



Goodbye 2025 - Hello 2026

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!



THE TALBOTTON NEW ERA

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In Review: Top Stories of 2025

By JOHN KUYKENDALL

Editor's Note: Below are some of the top stories reported by The Talbotton New Era during 2025. They are in date order.

• The year began with a bang, literally. On Jan. 23 the newspaper reported the GBI was investigating a shooting incident that resulted in one person being killed and another person injured. The incident occurred on Wednesday, Jan. 15 at about 2:10 p.m. It was reported, the Talbot County Sheriff's Office requested the GBI to investigate a shooting. The preliminary investigation indicated that at about 2:10 p.m., the Talbot County Sheriff's Office was dispatched to a home on Tuck Person Highway in reference to a shooting. Upon arrival, deputies learned that Fazion Terry, age 29, of Woodland, and another man were involved in an argument that resulted in both men being shot. Terry was pronounced dead on the scene. The other man was taken by ambulance to a hospital in Columbus, where he was treated for injuries sustained during the shooting. To this day, it has not been reported if an arrested has been made in the case.

• On Jan. 30, this newspaper reported the Talbot County Board of Education and the Talbot County Board of Commissioners intended to opt out of Georgia House 581. After meeting and public hearings and the board's decisions to do so sparked controversy.

• On Feb. 6, the Talbot County Sheriff's Office arrested two teens after a shooting incident. The teens were charged with aggravated assault in connection with the shooting incident that occurred on Sunday, Jan. 5 around 1 p.m. inside the City Limits of Talbotton. According to Sheriff Bobby Gates, Jr. no one was injured in the incident. Arrested in connection to the incident were, Kendrevious Searcy, 18 and a 17 year-old juvenile both charged with aggravated assault.

• On Feb. 13, the newspaper reported former Talbot County Sheriff Justin "Jake" Johnson had been arrested by the GBI on charges connected with the arson fire at his Shiloh home that

occurred in Nov. 6, 2023. Johnson's home on Turkey Roost Lane in Shiloh, in Talbot County, burned and an investigation was launched by the Georgia Commissioner of Insurance and Fire Safety that led to charges being filed against Johnson and two Manchester men, identified as Jimmy Buchanan, 70, and Wallace Copeland, 62. All three were arrested by the GBI on Jan. 31. Johnson was charged with first-degree arson, conspiracy to commit a crime and insurance fraud. Buchanan and Copeland were charged with two counts of arson and one count of conspiracy to commit arson. All three were booked into the Harris County Jail following their arrests.

• On July 10, the Talbotton New Era reported the Columbus Police Department had made an arrest in the murder of Daryus Bryant, who was shot and killed in Columbus in April 2024. Zion Horton, 17, of Talbot County was taken into custody on Thursday, July 3 in Coweta County and transported to Columbus. Horton has been charged with murder, three counts of aggravated assault and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime. Also, Semj Copeland, 18, also of Talbot County had turned himself in to authorities on July 8 and was charged with murder and three counts of aggravated assault. According to the Columbus Police Department at the time of the shooting, the incident took place at 11:50 p.m. near Macon Road and Lake Shore Road. According to reports, Police responded to a call of a shooting and on arrival discovered two cars which had been hit by bullets. Bryant was found to have been suffering from a gunshot wound. Also, Clarence Favors, of Manchester, was wounded in the incident. Bryant and Favors were transported to Piedmont Columbus

Regional, but Bryant did not survive the attack. Favors underwent surgery and survived. Bryant was a student athlete at Manchester High School and played football, basketball and was a state high jump champion and had received region and state honors for his athletic abilities. Both Horton and Copeland appeared in Muscogee County Recorder's Court on July 10. Copeland, Bryant's cousin, was a student-athlete at Central Elementary-High School. Copeland had been named All-Region Basketball Player of the Year for Region 6 and was named the Most Valuable Player of the Mid-South Madness All-Star game. Both Horton and Copeland pled not guilty to the charges during recorder's court.

• On Sept. 4, the New Era reported that Talbot County School Superintendent Dr. Jack Catrett had resigned after 13 years on Aug. 29. He had served as a superintendent for a period of 27 years overall and had been a teacher, principal, counselor and coach and served in education for a period of 44 years. Catrett said leaving the Talbot County School System was one of the hardest decisions he has ever made.

• On Nov. 20, the newspaper reported the Talbot County Board of Education had named Jonathan A. Taylor as the new superintendent of the school system. The board began the search for a new superintendent when Dr. Jack Catrett resigned on Aug. 29. At the Nov. 10 meeting of the Board, Taylor was named the finalist for the superintendent's position. Taylor has served as principal of Central Elementary-High School for several years. Under Georgia law, Taylor was placed on a 14-day waiting period and on Dec. 11, the New Era reported that Taylor had signed his contract to serve as superintendent.



Submitted Photo

SHOP WITH A COP - On Saturday Dec. 20, the Talbotton Police Department was blessed to be able to take 40 children to Walmart in Thomaston for our "Shop with a Cop" event. The names were pulled on a live feed on the Talbotton Police Department's Facebook page at the city council meeting on Dec. 16. The Mayor and Council took turns drawing names from a box that all names had been placed in. The Talbotton PD would like to thank all donors who helped make this event possible.



THE



Photo By Keniece Adams

SCHOOLS FILLED WITH THE SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC - The Central Elementary-High School band performed a Christmas concert at the school last week. See more photographs on Page 6-A.

Carter Earns Champion of Education Award

Submitted to NEW ERA



Photo By Keniece Adams
CONGRATS - Central Elementary-High School Counselor, Dr. Jenie Carter and Mr. Jonathan Taylor (Superintendent) are shown with the Award presented by RESA.



Photo By Keniece Adams

WHAT A HONOR - Central Elementary-High School Counselor, Dr. Jenie Carter, received the Champion of Education Award presented by Chattahoochee Flint RESA. Pictured left to right are: Mr. Jonathan Taylor (Superintendent), Dr. Jenie Carter, State Representative Debbie Buckner and Mr. Richard McCorkle (Director of Chattahoochee-Flint RESA).

ing educators who go above and beyond to advocate for students, strengthen communities, and inspire lifelong success.

Central Elementary High School congratulates Dr. Jenie Carter, whose passion and perseverance continue to make a lasting impact on students, families, and the entire CEHS community.

CEHS Recognized as a CSI Progress School

Submitted to NEW ERA

Central Elementary-High School (CEHS) has been recognized by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) as a 2025 Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Progress School, marking a significant milestone in the school's ongoing efforts to improve academic performance and student outcomes.

Each year, GaDOE identifies CSI schools that demonstrate measurable progress on their school improvement plans. To earn the CSI Progress School designation, schools must show at least a 5 percent increase in the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) Content Mastery score from one year to the next and achieve a score of 80 or higher in at least one additional CCRPI component.

School leaders credit the recognition to intentional instructional strategies, data-driven decision-making, and the collective commitment of educators, students, families, and community partners. Focused efforts on strengthening classroom instruction, monitoring student progress, and addressing individual learning needs have contributed to CEHS's improved performance.

The CSI Progress School designation highlights CEHS's forward momentum and reinforces the school's dedication to continuous improvement and student success. Administrators note that while the recognition is an important achievement, the work continues as CEHS remains focused on providing high-quality learning opportunities for all students.



Things to Do In and Around Talbot County

Outreach Program

Fishing For Youth of America was founded in memory of Richard Nash's mother and father. The program provides fishing supplies for our youth. It is the hope of FFYA to encourage our youth to fish and do other wholesome activities and to stay away from drugs, guns, gangs and violence. If we can get our youth to appreciate the outdoors they make better young people. If you know of a child or grandchild that could benefit from this program we would love to hear from you. It's also a program that benefits children that would otherwise not get anything for Christmas. If anyone would like to support this cause you can give in Honor or in Memory of someone. For more information on how you can be a part of this much-needed outreach you may call Richard 478-998-2996..

Gospel Singing

New Providence Baptist Church in Buena Vista invites you to start the new year right with a night of worship with the community! They invite you to their Congregational Hymn Singing on Sunday, Jan. 11, 2026, beginning at 6 p.m. The singing will be led by Silas Fuller.

Autos For Sale

Wide Variety To Choose From

14 Ford F-150, Crew Cab, Black, \$11,900
 16 Dodge Ram, 4 Door, 4x4, Red, \$10,400
 17 Jeep Wrangler, 4 Door, Gray, \$12,400
 19 Chevy Equinox, Silver, \$8,400
 14 Ford Mustang, Gray, \$6,200
 16 Chevy Colorado, Ext. Cab, White, \$10,400
 18 Honda Civic, Black, \$9,600
 15 Honda Pilot, Silver, \$8,900
 14 GMC Sierra, 4x4, Double Cab, Maroon, \$13,400
 20 Kia Sedona, Gray, \$8,900
 15 Ford Explorer, Blue, \$6,900
 11 Jeep Wrangler, Black, \$8,900
 19 Kia Optima, Blue, \$7,200
 21 Chevy Malibu, White, \$9,400
 15 GMC Terrain, White, \$6,900
 14 Dodge Challenger, Blue, \$7,400
 18 Jeep Cherokee, White, \$7,900
 17 Chevy Equinox, White, \$7,400
 17 Dodge Ram, 4 Door, Gray, \$10,900
 18 Dodge Journey, Red, \$7,900
 19 Chevy Equinox, White, \$10,400
 22 Nissan Altima, Gray, \$10,400
 18 Jeep Renegade, Gray, \$7,900
 16 Chevy Trax, Blue, \$6,400
 17 Nissan Frontier, Ext. Cab, White, \$7,900
 16 Honda CRV, Blue, \$10,600
 17 Ford Explorer, Blue, \$8,900
 17 Chevy Equinox, Gray, \$8,400
 17 Ford Expedition, Black, \$8,900
 14 Ford F-150, 4x4, Crew Cab, Gray, \$13,400
 16 Jeep Renegade, White, \$7,400

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NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS Tri City Housing Authority Apartment Waiting List is Open!

Apartments available in 1-5 bedroom sizes perfect for individuals and families!

Don't miss your chance to secure your spot on the waiting list.

Call 706-674-2316 today for more information and schedule an appointment to apply!



Things to Do In and Around Talbot County

New Providence Baptist Church

New Providence Baptist Church is located at 197 Providence Church Road in Buena Vista.

New Life Services

New Life Community Church invites everyone to fellowship with the church family on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. The church is located at 9108 GA HWY 85 in Waverly Hall at the City Hall building. Rev. Desmond Thornton and associate pastor Rev. Solomon Terry presiding.

Church Pickup

Friendship Baptist Church located in Woodland is offering a Transportation Ministry free to any person who would like to attend the church. The transportation service will be available every Sunday from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. For more information please contact Clarence Leonard at 706-427-3443 or Scott Hope at 706-573-8231. A mask is advised and social distancing is required.

Free Produce

Geneva Baptist Church will be giving away free produce to everyone every Thursday at 9:30 a.m. Produce will be given away while supplies last from FTV Food Bank.

Let Us Help You

Christ the King's Outreach Ministry welcomes Harris and Talbot County residents in need of short-term assistance with groceries, utility bills and rental payments and do what the church can to help. Christ the King's Outreach Ministry office is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Appointments can be made by calling the Ministry at (706) 663-0090.

Clothing Center

New Beginnings Outreach Ministry of Woodland has a special clothing center. All items are from community donations. We also have household items, baby accessories and furniture. **EVERYTHING IS FREE.** For more information contact Bro. Richard Crawl at 706-977-5469 or Pastor Searcy at 706-601-6776.

Free to Needy

Pastor William Searcy of The New Beginnings Church of Woodland announces that their Outreach Ministry's Center will be open two days a week from nine to five on Monday and Friday. This will be the last week. **EVERYTHING IS FREE.** They have clothing, miscellaneous items, including furniture. Remember, this is FREE to the public. Call 706-601-6776.

Change of Service

Valley Grove Baptist Church, Manchester (Tax), will have services on Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. until further notice.

Help for Elderly

The River Valley Regional

Commission Area Agency on Aging is ready to help senior citizens. If any senior citizen in the Talbot County Region has problems or needs help with utility bills or more, please call Woodland Mayor and Board Member of River Valley Regional at 706-256-2900 or 706-256-2928 or Katie Howard at 706-256-2910.

Food Talk Series

UGA Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program is offering free virtual and in-person classes with a series of sessions featuring meals in minutes

called "Food Talk." If you are interested or if you have any questions, please contact Erica Chaney at 706-665-2397 or Erica.Chaney@uga.edu. You can also visit the Talbot County Extension Office at 401 S. Washington Ave. in Talbotton.

How to Submit Items

The Talbotton New Era gladly prints items of interest for the community as well as local church news and events by non-profit organizations. Please note the deadline for items for the community and church events section of the newspaper must be

received by 12 noon on Monday, prior to run date to be printed in that week's issue. Items received after the Monday deadline will not appear until the following week. Please do not send items more than once. Items will continue to be printed in the newspaper until the event is over.

Sorry no flyers, items written in all capital letters or items sent as pdf files are accepted. Please email items as an attachment on a Word document or as email body copy. Jpegs, pdfs, etc. can not be used by the newspaper for news copy.

Please do not indent or dou-

ble space between paragraphs and sentences. Please do not use 2025 or spell out months of the year, simply use Sept. 10. Do not use times in this manner 5:00, please use 5 p.m.

Photographs can only be accepted in jpeg format and as an attachment to an email. Please do not attach them to Word documents. Such photographs do not work well.

Please note the newspaper reserves the right to edit or reject any submission for the things to do section. Thank you for your continued support of the New Era.

Who is the only professional baseball player to have pitched two perfect games?

By JACK BAGLEY
didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com

Happy New Year!

Time to begin making those wonderful New Year's Resolutions, friends. You know - the ones you make today, then forget about in two or three days.

Things like losing weight, quitting smoking or drinking, getting your act together, etc. The things we all say we should do, then don't do.

Yep, those things. If you'd like to share your resolutions with me, send me an e-mail at didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com and we can both laugh at them.

I am making two resolutions, one of which I shall immediately break. I resolve not to make resolutions; and I resolve to share trivia with you each week. Let's go!

Did you know ...

... a poet tried a novel way to generate book sales? When Walt Whitman (1819-1892) wanted to stir sales for his collection *Leaves of Grass*, he sent in reviews for the book to the New York newspapers without a byline. His reviews (of his own work) called the book "transcendent" and proclaimed "An American bard at last!" Sadly, the reviews didn't help. *Leaves of Grass* sold only a few copies during its first print run. (Gives a new meaning to "reading one's own press releases," if you ask me.)

... one of the oldest candies available has been around since the mid-19th Century?

Love them or hate them, everyone who likes candy has an opinion about Necco Wafers™, flat round slabs of candy about the size of a quarter, which come in rolls of about 35. The candy was first produced in 1847 by the New England Confectionery Company, the initials of which incidentally form the candy's name. They are the oldest American candy brand still in production. Additional trivia note: The oldest continually produced candy brand is Good & Plenty™, the candy-covered licorice treat. Production of those began in 1893, but because of a break in production of Necco Wafers from 2018 to 2020, Good & Plenty are the oldest brand in continuous production. (And suddenly I want some candy.)

... only one pitcher in all of professional baseball history has thrown two perfect games? A perfect game is one in which a pitcher retires all 27 opposing batters without allowing a single base runner. While the first perfect game in Major League Baseball was thrown in 1880 by Lee

Richmond (1857-1929), and the feat has been done only 23 times since then, no MLB pitcher has thrown more than one. The only professional ballplayer to throw two perfect games was Jean Faut (1925-2023), who pitched in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League from 1946 to 1953. Faut, who played for the South Bend, Indiana Blue Sox, threw her first on July 21, 1951 against the Rockford Peaches, and did it again on September 3, 1953, against the Kalamazoo Lassies. Additional trivia note: Faut's two perfect games were two of only five pitched during the entire existence of the AAGPBL. The others were thrown by Annabelle Lee (1922-2008) of the Minneapolis Millerettes, Carolyn Morris (1925-1996) of the Rockford Peaches, and Doris Sams (1927-2012) of the Muskegon Lassies. The AAGPBL was featured in the hit 1992 movie, *A League of Their Own*.

... tropical storm classifications are based on wind speed? For a tropical storm to be considered a hurricane, its sustained winds must be at least 74 miles per hour. From 39 to 74 miles per hour, it's called a tropical storm, and with winds less than 38 miles per hour, it would be a tropical depression. (That she blows!)

... the design for a popular video game character was inspired by food? Toru Iwatani (born 1955), the game designer who created the popular "Pac Man" game, got the inspiration for the design of the title character from a pizza. Iwatani said he took a slice from a pizza and noticed how the remaining pie looked like a character, and used that as the design for the yellow dot-gobbler. (Good thing he wasn't having a dish of sushi

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or something.)

... a prolific director of horror movies got his start working for a children's show host? George A. Romero (1940-2017), the director who brought us classic horror films such as *Night of the Living Dead* and *Creepshow*, got his first paid directing job working for Fred Rogers (1928-2003). Romero filmed a segment for the children's program *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* in which Rogers underwent a tonsillectomy. Romero credited that project as the catalyst which made him want to direct zombie and horror films. (From Mr. Rogers to horror ... what's the transition?)

... a rock musician has a doctoral degree? Brian May (born 1947), guitarist for the group Queen, has an earned Ph.D. in astrophysics from Imperial College in London. (I've heard of spaced out, but this ...)

... noted author and political activist Helen Keller was

related to a Confederate general? Keller (1880-1968) was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, and became deaf and blind at the age of two following an illness. She was related to Confederate general Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) on her mother's side. Keller's mother, Catherine Everett Adams Keller (1856-1921), was a second cousin of Lee.

... penguins sleep more deeply in the afternoon? Scientists discovered this trait by creeping up on sleeping king penguins at different times of the day and poking the penguins with a stick until they awakened. It took only an average of five pokes to wake a sleeping penguin in the morning, but afternoon naps were deeper—the average was nine pokes with a stick to rouse the bird. (Try that trick with a bear one day, and let me know how it goes.)

Now ... you know!
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DEATHS & FUNERALS

BILLY ANN WILLIS
September 30, 1968 - December 19, 2025
Former Ms. Wheelchair Georgia

Billie Ann Wills, age 57 of Columbus, GA, a former resident of Talbotton, GA, passed away Friday, December 19, 2025, at Taylor County Health and Rehabilitation in Butler, GA.

Billie Ann was born September 30, 1968 in Cuthbert, GA, the daughter of Billy Wills and Ann C. Wills. She attended Westwood Academy in Thomaston and was a graduate of Manchester High School. She was always good at spelling, and won numerous spelling contests. She later attended Trinity Bible College in Florida, and worked her way to earning a bachelor's degree. In 2004 she was chosen as Ms. Wheelchair Georgia, and while holding that title, her duties included traveling as a public spokesperson for people with disabilities, focusing on advocacy and education. Billie Ann was blessed with a beautiful singing voice. She was a member of Geneva Baptist Church in Geneva, GA, and was a former member of the church choir.

She is survived by her parents, Billy and Ann Wills of Talbotton; a brother and sister-in-law, John and Maria Wills of West Point, GA; two nephews, Connor Wills of Charleston, SC, Isaac Wills of Woodbury, GA; and a niece, Hanna Wills of Columbus, GA.

Funeral services were held 2:00 PM Sunday, December 21, 2025, at Geneva Baptist Church in Geneva, GA, with Rev. Wade Dawson officiating, assisted by Rev. Lynn McManious. Interment followed in Oak Hill Cemetery in Talbotton.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Geneva Baptist Church.

Cox Funeral Home, Manchester, GA, is assisting the family with arrangements. Please follow the link on this page to share a memory, or to leave online condolences for the family.

Contact The Talbotton New Era by calling
(706) 846-3188 or emailing:
starmercuryjohn@gmail.com

Opinions & Ideas

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THE TALBOTTON NEW ERA

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The Georgia Trust for Local News

DuBose Porter, Executive Director
Caleb Slinkard, Executive Editor

Pam Burney, General Manager
Phone (706) 846-3188
starmercuryjohn@gmail.com
P. O. Box 426
Manchester, GA 31816
Official Legal Organ of Talbot County.

JOHN KUYKENDALL
PUBLISHER/EDITOR

JACK BAGLEY
LAYOUT EDITOR

BRYAN GETER
ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE

Happy New Year Indeed

And now it's a new year!

As I said last week, I fervently hope that 2026 is a better year for everyone, myself included. This is the time to make resolutions, to try and figure out what I'd like to accomplish in the new year. Well, I don't make resolutions, as my regular readers know, so I thought I would do something a little different... some random thoughts and bad jokes to begin 2026.

So let's get random!

I have determined that horses must be more intelligent than humans. Consider this:

If twelve horses are gathered together for a race, there could be up to 100,000 humans attending to watch.

Put twelve humans together for a race, and I guarantee there won't be one horse in the crowd.

I told my ex-wife once that she should embrace her mistakes.

She gave me a hug.

When I was in ROTC in high school, my instructor said to me, "Bagley, I didn't see you in camouflage class yesterday."

I said, "Great! Then it's working!"

I once had a job in a calendar factory. I got fired for taking a couple of days off.

I think mathematics textbooks are really sad. I mean, look at all the problems they have.

When two vegetarians get into an argument, is it still called a beef?

For the last few weeks, I've been on the seafood diet. I see food, and I eat it.

I didn't talk to my ex-wife for three years. I thought it would be rude to interrupt her.

Seagulls fly over the sea, because if they flew over the bay, they'd be bagels.

Is a sleeping bull really called a bulldozer?

Fake noodles are called impastas.

I asked my dog the other day what two minus two is. He said nothing.

My father once told me a joke about boxing, but I missed the punch line.

I was going to buy a book about procrastination, but I keep putting it off.

Parenting, I learned, is a lot like playing that Whack-a-Mole game at the carnivals. You solve one problem, and



Jack Bagley
Musings of
An Aging
Mind

another one pops up.

Cleaning a house that has kids or pets in it is a lot like trying to brush your teeth while eating Oreos.

As I get older, I remember all of the people I lost along the way. Maybe a career as a tour guide wasn't the best choice.

I once submitted ten puns to a joke competition. I really thought that with that many, one was sure to win.

Sadly, no pun in ten did.

What invention was even more useful than the first telephone?

The second telephone.

I went to the doctor with a suspicious-looking mole.

The doctor said they all look that way, and I should have left him in the garden.

If April showers bring May flowers... do May flowers bring Pilgrims?

It's easy to tell the difference between an alligator and a crocodile.

One will see you later, and the other will see you in a while.

At a carnival, I once saw a dog magician.

It was a labracadabrador.

For my last birthday, the cake looked like a forest fire. The heat from all the candles drove me back.

Two antennas got married. The wedding was okay, but the reception was great.

Two nuclear technicians got married the other day. The bride was radiant and the groom was glowing.

They say that as we age, the memory is the second thing to go.

I can't remember what the first thing is.

An elderly woman is sitting alone at a bar when an older gentleman comes in and sits down beside her.

"Tell me," he said, "do I come here often?"

Birthdays are good for you. The more you have, the longer you live.

Happy new year!

THE TALBOTTON NEW ERA is published weekly by The Georgia Trust for Local News at 3051 Roosevelt Highway, Manchester, Georgia 31816. The Talbotton New Era is published proudly for the citizens of Talbot County and its goal is to produce quality, profitable, community oriented newspapers that you, our readers, are proud of. We will reach that goal through hard work, teamwork, loyalty, and a strong dedication toward printing the truth.

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Predictions for This Week's CFP Winners

I said before the college playoffs began that the selections were tainted and flawed and I still believe that. I'm speaking about some of the, what I believe to be, weak sister teams that got in. That however is a topic for another day.

As a fan of the Georgia Bulldogs, I'm glad the Dawgs are in, but the team does have a rough road ahead.

It was good to see so many SEC teams in the college playoffs, but it does make the going tough for the teams and I'm going to try and explain why I believe that and then try and predicted which teams will make it to the next round.

I'll have to say, Oregon has a good football team, I watched them play, they also have an attitude I didn't like seeing taunting, late hits, holds and other things the refs let go. The poor sportsmanship and bad attitude may work in their favor, but we'll see.

Fortunately for the Luckie Duckies they will face Texas Tech in the second round. They should be thanking the football Gods for that. In my opinion, the Duckies are not ready for an

Sparky that I truly learned how much fun being a costumed character could be, not only for me but for children and adults!

Understand that being inside a costumed character is work, especially in really warm temperatures, but it is an incredible amount of fun and well worth the effort of bringing smiles to faces.

Over an increasing span of years, I have portrayed various costumed characters starting as a gorilla while in college helping raise funds for a charity and lastly as Sparky the Fire Dog for Pine Mountain Fire Department.

Each of the costumed characters I did over the years was fun but each in a different way. Up until this Christmas, Sparky had been my favorite and most often portrayed character.

Talent had nothing to do with my portrayal of Sparky but rather I was one of the few firefighters that could actually fit inside the Sparky suit -- and after all these years I still can. It was as

Then opportunity presented itself.

The place where my wife



John Kuykendall
Publisher & Editor

day before all the playoff

hipe. The Rebels are angry and have a chip on their shoulders with their Coach Lane Kiffin dumping his team and heading out to LSU. Now, more than before, the Rebels have something to prove.

On the Bulldog's side, the team has been here before. They should realize the challenge ahead and they have Kirby Smart. Who I consider one of the best coaches in college football.

It's true, the Bulldogs are young, they are banged up and are missing some players. However, one thing that can never be said about Coach Smart and his Bulldogs is that they will face the challenge head-on, be physical and will fight until the last buzzer sounds.

In my opinion, Ole Miss is a better team than Alabama. The had a good running game, mix the offensive plays well and attack on defense. Going to be a challenge for the Dawgs.

Unfortunately picking this one with my heart. Georgia 34 - Ole Miss 27.

Things Learned While Being Santa

I could not let the door close on 2025 without sharing my experience of being Santa Claus.

Not to be mistaken as a parent purchasing Christmas gifts for their children and putting said gifts under a Christmas Tree with the child, or children, believing they came from Santa. Not at all, but portraying Santa in a public environment.

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Then opportunity presented itself.

The place where my wife



Andy Kober
Columnist

asks about her husband, she will inevitably say he is on the naughty list. If a woman volunteers that she is on the naughty list, just say "Merry Christmas" and let it go.

If someone is wearing Georgia Bulldogs gear, be sure to say "Merry Christmas" followed by "Go Dawgs" as that's guaranteed to get a positive response.

There were other lessons but my personal favorite included a number of adults who would look at me and see what they thought was a mannequin, until I moved, shook my carriage bells, or said "Merry Christmas", and invariably they would be slightly startled, but each one laughed and returned the greeting.

WOULD I do Santa Claus again? Perhaps, should the need arise.

In the meantime, I'll just enjoy being me.

That's my opinion.

A newspaper columnist for over 35 years, Andy Kober can be reached by email at andykober@hotmail.com

* Prayerfully Looking Ahead to New Year 2026 *



Pres Hall
Columnist

est, even though we are close to New Year 2026, some of us might not see it. So I beg and encourage us to cherish, embrace, enjoy and live everyday as if it may be our last. It could very well be!

Nevertheless, perhaps some have enjoyed a great year and for some, it's been a very difficult one. But either way, it's ending and a new year is in front of us. Actually, I'm pretty sure that we all can look back at the past year and find plenty of things we regret, but regrets can often be defeating to us and put us in a bad place. But the thing is, learn from our mistakes and try to do better in the coming year. But through it all, praise God, we are still here. *Philippians 3:13* says, "...But one thing I do, forget what lies behind

and [trust God] straining, [looking] forward to what lies ahead."

And in the meantime, I close with a Joyce Meyers's prayer: "Father, thank You for this year.

Thank You for guiding me through it and giving me the grace to enter the New Year with enthusiasm and expectation."

And again and rest assuredly, I'm continually praying for all of you and that God's grace you with whatever you need to move ahead and move on in the coming year. "This too, (whatever it is) shall pass."

Regardless of our circumstances and situations, vigorously strive to "make a positive impact and difference in someone else's life."

And God will do likewise for us! Happy New Year and God's grace be with us!

Bible Thought of the Week

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:9-11

Domesticated Trash Pandas: A New Year's Resolution

You know that look your dog gives you when it thinks it's in trouble? It's a look that suggests great remorse after you discover a trail of mud across the floor or chewed-up TV remote or a pile of something unmentionable in the corner of the closet.

It's just a ruse. Your precious fur baby feels neither shame nor regret for its actions.

Australian researchers have long discovered that "puppy dog eyes" is an evolutionary defense mechanism. Sometime after the domestication of dogs, canines discovered that the cuter they looked, the more likely humans were to keep them around, even if they were incapable of work or were destructive. Being cute meant a life of luxury and an easy, never-ending meal train.

Of course, humans helped this along as dogs were used more for companionship rather than labor, and now there are countless breeds good for nothing but looking at and cuddling like a living toy. Not that there's anything wrong with that; if spoiling your four-legged friend brings you contentment in life, please, by all means, spoil away.

A new study has revealed another animal is picking up on this secret.

Released in October, but just now gaining steam across the internet, researchers are suggesting that raccoons are showing early signs of domestication. Co-written by a biologist in Arkansas, a place where they know a thing or two about raccoons, this study



Kyle Dominy
New Southern Dad

suggested that trash pandas, particularly those in urban areas, are physically changing and adapting to get closer to humans.

This change is present as, when compared to raccoons in rural areas, as a shorter snout; floppy ears; and white patches in the fur. To sum it up: They are getting cuter. They've learned that if they are non-aggressive and adorable, people don't mind having them around, rummaging through the garbage or nosing in on the cat or dog's supper. This paper goes as far as to challenge the old, long held belief that humans initiated the domestication process with animal capture and selective breeding. Domestication begins, apparently, when animals live long

enough in human environs and are hungry.

The wild thieves of the neighborhood are on tap to become man's next best friend and judging by the millions of social media videos of people willingly feeding raccoons and even keeping them as pets, folks are very keen on the idea.

Maybe rural raccoons will take the hint soon. They're still mean. I've been raccoon hunting before. It was a wild night of running through the woods, chasing dogs and dodging angry critters fighting for their life. I don't plan on doing it again; I've got no beef with raccoons. Coonskin caps never looked good on me anyway.

But still, I don't want a pet raccoon or even one rummaging around the house, making a mess. For New Year's maybe I'll get a dog, and I resolve not to get one for looking at, but one to chase off wild intruders.

You can reach Kyle Dominy at: k.l.dominy@gmail.com or write to 115 South Jefferson St. Dublin, Ga. 31021



Embark on a Path of Self-Improvement

From Staff Reports

There is always room to develop, grow and become a better person. With a new year on the horizon, setting self-improvement goals now can help anyone navigate a path to a better version of themselves.

Here are some New Year's resolutions that can help a person grow and nurture their well-being.

• Focus on improving time management. Feeling rushed and that you don't have a handle on how you spend your time can exacerbate stress. According to Indeed, making better use of time can enhance productivity, make it easier to meet deadlines and reduce stress. Time management isn't just about work performance. It's also an important tool for getting things done at home. Key

aspects of time management involve delegating tasks, focusing on one thing at a time (as opposed to multi-tasking) and setting priorities.

• Become a better listener. You must be able to communicate effectively in all aspects of life to make sure your message is understood. But it's equally important to be able to receive and adapt to the messages of others. Take advantages of opportunities to slow down and receive visitors. Seek input when planning, and ask colleagues how they feel something can be completed effectively.

• Pamper your mind often. According to Vaughn College, feeling calm and in control often means nurturing yourself from the inside-out. Keeping a mind-body balance is essential. Reading excerpts from motivational

books or passages, turning off notifications on the phone, taking a break from social media, carving out time for spiritual enrichment or meditation, or working on a puzzle can help fuel the mind.

• Learn to stop procrastinating. Procrastination can lead to increased stress and unhealthy means to managing stress, according to research published in *Frontiers in Psychology*. Procrastinators are more likely to exhibit avoidant behaviors as deadlines draw closer. To overcome procrastination, breaking down tasks into smaller steps or making short-term goals can help tall tasks feel more achievable.

Focusing on self-improvement at the beginning of a new year can help set the course for productive months ahead.

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COSTS FOR LEGAL NOTICES

\$15 per 100 words times weeks published. A typing fee will be charged for legal not on a Word document or in regular email body copy.

Cost depends on words in legal notice.

Debtors & Creditors Notice

25-119

NOTICE TO

DEBTORS AND CREDITORS
TALBOT COUNTY, GEORGIA
IN RE: ESTATE OF FORREST DAVID RIGSBY

All creditors of the Estate of FORREST DAVIS RIGSBY late of Talbot County, are hereby notified to render their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment.

This 10th day of DECEMBER, 2025.

SHERRY ANN RIGSBY
Administrator(s) of the Estate of
FORREST DAVID RIGSBY, Deceased
4551 BUCKNER RD

JUNCTION CITY, GA 31812
(12:18, 25, 1:1, 8)

Foreclosures

25-118

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE OF RIGHT TO REDEEM

To : Willis & Tammie Frederick

TAKE NOTICE THAT the right to redeem the following described property to wit: All and only that parcel designated as Tax parcel ID OAKM27 08 22nd land district being 0.4 acre, more or less lot 8 block 27, Oak Mountain Estates Subdivision, shown in plot Book F, page 9, described in deed Book 122, page 57 located on Heather Lane will expire and will be forever foreclosed and barred on and after 20th January 20th 2026.

The Sheriff's Deed to which this notice relates is dated 3rd day of December 2024 and is recorded in deed book 122 page 57. In the office of the clerk Talbot County Court House. The property may be redeemed at any time before 19th January 2026 by the payment of the redemption price as fixed and provided by law.

(12:18, 25, 1:1, 8)

25-114

NOTICE OF REAL ESTATE SECURITIES TY DEED FORECLOSURE SALE

Default having been made under the terms of that certain Purchase Money Deed to Secure Debt and Security Agreement dated November 17, 2022 (the ?Security Deed?), executed by Derek Duffey in favor of Shiva K. Gangadhar, Simbhoodath Gangadhar and Suhindra Gangadhar as recorded in Deed Book 493, Page 182, in the Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Talbot County, Georgia, to secure a Balloon Note (Promissory Note) in the original principal sum of \$117,750.00, and default having been made in the payment of said indebtedness, and the entire remaining unpaid indebtedness being now due, there will be sold before the courthouse door of said county to the highest bidder for cash on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, during the legal hours of sale, the property described in said Security Deed, to which reference is made, to wit:

All that tract or parcel of land lying and being in Land Lot 272, 16th Land District, Talbot County, Georgia, being known and designated as PARCEL 4, containing 47.500 Acres, as shown on that certain Division Survey for Simbhoodath Gangadhar & Suhindra Gangadhar dated October 25, 2022, and recorded in Plat Book 254, Page 278, in the Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Talbot County, Georgia, said map or plat is incorporated herein by reference thereto for a more accurate description of the property conveyed herein.

Tax Map Parcel No.: 007-16606H

Property Address: 190 Powell Church Road, Talbotton, Georgia

The property will be sold as the property of Derek Duffey, under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in said Security Deed, subject to all unpaid ad valorem taxes, any prior security deeds of record, assessments, all valid restrictive covenants and all easements of record which are in place.

The sale will be conducted subject (1) to confirmation that the sale is not prohibited under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code and (2) to final confirmation and audit of the status of the loan with the holder of the Security Deed.

The individuals who has full authority to negotiate, amend, and modify all terms of the aforesigned Security Deed are Shiva K. Gangadhar, Simbhoodath Gangadhar and Suhindra Gangadhar, c/o Robert R. Lomax, Post Office Box 2339, Columbus, Georgia

31902, (706) 322-0100, who may be contacted through the undersigned attorney.

THIS LAW FIRM IS ACTING AS A DEBT COLLECTOR. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

This 2nd day of December, 2025.

By: Shiva K. Gangadhar, Simbhoodath Gangadhar and Suhindra Gangadhar, as attorney-in-fact for Derek Duffey

Robert R. Lomax, Esq.

ROBERT R. LOMAX, LLC

Post Office Box 2339

Columbus, Georgia 31902

(706) 322-0100

Attorney for Shiva K. Gangadhar, Simbhoodath Gangadhar and Suhindra Gangadhar

(12:11, 18, 25, 1:1)

Probate Notices

25-117

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF
TALBOT COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: ESTATE OF
ERIC MENDEZ, DECEASED
ESTATE NUMBER: 2025-P-49

NOTICE OF PETITION TO FILE FOR
YEAR'S SUPPORT

The petition of JANET MENDEZ, for a year's support from the estate of ERIC MENDEZ deceased, for decedent(s) (surviving spouse) and (minor child(ren)), having been duly filed, all interested persons are hereby notified to show cause, if any they have, on or before JANUARY 5, 2026 why said petition should not be granted. All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections, and must be filed on or before the time stated in the preceding sentence. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact probate court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be (scheduled at a later date). If no objections are filed the petition may be granted without a hearing.

SHATARA POWELL
Judge of the Probate Court
By: NI?LEJA WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Probate Court

PO BOX 157
TALBOTTON, GA 31827
706-665-8866

(12:11, 18, 25, 1:1)

25-121

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF
TALBOT COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: ESTATE OF
REGINALD T. MYERS, DECEASED
ESTATE NUMBER: 2025-P-51

NOTICE OF PETITION TO FILE FOR
YEAR'S SUPPORT

The petition of EMMA SUE MYERS, for a year's support from the estate of REGINALD T. MYERS deceased, for decedent(s) (surviving spouse) and (minor child(ren)), having been duly filed, all interested persons are hereby notified to show cause, if any they have, on or before JANUARY 12, 2026 why said petition should not be granted. All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections, and must be filed on or before the time stated in the preceding sentence. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact probate court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be (scheduled at a later date). If no objections are filed the petition may be granted without a hearing.

SHATARA POWELL
Judge of the Probate Court
By: NI?LEJA WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Probate Court

PO BOX 157
TALBOTTON, GA 31827
706-665-8866

(12:11, 18, 25, 1:1)

25-120

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF
TALBOT COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: ESTATE OF
MARVIN JARRETT, DECEASED
ESTATE NO. 2025-P-50

PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION NOTICE
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

KEIRA ADAMS has petitioned to be appointed Administrator(s) of the estate of MARVIN JARRETT deceased, of said County. (The Petitioner has also applied for waiver of bond and/or grant of certain powers contained in O.C.G.A. ? 53-12-261.) All interested parties are hereby notified to show cause why said Petition should not be granted. All objections to the Petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections, and must be filed with the Court on or before JANUARY 12, 2026.

BE NOTIFIED FURTHER: All objections to the Petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact Probate Court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be (scheduled at a later date). If no objections are filed, the Petition may be granted without a hearing.

SHATARA POWELL
Judge of the Probate Court
By: NI?LEJA WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Probate Court

PO BOX 157
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706-665-8866

(12:18, 25, 1:1, 8)

25-121

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF
TALBOT COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: ESTATE OF JUSTIN LAWRENCE

GEORGE, DECEASED
ESTATE NO. 2025-P-46

PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION NOTICE

TO: PETRA BAPTISTE, PETER LAMBERT, ALEXIS GEORGE and to whom it may concern:

David Willis has petitioned for Davis Willis to be appointed administrator of the Estate of Justin Lawrence George deceased, of said county. The Petitioner has also applied for waiver of bond, waiver of reports, waiver of statements, and/or grant of certain powers contained in O.C.G.A. 53-12-261. All interested persons are hereby notified to show cause why said petition should not be granted.

All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections, and must be filed with the Court on or before January 5, 2026.

BE NOTIFIED FURTHER: All objections to the Petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections. All objections should be sworn to before a Notary Public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact probate court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be (scheduled at a later date). If no objections are filed, the Petition may be granted without a hearing.

SHATARA POWELL
Judge of the Probate Court
By: NI?LEJA WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Probate Court

PO BOX 157
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706-665-8866

(12:18, 25, 1:1, 8)

25-115

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF
TALBOT COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: ESTATE OF
DAISY L. NOLEN, DECEASED
ESTATE NO. 2025-P-48

PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION NOTICE
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

JERETHA HOWARD has petitioned to be appointed Administrator(s) of the



Hobbies to Get Seniors Out and About

Submitted to the *New Era*

• Book club: A book club offers multiple benefits to adults. Book clubs are inherently social and tend to bring like-minded individuals together, which can help build new and lasting friendships that extend beyond weekly discussions. A 2021 study published in the journal *Neurology* also linked regular reading to a lower risk of developing dementia.

• Sports: Sports provide another avenue to socialize with like-minded individuals. Golf is not a team sport, but it is typically played in groups of two or four, making it an ideal activity for adults with free time on their hands to get out and about and meet other people. Leagues for softball, bowling and pickleball also provide opportunities to socialize, and many adults are participating in such leagues for that very reason. A CivicScience study released in 2025 found that 49 percent of adults who planned to participate in adult recreational sports leagues were doing so for social interaction and the chance to make friends.

• Travel: Travel can provide another means for aging adults to make friends. Group tours to foreign countries, day trips to local attractions arranged by township recreational offices or even overseas trips with friends you've fallen out of touch with can be a great means to build new friendships and reinvigorate old ones, all the while getting you out of the house.

These are just some ways for men and women to get out of the house and socialize with others their age, a worthy endeavor that can be highly beneficial to adults' overall health.

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Wheelchair Bound Astronaut Takes Flight

By ANDY KOBER

Blue Origin scored a space first on Dec. 20, sending a wheelchair bound person into space. Aerospace engineer Michi Benthäus, along with five crewmates lifted off from the Blue Origin West Texas launch site onboard the New Shepard autonomous and reusable capsule.

Benthäus, who works for the European Space Agency, has been bound to a wheelchair since a mountain-biking accident suffered in 2018. She was joined on the flight by aerospace engineer Hans Koenigsmann, investors Joey Hyde and Adonis Pouroulis, entrepreneur Neal Milch, and Jason Stansell.

The New Shepard flights reach an altitude of 62 miles, which is recognized as the boundary of space, lasting 10 to 12 minutes from liftoff to touchdown.

The Quadrantids Meteor Shower is set to peak during the overnight hours of Jan. 2-3.

This is a short-lived meteor shower that began on Dec. 28 and ends on Jan. 12.

ANDY'S ASTRONOMY

There is a relatively short time period, only about six hours, during which to view the Quadrantids at peak activity and the shower generally produces about 25 meteors per hour during peak. This year, the Moon will be nearly full and even with clear skies the light will wash out some meteors, however the Quadrantids could produce some fireballs.

That's a bummer and a sad way to end the meteor shower season. The next meteor shower will take place in April.

Keep your eyes on the sky for passing fireballs.

Meteors can flash across the sky anytime, day or night, and extraordinarily bright meteors are often referred to as fireballs — and they are spotted quite often.

On Sunday, Dec. 14, 32 people across Alabama and Georgia reported seeing a fireball.

The fireball was first reported at 8:11 pm by a skywatcher in Okeechobee, FL. The fireball was seen as far north as Richmond Hill, GA; as far east as Pompano Beach, FL; and as far south as Cutler Bay, FL; and as far west as Tifton, GA. The fireball appeared to be traveling from north-north east to south-southwest.

None of the sky watchers reported hearing the fireball make noise but six people reported seeing it fragment into pieces.

Anyone seeing a fireball is urged to report the sighting to <https://amsmeteors.org>

Going outside and looking at the sky, especially the night sky, can be fun and educational for the entire family.

There are a number of free apps available to help identify stars and constellations, and some of the apps will show satellites.

Happy skywatching!



Photos By Keniece Adams

SCHOOL CAMPUS FILLED WITH THE SOUNDS OF THE SEASON - The Central Elementary-High School (CEHS) Band filled the campus with the sounds of the season during its annual Christmas Concert, showcasing the talent, dedication, and holiday spirit of student musicians across grade levels. Families, staff, and community members enjoyed a festive evening of classic and contemporary holiday selections that highlighted the growth and hard work of the band program.

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