

Hogansville Post 5 candidates talk goals

BY JENNA ODEN
 DAILY NEWS

Toni Striblin and incumbent Theresa Strickland are running for the post five seat on the Hogansville City Council.

Strickland has served on the Hogansville City Council for four years and was the first African American and first woman to serve as the city's mayor pro-tem.

"I think the past four-years

SEE HOGANSVILLE 2

County ends tourism agreement

BY ALICIA B. HILL
 DAILY NEWS

When the LaGrange City Council voted to end its tourism contract with the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce in April and form a new 501©6 in July, those decisions had a ripple effect throughout the county.

Following the decision, the chamber decided to cease operating as a 501©6 covering tourism, and now, Troup County, Hogansville and West Point are all having to consider what the future use of tourism funds will look like

SEE TOURISM 2

Kidnapped woman escapes on I-85

FROM STAFF REPORTS
 DAILY NEWS

A woman who was reportedly kidnapped out of Montgomery jumped out of a vehicle on Interstate 85 Tuesday night, leading the Troup County Sheriff's Office into a high-speed chase with the driver of the vehicle.

A deputy was sitting at the state line in a construction zone when he saw a vehicle traveling next to him skid to a stop, according to a press release from TCSO. A female

SEE CHASE 2



ALICIA B. HILL | DAILY NEWS

COUGAR STRONG RACING: Troup County School System transportation manager and former Long Cane Middle School principal Chip Giles (right) explains to TCCS Superintendent Brian Shumate (center) how Greenpower USA race cars work on Wednesday, following a luncheon honoring sponsors.

RACING INTO THE NEXT YEAR

Local Greenpower Racing sponsors recognized at LCMS luncheon

BY ALICIA B. HILL
 DAILY NEWS

On Wednesday, students from Long Cane Middle School's Cougar Strong Racing team discussed what they've learned during a sponsor luncheon honoring the local businesses that made Greenpower racing possible in Troup County.

In the Greenpower USA racing program, students build, drive and troubleshoot problems with electric cars. The sport is relatively new, but Troup County-based Cougar

Strong Racing has already seen great success in the program with team 999 recognized as the best in the nation and team 000 following close behind. However, according to Chip Giles, director of transportation for the Troup County School System and former Long Cane Middle School principal who was instrumental in getting the program started in Troup County, the program itself wouldn't be possible without support from local businesses.

"We had some strong sponsors last year, and we could not have done the things we

did [without them]," Giles said. "We couldn't have had that national championship ring or the second place, but most importantly, these kids got so much out of this program, and it is going to launch them into a great career."

The students answered questions from sponsors on how the cars work, pit stops and how to win, and they shared their favorite parts of the program. According to Matthew Graham, who oversees the program

SEE GREENPOWER 8



FILE PHOTO | DAILY NEWS

NICE TO MEET YOU: A Georgia State Patrol Officer talks to a young attendee at National Night Out in 2018.

Locals prepare for annual National Night Out

BY DONNA WILLIAMS
 SPECIAL TO THE DAILY NEWS

Local families are invited to LaGrange's Third Annual National Night Out, a night where families can get to know the law enforcement officers in their communities.

"It's a time for the community to interact with public safety," said Sgt. Stewart Smith, Public Information Officer for the Troup County Sheriff Department. "We'll have a patrol car there, as well as our mobile command post, and McGruff the Crime Dog will likely make an appearance."

The LaGrange Police Department hosts the event, which includes a DJ, dancing and games. Kids are encouraged to ask questions as they try on police gear and tour safety vehicles, such as a S.W.A.T van or fire truck. One big draw each year is a crime scene unit from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, in partnership with the county and city.

Groups scheduled to be available at the event include nonprofits like The Jungle Bus and Harmony House. The Department of Family and Children

SEE NATIONAL 2



GOOD MORNING: Good morning to Chuck Estes, who was recieved Troup County's Strongest Link award on Tuesday.

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TODAY'S WEATHER ARTIST: Today's weather artist is Antaniya Blackmon, a fourth grade student at Clearview Elementary School.

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OUR MISSION

The goals we set for ourselves

The LaGrange Daily News and its employees strive for the following:

- ▶ To report news accurately and without bias
- ▶ To edit and publish with integrity and with the best interests of our community in mind
- ▶ To take an active leadership role in our community
- ▶ To do what we say we will do
- ▶ To bend over backwards to meet the needs of our advertisers
- ▶ To operate at a profit level that allows us to fairly compensate our employees, reinvest in our organization and stand independent from outside influences
- ▶ And, above all, to treat our readers, advertisers and employees as we would like to be treated ourselves.

DIRECTORY

Below is a partial listing of the staff and administration of LaGrange Daily News

Daniel Evans
President and Publisher
daniel.evans@lagrangenews.com

Donna Ennis
Business Manager
donna.ennis@lagrangenews.com

ADVERTISING/MARKETING

Jennie Overfelt
Advertising Director
jennie.overfelt@lagrangenews.com

Truett Pirkle
Marketing Consultant
truett.pirkle@lagrangenews.com

CIRCULATION

Ed Pugh
Circulation Manager
ed.pugh@lagrangenews.com

Maggie Langford
Customer Service
maggie.langford@lagrangenews.com

NEWS & SPORTS

Kevin Eckleberry
Sports Editor
kevin.eckleberry@lagrangenews.com

Alicia Hill
Reporter
alicia.hill@lagrangenews.com

Jenna Oden
Reporter
jenna.oden@lagrangenews.com

COMPOSING

Kathy Reeves
Graphic Designer
kathy.reeves@valleytimes-news.com

WANTED: NEWS

How to submit articles, photos

The LaGrange Daily News is always looking for articles and photography that help us tell the stories of the communities we serve. Please feel free to submit your news to us, and photos as well.

Electronic delivery of articles and photographs assists us in getting your submission into print sooner. It also reduces the risk of errors that occur during the typesetting process.

Articles generally should be 500 words or less, though we will consider longer pieces in special circumstances.

Photographs should be saved at a resolution not less than 200 dots per inch. Send them in color and we'll convert to black-and-white if necessary. Photos printed on ink-jet printers aren't of acceptable quality.

Any questions about articles or photo submissions should be directed to news@lagrangenews.com, or by calling (706) 884-7311 and ask for the newsroom.

OUR VIEW

Silver Screen comes to area

Many people in Troup County wouldn't know it, but just down the road in Valley, Alabama, a massive film crew took over the Valley Community Center and the Skatin' Rink Tuesday afternoon.

The set of "Electric Jesus" shot a few scenes at the skating rink, and if you read Wednesday's edition of The LaGrange Daily News, you saw that we had an inside look at the set.

The film has a few young actors, an energetic cast and a few veterans to balance the cast. Part of those notable actors include Judd Nelson, known for his role as John Bender in "The Breakfast Club" and Brian Baumgartner, best known for his role as Kevin Malone in "The Office."

"Electric Jesus" is based in Columbus, and was described by movie Director Chris White as a trip back to the 80s, featuring a Christian rock band.

However, the filmmakers wanted an authentic location with an 80s feel.

Apparently, The Skatin' Rink was that place. Who would have thought that place would be just over the state line in Valley, Alabama. When the film comes out some time next year, Valley will be immortalized on film forever.

White said it would be cool to have a screen-



JOHN POWELL/WWW.BLUECOLLARIMAGES.COM

ing at the Valley Community Center before the film is released nationally. Let's hope all of the logistics work to make that possible.

Additionally, a big shout out goes out to Jason and Carmen Turnham keeping the skating rink in great shape and well-maintained. Without them, there is no skating rink for "Electric Jesus" to shoot at, and it likely would have gone somewhere else. For now, those in Troup County who have skated at the rink as kids and anyone who skates there now should be proud and excited the rink will be in the film. Moreover, we should be excited about the prospect that a piece of the Greater Valley Area will live on forever. From what it sounds, those growing up in the 80s will love this film. We can't wait to see it.

CONTRIBUTOR'S VIEW

My struggles became my purpose

Often, I say, "God works in mysterious ways." Now, I know he works behind this typewriter. I should buy him a desk.

The other day as it was inching toward September, I wanted to submit another story to the USA Today Network in Tennessee, who has published some of my work.

I looked through several of my articles ranging from topics about sorrow and love to fried chicken. I couldn't decide, so I asked my friend, Deborah, to study the five I selected and see which one she thought was best. She couldn't make up her mind, so we sent two.

One was a story I had edited from an article I wrote over a year ago regarding depression and thoughts of suicide. It was a deeply personal story, but readers responded with nothing but kind words.

Before I hit "send" last Friday, I questioned my choice about the selection of such an intimate story.

Was I prepared for this story to travel beyond Georgia and into wherever the USA Today network decides to publish the column? When I write for Georgia folks, I feel as if they are all my friends, know who I am, and they are welcome for coffee anytime.

Trust me, to see a story I wrote about my Southern great-grandmother published in New York is a bit daunting. New Yorkers for coffee? Do I have that much coffee, and will they understand my accent?

During the Labor Day weekend, I wondered what the editor would think as he sat behind his desk reading this tale of a woman's struggle to not commit suicide in 1988 and finding a way to live with her depression. Surely if he chose to publish one of the stories, it would be the happier, upbeat story about my Tennessee ancestors.

The email came after lunch the day he received the two submissions. The story chosen was "Finding My Way to the Light after 1988."

He thanked me for sharing such a personal journey, especially since September was Suicide Awareness Month.

I had no idea or had forgotten that fact. When I thought about it, I realized sometimes we are just not in charge of what happens in our lives. Sometimes God does his own thing with our purpose.



LYNN GENDUSA
Former resident and writer who lives in Roswell

He knew September was to raise awareness of the mental diseases that prompts prematurely ending lives. He also knows our struggles and how we are meant to aid, encourage, and fight for one another.

Of course, I was meant to share my journey through the darkness and into the light. If not, then what is my mission? We don't just live for ourselves, do we? The beauty of survival is to share it.

Let's say you experienced a heart attack and survived.

What if you then saw a friend experiencing the same symptoms, would you quickly call for help?

Well, of course, you would. Your knowledge of what a heart attack feels like quickly made you realize you could keep your friend from dying by recognizing the signs. You just saved a life through your experiences with heart disease. There is no difference.

Our travails can be a stepping stone to another's survival if we only share the journey.

Our society often grapples with the horrible affliction known as, "What will the neighbors think? I don't want folks to know I am not the perfect specimen of humankind."

That affliction is a killer, especially for the depressed.

The truth is we all have strife, aches, pains, heartaches and times when life is just plain tough.

Nor does hiding under the umbrella of silence make our difficulties easier. Sharing with a loved one or friend is what we are built to do. To listen, to offer hope, to be aware of another's needs and anguish can save a person's life.

If you or someone you know is struggling with depression or thoughts of suicide, be bold enough to call for help just like you would for the heart attack victim.

Be brave and listen to God pleading with you to end your suffering and seek advice. He is using all of us who know what that silence feels like to aid you. Your purpose in life is there; it is only the darkness that is not allowing you to see it.

In America, 123 people die every day from suicide. It is the tenth leading cause of adult deaths and the second leading cause of death among teens.

A quarter of a million more of our citizens survives a suicide attempt yearly.

No wonder God is working anyway he can to spread the word to live until he alone decides to call us home.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A challenge for our local governing bodies

Dear Editor,

I write this letter as a challenge for our local governments to search out ways to give some relief for seniors 65 and above from property tax rates in Troup County — specifically school property tax, which according to local officials makes up 47 percent of the entire tax rate for Troup County.

At present, Troup County offers only the mandated state exemption of \$4,000.00 for seniors age 65 or above.

Three out of the five surrounding counties offer as much as five times the standard deduction.

Some of these counties are at the same time operating on much smaller budgets while producing better results on test scores.

So there seems to be no correlation between lower school tax rates for seniors and reduced test scores.

Many of the counties in Georgia offer a 100 percent elimination of property taxes for seniors and again they have as good, if not better test results and often operate on a lower per student cost than Troup County currently operates on.

I would never want to do anything that would have a negative impact on our most precious valuable resource, our kids.

My wife was an educator for 31 years, so I know of the challenges our schools face. I also know of the challenges some of our senior property owners face with our current cost of school tax.

I do believe though that if these other systems can reduce their tax rates, while maintaining or actually improving their test scores at or above the level of Troup County, our local officials can and should be able to do the same.

According to local tax officials, totally eliminating the school property tax for seniors would have a \$3 million impact on the school system. That is a lot of dollars.

However, given a school budget of \$118 million and a surplus of some 16 to 18 million, and the continued backing of SPLOST in Troup County, this reduction could be easily achieved with some minimal tightening of expenditures.

Any well-managed organization should be easily able to absorb a 2 to 3 percent impact to its budget, given the great economy we are currently experiencing.

In addition, given our recent expenditures to build several \$15 million gyms and pay our local school leadership at a rate few if any of the citizens of Troup County could ever hope to attain, I believe it can be done.

RANDY ATKINS
LaGrange

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PHOTOS BY ALICIA B. HILL | DAILY NEWS

COUGAR STRONG SUPPORT: Left, Gordon Cone, chairman of the Diverse Power Foundation, presents a check to the local Greenpower Racing program for \$10,000 on Wednesday. Above, a representative from Kia of LaGrange (left) accepts a ring recognizing its contribution to the Cougar Strong Racing. Below, Freeman's Custom Windows is recognized. Bottom, Trackmobile is recognized for its contributions.

GREENPOWER

Continued from page 1

at LCMS, one of the requirements is that the students have to solve problems that they encounter during races on their own, and the Cougar Strong Racing teams have risen to the challenge at races facing wet tracks and even a car's nose cone malfunction.

Those over the program hope that those problem-solving skills will help the students for years to come, even into the working world.

"You aren't investing in a race program. You are investing in kids," Giles said. "This is the very best workforce development STEM program out there."

Troup County School System Superintendent Brian Shumate attended the event, and he said that Greenpower Racing fits perfectly with what he hopes for a school program to enrich students.

"We talk about a place for every kid, and programs like this create a place for these kids to engage in the school process beyond what the normal classwork is," Shumate said. "So, not only is it a fun thing to do where they are creating teammates, and they have a common interest, but they are learning about science

and technology and electrical power, electric cars, how to innovate on the spot, how to fix problems."

Giles added that in addition to skills that could be helpful to future engineers, the program also teaches the students public speaking and business skill sets.

"I hope that this leads to the students setting a goal for themselves to aspire toward high paying professional jobs, jobs that will sustain them as adults, sustain a family, career type jobs that we have plenty of here in Troup County," Giles said. "We hope this program funnels our kids right into these jobs and these industries, and they aren't all just engineering. There is a lot of business applications here. There is something for every kid in the Greenpower program whether they are science kids, whether they are artsy kids, whether they are the communicators. There is really something for everybody here."

Shumate noted the role of activities after school hours — ranging from working on the cars after school to attending out of state competitions — in ensuring that students remain engaged at school. He said that he looks forward to watching the program grow and seeing opportunities expand throughout the district.

The sponsors gathered at the event

already had a hand in that, and Giles thanked them for their support.

"It takes money to drive from here to Huntsville with a bunch of kids to stay a couple of nights and come back," Giles said. "It takes money to buy all the performance racing stuff that goes on these cars."

Cougar Strong Racing sponsors recognized at the event included Kia of LaGrange, Freeman's Custom Windows, Trackmobile, Diverse Power, Polk Sheet Metal, Jackson Services, His 'N' Hers Hair Salon, Norris Body Shop, Kona Ice, Lee's Crossing Tires, Troup High School's automotive program and Southern Carts.

"It is a program that will never stop giving good things to these kids and making them think," Giles said. "We are hoping they can come be engineers for [the gathered sponsors]."

Gordon Cone, chairman of the Diverse Power Foundation, presented a check to the program for \$10,000 on Wednesday. Diverse Power is the sponsor of the 2020 race.

All the middle schools in Troup County have Greenpower Racing kits this year, and the program is expected to continue to expand to include Troup County high schools and elementary schools, both public and private.





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PHOTOS BY ALICIA B. HILL | DAILY NEWS

WINNING TEAM: Above, Polk Sheet Metal is recognized by members of the Cougar Strong Racing team. Left, His 'N' Hers Hair Salon is recognized. Below, Jackson Services is recognized for its contributions.

