

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of pink cherry blossoms in full bloom, set against a clear, bright blue sky. The flowers are in various stages of opening, with some showing their stamens and centers. The lighting is bright and natural, highlighting the delicate petals.

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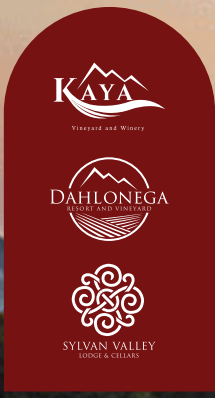
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Growing strong

Headwaters Master Gardeners partner with Victory Home.

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A bridge leads to the Tallulah Falls Shortline Trail, or one can kayak, paddleboard or swim in Tallulah Falls Lake.

Photo/Zach Taylor

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Piedmont launches forensic academy

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On the cover

Peach trees bloom in mid-March at Grier Peach Orchard in Alto. Photo/Zach Taylor

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Clockwise from left, Lavon Callahan, Janet Martin, Andrea Richardson and Barbara Rice work on separating and potting plants in the Victory Home greenhouse.

Growing strong

Headwaters Master Gardeners partner with Victory Home

Story and photos by Kimberly Brown

Most gardeners know that “playing in the dirt” can be therapeutic for body, mind and soul.

A gardening project managed by Headwaters Master Gardeners at Victory Home in Tallulah Falls provides that therapy.

The partnership includes a greenhouse, a hoop house and a shade house on the Victory Home property. Victory Home is a Christian nonprofit residen-



Pots of blue star creeper grow lush and green in the greenhouse at Victory Home.

tial men's drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility. It can house up to 21 men, and usually there are 13 to 17 residents.

The greenhouse is used to propagate plants for sale, the hoop house is used to grow vegetables for food used in the Victory Home cafeteria, and the shade house is used to keep delicate plants out of the hot sun.

Master Gardeners is a program of the University of Georgia's Extension Service, and Headwaters Master Gardeners includes White, Rabun and Habersham counties.

Managing the greenhouses at Victory Home allows the Master Gardeners to put into practice skills they learn in the classroom.

"It has provided a hands-on opportunity for our Headwaters Master Gardeners to learn about plant propagation," said Steven Patrick, Habersham County Extension coordinator. "Plant material is then sold, which provides money for community programs, scholarships and for Victory Home."

Kathy Booker has been a Master Gardener since 2011, and she is currently coordinator for the Victory Home program. She said it took a few years for the project to take hold, but now Victory Home residents enjoy working in the greenhouses.

"It's added a whole new dimension to the project," she said. "We all love playing in the dirt."

Each year, the group propagates hundreds of houseplants, shrubs and trees, including many natives. Some of the plants are sold during an annual plant sale, while others are used for stream bank restoration projects.

Patrick said having a source of low-cost trees and other plants for stream bank restoration is another benefit to the program.

"We're trying to mesh the stream bank work I've done for years and years with the Master Gardeners, and the therapeutic gardening (at Victory Home)," he said.

The benefits to Victory Home residents are also great, Patrick said.

"They learn skills, they get to meet people that care, and they know the plants being raised are important for their program," he said.

Victory Home Executive Director Mark Beach agrees.

"For a lot of our guys, it teaches them skills, and it allows them to interact with others (the Master Gardeners)," he said. "That's good for them, because these women really care about them, and they sense that. They're able to share their stories with someone who will listen."

"It's been a great project for both of us," he added. "It's worked well."

The gardening "exposes them to something

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they've never been exposed to before," Beach said. "And it gives them an appreciation. They get to watch something come from nothing. They watch [the plants] grow, and they get to be a part of that."

Patrick said eventually he wants to include teaching the residents how to install landscapes, something that will be a marketable skill, in addition to learning how to care for the plants in the greenhouse.

Though the partnership started in 2019, it's gained momentum in the past two or three years, Patrick said. It began with an abandoned greenhouse already on the property, which the Master Gardeners brought back to life.

"Last year we built a

hoop house to produce food for the men," he said. "This year we built a shade house and installed irrigation. The shade house will increase our capacity to deliver trees and shrubs for stream bank and watershed restoration projects. We also installed irrigation for the plants and a sidewalk to improve accessibility."

The hoop house was built with a grant from the Chestatee-Chatahoochee Resource, Conservation and Development Council, Patrick said.

Booker said the Victory Home residents who work in the garden are hard workers who don't mind helping with heavy labor, and they love to learn about planting and growing.

She said the Headwa-



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ters Master Gardeners group is “very lucky” to have the greenhouses at Victory Home.

“We’re very lucky, because there are other groups who would love to have what we have,” she said. “It’s a great project.”

In addition to the Victory Home project, Headwaters Master Gardeners also maintain pollinator gardens at several area libraries and churches, they have worked on projects at the Old Clarkesville Cemetery and Habitat for Humanity homes and they hold regular classes.

Potential Master Gardeners must finish the course of study, then in the first year, complete 50 hours of community gardening service, then 25 hours per year after that.



Jonathan Twitty, Mike Callihan and Michael Staton work on the area outside the greenhouse at Victory Home.

Because so many plants are propagated at Victory Home each year, Headwaters Master Gardeners can always use donated pots, such as plastic pots from store-bought plants. If you have pots to donate, take

them to the Habersham, Rabun or White County Extension Service offices or to Victory Home in Tallulah Falls.

This year’s plant sale will be held Wednesday through Saturday, May 8-11, 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

at the Victory Home campus.

For information about Headwaters Master Gardeners, visit HeadwatersMasterGardeners.org. For information about Victory Home, visit VictoryHome.org.

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The signs of a *healthy* 'heart'

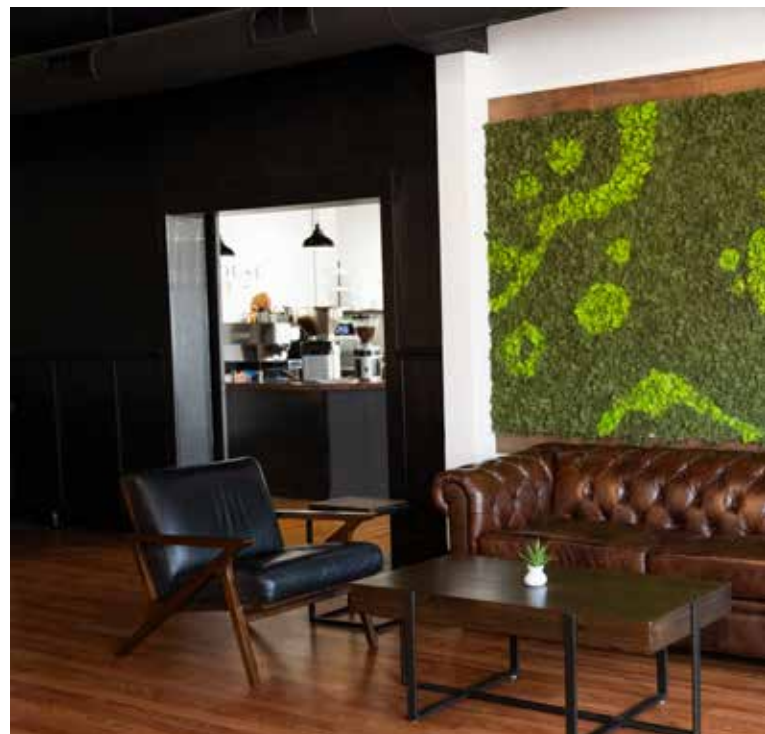
As 'heart of Habersham,' changes in Demorest quicken its pulse

Story and photos
by Zach Taylor

Demorest, a city known for its continuous efforts toward urban development, is currently working on enhancing its downtown areas and parks, as well as its water and sewer systems, building up the strength of the "heart of Habersham."

The city has planned several projects, including renovating the infrastructure surrounding the post office and establishing a new restaurant, Holden Oversoul Kitchen and Oyster Bar. This restaurant is the brainchild of Jamie Allred, who is known for his innovative and exquisite cuisine. The restaurant is slated to be an oyster bar where one can savor delicious farm-to-table meats and produce.

With its unique concept and delectable offerings, Holden Oversoul will surely be a hit among food lovers in the city. Allred has announced plans to open Holden Oversoul at the newly renovated Demorest City Hall building in March 2024. The establishment will feature a 32-seat dining room and a nine-





Jamie Allred stands in front of the 'coming soon' sign to his new farm-to-table restaurant in Demorest.



LEFT: Comfortable chairs and leather couches with coffee tables furnish the interior of Farmhouse Coffee in Demorest.



Demorest Springs Park now has modernized bathrooms and fresh landscaping to prepare for the spring and summer months.

seat bar, offering patrons a comfortable and intimate dining experience with kitchen views.

The city of Demorest has recently made notable improvements to its downtown park. One of the most significant upgrades is the addition of modernized bathrooms, which provide visitors with comfortable facilities

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during their stay in the park. Additionally, the park has undergone a stunning landscaping makeover, with pine straw around the trees and beautiful flowers enhancing the park's natural beauty. These changes have made Demorest's downtown park an even more attractive destination for locals, Piedmont University students and tourists alike.

The Demorest Water Works Department is making plans to prepare for the future, following the recent acquisition of land for the construction of a new water and sewer facility on State Highway 365. The upcoming facility will have cutting-edge monitoring equipment to ensure a smooth and efficient water supply throughout the city of Demorest.

Additionally, the facility will have advanced filtration systems that will improve the quality of water supplied to



Barista Trey Fuller brews a drink at Farmhouse Coffee in Demorest.

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residents. Upgraded hardware will distribute water across the area, making the system more reliable.

Farmhouse Coffee is a beloved establishment that has become a go-to spot for Piedmont University students and Habersham locals. The cozy cafe takes pride in its freshly ground espresso shots, which are guaranteed to perk you up and get you going. In addition, Farmhouse Coffee offers homemade gluten-free breakfast and snack options that are a hit among health-conscious customers. For those with a sweet tooth, the decadent treats are sure to satisfy any craving. Farmhouse Coffee is a great place to grab a quick breakfast or enjoy a refreshing afternoon pick-me-up. Whether you're in a hurry or looking for a cozy spot to study, Farmhouse Coffee is the perfect choice.

Sweet Breads is a highly acclaimed restaurant famous for its eclectic menu and unique ambiance, described as "esoteric, bohemian, and emphasizing all-natural ingredients." This pet-friendly eatery welcomes dogs and encourages their presence, creating a one-of-a-kind outdoor dining experience on the patio. Sweet Breads differs from your average restaurant, as it offers live music and serves a diverse range of dishes, including trout piccata and portabella-stuffed ravioli.

For more information about Demorest, visit CityofDemorest.org.



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Sample the flavor of Cornelia

By Julianne Akers

Home of the Big Red Apple, Cornelia is one of the fastest growing cities in Habersham County with a bustling downtown and annual events like Christmas in the Park and the Big Red Apple Festival. With a daytime population of 35,000 people, the city has grown by over 20 percent since 2010, said Community Development Manager Jessie Owensby.

With about 15 eateries in its downtown, “We’re kind of becoming known as the foodie district,” Owensby said. This ranges from steakhouses like Community Brew & Tap, Fenders Diner and Fenders Alley which features live music on the weekends, and bakeries and coffee shops throughout downtown.

Owensby noted the city is growing outside of the restaurants and is also an entertainment district. Construction on an amphitheater on the edge of downtown is aiming to start in January 2025 to bring diversity to the downtown scene.

A Fairfield Inn and Suites will be the newest hotel opening around the end of summer.

“It’s going to fill a huge

Cornelia’s Big Red Apple monument has been a Cornelia landmark since 1925.
Photo/Julianne Akers

gap that we have,” Owensby said. “Right now we have a lot of people who are forced to stay in hotels in neighboring cities because we don’t have enough.”

Another new edition will be a Michaels craft store opening in late spring.

With all of the new additions to the city, it also boasts a rich history that brings a large tourist population. This includes the Cornelia Depot Railroad Museum, Loudermilk Boarding House & Everything Elvis Museum and the Chenocetah Fire Tower built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s.

Adding to its arts and cultural scene, a unique landmark in Cornelia is the Tim Loves Tink underpass. There’s ongoing debate on how the saying got there and what it means, but it remains a topic of conversation for the community with a vast mural project coming to downtown in its honor.

Lovers of the outdoors also flock to Cornelia to visit destinations like Lake Russell located in the Chattahoochee National Forest. For over 30 years, the city has worked with the U.S. forest service and the Tree City USA program to add to the sprawling greenery seen throughout the area.

For more information about what Cornelia has to offer, visit www.cornelia.city.



The city of Cornelia has about 15 eateries in the downtown area and is becoming known as a “foodie district,” according to Jessie Owensby, Community Development Manager. **Photo/Julianne Akers**

The Big Red Apple Festival, held each fall in Cornelia, is a longtime event that brings thousands of people into the city. **File photo**

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Exceptional leadership

Superintendent, sheriff celebrated for years of service to the community

By Matthew Osborne

Four-term Sheriff Joey Terrell and longtime Superintendent Matthew Cooper have been two pillars of Habersham County's leadership for more than a decade.

Terrell is coming to the end of his fourth and final term as sheriff, while Cooper is in his 12th year leading Habersham County Schools. He has not indicated when he might retire, and his contract was recently renewed by the Board of Education.

Both were honored March 12 at the American Values Dinner presented by the Boy Scouts of America.

Terrell has put in more than three decades of work in law enforcement, including almost 16 years as sheriff.

"It's overwhelming the amount of support that law enforcement gets in our community," Terrell said. "When we get honored, we are humbled by the outpouring, because you don't do this job for accolades and trophies. Being honored like this is something I will always treasure when people thank you for doing a job that is not always glorious."

Cooper has been a teacher, coach, assistant principal and principal in his long educational career. He was nominated for Georgia Superintendent of the Year in 2019.

"I have been blessed to live and work in Habersham County for going on 12 years," Cooper said. "This community has been good



Sheriff Joey Terrell and Superintendent Matthew Cooper congratulate each other March 12 after being named distinguished citizens by the Boy Scouts of America. Photo/Matthew Osborne

to me professionally and it has also been good for my family. All three of my children graduated from Habersham Central High School. I am thankful that they graduated from one of the best public high schools in our state. I often say that if I thought there was a better place to work I would be trying to get there. The reality is that Habersham County is the best place. There is no place I would rather be. I have been supported by many key leaders in our community and I am grateful. Our parents here in Habersham value public education and they love their children. Having good parents is important to a superintendent. Back when I was going through the superintendent's academy, I wondered where I might have the opportunity to serve. I sure am glad it ended up being here in Habersham County."

The two leaders who have made

a major impact on Habersham County have a strong mutual respect.

"Mr. Cooper has done a lot for our school system," Terrell said. "He has spent his life building his own all-around education, and he is all in when it comes to our students and providing the best environment for them to learn. He cares about them and that makes him a great superintendent."

"As a citizen, superintendent, and as a dad, I appreciate a strong sheriff like Joey Terrell," Cooper said. "Sheriff Terrell has been a friend of our school system. He has placed great value on the children of our county and he has made their safety a priority. I respect him as a Sheriff and as a person. Our schools are no doubt safer as a result of his leadership and commitment to the children of our county."

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PARTNERSHIP

Helping to move Habersham forward

By Matthew Osborne

Partnership Habersham was formed in 2016 to unify economic development efforts between Habersham County's education, government and business partners. "The unique structure unifies private enterprise, education, and government, building strong community and solidarity," its website states.

The private-public partnership helps find economic development solutions in an evolving Habersham County.

"I think one of the most important things we do is workforce development," Executive Director Charlie Fiveash said. "We really try to keep an eye on what industries here are doing to make connections and find new employees coming out of school who want to live and work here."

Partnership Habersham works on retail development and, to a lesser extent, housing development. The group assists the Development Authority in recruiting new industries and finding new avenues to grow the county.

"We have to position ourselves the right way for the growth that is coming to the southern end of the county," Fiveash said. "I think we all want to see steady growth, but staying at a pace that folks here are comfortable with. We still want to be an agricultural community and do all that we can to support our current industries while finding others that fit with our model."

Partnership Habersham has been assisting Habersham County leadership in finally finding a suitable development

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HABERSHAM



Amanda Fulmer talks real estate with ninth graders Hailee Parham and Cendall Pitts during a recent career fair at Habersham Ninth Grade Academy. Sponsoring an annual career fair is one way Partnership Habersham helps to grow a future workforce. **Photo/Julianne Akers**

outcome for the old courthouse in Clarkesville. The organization also is preparing for the potential influx of busi-

ness and growth that will come from the inland port in North Hall County, slated for an opening in 2026.

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Habersham industry continues to thrive



Habersham County has many strong, thriving industries, which provide jobs for residents to help keep the Northeast Georgia economy strong.

By Kimberly Brown

CURRAHEE TRAILERS

Located in Mt. Airy, Currahee Trailers manufactures trailers that are economical, but also built to last for years to come. Currahee Trailers builds and sells gooseneck trailers, car hauler trailers, landscape and utility trailers and equipment and flatbed trailers. curraheetrailers.com.

ETHICON

Ethicon, a division of the Johnson & Johnson Company, has been in business in Cornelia for nearly 70 years.

The company has been one of the leading innovators of medical products since 1887, starting with sterile sutures and moving on to a myriad of medical and surgical supplies.

Ethicon partners with local trade schools, technical colleges and universities such as Georgia Institute of Technology and Clemson University. They provide internships and co-ops for students

and have found that bringing in students during the college years can lead to full-time employees after graduation.

jnjmedicaldevices.com

FIELDALE FARMS

Fieldale Farms in Baldwin is a family business, still owned by its founders, but has grown to become one of the largest independent poultry producers in the world. It is the largest employer in Habersham County

The company started more than 50 years ago in the countryside of Northeast Georgia.

“At Fieldale we produce the best possible chicken in the market with the latest up-to-date equipment and technology, always bearing in mind the health of the millions of consumers,” the company’s website says. “Chicken is our only business and one to which we are committed in every phase of our company.”

fieldale.com



ABOVE: Welders work on a structure at SteelCell in Baldwin. SteelCell produces prefabricated, modular detention cells. **Photo courtesy of SteelCell**

RIGHT: One of the oldest industries in Habersham County, Morito Scovill has been in business since 1802, and it has been in Clarkesville since 1955.

Photo courtesy of Morito Scovill

FOUNDATION CORE AND TUBE

Located in Clarkesville, Foundation Core and Tube produces spiral paper tubes and cores to protect products from damage.

foundationgt.com

GLOBALTECH

GlobalTech Industries of Cornelia is a contract candle manufacturer, marketing candles and home fragrance products under the name Habersham Candle Company. GlobalTech is in a 60,000 square foot building in Cornelia. The facility includes production, design and development and quality control.

globaltechindustries.com



The home office of Fieldale Farms, Habersham County's largest employer, is in Baldwin. Photo/ Kimberly Brown



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green-tek.com

produces products for "life safety," including bullet-resistant, sound-etardant, fire-rated, forced-entry/ballistic-rated, and blast-rated doors, frames and wall panels.
habershammetal.com

HABERSHAM METAL PRODUCTS
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lindsaywindows.com



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2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 19 @ 6 PM - 8 PM
Big Apple Bingo Night

in front of Big Red Apple in Cornelia
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Music, cash prizes, and fun! \$1 per card.

MAY 18 @ 5 PM - 10 PM
Cornella Music Fest

Downtown Cornella FREE concert.
Presented by the Cornella Hospitality and Tourism Board.
Featuring Actor and Country Singer John Schneider.
Food Vendors and Cash Bar on site!

MAY 30 @ 5 PM - 9 PM

Catch Me In Cornella- Summer Nights
Downtown Cornella FREE Festival. Presented by the Cornella Downtown Development Authority
Featuring live entertainment, craft vendors, food vendors, kids zone, axe throwing, and more.
Some prices may vary.

JUNE 27 @ 5 PM - 9 PM

Catch Me In Cornella- Summer Nights
Downtown Cornella FREE Festival.
Presented by the Cornella Downtown Development Authority, Featuring live entertainment, craft vendors, food vendors, kids zone, axe throwing, and more.
Some prices may vary.

JULY 25 @ 5 PM - 9 PM

Catch Me In Cornella- Summer Nights
Downtown Cornella FREE Festival.
Presented by the Cornella Downtown Development Authority,
Featuring live entertainment, craft vendors, food vendors, kids zone, axe throwing, and more. Some prices may vary.

SEPTEMBER 21 @ 10 AM - 4 PM

36th Annual Big Red Apple Festival
Downtown Cornella FREE Festival.
Presented by the Cornella Downtown Development Authority,
Featuring live entertainment, artisan vendors, food vendors, kids zone, axe throwing, hayrides and more. Some prices may vary.

OCTOBER 31 @ 3 PM - 6 PM

Downtown Cornella Trick or Treating
Visit the local businesses for candy.
FREE to Attend.

NOVEMBER 29 @ 6:30 PM

Downtown Tree Lighting
Come celebrate the beginning of Christmas with Friends and Family. FREE to Attend.

DECEMBER 5 @ 5 PM - 8 PM

Annual Habersham Christmas Parade
Join us in Downtown Cornella to watch the parade, along with an evening of food, shopping and entertainment,
FREE to Attend.

DECEMBER 7 @ 4 PM - 9 PM

Downtown Christmas Festival
Downtown Cornella FREE Festival.
Presented by the Cornella Downtown Development Authority,
Featuring photos with Santa and the Ice Queen, live entertainment, s'mores, hot cocoa, and hayrides.
Some prices may vary.

NOVEMBER 29 - JANUARY 1
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OK FOODS

Founded more than 80 years ago, OK Foods has grown from a livestock and poultry feed manufacturer to join one of the world's leading chicken producers, Bachoco. The company has operations in Baldwin, with other sites in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Oklahoma and Mexico.

okfoods.com

PIEDMONT METAL PROCESSING

Piedmont Metal Processing (PMP) was founded in 1996 by Frank Ferguson. Frank's son, Jeff Ferguson, incorporated the business in 1999, and added additional technologies and capabilities. Today the family business continues to expand and explore new ideas with the ever-changing marketplace. The company specializes in detention furniture, general metal fabrication, computer numerical control plasma cutting, press breaking and metal shearing.

piedmontmetal.com

SALFORD GROUP

Since 1978, Salford Group has manufactured tillage equipment and produced innovative tillage designs. The company manufactures BBI spreaders, Valmar Airflo

and AerWay Aeration. In 2022, Salford Group was acquired by Linamar Corporation and is part of Linamar's industrial division. In addition to its Cornelia facility, the company has production facilities in Iowa and Ontario and Manitoba, Canada.

salfordgroup.com

SCOVILL

Scovill has been in business since 1802. The company began with a small button shop in a mill on a river in Connecticut. In 1955, Scovill relocated to Clarksville, where it has resided ever since.

In 2014, Scovill was purchased by Morito, Co. Ltd., a well-known apparel trim supplier in Japan. Today, Scovill is known as Morito Scovill Americas and is one of the world's largest companies offering both apparel and industrial fasteners where they can offer customers 330 years of combined service and expertise in the industry.

Scovill's main brands are Duramark™ buttons and rivets commonly seen on denim garments, Gripper snaps commonly used on infant and baby clothing and DOT snaps used to secure everything from boat covers to gun holsters.

Morito Scovill Americas has a presence in more than 25 countries, a vast supply chain network to provide high-performance fasteners for apparel and industrial applications as well as attaching machine equipment and expert technical support.

scovill.com

SOLMAX

Formerly Tencate, Solmax acquired Ten-Gate Geosynthetics and Propex in 2021, according to solmax.com. Solmax is the world's largest geosynthetics manufacturer, producing erosion control, barrier and containment, filtration and drainage, retaining walls, reinforced slopes and berms, road and railway stabilization and more. Solmax's Georgia offices are in Cornelia, Ringgold and Commerce.

solmax.com

STEELCELL

SteelCell Inc. of Baldwin has been producing "detention cells at maximum efficiency," according to its website, for nearly 20 years.

"Our prefabricated, modular detention cells and youth rooms are the highest quality in the industry. We use A60 Galvannealed Steel for long-lasting, rust-resistant products. Our cells can withstand the wear and tear of a detention center," the company's mission statement reads.

steelcell.com

AIRPORT INDUSTRIAL PARK

Habersham County and its Economic Development Department are dedicated to job creation, business growth and industry diversification.

With one of Northeast Georgia's newest industrial parks, as well as individual buildings located throughout the county, Habersham County offers ample choices for nearly all types of businesses and industries.

The Airport Industrial Park is located adjacent to the newly-expanded Habersham Airport, with a 5,500-foot runway. The Industrial Park contains approximately 80 acres, with six to eight tracts of variable acreage. Some statistics on the park:

- 20 miles to Interstate I-85 at Commerce exit
- 1/2 mile from state Route 365 which becomes I-985
- 76 miles to Atlanta International Airport
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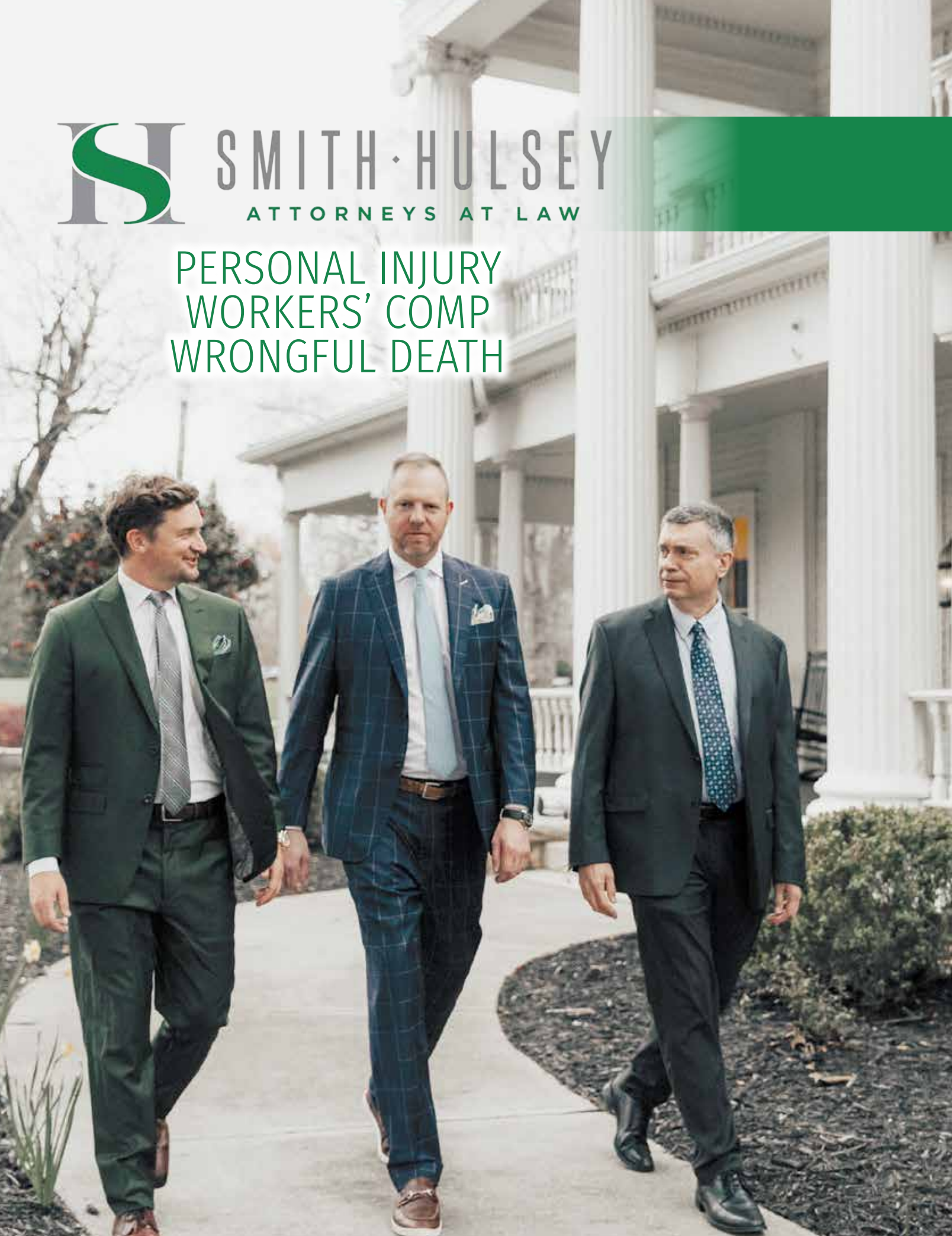
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Clockwise from top left: A hummingbird enjoys nectar from a trumpet vine flower; a pileated woodpecker rests among red berries; this white breasted nuthatch hangs upside down on a pine tree twig; a rose-breasted grosbeak holds onto a branch of foxglove flowers; a male bluebird feeds a fledgling nutritious mealworm; and this American goldfinch rests on a purple thistle. **Photos taken in Habersham County by Danny Young**

Sights that *soar*

For birding, Habersham County sets the bar high

By Kimberly Brown

For those who are interested in Northeast Georgia's wildlife, sometimes it pays to look up.

A wide variety of birds can be found in the Northeast Georgia mountains, including neotropical migrants just passing through, ones who nest here in the summer, and ones who live here full-time.

Just as the types of birds vary greatly, there are also different types of birders, including backyard enthusiasts and those who spend years keeping data on migrating birds.

Joel Volpi of Cornelia has been a birder for about 50 years. He said "citizen birders" are those who watch feeders and nests to gather data that "contribute greatly to our greater ornithological understanding of birds everywhere."

"This data is being compiled and it'll be useful for long trends, and it's useful for unusual birds we call 'vagrants,' ones who show up where they're not supposed to be," he said.

Birders can be casual, someone who just watches birds at their feeders, to ones who travel internationally to bird.

"It's wide open, and it's a billion-dollar business in lots of places," Volpi said.

For about 30 years, Volpi has done breeding bird surveys sponsored by the United States Geological Survey, which show trends of breeding bird populations. His route is the Upper Piedmont, from Athens to Franklin County.



Volpi remains a member of the Georgia Ornithological Society and Georgia Audubon Society, but he mostly birds on his own, he said. He served as president of the Atlanta Audubon Society before it became the Georgia Audubon Society. That organization is now Birds Georgia.

Equipment for birding is simple – a pair of good binoculars and a field guide. With electronic field guides available as smartphone apps — which have bird song samples as well as pictures of the birds — it’s even easier for people to go birding on their own, and to be able to identify what they see and hear, Volpi said.

“We have permanent resident birds that never leave, and we have neotropical migrants who come here and nest here, and we have neotropical migrants who don’t nest, but just pass through in the spring and fall,” he said. “Those are the times you want to get out and see ones you only see during migration.”

Volpi’s personal favorite birds are birds of prey such as peregrine and merlin falcons who migrate en masse during the fall. He visits Brasstown Bald with other birders during the migration.

“It’s the highest point in Georgia, and the birds tend to follow the mountains down,” he said. “You get a good variety of birds of prey that are migrating through.”

Another of Volpi’s favorites is the yellow-billed cuckoo, a migrating bird who also nests here.

In addition to Brasstown Bald, neotropical migrating birds can be found on Rabun Bald, Mount Oglethorpe in Pickens County, Kennesaw Mountain in Cobb County, and other mountains with high lookout points.

Locally, birds can be found at your own backyard feeders, but also on the Clarkesville Greenway, where Volpi holds spring and fall bird walks through the Soque River Watershed Association.

During the walks on the Greenway, Volpi’s groups have seen Baltimore orioles, indigo buntings, blue grosbeaks, pine warblers, as well as permanent resident birds, chickadees, titmice, red-bellied woodpeckers, and hairy and downy woodpeckers. There is also a red-shouldered hawk who lives on the Greenway.

“That’s really good nesting habitat for a lot of birds,” he said.

When setting up feeders, different birds eat different seeds, and some eat both insects and seeds. For insectivores like woodpeckers and warblers, and even some other birds who eat both seeds and insects, he recommends putting up suet, which can be purchased or made at home using animal fat.

If you’re looking for showy birds, Volpi said summer birds such as blue grosbeak, indigo bunting and some warblers can be found, and migratory birds such as Baltimore orioles and various species of warblers come through this area.

Finding birds is “about the auditory and the visual,” Volpi said. Two good smartphone apps he rec-



A male bluebird feeds its fledgling in a bluebird box nest.

Migration tips

Fall migration starts in late summer for some species. It peaks from late September into early October. Species you may see include warblers, thrushes, fly catchers, raptors, shore birds, nighthawks, rose-breasted grosbeaks, orioles, rusty blackbirds, sparrows, ducks, geese, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, creepers, red-breasted nuthatch and sandhill cranes.

Spring migration goes from March to May, and peaks mid-April to the first week of May. Species you may see include purple martins, swallows,

ruby-throated hummingbirds, warblers, thrushes, fly catchers, indigo bunting, blue grosbeaks, rose-breasted grosbeaks, orioles, raptors and green herons.

Winter is for permanent resident birds and birds that winter here from more northern latitudes. Species you may see include sparrows, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, juncos, winter wrens, creepers, orange-crowned warblers, ducks, kinglets, hermit thrushes, purple finches, pine siskins, evening grosbeaks, western hummers, shore birds and some wintering raptors.

ommends are eBird and the Sibley Field Guide app.

Another local birder, Danny Young of Clarkesville, is an award-winning bird and nature photographer. He won Best in Show out of 800 entries in a contest held by Gibbs Gardens, and one of his photos was selected out of 8,000 worldwide entries as a National Geographic “Shot of the Day.”

Young uses a bird blind in his yard to capture stunning photos of a variety of birds. He said he’s currently using a chair blind, but has used larger blinds before, like what hunters use.

“My feeder is portable and so is the blind,” he said. “This allows me to position the feeder/perch/birds with the background I choose. This setup also allows me to use the sun to my benefit. I especially like setting the ‘studio’ in front of my forsythia hedge which provides a yellow background in the spring, green in summer, and orange, yellow and red in the fall.”

Young puts sunflower seeds in his feeder, except when he has bluebirds visiting. Then he adds mealworms.

“My favorite birds are the rose-breasted grosbeaks who usually come through in May and November, staying about a week,” he said. “Goldfinches also pass through in the spring, and I plant sunflowers to help attract them. I designed my adjustable-height feeder to allow me to use a variety of perches, cut flowers and hard limbs. This helps produce a more natural wild look.”

In addition to photographing birds in his own backyard, Young travels to Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina in search of birds to photograph.

To catch the stunning photos, he said he used a 400 mm lens for many years, but has recently acquired a 600 mm lens.

“When I’m in my blind/studio at home I use flash to help expose all the details,” he said. “I usually use a tripod.”

He hasn’t moved to a phone app for identification, though. “To identify birds, I use a big thick book I was given years ago, which contains all the birds in North America,” he said.

Young said he recently tried a new method to photograph hummingbirds.

“I keep the feeder up all summer, and then in late August I will position a fresh-cut flower near to where the feeder is,” he said. “Then I remove the feeder, and I will spray sugar water on the flower. The hummingbirds will come to the location of the feeder, which is now gone, fly around a bit and discover the flower and will devour the sugar water on the flower. Before I used this method, I’d get about 20 images of a hummingbird when they fed on a flower, but now I can get at least 100 images from each visit.”

For bluebirds, he said, he has a nest box on a pole in his garden.

“I can rotate the pole, which allows me to adjust for the movement of the sun during the day,” he said. “I place a perch near the box. I will also provide mealworms near the nest box to aid in keeping the birds close by.”

So, whether you’re a serious birder or someone just getting into the hobby, Northeast Georgia has plenty of birds to find, identify and photograph.

For more information about Volpi’s bird walks, visit Soque.org. To learn about birds in the southeast, there are several good websites, including the Cornell Ornithology Lab at AllAboutBirds.org and Birds Georgia at BirdsGeorgia.org.



2024 Calendar of Events

April 5, Friday

First Friday Fun Downtown

May 3, Friday

First Friday Fun Downtown

May 18, Saturday

62nd Annual Mountain Laurel Festival

June 7, Friday

First Friday Fun Downtown

July 5, Friday

First Friday Fun Downtown

July 13, Saturday

Red, White, & Tunes at Pitts Park

August 24, Saturday

Dog Days of Summer at Pitts Park

September 6, Friday

First Friday Fun Downtown

September 6-14, Friday-Saturday

Chattahoochee Mountain Fair
at Clarkesville Fairgrounds

October 5, Saturday

Fall Festival & History Harvest

October 19, Saturday

Soque River Fine Arts Festival

October 31, Thursday

Trick or Treating on the Square

November 30, Saturday

Shop Small Business Saturday

December 7, Saturday

Downtown Clarkesville Christmas

December 23, Monday

Candlelight Christmas Walk



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Take a hike

Habersham County offers several ways to experience the great outdoors, and hiking is the first choice among tourists and locals.

Story and photos by Zach Taylor



Water flows over a shallow Panther Creek in the summer of 2021.

Panther Creek Falls and Recreation Area

Panther Creek Falls and Recreation Area is a recently popularized gem that offers the perfect setting for a peaceful picnic or a scenic day hike. The 3.5-mile hike to the falls is a one-way trail that promises to reward hikers with breathtaking views of the cascading waterfalls at the end of their journey. The falls, which plunge down the mountainside into a tranquil pool, offer a break from the summer heat and are ideal for a refreshing swim. To access the National Forest parking area, simply head 8 miles north of Hollywood, GA, on old US-441 between Clarksville and Tallulah Falls, and you will find yourself at the entrance to this beautiful recreation area. The address is 3995 Old Historic 441, Turnerville, GA 30523. For more information, visit bit.ly/PantherCreekTrail

Lake Russell Recreation Area

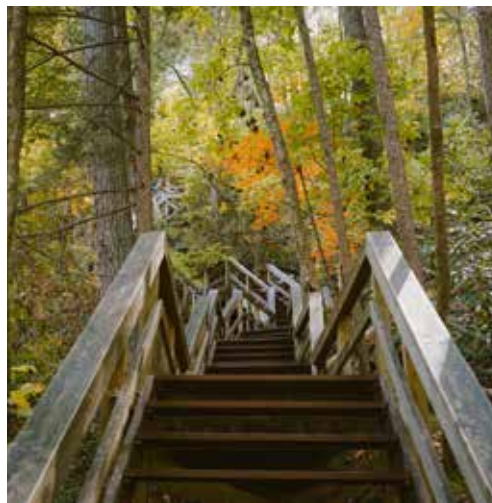
Lake Russell Recreation Area offers a range of outdoor activities, including hiking trails such as the Lake Russell Trail, Ladyslipper Trail, and Sourwood Trail. Visitors can also enjoy fishing, a grass-covered beach, a designated swimming area, and camping facilities, making it the perfect destination for a family weekend getaway. The Ladyslipper Trail is a 6.1-mile loop trail that welcomes mountain bikers and horseback riders, so it's essential to be aware of others when traveling on foot. The Lake Russell Trail is a 4.6-mile route, moderately challenging, and takes approximately one hour and 45 minutes to complete. You can find Lake Russell Recreation Area at 304 Lake Rabun Rd., Mount Airy, GA 30563. For more information, visit bit.ly/LakeRussellRec



The Ladyslipper Loop Trail is a 6.1-mile loop trail in the Lake Russell Recreation Area open to horseback riders, mountain bikers, and hikers.

Tallulah Gorge State Park

Tallulah Gorge State Park is a hiker's paradise, offering many gorgeous trails with scenic natural views. One such trail is Tallulah Falls' Bill and Dustie MacKay Trail (Formally 'Shortline Trail'), perfect for those seeking a shorter, more leisurely hike. For those looking for a more challenging adventure, the trails, stairs and repelling walls within Tallulah Gorge State Park offer breathtaking views and opportunities to push your limits. The Hurricane Falls Loop Trail is a 2-mile trail with 1,099 stairs that takes visitors down to the gorge floor and loops back



to the interpretive center along the South Rim Trail. The North and South Rim Trails (¾-mile each) offer visitors breathtaking views of five waterfalls and many pools within the gorge.

Whether you're a thrill seeker or on a weekend getaway with the outdoors in mind, Tallulah Gorge State Park has something for everyone. For more information and floor permits, visit Tallulah Gorge Interpretive Center at 338 Jane Hurt Yarn Dr, Tallulah Falls, GA 30573. For daily information and water release dates, visit gastateparks.org/TallulahGorge



A view of Minnehaha Falls after a summer storm in 2022.

Minnehaha Falls

The Minnehaha Falls Trail is a nature lover's paradise that offers an enchanting .4-mile hike leading to a multi-tiered cascading waterfall that plunges into Lake Rabun below. This picturesque trail is perfect for families, as it is kid- and pet-friendly. The hike features a slight incline on the route in, which is not challenging, and a downhill trek on the way out, ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable experience for all. This natural wonder is located in Rabun County near the Habersham-Rabun border, marked with a green diamond and the number 147, off the unpaved Bear Gap Road near Lakemont, Georgia. It is a must-visit destination for anyone seeking tranquil views of a serene waterfall after an easy hike. For more information, visit fs.usda.gov/conf

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Hospital sits at heart of growing community

By Matthew Osborne

Over the last few years, Habersham County was like many rural communities in Georgia - it was in danger of losing its hospital.

Many other small towns have suffered that crippling blow not only to their healthcare infrastructure, but to their economy and other aspects of their functioning communities.

But through the efforts of North Georgia Health Systems (NGHS) and Habersham County leadership, the former Habersham Medical Center was reborn as NGHS-Habersham on July 1, 2023.

The hospital has grown and offered new doctors and new pathways for residents of Habersham and surrounding counties to get the care they need.

"I am very pleased with the level of care we have been able to provide," CEO Kevin Matson said. "We have more emergency visits than we expected in the first nine months, and we are pleased that people who need medical care are able to find and trust the services they need closer to home."

Many believed NGHS would rather see the hospital close and redirect patients to their Gainesville facilities, but Matson said it is the opposite scenario. The two hospitals complement each other and allow NGHS to find the right care for each patient in the region.

The system uses software called Epic to connect all medical records across any doctors and specialists seen by a patient in any of their locations. This allows doctors and emergency room staff to immediately have access to all the information they need about a patient without having to go looking for it.

"That is a critical piece of our infrastructure to offer the highest quality care that we can," Matson said. "We have also expanded our telehealth services so that if someone needs to see a specialist in Gainesville but they can't make it there for any reason, they can do a Zoom appointment and the information flow is seamless."

Habersham Home long-term assisted living facility also is thriving under a \$6 million investment by NGHS to fully renovate and update the previous nursing home operation.



"For our residents, this is their home, and we want it to be a beautiful place for them to live," Matson said. "We have also been able to raise the wages of our long-term caregivers, which has given them the consistency of care and attention from people they know and trust."

The hospital's success bolsters the local economy, not only by providing 1,200 jobs, but making an estimated economic impact of \$117 million annually

through all the ways a strong medical facility lifts up its surrounding area.

“Whether you are talking about residents or businesses trying to locate here, they want to know about schools and healthcare first and foremost above most things,” Matson said. “We are here for the long haul and we will continue assessing the needs of our community as we expand our services. We want to be a large contributor to Habersham’s future growth.”

Habersham residents who want to help keep the hospital thriving can use the Georgia Heart Rural Tax Program to redirect the taxes they are already



Dr. David Bray and nurses on the acute care floor do their morning rounds to prepare for the day. **Photo/Zach Taylor**

paying to benefit NGHS-Habersham. Anyone interested in the program can visit georgiaheart.org to learn more.

NGHS-Habersham is located at 541 Historic Highway 441 North in Demorest.

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Piedmont launches state's first forensic academy



By Julianne Akers

Piedmont University is a small liberal arts university of over 2,500 students located in the heart of Demorest. The university has made new strides in recent years, most notably being home to Georgia's first forensic academy, which offers three certifications in crime scene investigation, latent print analysis and advanced crime scene.

Through the new programs, Piedmont is paving a way for city and county law enforcement agencies who do not have the resources to do adequate forensic research.

"It's the first of its kind to train law enforcement professionals and other people, such as students that go here," said John Lanneau, director of Georgia Forensic Academy and assistant professor of

forensic science.

Students are gaining hands-on experience through examining the trajectory of blood stains, scanning fingerprints, comparing bullet casings under a microscope, and in some cases, helping investigate real cases.

"It's pretty big when you can get college students out for a real dig for a clandestine grave site," Lanneau said.

The university also offers bachelor's, doctoral, specialist and master's degrees and certificates in arts, sciences, business, education and nursing and hosts 21 intercollegiate sports teams competing in Division III.

In January 2023, Piedmont welcomed Marshall Criser as its president. Criser came to the school after serving eight years as chancellor of the University System of Florida. After coming to the



Piedmont University Vice President of Academic Affairs Bruce Willis holds an example of a gunshot wound to the head next to students' assignments on trajectory of blood stains. Photo/JULIANNE AKERS

university, Criser helped revitalize the college of education by bringing Piedmont students back into Georgia's school districts. "The teachers are our students at the graduate level. They are back in our school districts, teaching teachers across the state and

helping them to get their credentials," Criser said. He added that the university strives to continue engagement with the Habersham County community. "What I have found is an opportunity to really build on the partnerships that are available here, and it is a

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community that works together," he said.

In March, Piedmont introduced its new logo, produced from a student-led effort, depicting the bridge that stretches over Central Avenue, connecting the university and downtown Demorest. This is one of the first things prospective students see as they

enter campus and walk through the foothills of Georgia's Appalachian mountains.

The logo is intended to shift the view from the previous chapel logo that indicates Piedmont is a predominantly religious institution.

For more information about Piedmont University, visit piedmont.edu.



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Three new programs expand opportunities for local students

North Georgia Technical College now offers programs in social work, cybersecurity, nursing

By Kimberly Brown

Since its beginning in 1943, North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) has educated area students on its Clarkesville campus.

Fall 2023 saw an enrollment of 2,697 students, with 1,621 of those on the Clarkesville campus.

“Our numbers for fall semester showed a steady increase in our enrollment from past semesters, and we are currently working toward the same success for our spring semester,” said NGTC President John Wilkinson. “All three of our college locations – Blairsville, Currahee

and Clarkesville – saw increases in enrollment. Our credit hour increase shows that students are taking more classes per semester than before, which is admirable as many of these students are working either full- or part-time while balancing a family life as well as their academic studies.”

Students who enter NGTC may select from a wide variety of programs to study. Depending on program objectives and the number of semesters or courses required, a degree, diploma or certificate is awarded upon the successful completion of all required courses in the chosen program of



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Above, a photography student adjusts the light to take photos of a toy car. At left, students in the NGTC photography program develop state-of-the-art editing skills in the classroom. Photos/Zach Taylor

study.

NGTC offers an Associate of Science in Nursing and General Studies, and various associate of science and associate of applied science degrees. Diploma programs are also offered and provide students with

entry-level job knowledge and skills. These programs are available on the postsecondary level for both high school graduates and GED recipients. In addition to occupational diploma and associate degree programs, North Georgia

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Tech offers technical certificates of credit for certain occupational areas. Credit earned in some of the technical certificate areas may be applied toward a diploma or degree.

NGTC continues to look for ways to grow and better serve its students, and three new programs have recently been announced.

One of those is the launch of NGTC's new Social Work Assistant Associate of Applied Science Degree program. This comprehensive program is designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to make a positive impact in the field of social work. With a strong focus on practical training and real-world application, students will engage in experiences that prepare them for the challenges of social work in various professional settings.

The college also recently announced the launch of its groundbreaking bridge program, allowing Practical Nursing graduates to seamlessly transition into the Associate of Science Degree in Nursing program. The Practical Nursing (PN) bridge to Associate of Science Degree in Nursing (ASN) program will be a direct path to registered nursing, projected to be one of the two occupations with the highest growth rate in Georgia and among occupations with most annual openings in metro Atlanta and North Georgia. The first cohort of the program begins January 2024.

The third new program announced is a cybersecurity program, equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to combat the ever-evolving threats in the digital landscape. This comprehensive program will provide students with hands-on training in the latest cyber defense techniques, ethical hacking, network security, and threat analysis. With the increasing demand for cybersecurity professionals in today's technology-driven world, this program is a significant step towards preparing students for rewarding careers in safeguarding our digital infrastructure.

"North Georgia Technical College continues to research the programming needed to educate our community's future workforce, and we work with area businesses and schools to make this happen," said NGTC Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Marketing Amy Hulse. "We are fortunate that so many community members offer their expertise by serving on various advisory boards of our college to give input on how we can better train our students to be career-ready upon graduation and meet the needs of our area companies. Many partners provide programmatic funding and/or scholarships to ensure our students can get the education needed without any student debt incurred. We are very thankful for such amazing support for our college and our students."



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Habersham Central's Juan Lara celebrates after scoring a goal in the Raiders' win over Flowery Branch earlier this season. Photo/Lang Storey

Raiders keep climbing

By Lang Storey

Great things are happening on campus — and beyond — at Habersham Central High School (HCHS). Whether it's on the field, court, course, mat, track or even in the classroom and school hallways, there's been plenty to celebrate in Mt. Airy.

Raider football entered last season looking to climb its way back into the state playoff picture after a multi-year drought. A couple weeks into the campaign, it appeared that would not be happening. Yet Coach Benji Harrison and company rallied late to get the job done.

On homecoming weekend, HCHS celebrated a king and queen that each embody what it means to be a Raider - Amayah Dooley and Bobby Ray Wallace.

Throughout her time at Hab Central, Dooley has cheered, played volleyball, run track and been a loyal Raider Rowdie. She's always been quick to credit her faith in everything she does.

Wallace is a four-year member of JROTC. As a Raider, he has played varsity tennis, been a member of the All-State chorus program and found his niche in the HCHS drama program, too.

In October, graduation rates around the state were released. Habersham was up three-tenths of a point from the year prior, putting the county back in the top 10 graduation rates of Georgia's traditional school systems. The overall graduation rate was a Habersham County Schools system record.

“High graduation rate not only enhances the lives of the individual students, but ultimately means a more viable and productive Habersham County community,” said HCHS principal Jonathan Stribling.

Stribling says a strong correlation exists between academics and athletics in Habersham County.

“Student athletes are more apt to graduate. That's the value of the athletic programs,” he said.

He believes in keeping the two intertwined,

which is easy to do at the school.

“Athletic Director Geep Cunningham and I have a close working relationship,” Stribling said. “Not only do I support all the athletic programs, but Coach Cunningham is a huge proponent of strong academics.”

Additionally, the school established a peer-led tutoring program catering specifically towards student athletes called STAR.

“It basically consists of upperclassmen who are proficient in mathematics who are willing to meet with our student athletes before school in the morning,” Stribling said.

Hitting November meant the return of Raider Hoops. The boys’ program has struggled since 2011, but this past season marked another step forward as the 2023-24 Raiders became the second team in school history to reach 20 wins. They didn’t advance as far as they would’ve liked in the state tourney, but the foundation is set for the future as next season brings the return of 4 starters.

On the girls side, we saw the last hoorah for Lady Raider legend Kyia Barrett. The Anderson University commit and 4-year HCHS starter has done the community proud both on and off the hardwood. As much as others have tried to make it (fairly) all about her, Barrett has always been quick to credit others for help along the way. That’s simply a reflection of who she is.

Another Raider leaving behind a lasting impression is Brad Chosewood.

The All-Region lineman and shot put standout is headed to Dartmouth in the fall, but not before walking across the HCHS graduation stage as salutatorian. Chosewood has also served as an FCA student leader. He plans to study statistical science at Dartmouth.

Habersham added an athletic program this year. Veteran wrestling coach Morris Brooks, with the aid of Cunningham, established the school’s first girls’ wrestling squad. A roster was assembled right away, and the ladies had a successful inaugural season.

Still on the horizon this year is scholarship night and honors day. The former recognizes students who are receiving both academic and athletic scholarships, while the latter awards students in each class receiving special honors in a wide array of subjects.

Outside the classroom, spring sports are currently in full-swing and every varsity level sport is experiencing greater levels of success than this same point the previous year. It’s a testament not only to each individual program’s athletes, but also the investment by each coaching staff.

Current success is a culmination of steady hard work put in over time. Cunningham says he couldn’t be more proud of how things are.

“I don’t think there’s any doubt we’re in a much better spot than we were even 5 to 10 years ago,” he said. “Athletically and academically, we’re much more competitive in all that we do.”



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Tallulah Falls School has a 100% college acceptance rate. Shown are students with pennants from their colleges of choice. Photo courtesy of Tallulah Falls School

Tallulah Falls School offers ‘unique learning experience’

By Julianne Akers

Tallulah Falls School (TFS) is a private boarding and day school straddling the line of Habersham and Rabun counties, educating local and international students in fourth through 12th grades.

“I think we’re pretty well setting the standard for most things,” said head of school Dr. Larry Peevy.

With more than 500 students, the school added a new fourth grade class this year to accommodate growing interest. Peevy said students at TFS gain a unique learning experience not offered at many schools throughout the country. Throughout their time at the school, students have the opportunity to travel to Germany, Costa Rica, Boston, New York City, Charleston and the Florida coast, just to name a few. He said students come back with a richer knowledge of that place’s culture. “All those things you learn in history, our students are experiencing it,” Peevy said.

Like many high schools, TFS offers dual

enrollment classes with 21 being taught on its campus. A large portion of students graduate with a year or more of college credit.

A wide variety of varsity and junior varsity sports programs are offered at TFS, ranging from traditional activities such as baseball, basketball and soccer, to more unique things like bass fishing, eSports and precision rifle. In 2020, a new state-of-the-art natatorium opened on the campus and has been widely used by the TFS swim team and in partnership with Piedmont University.

Peevy said TFS is not tuition driven, but driven by the quality of education given to the students. The school puts a freeze on a student’s tuition when they begin their education at TFS, so they pay the same amount each year without the worry of it increasing. In addition to that, the school receives help from a private foundation that assists them in lowering tuition costs.

“We offer a college prep program beginning in the fourth grade for less than half of what it costs us to produce,” he said, noting that the school gave \$7 million in financial aid last year.

He said the main mission of the school is not only educating students for future success, but also helping them develop the moral and ethical character “that is necessary to be a great leader.”

“We try to put together a quality program for the kids by hiring the best teachers, having the best facilities, the latest and greatest equipment you can possibly have and an atmosphere on campus that is not really an atmosphere but a culture that has a family to it,” Peevy said. “They become part of the Tallulah Falls School family. They’re not a student. They’re not a number, they come into an environment where they fit, where they’re accepted and where they’re appreciated.”

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Community support

Habersham United Way lends a hand throughout the county

By Kimberly Brown

From literacy to children's services to housing, Habersham County United Way (HABUW) works with community donors to provide much-needed funds to 21 local partner agencies. HABUW also has five available grant opportunities.

HABUW Director Candice Holcomb said the organization's mission is "uniting our community to build a stronger future."

"We work to raise and distribute funds to meet the needs of our community and advance the common good by creating opportunities for all," she said. "Our focus is on education, income, and health — the building blocks for a good quality of life and a strong community."

Like most charitable organizations, HABUW suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is bouncing back.

"We are beginning to see an increase not only in funding but participation in events, and we have been able to get back into our local businesses for campaigns," Holcomb said. "After COVID, we presented at Habersham EMC and because of their leader-



Volunteers work on a recent Habitat for Humanity of Northeast Georgia (HHNEG) build. HHNEG is one of Habersham County United Way's 21 partner agencies. **Submitted photo**



John Krippner, Brandy Lovvorn and Habersham United Way Director Candice Holcomb stand with a thermometer board showing this year's goal has almost been reached. **Submitted photo**

ship and devoted employees, we were able to get their level of funding up tremendously, which allows for more funds to be distributed to HABUW partner agencies and also the opportunity to give more grants."

With \$540,000 raised last year, this year's HABUW goal is the highest it's ever been: \$600,000. Holcomb expects to meet that goal. To help the community keep up with progress, the big thermometer boards have returned.

"We live in a very

giving community, and with the help of industry, small businesses, employee giving and individuals, we will reach our goal," she said.

Each HABUW partner agency is responsible for conducting their own fundraising to help meet their own needs, as well as receiving United Way funds.

There are a wide variety of fundraisers sponsored by HABUW. One of those is a partnership with Springer Mountain Farms to host a sporting clays tournament in the

spring and fall each year. These clay shoots raised more than \$80,000 in 2023. Springer Mountain Farms also held a barbecue fundraiser, raising about \$5,000.

“We have partnered with Ethicon for 25 years in hosting the Annual Charity Golf Classic at The Orchard Golf Club in Clarkesville,” Holcomb said. “This event has raised over \$1.7 million over the past 25 years.”

In addition, Fieldale Farms, Ethicon and the Habersham County School System conduct yearly employee giving campaigns within their organizations.

One agency that receives HABUW funds is Volunteers for Literacy of Habersham County (VFL). VFL programs made possible by HABUW funding include the English Language Acquisition program, in which volunteers teach English to immigrants; the Dictionary Project that provides dictionaries to every third-grade student in Habersham County Schools; and funding to enroll each elementary and middle school



Clarke Bailey sprays off the yellow rubber ducks after Habersham Volunteers for Literacy's annual rubber duck race on the Soque River. Habersham United Way partner agencies are responsible for holding their own fundraisers, in addition to receiving United Way funds. **Submitted photo**

so they can participate in Scripps Spelling Bee. VFL depends on United Way funds, Wilson said. Suzanne Dow, executive director of Circle of Hope, Mark Smith, executive director of FAITH's Power House, and Brian Young, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Northeast Georgia, shared similar thoughts.

“Habersham County United Way was one of Circle of Hope's first funders after we formed in 1987,” Dow said. “They have played a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining our agency programs, such as emergency shelter, counseling services, and legal advocacy programs. Over the past 36 years, Circle of Hope has assisted thousands of families affected by domestic violence. The funds we receive annually from United Way have touched each of these families in some capacity.”

Smith said HABUW touches local nonprofits in many ways, by funding to help organizations deliver services; providing the mechanism for nonprofits to come together to share ideas and see how they can work together to provide needed services without duplication of efforts; providing training opportunities on changing trends; and by keeping the work of the nonprofits a focal point in the community.

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Habersham Rotary Club provides 60 years of service

By Kimberly Brown

Serving the community and providing fellowship and networking for members is what Habersham County Rotary Club is all about.

“Over the past 60 years, Habersham Rotary has made and will continue to make a positive difference in the lives of many people, in our community and around the world,” said Bradley Cook, who is serving as Habersham Rotary’s president this year. “In the words of Rotary International President Gordon McInally, ‘We will Create Hope in the World.’”

Habersham Rotary sponsors a wide variety of community projects, and members also enjoy entertaining and educational speakers at the weekly meetings.

Rotary supports two efforts that benefit Habersham County elementary students: Shoes for Kids, which provide shoes to students in need, and Food 2 Kids, which provides weekend meals for students who might otherwise not have food available. Rotary also provides scholarships to local high school students, having awarded \$385,150 to 311 different students over 38 years.

Habersham Rotary currently has approximately 100 members. There are over 1.2 million Rotarians worldwide.

The sole remaining charter member of Habersham Rotary Club is John Foster of Cornelia. Foster and his wife, Bobbie, owned WCON Radio, and Foster served as District 50 senator from 1975 until 1992. He also served one term as Habersham Rotary president.



John Foster, right, stands with former Gov. Nathan Deal, center, and David Foster during a Habersham Rotary Club meeting on June 13, 2019. John Foster is the last remaining charter member of Habersham Rotary Club. **Submitted photo**

Foster became a Rotarian when he was a young businessman in Sandersville. When he and his wife moved back to Habersham County, he was contacted by a man named Williams, who wanted to expand Rotary in Georgia.

“He called me and asked me if I would be interested in starting a Rotary Club in Habersham County,” Foster said. “We met in front of Habersham Hardware, and I agreed we would do it.”

Foster said the new club started with 27 charter members. He served as president from 1965-1966.

“We struggled for a while,” he said, but the club has thrived over its 62 years.

Ken Schubring has been a

Rotarian for 23 years and was president of Habersham Rotary 2009-2010 and 2019-2020.

“He’s the patriarch of the club, and he’s the go-to guy when we want to research history of the club,” Schubring said of Foster. “He’s done so much in this community over the years, not only as a senator, but as a businessman. You don’t find people like him anymore. He’s one of those go-to people who you can call, and he’s always willing to help.”

Philip Smith has been a member of Habersham Rotary Club for 19 years, and he served as president 2010-2011 and 2020-2021. Smith said John Foster is “a pillar of our community.”

“He’s one of the kindest persons you’ll meet,” Smith said. “He has given me counsel as a business leader and Rotarian that I value.”

Smith said when he served as president of the club, Foster would help line up speakers.

“He knows so many people from all walks of life,” Smith said. “He’s been a tremendous asset to our club, giving of his time and resources to help make Habersham County and the state of Georgia a great place to live and work.”

Habersham Rotary Club meets from noon to 1 p.m. at the Community House in Cornelia. Typically, new members are sponsored by existing members, but if someone is interested in Rotary, they are welcome, Schubring said. “If someone wants to join, we’ll line them up with somebody (a sponsor),” he said.

2024 Festivals and Events

Ongoing

First Friday of each month, Clarkesville hosts First Friday Fun Downtown. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street.

Fourth Friday of each month through October, Baldwin hosts "Movie in the Market" in the downtown Farmers Market. Concessions will be available, with proceeds going to Shop with a Hero.

Each Saturday, April through October, Saturday Night Bluegrass Jam in Tallulah Falls. Bring lawn chairs to watch and instruments to join in. Hot dogs will be served. Donations of food to share or money are appreciated. Features a bonfire and s'mores. Details: 706-754-6040

Each month, Full Moon Hikes at Tallulah Gorge State Park. April 22, May 22, June 20, Aug. 18, Sept. 17, Oct. 17, Nov 15, Dec. 15. Times vary each month. Hike to the suspension bridge and watch the moon rise over the gorge. Must register in advance. Event is \$10 plus \$5 parking or annual park pass. Details: 706-754-7981 or visit explore.gastateparks.org for times.

Each month, beginner archery at Tallulah Gorge State Park, 9-10:30 a.m. April 20, May 18, June 22, July 20, Aug. 7, Sept. 21, Oct. 19, Nov. 16 and Dec. 21. Learn to shoot a bow for the first time or hone your skills. All ages welcome but must be strong enough to pull a 20-pound bow. Event is \$10 plus \$5 parking or annual parking pass. Details: 706-754-7981 or visit explore.gastateparks.org.

April 19 and May 3: 4:30-5:30 p.m., Campfire Cookin' at Tallulah Gorge State Park. Roast up s'mores and weenies by the campfire. All you can eat. Meet at Jane Hurt Yarn Interpretive Center. Register in advance by calling 706-754-7981. Cost is \$5 plus \$5 parking or annual park pass.

April

13: Alto Clean-Up Day. Meet at city hall at 9 a.m. and finish by noon. Hot dog lunch and a T-shirt provided to volunteers. Rain day will be April 20. Details: 706-778-8035.

20: Baldwin Clean-Up Day. Details: 706-778-6341 or email media@cityofbaldwin.org.

May

2: National Day of Prayer, observed at locations across Habersham County.

4: Alto Spring Fling and Parade. Parade begins 10 a.m., and the day lasts until 2 p.m. Features a car show, food, entertainment, craft vendors and kids' zone. Details: 706-778-8035.

4: Public Safety Day in Baldwin. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., fun activities and demonstrations to bring awareness to fire and police departments. Details: 706-778-6341 or email media@cityofbaldwin.org.

18: 62nd annual Mountain Laurel Festival, Clarkesville, featuring vendors, kids' activities, music and food. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street.

18: Cornelia Music Festival. Opening act takes stage at 5 p.m., North Main Street. Features live entertainment, art and food vendors, kids' zone,

cornhole, ax throwing and more. Free to attend; vendor prices vary.

June

3-7: Adventure Junior Ranger Camp at Tallulah Gorge State Park. Day camp for kids 9-12 years old. Features challenging activities such as canoeing, strenuous hikes, archery and more. Space is limited, so sign up in advance by calling 706-754-7981. Cost \$300 plus \$5 parking or annual park pass.

10-14: Junior Ranger Camp at Tallulah Gorge State Park. Day camp for kids 5-8 years old. Learn about nature and outdoor activities. Space is limited, so sign up in advance by calling 706-754-7981. Cost is \$300 plus \$5 parking or annual park pass.

15: Water War at Mitchell Gailey Park, Baldwin, 2:30-4:30 p.m. Grab your super soakers and swim trunks and get ready!

22: 8th Annual Car Show, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Free T-shirts while supplies last. Antiques, vendors, entertainment. Event at Miles Through Time, 583 Grant Street, Clarkesville. Free for spectators. Registration for the show is \$25. Details: 706-754-4829 or milesthroughtime.com.

27: Cornelia's Summer Nights Festival, 5-9 p.m., North Main Street. Features live entertainment, art vendors, food vendors, kid zone, cornhole, axe throwing and more. Free to attend. Vendor prices vary.

29: Baldwin City "Pit"nic, 5 p.m. until dark with fireworks finale, at downtown city park in Baldwin. This is a family-friendly event with food provided by the city to show appreciation to residents.

July

4: Glorious Fourth of July Celebration, downtown Demorest. Festival, parade, and fireworks at dusk.

13: Red, White & Tunes, Pitts Park, Clarkesville. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street.

20: Back to School Bash in Baldwin. Come celebrate the end of summer with a final bash. Details: 706-778-6341 or email media@cityofbaldwin.org.

25: Cornelia's Summer Nights Festival, 5-9 p.m., North Main Street. Features live entertainment, art vendors, food vendors, kid zone, cornhole, axe throwing and more. Free to attend. Vendor prices vary.

August

6: National Night Out, Baldwin. Event to bring first responders and residents together. Details: 706-778-6341 or email media@cityofbaldwin.org.

24: Dog Days of Summer, Clarkesville. Bring your pooches and have lots of cool fun, including kiddie pools, Kona ice, homemade treats, an agility course and more. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street.

September

6-14: Chattahoochee Mountain Fair 2024, Habersham County Fairgrounds, Clarkesville. Features a petting zoo, midway rides, art and photography show, a rodeo, baking, canning and crafts, entertainment, food, vendors and more. Details: Chattahoocheemountainfair.org.

21: 36th Big Red Apple Festival, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.,

downtown Cornelia, featuring live entertainment, car show, cornhole tournament, hayrides, artisan vendors, food vendors and kids' zone. Free to attend. Vendor prices vary.

October

5: Fall Festival and History Harvest, Clarkesville. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street or email mainstreet@clarkesvillega.com.

19: Baldwin's 7th annual Fall Festival, beginning at noon with a free movie screening at dark, held at the Farmers Market, 110 Airport Road, Baldwin. Details: 706-778-6341 or email media@cityofbaldwin.org.

19: Juried Art Show, Clarkesville. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street.

26: Tenth annual Twin Rivers Challenge bicycle race, sponsored by Tallulah Falls School. Registration is at 7:30 a.m. and the ride begins at 9 a.m. Details: tallulahfalls.org.

31: Downtown Trick or Treat in Cornelia, 3-6 p.m., visit local businesses for candy and costume contest. Free to attend.

31: Trick or Treat on the Clarkesville Square. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street or email mainstreet@clarkesvillega.com

31: Trick or Treat in Demorest.

November

Thanksgiving Night through New Year's Eve: Christmas Lights Spectacular, Cornelia City Park, 6-11 p.m. each night.

28: Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner, Baldwin. Details: 706-778-6341 or email media@cityofbaldwin.org.

29: Tree lighting in Downtown Cornelia. Begins at 6:30 p.m., North Main Street in Cornelia. Come celebrate the beginning of Christmas with friends and family.

30: Small Business Saturday, shop local all day in Habersham County.

December

5: Habersham County 2024 Christmas Parade will be held in downtown Cornelia. Events 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., North Main Street in Cornelia, Ga. Come enjoy the evening with food, shopping, and the annual county parade in downtown.

6: Baldwin's Christmas tree lighting, pictures with Santa, hot cocoa and cookies, 3-6:30 p.m. Details: 706-778-6341.

6: Alto's Christmas tree lighting, time TBD.

7: Christmas in Downtown Cornelia and Christmas Tree Lighting 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., North Main Street, Cornelia. Events features photos with Santa, live entertainment, s'mores, hot cocoa, hayrides and more.

7: Downtown Clarkesville Christmas, 5-7:30 p.m., featuring photos with Santa, live music, roasted marshmallows and hot cocoa, capped off with Christmas tree lighting. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street or email mainstreet@clarkesvillega.com.

23: Candlelight Christmas Walk, Clarkesville. Details: clarkesvillega.com/main-street or email mainstreet@clarkesvillega.com.

31: New Year's Eve Celebration, Baldwin. Details: 706-778-6341 or email media@cityofbaldwin.org.



Cubmaster Al Skelton of Pack 5 in Clarkesville directs traffic, literally and figuratively, at the 2024 Pinewood Derby in Toccoa. **Photo/Matthew Osborne**



Caleb Bennett takes aim during the BB Shooting activity at Fall Family Camping at Camp Rainey Mountain. **Photo/Megan Bennett**

On their honor, they do their best

Scout programs instill values in youngsters

By Matthew Osborne

At the beginning of meetings, the Scouts all know the words. They know the oath, the Scout Law and the Pledge of Allegiance, all of it focusing their minds on the values they are taught to uphold.

The Boy Scouts of America programs were founded in 1910, and they are now the largest youth organization in the U.S.

In Clarkesville, the Scouting programs survived the challenges of the pandemic and have come out on the other side thriving.

Clarkesville's Troop 5 is celebrating its 75th year in 2024. The program for the older Boy Scouts is led by Scoutmaster Jake McGahee, who

took over leadership of the troop in November 2019, just months before COVID-19 shut everything down.

McGahee, who earned his Eagle Scout with Troop 5 as a young man himself, was on a camping trip with some of the Scouts when the news started trickling that schools were being closed.

On the Cub Scout side – the program for elementary school-aged students – Pack 5 had no Cubmaster until Al Skelton moved to town from Decatur. Also an Eagle Scout from his youth, Skelton did not want to see the Cub Scout program falter.

When COVID hit, though, only one child carried over and stayed in the pack. Under Skelton's guidance, the group has grown over the last four years to 40 active Scouts.

“The key was building good relationships with the elementary schools and getting them to help us recruit,” Skelton said. “After that, it was on us to provide a fun program for the kids on Tuesday nights. Now the kids have started their own recruiting and bringing their friends, and that has helped us grow. We could not do what we do without some great parent volunteers who really support us in the leadership roles.”

After the kids cross over to McGahee's troop, their experience ramps up, teaching them all sorts of life lessons.

Not every Scout makes it all the way to Eagle, but McGahee said the lessons every Scout learns can still go with them for their entire lives.

Anyone interested in Scouting can visit beascout.org or email pack5cubs@gmail.com.

OUR TOWNS

A city-by-city guide

Straddling Habersham and Banks counties, the city of Alto is a small town named after the Italian word for “high,” for its 1,395 feet above sea level elevation. Originally known as “Lulah City” and “Long View,”

Alto was incorporated on Dec. 16, 1985, and it is one square mile in size.

Alto is home to landmarks like the School Bus Graveyard and Jaemor Farms, which offers a variety of local produce as well as homemade fried pies and boiled peanuts. The Wat Lao Buddha Sattha Dhamma Buddhist Temple, which was founded in 2009 by the Laotian American community of Habersham County, is also located in Alto,



Phone: 706-778-8035
Website: townofaltoga.org
Mayor: Patricia Gail Armour
City Administrator: Lisa Turner
Property tax rate: 4.370 mills
Population: 970 (2020 Census)

serving as both a place of worship and a learning center for Laotian culture.

Alto also houses Lee Arrendale State Prison, which is still awaiting a delayed downsizing to become a rehabilitation facility.



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Incorporated Dec. 17, 1896, on 250 acres along the Banks/Habersham County line, Baldwin was originally known as Stonepile because of a pile of stones that stood in the center of town, stacked

and left behind by Cherokee Indians who once lived in this area.

Baldwin, named after Joseph A. Baldwin, an Atlanta-Charlotte Air Line Railway official, has city limits that contain about 4.5 square miles and are located along two major corridors of U.S. Highway 441 and state Route 365 – two divided highways.

Baldwin's downtown park is expected to bring more visitors – both growers and buyers alike – to the downtown farmer's market.

The park, intended to serve as a gathering

spot for young families who settle in Baldwin, is expected to bring a great sense of community with its completion.

Baldwin is also home to the Habersham County Airport, which is growing each year and could become an Airport of Regional Significance in the next year.



Clarkesville is the county seat of Habersham County, and it is coming off the celebration of its 200th anniversary last year. The city, named for Gen. John C. Clark, governor of Georgia in 1819 and 1821, or his father, Gen. Elijah Clarke, was chartered in 1823. The elder Clarke was a Revolutionary War hero, according to various versions of the city's history.

Before Clarkesville became a frequented tourist spot, it belonged to the Cherokee Indians, and around 1540, Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto is said to have made passage through what would later become the city.

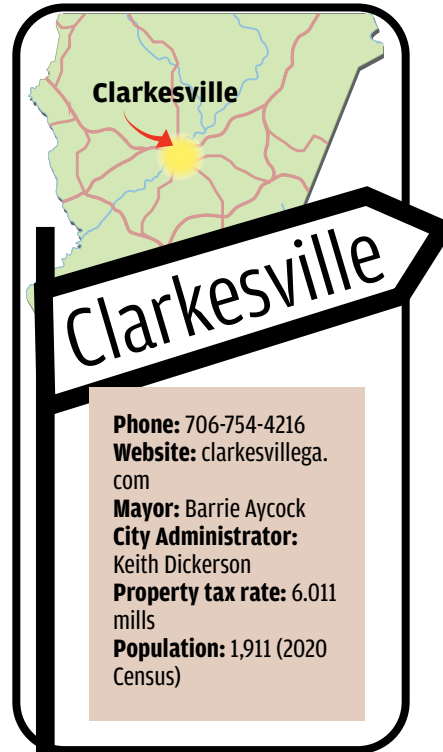
Years later, before the city became known as

Clarkesville, white settlers inhabited the area.

In 1823, the city was surveyed and planning for its layout was underway, with the streets named for presidents Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, as well as Benjamin Franklin and generals Greene, Wayne and Marion of the American Revolution.

Clarkesville has a strong undercurrent

of growth yet to manifest, but the city continues to actively plan and account for the urban sprawl expected to come from the Atlanta area, preplanning for the future of a city many will start to call home in the coming years.



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Cornelia was first a settlement around 1860. It was situated near the old boundary line between the Cherokee and Creek Indian tribes. In 1872, workers of the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line Railroad (later Southern Railway) invaded the virgin forest. A roadbed was cleared and graded, and tracks were laid from Gainesville to Toccoa. In 1882, the Blue Ridge and Atlantic Railroad opened a line that extended northward from the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line to Clarkesville and Tallulah Falls. The Tallulah Railway, as it came to be called, carried passengers and freight from Cornelia to Franklin, N.C.



Phone: 706-778-8585
Website: www.cornelia.city
Mayor: John Borrow
City Administrator: Donald Anderson
Property tax rate: 9.5 mills
Population: 4,503 (2020 Census)

The Big Red Apple monument stands on the railway depot grounds in downtown Cornelia. The replica of the North Georgia apple is constructed of steel and concrete and was molded in Winchester, Virginia, in 1925. Cornelia is a pleasant, picturesque small town at the gateway to the North Georgia mountains. It is located at the juncture of U.S. Highway 441 and state Route 365 and has a population around 4,500.

Cornelia's city motto is "Let the tracks lead you here."

Cornelia is adjacent to Lake Russell in the Chattahoochee National Forest. Within its city limits, visitors will find numerous attractions, such as the historic Cornelia Community House.

The restored railroad depot in the center of town is available for public and private events.

Chenocetah Tower is the last rock-constructed, working fire lookout tower in the east and has been preserved through a cooperative effort between the U.S. Forest Service and local citizens' groups.

Cornelia is home to a new city hall and fire station, the latter of which has improved emergency response time in the southern end of Habersham County.

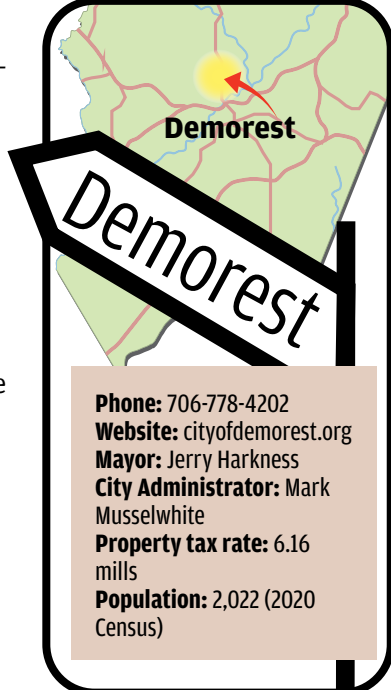
A town founded on temperance, Demorest is one of the most unique cities in Northeast Georgia with several water springs.

Town founders ensured prohibition enforcement through the Demorest Home, Mining & Improvement Company, which purchased the 3,500 acres that would become Demorest. Both the town and company were named for William Jennings Demorest, an internationally known alcohol prohibition leader.

The city once had two small lakes, Demorest Lake and South Lake, built to provide water power for the factories. Hotels accommodated visitors and a small steamship carried passengers across the lakes.

The city is home to Piedmont University. Demorest was shaken by the economic depression of 1893, including the bankruptcy of the Demorest Home, Mining & Improvement Company, and failure of many other businesses.

Water still runs this city and it is the largest supplier in Habersham County with over 450 miles of pipe. The Johnny Mize Athletic Center and Museum, named for the Baseball Hall of Famer and former Piedmont player Johnny Mize, features memorabilia from his career.



Phone: 706-778-4202
Website: cityofdemorest.org
Mayor: Jerry Harkness
City Administrator: Mark Musselwhite
Property tax rate: 6.16 mills
Population: 2,022 (2020 Census)



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Founded in 1874 by a railroad promoter, Mt. Airy has views of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Northeast Georgia at an elevation of 1,545 feet.

Originally a resort town filled with summer cottages and hotels during the glory days of railroad travel in the 1800s and early 1900s, the town hall was located on the site of the former Monterey Hotel until its recent move to the Old Mt. Airy Schoolhouse.

Heritage tourism sites include the Mt. Airy Schoolhouse building and Eastview Cemetery, with gravestones dating from the 1800s. The cemetery offers a beautiful mountain view of Currahee Mountain to the east, beyond Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area.

Mt. Airy is the home of Habersham Central High School, which has been the county's main secondary school since 1970.

Mt. Airy

Phone: 706-778-6990
Website: townofmtairy.com
Mayor: Ray McAllister
City Administrator: Sheri Berrong
Property tax rate: 3.91 mills
Population: 1,311 (2020 Census)

Tallulah Falls, founded Oct. 7, 1885, is situated in Habersham and Rabun counties.

The town is about 1,570 feet above sea level. The town was a popular resort in Victorian days, with visitors from the hotter, southern part of Georgia coming to town on the Tallulah Falls Railroad.

One of the primary attractions of Tallulah Falls is Tallulah Gorge State Park. The gorge is 2 miles long and about 1,000 feet deep.

With swimming, camping, hiking, biking, kayaking and state park-sponsored events and classes, there is an abundance of activities to enjoy. The town hosts its own free outdoors bluegrass music in the spring and summer every year.

Tallulah Falls

Phone: 706-754-6040
Website: tallulahfallsga.gov
Mayor: Mike Early
Property tax rate: 6.473 mills
Population: 199 (2020 Census)

Magnolia Hills



Mimi Brantley (center) is joined by daughter SusAnn Brantley Allen and granddaughter Bralen Allen for three proud generations in the family business.

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— SusAnn Allen, RN, BSN

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RELOCATION GUIDE

Requirements and resources for new residents vary by geographic location – Habersham has seven municipalities – please refer to specific city or town for details.

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Website: habershamemc.com

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Fax 706-776-4119
Website: georgiapower.com

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Cornelia Post Office: 706-778-4714

Demorest Post Office: 706-778-8479

Mt. Airy Post Office: 706-778-8323

Tallulah Falls Post Office: 706-754-6011

Habersham County Schools

Under the leadership of Superintendent Matthew Cooper, Habersham County's school system includes 14 schools – eight elementary schools, three middle schools, a ninth-grade academy (which includes the county's alternative school), Habersham Success Academy and Habersham Central High School.

Elementary

Baldwin Elementary

894 Willingham Ave., Baldwin GA
30511
706-778-6435
Principal: Rodney Long

Clarkesville Elementary

6539 Highway 115 West,
Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-754-2442
Principal: Georgia Pitts

Cornelia Elementary

375 Old Cleveland Road, Cornelia,
GA 30531
706-778-6526
Principal: Dr. Darlene Hudson
(through 2024 spring)

Demorest Elementary

3116 Demorest-Mt. City Highway,
Demorest, GA 30535
706-778-4126
Principal: Lana Jones

Fairview Elementary

2925 Cannon Bridge Road,
Demorest, GA 30535
706-778-2030
Principal: Michelle Wilbanks

Hazel Grove Elementary

6390 Dicks Hill Parkway, Mt. Airy,
GA 30563
706-754-2942
Principal: Dr. Tim Goss

Level Grove Elementary

2525 Level Grove Road, Cornelia,
GA 30531
706-778-3087
Principal: Aimee Shedd

Woodville Elementary

911 Historic Old Highway 441,
Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-754-4225
Principal: BJ Addison

Middle Schools

Hilliard A. Wilbanks Middle School

3115 Demorest-Mt. Airy Highway,
Demorest, GA 30535
706-894-1341
Principal: Chris Chitwood

North Habersham Middle School

1500 Wall Bridge Road,
Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-754-2915
Principal: Dr. Adam Bagwell

South Habersham Middle School

237 Old Athens Highway, Cornelia,
GA 30531
706-778-7121
Principal: Daphne Penick

Secondary Schools

Ninth Grade Academy

171 Raider Circle, Mt. Airy, GA
30563
706-778-0830
Principal: David Leenman

Habersham Success Academy

171 Raider Circle, Mt. Airy, GA
30563
706-894-3056
Principal: Vickie Martin

Habersham Central High School

2059 Highway 197 South, Mt. Airy,
GA, 30563
706-778-7161
Principal: Dr. Jonathan Stribling

Private schools

Tallulah Falls School

Founded in 1909, Tallulah Falls School is an independent, co-educational boarding and day school serving more than 500 students in grades five-12. Academics and character development are at the heart of the Tallulah Falls School experience.

TFS is located on 500 acres in Habersham and Rabun Counties. Dr. Larry Peevy is Head of School for Tallulah Falls. For more information about TFS, visit tallulahfalls.org or call 706-754-0400.

The Torch Christian Academy

The Torch Christian Academy in Demorest offers 3-year-olds through fifth-grade students “a challenging curriculum with Christian values infused throughout all lessons,” according to Director Carrie Akers. For more information about the Torch Christian Academy, visit thetorchchristianacademy.net, call 706-778-4063, ext. 107, or email cakers@thetorch.net.

Trinity Classical School

Trinity Classical School is a Christian school located at Hazel Creek Baptist Church in Mt. Airy. TCS is accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission, and serves students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Its mission is to covenant with parents and educate children through the Christian Classical model. The head of school is Susan Ramsey. For more information about Trinity Classical School, visit trinityclassical.org or call 706-894-2404.

Colleges

Piedmont University

165 Central Ave.
Demorest, GA 30535
706-778-3000
Piedmont.edu

North Georgia Technical College

State Route 197 North
Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-754-7700
Northgatech.edu

**Habersham County
Property Tax Rate:**
12.682 mills

EMS Tax Rate:
0.825 mills

Hospital Bond:
0.842 mills

HABERSHAM COUNTY COMMISSION

District 1: Bruce Palmer, bpalmer@habershamga.com

District 2: Dustin Mealor, dmealor@habershamga.com

District 3: Jimmy Tench, jtench@habershamga.com

District 4: Bruce Harkness, bharkness@habershamga.com

District 5: Ty Akins, takins@habershamga.com
(Chairman)

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(R-Cornelia)**

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victor.anderson@house.
ga.gov

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(R-Homer)**

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house.ga.gov

**Sen. Bo Hatchett
(R-Cornelia)**

109 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334
Office: 404-656-7454
bo.hatchett@senate.ga.gov

U.S. CONGRESS

U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff (D-Ga.)

Atlanta
3280 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 2640
Atlanta, GA 30305
Phone: 470-786-7800
Washington: Hart Senate Office Building, Suite
825 B&C, Washington, DC 20510
Phone: 202-224-3521

U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.)

Washington, DC
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Suite B40D
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: 202-224-3643

U.S. Rep. Andrew Clyde (R-Ga.)

Gainesville
210 Washington St NW, Suite 202
Gainesville, GA 30501
Phone: 470-768-6520
Washington: 1504 Longworth House Office
Building, Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-9893

County Recreation Facilities

The Ruby Fulbright Aquatic Center has two swimming pools – a recreational pool and an eight-lane fitness pool. Open swimming is allowed daily per the current pool schedule. Two indoor gymnasiums, a fitness and exercise room and two meeting rooms are available. The pool and basketball courts are free to use for Habersham County residents. Outside, there are two tennis courts and a new slate of pickleball courts, along with two football fields and multiple soccer, baseball and softball fields. All county facilities are available for rental by contacting the Habersham County Parks and Recreation Department at 706-754-3650.

Contact Information
Habersham County Parks
and Recreation Department
Ruby Fulbright Aquatic Center

Brooke Whitmire, director
bwhitmire@habershamga.com
120 Paul Franklin Road
Clarkesville, GA 30523

706-839-0234; habershamga.com/parks-and-recreation
Registration for programs: habershamga.recdesk.com/Community/Home

Driver's licenses: (No office in Habersham County)

Georgia Driver Services
62 E. Doyle St.
Toccoa, GA 30577
678-413-8400

Georgia Driver Services
1010 Aviation Blvd.
Gainesville, GA 30501
678-413-8400

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