



# County Line

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## County moves forward on revitalization efforts

The Gwinnett County Revitalization Task Force spent a year studying the causes of commercial and residential decline, learning ways other municipalities have overcome blight in their communities, and identifying areas in Gwinnett as candidates for redevelopment. The task force then presented its findings to the Board of Commissioners. According to the group's report, Gwinnett County's "future position as a leader in business, education, and quality of life is at risk" from the threat of decline and disinvestments in older parts of the County. The task force report outlined strategies and tactical recommendations to address this threat, including the encouragement of mixed-use development as a tool for redevelopment and launching pilot studies in three areas.

Some early efforts to combat suburban decline include a mixed-use development overlay district approved by the Board of Commissioners in October 2002. The ordinance permits the mixing of commercial, office, and residential uses in a single zoning district. The regulations require developers to set aside 20 percent of the property as common area. In

December 2002, the Board approved a resolution to extend the term of the Revitalization Task Force for two years. During this time the task force will oversee the pilot studies and come up with ideas for redevelopment. The residential portion around Beaver Springs Elementary, the Gwinnett Place Mall area, and the Highway 78 corridor from Snellville to the Dekalb County line are the three areas to be studied.

The work of the Gwinnett County Revitalization Task Force has already won accolades. Just last month, Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful (GC&B) presented the task force with the Beautification Project of the Year award for the group's tireless work to develop recommendations to prevent urban blight and manage Gwinnett County's growing pains.



*GC&B chairman Jim Steele presented task force members (l to r) Nancy Roney, Jim Durrett, Jack Bolton, Marina Peed, Theresa Cantrell, Kelly Herndon, Steve Logan and Emory Morsberger, chairman, with the award on January 10. Other members of the task force are John Sexton, vicechairman, Wayne Chan, Nancy Chandler, Bob Chapin, Terrilee Cooper, Steve Gaultney, Lance Hatfield, Mike Lant, and Ana Ramirez.*

## 2003 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

Close to 400 people gathered on January 8 to learn about the "State of the County." Gwinnett County Commission Chairman F. Wayne Hill delivered his annual address during a joint meeting of the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce and Council for Quality Growth.

Hill let images tell the story of the County's success during a 10-minute video, then hit several of the highlights from the past year and priorities for the future:

- Gwinnett County has maintained its Triple AAA bond rating, one of only 20 counties in the nation to hold this designation. The rating results in lower interest rates and savings to taxpayers.
- Gwinnett's \$1.4 billion budget is larger than the general fund budgets of six states and it equals that of 80 Georgia counties. This budget includes 187 new positions (compared to 55 last year); 113 of those are public safety and courts jobs.
- The Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners last year announced a partnership between the University of Georgia and the Gwinnett County Board of Education to build the Gwinnett County Environmental and Heritage Center. According to Hill, this center will preserve history and "educate our children and give us all a glimpse of what has happened in our county."
- The Thomas P. "Tommy" Hughes Grand Ballroom opened last fall and the Arena at Gwinnett Center will open February 16 with a nationally televised Georgia Force arena football game.

...continued on County Line page 4

## contents

Black History Month observances



Dogs enjoy new park



Additional routes on Transit



Valentine weddings



Attention Gwinnett taxpayers



Pet Corner



Check it out!



Around Gwinnett





## Black History Month observances

In observance of Black History Month, the Gwinnett Human Relations Commission and the United Ebony Society hosted a reception on February 2 from 3:00pm – 5:00pm to kick off Black History Month. The reception was held at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center (GJAC) in Lawrenceville, which is also the site of a black history display throughout the month of February. The **“Seeds have been planted; reap the harvest”** exhibit will include photographs, letters, newspaper articles, and other items related to black history. The month-long observance will culminate in a program on February 28 at Richards Middle School at 7:30pm. For more information, contact **Percy Scott**, Human Relations Coordinator, at 770.822.7019.



## Dogs and their owners to enjoy new park

Gwinnett County's Five Forks Park will have something for every member of your family, even the one with four legs.

The 25-acre park will house the county's first dog park as well as a senior area, basketball courts, a small skate area, a playground, and a multi-purpose trail. Construction will begin on the park next month and Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation will hold a groundbreaking ceremony at the park site on March 4 at 3:00pm. The public is invited to attend.

Five Forks Park will boast the county's first dog park, a two-acre fenced-in area where dogs can play off their leashes. Two sections will comprise the dog park – one for small dogs and one for large dogs.

Five Forks also will have an area especially designed for seniors with horseshoe pits, shuffleboard courts, bocce ball courts, and a pavilion with permanent chess and checkerboards.

Children will love the playground and skate area, and children and adults alike will enjoy the two half-court basketball courts and a three-quarter-mile paved multi-purpose trail, which is great for walking, jogging, or bicycling. Other amenities will include several covered picnic areas, a small pond, and an open field where people can fly kites, hold picnics, or just run around and play.

The park will be located near the intersection of Five Forks Road and Ronald Reagan Parkway in Lawrenceville, across from Five Forks Library.



## Groundhog predicts additional routes on Gwinnett County Transit

When the groundhog popped out of his hole on February 2, the forecast was obvious: Expect three more Local Bus routes.

Gwinnett County Transit began serving a total of five Local Bus routes on February 3, adding routes to the southern I-85 corridor, the Peachtree Corners/Technology Park area, and up Satellite Boulevard and U.S. 23 to Buford. The County commemorated the start-up with a Grand Opening celebration February 4 at the Gwinnett Place Transit/Transfer Center.

Gwinnett Transit first began offering Local Service last November, providing service to the Doraville MARTA Station, Gwinnett Place Mall, Discover Mills, Gwinnett Technical College, the Gwinnett Medical Center complex, and other points in Lawrenceville.

*“We expect our ridership will continue to grow as we add these routes,”* said **Brian Allen**, director of the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation.

Route 10 provides service between the Doraville MARTA Station and Gwinnett Place Mall. Average daily ridership on Route 10 was 177 in November; in December, it grew to 300. Route 40 provides service between Gwinnett Place Mall and Lawrenceville. Average daily boardings grew from 50 in November to 100 in December.

Routes and schedule information for Local and Express Service Routes can be found online at [www.gctransit.com](http://www.gctransit.com) or by calling 770.822.5010.



*Dogs like Grace will soon enjoy their own space in the dog park, a feature of the new Five Forks Park. The entire park goes under construction in March.*

# Courts offer Valentine's Day nuptials

Couples wishing to marry or renew their marriage vows are invited to attend the annual Valentine's Day marriage ceremonies at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center. A Probate Court judge will perform the ceremonies on Friday, February 14 from 9:00am – 5:00pm and a Magistrate Court judge will marry couples from 9:00am – 6:00pm that day.

All services are free. Couples must present a valid marriage license although couples renewing their vows do not need to bring a marriage license. No appointment is necessary. Magistrate Court also offers ceremonies performed in Spanish.



Amid festive hearts and streamers, Judge Walter Clarke performs a Valentine's Day wedding ceremony. (Photo courtesy of Bill Roa, Gwinnett Daily Post)

## ATTENTION TAXPAYERS

### New motor vehicle insurance laws

Motor vehicle insurance laws changed as of February 1, 2003. This legislation affects your tag transactions.

Now when you process a tag transaction that requires insurance verification, such as a tag renewal, the County Tag Office will no longer accept an insurance card as proof of insurance. The insurance information verification is accomplished by the State Tag and Title Registration system electronically matching the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) that was provided by your insurance agent to the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety database. This means the VINs must match.

The Vehicle Identification Number on your vehicle, the VIN on your current insurance card and the VIN on your current registration card must all match exactly to ensure the State's computer system reflects correct information!

Don't wait. Check now!

...continued on County Line page 4

### Check it out!

Great music for enthusiasts! Enjoy old favorites and discover new ones by checking out the following titles from the Gwinnett County Public Library's CD music collection.

**George Winston:** *Winter into Spring*

**U-2:** *The Best of 1980 – 1990*

**Santana:** *Supernatural*

**Ella Fitzgerald:** *Ella and Friends*

**Ludwig van Beethoven:** *Symphony No. 5*

**Soundtrack:** *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?*

**The Rolling Stones:** *Forty Licks*

**Santana:** *Supernatural*

**Otis Redding:** *The Very Best of Otis Redding*

**Johnny Cash:** *The Essential Johnny Cash*

**Jimmy Buffet:** *Songs you know by Heart*

List provided by Gwinnett County Public Library. Call or visit one of the library's 11 branches for additional selection assistance or visit the Web site at [gwinnettpl.org](http://gwinnettpl.org)!

## Pet Corner



### Pet Corner

Pet Corner

The Bruce family adopted this lovable puppy named Maia from the Gwinnett County Animal Control Shelter last July. Maia's new family gives her an abundance of love. They sent photos to the shelter, hopeful that more people will follow in their footsteps and visit the local animal control shelter to find their next pet.

Are you looking for an addition to your household that will give you unconditional love and affection? You need to look no farther than the Gwinnett County Animal Control Shelter where you can adopt one of the cats and dogs they have available. Dogs and cats are also available for adoption every Sunday from 1:00pm – 5:00pm at the Pet-smart near the corner of Ga. Hwy 120 and Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road in Lawrenceville.



If you'd like to see photos of pets currently up for adoption, go to [www.co.gwinnett.ga.us](http://www.co.gwinnett.ga.us). You can also visit the shelter at Hi-Hope Road and Georgia 316 in Lawrenceville or call 770.339.3200.





# AROUND GWINNETT – FEBRUARY

Pinckneyville Community Center presents “Chinese Papercuts,” an exhibition of five artists (Li Liu, Ting Qi Wang, Yan Yu Chen, Shong Li, Yu Qin Hong) from Jilin Province in northeast China showcasing the traditional art of Chinese papercutting. The themes cover modern life, folk tales, ancient story, and local customs. The show runs through February 27, 2003. The exhibit is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00am – 9:00pm, Friday and Saturday from 9:00am – 5:00pm, and Sunday from noon – 5:00pm. Admission is free. Call 770.417.2200.

The Gwinnett Historic Courthouse features “Conversations,” a solo exhibition by local Duluth artist, Michelle Williams-Peterson. Williams-Peterson, a self-taught artist who works in all water-based mediums, will present a series of figurative abstract paintings that depict human interaction through the fundamental communication of body language. The show opens February 3, 2003 and runs through April 4, 2003. Hours are Tuesday through Friday, 10:00am – 4:00pm. Admission is free. Call 770.417.2200.

**Adult Spring Softball Registration** will take place February 5 at 7:00pm in the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center Auditorium. Registration is by team only and the fee is \$455 per team. Divisions include Men’s Open, Women’s Open, Coed, Men’s Industrial, and Men’s Church. Season begins March 3. Call 770.822.5152.

Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation presents a **Magic Show: The Wizard of Odd** on February 7. This can’t-miss show will take place at the Pinckneyville Community Center. Admission is \$3 and an adult must accompany children. Call 770.417.2200.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services will host its first community **Super Saturday** of CPR and First Aid certification classes of the year on February 8. Instructors will teach participants how to recognize and treat life-threatening emergencies; perform adult, child, and infant CPR; and sharpen their basic First Aid skills. Super Saturday will take place in the Jury Room at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center from

8:30am – 5:00pm. The second Super Saturday will be held on September 20. In addition to Super Saturdays, the department offers weekly classes and each year certifies more than 2,000 people in CPR and First Aid. For additional information, call 770.513.5586.

**Daddy-Daughter Date Night** is on February 14 at the Pinckneyville Community Center. Make a date with your daughter for a Valentine’s Day dance from 6:00pm – 9:00pm. Dance to yesterday and today’s hits and show off your moves in a dance competition. Refreshments will be served and all participants receive a keepsake photo. Admission is \$15 per father-daughter pair plus \$5 for each additional child. Call 770.417.2200.

A **Valentine’s Dinner** will take place on February 14 at the Gwinnett Historic Courthouse. Take a special someone out for a romantic evening of dinner and dancing at the restored 19th century Gwinnett Historic Courthouse. Evening includes a buffet dinner, dancing, and live music. No alcohol and smoking permitted. Reservations required by February 10. Admission is \$50 per couple. Call 770.822.5450.

Registration for session two of **Swim Lessons** sponsored by Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation will take place on February 15 at Bogan Aquatic Center in Buford, Collins Hill Aquatic Center in Lawrenceville, and Mountain Park Pool in Lilburn from 10:00am – noon. Sign up in person at the pool where you plan to take lessons. Session costs \$45 and runs from February 24 – March 20. Call Bogan at 770.614.2063, Collins Hill at 770.237.5647, or Mountain Park at 770.564.4650.

Halloween is coming early this year with the **Costume Carnival** on February 28 from 7:00pm – 10:00pm at the Pinckneyville Community Center. Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation presents a costume party the entire family can enjoy. Dress in theme-related costumes and enjoy prizes, refreshments, dancing, and more. Call 770.417.2200.

## TAXPAYERS

...continued from County Line page 3

If the VIN on your insurance card is incorrect you need to contact your insurance agent immediately. If the VIN on your current registration is incorrect you need to contact the County Tag Office immediately.

For additional information call 770.822.8818 or visit [www.gwinnetttaxcommissioner.com](http://www.gwinnetttaxcommissioner.com).

### Homestead exemption filing begins

The 2003 homestead exemption filing season began January 2, 2003. A regular homestead exemption and value offset exemption is available to all homeowners who occupy their property as their primary residence. It is not applicable to rental property or vacant land. Other exemptions are also available to senior and disabled homeowners. The deadline for filing is May 1, 2003.

### Mobile home tax bills mailed this month

Mobile home tax bills were mailed on January 15, 2003. The deadline for payment is May 1, 2003.

For more information, call the 24-hour customer service line at 770.822.8800 or e-mail [Property\\_Tax@co.gwinnett.ga.us](mailto:Property_Tax@co.gwinnett.ga.us).

## State of the County

...continued from County Line page 1

- Some issues will maintain their priority in coming years, including water supply and water quality, air quality, and storm water runoff. Gwinnett County will continue to be part of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District and participate in the Georgia Clean Air Campaign.

A link to the State of the County 2003 and 10-Year Overview handouts are available online at [www.co.gwinnett.ga.us](http://www.co.gwinnett.ga.us).

## countyline

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