton County Sheriff's Office (NCSO), investigators have issued additional warrants for a second suspect — Jordan Smith, a 19-year old of Conyers — for his connection to the Feb. 25 shooting.

At around 8 p.m. on Feb. 25, Newton County deputies responded to a "penetrating trauma call" at the apartment complex in Covington. An initial investigation determined the incident was domestic violence-related.

Two male individuals sustained gunshot wounds. One sustained minor injuries while the second sustained major injuries.

Both were transported to a local hospital, per the NCSO press release.

This is an ongoing story and will update when more information is made available.



ROBERT SMITH

Questions arise over Almon Community Center

EVAN NEWTON | NEWS EDITOR

NEWTON COUNTY - There has been one question on the minds of commissioners at the recent Newton County Board of Commissioners (BOC) meetings.

Who owns the Almon Community Center?

Initially stemming from conversation at the Jan. 16 BOC meeting, the former voting precinct and event center - also known by the name "Almon

Community House" - has been the subject of many questions regarding its ownership and subsequent tax-exemption status.

Discussion over ownership begins during county manager report

Discussion of this topic first appeared during county manager Harold Cooper's county manager report at the Jan. 16 meeting. In the report, a pre-

sentation with a chart showed a list of properties with owner designations for each listed property.

The presentation listed Almon Community Center as "not county owned."

This drew the confusion of District 3 representative Alana Sanders.

"When I came in 2021, our former county manager Lloyd Kerr - when I started receiving complaints - he

QUESTIONS
CONT. ON A3

Johnson Qualifies for Re-Election in 2024

SUBMITTED TO THE NEWS

DECATUR, Ga. - On Monday, March 4, 2024, Congressman Hank Johnson (GA-04) made it official by qualifying to run for his tenth term in Georgia's Fourth Congressional District.

"I am proud of my strong record in Congress," he said. "I look forward to meeting new voters, constituents and continuing to work for the people of Georgia's Fourth Congressional District," Johnson said.

Since 2007, Rep. Johnson has helped bring billions of dollars in federal investments for COVID-19, schools, transportation projects, small businesses, public safe-

JOHNSON
CONT. ON A2



Contributed Photo

NCSS High Schools named 2024 AP Honor Schools

STAFF REPORT | THE NEWS

All three Newton County School System high schools - Alcovy, Eastside and Newton - have earned the distinction of being recognized as 2024 Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Schools by Georgia School superintendent Richard Woods.

This year, all three schools achieved recognition as AP STEM schools, showcasing their commitment to excellence in courses such as AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, AP Statistics, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Environmental Science, AP Physics 1, AP Physics 2, AP Physics C, AP Computer Science A, and AP Computer Science Principles. Moreover, Newton High was acknowledged as an AP Expansion School, and both Newton High School and Alcovy High School earned the title of 2023 AP Humanities School.

Dr. Duke Bradley III, Newton County School superintendent, congratulated each school.

"I am thrilled to congratulate Alcovy, Eastside, and Newton for their well-deserved recognition as AP Honor Schools," Bradley said. "This achievement reflects our ongoing dedication to providing a diverse range of AP courses, exposing students to the challenges of college-level coursework while affording them the opportunity to earn college credit. With twenty-three different AP courses currently offered, we remain committed to identifying avenues for expansion, ensuring that every high school student interested in enrolling in a collegiate-level course has the access and opportunity to do so."

The Georgia Department of Education defines AP STEM schools and AP Humanities schools based on specific

AP
CONT. ON A2



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6
HIGH: 70° LOW: 48°
RAINY
40 PERCENT PRECIPITATION



THURSDAY, MARCH 7
HIGH: 73° LOW: 53°
CLOUDY
9 PERCENT PRECIPITATION

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA &
JOIN OUR 35,000+ FOLLOWERS!

@COVNEWS @COVNEWS @COVINGTONNEWS

OPINIONS A4
COMMUNITY A7
SPORTS B1
ENT. GUIDE C1



VOLUME 159,
NO. 19
SUBSCRIBE TODAY
ONLY \$60/YEAR
COVNEWS.COM

CROSSWORDS

Now in every Wednesday edition on A6

The Covington News

Subscribe at CovNews.com

Anavitarte, Strickland Introduce Legislation Regarding Illegal Immigration

SUBMITTED TO THE NEWS

ATLANTA - On Feb. 29, Sen. Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas), Chairman of the Senate Majority Caucus, and Sen. Brian Strickland (R-McDonough), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, unveiled two new legislative initiatives addressing criminal procedure concerning individuals who immigrate to the state illegally.

The first proposal is a resolution amending the Constitution of Georgia, which would empower the Georgia General Assembly to either outlaw parole for undocumented immigrants or establish specific parole terms and conditions for those who fall into this category. The second initiative is a bill delineating the criteria for bail hearings concerning undocumented immigrants, as well as individuals charged with a felony punishable by imprisonment for one year or more and deemed removable or dismissible aliens.

"I extend my sincere gratitude to our legislators for tackling this vital issue," said Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner John F. King. "As a former police chief, Army officer, and Georgia's first Hispanic statewide constitutional officer, I deeply value law and order. The proposed measures introduce strict bail conditions and revise parole rules, which demonstrates Georgia's dedica-

tion to these values, addresses federal immigration policy flaws, and enhances the safety and welfare of all Georgians."

Sen. Anavitarte commented on the two proposed pieces of legislation, stating, "I felt compelled to introduce these measures as they aim to enhance the protection of our state's citizens. I approached the drafting of these bills with a balanced perspective, recognizing the importance of upholding the rule of law, while also addressing our broken immigration system. These measures reinforce our commitment to cultivating a judicial system that is both fair and just, prioritizing the security of our state and the welfare of our communities."

"Immigration reform should start with enforcing the laws we already have on the books," said Sen. Brian Strickland (R-McDonough), who partnered with Sen. Anavitarte to draft this legislation. "While we wait for Washington to address our broken system, this legislation makes certain that Georgia is protecting our citizens from those in our country illegally that choose to commit crimes. Georgia should remain a welcoming place for all immigrants that are following the rules and attempting to navigate our broken system but stand up against those few that choose to ignore our laws and commit crimes against our citizens."

Medical leaders speak to Social Circle Rotary Club



Lindsey Petrini, CEO of Piedmont Newton, recently presented a program to the Rotary Club of Social Circle. She was accompanied by the hospital's Community Relations Director, Andrea Lane. Piedmont Walton's CEO, Blake Watts, was a guest of the Rotary Club of Social Circle for the meeting. | Contributed Photo

JOHNSON
CONT. FROM A1

seniors. From his main district office in Stonecrest, he has worked to help secure more than \$90 million for constituents

ty, veterans, and seeking help with specific federal agencies such as the IRS, Social Security, VA and the Small Business Administration.

As a senior member of the Democratic Caucus, Hank is

known for his work on police and court reform, consumer protection, civil and voting rights, First Amendment rights, environmental protection, and renewable energy.



CITY OF COVINGTON JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

The City of Covington is currently accepting applications for a **Purchasing and Inventory Technician** in the **Electric Department** with a starting hourly rate of **\$25.20** to a maximum hourly rate of **\$37.00** depending upon qualifications. Qualified applicants **MUST** apply on our website by downloading an application packet at cityofcovington.org, or may apply in person at Covington City Hall, 2194 Emory Street, Covington, Georgia 30014. This position will remain open until **4:00pm on Friday March 15, 2024**. The City of Covington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

FULL LIST OF YOUNG AUTHORS WINNERS (RIGHT)

Young Georgia Authors Winners

GRADE	SCHOOL	STUDENT	TITLE OF WORK
Kindergarten	Mansfield Elementary	Ava Egeland	"The Best Christmas"
1st Grade	Newton County STEAM Academy	Grace Benefield	"Plip Plop!"
2nd Grade	Porterdale Elementary	Akari Roach'e	"The Scary Ghost"
3rd Grade	Newton County STEAM Academy	Caleb Hodges	"The Day I Got Stuck..."
4th Grade	South Salem Elementary	Hawa Sagara	"Coin"
5th Grade	South Salem Elementary	Autumn Jarvis	"Dark Skin Girl"
6th Grade	Clements Middle	Sebastian Paler	"The Trials"
7th Grade	Newton County STEAM Academy	Elise Bray	"Dectecies #1: The First Mission"
8th Grade	Liberty Middle	Payton Tremblay	"Inevitability"
9th Grade	Newton High	Sam Paler	"Silver Lined Skies"
10th Grade	Newton High	Victoria Barrett	"I Am Not an Angry Black Woman"
11th Grade	Eastside High	Malorie Jackson	"Rain"
12th Grade	Newton College & Career Academy	Yankiel Guevara Garrido	"The Graveyard"

NCSS Announces Winners of District Young Georgia Authors Competition

STAFF REPORT | THE NEWS

Newton County School System (NCSS) is pleased to announce the grade-level winners of the 2024 District Young Georgia Authors Competition. Unlike many writing competitions, Young Georgia Authors does not provide a prompt to which students must respond or provide any other boundaries to their genre choice or creativity beyond a 1900-word maximum length. Entries may include short stories, poetry, essays, journalism, academic research reports, personal narratives, and any other original student writing. Judges looked for expression of ideas, language use, and unique perspective and voice. All district winners will now have their written work forwarded for consideration in the regional Young Georgia Authors Competition.

NCSS Chief Academic Officer Dr. Benjamin Roundtree expressed his congratulations to the winners and underscored the significance of strong writing skills.

"Congratulations to each of the winners in the Young Georgia Authors contest," Roundtree said. "Proficient writing is a critical skill that serves as a gateway to improved grades and heightened academic success. Moreover, as students venture into the workforce and navigate their career paths, the ability to write effectively becomes a key asset. I commend these students for their outstanding achievements. Our school district is undoubtedly home to some incredibly talented writers, and I extend my best wishes to them as they embark on the next phase of the competition."

AP
CONT. FROM A1

criteria, and AP Expansion Schools are recognized for significant growth in AP student participation.

"This recognition speaks to the standard of academic excellence that exists in our high schools. It is a testament to both our teachers and our students," Bradley said.

This achievement aligns with the broader vision of providing high-quality opportunities for Georgia stu-

dents, as expressed by Georgia School Superintendent Richard Woods.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the 2024 AP Honor Schools," Woods said. "I commend them for their hard work to build strong Advanced Placement programs and, as a result, provide high-quality opportunities for Georgia students. Additionally, I am thrilled that the number of AP Honor Schools and school districts continues to rise each

year - a testament to the commitment of Georgia public education to expand opportunities for all Georgia students."

The Advanced Placement (AP) classes and exams, administered by the College Board, offer rigorous college-level learning options to high school students. Those who achieve a score of 3, 4, or 5 on AP exams may receive college credit, further enhancing their educational journey.

2024



Hometown Vets (770) 728-4302

February SMALL BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

NEWTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

QUESTIONS
CONT. FROM A1

was the one who informed me that it was a county owned property and there was an agreement with the county for Mr. Chuck Berry to maintain it on behalf of the county,” Sanders said. “So now this is the first time I’m hearing in 2024 that it’s not owned by the county.”

County attorney Patrick Jaugstetter said that the county recently compiled research and figured out that it was not owned by them.

“We undertook a thorough title examination of the property and determined the county did not own the property,” Jaugstetter said.

Cooper stated that it is owned by a trust through a “collective of families.”

Sanders then questioned the county’s motives behind the property.

“So why was the county involved? Because when I was speaking to Mr. Kerr, he said the county also does maintenance in the building as far as cutting grass,” Sanders said. “So why has the county been involved in someone’s personal property?”

Cooper replied by stating that the information provided to him about the matter was recent – hence why he brought it before the board.

“The only thing that I know was that the county was assisting them with their water services,” Cooper said. “And I do know that at one point in time this was a voting precinct so I don’t know if it carried on until we did actually did this most recent search on Jan. 10, but once I received the information on Jan. 10, that’s why I wanted to come and bring it before this board today.”

Who owns the Almon Community Center?

According to Newton County Tax Assessors Office public domain, qPublic.net, Newton County was listed as the owner as recently as Feb. 13.

The property located on 65 Mount Tabor Road was listed with an official ownership designation of “Newton County Public Property.”

The Covington News filed an open records request with Newton County on Feb. 13 to determine who possessed ownership of the former voting precinct.

According to a deed from Nov. 5, 1953, the property was formerly owned by G.H. Dobbs, and subsequently put in a trust of successors. “Title is vested of record in D.T. Dobbs, J.T. Owens, Sr., J.T. Wallace, C.H. Berry, Jr. and James H. Dobbs, as Trustees of Almon Community House, and to their successors thereof by virtue of deed from G.H. Dobbs dated November 5, 1953 and recorded in Deed Book 46, Page 225 in Newton County Deed Records,” according to an official title certification.

The title certification had an effective date of Dec. 13, 2023, and a title report date of Jan. 3, 2024.

On Feb. 23, an update from qPublic.net showed “Almon Community House Trustees of ETAL” as owners of the property.

The News spoke to chief appraiser of the Newton County Assessor’s Office, Martie Kinard, to get further clarification.

Kinard told *The News* on Feb. 27 that the change was made “either Friday [Feb. 23] or Monday [Feb. 26].”

The change was made due to an email exchange that took place involving the county attorney, Jaugstetter and the assessor’s office.

“There was a title search recently conducted through the Board of Commissioners and I was supplied a copy of that title search through the county attorney,” Kinard said.

Supervisor of the community center, Chuck Berry, confirmed to *The News* that the property was owned by a trust and not the county.

But as time went on, Berry said that the property reverted back to the Dobbs family and that he remained the caretaker.

“As time went by and people kinda moved on and me being the caretaker, and the Dobbs family basically owning the property on which the building sits , so one goes hand-in-

hand,” Berry said. “Whether it be the facility itself or the property, it’s in the hands of the Dobbs family.

“Families kind of dispersed. People passed away. The group itself kind of dissolved over time... Nobody has been directly involved with the community house in several years outside of myself just basically looking after it to make sure we still had it for people in the community to use.”

Son of G.H. Dobbs, Denny Dobbs, told *The News* the property was never owned by the county and was originally built by his father and a group of men – who were listed as the trustees – to provide a community house for Almon.

Despite this, Denny said that he was never involved with the naming of trustees, and said he was not a trustee himself.

When asked who currently owns the property, Dobbs said that is up in the air.

“We’re trying to figure all that out now,” Dobbs said. “The way I think it is, we’re trying to sort all that – if there’s no trustees to operate it – it reverts back to family, my father, which would be me and my sister who has passed away... what I’ve heard from legal counsel is that it would work back to us.”

As far as whom it may revert to, that is still in talks, too.

“I’ve been in discussions with Chuck Berry about whether he wants to try to put together another group of trustees,” Dobbs said. “He’s been the one who’s been putting all the effort in it for the last 10 years.”

Dobbs said it is likely an LLC will be set up to hold the title of the property and that Berry would continue to day-to-day operations. It was said that currently, all proceeds of the center is in a bank account with Berry’s name on it and used for maintenance and utilities only, and not for any personal usage or profit.

Where did the confusion come from?

Not much was said on why the County thought they owned the property.

However, Newton County public information officer Bryan Fazio stated that the former interim county manager, Jarvis Sims, began to look into community centers during his tenure. After some further digging from Cooper, the title examination was then conducted.

“The interim county manager [Sims] was going through some of our policies pertaining to community centers,” Fazio said. “Upon a deeper dive, a full property title search revealed that we did not own it.”

The Covington News reached out to Jaugstetter to get a further idea on the clarification behind the title examination. However, Jaugstetter declined to comment.

There has also been confusion among commissioners and office-holders alike as to if the property was county-owned or not county-owned.

District 4 representative J.C. Henderson – who has served on the Board of Commissioners since 1996 – said he was never aware of the building as anything other than county-owned.

“There never has been since I’ve been on the board a discussion of whether or not it was county property,” Henderson said at the Jan. 16 BOC meeting. “It should have fell under the same rules as any other community center or building.”

While not knowing an exact year, Kinard said that she has always thought that Almon Community Center was county-owned, too.

“I had only ever known it to be in that name [of Newton County],” Kinard said.

But Berry said that despite the tax records, Newton County never owned it.

“It’s listed on the tax records [as the county owning the property] but there’s nothing in the deeds that indicate that,” Berry said. “My guess is that they listed on the tax records as county property so that they can carry the liability insurance on it,

seeing as it was used as a voting precinct. Legal ownership was never transferred.”

Dobbs also seconded this.

“The county has never owned it, let me clear that up for you,” Dobbs said.

How much does Almon Community Center pay in taxes?

As recent as Feb. 13, the property had a listed E1 designation – the designation for tax exempt public property. It is also listed on the public domain as “Office - Governmental.”

This meant this property was tax-exempt, therefore, the answer was nothing.

That, however, is set to change. As of Feb. 23, the property’s designation changed from E1 to C4 - commercial.

Kinard stated that the change was made to reflect the proper ownership and that specifics are still being looked into for the future.

“I have my appraiser still looking at the property to see what strata classification it would go into, of course it wouldn’t go into E anymore,” Kinard said.

How did Almon Community Center receive its exemption status?

This part does not seem as clear as others.

Newton County Tax Commissioner Marcus Jordan told *The Covington News* that each time a property is classified as exempt, the Newton County Board of Tax Assessors would vote to determine whether the property should be exempt or not.

When an open records request was filed to see if an exemption record was on file, the County stated “there are no records responsive to this request.”

How much has Almon Community Center been worth over the years?

Valuations made available through qPublic.net only showed what the property was worth from 2019 to 2023. However, *The News* was able to obtain the valuation of the property from the Newton County tax assessors office from the years 2016 to 2023.

2016: \$40,000
2017: \$125,900
2018: \$175,000
2019: \$175,000
2020: \$180,500
2021: \$178,700
2022: \$178,700
2023: \$191,700

The News asked Berry on whether any changes had been made to the property to warrant an over 300 percent valuation increase from 2016 to 2017.

“No. There were no changes to the building that would have warranted that,” Berry said.

How much in property taxes would Almon Community Center have paid had it been listed as private property?

Kinard confirmed to *The News* that the Almon Community Center has not been paying property taxes.

Due to the property’s tax-exemption status as county-owned property, property taxes were not collected.

Based on the numbers provided by the tax assessor’s office, here is what Almon Community Center would have roughly paid in property taxes had the property been listed as privately owned and not tax-exempt.

It is important to note that these are rough estimates and are not to be considered as exact calculations.

The formula used to calculate the rough estimations was (Property valuation for each year) * (40 percent) = x. Then (x) * (Millage rate for each year / \$1,000).

2016: \$549.32
2017: \$1,729.01
2018: \$2,403.31
2019: \$2,387.70
2020: \$2,425.63

2021: \$2,167.63
2022: \$1,939.53
2023: \$1,942.38

The Covington News asked Berry if he was aware of the property’s tax-exemption status, to which he said “he did not know.”

“If there was any tax liability on it at that point it would be the Dobbs family because the Dobbs family owned the property,” Berry said.

Dobbs told *The News* that he never had personal involvement with the property until the issue was brought up by Sanders in a BOC meeting “a few years ago.” He stated that until just recently he was beginning to take involvement in the property.

“I never looked at the tax bill. I never knew who got it. I never got it,” Dobbs said. “I have no idea about any of that. I have no dealings with the community house period.”

How much has Newton County paid to Almon Community Center?

The News also submitted an open records request to determine how much money Newton County has paid to the Almon Community Center – specifically in its utilities.

An official water/sewer log shows data stemming from July 2014 to January 2024 was made available via the request. The county paid the following amount(s) year-by-year:

Jul 2014 - Dec. 2014: \$82.32
2015: \$187.66
2016: \$174
2017: \$374.95
2018: \$160.73
2019: \$204.61
2020: \$152.12
2021: \$157.86
2022: \$168.73
2023: \$167.92

An entry for January 2024 was listed is blank.

The payment log had a listed address of “Almon Voting Precinct.”

However, per a February 2022 *Covington News* article, the voting precinct for Almon was changed from Almon Community Center to Newton Baptist Church.

While Cooper stated that he was only aware that the county paid its water bill, other services were reportedly performed, too, according to Berry.

“The County just basically cut the grass and kept liability insurance on it,” Berry said.

Berry additionally clarified that the other utilities, such as gas and electric bills, were paid from money that was acquired through people who rented the property for its community usage.

What’s next in this process?

As of press time, there are no written plans in any upcoming board meeting agendas for the County to continue discussion on this matter.

Cooper did, however, clarify at the Jan. 16 meeting that Newton County is no longer paying the water/sewer bill.

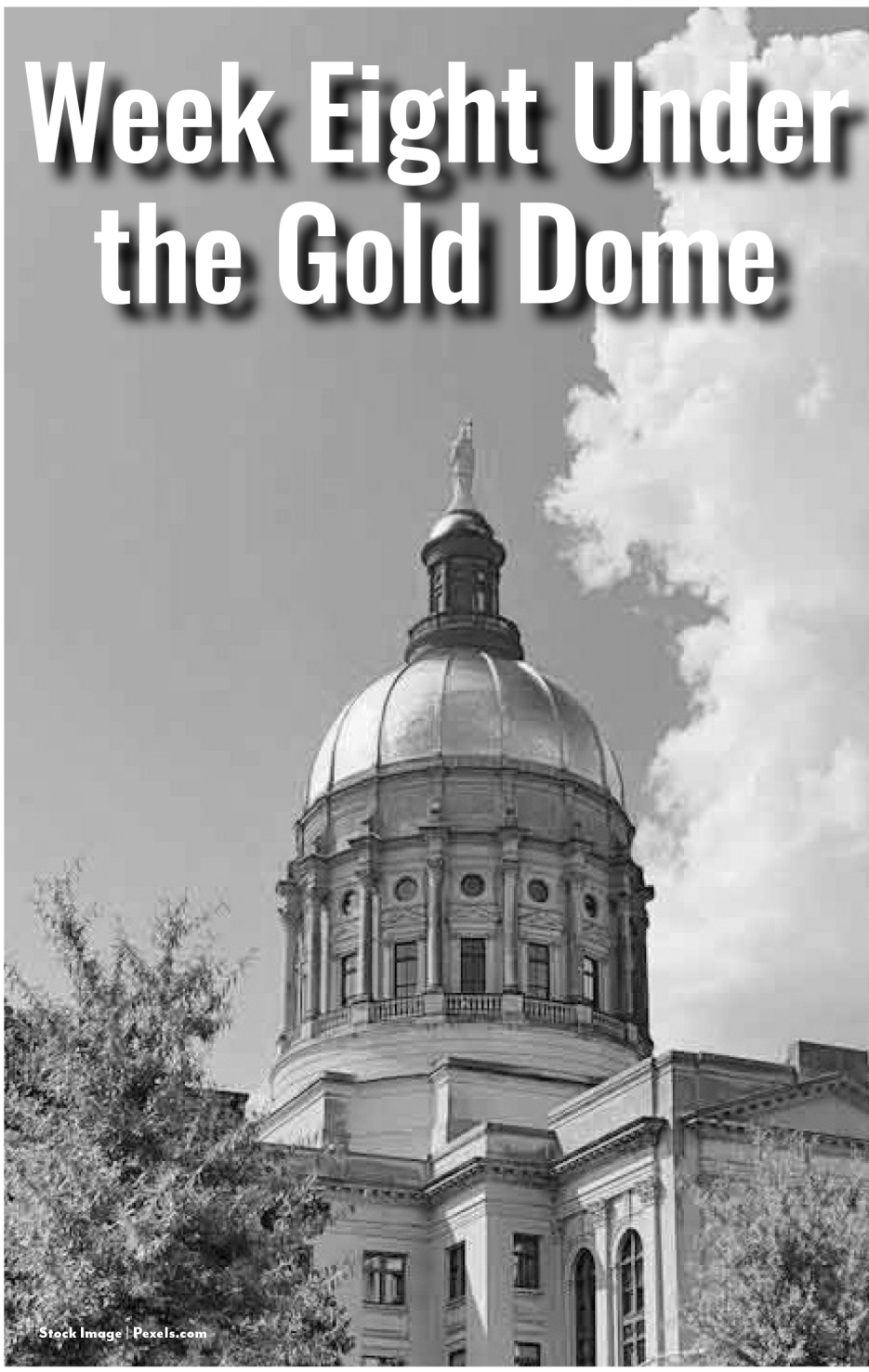
“Effective immediately we have been removed since I found out about it on Jan. 10,” Cooper said.

Dobbs said that the community center will continue to run as operated for the foreseeable future.

“Far as I’m concerned it’s going to be used in the same manner that it is in the past,” Dobbs said.

Berry shared the same sentiment, stating that the community center will continue to run as operated, and will be able to be rented by anyone interested.

“It’s always been a community center and we’ve always had it available for the community and the County was willing to help us there to make a better facility,” Berry said.



BRIAN STRICKLAND
Senator

As the week progressed, the Senate achieved a significant milestone with the completion of “Cross-over Day” on February 29th. This day marks the deadline for all Senate bills to cross over to the House chamber and vice versa. Throughout the 2024 Legislative Session,

Senate Republicans have experienced considerable success, advancing every priority defined by our caucus on to the House of Representatives. Despite this achievement, our dedication to serving Georgians never waned, as we passed several additional bills to further our work for the benefit of this state.

I had the privilege of standing alongside my fellow majority caucus members to support various piec-

STRICKLAND
CONT. ON A5

A reader’s reminder of the goodness within us



DICK YARBROUGH
Syndicated Columnist

I get a number of suggestions from readers regarding topics for a column. For that, I am grateful. I also get suggestions from some readers about what I can do with the column and where I can go while placing it where they suggest. For that, I will leave to your imagination.

A good example of how this particular column came to be was from an incident related to me by a good friend and loyal reader, Janice Carter of Atlanta. I found it worth passing along. It is a reminder that in spite of all the negativity we see and hear daily, there is a goodness among us that we tend to forget.

A few weeks ago as she was departing her bank, Ms. Carter happened up on an elderly woman sitting on the curb of a heavily traveled street in Atlanta and a big burly man towering over her. She immediately went to investigate and discovered that the woman had just been involved in a wreck. She had been injured, was bleeding and was going into shock. The man had physically carried her across the busy intersection from the wreck site and was administering aid.

What happened next is where the goodness comes in. Strangers came out of the bank and other locations, all seeking to help. To my knowledge, no one asked about stolen elections or the war in Ukraine or the border crisis or the economy. The elderly lady was everyone’s priority.

A well-dressed man leaving

the bank offered his belt as a tourniquet. A delivery truck driver stopped to see what was happening and immediately retrieved her emergency medical kit from her vehicle to assist. That was a big assist.

There was no question that the big guy was in charge and remained so until emergency responders arrived and transported the victim to the hospital. With that accomplished, all the strangers who had come together to provide aid and comfort dispersed and went their separate ways.

When everyone had left, Ms. Carter, the wife of a retired physician, walked over to the man and complimented him on his bravery in getting the elderly woman across the street amid heavy traffic and his leadership in directing others until the EMTs arrived. He looked at her and said simply, “Ma’am, I am a Marine.” ‘Nuff said.

For a brief moment, a group of strangers who I suspect may have had divergent views among themselves had they been in a different environment where politics, race or sexual orientation had been the topic, instead had one goal: Unite together to help someone in distress.

For some reason, Janice Carter’s story reminded me of a comment by our late U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson. I was at a small gathering with him when someone asked what would it take to unify our country, His answer? A disaster.

Never were we more united than after Sept. 11. I still recall the senators standing on the steps of the U.S. Capitol and singing “God Bless America,” scared out of their gourds. Today, that bunch in Washing-

YARBROUGH
CONT. ON A5

Once, America was strong and on the move



DAVID SHRIBMAN
Syndicated Columnist

What if President Joe Biden opened his coming State of the Union Address this way:

On this Hill which was my home, I am stirred by old friendships. Though total agreement between the Executive and the Congress is impossible, total respect is important.

I am proud to be among my colleagues of the Congress whose legacy to their trust is their loyalty to their Nation. I am not unaware of the inner emotions of the new Members of this body tonight.

Fifty-one years ago, I felt as you do now. You will soon learn that you are among men and women whose first love is their country, men and women who try each day to do as best they can what they believe is right.

Would this opening change the country? There’s a slim chance that it might. Would this opening explain the country? There’s a big chance that it would.

A lot has changed

I’ve changed five of the 108 words above, all in the final paragraph. I’ve changed “28” years ago to “51,” and taken the word “men” and made it “men and women.” Otherwise it’s an exact rendering of the opening of Lyndon B. Johnson’s State of the Union address to Congress 59 years ago.

A lot has changed since 1965. Those changes explain our politics. But some things have not changed. They explain what our politics might be.

The speech was written by Richard Goodwin, a master of the genre. Next month his widow, the writer Doris Kearns Goodwin, will publish “An Unfinished Love Story,” an

account of their marriage and a look at some of her husband’s work.

In that volume, she says to her husband, then in his 80s, “What an unusual opening. Emotional, sentimental, so flagrantly flattering to the assembly.”

His reply is illuminating. “Of the many proposals Lyndon made during that speech, the most important was his marriage proposal to the Congress. He told me he wanted to make love to the Congress.”

Ms. Goodwin reflects: “The full-blown courtship of Congress — an appeal deeper than partisanship, beyond camaraderie, and nostalgia — was propelled by Johnson’s profound insight into the political process. It was his golden ticket to board an express train that would become known as the 89th Congress.”

Washington then and now

These days the 118th Congress is laboring in Washington. There are many profound differences that have taken form in the 29 Congresses since then.

We live in a changed world today. When Mr. Johnson spoke, Winston Churchill and Malcolm X had not yet died. No one had made a space walk. Muhammad Ali had not yet knocked out Sonny Liston. Pope Paul VI had not yet declared that Jews bore no responsibility for the death of Jesus Christ. All that would occur in the next several days and weeks.

There were conservatives in the Democratic Party, liberals in the Republican. And there were only 11 women in the House then, and just two (Republican Margaret Chase Smith of Maine and Democrat Maurine B. Neuberger of Oregon) in the Senate.

The Vietnam war — hardly mentioned in the president’s address, an unusual omission — had not yet become controversial, though it was deadly, with the Operation Rolling

Thunder bombing offensive of North Vietnam less than two months in the future.

But a speech delivered while Mr. Biden was in his final semester at the University of Delaware and Donald Trump was a second-semester freshman at Fordham still offers us some lessons. Mr. Johnson said the country’s task was “to establish a unity of purpose and interest among the many groups which make up the American community.” That work is unfinished.

A confident America

The 36th president said that evening that “we were never meant to be an oasis of liberty and abundance in a worldwide desert of disappointed dreams,” arguing, “Our nation was created to help strike away the chains of ignorance and misery and tyranny wherever they keep man less than God means him to be.” That notion is part of the great debate of our time, nearly two-thirds of a century later.

But here is a passage that no one would consider uttering today, 117 years after Lyndon Johnson was born: “Most important of all, in this period, the United States has reemerged into the fullness of its self-confidence and purpose. No longer are we called upon to get America moving. We are moving. No longer do we doubt our strength or resolution. We are strong and we have proven our resolve.”

Today we lack self-confidence and purpose. The country doesn’t seem to be moving, except in a very perilous direction. We doubt our strength and resolution.

Consider the following notion, which Mr. Johnson shared with Ms. Goodwin as the two of them — the president and a recent graduate of Colby College enlisted to help him shape his memoirs — walked around the president’s ranch and had a look at his Hereford cattle: “If it’s really going to work, the relationship between

SHRIBMAN
CONT. ON A5

STRICKLAND es of legislation aimed at protecting Georgians from domestic swatting, foreign threats and human trafficking. Notably, Senate Bill 421, which enhances penalties for false public alarms, commonly known as swatting, received unanimous approval from the Senate this week. This bipartisan effort underscores our commitment to holding swatters accountable to the fullest extent of the law. I commend my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for their dedication to defending the interests of Georgians. Next, the bill will undergo further consideration by the House.

The Georgia Senate also took decisive action to safeguard Georgians from foreign adversaries, with a particular focus on protecting our farmers. I proudly supported Senate Bill 420, which prohibits certain foreign individuals and entities from acquiring possessory interests in specific land. Georgia’s agricultural sector is the backbone of our economy, generating \$83.6 billion annually and sustaining countless livelihoods. Given the threats posed by foreign actors, it’s imperative that we take proactive measures to safeguard our farmlands and critical areas, such as military bases. I was pleased to join Governor Brian P. Kemp in celebrating the vital contributions of Georgia’s farmers at the State Capitol this week. They work tirelessly to put food on our tables, shelter over our heads and fuel our economy.

In addition to advocating for our majority caucus’ priorities, I continued working on my individual legislative priorities. Specifically, I am proud to have sponsored several pieces of legislation that all focus on enhancing Georgia’s families and the safety mechanisms that correspond with family building and healthcare. The “Pregnancy Protection Act” (Senate Bill 283) provides for reasonable accommodations to job applicants and employees for circumstances related to pregnancy and childbirth; while Senate Bill 371 updates and strengthens Georgia’s peace officer workers’ compensation plan; and two other pieces of legislation aim to better our state’s procedures within the central caregivers

registry, criminal mental incompetency and restoration programs, and the state’s Behavioral Health Coordinating Council for veterans.

Each week under the Gold Dome, constituents, associations and organizations alike come to the Capitol to speak to legislators and host events with public officials. I was incredibly proud to recognize Rusty Strawn, the CEO of Strawn and Co. Insurance, as a model Georgian (Senate Resolution 220); as well as encouraging my senate colleagues to recognize Feb. 22 as “Strolling Thunder Day” (SR 691) to honor Georgia’s 650,000 children under the age of five by emphasizing the importance of prioritizing our youngest learners in public policy for stronger families, vibrant communities, and a prosperous state.

Our week began on a somber note following the tragic passing of Laken Riley, a 22-year-old nursing student from Georgia. Laken’s untimely departure has left a void in the hearts of her family, friends and the Athens community. What’s even more heartbreaking is that she was taken from us by an illegal immigrant who had been arrested and released back into our society multiple times. It’s alarming to think that, in Joe Biden’s America, every state has become vulnerable to crime, illegal substances and a lack of direction from federal leadership. Here in Georgia, Senate Republicans are working tirelessly to ensure that every legal citizen feels safe. I personally pledge to continue fighting against careless and dangerous immigration policies in the days ahead.

Please never hesitate to contact my office if I can assist with legislative matters. I hope to see you under the Gold Dome soon as the 2024 Legislative Session continues.

Sen. Brian Strickland serves as Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. He represents the 17th Senate District, which includes Morgan County and portions of Henry, Morgan, Newton, and Walton County. He may be reached by email at brian.strickland@senate.ga.gov.

SHRIBMAN the pres-ident and the Congress has got to be almost incestuous. He’s got to know them even better than they know themselves.”

A long way
We’ve come a long way. Much of that journey — Vietnam deaths and protests, Watergate prosecutions followed by a presidential resignation and pardon, crises with Iran and Iraq, three presidential impeachments (plus a Cabinet one), a credibility gap that Mr. Johnson created and that Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton and Mr. Trump enlarged, a riot at the Capitol — has been difficult.

But unless our leaders seek to lessen the gap between Americans rather than enlarge it, we face crises that no

one listening to that 1965 speech could imagine. One sentence, aimed at a foreign audience rather than a domestic one, might shine the way: “If we are to live together in peace,” Mr. Johnson said, “we must come to know each other better.”

His successor sought detente with the Soviet Union. Our own leaders need to seek detente amid our own people. As Mr. Johnson said in the opening of his address, “total respect is important.”

David M. Shribman, the former executive editor of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, is a scholar-in-residence at Carnegie Mellon University. His previous column was “The two great tides of American politics are going out.”

YARBROUGH ton can bare-ly keep our government open or our borders closed for all the partisan infighting.

Hopefully, it won’t take Chinese or Russian hackers taking down our power grid or Vladimir Putin invading Europe or that nutcase with the bad haircut in North Korea dropping a nuclear bomb or Arab terrorists blowing up another tall building to get us to understand we are not each other’s adversary, in spite of what political wingnuts and special interest groups promulgate.

I have little use for social media, and no use for those who use it anonymously and, particularly, for those who accept what they see or hear without checking its accuracy. In my opinion, much of social media is a clear and present danger to our

society. It seeks to divide us rather than unite us.

Frankly, I’m not sure what to make of the advent of artificial intelligence except it seems to have the same capacity for creating good or evil.

Forgotten in all of this is that deep down we are decent people. We do a good job of volunteering, looking out for each other and coming together when we are needed in a crisis situation. This is who we really are when we choose to be.

I thank Janice Carter, the Marine, the delivery truck lady and the other generous souls who pitched in to help an unfortunate crash victim for reminding me of that fact. We all should.

You can reach Dick Yarbrough at dick@dickyarbrough.com or at P.O. Box 725373, Atlanta, Georgia 31139.

The Covington News

Newton Newspapers Inc.

Phone 770-787-6397
Fax 770-786-6451
Website: covnews.com
Email: news@covnews.com



PROPRIETOR & PUBLISHER
Patrick Graham
pgraham@covnews.com

Advertising



ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Cynthia Blackshear Warren
cbwarren@covnews.com
770-728-1407



ADVERTISING REP.
Brian C. Worton
bworton@covnews.com
770-728-1400

Circulation



CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Lee Ann Avery
lavery@covnews.com
770-728-1414



LEGALS CLERK
Kaison Joyner
kjoyner@covnews.com
770-728-1418

Editorial



MANAGING EDITOR
Phillip B. Hubbard
phubbard@covnews.com
770-728-1409



NEWS EDITOR
Evan Newton
enewton@covnews.com
770-728-1401



SPORTS EDITOR
Garrett Pitts
gpitts@covnews.com
770-728-1413

The Covington News (USPS 136140) is published bi-weekly on Sunday and Wednesday for \$60 a year for home delivery or \$80 a year for mail delivery by Newton Newspapers Inc., 1166 Usher St. NW, Covington, GA 30014. This newspaper is printed at the Jackson County Sentinel in Scottsboro, Alabama. Periodicals postage paid at Covington, Georgia. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Covington News, P.O. Box 1249, Covington, GA 30015. Contents Copyright © 2024 Newton Newspapers Inc.

Letter to the Editor

MAIL:

The Covington News,
P.O. Box 1249, Covington, GA 30015

IN PERSON:

Stop by 1166 Usher St. NW in
Downtown Covington

EMAIL:

news@covnews.com

Subscriptions

Print & Digital Subscription

Different Payment Structures:

\$5/Month

\$30/Month every 6 Months

\$60/Year

Community Calendar

To submit your events to our calendar, send information to news@covnews.com or create your own calendar event at CovNews.com/Calendar

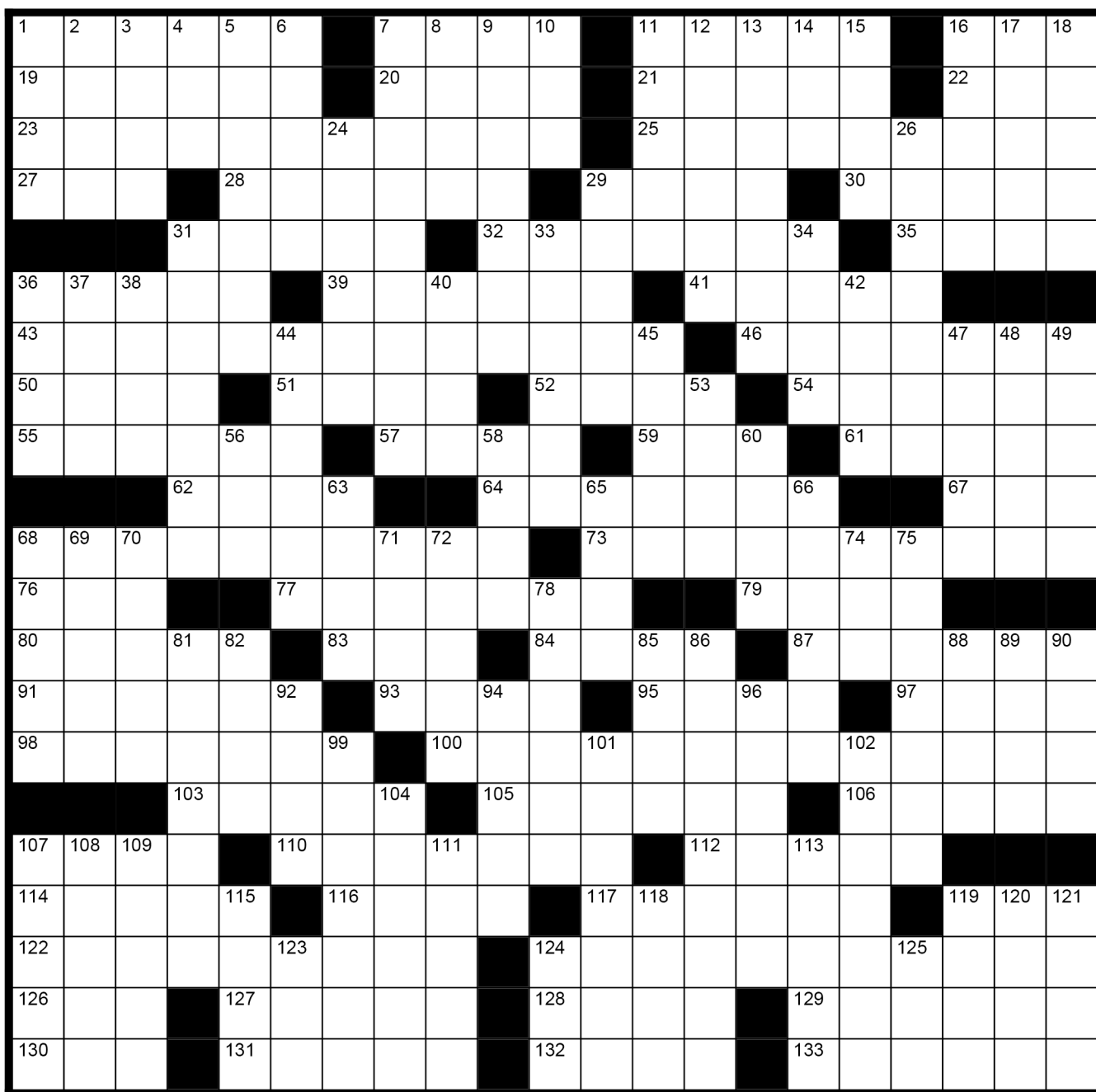
Friday, March 8	Friday, March 8	Saturday, March 9	Tuesday, March 12	Thurs-Sat, March 28-30	Saturday, April 20
<div>OXFORD LIONS PANCAKE SUPPER</div> <div>Friday, March 8th 5pm-7:30p.m.</div> <div>Flint Hill Elementary School</div> <div>All you can eat plain or blueberry pancakes, Holifield sausage, coffee, milk or tea.</div> <div>Tickets are \$7 adults and \$4 for children under 10.</div> <div>Supports school and Lions sight services.</div>	<div>Georgia's LARGEST Kid's Consignment Event!</div> <div>The southeast's largest consignment event is coming back to the Georgia International Horse Park in Conyers Supports school and Lions sight services.</div> <div>Georgia International Horse Park 1996 Centennial Olympic Parkway Conyers GA 30013</div> <div>Friday, March 8</div> <div>Antique Tractor Show and Plow Day</div> <div>Colquitt County High School 105 Darbyshire Road Norman Park GA 31768</div>	<div>Educator Appreciation Day Zoo Atlanta</div> <div>The discount applies to active teachers, local and out-of-state educators, informal educators, and administrative support staff. Educators must present a valid educator ID or relevant documentation and a photo ID to take advantage of these discounts. Up to four family members or guests accompanying educators will enjoy \$5 off general admission on the day of the event. In addition, educators receive discounts around the Zoo. Educators are encouraged to visit our variety of educational booths throughout the Zoo from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to meet Zoo team members and learn more about our educational programming and professional learning.</div> <div>Zoo Atlanta 800 Cherokee Ave. SE Atlanta GA 30315</div>	<div>Newton County Board of Education work session 7 p.m.</div> <div>Location 2109 Newton Drive NE Covington, GA 30014</div> <div>Friday, March 15</div> <div>Georgia 4-H State Livestock Judging Contest 8 p.m.</div> <div>Additional Dates Sat, Mar 16, 2024, 8 p.m. Sun, Mar 17, 2024, 8 p.m.</div> <div>Location Covington, GA</div> <div>Description 4-H and FFA event</div>	<div>Southern Heritage Classic Racing</div> <div>2024 Season, Here we come! You don't want to miss the kickoff weekend on March 28-30!</div> <div>For more information, contact Chance Smith anytime at 229-256-7273 or message the Southern Heritage Classic page or the Needmore Speedway page.</div> <div>Needmore Speedway 1060 John Vickers Rd Norman Park GA 31771</div> <div>Saturday, April 20</div> <div>Intro to Tree Climbing</div> <div>1 PM to 2 PM - Panola Mountain State Park - Stockbridge, GA - Join us "on rope" for an adventure exploring the canopy above. This is an introductory program to recreational tree climbing. Participants will use rope and harness to climb, swing, and scramble. Climbs start at 1 PM and 3 PM. Call Nature Center to register, space is limited to 12 climbers. Ages 8 and up.</div> <div>Panola Mountain State Park 2620 Highway 155 SW Stockbridge GA 30281</div>	<div>Tchaikovsky & Friends performed by the Columbus Symphony Orchestra</div> <div>Tchaikovsky's triumphant symphony and Borodin's evocative tone poem bookend the masterful Third Piano Concerto by Prokofiev performed by Canadian pianist Katherine Chi. With her energy, character, and spunk, her previous performances have been described as "... the most sensational but, better, the most unfliningly cogent and compelling Prokofiev's Third I have heard in years."</div> <div>Bill Heard Theatre RiverCenter For The Performing Arts 900 Broadway Columbus GA 31901</div> <div>Thursday, May 2</div> <div>Into the Woods (Spring Musical) 7-8 p.m.</div> <div>Location Peachtree Academy Covington Campus 14101 Hwy 278 NE Covington, GA</div> <div>Be careful what you wish for, as Stephen Sondheim's and James Lapine's cockeyed fairytale comes to life in this adaptation of their groundbreaking, Tony Award-winning musical.</div>

The answer to this week's metapuzzle is a phrase that parents often say to young children.

ACROSS

- 1** With no guarantee of publication
7 Church organ tube
11 Having a pungent odor
16 Tech products from HP
19 Assembly guide
20 "Severance" star ____ Scott
21 "20/20" creator Arledge
22 Decay, as food or wood
23 *Plan B song whose title translates to a phrase meaning "Don't tell anybody about this"
25 *Wisconsin city where the indie band Bon Iver formed
27 Bother persistently
28 Dental incrustation
29 Bump on one's skin
30 2008 martial arts film based on the life of Bruce Lee's master
31 Admitted
32 Aristotle who owned Olympic Airways
35 Big moment for a bassist or a drummer
36 Overwhelmingly
39 Attached like some sequins
41 Computer built at the Moore School of Electrical Engineering
43 **"Wanna go?"
46 *R&B group with the 1990 hit "Hold On"
50 Squeaked (by)
51 Somebody who logs on
52 Poems in "Black Roses" by Harold Green III
54 Homer's sources of temptation
55 Mover of merchandise
57 "Black-ish" actor Cole
59 On the ____ (fleeing)
61 Ownership documents
62 Votes (for)
64 Gave more stars to, say

- 67** Diving locale
68 *She played Mary Taylor in "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial"
73 *Procedure performed by an ophthalmologist
76 Right-angle shape
77 Lessen in intensity
79 "____ Karenina"
80 Oil supply?
83 Father of the cartoonist Jeff Keane
84 Job-site inspection org.
87 "Nobody was ____" ("Everyone was safe")
91 Home of the Canadian Tulip Festival
93 "Play these notes legato" marking
95 Protagonist Pontellier of Kate Chopin's novel "The Awakening"
97 Experiment findings
98 *When a round begins
100 **"Yeah, sure buddy, God forbid that!"
103 Demonstrate contrition
105 Recovered from injury
106 ... family, ____, species
107 \$20 bill distributors
110 "An Alpine Symphony" composer
112 Aquatic spot for a hippo
114 Astronomer who established the Uraniborg observatory
116 Car ____ (waxing site)
117 Major project?
119 FearFest network
122 *Star pitcher for the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters before joining Major League Baseball in 2012
124 *Device that separates Earl Grey leaves from the brewed liquid, say
126 Sketch show for Heidi 75 Down
127 "Xena: Warrior Princess" actress O'Connor
128 Craft, as a wool cap
129 Blazing with light
130 Diving locale
131 Pirate's rear end?
132 Regjeringskvartalet city
133 Chillaxed



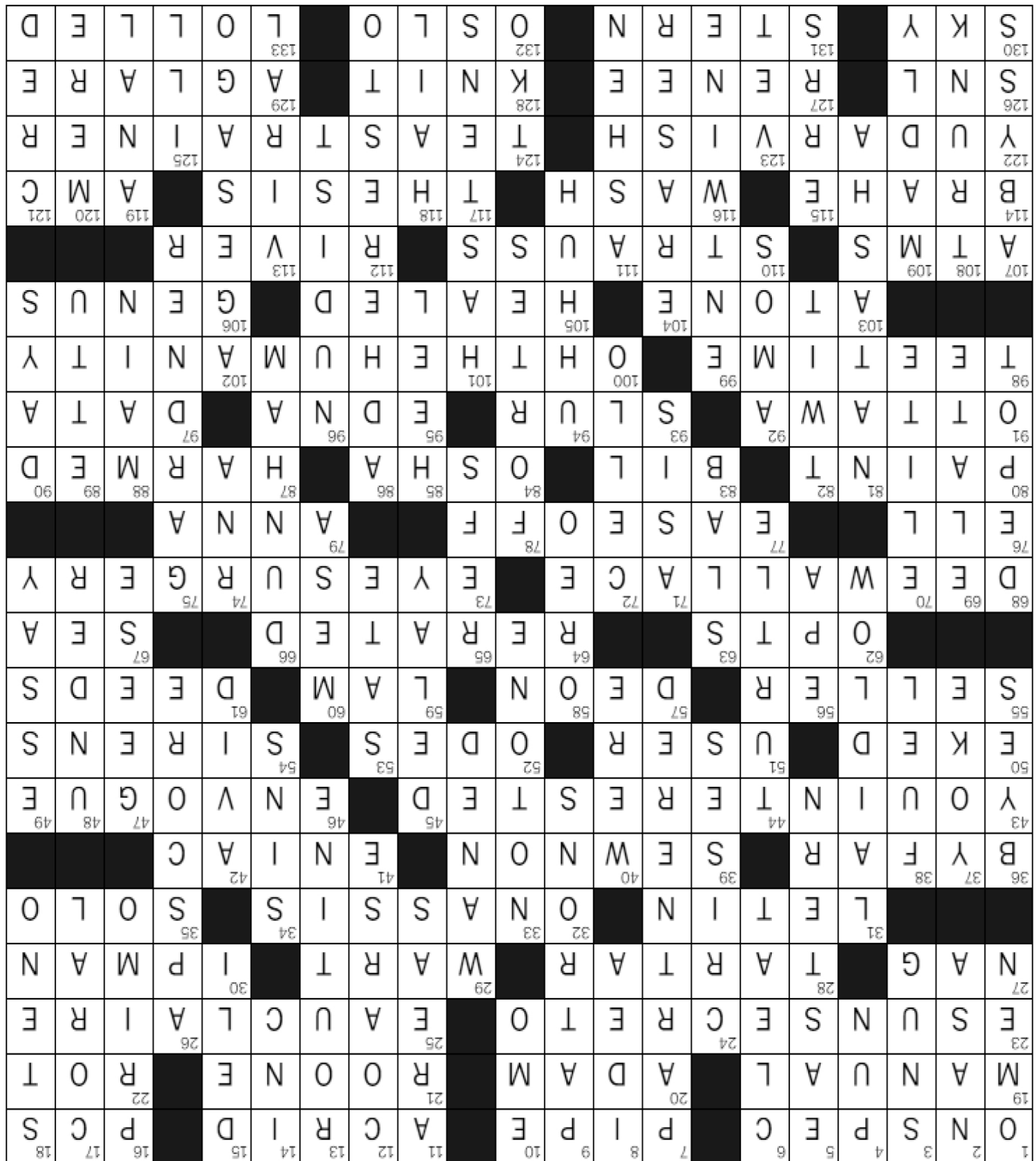
DOWN

- 1** Disturbing sign, maybe
2 ____ EDGE (video podcast encouraging viewers to "embrace your inner astronaut")
3 Comfy and cozy
4 "Thanks for explaining the word 'many' to me, that means a lot," e.g.
5 The E of EST
6 Feature of a soccer shoe
7 Formed an alliance
8 "Say, there's an ____!"
9 Museum supporters
10 Genre in which a band might wear all black
11 Zones
12 Like dirty jokes
13 Stand-up comic's act
14 Bus. name abbr.
15 Where to buy salami
16 Top-notch, informally
17 Reef-building organism
18 Pro taking notes, and an anagram of "notes"
24 Results of catastrophes
26 H.S. test result that a student can use to earn college credit
29 Faded, as lunar visibility
31 Went into hiding
33 Zero
34 Gluttony, greed, etc.
36 Free passes to the next round of a tournament
37 Beam connecting oxen
38 Shell collection?
40 "The Way We ____"
42 Like an ardent fan
44 Pond creature
45 Annoyance for a waiter?
47 Birds in a gaggle
48 Lying ____ oath (perjury)
49 History final composition
53 Fully fulfill, with food
56 Org. publishing the Map of Radon Zones
58 Cookie brand behind a Daily Twist campaign
60 Colorado Plateau landform
63 Big piece of concrete or marble
65 Play checkers?
66 Dancer, choreographer and anthropologist Katherine often called the "matriarch of Black dance"
68 Bus station
69 Bring joy to
70 Rich and powerful
71 Antique store caveat
72 Bach suite instrument
74 Transfer ____ (molecule involved in protein synthesis)
75 Comedic Heidi who plays the teen film critic Bailey Gismert
78 Strong suits
81 "Russian Doll" star and co-creator Lyonne
82 Silly fool
85 Back of one's foot
86 Follows
88 No. 1
89 Caesar's question after Brutus's betrayal
90 Septet of SMTWTFs
92 Wally of a "Famous" cookie company
94 "Okay, go on"
96 One who tired of attir
99 Wrap around
101 Picks up the pace
102 Long before now
104 One end of a pencil
107 Deep chasm
108 Storage compartment in the back of a car
109 How some fall in love
111 Pale with fright
113 Like widely shared memes and videos
115 Makes a mistake
118 Icy precipitation
119 ____-retentive
120 Nothing more than
121 Authenticity, briefly
123 Pet doc
124 MMA bout decision
125 Unwell



YOUR
CROSSWORD,
HERE TO STAY.
WEDNESDAY'S
ON A6.

The Covington News



DeGarmo brings resources and training to Newton County parents

SUBMITTED TO THE NEWS

Foster parents often grapple with substantial challenges, underscoring the critical necessity for essential training, support and resources. In response, Amerigroup Georgia has partnered with renowned foster care expert Dr. John DeGarmo, to offer free training sessions to foster parents across Georgia, with Saturday's discussion in Newton County addressing mental health issues and related challenges affecting both parents and children.

Health care leaders and foster care parents from across Newton County joined together to raise awareness and gather support for foster care initiatives. Dr. DeGarmo shared his personal experiences and insights, aiming to inspire and empower attendees. The event addressed the specific needs of the county's foster care community and emphasized the importance of increased support services, enhanced training and mental health resources.

"Training foster parents is a vital investment in the well-being and future of children in foster care, equipping caregivers with the tools they need to provide stability, support and healing so that every child has the opportunity to thrive," said Bhavini Solanki, Director of Georgia Families 360°. "We are proud to collaborate with Dr. DeGarmo, as he brings both

expertise in offering these trainings alongside first-hand experience as a foster care parent, understanding the challenges of caring for vulnerable children."

Dr. DeGarmo, founder and director of The Foster Care Institute and a TEDx Talk speaker, has cared for more than 60 children alongside his wife as foster parents. Dr. DeGarmo emphasized the pressing importance of addressing mental health, stating, "The real pandemic right now is mental health, and foster parents need support services they're not currently receiving. The purpose of this event was to provide foster parents with the critical support they need to address trauma, burnout and stress."

National data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System reinforces the severity of the issue, indicating a significant shortage of licensed foster care homes in most states across the United States. Georgia, for instance, has seen a decline of almost 3,000 licensed homes since 2019, highlighting the need for immediate action.

Foster parents frequently experience a lack of support, especially as the needs of youth in care change over time, necessitating additional resources. Through Dr. DeGarmo's foster parent support network, Amerigroup Georgia aims to provide ongoing education and emotional support. The goal is to bolster the foster care



Contributed Photo

community, creating a sustainable and growing network of caregivers.

"We will continue to travel across the state, offering free training sessions on trauma-informed care and other essential topics, especially in areas of the state with limited community resources," said DeGarmo. "We'll also establish foster parent support groups in locations that don't currently have groups in place. By empowering foster parents with knowledge and support, we can enhance retention and encourage more individuals to become foster parents."

Foster parents who lack support in their local area and require additional resources are encouraged to

reach out to their Amerigroup Care Coordinator to ensure they receive the assistance they need.

Since 2014, Amerigroup has served as the sole CMO in charge of coordinating care for children, youth and young adults receiving adoption assistance, and select youth involved in the juvenile justice system through Georgia Families 360° (GF360). Covering approximately 32,000 children, Amerigroup is committed to working with foster families, community organizations, healthcare and social service providers and partners in state government to ensure these individuals have access to the right services in the right setting.

Newton County K-9 provides safety at Atlanta Motor Speedway



Photo via NCSO

STAFF REPORT
THE NEWS

A familiar face from Newton County was in attendance at the NASCAR races at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

K-9 Dori and her handler, Cpl. Troy Mason, represented the Newton County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) in Hampton last weekend as they helped provide security for the track for the thousands in attendance.

K-9 Dori is an explosive detection canine and it was her job to secure the speedway site of any potential explosive devices.

According to a picture from the NCSO, K-9 Dori's favorite driver is Cup driver and 2024 Daytona 500 winner William Byron, who would go on to finish 17th in the Sunday race.

Volunteers recognized at CPD's annual ceremony



STAFF REPORT
THE NEWS

Volunteers were recognized at the Covington Police Department's (CPD) annual awards banquet on Feb. 20. Honorees included the CPD's Honor Guard bagpipe player as well as alumni of the Citizens Academy Board.

"Our volunteers are an invaluable asset not only to the Covington Police Department, but also to our community as they are often found volunteering at City events, the Fuzz Run and more," a CPD Facebook post read.

Below is a list of the people recognized:

- Russell "Rusty" Smith



- PWC Fuzz Run Committee and CPD Honor Guard

Citizens Academy Board

Alums:

- Lowana Bell
- Kim Fincher
- Jacquenetta Ivey
- Wendy Jacques
- Stephanie Kazar
- Donna McDaniel
- Ruth Norman
- Ashley Nuqui
- Ross Potts
- Dwahn Turner

"We are grateful to our volunteers for their enthusiasm, dedication and support," a CPD Facebook post read. "Each event they attend or help plan is a success because of their vital assistance and commitment. Thank you to all of our volunteers."



Photos via CPD Facebook



Freshway Market

1261 North Cherokee Road • Social Circle, GA • 770-464-0040
Visit Our Ad Online @ www.covnews.com

Social Circle City Schools Round-Up Program*
Over \$186,700 Raised to Date!
*Ask Cashier for Details

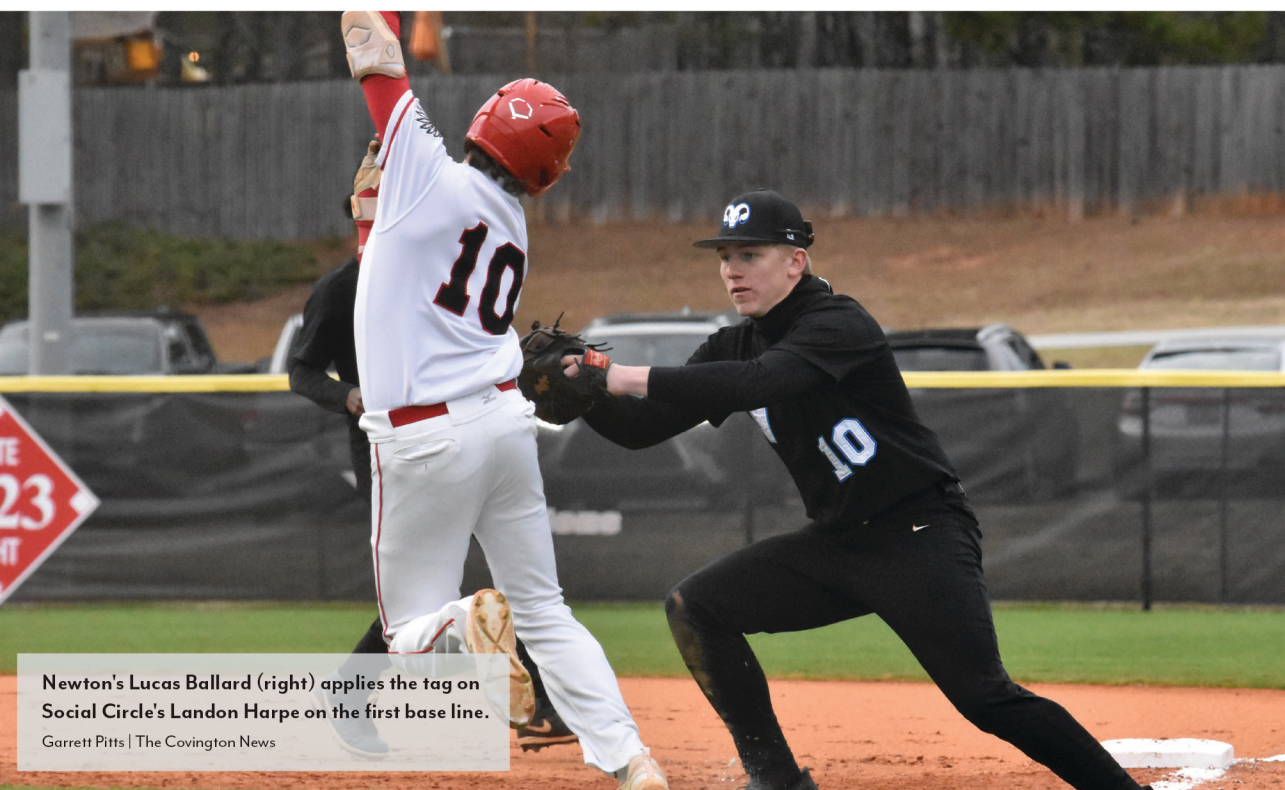
 <p>Family Pack Chicken Leg Quarters 69¢ LB.</p>	 <p>6 Pack, 1/2 Liters, Assorted Coca-Cola Products 4/\$12.00 28 Ounce Assorted Powerade....5/\$5.00</p>	 <p>Family Pack, Bone-In Assorted Pork Chops \$1.79 LB.</p>	 <p>CAB, Family Pack Ground Sirloin \$4.99 LB.</p>
 <p>Vacuum Pack Baby Back Pork Ribs \$2.99 LB.</p>	 <p>BONELESS USDA Select, Family Pack Ribeye Steak \$9.99 LB. CAB, Family Pack Ribeye Steak...\$13.99 LB.</p>	 <p>7.75 Ounce Lay's Chips 2/\$6.00</p>	 <p>40 Ounce Crisco Vegetable or Canola Oil \$3.99</p>
 <p>30 Ounce Duke's Mayonnaise \$3.99</p>	 <p>8 Pound Bag Idaho Potatoes \$2.99</p>	 <p>56 Ounce Mayfield Classic Ice Cream 3/\$10.00</p>	 <p>Family Pack, Bone-In Center Cut Pork Chops \$2.49 LB.</p>
 <p>1 Pound Jamestown Bacon 4/\$10.00</p>	 <p>14.5 Ounce Libby's Vegetables 79¢</p>	 <p>Crab Leg Clusters \$7.99 LB.</p>	 <p>Family Pack, Bone-In Quarter Loin Pork Chops \$1.99 LB.</p>
 <p>CAB Sirloin Tip Roast \$5.49 LB.</p>	 <p>Family Pack, Boneless Chicken Thighs \$1.99 LB.</p>	 <p>1 Pound, Bun Length or Jumbo Size Bar S Meat or Chicken Franks 2/\$3.00</p>	 <p>Fresh Yellow or Zucchini Squash \$1.69 LB.</p>
 <p>Cantaloupe \$2.99 EA.</p>	 <p>Pint, Fresh Blueberries 3/\$10.00</p>	 <p>California Celery \$1.69 EA.</p>	 <p>Red, Orange or Yellow Green House Grown Peppers 2/\$4.00</p>
 <p>14.5 Ounce, Selected Margaret Holmes Vegetables 4/\$5.00</p>	 <p>7-13 Ounce Nabisco Chips Ahoy Cookies 2/\$6.00</p>	 <p>14 Ounce Success White Rice \$2.29</p>	 <p>24 Pack, 8 Ounce Bottles Niagara Water 2/\$7.00</p>
 <p>11.36 Ounce Red Lobster Cheddar Bay Biscuit Mix 2/\$5.00</p>	 <p>9 Mega Rolls Charmin Soft & Strong Bath Tissue \$12.99</p>	 <p>12 Pack Yoo Hoo Chocolate Drink \$5.99</p>	 <p>6 Pack, Chicken, Beef or Shrimp Ramen Express \$2.99</p>
 <p>Broccoli Crowns \$1.99 LB.</p>	 <p>10.2 Ounce Pillsbury Grands Biscuits 2/\$3.00</p>	 <p>6 Pack, 1/2 Liters, Assorted Pepsi Cola Products 4/\$13.00</p>	 <p>24 Ounce Daisy Sour Cream \$3.49</p>
 <p>2 Pound Velveeta Cheese Loaf \$7.99</p>	 <p>7 Ounce Banquet Pot Pies 5/\$5.00</p>	 <p>Family Pack, Bone-In Wafer Thin or Thick Cut Pork Chops \$2.99 LB.</p>	 <p>19.2 Ounce, Assorted Smithfield Tenderloins \$5.99</p>
 <p>13.92-15.91 Ounce Oscar Mayer Lunchables 2/\$7.00</p>	 <p>Bryan Meat Bologna \$3.99 LB.</p>	 <p>Oven Roasted or Hickory Smoked Kretschmar Turkey Breast \$7.99 LB.</p>	 <p>Potato or Macaroni Reser's Homestyle Salad \$1.99 LB.</p>

Store Hours: 7 Days 8am-9pm • No Rain Checks
This Ad Good Wednesday, March 6th thru Tuesday, March 12th, 2024
We Accept EBT Cards, Debit Cards and Credit Cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express & Discover).

Wed 6	Thur 7	Fri 8	Sat 9	Sun 10	Mon 11	Tues 12
----------	-----------	----------	----------	-----------	-----------	------------

WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CORRECT ANY TYPOGRAPHICAL OR PICTORIAL ERRORS. WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT QUANTITIES. NONE SOLD TO DEALERS.

RAMS SWEEP REDSKINS



Newton's Lucas Ballard (right) applies the tag on Social Circle's Landon Harpe on the first base line.
Garrett Pitts | The Covington News

Newton earns 10-5 and 2-0 wins over Social Circle

COOPER HUAU | CORESPONDENT

SOCIAL CIRCLE, Ga. — The Newton Rams took both games of the doubleheader against the Social Circle Redskins 10-5 and 2-0 on Thursday.

Newton jumped ahead early and stayed ahead for the rest of the night, taking both games at Social Circle behind 17 strikeouts and 12 runs across the two games.

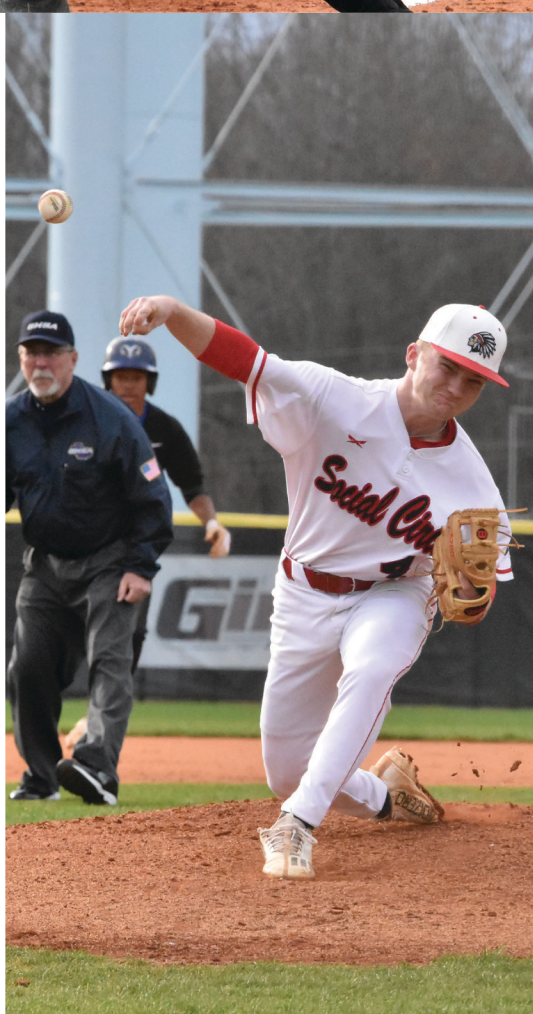
The Rams had posted a 2-6 record to start the season and were hoping to get back into the win column for the first time since their 15-0 victory over Alcovy on Feb. 17. Conversely, the Redskins were looking to improve on their impressive 8-3 start.

A rain check on Wednesday set up for a Thursday night doubleheader between the Rams and the Redskins. The Rams were ready, though, scoring four runs in the top of the first behind a three-run home run from Caden Brown.

Social Circle responded in the bottom of the second with four runs, mostly thanks to a hit and solid baserunning.

The lone RBI knock came from Braydon Allen. The other three runs came across on a fielder's choice, wild pitch and an RBI ground-out.

NEWTON
CONTINUED ON B4



Phillip B. Hubbard
The Covington News

Johnson to continue softball career at Georgia Highlands

PHILLIP B. HUBBARD
MANAGING EDITOR

Makinzie Johnson's post-high school plans were made official last Friday inside Alcovy High School's media center.

With family, teammates and coaches present, Johnson signed her national letter of intent to play softball at Georgia Highlands College.

Once the Lady Tiger put pen to paper, she stressed what this entailed for her career.

"Actually, me and coach Marcus [Smith] were talking and he was like, 'Now since we're up here at the high, now we got to go back to the low and figure this out and just keep on going and keep on pushing,'" Johnson said. "And my biggest thing right now is just keeping God first and let's go. Let's roll."

Johnson was a four-year starter for Alcovy all as the team's third baseman. From her sophomore to senior years, Johnson drilled nine home runs, had 96 RBIs and 129

putouts.

Across her career, Johnson received the 2021 Coaches Award, 2022 Golden Glove Award — she only made three errors that particular season — and the 2023 teammate award.

For the past two seasons, Johnson has been a contributor in the Lady Tigers capturing back-to-back Region 3-AAAAAA crowns.

Region 3-AAAAAA coaches also voted Johnson All-Region her junior and senior seasons. Additionally, Johnson was an All-Cov News honoree the past two seasons, too.

Johnson described how she has grown the past four years as a person and a player.

"I think, honestly, more valuable lessons are not about softball, they're about life. And that's what's gotten me to where I am.

Now, Johnson will join the Georgia Highlands College softball program after she graduates from Alcovy High in May.

Johnson recalled attending one of the team's camps as a main factor in her final decision.

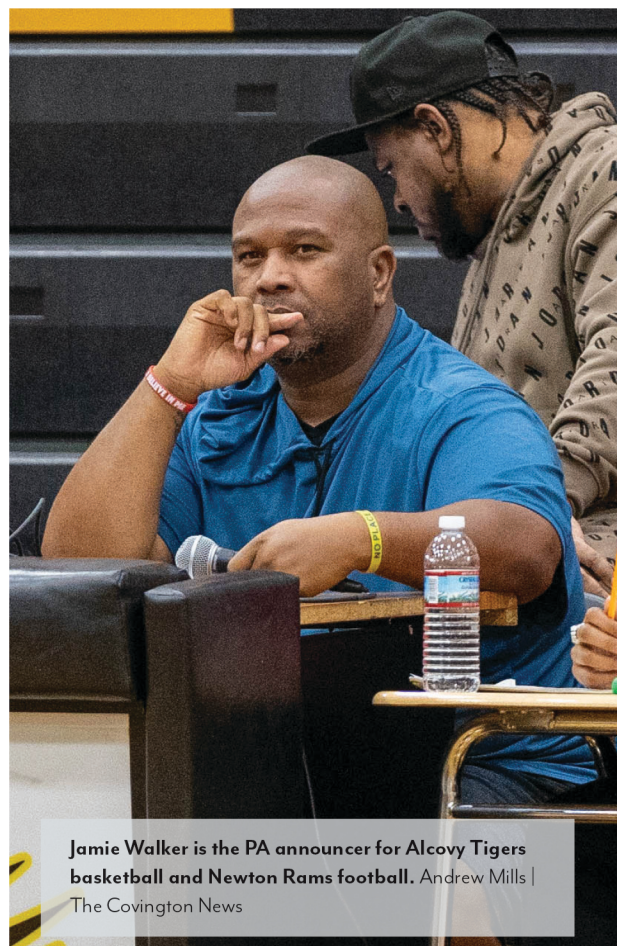
"I hung out with the players there the whole time. Hung out, got to know [them], got to tour the campus and that was a really big thing to me," Johnson said. "And it felt like I was already a part of them. And I know a few girls that are already going there that's actually going there with me. So that was another big thing. You kind of know when you go and I felt comfortable."

In addition to her softball aspirations, Johnson plans to pursue becoming a physical therapist and study exercise science.

Upon reflection, Johnson is grateful for her past four years spent as a Lady Tiger.

"I couldn't put in words to express how much I love them and how much they impacted my life," Johnson said. "I don't think I would be here without coach Marcus, coach Raven [Smith] and [Miranda] Lamb. Like you hear my dad say, Marcus took a chance on me. Before I even got here, he took a chance on me.

"And...I'm here. I did it."



Jamie Walker is the PA announcer for Alcovy Tigers basketball and Newton Rams football. Andrew Mills | The Covington News

Jamie Walker :
The man behind
the microphone

PHILLIP B. HUBBRAD
MANAGING EDITOR

If you ask him, Jamie Walker will say he is a teacher by trade. That does not mean that is all he does.

Serving as a public address (PA) announcer is something he "does on the side," but is passionate about just the same.

Walker's voice has been heard from the middle school to even the semi-professional ranks. There is something special for Walker, though, about announcing Alcovy and Newton high schools' athletics.

"Alcovy and Newton are the favorites only because I'm familiar with the county," Walker said. "I live here. I know the administration at both of those places and I know a lot of those kids."

Walker got his start in PA announcing in 2002 at Meadowcreek High School in Gwinnett County.

Coach Mike Ireland called on Walker in an emergency situation to announce a game and the rest is history.

"He just asked me and said, 'You know what? You got a pretty good speaking voice,'" Walker said. "Like I said, I'm fresh out of college. So, he asked me to do it and I've always been into sports just hearing the voices of sports anyway. He asked me to do it and I was just a natural at doing PA. That's how it all got started."

Walker said he is a "Gus Johnson guy," while also admiring commentators such as Pat Summerall and John Madden. As far as stadium voices go, Walker admires Ryan Cameron who does PA for the Atlanta Falcons and previously for the Atlanta Hawks.

Throughout his time behind the microphone, Walker has taken inspiration from the aforementioned individuals while developing his own style as well.

"If I'm doing basketball, for example. I'll say something like, 'A few too many steps.' Or I'll elevate and stymie the voice when it comes to third down," Walker said. "Everybody has a third down call where they like to extend it in football. I'll chop up my voice kind of like a record. Like, 'Thirr-rr-rr-rr-rtd.' I'll go in that manner."

In addition to his work on the local level, Walker has taken his talents to various other arenas.

He has done voice work for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) such as Clark Atlanta University and Morehouse College. Walker has commented for semi-professional leagues as well as Emory University.

Walker has also been a part of many ESPN+ broadcasts.

Actually, one of those broadcasts delivered Walker's favorite game and call ever. It was during Tuskegee University's homecoming game on Oct. 14, 2023 against Edwards Water.

The game came down to the last play.

"It was a last-second hail mary throw that we called. I was actually on color for that game," Walker said. "The guy caught it and that is definitely my favorite game to call, because of how the game went — just up and down, action packed the entire game."

Not only has Walker witnessed high profile moments on the gridiron and court as an announcer, but has come across some high profile individuals, too.

Walker has met the likes of Deion Sanders, Michael Vick,

WALKER
CONTINUED ON B4

Food Depot

*OUR COST INCLUDES FREIGHT, STOCKING FEES AND ASSOCIATED EXPENSES

**OUR COST PLUS 10%
ADDED AT REGISTER!**

Please visit our website at www.fooddepot.com
Download the Food Depot App for digital
coupons and in-store promotions!

COVINGTON: 6160 Highway 278
Covington Crossing Shopping Center
CONYERS: 2300 Salem Road
CONYERS: 3630 GA 20
Honey Creek Village Shopping Center
OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK! MONDAY-SUNDAY 7am-10pm



USDA Inspected,
Fresh
**Lean
Ground Beef**
\$3.98
LB.



USDA Select Beef
**Extra Lean
Beef Tips or
Stir Fry**
\$6.77
LB.



USDA Inspected
**Medium Pork
Spare Ribs**
\$1.98
LB.



Fresh, Boneless,
Skinless
**Tyson
Fryer Breast**
\$2.75
LB.



USDA Inspected
**Rib Half
Pork Loin
Chops**
\$2.75
LB.



USDA Select Beef,
Bone-In
**Chuck
Roast**
\$4.97
LB.

Farm Fresh Produce



9-11 Ounce Bag
**Fresh Express
Green & Crisp
or Premium
Romaine
Salad**
\$1.99
BG.



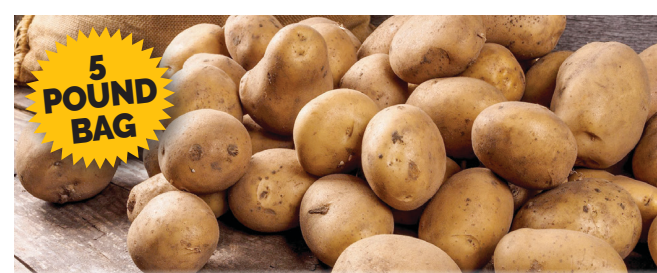
Pink Lady Apples
\$2.99
BG.



Snap Beans
\$1.59
LB.



Roma Tomatoes
\$1.59
LB.



Idaho Potatoes
\$2.69
BG.



Grape Tomatoes
\$2.89
EA.



Green Cabbage
69¢
LB.



Turnip & Mustard Greens
2/\$1.99
EA.



Florida Oranges
\$4.79
BG.

From Our Dairy Case!



64 Ounce
Sunny Delight
\$1.25



45 Ounce
**Country Crock
Spread**
\$4.47



52 Ounce
**Minute Maid
Aguas Frescas**
\$1.96



5.3 Ounce, Assorted
**Chobani
Yogurt**
82¢



16 Ounce
**Coffee Mate
Natural Bliss
Creamer**
\$2.76



2 Pack
Hot Pockets
\$2.04



10-10.8 Ounce
**Birds Eye
Steam Fresh
Selects**
\$1.15



24 Count
Sack O' Corn
\$7.79



19-32 Ounce
Ore-Ida Fries
\$3.56



11.6 Ounce
**Eggo
Thick & Fluffy
Waffles**
\$2.87

Food Depot

Watch Your Savings Grow!

OUR COST PLUS 10% ADDED AT REGISTER!

*OUR COST INCLUDES FREIGHT, STOCKING FEES AND ASSOCIATED EXPENSES

OFFERS GOOD MARCH 4TH-MARCH 10TH, 2024

QUANTITY RIGHTS RESERVED. NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR TYPOGRAPHICAL OR PICTORIAL ERRORS.

Great Quality Brands!



750 ML
Lolli Wine
\$10.99



750 ML
Clos Du Bois Wine
\$7.99



12 Pack, 12 Ounce Cans or
8 Pack, 12 Ounce Bottles
**Coca-Cola
Products**
2/\$11.00



10 Pack, 7.5 Ounce Cans
**Coca-Cola
Products**
3/\$13.00



8 Pack, 20 Ounce Bottles
**Powerade
Sports Drinks**
2/\$12.00



16 Ounce
**Body Armor
Sports Drinks**
2/\$3.00



7.75-8 Ounce
**Lay's
Potato Chips**
\$2.70



13.5-20 Ounce
Heinz Ketchup
\$2.39



12.67-31.78 Ounce
**Little Debbie
Big Packs**
\$3.08



14.26-15.85 Ounce,
Value Pack
**Sunbelt Bakery
Granola Bars**
\$2.75



14.5-24 Ounce
**Prego Pasta
Sauce**
\$1.80



12-16 Ounce
**Mueller's
Thick Spaghetti**
96¢



24 Ounce
**Hidden Valley
Ranch Dressing**
\$4.49



5 Ounce
**Bumble Bee
Chunk Light Tuna**
93¢



18.6-18.8 Ounce
**Campbell's
Chunky Soup**
\$2.06



16 Ounce
**Pompeian Extra
Virgin Olive Oil**
\$6.10



6-8.8 Ounce
**Ben's
Ready Rice Mix**
\$1.89



56-57.6 Ounce
**Xtra 2X
Liquid Detergent**
\$2.04



12 Roll
**Fiora
Bath Tissue**
\$4.36



6 Big Rolls
**Viva
Paper Towels**
\$6.34

Low Prices — Name Brand Meats



16 Ounce,
Random
**Jamestown
Sliced Bacon**
\$2.48
EA.



16 Ounce
**Dandy
Mild
Smoked
Sausage**
\$1.83
EA.



16 Ounce,
Jumbo or
Bun Length
**Bar-S
Hot Dogs**
\$1.42
EA.



16 Ounce,
Regular or Thick
**Bar-S
All Meat
Bologna**
\$1.61
EA.



14 Ounce
**Sunset Farm
Ham Steaks
or Breakfast
Ham**
\$3.51
EA.



16 Ounce
**Curly's Pork
or Chicken
Pulled BBQ**
\$3.83
EA.

Stock Up On Freezer Favorites!

My spring sport standouts early into March



GARRETT PITTS
Sports Editor

With spring sports in full swing, a few Newton County-area athletes separated themselves with strong starts to their respective seasons.

Alcovy girls soccer off to strong start

The Lady Tigers, who are coming off a playoff season in 2023, began the new season with winning ways with a 4-0 start.

One reason why is the sophomore duo of Zariah Strozier and Jasmyne Boney.

Through four games of the season, Strozier and Boney have combined to score 31 of the team's 34 goals.

Strozier leads the team with 3.4 goals a game while Boney follows with 2.8 goals per game.

Alcovy will begin region play Tuesday, March 5 on the road versus Rockdale County.

Lady Redskins soccer clicking on all cylinders

The Lady Redskins are off to a 6-0 start to begin the season.

Ultimately, a combination of strong play up front and stout defensive play had propelled Social Circle to early season success.

The leading scorer for the Lady Redskins is senior Peyton Brooks, who is currently scoring 3.2 goals per game.

Out of Social Circle's 38 goals scored in 2024, Brooks was responsible for 28 of them, whether through scoring or with an assist.

On the defensive end, the Lady Redskins are getting strong goalkeeping play from sophomore Gentrie Mobley, who has racked up 32 saves in 2024.



Left: Alcovy's Zariah Strozier leads the Lady Tigers with 3.4 goals per game. Right: Caden Brown leads the Rams with a .419 batting average and 1.149 on-base percentage. Garrett Pitts | The Covington News

Through six games, Social Circle has only conceded four goals.

The Lady Redskins began region play on the road Monday, March 4 against Oglethorpe County.

Eastside boys soccer already making strides

After capturing six wins in 2023, the Eagles have already won five games so far into the 2024 season.

Currently at 5-2, things seem to be heading in the right direction for Eastside soccer under Anthony Williams.

With 38 goals scored as a team, there have been enough goals to go around for almost everyone on the team.

The two leading scorers for Eastside are actually underclassmen.

Sophomore Alexis Vieyra and freshman Ethan Oakley hold the team lead with six and five goals, respectively.

Junior Thomas Hill's eight assists lead the time by a wide margin.

Eastside took its 5-2 record into its first region game of the season on the road against Loganville on Tuesday, March 5.

Newton baseball showing flashes early under Delvin Jordan

Even with a 4-6 record, all signs elude to 2024 being a new chapter of Newton Rams baseball with first-year head coach Delvin Jordan.

Following a four-game skid after the Newton Cup split, the Rams swept the doubleheader of the Redskins with region play on the horizon.

The man leading the way offensively for the Rams is Caden Brown.

Brown is currently posting a team-leading .419 batting average and 1.149 on-base percentage with eight RBIs and one home run. Brown has also made five appearances on the mound, accounting for 16 strikeouts.

Outside of Brown, freshmen Kendall Turner and Josh Brown have each shown potential. Turner is currently sitting at third on the team in batting average while holding the tie with Caden Brown with eight RBIs. Josh Brown has made four appearances on the mound for Newton and has posted a 2.47 earned run average (ERA) and 13 strikeouts.

Newton went on the road Monday, March 4 to face South Forsyth.

Another strong start to the season for Social Circle baseball

Despite the doubleheader sweep from Newton, Redskins baseball seems to have picked up right where they left off.

Currently with an 8-5 record and region play still a month away, the Redskins have seven more non-region games ahead.

One constant for the Redskins so far is their ability to score runs on almost anyone. Through the team's first 13 games, Social Circle has scored at least five runs in eight of them.

Before the doubleheader with Newton, Social Circle was on a five-game win streak. In those contests, the Redskins outscored their opponents by a combined 46-10.

The Redskins got back on the diamond against Walker on Tuesday, March 5.

Tigers baseball looking to carry momentum into region play

With their only losses coming on a pair of routs, the Tigers look to enter region play with a 4-2 record and a two-game win streak.

With its game against Monroe Area on Feb. 28 canceled due to weather, Alcovy's region slate begins after back-to-back wins over Athens Academy and Strong Rock Christian.

At the plate, the team has been led by a pair of seniors who have been raking.

Reece Payne and Dylan Lester hold .389 and .364 batting averages, respectively.

Though Alcovy is not scoring a ton of runs, the pitching has been more than enough to lead the team to wins.

The man leading the rotation is junior Cooper Duncan.

In three appearances, Duncan is 2-0 with a 1.31 ERA.

Alcovy began Region 3-AAAAAA play Monday, March 4 on the road against Mundy's Mill.

NEWTON CONT. FROM B1

After letting the lead slip in the second inning, the Rams jumped back ahead in the top of the third frame.

A two-run triple from Jeremiah Francis, followed by a RBI double from Andre Byrd Jr. gave Newton the 7-4 advantage.

The Redskins scored again in the bottom of the third, making the score 7-5, but that would be their last time crossing home plate on Thursday night.

Ultimately, the Rams continued to pour on runs in game one of the doubleheader.

Even though the Redskins pitching changes were effective in stifling the Rams' hot offense, they could not get anything at the plate for the rest of game one.

In the first game of the doubleheader, Lucas Ballard came in and pitched five innings and recorded eight strikeouts for the Rams. Ballard took over for Devon Hardeman, who pitched the opening two innings for Newton.

The Rams' pitching performance, paired with Brown's homer over the left field wall,

gave Newton the momentum it needed to win both games in the evening.

Brown was not done, though, as he pitched a complete game shutout with eight strikeouts in game two of the doubleheader.

Caden Richardson pitched 6.2 innings in game two for the Redskins and recorded 11 strikeouts in an effort to keep Social Circle in the game.

However, only three Redskins batters were able to get on base in the second game, a stark contrast from earlier in the evening.

After four innings of scoreless ball, Newton took the lead on an RBI double from Robert Jackson.

In the seventh inning, the Rams brought one more home on a balk from the Redskins pitcher.

The Rams traveled to South Forsyth for their next matchup on March 4 where they will look to continue their win streak.

Social Circle will be looking to get back into the win column on March 6 at Baldwin. The Redskins will have another game the following day at home against Baldwin as well.



Photos by Garrett Pitts
The Covington News

WALKER CONTINUED FROM B1

Doug Williams and Jay Harris. Just this past high school basketball season, Walker saw Dominique Wilkins at an Alcovy home basketball game.

Before announcing for today's student-athletes, Walker was one himself.

When he was in high school, he played football and baseball as his main two sports. Walker's playing career carries over to his announcing repertoire.

"Just knowing what's going on," Walker said. "What the precursor is to what a play may be. What situationally may be coming."

Walker is in the first year of his second stint teaching at Clements Middle

School. He is a physical education teacher and is the head football coach for the Wolverines.

He holds a bachelor's of science in history from North Carolina A&T University and a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Walker earned his specialist from Piedmont College, now referred to as Piedmont University.

Outside of teaching and coaching at a Newton County school, Walker announces at athletic events. This school year, in particular, Walker did PA for Newton and Alcovy football games at Sharp Stadium and Alcovy home basketball games.

Alcovy girls basketball head coach Justin Hunter shared the value Walker's

announcing adds to the home game environment.

"Jamie Walker's announcing at Alcovy High School home basketball games definitely brings a narrative component that keeps the masses engaged into the presence of the contest taking place between two high school basketball teams/cheerleading squads and supporting stakeholders," Hunter said. "His commentary presence puts you in the mindset as if you are watching a live television to get a sense of the game and environment surrounding it. This has been the case for the last several years and Tiger basketball nation appreciates Jamie Walker's first class service to us."

Teaching, coaching and announcing

all in Newton County has helped Walker form bonds with the coaches and players he announces about.

Doing so adds a special flare for Walker. "Being able to gain their trust and them know that I know them and care about their well being. Even to the extent of the social media realm," Walker said. "A lot of times, if they have something going on, especially if they're trying to go to school, trying to get something going, a simple retweet I can easily do. Just knowing the kids, knowing the parents, knowing the situation or just knowing what they're trying to do often benefits me being within the local community."