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Inside, A8

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VOLUME 147, NO. 47

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2024

2 SECTIONS / 20 PAGES / \$1

Taxes rise to finish fire station

Jonathan Vickery
Publisher
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Funding Sources
Most of the \$5.2 million dollar fire station is funded by state and federal money.

The city started with \$350,000 from the S.C. Department of Public Safety that was secured by Rep. Lonnie Hosey. Additionally, the city has received \$500,000 from the S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations, \$2 million from Department of Energy settlement funds involving the Savannah River Site, nearly \$1.3 million from the federal American Rescue Plan Act, and \$75,521.20 in interest.



See BOND, 10A The new fire station for the Barnwell City Fire Department is nearing completion.

Taxpayers in the City of Barnwell will help fund the completion of the new fire station. In a split 3-2 vote, Barnwell City Council voted on Feb. 27 to approve a general obligation bond of \$1 million to complete the nearly-finished fire station. To repay the bond, the city will implement a property tax increase. "To finish our fire department, we've got to a point now where we have to borrow money," said Mayor Ron Still.



Second grade students at the Williston Dreams, Imagination, & Gift Development (DIG) after school program built a roller coaster made for marbles under the guidance of students from Howard University. The college students spent their spring break in Barnwell County to leave a positive impact on the next generation.

Alexandra Whitbeck / Reporter

Howard University students mentor at DIG

Alexandra Whitbeck
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Fifty students from Howard University in Washington, D.C. made the trip down the east coast to spend their spring break mentoring students in Barnwell and Allendale counties.

Since 1994, Howard University has offered the Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program to their students providing them with an opportunity to serve communities in need across the country. After nearly four years on the waiting list, Dreams, Imagination, and Gift Development (DIG) was selected to be a recipient of the program.

Brown and DIG's co-founder, David Gleaton, originally planned for Howard students to come in March 2020, until the pandemic de-railed their plans. However, the Howard University ASB program "found the value" of DIG, according to Brown, and plans were kept to visit the rural south.

"They found the value of our

See STUDENTS, 2A



Howard University freshman Zoey Hall grew close connections with DIG Dreamers in Williston during her weeklong visit to Barnwell County. Hall was one of 50 Howard students in Barnwell and Allendale counties mentoring students as part of the university's alternative spring break program.

Alexandra Whitbeck / Reporter

OSHA investigating 2 worker deaths at Scotsman Ice Systems

Elijah de Castro
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Renique Riley said autopsy results will be available soon.

Scotsman Ice Systems declined to comment.

The South Carolina office of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is currently investigating two recent deaths that occurred at Scotsman Ice Systems outside of the Town of Fairfax.

A death caused by a lightning strike occurred at Scotsman Ice Systems is under investigation as well as the March 7 death of Michael Cateo, 55, a subcontractor who died in a workplace accident.

Allendale County Coroner

Under OSHA law, worker fatalities are required to be reported within the first eight hours. As of press time, South Carolina's OSHA office did not respond to a request for comment.

Holly Beeson, counsel to the Office of Communications and Governmental Affairs of the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, confirmed the OSHA investigations, which take between six to eight weeks.

Master hair care & child development programs coming to school district

Alexandra Whitbeck
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Administrators are visiting the Orangeburg Career & Technology Center on March 21 to see their child development program.

Consolidation update, new programs, and policy approval were topics of discussion at the Barnwell County School District (BCSD) meeting on February 27.

New Programs

Blackville-Hilda High School (BHHS) will welcome a barber/master hair care program in the 2024-2025 school year. This program will be open to all students in the county.

The district recently closed applications for a program instructor. Administrators will be visiting Lexington School District Two on March 15 to see their barber/master hair care program.

An early childhood education pathway will also be offered in the 2024-2025 school year. BHHS has a space which already meets the state requirements for this program.

At Barnwell County School District 45 (BSD45), the S.C. Department of Education (SCDE) has allowed a multi-age Montessori classroom as an expansion of the Child Early Reading and Development Education Program (CERDEP) program already in place.

BSD45 requested additional funding for this classroom that will serve three and four-year-olds. Funding approval is still pending.

CERDEP programs were expanded this past fall at Macedonia Elementary-Middle School (MEMS).

These programs are through the Barnwell County Career Center (BCCC), but will be housed at their respective schools.

Consolidation Update

The process of combining

See PROGRAMS, 3A

WHAT'S INSIDE

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OBITUARIES, 7A

- Patty Craig** - Williston
- Debora Ann Martin (Fail)** - Barnwell
- Eleanor Floyd** - Allendale
- Johnny Kinard** - Barnwell
- Angelene Pennington Little** - Barnwell



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STUDENTS: Howard University students spend spring break helping local students

FROM PAGE 1A



Organized by the DIG program, 50 students from Howard University visited Barnwell and Allendale County schools to lend a helping hand during the week of March 4.

program," said DIG founder Steven Brown. "With our mantra of giving back and digging deep, I think Howard helped our kids connect those dots."

Throughout the week of March 4, Howard students visited Williston-Elko middle and high schools and Blackville-Hilda High School during the school day and spent the afternoon with DIG Dreamers in their Williston, Barnwell, and Allendale programs.

"It was great to show rural South Carolina that HBCU students are just as qualified as students in other colleges and have the mindset that can carry them into the future," said Brown.

Founded in 1867, Howard University is a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) ranked second in the nation.

At the Williston DIG program, college students worked with varying grade levels to bring their STEM-based creations to life.

"They're very willing to do the things we are trying to do with them, and they're really excited about it," said Habibata Kaira, a sophomore marketing major with a double minor in electronic studio art and fashion design. "You can see the impact you're making because the kids actually want to do the stuff they're doing."

A roller coaster made for marbles, a toothpick and marshmallow bridge constructed to support the weight of a couple pairs of glasses, cars with CDs for wheels, and an egg drop were some of the ideas DIG Dreamers brought to life with the guidance of their Howard mentors.



An egg drop challenge was one of the many STEM-based events Howard University students oversaw. Students were encouraged to create a device that would protect their egg as it fell from the football field bleachers.

"As we go on throughout the week, they've become more open and ready to work," said Jackinia Andre, a junior studying political science.

Although the students only got to spend four days in schools, they felt they were able to make an impact while here and made connections with the younger students.

"Each time I worked with children, and by the end of the week, I would form connections with them," said Karina Aker, a Howard University junior studying sociology and speech language pathology. "I just really enjoy spending time with children and helping them out."

DIG Dreamer and second grader Amber O'Neil made a connection with junior public relations and graphic design student, Genesis Norwood.

"Genesis is very nice," said O'Neil. "I've been really happy working with them."

Students like O'Neil were able to see the national impact DIG has, and opened their eyes to the possibilities for their own futures.

Norwood hopes to work

in education after graduation and continue serving those around her.

"While we are here to impact them, I feel like I've been impacted way more," said Norwood.

"It's been fun and a joy seeing the impact we made on them in a short time," said Papa Frempong, a senior finance major.

Frempong decided to participate in the ASB program as a volunteer initiative for his business fraternity, but also "wanted to give back and help the community," he said.

For many of the students, it was their first time visiting the rural south and experiencing southern hospitality.

"I've never been in South Carolina before so the education system is different but it's been very nice meeting the kids, interacting with them," said Aker.

"It's been very eye opening and fun learning about the place and what people do here," said Andre of her first time being in S.C.

Spring break across the U.S. is commonly associated

with beaches and partying, however, these students decided to spend their time giving back.

Freshman computer science major Zoey Hall signed up to spend her spring break helping the next generation because she "grew up with the principles of giving back at home, and then I saw an opportunity to go into other communities. I wanted to continue that when I went off to college," said Hall.

Senior Brianna Seward is studying nursing with hopes to be a pediatric emergency room nurse, and found the program to be a "really good supplemental learning experience since I will be working with kids."

"My favorite part has been bonding with the kids," said Seward. "I hope to continue to make an impact on them after this week."

Ned Branch Missionary Baptist Church, Friendship Church, and St. Peter's Missionary Baptist Church in Elko assisted in feeding the Howard students.

On their last day, the students spent time around a bonfire sharing their



DIG Dreamers were excited to see if their egg could survive the drop.

Alexandra Whitbeck / Reporter



Toothpicks and marshmallows were used to create a bridge--able to hold multiple pairs of glasses.

thoughts about the week. Many expressed they were sad to leave the students they grew to love, however, find comfort in knowing they left a mark.

"I think it's a model to show other colleges and

universities...that this is something they can volunteer and do for our students locally," said Brown, who hopes bringing college students to mentor DIG Dreamers will become a more frequent event.

COMMUNITY LISTENING CONVERSATION

We need to hear from you!

HEALing Partners is hosting Community Conversations to identify the Health Priorities in Barnwell County.

SCHEDULE

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<p>Barnwell Friday March 15 Barnwell County Health Department 11015 Ellenton St. Barnwell</p>	<p><i>Only</i> 2 DAYS LEFT</p>	<p>Williston Wednesday March 20 Williston Town Hall 13112 Main St. Williston</p>
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County reallocates funding for recreation

Alexandra Whitbeck
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Numerous initiatives got started at the February 13, 2024 Barnwell County Council meeting.

Repurposed Funding for Recreation

Chairman Jerry Creech recommended the county contact the appropriate state entity to request nearly \$2 million be repurposed for advancements at Lake Edgar Brown.

\$1.5 million in legislative funds had been destined for a cover over the pool at the YMCA. However, the county would not be able to afford the installation and upkeep with this cover regardless of state funding.

"The cover for the pool is going to cost \$3.5 million and \$10,000 a month to heat and cool. We can't afford that," said Chairman Creech, who initially was an advocate for this recreational project.

Chairman Creech also recommended \$200,000 reserved for water recreation at Steel Creek Boat Landing

and \$43,000 in fee funds be repurposed for initiatives at Lake Brown.

This recommendation was approved by the council, allowing county staff to pursue funding restructuring.

Hillary Hindman, the county's recreation and community engagement director, is currently working alongside the Williston Recreation and Activities Committee to upgrade baseball fields in Williston. The county recreation committee will then focus on recreational opportunities in Blackville, such as a walking trail.

Chairman Creech also explained the recreation committee is in conversations about bringing clay shooting competitions to Barnwell in hopes of increasing tourism and therefore revenue in the county.

"Our recreation director is doing a fantastic job," said Chairman Creech.

New Equipment

The county approved the purchase of a wheeled excavator for \$249,528 from Hills Machinery Company



Barnwell County Council Chairman Jerry Creech recognized retiring county employee Tammy Rhoden.

LLC based in Columbia with an annual payment of \$50,465.

According to director Curtis Hogg, the public works department had \$50,000 in their budget for the down payment. The last \$40,000 payment on the department's 2018 Volvo Wheel Loader was paid in January, freeing up funding

for the initial payment on the excavator.

Hogg explained this machine is essentially a trackhoe on wheels and will aid in efficiency efforts at the landfill. The excavator will rotate 360 degrees on a turntable to allow the operator to work from the front rather than the side of the machine like they would on a tractor.

The machine will arrive in six to eight weeks.

Recognition

Theresa "Tammy" Rhoden was presented with a resolution of recognition

by Barnwell County Council members for her 23 years of service to the public works department as the administrative assistant.

"We're going to miss you," said Chairman Creech.

ATAX Committee

According to state law, counties and municipalities receiving more than \$50,000 from the accommodations tax must appoint a seven-member advisory committee to make recommendations on spending tax revenue.

The accommodation tax is a seven percent sales tax on the gross proceeds of housing rentals or lodging accommodations, according to the S.C. Department of Revenue.

The advisory committee must submit written recommendations to a municipality or county annually. County staff selected a pool of potential applicants for council to appoint from at a future meeting.

Revising PILT

Councilman Daniel Alexander explained to county council members it may be time to revise the county's PILT allotment from the Department of Energy Office of Management (DOEM). PILT stands for payment in lieu of taxes. PILT is given

to Barnwell County for housing the Savannah River Site (SRS).

According to Councilman Alexander and the finance committee, land ownership is being transferred from DOEM to the National Security Authority (NSA) around October. With this transfer, there may be an opportunity to increase the allotment of PILT funding received by Barnwell County.

A similar effort was made by Barnwell County in 2014 producing a comprehensive study, and Councilman Freddie Houston explained the county has expressed discontent in the PILT allotment in letters to DOE in previous years.

No action was taken on this agenda item, but was for council consideration. The finance committee will continue to explore this project and report back to the council.

Renaming a County Building

The SCA Building will soon have a new name. Located at 54 Irving Street in Barnwell, this building holds numerous county offices and serves as the chambers for county council meetings.

The county government committee has been tasked with presenting options for a new name to the council.



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PROGRAMS: Barnwell County School District adding 2 new programs

FROM PAGE 1A

budgets is underway. Chief Financial Officer Holly Hutto is working with financial management softwares to merge data from all three districts; BSD45, the Barnwell County Consolidated School District (BCCSD), and BCCC.

In March, meetings will be held to determine budget needs for the 2024-2025 year from each school. According to superintendent Dr. Crissie Stapleton, this is a critical step prior to bringing a proposed budget before the board for approval.

In other consolidation news, BSD45 Director of Operations Mike Beasley has begun coordinating with transportation and maintenance supervisors

regarding operations and needs moving forward.

Approved ELA Materials
Four English Language Arts (ELA) instructional materials for the 2024-2025 school year have been approved by the board.

Materials were chosen by teacher representatives from each different grade span across the county. These representatives learned of state-approved, available options at the recent Instructional Materials Caravan held by SCDE.

The four programs were Zaner-Bloser Handwriting for K and K3, South Carolina Wonders by McGraw Hill for grades K-5, South Carolina StudySync by McGraw Hill for grades six to eight, and HMH Into Literature for grades nine

through 12.

Policy Approvals

Policies regarding general school administration and fiscal management were passed on the second reading at the meeting.

The board also read additional policies relating to fiscal management for the first time.

Policies on their first reading include establishing the basic structure for budget transfers, ensuring federal funds are processed correctly, collection of tuition for non-resident students, structure for signing checks and credit card use, payment procedures, and more.

The next BCSD meeting will be held on March 26 at the Barnwell County Career Center.

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BIRTH



Rylee Grace Kinard was born November 15, 2023.

Rylee Grace Kinard

Ross and Harriett Kinard, of Barnwell, are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Rylee Grace Kinard.

Rylee was born on November 15, 2023 at 5:40 p.m. at the Piedmont/University Hospital in Augusta, Ga. She weighed 7 lbs, 11oz and measured 19 1/2 inches in length. Maternal grandparents are Scott and Daria Priester of Bamberg, S.C.

Maternal great-grandparents are Nancy Kruhm and the late George Kruhm, the late George Allen and Evelyn Priester, all of Bamberg, S.C., and Sam and Patsy Stevenson of Springfield, S.C.

Paternal grandparents are Bryan and Gwen Kinard of Barnwell, S.C.

Paternal great-grandparents are Elaine Sanders of Aiken, S.C. and the late Mcgee Sanders of Barnwell, S.C. and the late A.J. and Louise Kinard of Barnwell, S.C.

BIRTHDAY

Scarlett Quinn Baxley celebrates 6th birthday

Scarlett Quinn Baxley celebrated her sixth birthday on March 2, 2024.

She is the son of Bryan and Taneasha Baxley of Williston.

Scarlett has one brother, Sebastian Blake Baxley of Williston.

Maternal grandparents are Suzanne Walker of Williston and the late James Brooker Jr. of Blackville.

Paternal grandparents are Paula Baxley of Williston and Raymond (Cary) Cowan Jr. of North Augusta.

Great-grandparents are Quincy Walker Sr. and the late Shirley Walker of Williston, the late James Brooker Sr. and the late Lizzie Mae Brooker of Blackville, Patricia Cowan and the late Raymond Cowan Sr. of Graniteville, the late Judy "Gayle" Melton Baxley of Williston, and Dwight Baxley of Summerville.



ENGAGEMENT



Kyle Kinard and Katie Seavey are engaged to be married on May 11, 2024.

Katie Seavey, Kyle Kinard

Katie Michelle Seavey of Knightsville, S.C. and Kyle Houston Kinard of Barnwell, S.C. announce their engagement and forthcoming marriage.

Katie is the daughter of Mrs. Sharon Seavey and the late Mr. Derrill Seavey of Knightsville, S.C.

Kyle is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Kinard of Barnwell, S.C. He is also the grandson of Elaine Sanders of Aiken and the late AJ and Mary Kinard of Barnwell.

The bride-elect is a 2017 graduate of Charleston Southern University. She is currently employed at the Clemson Extension Edisto Research Center as a cattle technician.

The groom-elect is a 2019 graduate of Barnwell High School. He is currently employed at the Clemson Extension Edisto Research Center as a peanut technician.

The wedding is planned to take place on May 11, 2024 at Copper Oaks Plantation in Bamberg. Formal invitations will be sent.

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