

Around Monroe County & Forsyth • Juliette • High Falls • Bolingbroke • Culloden • Smarr

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COMMUNITY
CALENDAR

TODAY, FEB. 22

Story Time field trip

Your Monroe Co Library is promoting Recycling during Story Time in February; the last program will be a field trip on Wednesday , Feb 22 at 11 a.m. to the Old Brent Road Recycling Center, just past Hubbard Elementary, to learn more about the excellent recycling opportunities in Monroe County. All children are encouraged to join in this field trip; there will be no Story Time on Thursday, Feb 23. March Story Time will be a series of lessons on Rain and Rainbows to help welcome spring. Story Time is on Wednesdays at 11 a.m. for ages 2-4, and on Thursdays at 11 a.m. for home schoolers and family groups ages 4 and up.

FEBRUARY

Pre-K & Kindergarten registration 2017-18

Monroe County Schools announce combined pre-K and kindergarten enrollment for children four or five years of age on or before Sept. 1, 2017. Those currently enrolled in MCS pre-K do not need to complete the process for kindergarten. Registration packets will be available for pick up on Feb. 21 and scheduling of appointments will begin Feb. 27. For more information, call Cindy Seymour at 478-994-2031 or visit www.monroe.k12.ga.us.

Feb. 23

Business After Hours

Business After Hours will be Thursday, Feb. 23 at 5:30 p.m. at Forsyth-Monroe County Chamber of Commerce, 10 W. Chambers St., Forsyth.

Feb. 23-24

K.B. Sutton presents ‘Seussical the Musical’

K.B. Sutton Elementary will present “Seussical the Musical” on Thursday and Friday, Feb. 23 and 24 at 7 p.m. at the Monroe County Fine Arts Center.

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More Community Calendar



www.Mymcr.net

MONROE COUNTY



This property near Hopewell Road, about five miles south of Forsyth, is now under a perpetual conservation easement program that emphasizes preserving water quality.

Land Trust accepts first acreage in Monroe County

By Diane Glidewell
news@mymcr.net

The Oconee River Land Trust announced that it accepted 2,500 acres of land in Bibb, Jones and Monroe counties in 2016 for inclusion in its program of permanent environmental protection, bringing the total in these three counties to 7,000 acres. The two properties in Monroe County were the first from the county to be added to Oconee River Land Trust, a 501c3 non-profit based in Athens that partners with landowners to conserve lands along Georgia’s rivers, streams and wetlands.

One of the parcels in Monroe County is 557 acres near Maynards Mill Road. Six miles south of Forsyth, it preserves more than two miles of Tobesofkee Creek and over a mile of its tributaries. The protected parcel has areas of bottomland hardwood and moisture-balanced forests, oak-hickory-pine forests and wetlands with grassy and herbaceous edge habitats. The tract has river cane, river oats and ground cedar.

The other local tract is 271 acres near Hopewell Road, about five miles southwest of downtown Forsyth. It protects a mile of intermittent tributaries of Tobesofkee Creek and also has bottomland hardwood forests, oak-hickory-pine, medic forests and a working pine forest. Diverse plant species are growing on this property, including American elm, American holly, southern sugar maple, mountain laurel, Piedmont azalea, painted buckeye and river cane.

Tredway Shurling, who donated the conservation ease-



Piedmont azalea is one of the native plants Oconee River Land Trust will protect on the Hopewell Road property in Monroe County.

ment on the Hopewell Road tract, bought the land in about 1994 or 1995. He learned about land trusts through involvement with one in North Carolina. He decided that preserving this piece of land in Monroe County is the best use for it.

“This tract seemed to lend itself [to conservation easement],” he said. “I couldn’t see developing it, cutting it up.”

Shurling said he retained some of the frontage along the paved road and can continue to use the land in the same way he has been using it over the last 20 years. Some of the

land is planted in timber; he can harvest it when it is ready but under the easement must keep a 200’ buffer uncut along streams. Shurling said that the guidelines that Oconee River Land Trust sets are best management practices that he would follow anyway.

“I would manage it in the same way. I don’t think I would ever cut hardwood bottoms,” he explained.

Shurling said the land has a lot of granite outcroppings, including come enormous boulders, that create an inter-

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EDUCATION

Monroe in College

David Clark of Forsyth earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the **Georgia Institute of Technology** in Atlanta. Clark was among approximately 3,200 undergraduate and graduate students who received degrees during Georgia Tech’s 252nd Commencement exercises on Dec. 16-17, 2016, at the McCamish Pavilion.

Stephen Kyle Wheeler of Forsyth was named to the **Mercer University** President’s List for Fall 2016 Semester for his high academic achievement. He was also named to the **Mercer University School of Engineering** Fall Semester 2016 Dean’s List for his high grades in its rigorous curriculum.

John Roberson of Juliette made the Dean’s List for the Fall 2016 semester at the **Georgia Institute of Technology**. This designation is awarded to undergraduate students who have a 3.0 or higher academic average for the semester.

Clayton Carter of Monroe County has been named to the **Auburn University** College of Architecture, Design and Construction Dean’s List for 2016 Fall semester.

Betty Carper of Forsyth earned a master’s degree in Global Hospitality Management from **Georgia State University** at its 102nd commencement, held Dec. 14, at the Georgia Dome. More than 600 students earned master’s degrees during the fall semester. Across all disciplines and degree levels, more than 2,500 students received degrees.

Young Harris College announces that **Mackenzie Melton** of Monroe County, daughter of Jimmy & Jennifer Melton, has been named to the President’s List for the fall 2016 semester. Students who achieve a 4.0 grade point average are eligible to be named to the President’s List. Young Harris College is a private, baccalaureate degree-granting college located in the beautiful mountains of North Georgia.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

County, cities, BOE talk about cooperation Meetings hope to better communications

By Diane Glidewell
news@mymcr.net

In an effort to foster communication and cooperation, Forsyth-Monroe County Chamber of Commerce and Monroe County, Forsyth and Culloden governments agreed last

year to get together for a joint meeting each time there is a fifth Tuesday in a month. One of those joint meetings was on Jan. 31.

Todd Tolbert, facilitator for the meeting, made the first order of business re-visiting the committees created at

the first joint meeting in January 2016. The group voted to disband the committee on joint efforts for passive recreation and the committee on public/private partnership to develop Plant Camellia as a water source. Committees on job creation, infrastruc-

ture and a swimming/multi-use complex stayed in place. There were no reports from the committees. In closing the joint meeting, Tolbert said he challenges those on the committees to have meetings and bring back reports. Dr. J. Ray Grant,

chair of Monroe County Board of Education, and Monroe County Schools Supt. Dr. Mike Hickman invited those who had not yet visited the new Fine Arts Center to tour it. He said the Fine Arts Center hosted about 3,500 people for Christmas concerts after opening in December.

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LAND

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esting topography. He built about a 5-acre pond on the property that is spring-fed; it has stayed full through droughts in the surrounding area. The property has about six miles of roadways through it. A neighbor keeps them cleared and mowed in exchange for hunting on the property. The Land Trust would now have to approve cutting any additional roadways.

A perk of his association with Oconee River Land Trust is that it sent a man with doctorates in limnology and aquatic ecology who took an inventory of the property and wrote a detailed report that

included topographic maps and pictures and information on plant and animal species found.

Shurling moved to Macon in the fall of 1967, shortly after he finished law school. He worked in commercial real estate and handled various business interests over the years. Recently, after retirement, he moved into Monroe County. One of the businesses in which he has an interest makes scoreboards, and its scoreboards can be found at Mary Persons and at the Monroe County Recreation Department. Shurling said that having seen how Atlanta has expanded over the last 50 years influenced his decision to partner with Oconee River Land Trust to preserve the land off

Hopewell Road.

“It’s a win-win: some economic benefits and something good for the environment,” he said. “You can’t really anticipate what might happen. At this point in time you would never think of any high density housing [in this area]. But in 50 years? It’s all something most of us are aware of and concerned about. Most of us are trying to be good stewards.”

Carla Francis of Oconee River Land Trust said that although there are several reasons for conservation easements, even to preserve historic sites, Oconee River Land Trust puts priority on tracts that will help protect water quality for the future, like both of the Monroe County parcels

of land do. She said that once an agreement is reached, the conservation easement follows the land forever, whether it is sold, inherited or otherwise transferred between owners.

Francis said that the Land Trust usually only accepts land that meets several contribution values rather than just one. The Land Trust accepted about 40 new projects around the state at the end of 2016. It turned down those without conservation value and picked the ones with the most environmental impact. She said that Oconee River Land Trust primarily works in the Piedmont area, within two or three hours of its headquarters in Athens but does have a couple of

projects on the Georgia coast.

“When we accept a project, we are legally bound to make sure all the requirements are met,” said Francis. “We visit at least once a year and walk the boundary and interior. It’s a win to work with conservation-minded landowners. They are great people to work with.”

Since 1993, Oconee River Land Trust has worked with landowners to protect 26,000 acres across Georgia. Its mission is to protect water quality, preserve wildlife habitats and enhance quality of life for present and future generations.

Landowners retain ownership but permanently give up most rights to develop the properties. In

return they receive tax advantages for federal, state and estate taxes and usually also reduced property taxes. They also know the sites will be permanently protected. Owners may continue to use the land for uses compatible with conservation, such as, hunting, tree farming and pastureland. With the landowners’ permission, Oconee River Land Trust may conduct public events, like hikes and bird watches, on the property.

Visit oconeeriverlandtrust.org to learn more about the organization, conservation easements and some public events on the protected lands, including a bird walk in Macon with the Ocmulgee Audubon Society on Saturday, April 1.

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