



Watching art in the making

Jon Griggs, with daughters Brennah and Maggie, watch primitive artist Leonard Jones of Lincolnton create art on tin at Saturday's Fall ArtFest. "We've got several of his pieces decorating our home," Griggs said. "We're really enjoying watching him paint this one." The interaction between patrons and artists is one of the best parts of the annual Fall ArtFest, organizers say.

U.S. Census to hire hundreds in Wilkes Co. with testing set Saturday, city council hears

By KIP BURKE
news editor

In its regular November meeting Monday night, the Washington City Council passed a resolution to apply for an energy-efficient-home grant, and heard a report that testing starts soon for hundreds of temporary census jobs in the area.

Washington Mayor Willie Burns and City Councilmen Pamela Eaton, Ed Pope Jr., Nathaniel Cullars, Maceo Mahoney, and Ames Barnett met with City Attorney Barry Fleming, City Administrator Mike Eskew, and City Clerk Debbie Danner. Rev. G.L. Avery was not present.

As proposed by Main Street Director David Jenkins at Monday night's meeting, the council approved a resolution for the city to

apply for a GEFA energy grant program. The Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority would make up to \$300,000 available to improve the energy efficiency of homes for low and mid-income people.

The council also passed a resolution to apply for a HUD counseling grant to help low- and mid-income families to become more creditworthy and qualify for mortgages.

Carl Cox of the U.S. Census Bureau's new Athens regional office announced that testing for census jobs would start in Wilkes County on Saturday, November 14, at 11 a.m. at the Mary Willis Library; again on Tuesday, November 17, at 2 p.m.; and Thursday, November 19, at 10 a.m. All testing will be at the library's meeting room.

Cox told the Council that a good

census count is essential to getting the most funding from state and federal sources. "City governments can gain thousands in possible government funds for every resident you find for the census, so it's important that everybody be counted. To make that count, we're hiring 1,000 to 1,500 temporary part-time and full-time employees in seven counties, and this week in Wilkes County we're testing people who want to be considered for employment."

Tourism Director Ashley Barnett reported that the Wilkes County Complete Count Committee, which is the local effort to help ensure the most accurate census possible, is meeting Thursday, November 19, at 4 p.m., in the courthouse and that volunteers are needed to help. She reviewed plans for upcoming Christ-

mas events, including the "snow" that is guaranteed to fall. "This is really going to put us on the map," she said. "They're talking about this all over Georgia."

Chamber of Commerce president Allan Soto told the council that Sorelle's, a new business on East Robert Toombs Avenue is holding a grand opening Thursday, November 19, at 1 p.m. The Chamber's Board of Directors is holding a Chamber Retreat November 18, a Chamber After-Hours event on The Square Friday night, December 6, and the Chamber's annual banquet is set on either December 10 or 17, depending on a caterer's confirmation, Soto said.

The council also heard Washington Police Chief Mike Davis' report that two new officers had been trained and are on patrol, and that the department's big annual toy drive is underway and going well.

Councilman Eaton reminded those present that they are invited to shop downtown during the annual Candlelight Shopping event put on by the Downtown Development Authority, which meets November 19 at 8:30 a.m. at Farmers State Bank.

Linda Echols, a Wilkes County advocate for the developmentally disabled, told council members of a public forum for families affected by behavioral health problems, developmental disabilities, and addictive disease is set for Tuesday, November 10, at 5 p.m. at the Mary Willis Library in Washington. "This will be an opportunity to discuss issues that affect us and our families concerning the services that are available for behavioral health, developmental disabilities, and addictive disease with the regional planning board," Echols said. "It's important to come out and speak up about our needs."

UGA graduate students develop concepts for look of county, city entrance corridors

Nine University of Georgia graduate students spent last weekend developing a conceptual design for the gateways into Wilkes County with an eye toward identifying those things that detract from the overall appeal and positive image of the county.

Utilizing components of the Georgia Made/Georgia Grown program, students in the College of Environment and Design and their instructor Pratt Cassity incorporated the theme of *Celebrating People, Places and Things* to showcase the native qualities that contribute to the county's identity and visual character.

Part of an ongoing effort by the City of Washington in partnership with Wilkes County, Cassity said, the UGA involvement will contribute to the active promotion of heritage tourism and community pride. "Conducted through a service-learning process called a charrette, the group spent an intensive 72-hour planning weekend during which student designers from the fields of Landscape Architecture and Historic Preservation collaborated on a vision for development of the proposed gateways and corridor improvements."

The charrette process takes place away from campus at the project



Focused on the appearance of the city's gateways, a group of UGA graduate students works diligently at City Hall Annex Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

site, Cassity said, with the team setting up a full working office complete with drafting equipment, supplies, computers, printers, copy machines, and telephones. "They perform fieldwork, comb through planning documents, carry out extensive research and interview stakeholders while striving to arrive at solutions for enhancement of the targeted area of concern."

During the course of the weekend,

the students analyzed eight roadways (Ga. 378 to Lincolnton, U.S. 78 east to Thomson, U.S. 78 west to Athens, U.S. 80 to Warrenton, Ga. 47 to Crawfordville, Ga. 44 west to Greensboro, Ga. 44 east to Chennault, and U.S. 17 to Elberton) as they generated concepts for protecting the visual scenic, historic, or agricultural qualities while creating gateways to the county.

Additionally, they will be recommending how to identify important landmarks, as well as suggesting sensitive and appropriate signage to direct travelers through the county. One of the group's main objectives is to identify those things that detract from the overall appeal and positive image of the county.

Brady Richards, a Minnesotan in his third year of UGA's Master of Landscape Architecture program, said, "Washington-Wilkes has so many assets and the negatives are so few, so this was a really fun project. Success is respecting and protecting the great things that are already here."

Cassity said, "Our students get such a wonderful taste of the real world by working on service-learning projects like these. We use your county as a classroom and are provided a perfect teachable moment. These kinds of projects stay with the students throughout their careers."

The solutions developed from the Washington-Wilkes County Gateways charrette will be presented in a final report targeted for completion by the beginning of 2010. It will serve as the basis for decision making for local planning and policy recommendations.

The charrette process was used in Washington previously to create the vision for redevelopment in the Rusher Street area, Cassity said, "This project will be a companion piece for the fine work that the City is doing at Rusher Street and will augment the recently completed Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive Plan and Washington Multi-Use Trails Plan."

Weeks before Christmas are packed with events, parades, and shopping in the snow

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in Wilkes County, as the weeks leading up to the holidays are packed full of events, concerts, and celebrations throughout the area.

With next Saturday's jazz concert by Connye Florance as an appetizer, the season kicks into full swing with the Washington Downtown Development Authority's annual Christmas Candlelight Shopping on Tuesday, November 24. "It's going to snow at Candlelight Shopping!" said Tourism Director Ashley Barnett. "We're going to have the trial run of our new snow machines that Tuesday night, then it'll snow hourly each Friday

and Saturday nights during December. We're already getting calls from all over about our snow."

In addition to snowfall, Candlelight Shopping will feature Santa, as always, and special sales by downtown merchants. "Come see how easy it is to shop Washington-Wilkes first," Barnett said, "and see what all our wonderful downtown merchants have."

After that kick-off event, the activities come in rapid fire. Thursday, December 3, starts early with the annual Legislative Breakfast set for 8 a.m. at the Third Shiloh Building, followed that night at 7 by a benefit concert for Calli Nickels by country music artist Ty Herndon at the Old Tignall Gym.

The following night, Friday, December 4, will see a return of Christmas shopping in the snow to The Square downtown, along with a Chamber After-Hours at the Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce.

On Sunday afternoon, December 6, at 3 p.m. the Washington Little Theater will present a free concert with cellist Ruth Berry and pianist Kevin Pollock. That afternoon, too, the annual Tignall Christmas Parade will bring Santa to visit North Wilkes.

The Chamber of Commerce members will hold their annual banquet Thursday night, December 10, at the new high school cafeteria, Barnett said. "Instead of a speaker this year, we'll be focusing on local businesses and business people," she said. "It will be a great time."

Following that weekend will be the Christmas Town and Country Tour on Friday, December 11, and Saturday, December 12. In addition to the many seasonally decorated homes, visitors can enjoy a holiday gift bazaar and gingerbread house display on The Square. See the Washington Historical Foundation website www.historyofwilkes.org for additional details and information on purchasing tickets for this annual event. Volunteers are also needed to help with a variety of activities. Contact Tour chairman Ed Franklin via email at talkofthetown2@hotmail.com.

Opening Tour weekend, the Washington Little Theater will present "A Tuna Christmas" with Bradley Barber and Cindy Barrow, in a seasonal comedy with the two actors presenting 23 hilarious characters. "A Tuna Christmas" will play December 11, 12, 16, 18 and 19, with matinee performances on December 12 and 13.

And finally, Washington's annual Christmas Parade is set for Sunday afternoon, December 13. Just as last year, organizer Blake Thompson says, the parade will form at the Pope Center at 2 p.m. and step off at 3, ending at the Washington-Wilkes Elementary School.

Opportunities to help folks abound in Wilkes County during holiday season

BY KIP BURKE, news editor

If one of your Christmas wishes is to do a little something to help your neighbors, you have plenty of opportunities in Wilkes County this year — some as soon as this week.

To help neighbors who don't have warm outerwear, a winter clothing drive here is collecting donations of coats, sweaters, hats and gloves to give out next Friday.

"We all have winter outerwear that we don't use, but that others could wear to keep warm this winter," said Salvation Army Director Dr. M.R. Clayton. "Please help us help those who are in need of warm winter wear." Donations will be accepted at the Washington Bi-Lo store and the First United Methodist Church through next Thursday, November 19. Donations carried to the Methodist Church should be left in Wesley Hall, the old fellowship hall.

The outerwear will be distributed the next day, Friday, November 20. One set of outerwear per family member will be distributed free of charge at God's Marketplace from 9 a.m. until noon. The Wilkes County Unit of the Salvation Army, God's Marketplace, and the local Bi-Lo store are sponsoring the drive.

Local annual programs are providing gifts for hundreds of children — here and around the country — who otherwise might be forgotten.

During the week of November 16-20, Baptist churches all over the county are collecting shoe boxes for the Samaritan's Purse program "Operation Christmas Child," which will deliver gifts to needy children all over the U.S. and the world, along with a Christian message. The office of the First Baptist Church in Washington is the local collection point.

The day before Thanksgiving, November 25, ends Restore Galore's dog food drive. Since November 2, the store has been collecting canned and dry dog food, plus puppy food, bleach, old towels, and plastic bowls to provide for the Wilkes County Animal Shelter over the holidays.

For years, Washington's police officers have helped Santa with the department's annual campaign, taking requests and buying gifts for some 250 children in the Washington-Wilkes area. Police volunteers spend weeks organizing the toys to be distributed and assembling bikes for kids who asked for them. The highlight of the year is the annual distribution, handled by Santa himself, to the kids just before Christmas. For more information, contact Asst. Chief Theodosia Glenn at 706-678-3244.

The community Angel Tree program, run by Washington First United Methodist Church, is an outreach to needy children all over the county, with support and participation from many individuals, civic groups, and other churches, said Laura Toburen. "The children

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Kids, grownups enjoy Tignall festival

As kids played games and tested their skills, adults enjoyed music by the Newtown Rhythm Band at Saturday's ninth annual "I'd Rather Be in Tignall" Festival at the old school in Tignall. Visitors, residents, and returning natives enjoyed fine food, good company, and a day full of music, including performances by Gracen Ware, Sylvia Leigh Walker, Gwin Ware, and Freddy Brown in addition to the Newtown Rhythm Band. As always, bingo, cakewalks, and old photos were crowd favorites.