

FEATURE

New senior center offers one-stop services to residents

In December, Gwinnett County and federal officials opened the new Gwinnett Senior Services Center at 567 Swanson Drive in Lawrenceville. The one-story facility is designed as a LEED Silver building to maximize energy use and water conservation. The center has two community rooms for educational programs and meetings. Staff is easily accessible to match seniors and their caregivers with available resources, and volunteers can sign up for service projects.

Federal Community Development Block Grant Recovery (stimulus) funds and Community Development Block Grant funds were used to construct the \$1.6-million building. For more information about Senior Services, visit www.gwinnettseniorservices.com or call the Senior Helpline at 678.377.4150.



PROTECTING OUR RESOURCES

Wastewater 101

When water leaves your home, apartment, or workplace, it goes to one of two locations: the sanitary sewer system or a septic tank. If the wastewater goes to the sanitary sewer system, it will pass from the source to a wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater treatment facility will clean the water and release the treated water (or effluent) into a nearby stream, river, or lake. Water that does not flow into the sanitary sewer system is treated by an onsite waste water management system, commonly called a septic system.



A typical septic system is made up of a septic tank and a drain field (or absorption field). The septic tank is an underground watertight container built to receive wastewater and allow solids to settle out before sending the liquids to the drain field. This system uses nature's physical, chemical, and biological processes to clean the wastewater. If designed, installed, and maintained properly, a septic system can be a cost-effective, safe, and efficient way to dispose of wastewater. However, just like painting your home or fixing a leaky roof, the maintenance of a septic system is up to the homeowner. Failing to maintain your system can have a negative impact on your system, your wallet, and the environment.

Gwinnett has one of the highest concentrations of septic systems in the United States, with over 75,000 of these systems spread throughout the county. A failure to maintain your septic system can lead to an overflow of raw sewage, which can flow to a creek, storm drain, or cause a backup into your house. Leaking septic systems along with several other sources of fecal bacteria (such as pet waste and some agricultural facilities) have impaired 196 miles of Gwinnett's streams so that they do not meet the standards set by Georgia's Environmental Protection Division. As a minimum maintenance requirement, it is recommended that homeowners have their septic tanks pumped every three to five years. This simple maintenance step removes the collected solids and prevents them from overflowing into and clogging the drain lines connected to the septic tank. This simple action will help you avoid risking your health and the health of others by finding sewage in your bathtub or a wastewater lagoon in your yard.

If you are unsure about your home's wastewater treatment method or have more questions about septic tanks, please visit www.gwinnettstormwater.com and scroll to the bottom of the page for the link titled *Septic Tank Maintenance Information*. There you can learn some basic septic tank information, figure out if your home is on septic or sewer, view our septic tank maintenance folder, and request a free copy of the folder in the mail.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Winter weather safety

With the temperatures getting colder and the potential for icy conditions on the rise, Gwinnett Fire and Emergency Services encourages each household to prepare an emergency kit using the following items:

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Battery-powered NOAA weather radio and a portable AM/FM radio
- Non-perishable foods and water
- First-aid supplies
- Blankets, sleeping bags, and extra clothing
- A fully-charged cell phone

Get all heating appliances serviced annually by a qualified technician. Install and maintain smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms on every level of the home. Develop a home escape plan and conduct fire drills with the entire family. For more information about winter weather safety, visit www.gwinnettcounty.com.

CHECK IT OUT

Check out these inspiring books to get ready for 2011. These and others are available at the Gwinnett County Public Library, www.gwinnettpl.org.

A Long Bright Future: An Action Plan for a Lifetime of Happiness, Health, and Financial Security, by Laura Carstensen

Gunn's Golden Rules: Life's Little Lessons for Making it Work, by Tim Gunn

Clutch: Why Some People Excel Under Pressure and Others Don't, by Paul Sullivan

The Doctor Is In: A 7-Step Prescription for Optimal Wellness, by Travis L. Stork

SPLOST

Gwinnett approves sidewalks and more

Design improvements to the intersection of Jimmy Carter Boulevard at Buford Highway will be underway soon after Gwinnett commissioners approved three contracts with two Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) in December.

An agreement with the Gwinnett Village CID allows the district to study feasibility and designs to accommodate increased capacity, improve safety, and minimize congestion at the intersection. Resurfacing of Indian Trail Road is covered by a second agreement with the same CID.

The Gwinnett Place CID will add sidewalks on Sweetwater Road, Koger Boulevard, Steve Reynolds Boulevard, Old Norcross Road, Venture Drive, and Pineland Road. Sidewalks on Ross Road will be the result of an innovative pilot project for a combined design/build contract awarded to ISC, Inc., for \$299,180. The County also awarded a construction contract for sidewalks in the Gwinnett Center area on Sugarloaf Parkway and Satellite Boulevard. An agreement with the Georgia DOT for a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grant will provide just under \$1.1 million toward the construction cost.

"The money for these projects has been collected through the 2009 SPLOST program, and those funds have allowed us to receive grant funding for one of the projects," said Gwinnett DOT Director **Brian Allen**.



County offices closed for Martin Luther King Jr. holiday

All offices, except those operations required for the comfort and safety of the citizens of Gwinnett County, will be closed January 17 for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Offices will reopen January 18.

EVENTS

Sign up for these and other great activities at www.gwinnettparks.com.

An Engaging Affair Bridal Show

January 19 • 1:00pm – 4:00pm
Gwinnett Historic Courthouse
185 E. Crogan Street, Lawrenceville

Kids Night Out

January 21 • 5:30pm – 9:00pm
Bogan Park Community Recreation Center
2723 North Bogan Road, Buford

Belly Laugh Comedy Competition

January 21 • 7:00pm
Dacula Park Activity Building
2735 Old Auburn Road, Dacula

Women's Self Defense Workshop

January 22 • 3:30pm – 5:30pm
Bogan Park Community Recreation Center
2723 North Bogan Road, Buford

Crochet/Knitting Club Social

January 24 • noon – 2:00pm
George Pierce Park
55 Buford Highway, Suwanee

Me and My Guy

January 29 • 5:00pm – 7:00pm
Rhodes Jordan Park Community Recreation Center
100 E. Crogan Street, Lawrenceville

Movie Night

January 29 • 6:30pm
Best Friend Park Gym
6224 Jimmy Carter Boulevard, Norcross

Water Resources self-service portal

A new self-service portal has been added to the Water Resources website. Customers can now manage automatic payments and make address and phone number changes to their water accounts. Please visit www.gwinnetth2o.com to see these improvements and stay tuned for future improvements coming soon.

AROUND GWINNETT

Homes around the world exhibit

Take a journey into the homes of people around the world in the exotic, hands-on traveling exhibit entitled *Your House, My House* at the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center (GEHC) beginning January 8 and running through April 16.

GEHC will host a special opening day for the exhibit on January 15 from 10:00am to 2:00pm.

Activities for this fun-filled exhibit include designing and building houses and visiting model homes from around the world to learn how a home's environment can affect its design.

Step inside three model homes: a Mongolian herder's ger, a m'bure from the tropics of Fiji, and a stilt house from a Malaysian fishing village to learn how children in these places might live.

Design your own house using the tools of the trade or make choices on house components using a computer program. Compare different building materials and house features or match houses with environments. Choose from four building materials and construct your own house.

This exhibit is sponsored by Holtkamp Heating and Air Conditioning, Inc., and included with GEHC admission. GEHC members are admitted free. For more information, call 770.904.3500 or visit www.gwinnettEHC.org.

TAX COMMISSIONER

Out-of-area emission waivers

As of January 1, 2011, the Georgia Clean Air Force processes all out-of-area emission waivers for Gwinnett County residents. Due to new Clean Air Force requirements, Gwinnett County tag offices **no longer** process out-of-area emission waivers. For an application and other information, visit the Georgia Clean Air Force website at www.cleanairforce.com.

gwinnettcounty connection
send questions or comments to shaunika.taste@gwinnettcountry.com

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