The
Georgetown County Chronicle

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

Volume 9, Issue 7 March/April 2021

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Calendar

April 1 – Board of Zoning Appeals meeting, 5:30 p.m. at Howard Auditorium

April 2 – County offices and facilities are closed for Good Friday.

April 5 – Georgetown County Legislative Delegation meeting, noon, Howard Auditorium.

April 13 – Georgetown County Council meeting, 5:30 p.m., Howard Auditorium.

April 15 – Ribbon cutting ceremony for new track and field complex at Beck Recreation Center, 5 p.m..

April 15 – Georgetown County Planning Commission Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Howard Auditorium.

April 27 – Georgetown County Council meeting, 5:30 p.m., Howard Auditorium.

County offices to eliminate appointment requirement April 1

Just over a year after Georgetown County closed its offices due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is getting ready to fully-reopen. For most offices, that means an end to the requirement that residents make appointments to conduct county business in person at its facilities.

Those entering county facilities will still be required to wear appropriate facial coverings over the nose and mouth, and adhere to social distancing guidelines.

The county closed its doors near the start of the pandemic, on March 18, 2020, and reopened partially, allowing residents into facilities again on the condition they first make an appointment, back in May 2020. That requirement was helpful for limiting the number of people in the facility during the worst of the pandemic, but it frustrated some residents. With vaccination efforts well under way and plans to make all South Carolinians ages 16 and up eligible for vaccination on March 31, county officials determined it was time for a broader reopening.

Some features at facilities, such as indoor venue rentals for the public, will remain unavailable for the time being. Meeting rooms at the county's five library branches are scheduled to reopen May 31, pending approval by the Library Board. The Parks and Recreation Department will resume rental of outdoor facilities for events on April 1, but indoor rentals are not anticipated to be offered again until September. That is also the window for resuming programs including indoor sports leagues and programs for youth, youth tackle football and congregate programs for senior citizens.

Georgetown County Administator Angela Christian recently received her COVID-19 vaccination at Tidelands Health's vaccine clinic.

The county's full, department-by-department plan is available for viewing at gtcounty.org.

"It's not quite back to normal, and it won't be for

See "Reopening," Page 6

Cyberattack continues to cause issues for county two months later

Private information belonging to some employees of one Georgetown County department was leaked on the dark web in March following a cyberattack on Georgetown County's computer network in late January. The County immediately notified the S.C. Law Enforcement Division, which is investigating the hack, and began notifying impacted employees that same day.

The County is also working with third party forensic specialists to assess whether other data may be at risk. Currently, it looks like most of the data obtained by the criminals was public information that would have been made available to any person who requested it. The forensic specialists and SLED will continue to monitor for any additional information that may be released going forward.

Internally, most of the county's networks and systems are back up and running, thanks to around-the-clock work by the county's IT staff. However, reconnecting to outside systems, including those maintained by the state, has proven to be a significant challenge. This has created a huge hurdle for residents who paid car taxes this year and need to receive a new license plate decal. Residents normally receive decals in the mail automatically after submitting their vehicle tax payments, but with the SCDMV not allowing information to be transmitted online from the county to its system, residents have to take their tax receipt to a DMV office and pick up their decal. The county has completed all steps the state has requested for reconnection to occur and is ready to start transmitting data as soon as allowed to do so.

Langston named Finance Director

Karis Langston

Karis Langston, a longtime employee of Georgetown County's Finance Department, has been promoted to department director. She has served as interim director since September. Her duties include overseeing day-to-day operations of the Finance and Purchasing divisions, and managing the annual budgeting and auditing processes.

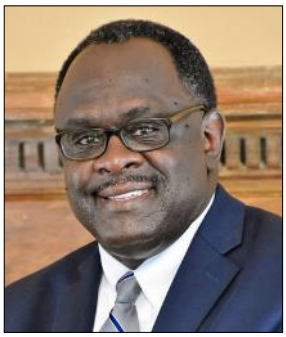
Langston joined Georgetown County's staff in 1998 as a budget and financial analyst and has served the county admirably for more than 20 years. She was a natural fit to lead the team and said her goals include reorganizing the department.

Langston said her philosophy is "the best way is not always the easy way" and she doesn't mind going the extra mile to ensure things are done right.

Prior to joining the Georgetown County team, she worked in finance for several private companies in Georgetown and Mount Pleasant. She studied at Purdue University in Indiana and later received her Associate's degree in accounting from Horry-Georgetown Technical College. She is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in accounting from Western Governors University.

Langston has been active in the community for many years, having served as a leader for Girls In Action, a Sunday School director, and as secretary for the Winyah Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. She also chaired the county's employee morale committee for 20 years. In her spare time, she enjoys scuba diving, hunting, fishing and skiing.

Funnye receives national award



Ray C. Funnye

Ray C. Funnye, Georgetown County's Director of Public Services, was recently presented with the American Medical Association's (AMA) prestigious Award for Outstanding Government Service.

Funnye grew up in Plantersville with seven brothers and sisters, and has spent almost three decades as a public servant in Georgetown County, where he oversees more 100 employees and seven divisions. He ensures public health by managing the County Stormwater Division and safeguarding access to clean water in coastal communities. As founder and executive director of The Village Group, he also engages the Plantersville community through literacy, after-school, and summer programs for local youth. The Village Group also takes children on field trips to museums, universities, and businesses.

"Mr. Funnye understands that economic and educational opportunities are crucial to every person's health and to achieving equity," said AMA Board Chair Russ Kridel, M.D. "Ray's boundless energy and enthusiasm for serving the public make him a larger-than-life figure in Georgetown County, whose impact can last well into the future."

In addition to his roles at The Village Group and Georgetown County, Funnye serves on a variety of nonprofit boards and is deeply involved with the Bethel AME Church. He also launched the Village Flyers Bike Club, which promotes healthy lifestyle habits among local youth. View his acceptance speech online.

County staff working on Fiscal Year 2022 budget; Council plans budget workshop for April 13

Georgetown County Administrator Angela Christian, right, and Finance Director Karis Langston, center, spent the week of March 15 working intensively to get a first draft of the Fiscal Year 2022 budget ready for County Council. Christian and Langston met with each department to review their budget requests. Pictured with them above is Beth Goodale, director of the Parks and Recreation Department. County Council is scheduled to have its first collective look at the budget during a budget workshop on April 13. A second workshop will follow on April 27. A final workshop will take place on May 11 only if council finds it necessary, before the budget is up for second reading and a public hearing on May 25. Council's final reading of the budget will take place June 22. The document will be available online and in local library branches a week prior to final reading for the public review.

Get the Chronicle

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

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

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

www.gtcounty.org

Council approves spending of $7 million in Capital Project Sales Tax funds

After a month-long postponement for discussion with residents and state officials, Georgetown County Council approved a modified list of capital projects to be funded with $7 million in surplus monies raised by a one-cent sales tax that expired in 2019.

Each of the council's seven members was asked to come up with $1 million in projects to benefit their district. However, when the spending came up for approval during a council meeting Feb. 23, residents asked for reconsideration of projects in some areas of the county. At issue in particular was $1.17 million designated for improvements at the library in Georgetown.

With several modifications, including a reduction in the amount of funds allocated to the library, the list went before council again on March 23 and received final approval. Projects that made the final cut are as follows:

- Emergency Vehicle Traffic Control System, $1 million
- DeBordieu Fire Station plan, $199,870
- Waverly Rd. multimodal pathway, $1.85 million
- Sewer system expansion along Powell Rd. to Mount Zion, $294,080
- Basketball court for S. Island and walking trail, $231,200
- Tennis courts for N. Santee, Sampit parks, $334,872
- Resurface tennis courts at S. Island Rd., $33,750
- Lighting and signage on trail in Andrews, $88,098
- Pleasant Hill NW Park basketball court and playground, $82,864
- Library improvements at main branch, $869,425
- Spring Gulley road, drainage and recreation improvements, $300,000
- HVAC systems at N. Santee Center, $18,000
- Big Dam Swamp Recycling Center, $650,000
- St. Luke Community Center, $100,000
- Choppee Complex auditorium renovations, $404,323
- Sandy Island Fire Station renovations, $22,000
- Dunbar park improvements, $61,500
- Lanes Creek park improvements, $45,800
- Sandy Island landing shelter, $6,000
- Plantersville park improvements, $45,000
- Sewer expansion from Choppee to Carvers Bay, $289,302
- Oatland, St. Paul and Pee Dee park improvements, $70,800.

The Capital Project Sales Tax was approved by voters in 2014 to pay for projects including more than 100 road projects, dredging in Georgetown and Murrells Inlet, construction of fire substations in rural areas of the county and completion of a new police and fire complex in the Town of Andrews. Those projects have been completed, with exception of the Andrews complex and Georgetown dredging. Funds for those projects remain available and have been set aside. That leaves about $10 million in excess funds generated over four years by the tax to be allocated.

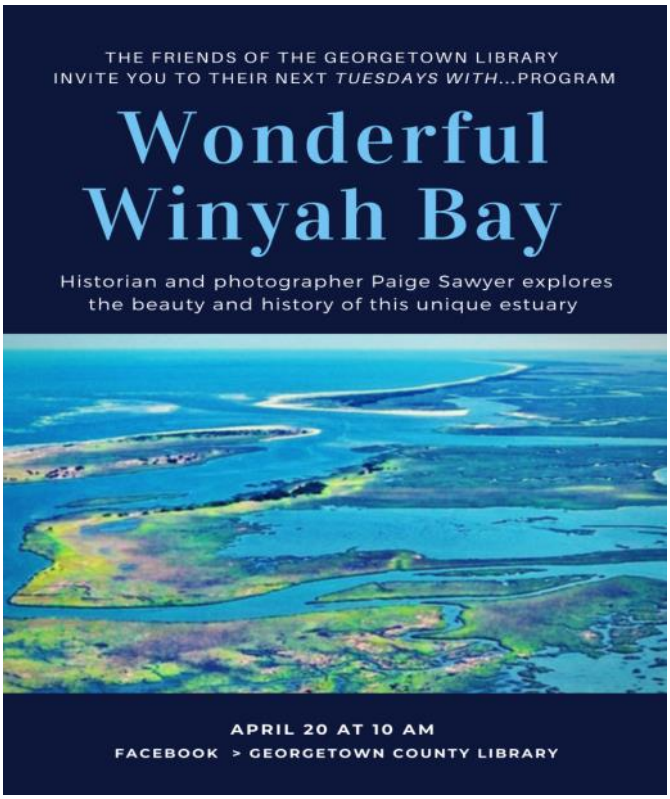
Once the projects approved March 23 are completed, and council knows if there were any overruns on construction costs, the body will determine how to spend the remaining funds. Money generated by a Capital Project Sales Tax must be spent according to strict guidelines outlined by state law.

More Council News from March

The following actions were also taken during Georgetown County Council's two meetings in March:

- Council passed a resolution in opposition to S.C. Senate Bill 200 and the use of a firing squad to execute a person sentenced to death.
- Council declared an "intent to reimburse" as part of the process for securing bond funding for construction of a new jail.
- The mask ordinance, which requires appropriate facial coverings over the nose and mouth in county businesses, was renewed through April 27 by a vote of 5-2.
- A contract for aerial mosquito spraying services was awarded to the low bidder, Williamsburg Air Service.
- No one spoke at a public hearing on amendments to the current fiscal year operating budget. The amendments were approved and consist of increases in the amounts of $87,275 for repairs at Pea House Landing and the well at Retreat Park; $140,000 to fund necessary network upgrades required following a cyber attack on the county in late January, as well as reinstatement of the position of IT director for the remainder of the fiscal year; $17, 500 resulting from a renegotiated contract for magistrate services for the Town of Pawleys Island (funds to be provided by the Town); $5,500 for firetruck repairs; and $214,829 for replacement of an excavator.
- Council denied second reading of a request to rezone three acres on the east side of Rose Hill Road. The rezoning would have allowed for a cemetery on the property. Denial of the request was recommended by the Planning Commission.

The items listed above are presented as meeting highlights and do not include every action taken by council. Council meetings may be viewed in their entirety at. YouTube.com/gtcountysc.



Friends group installs 'little free libraries' across Georgetown

The latest community project completed by the Friends of the Georgetown Library is undeniably cute. But even more importantly, it makes books accessible to the public in some unexpected places.

The Friends group recently installed "Little Free libraries" in four locations across Georgetown. The project is the culmination of eight months of planning and effort, and was completed in cooperation with the Georgetown County Library system, the City of Georgetown, Maryville Elementary School and Arnett AME Church.

The purpose of the little libraries is to supplement the wonderful work already being done by the county library system's five library branches and Bookmobile.

Three of the adorable little libraries were constructed by Friends members John and Alston Beckman. Each is a replica of a historic structure in Georgetown: the Rainey House (921 Prince Street), the Bowley House (231 King Street), and the Winyah Indigo Society Hall (509 Prince Street).

"They really do look like them, down to the exact colors of the buildings," said Library Director Dwight McInvaill.

The fourth little library, located outside the Maryville Elementary School, was created as an Eagle Scout project by Daniel Taylor of Troop 300 and has been adopted as part of this project.

All four are registered with and included on the world map of LittleFreeLibrary.org (charter numbers 119472, 119473, 119474, and 119475).

The four Little Free Libraries are located at

- East Bay Park by the playground on East Bay Avenue,
- Mount Zion Park at the intersection of Congdon Street and Merriman Road,
- Maryville Elementary School at 2125 Poplar Street, and
- Arnett AME Church at 900 North Merriman Road (to be completed mid-April).

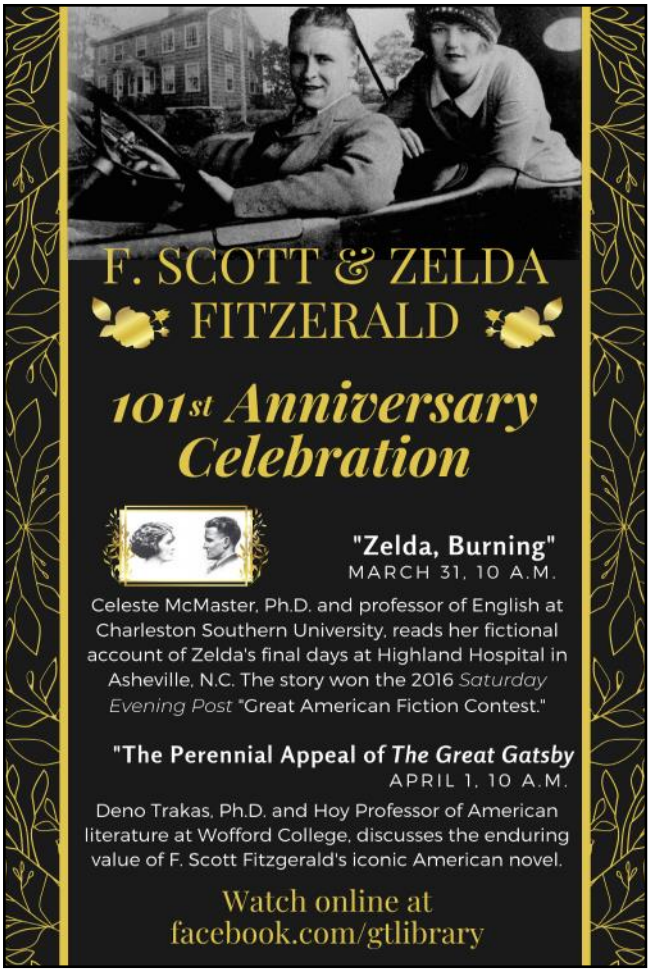
Books are being provided through donations to the Library and regular culling of the Library's collection. Books in the Little Free Libraries are available to children, youth and adults.

Local students invited to enter national art contest

Students in Georgetown County have an opportunity to show off their love for their local government at the national level – and win a pizza party for their class in the process. In an effort to bolster civic education in schools and communities, and educate youth on the role of county government, the National Association of Counties launched the "I Love My County Because" Art Contest in conjunction with National County Government Month in April.

NACo is spreading the word about how counties operate to children and young adults across the country ages 18 and under by inviting them to create artwork for a 2021-2022 "Counties Matter" calendar. "We encourage all students across Georgetown County to submit their artwork to the 'I Love My County Because' contest," said Angela Christian, Georgetown County Administrator. "By participating, we hope to raise awareness about county programs and services that impact people's lives every day."

County officials are also available to talk to classes about the important work counties perform, from waste collection and recycling to fire and law enforcement protection. For more information, visit gtcounty.org.



Jump club for ages 40+ helps members stay active, social

Play dates aren't just for kids anymore. They're for grown women too, according to Donna L. Reed of Browns Ferry. She would certainly know, since she has been attending once, twice, and sometimes even three or four times a week.

"We get out there and just have fun, doing all the things we used to do as children — we jump rope, play hopscotch, hula hoop. We're just recapturing our childhood and having fun. It's all about friends, fitness, fellowship and fun."

The group is called 40+ Double Dutch Club, and local chapters have been popping up in communities all over Georgetown County in recent months, with more on the way. Reed learned about the national organization, which was started in Chicago by Pamela Pelt-Robinson in 2016. "We are a group of women over the age of 40 who get together to get a break from 'adulating' by jumping Double Dutch!" the group's website proclaims. But each group across the nation is a little different, based on the desires of the club members, and the local groups have activities in addition to Double Dutch. They line dance, skip, play hand clapping games and more.

Reed learned about the group through her sister-in-law last year. Reed's grandmother had recently passed away and the family was gathered for the funeral. She spotted a jump rope in her sister-in-law's car, which seemed strange to Reed, so she asked her about it.

"I hadn't jumped Double Dutch since I was a child," Reed recalled. So they put the jump ropes to use, and Reed's sister-in-law, who belongs to a club in Raleigh, told her about 40+ Double Dutch.

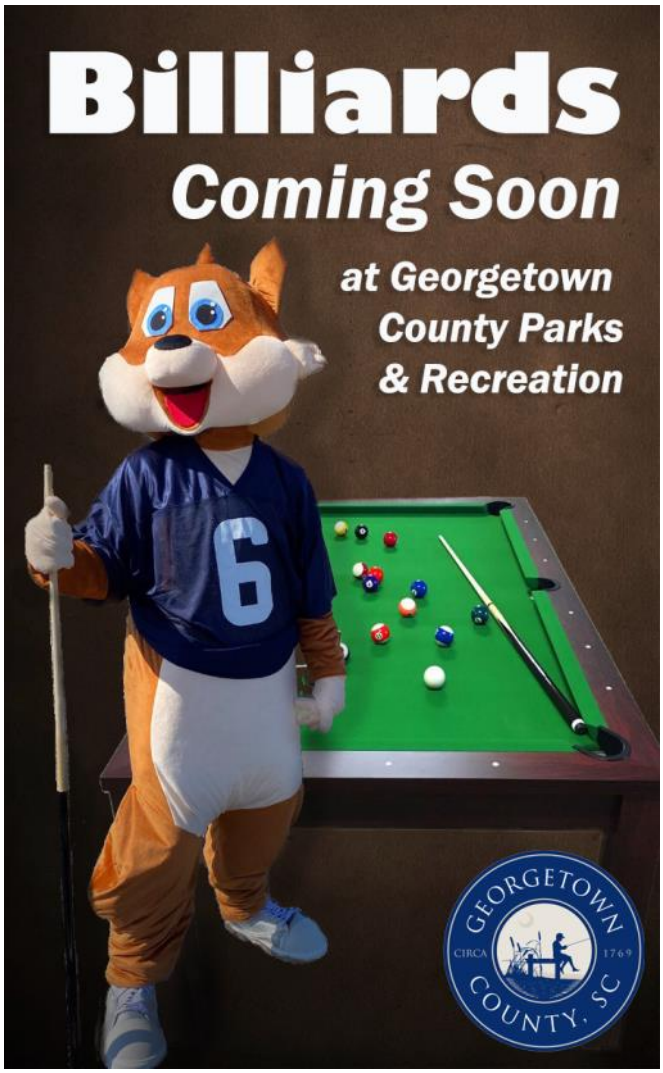
"I was dealing with a lot of stress from the pandemic, and pain and grief over my grandmother," Reed said. "It kind of relieved all of that. It helped."

At age 51, she felt like a kid again, and she wanted to hold on to that feeling. Reed was hooked and she knew she had to share this feeling with other women. She wanted to start a club in Georgetown County, and she didn't waste any time. She reached

out to Pelt-Robinson who still heads the national organization, set up a training session to become a team captain, and started looking for local women to join the group. There was just one more thing: She needed a location.

"It needed to be outdoors, because of COVID. I literally had a

See "Double Dutch," Page 7



Reopening

Continued from Front Page

some time. This pandemic is not over," said Angela Christian, Georgetown County Administrator. "But we are moving in that direction as more people, including our staff, receive their COVID-19 vaccinations."

As of March 26, nearly 1.25 million S.C. residents had received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, and just under 670,000 had been fully vaccinated. Georgetown County is ranked second in the state for vaccination rates.

In Georgetown County, more than 19,000 residents had been vaccinated, including more than 11,000 residents ages 65 and over. That accounts for 36.4% of the eligible population and 63.5% of the population 65 and older. About 67 percent of vaccinations were received by white residents and only 17.5 percent were received by black residents. Georgetown County is working to distribute informational materials about the vaccine in rural areas of the county, and in black communities, in an effort to get more individuals — particularly minorities — vaccinated.

The state transitioned to Phase 1B of its vaccination plan in April, allowing those ages 55 and up to register for vaccine appointments, along with frontline workers, teachers and those with underlying health issues.

Beginning March 31, all South Carolinians ages 16 and up will be eligible to receive the vaccine. Residents are reminded that there is no cost to the patient to receive the vaccine, regardless of whether they have health insurance.

For those who want to receive the vaccine, appointments may be scheduled at most local pharmacies, and Tidelands Health continues to offer appointments at the county's Howard Gymnasium. Residents can schedule an appointment with Tidelands Health at tidelandshealth.org/vaccine or by calling 1-833-669-7468 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. any day of the week. Tidelands Vaccination locations are available in Georgetown and Murrells Inlet.

Residents can also find vaccine appointments through the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control at scdhec.gov/covid19.

GSATS

The Grand Strand Area Transportation Study

MEETING NOTICE
GRAND STRAND AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
Thursday April 1, 2021 at 6pm
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84383754978

2021 Litchfield Tea and Poetry Series

This year's final session, featuring two thought-provoking S.C. poets.

Presented for free in a virtual format due to COVID-19. Watch on Facebook Live or YouTube.

April 15

Presented by the Waccamaw Library and the Poetry Society of S.C.

Dr. Jo Angela Edwins is professor of English at Francis Marion University and has published chapbook "Play" and poems in several journals and various anthologies. She has received poetry awards from the Poetry Super Highway and the S.C. Academy of Authors, and is Poet Laureate of the Pee Dee.

Ed Madden is author of four books of poetry and a memoir in poems about his father's last months in hospice care. He is also a professor of English at the University of S.C. His poems have appeared in "Crazyhorse," "Los Angeles Review," "Poetry Ireland Review," and more. He is Poet Laureate for the City of Columbia.

GEORGETOWN COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
INVITES YOU TO JOIN US FOR THE

BECK TRACK & FIELD COMPLEX

Opening Ceremony

Thursday, April 15, 2021
5:30 p.m.
Beck Recreation Center
2030 Church St., Georgetown

Georgetown County, South Carolina

County Government

Numbers to know

(All begin with area code 843)

Animal Control, 546-5101
Assessor, 545-3014
Auditor, 545-3021
Clerk of Court, 545-3004
County Council, 545-3058
Coroner, 546-3056
Elections, 545-3339
Finance, 545-3002
Parks & Rec., 545-3320
Planning and Zoning, 545-3116
Probate Judge, 545-3077
Register of Deeds, 545-3088
Sheriff, 546-5102
Treasurer, 545-3098

P.O. Box 421270
129 Screven Street

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

Morton retires after 35 years

Major Sharon Morton retired on March 19 after 35 years of dedicated service working at the Georgetown County Detention Center. The Sheriff's Office hosted a send-off luncheon for her, attended by Morton's family and co-workers, Sheriff Carter Weaver, Chief Deputy Wayne Owens, Detention Center Director Neil Johnson and Claude Bibb, who asked Morton to apply for the job back in 1986. Sheriff Weaver presented Morton with a shadow box containing her badge, patches, a key and other memorabilia from three and a half decades in law enforcement. Capt. Joanne Clarey presented her with a framed and officially signed "certificate of release."
"Sharon is the epitome of loyalty and service to Georgetown County and the citizens we serve," Weaver said. Georgetown County wishes Morton the best in her retirement and offers its sincere thanks for her many years of service.

Double Dutch

Continued from Page 5

dream about this beautiful area in Georgetown, and it had a big parking lot and a lot of green grass, and it was on the water." She told her husband about her dream and he drove her out to Georgetown County's Carroll Campbell Marine Complex on Riverwalk Drive, just over the Maryville bridge.

"It was the place I saw in my dream," she said. "I was so excited." So she contacted the county's Parks and Recreation Department and got permission to have her new club meetup at the Marine Complex. The Georgetown County chapter of the 40+ Double Dutch Club met for the first time in September with eight women.

As more got involved in the group, Reed realized there needed to be more opportunities for women with different schedules to attend the meetups. She started looking for other women willing to be team captains and began the process of recruiting captains and setting up teams in communities across the county, using county parks and facilities as meetup locations. There are now groups in Georgetown, Andrews, Browns Ferry, Plantersville, North Santee, South Santee and Andrews, with more on the way.

"It's crazy how many women are showing up now at the different community meetups," Reed said. "I think everybody enjoys that feeling of being a kid again and just having fun. For that amount of time, you don't have to worry about your job, your husband, your kids. You set all that aside for a little while. With COVID and everything, it's a stress reliever and a way to stay connected with friends."

As an added bonus, members are making lots of new friends, forming new support systems — and losing weight thanks to the extra activity. Some women, she added, jump three or four days a week by going to meetups in multiple communities.

So far, about 60 women have joined the groups in Georgetown County, ranging in age from 40 to 80+. And Reed is trying to attract more.

"We want women of all colors and all walks of life to come join in on the fun," she said. "You don't have to be in shape, and you don't even have to know Double Dutch. We can teach you, and if you can't jump, you can turn the rope and enjoy the fellowship. Just come out to an event, and I promise you'll want to keep coming back."

Anyone interested in joining one of the local groups can contact Reed at (843) 240-1245 or connect with her via Facebook at facebook.com/donna.l.reed.39.