

# New school year starts Friday; first time at new complex

Some 1,710 students will begin the 2009-2010 school year at four Wilkes County schools Friday, with middle and high school students coming to a new, state-of-the-art school complex, and all students attending schools that have met the state's increasingly higher expectations despite budget cuts.

"We have many things to celebrate in Wilkes County," said Dr. Rosemary Caddell, the county's new superintendent of schools.

"All of our schools and the entire system made AYP, we have one of the highest graduation rates around, and our middle school and high school students and teachers have a beautiful new facility. We have so much to be excited about."

After a summer filled with moving from the old facility to the new school, the big challenge Friday for the high school and middle school will be making safe entry and exit to the new school complex on

Highway 17 north of Washington. Wilkes County deputies will help keep traffic under control as new flashing lights and lower speed limits lend assistance. A diagram of the new system is in this issue of The News-Reporter on page 9A.

Middle and high schoolers are requested not to arrive prior to 7:30 a.m., and Principal Steve Echols says that student drivers, parents dropping off students, visitors, and high school faculty should use the

north entrance (the Tignall side). School buses, middle school faculty, and deliveries only may enter campus using the south entrance, on the Washington side.

Once inside the complex, parents dropping off students will need to take the first right turn to loop around to the front door. Student drivers should continue straight back to the student parking in the rear of the complex.

School personnel will be on hand

to help with parent and visitor traffic, Echols said, but no one will be directing traffic at either exit from the school. "We ask everyone to cooperate and be patient, especially during the first two weeks as things settle down."

Each school has set Open House events to welcome students and parents. Washington-Wilkes Primary School will hold Open House from 2 to 4 p.m. Thursday, August 6, with a PTG parent orientation Tuesday,

August 11, at 6:30 p.m. The elementary school's Open House is set for Thursday, August 6, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Washington-Wilkes Middle School will host its Open House Thursday from 2 to 4 p.m. at the new school, and underclassmen at W-WCHS will have their Open House Wednesday, August 5, at 6:30 p.m. at the new gym. Open House for freshmen and their parents will be Thursday, August 6, at 6:30 p.m.



## Packing up goodies for Marines

Cheney Gebing Bunch packs boxes with baby wipes and other items to make life a little more comfortable for her husband, Steven, and other members of the 1st Battalion, Fifth Marines now fighting in Afghanistan. "We've had great support," she said, "but please continue to give." Donations can be dropped off at McDonald's in Washington or at the Cravco offices behind McDonald's. The Marines live in hot tents in 120-plus degree desert, and the fine sand gets into everything. In the field, facilities for showering and taking care of personal hygiene are rare, so portable-sized packages of non-alcohol-based baby wipes are in high demand for these Marines.

By KIP BURKE  
news editor

In a called meeting Monday night, the Wilkes County Board of Education declared the old school property on Gordon Street to be surplus and voted to advertise the property for sale or lease.

In addition to the school disposal agreement, the board awarded the landscaping contract for the new

school, approved further expenditures for the school's construction company, and agreed to upgrade the schools' websites. They also discussed adding new search procedures for field trips to school and athletic handbooks.

In Monday night's meeting, board Chairman Ricky Callaway, Vice Chairman Andrew Jackson, and members Kay Finnell, Bob Guin, and Steve Albertson declared the old school property to be surplus, and resolved that it be offered for sale with conditions that reserved occasional use of the field house, practice fields, and gym until June 1, 2010, and use of the tennis courts until June 1, 2012.

In addition to agreeing to dispose of the property, the board agreed to advertise the property for sale or lease with sealed bids due by September 10. Bids will be opened and read at a called meeting September 14 at 12:30, and the winning bid announced at the board's regular meeting September 21.

The action opens the door for a new company that has expressed interest in the complex to house a homeland security training center.

The advertisement will run in *The News-Reporter*, and in publications in Athens, Augusta, and Atlanta, along with selected government bidding websites. The request for proposal will be posted at the board website, [www.wilkes.k12.ga.us](http://www.wilkes.k12.ga.us), by

Friday, August 7, Superintendent Rosemary Caddell said.

In a related action, the board first approved a change in policy to allow the lease of the property for up to 50 years to align with state policy.

The board also awarded the landscaping contract for the new school complex to L.C. Givens Landscaping of Watkinsville in the amount of \$84,184.

After going over the construction punch list of unfinished items at the new school, Caddell said that most of the items had been remedied, and those few remaining items would not affect using the school starting this week. She recommended, and the board agreed, to pay McKnight Construction \$440,811.05. Some \$100,000 remains to be paid when

all punch list items are completed.

The board also approved an expenditure of \$12,000 for E-Chalk Web Services, which will make each school's website much easier for school administrators to update, and for teachers and parents to interact. The cost will come from Title I funds because it will improve parental involvement and communications.

Board members also discussed adding procedures for searching student backpacks before field trips, after a high school student took a handgun on a trip to Athens and accidentally shot another student. Caddell said she had talked with principals and Coach Lee Hutto, and recommended that new language be added to both the student handbook and to the athletic handbook.

## Georgia Trust's Fall Ramble plans return to tour Washington-Wilkes

By KIP BURKE  
news editor

The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation has announced that its members and friends will return to Washington September 18-19 to explore local history and architecture during the Trust's annual Fall Ramble.

"We're very excited to host the Trust's Fall Ramble," said Betty Slaton, who leads the committee hosting the event. "This is a very big thing for us, with several hundred people coming."

Slaton said Washington was unique in hosting the city's fourth visit for the Ramble. "They came in the 1970s, then again in 1988, and in 1999."

On Friday afternoon, September

18, Ramblers will explore seven antebellum and Victorian homes and three churches in rural Danburg, she said. "Then in the evening, Ramblers will have a very elegant dinner on the grounds of Peacewood Plantation," a historic plantation home that dates back to the 1790s.

Following dinner, participants are invited to the recently rehabilitated Retro Cinema in Washington to mingle at the cinema's wine bar, browse the bookstore, and enjoy a film.

On Saturday, after an orientation and continental breakfast at Washington's First Baptist Church, Slaton said, Ramblers will explore some 12 historic homes, four churches, two museums, Callaway Plantation and the Mary Willis Library in Wash-

ington, with a luncheon following at First United Methodist Church.

The Fall Ramble is open to members of the Georgia Trust, she said, but membership is available from the Trust's website [Georgiatruster.org](http://Georgiatruster.org), and applications are available at the Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce. Information is also available from Mary Railey Binns at 404-885-7812 or [mrbinnis@georgiatruster.org](mailto:mrbinnis@georgiatruster.org).

Founded in 1973, The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation is one of the country's largest statewide, nonprofit preservation organizations, Slaton said. "The Trust is committed to preserving and enhancing Georgia's communities and their diverse historic resources for the education and enjoyment of all."



Washington Police Patrolman Keith Smith (right) gives a report to Chief Mike Davis after finding two bags of suspected marijuana (visible on the car's dash) during a traffic stop last Wednesday night.

## Augusta teens caught with marijuana after traffic stop for homemade license

Three Augusta teens were arrested last Wednesday night after Washington police stopped their car for having a homemade tag and then found over four ounces of marijuana hidden inside.

Patrolman Keith Smith noticed a black Volkswagen GTI with dark tinted windows and a homemade temporary license plate on the North Bypass near TPS, and conducted a traffic stop, coming to rest at Ann Denard Drive. Talking with the driver, Smith learned that the car was newly purchased and had no

insurance coverage.

WPD shift supervisor Lt. Harry Noble came to the scene, and while talking to the passenger noticed the strong tell-tale odor of marijuana coming from the car. The driver, Justin Corey Ray, 19, at first resisted a search of the vehicle, Noble said, but then consented, and officers found two bags of suspected marijuana totaling 4.6 ounces in the car's glove box, along with about \$150 in small bills.

The officers arrested Ray, along with Philip Joshua Williams, 19, of Augusta, and Roderick T. Walter,

19. All three were charged with possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

Lt. Joe Nelson said the amount of marijuana seized and the small bills indicated that the three were street dealers picking up a load from Athens to break down and sell in \$5 and \$10 bags in Augusta. The driver also lost possession of the car that he had just purchased. "There were enough drugs in there for us to say the car was being used for trafficking, so it was seized by the Washington Police Department," Nelson said.



GARY A. ROGERS

## Sheriff Gary Rogers passes away after extended illness

Retired Wilkes County Sheriff Gary A. Rogers, 57, passed away at his home Friday, July 31, after an extended battle with diabetes.

A long procession of blue lights escorted Sheriff Rogers to his final resting place as scores of law enforcement personnel and firefighters from Wilkes County and surrounding counties led the funeral procession Tuesday morning to graveside services at Washington-Wilkes Memorial Gardens.

Rogers served as Sheriff of Wilkes County from 2000 to 2008, and struggled with declining health for the last year of his tenure. His fellow law officers, friends, and neighbors rallied to his support, holding fundraisers and visiting him to keep his spirits up.

Obituary information is on page 2A.

## Resident bishop's visit will highlight century of worship at historic church

Washington's First United Methodist Church will celebrate 100 years of worship in its Spring Street home with a rare visit from the denomination's resident bishop on Sunday.

"We are a historic church and have many firsts," said Rev. Gale Seibert, "and we are pleased and honored that our new resident bishop, Bishop B. Michael Watson, will be preaching this Sunday."

The bishop's visit is special in itself, she said. "This will be the first time in 99 years the North Georgia Conference's Resident Bishop has joined us in worship."

The 10:30 a.m. Sunday service will be followed by dinner at noon. "The service is open to the community," Rev. Seibert said, "but come early for a good seat."

It was in 1907 that the congregation of Washington First Methodist Episcopal Church South, as it was called then, "stepped out in faith and began to build a beautiful new sanctuary," she said. "Local craftsmen were hired to shape wood, plaster and mortar into a heart-stirring place to approach the one true living God. It wasn't until August 1909 that the building was finished."

The public is invited.

## Stimulus forum set for Saturday

A community forum to give specific information on how the federal stimulus money is affecting Wilkes County is set for this Saturday, August 8, at The Pope Center in Washington.

The Wilkes County Community Development Corporation (WC-CDC) is hosting the forum from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday to give specific information on the funding available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and how the stimulus funds can benefit the Wilkes County community and citizens.

The WCCDC, founded by Wash-

ington Mayor Willie E. Burns and led by Executive Director Barbara Burns, said in a release that attendees at the forum will hear information on the many kinds of assistance available through, among others, the GEFA Weatherization Program, heating and cooling assistance, credit counseling, and USDA programs, as well as an overview of several projects being funded by stimulus money.

The program will also work to raise awareness of the Section 3 provision of the HUD Act of 1968 and the act's effects on upcoming projects in the community.



## Wilkes schools gain four new teachers

Four new teachers are joining the faculties of Washington-Wilkes schools for the 2009-2010 school year, including (l-r) Melanie Stokes, art teacher; Ansley Johnson, W-W Middle School science teacher; Brandon Cain, W-W Middle School math teacher; and Lee Hutto, W-W Head Coach and Athletic Director.