

# The Houston Home Journal

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Weekend, March 14, 2026



## 'Excited about what's ahead'

### Mayor speaks on city's progress, future at State of the City address

Warner Robins Mayor LaRhonda Patrick and City Council appear at the State of the City address on Wednesday, March 11. (Left-right:) Clifford Holmes, Kevin Lashley, Keith Lauritsen, Patrick, Derek Mack, Charlie Bibb, Larry Curtis.

Brianna Smith/HHJ

By **BRIANNA SMITH**  
HHJ Managing Editor  
brianna@hhjonline.com

**WARNER ROBINS** — The past, present and future were in focus for the city of Warner Robins, as the mayor delivered her State of the City address Wednesday morning at the Museum of Aviation.

Addressing city employees, community partners, and the public, Mayor LaRhonda Patrick focused her address on the city's unity, progress, and innovation, illustrating Warner Robins' journey from its past to its future.

She opened her remarks by expressing gratitude for the support she received throughout her first term and during her 2025 reelection.

"Your confidence in me during the November election really was empowering and humbling for me, and it really goes to show how much difference we're making in our city. Public service is built on trust, and I vow to continue working for your trust each and every day," she said.

See **ADDRESS** page 9A

### Assault on Watson leads to chase and crash

By **BRIANNA SMITH**  
HHJ Managing Editor  
brianna@hhjonline.com

**WARNER ROBINS** — Police are investigating after an aggravated assault Thursday morning.

According to the Warner Robins Police Department, officers responded to the area of 3111 Watson Boulevard.

Once on scene, officers learned the suspect fled in a vehicle, leading to a pursuit along Watson Boulevard. The Houston County Sheriff's Office responded to assist.

The suspect was in a crash and is now in custody. The victim was transported to a local hospital and is reported stable.

Anyone with more information is encouraged to call the police department's Criminal Investigations Unit at (478) 302-5380 or Macon Regional Crimestoppers: 1-877-68CRIME.

### 'Unfinished business' Mark Ivory seeking reelection for Houston County Board of Education

By **OWEN JONES**  
HHJ Staff Writer  
owen@hhjonline.com

**HOUSTON COUNTY** — Mark Ivory has spent his entire life in Houston County and is hoping to continue

his service on the Houston County Board of Education, Post 6 At Large.

His biggest supporter is his wife, Angela. They have two kids, or as Ivory likes

See **IVORY** page 9A



Mark Ivory and his wife, Angela.

Courtesy: Mark Ivory



Lt. Aundrea Day works detail for the Warner Robins Fire Department Honor Guard.

Courtesy: Aundrea Day

## Remarkable WOMEN

### Lt. Aundrea Day - A trailblazer in the Warner Robins Fire Department

By **BRIANNA SMITH**  
HHJ Managing Editor  
brianna@hhjonline.com

**WARNER ROBINS** — Firefighting demands courage, and this department trailblazer leads and serves her city.

Lt. Aundrea Day has been in the Warner Robins department for 14 years. As a lieutenant, she is responsible for managing the equipment and personnel on shift.

Day was motivated by her family's tradition of service. As a military child, she moved to Warner Robins during high

school, then became a military spouse and mother of three.

Her family's influence continued with her mother, another remarkable woman in her life, who was a first-generation Mexican-American and served in the Air Force as a weapons controller, another male-dominated field.

Wanting to be there for her family, Day said she wanted to stay local but still serve her community. After the events of 9/11, she felt drawn to firefighting.

See **DAY** page 10A



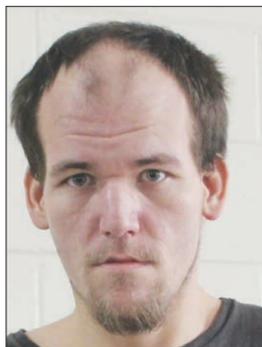
PERIODICAL

### Fort Valley man sentenced to 25 years for child molestation

By **SANDRA HERNANDEZ**  
HHJ Staff Writer  
sandra@hhjonline.com

**HOUSTON COUNTY** — Corey Alan Husk, 34, of Fort Valley, was convicted of five counts of child molestation by a Houston County jury on Wednesday, March 11, following a three-day trial, according to the Houston County District Attorney's Office.

Superior Court Judge Amy Smith sentenced Lusk to 60 years, with the first 25 years to be served in prison. He will also be required to register as a sex offender for life at the conclusion of his 25 years in the Department of Corrections custody. The media release says the jury deliberated for 20 minutes before rendering its verdict.



Lusk

The charges in the case against Lusk involved sexual abuse against a minor, who was nine years old when the abuse began. The abuse continued over

See **SENTENCED** page 10A

### Sheriff's Office, police departments join combined task force to reduce drug trafficking and gang violence

By **SANDRA HERNANDEZ**  
HHJ Staff Writer  
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**HOUSTON COUNTY** — The Houston County Sheriff's Office and other local agencies have now joined a combined task force that will tar-

get drug trafficking and gang violence.

Sheriff Matt Moulton said the Georgia Bureau of Investigation has taken command of the Ocmulgee Drug Task Force, previously based in Milledgeville,

and the Oconee Drug Task Force, based in Eastman. Both will combine with the Macon Gang Task Force into one multi-jurisdictional drug task force and gang task force.

See **TASK FORCE** page 10A



Brianna Smith/HHJ

The Houston County Sheriff's Office, Warner Robins Police Department, and Perry Police Department will join the task force, along with 14 other law enforcement agencies.

#### Word of the Day

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

— Matthew 7:24 (NKJV)

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A division of The Georgia Trust for Local News

# COMMUNITY

## Board of Education honors long-time employees, celebrates state winners



Owen Jones/HHJ

Houston County Board of Education recognized many employees who had worked in the school district for 30 years or more consecutively.

By OWEN JONES  
HHJ Staff Writer  
owen@hhjonline.com

**PERRY** — In the monthly meeting of the Houston County Board of Education, many long-time employees of the school district were recognized for their extensive service. All have served 30 years or more consecutively in the Houston County School District.

"To our honorees, thank you. Your commitment to our students, our schools and this community has helped shape the success of our District," Assistant Superintendent Dr. Walter Stephens said. "Staying in one school system for so many years says a lot about your dedication and heart you bring to your work everyday. The impact you've had on students, colleagues and families over the years is something that can't really be measured, but is deeply appreciated."

This years honorees include:

- 30 Years of Service:
  - Laurie Atkins, Warner Robins High School
  - Theresa Bowden, Centerville Elementary
  - Dr. Dana Brock, Miller Elementary
  - Stacy Brown, Northside Elementary
  - Dr. Kayren Cannon, Perry High School
  - Nikki Cooper, Teaching and Learning
  - Darcy Emerson, Veterans High School
  - Laura George, Matt Arthur Elementary
  - Tonya Grant, Transportation

- Theresa Gutierrez, Bonaire Middle
- Jennifer Hall, Teaching and Learning
- Dr. Mike Jackson, Thomson Middle
- Vickie Jackson, Kings Chapel Elementary
- Dr. Elgin Mayfield, Teaching and Learning
- Jennifer Pritchard, Centerville Elementary
- Alesa Rodriguez, Houston County High School
- Tiffany Rumell, Houston County High School
- Kevin Smith, Perry High School
- Christy Stokes, School Nutrition
- Dr. Tammy Strickland, Houston County High School
- Nell Tibbs, Transportation
- Dr. Tonya Wallace, Houston College and Career Academy

- 35 Years of Service:
  - Margaret Bagley, Transportation
  - Denise Boyd, Lindsey Student Support Center
  - Bradley Burris, Russell Elementary

- 40 Years of Service:
  - Martha King, Northside High School

The Board also celebrated State FFA winners from Veterans High School and All-State Art Students TaNia Spence and Allie Gibson from Perry High School.

High School All-State Band students, Livi Herbst, Ryan O'Connell, Carson Storie and Emma Johnson of Perry High School, Elisabeth Tomberlin,

Brennan Barnwell and Amelia Carrol of Veterans High School and Ignacio Redendiz of Warner Robins High School were also recognized for their achievements.

Annette Pender, Area Manager for the School Nutrition Program, was recognized for winning the Georgia Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award. Pender was first place in the state and was also named a national finalist for the U.S. Department of Education's RISE Award.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Richard Rogers said the award recognizes a school employee who provides "exemplary service to students in pre-k through high school".

Director of School Nutrition Meredith Potter said Pender has been with the school district for 19 years and started as an assistant manager. "Throughout her career, she only earned perfect health scores, and she was named Middle School Manager of the Year five years in a row," Potter said. "Annette will go to any lengths to make a student smile as she's willing to dress up and cut up just to bring joy to a student."

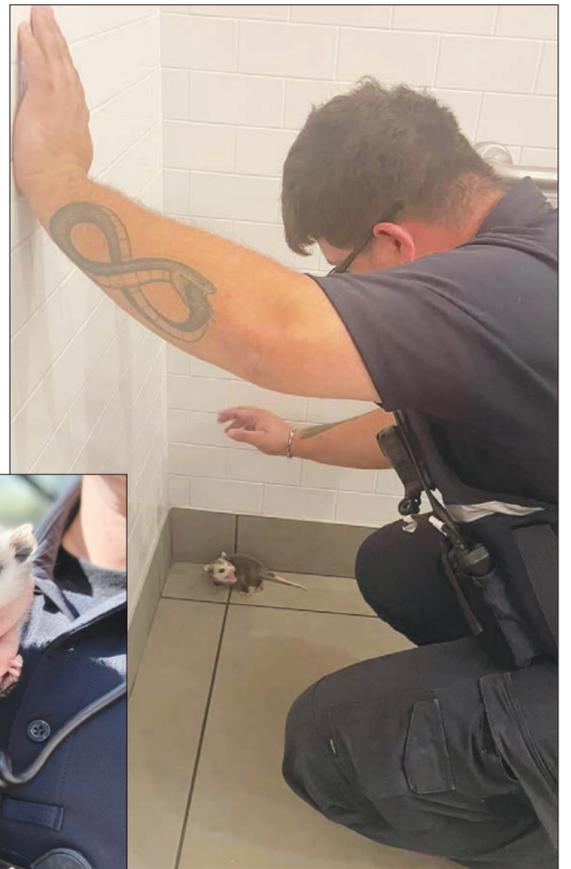
Potter also mentioned Pender's partnership with the Transition Academy and said she has a heart for any student and believes all should be valued and included. She even hired students from the Transition Program to work with her,

## Five possums, one bathroom

Animal control's job is not always about rounding up stray cats and dogs. Sometimes their days take a surprising turn, like the unusual case that unfolded recently.

Warner Robins Animal Control was called to a local business where two young possums had made themselves at home in the bathroom. Before the day was over, two more were discovered, and the next day brought another possum call.

In the end, five tiny possums were gently gathered up and taken to a rehabber for a safe new start, and the bathroom was once again possum-free.



Courtesy: City of Warner Robins



leading her to that partnership.

"She was asked to help design a training program to prepare these students for careers in food service," Potter said. "Annette, you show us every day the incredible difference classified staff can make in the lives of students. The size of your fan club here shows the respect you have earned and the friends you have made."

In new business, the Board approved procedures to fill the soon-to-be-vacant

Post 5 seat following board member Helen Hughes' resignation, effective March 31st.

According to the agenda, the BOE will accept resumes or letters of interest until Friday, March 20, 4 p.m. Submissions must be emailed to Mrs. Claudia McDaniel at claudia.mcdaniel@hcbe.net or mailed to her at 1100 Main Street, Perry, GA 31069.

Those living in District 5 who have submitted documents expressing interest can address the Board at

the April 6 Work Session at Northside Middle School at 6 p.m.

The BOE will make a final decision at the April board meeting the next day.

The newly chosen board member will begin after the appointment and serve the remainder of Hughes' term.

The next Houston County Board of Education meeting will be held Tuesday, April 7, 1 p.m., located at the board office, 1100 Main Street, Perry. The full agenda of this meeting can be found at hcbe.net.

## Five HoCo students place in Earth Day art contest

Special to The Journal

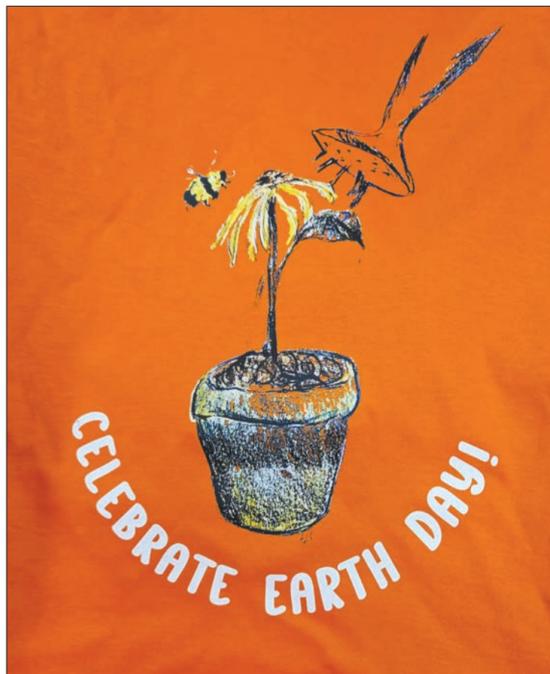
**PERRY** — Local students in 4-H, FFA, and Jr. Master Gardeners were invited to participate in an Earth Day art contest. Houston County's Earth Day Celebration will be on April 18, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Extension office in Perry. The first-place winner was Breshawna Sandry, Northside High School FFA member. She was presented with a certificate and gardening tools, and her art will be featured on T-shirts.

Four elementary school students also won awards and were presented with a certificate and plant starter kit. The winners, who are Jr. Master Gardeners, were:

- Second place, Keymoni Anderson, Pearl Stephens Elementary School (PSES);
- Third place, Jaydon Floyd, PSES; and

Two honorable mentions, Ahmir Towns, PSES, and Kylie Flton, CB Watson Primary.

Houston County ANR Agent, Morgan Grizzle, commented, "It was great to see the students' different takes on what Earth Day and the environment mean to them. I look forward to highlighting the art at our Earth Day celebration on April 18 and later



Courtesy: Houston County UGA Extension Office

Shirts with the winning design by Northside High School student Breshawna Sandry will be available for sale from the Houston County UGA Extension Office.

seeing individuals wearing the T-shirt with this design around town."

T-shirts with Breshawna's art are for sale in multiple colors at the Extension Office and will be available during the Earth Day Celebration. Children's T-shirts are \$12 and adult

sizes are \$15.

The Houston County Extension Office is located at 2030 Kings Chapel Road in Perry. For more information, call the extension office at 478-987-2028. To learn more about the UGA Extension Office, visit [www.extension.uga.edu](http://www.extension.uga.edu).

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# OBITUARIES

## Guyton Bennie Turner

Guyton Bennie Turner of Perry, Georgia, passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family on March 7, 2026.

Guyton was born on October 15, 1926, in Oak Park, Georgia, to the late George Hilton Turner and Sally Turner (Burns). He proudly served his country in the United States Navy. After completing his military service, Guyton began a long and dedicated career as a construction manager with the Houston County Maintenance Department.

In his free time, Guyton enjoyed spending time with his loving wife, Barbara, and his family. His family was truly the joy of his life, and any time spent with them was time well



spent. Guyton also loved to travel and stay on the go. Whenever he had the opportunity to hop in the car and take a ride, he was always eager to go.

Guyton was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Earlon Turner; and his sister, Erion Carter.

Left to cherish his mem-

ory is his beloved wife, Barbara Turner (Hollis); his sons, James Turner and David Turner (Judy); his grandson, Daniel Turner (Cama); as well as several nieces and nephews.

A visitation for family and friends will be held on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Burpee-Scott Memorial Chapel & Crematory. A graveside service honoring Guyton's life will be held on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 11:00am at Perry Memorial Gardens. The family kindly requests in lieu of flowers that donations be made to Perry Methodist Church.

With honor, Burpee-Scott Memorial Chapel & Crematory has been entrusted with arrangements.

## Georgia unveils 250th anniversary license plate



Courtesy: John Trussell

Eden Pethel displays the new Georgia 250 tag as she is recognized at the Georgia State Capital for her winning entry. Front left-right: Lee Herron, Eden Pethel, Lt. Governor Bert Jones Senator Max Burns. Back left-right: Tammy Herron, Adam Pethel, Brandy Pethel.

By **JOHN TRUSSELL**  
Georgia Sons of the American Revolution

ATLANTA — The Georgia Department of Revenue now offers a special commemorative license plate celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States.

The plate was proposed by Lee Herron, President of the Brier Creek Chapter, Georgia Sons of the American Revolution, and strongly supported by State Senator Max Burns throughout the legislative process.

“As we approach America’s 250th anniversary, this commemorative plate offers Georgians a meaningful way to recognize our nation’s founding and the pivotal role our state played in it,” said Revenue Commissioner Frank O’Connell. “We are especially proud that the design reflects the talent and engagement of Georgia’s students, whose creativity connects our Revolutionary past with the next generation of civic leaders.”

Developed to recognize

this historic national milestone, the America 250 plate features a design created by Georgia middle school students as part of a statewide civics education initiative undertaken in partnership with the Georgia Department of Education. The winning design was submitted by Eden Pethel, a student and member of the Children of the American Revolution.

Drawing inspiration from her visits to Georgia’s Revolutionary War sites, Eden explained: “The red stars on the design represent the following Georgia Revolutionary War sites from north to south: Fight at Van’s Creek/Hornet’s Nest, Battle of Kettle Creek, Sieges of Augusta, Battle of Brier Creek, Battles of Savannah, Fort Morris, and the Frederica Naval Action.”

Her submission was selected through a competitive statewide review process. Georgia vehicle owners now have the option to choose the commemorative plate when registering a new vehicle or renewing an existing registration through their

county tag office.

Drivers who wish to exchange their plate outside of their registration renewal period will be charged a \$20 new registration fee. Available through 2030, the plate will serve as a standard option—rather than a specialty plate—ensuring broad public accessibility at no additional cost.

The launch of the America 250 plate reflects Georgia’s ongoing commitment to civic education, historical awareness, and the recognition of America’s foundational heritage as the nation approaches its 250 semiquincentennial anniversary.

The Georgia SAR and Georgia DAR will be holding many special celebrations during 2026. For additional information, contact the Sons of the American Revolution at [gasocietysar.org](http://gasocietysar.org) or Daughters of the American Revolution at [DAR.org](http://DAR.org)

# CALENDAR

## 21st Annual Old Book Sale

Houston County Friends of the Library is hosting the 21st annual Old Book Sale at the GA National Fairgrounds in the Georgia Grown/Baby Barn Building from Thursday April 23rd to Saturday April 25th.

Over 90,000 books in 60 categories will be in the building ready for sale.

Admission will be \$10.00 on Thursday from 9AM to 12PM and \$5.00 from 12:01PM to 7PM.

Admission will be free on Friday and Saturday going from 9AM to 7PM Friday and 9AM to 3PM Saturday.

All items half price on Saturday!

Cash, Check, Credit, and Debit all accepted. Convenience fee for electronic transactions.

For more information, please email: [hocofriendsoftthelibrary@gmail.com](mailto:hocofriendsoftthelibrary@gmail.com) or, visit <http://houpl.org>, click “Support the Library, click “Friends of the Library”.

Find us on Facebook: Houston County Friends of the Library.

## Houston County Celebrates Earth Day

Houston County will celebrate Earth Day on April 18, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Houston County Extension Pavilion in Perry. This free family event will offer learning stations, craft projects, educational exhibits, face painting, and more.

Two exhibitors will bring wildlife and be available to answer questions. Vendors will also be onsite to offer a variety of items for sale, including plants.

Earth Day has been observed since 1970 to promote protecting the environment and raise awareness about preserving Earth’s resources.

The Houston County Extension Pavilion is located at 2030 Kings Chapel Road in Perry. For more information, call the extension office at 478-987-2028. To learn more about the UGA Extension office, visit [www.extension.uga.edu](http://www.extension.uga.edu).

## St. Christopher’s Easter Services

During Lent this year, St Christopher’s will be hosting a Lenten Bible Study every Wednesday, at 4:30 until March 25, 2026. We are inviting everyone who would like to participate in this study to join us.

During Easter Week, St. Christopher’s will be having Holy Eucharist on the following dates:

March 29, Palm Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

April 3, Good Friday Services at 12:00pm.

April 5, Easter Services at 8:00 a.m

St. Christopher’s has Sunday Services at 10:00 a.m.

Everyone is welcome to join us for our Sunday Services and Holy Eucharist at St. Christopher’s, 1207 Macon Road, Perry, GA 31069.

## Heart of GA Philatelic Society

The next meeting of the Heart of Georgia Philatelic Society (your local stamp club) will be on Tuesday, March 17, 2026 starting at 6 pm. The meeting takes place at 4088 Watson Blvd, Suite 600, Warner Robins.

The meeting is open to everyone interested in stamp collecting and postal history. Every meeting features door prizes, appraisals, free magazines and other literature, and a mini swap meet where you can buy and trade stamps, covers, supplies and related materials.

For more information, send an email to [chief\\_rod@yahoo.com](mailto:chief_rod@yahoo.com) or call 478-636-8684.

## All Saints Lenten & Easter Services

All Saints Episcopal Church, located at 1708 Watson Blvd, Warner Robins, invites all to our Lenten and Easter Services.

February 25th - March 25th, Wednesdays, Stations of the Cross 12PM

February 26th through March 26th - Thursday Evening Lenten Program; 5:45PM Evening Prayer; 6:00PM Light Potluck; 6:30-7:15PM, a video series, “We Confess”, (rooted in the ancient practice of confession, reminding us that Lent is not a season of condemnation, but a time of striving, with God’s help, towards healing, wholeness, and the peace God longs for us to receive)

March 28, 9:00 Palm Cross Workshop and Parish Workday

March 29, 10:15AM Palm Sunday Worship

April 2, 7:00PM, Maundy Thursday Service

April 3, 7:00PM, Good Friday Service

April 5, 6:30AM, Easter Vigil Service

April 5, 9:00AM, Easter Breakfast

April 5, 9:30AM, Easter Egg Hunt

April 5, 10:15AM, Easter Service

For more information, please contact the church office at 478-923-1791.

## Red Cross Blood Drive

It’s time to save a life by donating blood! Every drop counts!

Trinity United Methodist Church will be hosting a Red Cross Blood Drive Monday, March 16, noon-6 p.m. Sign up at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) to secure your spot and maximize staffing to limit wait times. Organizer Debbie Crenshaw has organized over 25 years of drives and does a fantastic job of making sure every donor also takes home a gift!

Location: 129 S. Houston Road, Warner Robins, 31088; parking in the rear.

## Sky Zone Grand Opening

On Saturday March 21st, 2026, Sky Zone Warner Robins will host their Grand Opening event! We will have a Chamber Ribbon cutting (Perry and Warner Robins) at 9:30am, Doors will open at 10am. Pastor Matt Walls will attend to give prayer of blessing.

We will have \$10 Jump Tickets all day, a live DJ, free socks to the first 1,000 guests, door prizes and more! Join us at 815 Russell Parkway for our grand opening!

## Community Calendar

Email your information to: [brianna@hhjonline.com](mailto:brianna@hhjonline.com)

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# VIEWPOINTS

"One voice can make a difference"

## The Houston Home Journal

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### Our Goal

The Houston Home Journal is published for the citizens of Houston and surrounding counties by a division of The Georgia Trust for Local News. Our goal is to produce quality, profitable, community-oriented newspapers that you, our readers, are proud of. We will reach that goal through hard work, teamwork, loyalty and a strong dedication towards printing the truth.

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### Share Your Viewpoint

There are three ways to submit a Letter to the Editor: Email it to brianna@hhjonline.com, mail it to Houston Home Journal at 1210 Washington St., Perry, GA 31069, or drop it off at the same location between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number (the last two not to be printed). The newspaper reserves the right to edit or reject letters for reasons of grammar, punctuation, taste and brevity.

P.O. Box 1910  
1210 Washington Street, Perry, GA 31069  
478-987-1823

# Thanatophobia could happen to you

COLUMNIST  
KELLY BURKE



I'm not picking on the Tax Assessors today. Instead I'm writing about thanatophobia. That's a word you don't hear every day.

Thanatophobia is essentially the fear of dying. Derived from Thanatos (Greek for death) and phobos (fear), it involves a persistent, irrational, or excessive fear of dying. And it matters to me, today, because I write about Marc Feld. Never heard that name? It's because he changed his name to Marc Bolan. Bo came from Bob, lan came from Dylan. Bob Dylan was his hero.

Marc Bolan still doesn't ring a bell to 94.6 percent of you. Maybe T Rex? That was the name Marc gave his band, because it was going to be the biggest thing on earth. Sadly, Marc didn't know the T Rex was not the biggest thing on earth at the time, it was the Alamosaurus. But I digress.

T Rex had a bunch of hits in merry old England, but here in the States their big hit was "Bang a Gong (Get It On)". They had a decent hit with "Jeepster." Both songs were about sex, doing the wild thing, or such frolicking.

Bolan suffered from thanatophobia. He so feared dying that he never got a driver's license. He was convinced he was going to die before he reached the age of 30. He and his girlfriend, Gloria Jones, were driving home from a night out when both had been drinking. She drove off the road, plowed into a fence post and then a tree, killing

Marc instantly. Two weeks before his 30th birthday. Had he lived, he would have been as famous as David Bowie, his friend and sometimes rival.

Gloria Jones was critically injured in the accident, but recovered and had a music career herself. Her claim to fame was "Tainted Love," although despite two releases (1964 and 1976), it didn't chart.

Glen Campbell played guitar on it.

Chances are you've heard the Soft Cell cover of the song. Their version spent a then-record 43 weeks on the U.S. Top 100 (1981-82), peaking at no. 8.

Thanatophobia is only an irrational fear if its not true. Marc Bolan was obviously justified in his belief, but just maybe a lit-

tle bit of prevention might have been wise. Like a designated driver.

Kelly Burke was born in Knoxville where he spent his younger years, followed by high school years in Atlanta where he graduated from Georgia Tech, and Mercer Law School. He has been in private practice, a magistrate judge, and an elected district attorney. He writes about the law, politics, music, and Ireland. He and his wife enjoy gardening, playing with their Lagotto Ramanolo named George Harrison, and spending time with their grandchildren. To see this column or Kelly's archives, visit www.kellyburke.com. You can email Kelly at dakellyburke@gmail.com.



# Time to listen, think and choose

Qualifying has completed. Candidates have declared. Communities must make a choice.

On the national level, the question is often asked, "Are you better than you were a few years ago?"

On the state and local level, that same question must be answered.

It is once again time to give a report card grade to our incumbents.

Should they be renewed? Should they be replaced?

Will the position they have on the issues matter? Will party affiliation win in the end?

What are the critical issues? Will it be crime that captures the electorate's mind?

Is there a real answer for the healthcare system? Will

THE SERVANT LEADER'S CORNER  
DR. DARYL VINING



rural hospitals keep closing? What will be said about the economic condition of families?

Is AI going to improve life or make it more difficult to live?

How can we improve services without raising taxes?

Who will put the people they serve before themselves?

So many concerns. So many questions. So little time to figure it out. One thing is for certain, over the course of the next few months all of these questions will get answers. The only question left to ask is will you be a part of the answer by participating or by casting your vote? Be involved by getting involved.

# The Louvre Heist: Planning a museum theft

On Oct. 19, 2025, a team of intrepid thieves donned the guise of humble construction workers and pulled off one of the greatest heists in human history. At about 9:30 in the morning, the apparent work crew parked a furniture lift against the wall of Paris' famed Louvre Museum.

Using the vehicle to gain access to a balcony, the bandits used a disc cutter to enter the historic structure through a window. The alarm was triggered, but people outside suspected nothing, just another day on the busy streets of the City of Lights.

Inside, however, unsuspecting guards were held at bay with power tools while several pieces of the French crown jewels, over \$100 million worth, were pilfered by the poachers.

The criminals left the same way they got in, and, again, no one thought anything of the work team that left the scene just as fast as they arrived. The whole event lasted less than eight minutes. It took authorities about a week to track down the suspects. Eleven people were arrested in connection with the heist, and so far, only five folks have been officially charged for the crime.

The crown jewels, however, remain at large.

Crimes like this always garner a lot of attention, with the lore behind the events

NEW SOUTHERN DAD  
KYLE DOMINY



reaching mythic proportions and the perpetrators often being granted hero status. Pop culture glorifies a good heist, with countless books and movies depicting them in fantastic fashion.

Now it's time for me to plan my own. I have become aware of an artifact in need of deliverance, and I cannot rest until it is liberated from its climate controlled archival safe glass enclosure.

Nestled near the Pagan River in southern Virginia is the Isle of Wight County Museum, in the quaint structure housing the history of one of our nation's oldest communities, is believed to be the world oldest ham.

This slab of still-edible meat is believed to be about 120 years old. It is a "Smithfield Ham," cut was the carcass of a peanut-fed hog slayed, cured, treated and smoked in the town of Smithfield, a small town east of Norfolk, Va. and just south of the leg-

endary Chesapeake Bay. I must eat that ham.

But freeing it from the eyes of the public will be no easy task. It is under constant supervision, in the form of a 24-hour livestream called the Ham Cam. A recent study of the footage doesn't reveal a lot of foot traffic near the exhibit. Being the home to the world's oldest ham probably does not bring as many visitors to Smithfield as it used to. In fact, production of genuine Smithfield Hams ceased not too long ago, in 2024, due to reduced consumer demand.

So, replicating the livestream online will be a simple task. AI can help me with that now. Taking care of the guards could be more difficult, but the video shows little surveillance outside the webcam.

On second thought, this job might just be a piece of cake, or rather, ham.

I'll have it out in time for Easter.

# Toledo gives side of Okefenokee mining issue

My columns opposing the mining for titanium dioxide on Trail Ridge near our Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge have drawn a heavy reader response. Almost all of it supporting a permanent ban on mining in the area.

I also have received a rebuttal, asserting I have gotten my facts wrong. This from Drew Jones, a Charlton County commissioner. It is in Charlton County wherein Trail Ridge is located. Jones is also the nephew-in-law of Joe Hopkins, president of Toledo Manufacturing, one of the leading opponents of a ban. Hopkins is Toledo's president. Drew Jones runs the company day to day.

Toledo Manufacturing owns 50,000 acres in Charlton County, making them one of the largest landowners in the county. Although he takes issue with the accusation, Joe Hopkins is seen by supporters of a ban on mining as having outsized political influence in the state and being the primary reason legislation to ban such mining on Trail Ridge has gone nowhere under the Gold Dome, despite bipartisan efforts to pass such a measure through several legislative sessions.

Mr. Jones asked to give Toledo Manufacturing's side of the story. I told him I would share his letter with you minus any snarky asides from me. You can make of his comments what you will. Here is the letter: "Dear Mr. Dick

COLUMNIST  
DICK YARBROUGH



Yarbrough: Your recent column concerning mining near the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge contains several assertions and implications regarding Toledo Manufacturing Company that require correction.

"To be clear at the outset, Toledo Manufacturing never advocated for Twin Pines Minerals to receive a permit, nor did we support mining absent rigorous, independent scientific review. We have consistently advocated for objective, science-based decision-making carried out by qualified regulatory agencies, free from political pressure, whether that pressure seeks to force approval or impose a blanket prohibition without evidence. That distinction matters, and your column does not reflect it.

"Property ownership adjacent to a proposed project does not equate to support for that project. Our position has been that decisions of this magnitude should be based on transparent studies conducted by credentialed experts without ideological or financial bias, not on reflexive oppo-

sition, campaign rhetoric or pressure from interest groups on either side of the issue.

"You suggest that elected officials who advocate for regulatory review rather than legislative bans are acting in bad faith. We respectfully disagree. Complex hydrological and environmental questions should be resolved through empirical analysis and scientific review, not political litmus tests. Decisions made otherwise risk undermining public confidence and setting concerning precedents.

"Your column also references Toledo Manufacturing as having 'solicited' Chemours to mine the area. This characterization is misleading. Any mention of Chemours has been purely hypothetical, in the context of public discussion about potential future land use, and not the pursuit of any project, partnership or mining proposal. Exploring theoretical possibilities is not the same as advocating for or advancing a mining operation.

See YARBROUGH page 5A

## LIFESTYLE & FAITH

# Hedge of protection for loved ones

The minister at a church I attended announced to the congregation one Sunday that his oldest son, now 30-years old, had a drug addiction. Everyone had seen the two other younger sons from time to time but didn't know a third son existed. Both younger sons were serving in the Iraqi war at the time.

The son's drug problem had been a source of heartache for the entire family. For years the wayward son seldom called home and his whereabouts were unknown. Not knowing his condition or what he was doing, the family resorted to their only alternative: prayer that God would intercede in the life of their son and brother.

The next week I saw the minister walking down the street and drove over to the curb to speak with him. I expressed my deep concern about his son and told him of a biblical principal that might rescue his son from the clutches

### PARABLES TO PONDER

BILLY POWELL



of drugs. It is a principal that another minister conveyed to me years ago.

Just as there are constant physical laws such as the law of gravity, there also are untapped spiritual laws that will produce predictable results. This spiritual law involves building a hedge of protection around a loved one who needs providential protection. The ground rules require that you pray every day that God will build a wall of protection so high, so thick, and so impenetrable that evil cannot get to your loved one.

It may take 6-months or it may take a year or longer, but I am told this spir-

itual law always works. Every day you pray, another brick is added to the wall's foundation. After months of prayer, the wall becomes higher, thicker, and stronger. The minister thought it was such a good idea that he decided to preach on the concept at an upcoming sermon. When he did preach the sermon, he suggested to the congregation that they should pray for concrete blocks and not bricks to construct the wall faster.

The basis for this spiritual law is found in the book of Hosea, chapter 2. The prophet had a wife name Gomer. She was flirting with adultery, and Hosea was very perplexed

as to what he could do. Hosea decided to pray that the Lord would build a hedge around Gomer so that evil could not get to her and her evil suitors could no longer tempt her.

Without God's intervention, drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes can have an unbreakable hold on individuals. Also, parents are at wits end in knowing how to deal with children who have left the nest and are living in sin.

A friend lamented that his daughter was living out of wedlock with other men and constantly getting into trouble. I suggested he pray the prayer of Hosea. Six months later he told me the prayer was producing results as his daughter was beginning to straighten up her life. Praying daily for a hedge of protection is worth trying.

# Courtesy expressions that make a difference

### HHJ PUBLISHER

DON MONCRIEF



Never underestimate the power of "Yes sir." "Yes ma'am." "No sir." "No ma'am."

I believe they're a big part of what got me to where I am today.

I believe they're the reason I was offered the opportunity to train to become a store manager at Giant Foods back when I was a young adult. (I chose the Air Force instead.) The reason I was made a squad leader in military basic training. The reason, even as a one-striper, I was selected to train others of the same rank at my first duty station in Greece. The reason I was selected to be the floor leader over a half dozen others in England, this time with three stripes. And so forth and so on.

Granted, hard work helped, but I wasn't - still am not - the sharpest tool in the shed. Minus that huge act of courtesy/respect, I'm not so sure things wouldn't have turned out differently.

I can't take credit. Left to my own devices, there probably would have been a lot of "yeah" and "uh-huh" and "what" and see "turned out different." But it was something my mother and father really believed in, so they preached it - demanded it, disciplined me when it was absent - and here I am.

I wonder today if it isn't a lost art.

That thought came to mind most recently in a series of emails I had with someone about a particular set of concerns. Some things I pointed out that needed fixing to make us better. I wasn't trying to micromanage. I wasn't on a power trip. I wasn't trying to cause problems. It was what it was. It needed to be done. Their responses, however, were evasive and frustrating, each seemingly "politically correct," polished even - I suspect they might even have been ChatGPT-generated, as they didn't read like this person's writing.

It didn't take long before I was screaming inside: "All I wanted was a 'yes, sir,' and we move on. Simple. If it needed to be 'no, sir'—since I can be wrong—then say so. Not all this 'here we go round the mulberry bush.'"

I practice this same exercise in futility from time to time with my now-grown children. (Even though I was mindful to teach them the acceptable, sacred response. I guess I should have been like my mom and dad: Popped them upside the head a little more.)

"Yes sir." "Yes ma'am." "No sir." "No ma'am."

On occasion, it might be fake, using it because you wrote a column about it, and now they think they can use it to get what they want. Or a weapon, someone calling you that in mock politeness to remind you you're old. ("Very old" in my case.) Or even rarer, inappropriate. "Don't call me sir. That's my father."

But when it's genuine, it works. It, having its origins dating back to jolly old England in the 1600s, works because it contains a secret - but obvious - element of humanity: Humility. You have to humble yourself to exercise it. A rarity these days. (Especially in the push to be "gender-neutral".)

In ancient Celtic mythology, there was a belief in certain places called "thin places" where the worlds of the seen and the unseen came closest together. In each of the beatitudes, Jesus points us to this kind of thin place, a place on earth where we draw closer to heaven. They were also the places He proposed we would find the treasures of the Kingdom of God.

What, at the heart, distinguished them from normal places? Humility, the kind that naturally stems from this honorable, respectful, caring, loving response. Should we sit up and take note?

"Yes sir!"  
"Yes ma'am!"

# The hazy double life of isinglass

If you find yourself humming along to Rogers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!, you might envision a breezy surrey with "isinglass curtains y'can roll right down." But depending on who you ask—a geologist, a brewmaster, or a Victorian carriage driver—you're likely to get a very different story about what, exactly, isinglass is.

The history of this material is as clear as the sheets themselves, yet as murky as a barrel of unfiltered ale. Today, the term has become a catch-all for flexible, transparent window material, but its origins are split between the depths of the earth and the depths of the sea.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, "isinglass" referred primarily to mica. These are transparent minerals mined from watery silicates of aluminum or potassium. Unlike the glass we know today, mica could be crystallized and sliced into incredibly thin, flexible sheets.

It was the "high-tech"

### ALL ABOUT ANTIQUES

JILLINDA FALEN



solution of its day. Before the advent of modern synthetic vinyl, these mineral sheets provided the "glass" for street lanterns, horse-drawn carriages, and even the iconic Ford Model T. Drivers could roll up these mineral windows during fair weather and snap them back into place when the clouds turned grey.

However, a linguistic shadow looms over the mineral. Long before it was a dashboard accessory, "isinglass" was (and still is) a semi-transparent gelatin derived from the air bladders of fish—specifically sturgeon, hake, and cod.

While it sounds unappetizing, this fish-based

isinglass has been a secret weapon in kitchens and breweries for centuries.

In the kitchen, before boxed gelatin was a pantry staple, isinglass was the thickening agent of choice for fruit jellies and creamy blancmanges.

In the brewery, it remains a vital "fining" agent in British brewing. When added to cask ales, the isinglass causes live yeast to flocculate into a jelly-like mass that sinks to the bottom, leaving the beer crystal clear.

"It's a bit of a cosmic joke," says one local historian. "The name stuck as a synonym for windows, even though the windows were made of rock and the beer-clearer was made of

fish. They share a name, but absolutely no DNA."

The versatility of the "fish-glue" variety extends far beyond the pub. In the world of high-stakes art conservation, isinglass is a miracle worker.

Because it is uniquely strong yet can be "reactivated" with a simple touch of moisture, it is the preferred adhesive for repairing delicate parchment and flaking paint on ancient canvases. Using binocular microscopes, conservators apply tiny droplets of the stuff—sometimes mixed with honey or glycerin—to bond 500-year-old paint back to its original surface.

Today, when we talk about "isinglass" on a modern boat or a jeep, we are usually talking about clear vinyl. The mica is gone, and the fish bladders are relegated to the brewery, but the word remains—a linguistic fossil of a time when the world was seen through thin slices of stone and clarified by the silver of a sturgeon. Happy Collecting!

# Your muscles and economy of movement

This is one of my favorite subjects because of its effect on everyone who can still move.

A person's economy of movement simply is a measure of how easily they can do their activities of daily living (ADLs), whether an office worker, elite athlete or someone using a wheelchair. The tasks we face throughout our day can either be very fatiguing or we can make them become easier by increasing the strength of the muscles that move our tendons, ligaments, and skeleton throughout our daily routine, whatever it may be.

Our muscles work a lot like our senses. When we lose one, another tends to become more sensitive, helping to compensate for what we lost or don't have.

For example, a person that loses usage of the legs can strengthen upper body muscles to compensate for

### YOUR HEALTH

WADE YODER



the lost leg strength or usage, thus increasing the economy of movement and her or his independence.

When we are less active and our muscles become weaker, our weight tends to hang much heavier from our tendons and ligaments, causing structural problems and premature aging to our joints. When this happens, our tendency is to move less to avoid this pain, causing further weakness.

If this cycle is not stopped, especially when combined with increased weight gain, the weight of our vital organs, body

fat, untuned muscle on our spine, hips, and knees, along with the weight of our head on our neck, will cause premature aging to our vertebra, joints, tendons and ligaments. This causes degeneration to our mobility and eventually a dependence on others for our normal ADLs.

There are many exercises that can strengthen movements we use in real life, and you do not have to have a gym or exercise equipment to strengthen functional lifestyle movements. It's as simple as doing what must be done more often and at a faster

pace.

For example, if you want to strengthen the muscles you use to go up a flight of stairs, repeat this activity more, along with a gradual increase in the speed going up the stairs. It will become easier because our muscles adapt to the new level of stress that help us go up the stairs. This same method works for an athlete as well, and the reason is simple: our body is designed to adapt to new or increased stresses.

Isn't it neat? By simply strengthening the muscles that we use throughout our day, we're less tired at the end of our day and we still have the energy for other things and to enjoy the ones we care about.

Strengthening our muscles not only strengthens our movements and makes our days go better, but it also takes a lot of weight off of our load bearing joints!

## YARBROUGH

From page 4A

or advancing a mining operation.

"It is also important to recognize the broader context. Across our nation, forestland ownership is becoming increasingly unprofitable. Many owners earn less from timber today than they did 30 years ago, even without adjusting for inflation, while the costs of ownership have risen significantly. Private landowners continue to provide immense environmental benefits such as clean air, wildlife habitat, biodiversity and carbon sequestration while bearing the associated costs. We rarely see articles addressing this pressing issue, yet well-funded conservation groups and the media could make it a top priority. What you have written about for years is a symptom of the problem, not the problem itself. The general public may be ignoring the economic realities of owning forestland. Without economic viability, these lands will eventually be converted to other uses, not out of greed, but out of necessity.

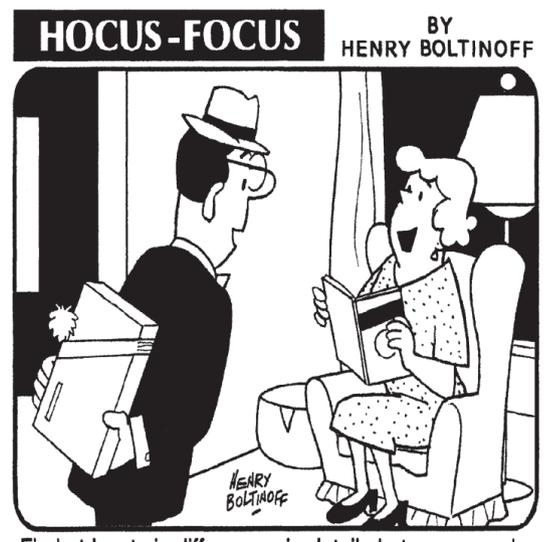
"Readers deserve accurate reporting based on facts, not narratives constructed without input from those most directly involved. We encourage coverage that reflects evidence, transparency, and the evolving nature of scientific research. If current or future studies demonstrate that mining in or near the Okfenokee poses unacceptable risks, then permits should not be issued. That conclusion should rest on evidence, not presumption.

"Toledo Manufacturing remains committed to environmental stewardship, property rights, and the rule of law. Those principles are not mutually exclusive and presenting them as such does a disservice to an issue that deserves serious, thoughtful consideration. We hope this clarification reaches readers as broadly as your other columns."

Drew Jones  
Toledo Manufacturing Company, Inc.

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

# ENTERTAINMENT

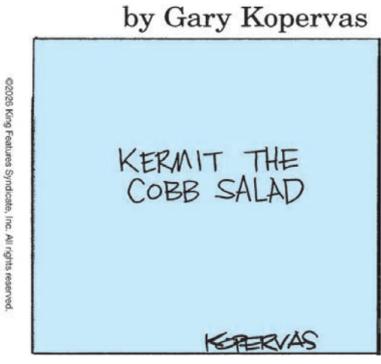


Find at least six differences in details between panels.

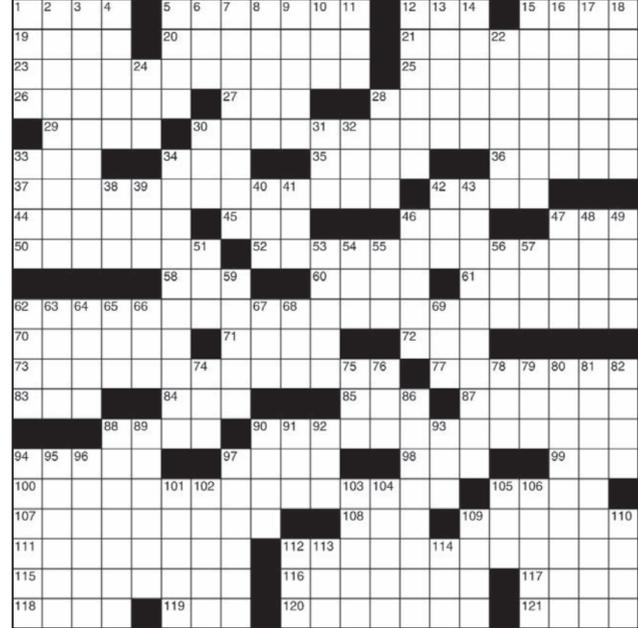


Differences: 1. Hat is larger. 2. Bottom of lamp is not showing. 3. Ear is different. 4. Book cover is different. 5. Glasses are missing. 6. Ribbon is moved.

### Out on a Limb



## CROSSWORD 3-14-26



### CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Part of DJ
- 5 Let leave
- 12 E-device download
- 15 Lobs' paths
- 19 Western U.S. gas chain
- 20 Radar on an old sitcom
- 21 Bargain offered by a prosecutor
- 23 Male horse that's the subject of a novel?
- 25 Deli meat often on rye
- 26 Visiting a website, e.g.
- 27 Sunshine St.
- 28 Contributed one's share
- 29 Pulitzer-winning biographer Leon
- 30 Setting a weekly limit on Mastercard purchases?
- 33 401, to Nero
- 34 Water, in Paris
- 35 Nickel, e.g.
- 36 Hands, in Havana
- 37 James Bond's creator, if he had lived on the island of Ithaca?
- 42 German car company
- 44 Pulls on
- 45 Theta lead-in
- 46 Egyptian -- (cat breed)

- 47 Current unit
- 50 "This requires a lot of effort"
- 52 "You're the Top" composer dishing out servings of food?
- 58 "You betcha"
- 60 Persia, now
- 61 As a whole
- 62 At the post one formerly held?
- 70 "Fighting" Big Ten team
- 71 Cyber-trash
- 72 Pro trained in trauma
- 73 Statement after a female jungle cat gains a lot of weight?
- 77 Include as a bonus
- 83 Bug planter
- 84 Busy bug
- 85 Weird
- 87 Internet investing site
- 88 Burkina --
- 90 Squid ink, for example?
- 94 One- -- (short play)
- 97 Foot bottom
- 98 "Well, I'll be!"
- 99 Lace up, e.g.
- 100 The stress of being a trailblazer?
- 105 Opposed to, in Westerns
- 107 They stagnate during recessions

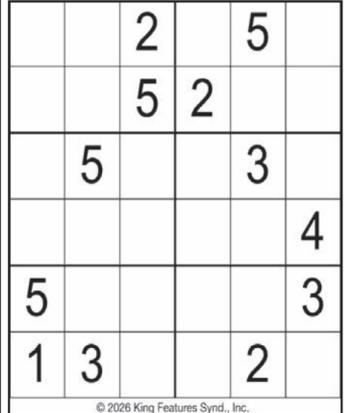
- 108 Old Glory's nation
- 109 "Scandal" creator Rhimes
- 111 Be physically intimate
- 112 Extra things seen eight times in this puzzle?
- 115 Fawned over
- 116 Blue-eyed cat
- 117 -- & Chandon (Champagne)
- 118 Short sleeps
- 119 Hosp. areas
- 120 Major forgetfulness
- 121 Within: Prefix

### CLUES DOWN

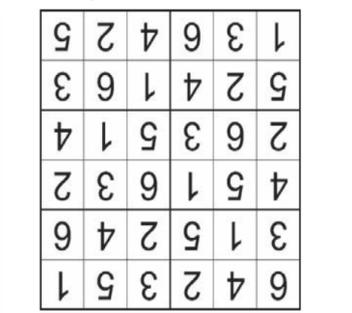
- 1 "The Living Daylights" actress Maryam
- 2 Resolved, as difficulties
- 3 Angry rebukes
- 4 Newswoman Roberts
- 5 Fawn over, with "on"
- 6 401(k) kin
- 7 Government of a nation by its own people
- 8 Dancer Agnes de --
- 9 Homer epic
- 10 -- -mo
- 11 Wd. in a thesaurus
- 12 -- Way (old Roman road)
- 13 Actor Oliver
- 14 Actor Joe
- 15 Gland near the kidneys
- 16 Scan, as data
- 17 El -- Real (road in California)
- 18 Hurls
- 22 In-house
- 24 '75 TV debut
- 28 Smug type
- 30 Half- -- latte
- 31 Roll call response, in Paris
- 32 Heap
- 33 The Mets' -- Field
- 34 Border crossing documents
- 38 "Sorta" suffix
- 39 Towing gp.
- 40 & so forth
- 41 Chinese chairman
- 42 Boat paddle
- 43 "Let's shake hands!"
- 46 -- Carlo
- 47 In a little bit
- 48 Parcel (out)
- 49 Egg on
- 51 Hwy. felony

- 53 R&B singer with the hit "4Ever"
- 54 Suffix with trick or mock
- 55 Faux --
- 56 Suffix of pasta names
- 57 Siouan tribe
- 59 Lay down as fact
- 62 Feels lousy
- 63 With 67-Down, mistakes
- 64 Stratagem
- 65 -- Tin Tin
- 66 Ethyl ending
- 67 See 63-Down
- 68 Singer Cooke
- 69 Qty.
- 74 -- -cone
- 75 Seoul soldier
- 76 Pub. staffers
- 78 Blvd., e.g.
- 79 Meal scrap
- 80 Attending to
- 81 Emphatic affirmation
- 82 Hawaiian goose
- 86 Humiliates
- 88 Cousins of anises
- 89 Iris ring
- 90 British actress Diana
- 91 British beer
- 92 Abode: Abbr.
- 93 Third letter
- 94 Tarzan, e.g.
- 95 Loud insect
- 96 Began, as a hobby
- 97 Zooms
- 101 Ham it up
- 102 Amazon, e.g.
- 103 Its capital is Khartoum
- 104 "I'd like to help"

## SUDOKU



Here's How It Works:  
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



Sudoku answer featured above. Crossword answer featured to the left.



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# CAPITOL UPDATES

## Georgia House and Senate Republicans on parallel course to reduce state income tax rate

By **TYTAGAMI**  
Bureau Chief  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — One thing that Georgia's House and Senate can agree on after finishing the first round of this year's legislative session is that the state income tax rate should continue falling.

Last Friday was the deadline for lawmakers to vote out the bills they were most serious about, moving them from the House to the Senate and vice versa.

The Senate had already sent legislation to the House last month that would cut the income tax rate to 3.99%.

On Friday, the House kicked a bill to the Senate with the same tax rate reduction and with an increase to the standard deduction that was similar to what was in the Senate bill.

Rep. Shaw Blackmon, R-Bonaire, the architect of the House measure, said it would cost the state \$600 million in the first full year of implementation.

Democrats ridiculed the Republican plan, asserting that two-thirds of the tax cut would go to the wealthiest fifth of the population while leaving less money for services, such as education. Most Georgians might see a few hundred dollars while the rich would get thousands, said Rep. Sam Park, D-Lawrenceville, the House minority whip.

"We must stop these tax cuts for the rich if we want to lift all Georgians up."

Republicans flipped the logic.

Rep. Chuck Martin, R-Alpharetta, said that if the top 20% would get two-thirds of the benefit, then they are paying that same proportion of the income tax now.

"The math goes both ways," he said.

House Bill 880 then passed 102-69.

It would reduce the income tax rate a tenth of a percentage point per year, conditioned upon continued growth in state revenue, until the rate reached 3.99%.

The current income tax rate is 5.19%. But, last month, state representatives passed House Bill 1001, which would drop it to 4.99% retroactive to the start of this year. If the Senate embraces both, then it would take a decade to reach 3.99%.

HB 880 would simultaneously increase the standard deduction. It is \$12,000 for a single filer now and would increase \$600 a year until reaching \$18,000 in a decade. These numbers would double for married couples filing jointly.

This approach differs only by degrees from Senate Bill 477 passed by senators early last month. Their approach would reduce the rate to 3.99% much sooner, by 2028. It would raise the standard deduction a little less, to \$16,000 for individuals and \$32,000 for married couples.

That 3.99% rate was the Senate's second priori-



Sen. Blake Tillery, R-Vidalia, speaks about the state budget on the Senate Floor at the Georgia Capitol on Friday, Feb. 20.

ty, the first being Senate Bill 476 to increase the standard deduction to \$50,000 for individuals and \$100,000 for couples.

To make both options palatable, the Senate handed the House what Sen. Blake Tillery, R-Vidalia, the designer of the two Senate bills, described as an "olive branch."

He scooped out the contents of two unrelated measures the House had sent the Senate last year and, like a baker filling a donut with custard, squeezed in the language

from the two Senate bills. House Bill 463 mirrors SB 477, and House Bill 134 copies SB 476.

So, now the House has two bills that would reduce the income tax rate to 3.99% — one that just reached the Senate and another that just got lobbed back from there.

Either by chance or design (probably the latter), HB 463 — the bill the Senate gutted before tossing it back to the House filled with a 3.99% income tax rate — was originally authored by Blackmon. He

is the same state representative who rallied House Republicans to send HB 880, for a 3.99% tax rate, to the Senate on Friday.

There are bragging rights on the campaign trail for getting bills passed, and all seats are up for election this year.

Tillery, when he was asked about HB 880 versus HB 463 outside the Capitol Monday, echoed a line that is often attributed to Harry S. Truman.

"There's no limit on what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets

the credit," said Tillery, who is running for lieutenant governor and has spoken quite a bit about the Senate Republicans' tax cutting agenda. "I don't care who gets the credit."

This article and photograph are available through a partnership with Capitol Beat News Service, a project of the Georgia Press Association's nonprofit, tax-exempt Educational Foundation.

## THE CLASSIFIEDS THAT CLICK

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### Announcements

#### Request for Proposals (RFP) A1-26

Flint Area Consolidated Housing Authority is seeking proposals for Legal services / General Counsel Representation. The RFP A1-26 packages will be ready to pickup on Thursday, March 12. The proposals are due back on April 9, 2026 by 4:30 pm.

For any further information please reach out to Brenda Gay, Executive Administrative Coordinator via email: [b.gay@facha.net](mailto:b.gay@facha.net) or phone 478-472-8209 x 202

### Employment

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31088

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STATEWIDE CLASSIFIEDS  
FOR THE WEEK 3/15/26

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# BUSINESS & FINANCE

## Chamber welcomes Duck Donuts



A sweet new spot for donuts has opened up in Warner Robins. To mark the occasion, Duck Donuts held a ribbon cutting for their grand opening with the Robins Regional Chamber on March 10. The donut shop features delicious made to order donuts, coffee drinks, milkshakes and much more. Waddle on over to 6011 Watson Blvd, Suite 300 and try it for yourself!

Robins Regional Chamber

## Robins Financial Credit Union announces Jonathan Pitts as new board member



**Special to The Journal**  
**WARNER ROBINS** – Robins Financial Credit Union is pleased to announce the appointment of Jonathan Pitts to its Board of Directors. Pitts previously served on the credit union's Audit Committee, where he provided valuable oversight and financial insight in support of the organization's mission.

"Jonathan has already demonstrated a strong commitment to the credit union through his service on our Audit Committee," said Christina O'Brien, President and CEO of Robins Financial Credit Union. "His leadership, professional expertise and passion for serving our members and community make him an excellent addition to our Board of Directors. We are excited to welcome him into this role."

Pitts is the Director of Client Relations at Piedmont Occupational Medicine, where he focuses

on building strong relationships and supporting the health and workforce needs of organizations across the region. His professional experience, combined with his commitment to community service, brings valuable perspective to the Robins Financial Board of Directors.

As a board member, Pitts will help guide the strategic direction of the credit union while ensuring the organization continues to operate in the best interest of its members.

Robins Financial Credit Union is a member-owned, not-for-profit, financial cooperative committed to upholding its mission to be Member Focused. Financial Partners. Community Proud. Chartered in 1954 by Robins Air Force Base civilian and military personnel, the financial institution now serves more than 274,000 members across the state of Georgia and beyond.

## BBB consumer alert: Beware of traffic citation scams

Receiving a notice about an unpaid traffic ticket can be alarming. Unfortunately, scammers know this and are increasingly using fake traffic citation notices to pressure consumers into paying fines that don't actually exist. The Better Business Bureau is warning consumers to be cautious if they receive unexpected messages claiming they owe money for a traffic violation.

Traffic citation scams typically arrive by text message, email, or automated phone call. The message often claims that you have an unpaid ticket, toll violation, or citation and warns that immediate action is required to avoid serious consequences. These consequences may include additional fines, license suspension, vehicle registration holds, or even arrest warrants.

The message usually includes a link directing you to a payment website or a phone number to call to resolve the issue. However, these links often lead to fraudulent websites designed to collect your credit card information or personal details, such as your driver's license number.

**How the Scam Works:** Scammers rely on urgency and fear to convince victims to act quickly without verifying the claim. A typical scam follows these steps:

First, the consumer receives an unexpected message stating that they have an unpaid traffic ticket or toll violation. The message may appear to come from a local police department, court system, or department of motor vehicles. In some cases, scammers use technology to spoof official phone numbers or agency names, making the message appear legitimate.

Next, the message warns that failure to pay immediately will result in penalties such as late fees, license suspension, or legal action. This pressure is intended to make recipients panic and pay quickly.

Finally, the message includes a link to a website where the consumer is

### BBB TIPS

KELVIN COLLINS



instructed to pay the fine. These sites may look convincing and include official-looking logos or government language. Once a victim enters payment information, scammers can steal funds and potentially use the personal information for identity theft.

**Red Flags to Watch For:** There are several warning signs that a traffic citation notice may be a scam:

- You receive a text message demanding immediate payment for a traffic violation.

- The notice contains a link to an unfamiliar payment website.

- The message uses threatening language about license suspension or arrest if payment isn't made immediately.

- The sender requests payment through gift cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency, or payment apps.

- The notice does not include official court documentation or instructions for verifying the citation.

Government agencies rarely send traffic ticket notices through text messages with payment links.

**How to Protect Yourself:** If you receive a message claiming you owe money for a traffic citation, take a moment to verify the information before responding. Avoid clicking links in unexpected messages or emails. Instead, navigate to the agency's website manually through your browser.

Contact the court or agency directly using the official phone number listed on its website. Many courts and law enforcement agencies provide online systems that allow you to look up citations using your name, driver's license number, or ticket number.

Consumers should also remember that legitimate agencies typically allow payment through secure online portals, mail, or in person, not through unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency.

**What to Do if You Paid a Scammer:**

If you believe you have fallen victim to a traffic citation scam, act quickly. Contact your bank or credit card company to report the fraudulent charge and request that the transaction be stopped if possible. Monitor your financial accounts closely for suspicious activity.

You should also report the scam to BBB Scam Tracker, which helps warn others and allows law enforcement agencies to identify emerging fraud trends.

**Stay Informed:** Scammers constantly adapt their tactics, often impersonating trusted organizations to make their messages appear convincing. Staying informed and verifying unexpected requests for payment can help you avoid becoming a victim.

If you receive a suspicious traffic citation notice, take the time to confirm it before taking action. A few minutes of verification can help protect your finances and personal information.

Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets stan-

dards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: 1-800-763-4222, Website: BBB.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org

MACON REGIONAL

## CRIMESTOPPERS

STOP CRIME NOW 742-2330

<p><b>BANKS, VALERIA</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR THEFT BY SHOPLIFTING AND BENCH WARRANT.</p>	<p><b>BENNETT, SONNY</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR GIVING FALSE NAME, DOB, ADDRESS TO OFFICER ST. CT VOP/THEFT BY TAKING.</p>	<p><b>BROOKS, DEWEY</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR VIOLATION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE ORDER.</p>	<p><b>CROSS, KENNETH</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BATTERY FAMILY VIOLENCE/ CRIMINAL TRESPASS /DAMAGE/ VIOLATION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE ORDER.</p>
<p><b>DAVIS, MAKHI</b>                      WANTED BY THE FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPOS POLICE DEPT. FOR BURGLARY- 2ND DEGREE, CRIMINAL DAMAGE TO PROPERTY 2ND DEGREE, AND CRIMINAL TRESPASS.</p>	<p><b>DAY, MARIAH</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR FELONY THEFT BY CONVERSION.</p>	<p><b>DYER, LVAUNTICZ</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR THEFT BY TAKING - FELONY.</p>	<p><b>GRAY, ARCHIE</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR FAILURE TO APPEAR/ SIMPLE BATTERY.</p>
<p><b>HOWARD, TODD</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR THEFT BY TAKING - FELONY.</p>	<p><b>JONES, TYRA</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BATTERY SUB PHYSICAL HARM.</p>	<p><b>JORDAN, TRAVION</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BATTERY SUB PHYSICAL HARM.</p>	<p><b>KING, JAHEIM</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SIMPLE BATTERY.</p>
<p><b>MENDEZ-TOREZ, LUDWIN</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR VIOLATION OF THE SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY.</p>	<p><b>MULLIS, DESTINY</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR THEFT BY TAKING - FELONY.</p>	<p><b>PRATT, TAJDRICK</b>                      WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR FLEEING OR ATTEMPTING TO ELUDE POLICE OFFICER - FELONY.</p>	<p><b>WILLIAMS, MARCUS</b>                      WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR INTERFERENCE WITH GOVERNMENT PROPERTY AND SUP. CT. VIOLATION OF PROBATION.</p>

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY TO PULL CRIMINALS OFF OUR STREETS! Macon Regional Crimestoppers is a local non-profit serving the Bibb, Baldwin, Houston, Jones, Twiggs, Crawford, Monroe, and Peach regional areas. Through our deployed systems as well as the cooperation local law enforcement agencies and the 911 Center, citizens in our community have a safe, secure, and confidential means to report crimes. IF A "TIP" RESULTS IN AN ARREST - A REWARD WILL BE PAID TO YOU CONFIDENTIALLY AND ANONYMOUSLY!!

If You Have Information On The Whereabouts Of An Above Shown Individual, Call Our Tip Line at 478-742-2330 or 1-877-68CRIME

# HEMA provides tips as severe weather season approaches

## Special to The Journal

As March continues to unfold, most people in central Georgia are thinking about spring festivals, tackling yard maintenance, and planning for school spring breaks. However, it would be wise to also take a few moments to prepare for Georgia's severe weather season.

Spring severe weather typically occurs from late February into mid-May. Primary hazards such as damaging winds, large hail, tornadoes, and flash floods can result in significant disruption to daily routines. In fact, Houston County recently saw a tornado warning the morning of March 12.

Preparation is essential and the Houston County Emergency Management Agency, HEMA, wants to share a few reminders to assist in preparing for the season.

EMA Director Christopher Stoner reminds residents to have an emergency plan, have multiple ways

to receive critical weather information, and have an emergency kit for your home and/or business. Stoner also reminds the populace to review and update, if needed, insurance coverage.

"The public should be aware of the risks in their area", HEMA weather forecaster Roddy E. Nixon Jr. states. Understanding the risks will help you plan and mitigate against the threats that result from occurrences such as large hail or potential damaging winds.

Deputy Director David Newman highly encourages county residents consider signing up for Houston Alerts so that they can receive critical information during emergencies.

Sign up at [houstontyga.gov/government/houstonalerts.cms](https://houstontyga.gov/government/houstonalerts.cms).

Additionally, HEMA recommends that residents visit the National Weather Service Weather Safety site ([weather.gov/safety](https://weather.gov/safety)) and [ready.gov](https://ready.gov) for assistance with preparing an emergency plan and/or kit.



## ADDRESS

From page 1A

Patrick continued by highlighting recent initiatives, including ongoing development in Commercial Circle, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Haven Hope House, and the city's InnoLab. She added that, internally, the city was working to foster open communication between departments.

"These accomplishments represent more than just milestones. They reflect vision, perseverance and what is possible when a community unites for a shared purpose," she said.

When she took office in 2022, Patrick said the city faced challenges: underpaid staff, understaffed departments, an IRS tax lien, overdue audits, and outdated software.

In her first term, the city resolved the tax lien and audits, raised city employee pay, increased police staffing by nearly 25%, nearly fully staffed the fire department, and began upgrading to a cloud-based system.

On the community front, Patrick pointed out that the city also struggled with blighted buildings, a growing homeless population, and only one community event.

Operation Reawaken cleared blighted buildings, new vision renderings were shared, and city events expanded to about 22 annually, drawing up to 20,000 people for Independence Day.

To address homelessness, Patrick said the city has built the Haven Hope House, a shelter she described as a place where

people can transform their lives and become better citizens.

The police launched a Real-Time Crime Center and plan to unveil a training center. Two firefighters were recognized statewide for their achievements.

Patrick said the city's partnership with Ed Farm opened the InnoLab, which offers technology training for all ages.

On upcoming projects, she also provided updates on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, saying it is in the design process and that the city will move dirt later this year.

The city also plans to renovate Simpson Peavy Park for the National Little League and has launched a new website, app, and branding standards.

Looking forward, Patrick reiterated her focus on unity, progress, and innovation by emphasizing enhanced city services to make citizen interactions more positive and connected.

"Whenever you come in contact with a city employee, city staff member, we want you to feel pleased, taken care of, happy and joyous. So, we're going to be intentional with every single department, making sure we drive that mission home, so that you all are happy about the service you receive from us," she said.

Patrick said she intends to expand the number and reach of city events and to implement programs over the next year designed to strengthen citizens' sense of community.

"Tensions are really high right now across our nation. I know [with] election season, things are get-

ting crazy, things are happening, and it is not always a nice feeling on the inside, but this is not the time for us to divide. We have to unite and be one, because that's what our founding fathers wanted," she said.

Addressing infrastructure, Patrick spoke about plans to tackle traffic concerns, announcing that the city is planning a shuttle service for essential errands, such as work, doctor's appointments, or grocery shopping.

Patrick noted new townhomes on Airmen Boulevard, a possible downtown master plan, and upgrades to Perkins Park as key economic development efforts.

She emphasized that many of the developments are planned with the future in mind, laying a strong foundation for growth.

"Smart leadership always looks beyond now, and that's one thing I can tell you about all six of these council members. They're really dedicated to looking at the future, even a future that may be for our children, our grandchildren, that we won't see," she said.

To further plan for the future, Patrick said the city will work on a comprehensive plan and encouraged citizen input. She also mentioned a youth council and an international council, where younger residents and citizens of all backgrounds can make their voices heard.

In closing, Patrick thanked her family, council, city sponsors, Robins Air Force Base, veterans and civilians. She affirmed that, as far as Warner Robins is concerned, she and the council are in it together, working tirelessly



The Warner Robins Honor Guard presents the colors at the State of the City address on Wednesday, March 11.



Warner Robins Mayor LaRhonda Patrick speaks at the State of the City address on Wednesday, March 11.

to build a better city.

"Council and I are so excited about what's ahead," she said. "We've worked so hard to get to where we are today, and

the best part about it is that we've had so much fun doing it. We work together. I support them, and they support me, and you all support us. So that means

we're in this thing together."

See the full state of the city address on the city's Facebook: [facebook.com/CityofWarnerRobins1](https://facebook.com/CityofWarnerRobins1)

## IVORY

From page 1A

to call them, "grown men", Marquez and Marcus Ivory. The oldest, Marquez, is a teacher and football coach at Northside High School. Marcus is a pharmacist working in Colorado. Ivory and his two sons each graduated and played football at Northside High School. Ivory is also a disabled veteran who served in the United States Army.

Ivory originally had no intention of serving on the Houston County Board of Education. However, he got some encouragement from the man upstairs.

"One night, I was lying in my bed, and I woke up at about two or three in

the morning, and this voice, which I knew was the Holy Spirit, told me to run for Board of Education," he said.

Ivory didn't think anything of it until the next night, when the same thing happened once again. He then contacted a friend and Board member at the time, Bryan Upshaw, to see how to get started.

"I just felt like it was a calling as I've been an educator in this county for a long time," he said. "I've taught school and coached here for 25 plus years, and I just know it is a great way to give back."

Ivory has served on the Board of Education since 2022. He described being on the Board as a good way to serve the community. He said their roles include set-

ting policy, procedures, and budget, as well as managing the Superintendent.

Ivory believes there is unfinished business in the Houston County School District and would like to see projects come to fruition while serving on the Board.

"I feel like I can spearhead some of these [projects], but I cannot do it by myself as we are a team," he said. "I think we all can agree we have some unfinished business in Houston County as much as we're growing, especially towards the south."

Ivory mentioned the construction of the STEM Academy and Veterans Middle School as major projects going forward. One of his campaign goals when he ran in 2022 was a greater focus on STEM, and that

still holds true today.

One of Ivory's main priorities if reelected is to continue to work as a team alongside the Superintendent.

"I think our new Superintendent Dr. [Richard] Rogers is doing a fantastic job, and his vision for the county lines up with the Board members and our vision," he said. "He's assembled a really good team for his Executive Cabinet, and we all work well together."

Another priority is to ensure that students are put first. Ivory said that without the students, they would have nothing.

"They are our community and the future of Houston County," he said.

Ivory described his leadership style as being like a quarterback. Coincidentally,

he played that quarterback position at Northside High School.

"In order to be in that position, you have to be a leader. I'm a vocal leader as you gotta know when to talk and when not to talk," he said. "I try to lead by example, and I like to think I'm a good family fan. We're a home of leaders and God has placed us in leadership positions."

Whenever Ivory is out in the community, he always likes to hear citizens' input on the school system.

"When people bring things to me, I take them straight to our Superintendent and our Board," he said. "I know our Superintendent respects me enough that he really listens to the things I bring back from the Houston County community."

Staying positive and sharing the Superintendent's vision is what Ivory hopes to achieve if he's reelected a second time. He believes that if the Houston County School District thrives, the county will progress and flourish.

"I think I'm a dependable person and a really good leader. You don't get a lot of half stuff from me. I'm gonna shoot you straight from the hip and tell you what's what," he said.

Ivory's goal by serving on the Houston County Board of Education has always been to make Houston County the best county in the State of Georgia.

Ivory is running against Andy Thomas. The general primary election is May 19.

# Senate GOP targets data centers, Democrats argue bill doesn't go far enough



Ashtin Barker/Capitol Beat

Sen. Matt Brass, R-Newnan, answers questions about Senate Bill 410 in the Georgia Capitol after the Senate passed the legislation on Friday, March 6, 2026. The bill addresses data center tax exemptions and sector effects on other electricity ratepayers.

By **TYTAGAMI**  
Bureau Chief  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — The Georgia Senate adopted legislation Friday that would encourage judges to think of regular people when considering disputes about contracts between electric utilities and big customers like data centers.

The legislation is aimed at shielding residential customers from Georgia Power's costs to build new power plants, transmission lines and other infrastructure as it ramps up to feed massive amounts of power to future data centers.

Democrats rejected the measure as fake protection.

Sen. Elena Parent, D-Atlanta, characterized Senate Bill 410 as "window dressing," since it codifies what state regulators at the Public Service Commission have already been writing into contracts, rather than demanding other protections.

Consumer advocates have been critical of the commission because it voted in December to allow Georgia Power to add 10 gigawatts of power for data centers and because it allowed six rate hikes in recent years.

Critics contended that the contract terms would leave the public on the hook for expansion costs over the next half century if data centers failed to arrive in Georgia as promised — or left early.

"The public understands what is going on here and we are giving them the middle finger," Parent said.

Republicans heralded SB 410 as an affordability measure that would protect rate payers. It would require that contracts include terms "designed to protect residential and retail electricity customers from costs associated with

servicing new large load customers ... ."

Sen. Matt Brass, R-Newnan, said critics of the legislation misinterpret it because of their disdain for Georgia Power, a monopoly electricity provider to a substantial proportion of the state population.

"Don't let your hate for Georgia Power cloud your judgment on what this bill actually does," he said on the Senate floor.

The bill attempts to fill gaps that were opened after Senate Bill 34, a measure that consumer advocates praised, was heavily amended. It initially pro-

hibited electric utilities from recovering costs for serving data centers and other high-demand customers by raising rates on everyone else, including households and small businesses. It was revised by dropping the prohibition and leaving only the requirement that utility contracts protect residential and retail customers from large load costs.

During a committee hearing on SB 410 on Tuesday, Brass explained that the protective language in the bill would not be in law, but judges could find it in the preamble to the legislation in case someone sued.

"It will be in the notes to the code," he said. "And the notes to the code can be used by the courts to help guide the courts' interpretation of our law."

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler, R-Rome, the author of SB 34, chairs the committee that heard SB 410.

"The intent of the legislature is here. It's not codified into law, which would be my preference," he said at the hearing. "But it's basically what's been worked out."

Sen. Mike Hodges, R-Brunswick, a member of the committee, asked any lawyer on the panel to explain the legal implications of a preamble.

Sen. Blake Tillery, R-Vidalia, a lawyer, explained that some courts ignore legislative intent while others consider it, and those that do would check the Legislature's notes.

"So," asked Hodges, "it might matter and it might not?"

"That's fair," Tillery responded.

SB 410 would also abolish tax exemptions for computer equipment and other technology used by future data centers, although existing centers could keep their exemptions.

Sen. Sonya Halpern, D-Atlanta, a member of the committee, raised concerns about that, saying the tax breaks had been "instrumental" in attracting Fortune 500 companies to Georgia.

Nonetheless, she voted to pass SB 410 out of the committee, which comprises several Democrats. The vote was unanimous.

But on the Senate floor Friday, Halpern and all the other Democrats who chose to vote went against SB 410. All Republicans voted for it. It passed 32-21.

Later, Sen. Jason Anavitarte, R-Dallas, said Democrats had voted against ending corporate subsidies that would cost the state general fund \$1.3 billion.

"The Democrats can sit there and debate all they want, but that's what they voted against ultimately," he said in a meeting with reporters.

Anavitarte, the Senate majority leader, said Republicans had just won on the main issue for voters this year, affordability. He nodded to the major upset in November when two GOP members of the Public Service Commission suffered defeat by Democrats who attacked them over those half dozen electricity rate increases. For the first time in years, Democrats were joining the five-member commission, albeit as a minority that would not be in control.

Even so, Republicans saw it as a warning for other elections: take affordability seriously.

"It's no secret. You all know where the public sentiment is," Anavitarte said. "I know where it is in my district. And people are tired of politicians making bad decisions. That's why two members of the PSC were un-elected — because they did not vote in the interests of Georgians."

## DAY

From page 1A

"When the city provided the opportunity, I prepared for it. I definitely had family members and personnel on the department help me through it. I applied, and I got picked up," she said.

Support from her family has been crucial to Day throughout her career. She particularly credits her husband and now

grown children, who fully understood the schedule and embraced military life.

"When we first got together, he was the one in the Air Force, and it's my responsibility to take care of family and support him. So, after my kids were bigger and the opportunity arose, he stepped up and supported me," she said. "Being a military brat, we have irregular schedules, so you make do with what

you have. But if you prioritize family, and it's number one priority, you're always going to make it work for you."

For Day, womanhood isn't a setback; it's a source of confidence and strength.

"We have a lot of strengths that differ from our male counterparts, and I feel like it's important to embrace those differences and use them to the best of our abilities," she said.

Day said her experience has helped her lead with a non-traditional and empathetic approach, drawing on the unique strengths she brings as a woman.

"I find that being a woman, being a mother, has allowed me to approach the job, approach my coworkers, and, more importantly, approach the citizens that I serve in the community. With that kind of mindset, I feel like I'm more

approachable," she said.

When Day joined the department, she was the only woman on staff. Today, four women serve the department, which she describes as well-rounded and supportive.

For her, supporting other women is paramount, and when she offers critical feedback, she aims to uplift rather than undermine.

"If we're honest with each other and we're supportive, that's what sup-

porting women looks like to me, celebrating all of our accomplishments," she said.

Day's advice to other women is to always strive for self-improvement.

"Challenge yourself to remember your strengths, embrace them and use them in a positive manner," she said. "Don't be afraid to face your weaknesses or the things that you're not as good at. Face them, correct them, and make them better."

## SENTENCED

From page 1A

a two-year span, the media release says.

The victim disclosed the abuse to a family friend in 2022, at which point an investigation was started by the Houston County Sheriff's Office Juvenile Investigations Division. The investigation included the child further disclosing during a forensic interview conducted

by the Crescent House Child Advocacy Center in Macon.

The case was investigated primarily by then-deputy Adrian Moss of the Houston County Sheriff's Office, who is now with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Lusk was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Elizabeth E. McDaniel and Brandi M. Holland of the Houston Circuit District Attorney's Office. McDaniel provided com-

ments on the case:

"As prosecutors assigned to the Special Victims Unit, Ms. Holland and I take great pride in representing the children of Houston County and being a voice for them. A child's safety is our top priority. With this conviction, that safety is restored for this victim, and the defendant will be unable to prey upon any other children in this community. I would like to thank Special Agent

Adrian Moss and the Crescent House Child Advocacy Center for their work on this case. Our job is not possible without the dedicated work of the law enforcement agencies and child advocacy centers in Houston County."

District Attorney Eric Z. Edwards also provided comments:

"This conviction was made possible because a child found the courage to speak up. Disclosing abuse is one of the hard-

est things a child can ever be asked to do, and standing in a courtroom to testify about it takes extraordinary bravery. That courage ensured that the truth was heard and that this defendant will no longer have the opportunity to harm another child. I am deeply grateful to the jury for the seriousness with which they approached this case and for the swift verdict they returned after hearing the evidence. I also want

to thank the investigators, the Crescent House Child Advocacy Center, and the prosecutors in our Special Victims Unit who work tirelessly to protect the children of this community. When a child has been subjected to abuse, our responsibility is to stand beside them and make sure their voice is heard. In this case, the jury heard this child's voice loud and clear, and justice was served."

## TASK FORCE

From page 1A

This includes about 14 different law enforcement agencies in middle Georgia, Moulton said. The Warner Robins Police Department and Perry Police Department will also participate.

He shared GBI has its leadership team in place, including a special agent and an assistant special agent. An investigator will operate under the task force to assist HCSO and

other agencies as needed.

Moulton said this will benefit the sheriff's office by allowing them to expand their force from a six-man narcotics unit to approximately 30. He shared that extra personnel are needed on certain investigations.

The Warner Robins Police Department will be assigned two officers, and the Perry Police Department one, according to documents.

Moulton also shared that the partnership will

bring additional funding to Houston County to conduct various investigations, helping to relieve taxpayers' burden.

He said drug trafficking and activity are a problem in Houston County. He shared that drug traffickers do not follow county lines or city limit signs; they operate everywhere.

In some cases, law enforcement faces obstacles like jurisdictional issues. This partnership will erase lines and allow them to pursue drug traf-

fickers wherever they are.

According to Moulton, there has not been an increase in drugs and gang violence in the county; however, the numbers remain steady.

"Any effort that we can make to reduce the supply and demand in Houston County for illegal control substances, it is a benefit to the sheriff's office as well as the citizens of Houston County for us to take those opportunities," he said.

The investigator

assigned to HCSO has been selected and will begin the background process with the GBI, a two to three-week process, according to Moulton. Once he has been approved, he will join the task force.

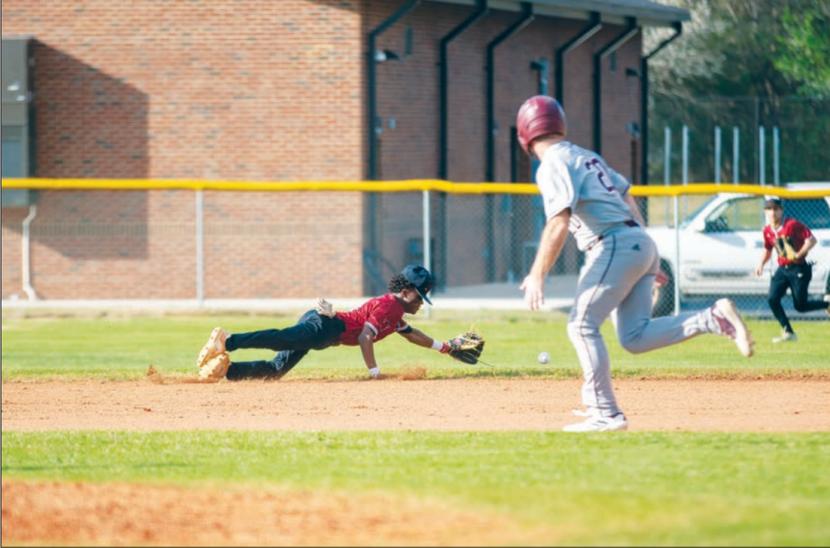
Moulton shared that he likes the idea of the "force multiplier" and being able to tap into additional resources when conducting investigations.

Moulton thanked GBI Director Chris Hosey and Governor Brian Kemp for their vision and leader-

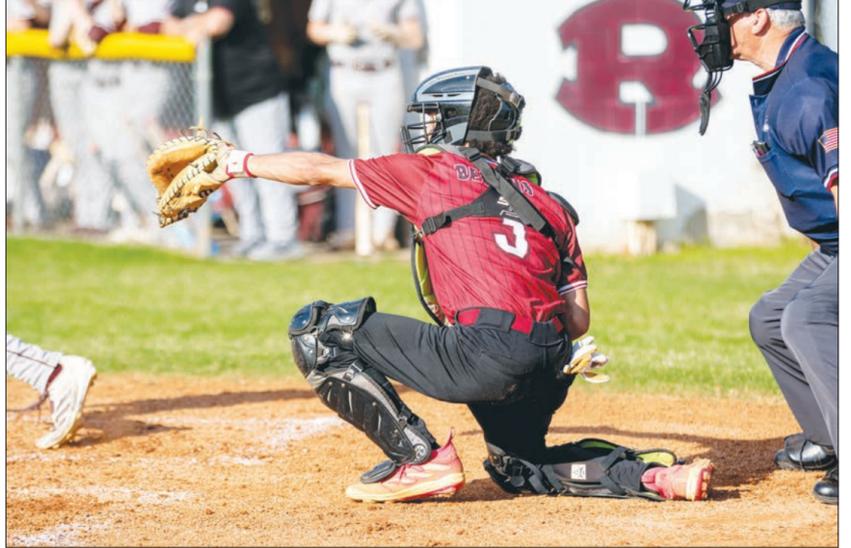
ship in recognizing the need for the task force. He said he appreciates their willingness to involve the sheriff's office and looks forward to improvements.

"The ultimate goal is to disrupt and dismantle any organization that traffics illegal controlled substances here in Houston County," Moulton said. "The long term goal is to continue making Houston County the safest community for us to worship, raise a family, work and play. That's the goal."

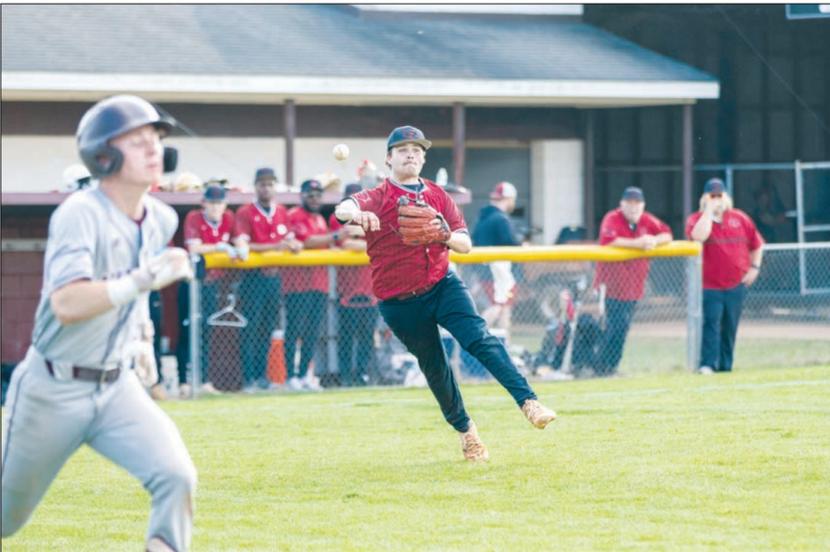
## PHOTOS: Warner Robins loses region opener to Benedictine, 19-2



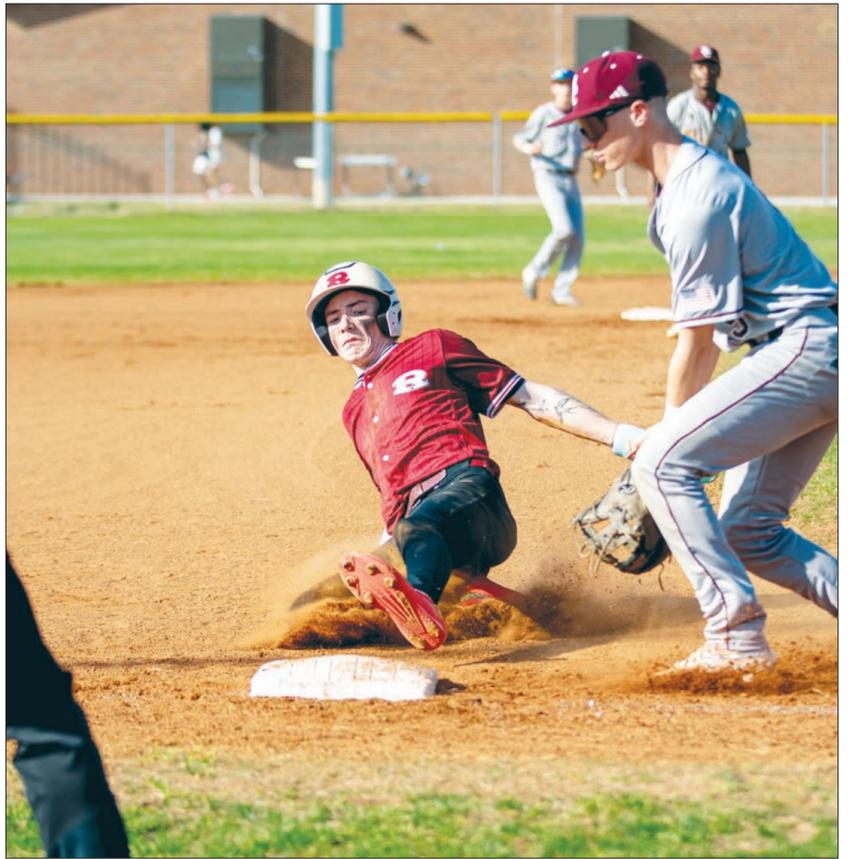
Clay Brown/HHJ  
Warner Robins second baseman Zakeion Porter (red) dives in attempt to stop a ground ball in the infield.



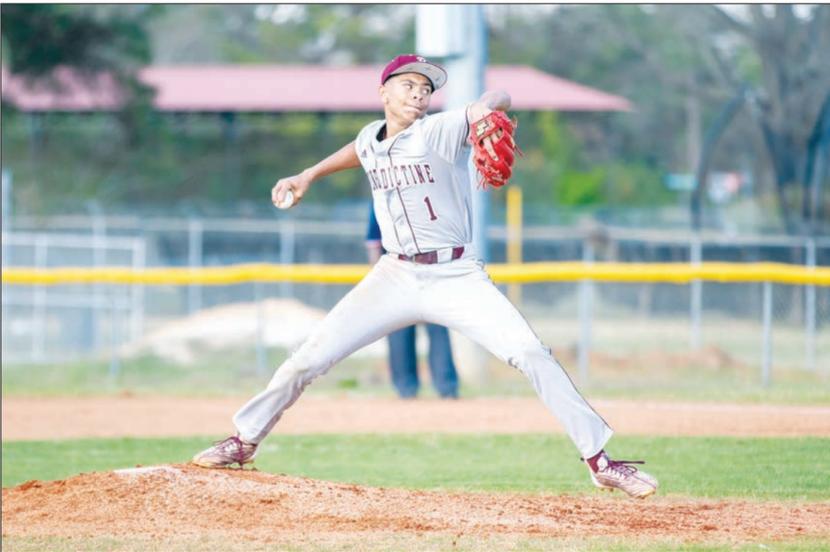
Clay Brown/HHJ  
Demons catcher Brandon Massie (3) reaches out for the ball during the second inning of Warner Robins' region loss to Benedictine.



Clay Brown/HHJ  
Demons third baseman Cameron Wilder (red) slings the ball to first base on the move, trying to beat out a Benedictine runner.



Clay Brown/HHJ  
Warner Robins shortstop Drew White (red, center) slides into third base early in the Demons' region game against Benedictine, a 19-2 loss.



Clay Brown/HHJ  
Benedictine's Noah Harris threw four innings and struck out six batters during the Cadets' 19-2 region win against Warner Robins.



Clay Brown/HHJ  
Caleb Woodard follows through on a swing during the early innings of a region contest against Benedictine.

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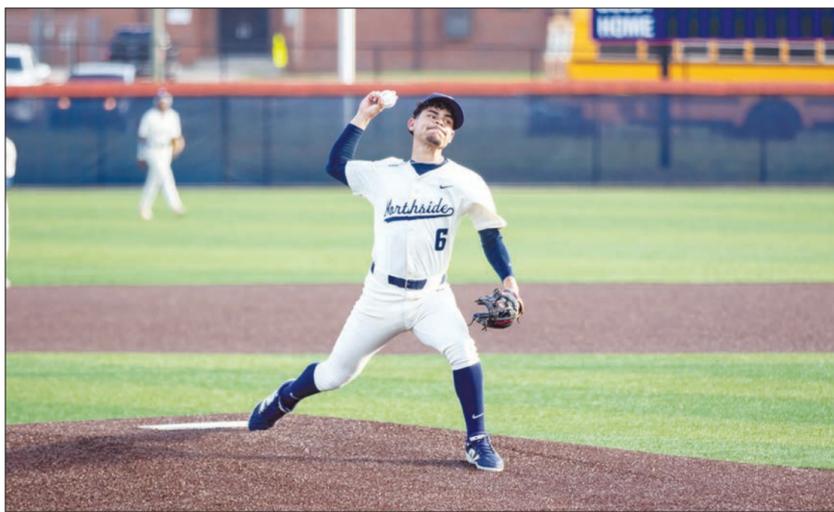
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# THE DROUGHT IS OVER

Northside beats Lee County for first region victory since 2019



Clay Brown/HHJ

Northside senior Emerson Rugama threw 104 pitches through seven innings and struck out nine batters during the Eagles' 4-3 victory over Lee County. Rugama was also 2-for-3 at the plate to help push Northside to their first region win since 2019.



Clay Brown/HHJ

Northside head coach Joey Walker (blue) laughs off a slight Gatorade bath after the Eagles' first region win since 2019, a 4-3 final against Lee County. Jeremiah Rozier (10) missed most of Walker, but managed to get a few trickles down his back.

By **CLAY BROWN**  
HHJ Sports Editor  
clay@hhjonline.com

**WARNER ROBINS** — Northside baseball has seen some truly dark times.

Just three years ago when Joey Walker took over the program the Eagles went 3-27 — the fewest wins in a season in the MaxPreps era.

He had to start from scratch, teach high school kids how to play baseball the right way. There was little payoff and a lot of turbulence, but this year something has finally started to click.

Those kids that won just three games out of 30 in 2023 secured the Eagles' (10-5, 1-3 Region 2-5A) first region win in seven years on Tuesday with a 4-3 defeat of Lee County (8-5, 1-3 Region).

"Year one we were like,

[3-27]. We won the first game and then after that it was just punch in the face [after punch in the face]," Walker said. "To see those same set of seniors, who were playing a lot as freshmen then, come out and just play their tails off. Do everything we ask them to do for four years, some of it they hated."

"We've lost some guys along the way that couldn't hold up to the standard that we were trying to establish here and to see those guys get rewarded for their hard work and to see a really great ball game get played out here. For us to come out on the winning side of that finally is, man, it's a lot. It's awesome. God is good," He continued.

Senior Emerson Rugama was the highlight of the night.

Rugama pitched all seven innings and came up with

some gritty strikeouts to help close the game and get his tally to nine.

Two-hole hitter Nathan Tacz was up with two outs in the top of the seventh to keep Lee County alive. After taking the first ball and strike he fouled off two pitches before Rugama finished him off with a fast-ball.

He threw 104 pitches but was also 2-for-3 at the plate, scoring two runs himself.

"Coming into the last inning we were over there talking, 'Whoever's got the most guts is about to win this game,'" Walker said. "I looked at coach [Tyler] Wilson, our pitching coach, and I said, 'I'll take [Emerson Rugama] over anybody right now.'"

"He's a headache sometimes to coach, he's a little crazy, he's a little kooky, but [he's] one of my favorite

kids in the world, I'd take him home with me today," Walker continued. "He talked to me in the third inning when he wasn't elite yet on the mound...He pulled it back together."

The Trojans opened the game with a RBI single and two-run home run to take a 3-0 lead. In previous years that alone has been enough for Northside to check out and let the opponent run away with the game.

Instead, in the bottom of the first, Taylor Hall drew a hit-by-pitch and two at-bats later Daniel Valdes doubled on a line drive to right field and scored Rugama and Hall to cut into the deficit.

As the top of the lineup came back around in the third inning, Hall's ground out scored one run and Jeremiah Rozier's took the lead for what would be the rest of the game.

The important thing for Northside was holding on to that lead especially when the offense dried up.

Walker and his staff tried to keep their messaging consistent in the last few innings to not spook the players.

"We still are a program learning how to win," Walker said. "We saw last week, one bad inning, the wheels could fall off. So I think the consistency piece is what's next...I think you could see from the excitement [tonight] that they weren't so sure, but I'm hoping now they'll see the kind of team they really are, the team [Houston County head coach Matt Hopkins] told them last week about."

The one blight on an otherwise celebratory night was the bottom of the lineup, who finished 0-for-8 and accounted for all five of

Northside's strikeouts.

"We've got two freshmen who are taking some lumps right now. We've got Jacob Cancerin down there and Jeremy Snelling," Walker said. "I just told them, 'I love watching y'all play... you're figuring it out, you ain't got a clue what's going on right now...'"

So it's just some growing pains there. I think if we can get them going, you know region pitching is a whole lot different than the middle school pitching they saw last year...then we can get it back over to the top of the lineup with the guys that really do consistently put the ball in play and do some damage."

**UP NEXT**  
Northside and Lee County will face off again in the doubleheader on March 13.

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