



county Line

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Chief Walters ready to face new challenges

Gwinnett County Administrator **Charlotte Nash** appointed **Colonel Charles M. Walters** as the new Gwinnett County Police Chief to succeed retiring **Chief Bill Dean**. Walters, a 24-year veteran of the GCPD, has served in various capacities throughout the agency. Walters has a master's degree from Georgia State University, and he is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and Leadership Gwinnett. Walters officially assumed command of the department on October 1, 2003.

"We are extremely fortunate to have an individual with Colonel Walters' credentials and experience within the organization," according to **Nash**. *"I am confident he is ready to assume command and lead the GCPD."*

A native of Buffalo, New York, Chief Walters started his police career in Gwinnett County as a patrol-

man and served the department as both a detective and a sergeant in narcotics for 11 years, director of the police academy for five years, colonel in charge of support operations for two years, and commander of the uniform division from May 2002 until he became chief last month.

Walters promoted 17 people on his first day as chief. *"There will be internal organizational changes that will make operations more efficient, but the public won't notice any difference,"* said **Walters**. *"There's not much to fix, but I will probably make some changes after the first of the year to make the department more responsive."*

"The challenge of this new position has been the much broader base of things I need to know. Instead of responsibility for just one division, I have to look at every issue and how



it affects the police department and how much the rest of county government affects the police department," **Walters** said. *"In the next year or two, we will be facing the same challenges as other departments in county government – growth, the increasingly diverse population, and the economic and crime trends that follow that growth. Our job will be to find ways to provide the best public safety services for the citizens of Gwinnett County."*

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Citizens get hands-on training at fire academy

by **Kinsey Hansel**,
Communications Intern

The streets are a little safer now that 32 Gwinnett County citizens have graduated from the Gwinnett Fire Department's two citizens academies. A third citizens academy started September 2. The idea came from President Bush's initiative to train more citizens on how to handle emergency situations after the September 11 tragedy. The nine-week course meets on Tuesday nights from 6:00pm to

9:00pm and a few Saturdays. *"One of the goals is to have a group of residents who are able to handle certain emergency situations even before fire personnel arrive,"* said firefighter **Tommy Rutledge**, coordinator of the Citizens Fire Academy.

Annette Bowen, who works in the Gwinnett County Human Resources department and whose husband is a firefighter, said she went through the academy to get a feel for what her spouse does firsthand. *"We learn-*

ed what it was like to be a firefighter," she said. *"We learned about and got to wear all of the equipment and even crawled into the burn building filled with smoke and used the hose. The water pressure in the hose makes it so stiff it is like trying to bend a two-by-four."*

Citizens participate in simulations on a fire truck, and even do a simulated search to find and pull a dum-

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Q and A with the Tax Commissioner: new state laws

Katherine Sherrington, Gwinnett County Tax Commissioner, explains some of the new state laws affecting motor vehicle registration.

Q. I remember reading recently that "new" 2004 license plates will be available beginning December 1 for January birthdays and every citizen will get a new plate in 2004. Is this true?

A. That was originally the state's intention. In order to save money, however, Governor Perdue recently decided that most of the current "Georgia . . . on my mind" license plate categories **will not** be relaxed, but instead will be renewed with a 2005 decal. This applies to the following vehicles: passenger/light truck, habitual violator, motorcycle, trailer, government vehicle, hearse/ambulance, low speed vehicle, government motorcycle, and all dealer license plates.

Vehicles not falling in the mentioned categories **will** be issued the new license plate: commemorative, college, prestige, amateur radio, military, veteran, commercial trucks, and disabled person tags. Also, all new residents registering a vehicle for the first time will be issued a new 2004 license plate, as will newly purchased vehicles when there is no current license plate to transfer.

Q. Does the DMVS still require a letter from the doctor to receive a disabled person license plate?

A. That's a good question. If you are applying for a disabled person plate for the first time, you will need to provide a notarized MV9D affidavit from your doctor. If you currently have a disabled person plate that was issued prior to July 1, 1999, a new affidavit will be required for your 2004 renewal. If you currently have a disabled person plate that was issued on or after July 1, 1999, it will not be necessary to provide another affidavit for your 2004 renewal.

Gwinnett County had approximately 540,000 registered vehicles in 2002 and is currently first in Georgia in motor vehicle registrations for the current year. We are committed to providing tag and tax services that are accessible and responsive to the needs of our citizens. Your comments provide us with information that enables us to better serve our public. Please feel free to call our automated 24-hour information line at 770.822.8801. We also have a call center at 770.822.8818, available Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 5:00pm, and you can visit www.gwinnett-tag.com anytime.

Citizen's fire academy

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my to safety. "We try to make it as hands-on as we can," said **Rutledge**. "It is set up like a mini recruit school. They learn about fire attack, how to use the ladder, command structure, everything recruits learn just on a more basic level."

Bowen would recommend the class to anyone because the academy teaches you how to respond in emergency situations in your own home. "If something happens and you're there you can begin emergency response right away instead of waiting five or six minutes.

We were certified in First Aid and CPR and we learned what to do in critical situations like a fire in the kitchen. We also learned what not to do, when to get out," she said.

Rutledge says that the program has been more beneficial than he could have imagined. "It allows us to meet citizens in a non-emergency situation and teach them about what we do. It also allows them a chance to let us know how we can serve the community better," he said.

For more information or an application for the Citizens Fire Academy, contact Tommy Rutledge at 770.614.2101. You must be 18 years or older and live or work in Gwinnett County to apply.



Elizabeth House and Howard Towne danced the day away under a ceiling full of stars at the 2003 Senior Prom held at Bogan Park in late September. The Health and Human Services Division organizes the annual event attended by senior clients from the Buford, Norcross, and Lawrenceville Senior Centers. If you are interested in information about senior services, please call 770.822.8850.

Attention! Gwinnett County taxpayers

The 2003 property tax bills are to be paid in full by November 15, 2003.

If any part of your bill is not paid in full by the due date, a five percent penalty will be added based on the unpaid amount. In addition, interest will begin to accrue at the rate of one percent per calendar month (12 percent annually) beginning **November 16**.

For more information, please call customer service at 770.822.8800 or visit www.gwinnett-tax.com.



Asian American Center, other service agencies have home in Norcross

by Kinsey Hansel, Communications Intern

The Asian American Center, a nonprofit organization founded in 1997, was worried about having to shut its doors after founder Henry Jee passed away last year. His wife, Connie, and a team of volunteers refused to give up on the center and now they have found a temporary home at the Norcross Human Service Center. The Norcross Human Service Center located at 5030 Georgia Belle Court in Norcross offers varied services to multiple nationalities already, but the Asian Center will help

bring in even another segment of the community.

When people visit the Asian American Center, they also have quick access to the services already offered by agencies at the Norcross facility. These groups include Public Health, GRN Community Service Board Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, Department of Family and Children Services, Ninth District Opportunity (Head Start/Pre-K), Gwinnett County Senior Services, and the Gwinnett County Department of Motor Vehicles.

There are also countless evening programs and other activities for the community, such as computer, Spanish and English classes, parenting workshops, and back-to-school events.

The new home has enabled the Asian American Center to offer new services to clients such as health screenings. The Center is also teaching computer, English, citizenship, Asian ink painting, and health education classes using the conference rooms at the Norcross Human Service Center.

Are you interested in reducing your debt?

by Sharon H. Cook, Gwinnett County Cooperative Extension Service

The question of how to best handle debt repayment faces many individuals and families today. The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service offers a program called PowerPay® to help you analyze payment options for your personal debts. Based on information you provide about your debts, the PowerPay® computer program will analyze the data and

generate a repayment plan designed specifically for you.

You may take advantage of this opportunity at virtually no cost to you except for postage and the time it takes you to fill out a form. **All information is handled with strictest confidence.** If you are interested in the PowerPay® program and would like to receive a copy of the form to get started, please contact Extension Agent Sharon H. Cook at 678.377.4010.

Check it out!

Read some great mysteries before the busy holiday season is upon you! The following crime novels were selected as *Booklist* magazine's Best of 2002.

Death of a Celebrity, by M.C. Beaton

Open Season, by C.J. Box

Seven Up, by Janet Evanovich

Flinch, by Robert Ferrigno

Tishomingo Blues, by Elmore Leonard

Smoke-Filled Rooms, by Kris Nelscott

The Nautical Chart, by Arturo Perez-Reverte

Bleeders, by Bill Pronzini

The Falls, By Ian Rankin

The Death of Sweet Mister, by Daniel Woodrell

List provided by Gwinnett County Public Library. Call or visit our branches for additional selection assistance, or check out www.gwinnettpl.org.

Pet Corner



Pet Corner

Princess' new owner adopted her from the Gwinnett County Animal Shelter on September 30. In this photo, she is just taking a break from a hard day's work.

There are other wonderful pets who also need a loving home. If you would like to view photos of cats and dogs up for adoption, go to www.gwinnettcountry.com. You can also visit the shelter at Hi-Hope Road and Ga. 316 in Lawrenceville or call 770.339.3200.





Come join Gwinnett Park's Foundation November 8 for a **5K road race**. Race day registration begins at 8:00am and the race will begin at 9:00am at Tribble Mill Park in Grayson. The registration fee is \$15 and proceeds from the race will benefit the Gwinnett Parks Foundation. Call 770.339.0203 or visit www.gwinnettparksfoundation.org.

Everyone will enjoy **Family Game Night** at **Rhodes Jordan Park Community Center** in Lawrenceville and at **Pinckneyville Community Center** on November 14. Games will begin at 6:00pm at Rhodes Jordan and at 7:00pm at Pinckneyville. Spend a night enjoying games, puzzles, bingo, and refreshments in the gym and game room. You must pre-register for this event and the cost is \$5 for a family of four and \$1 for each additional person. Call 770.822.5414.

The Pinckneyville Community Center hosts art exhibits at several locations. The Gwinnett Historic Courthouse: "**Lawrenceville Photography**" by Christopher Burdett runs through November 14 and "**A Work of Art**" by Lala Streett runs through February 20. Pinckneyville Community Center: **Black**

and white photos of China by Derek Bell runs through November 19. Centerville Community Center: **K.V. Herndon**, portrait artist, runs through December 12 and **Southern Colours Art Association** display runs through March 12. For more information about these or other exhibits, call 770.417.2200.

Ring in the holiday season with family and friends at the 16th annual **Lighting of the Tree** ceremony on the square in downtown Lawrenceville on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 2003. Festivities begin at 5:00pm and the tree lighting ceremony will begin at approximately 6:00pm. There will be live entertainment, horse-drawn carriage rides, beautifully decorated rooms to stroll through, and, of course, Santa Claus. For more information, call 770.822.5450.

The *History of Gwinnett County Georgia, 1818-1993 Volume III* will be on sale in the lobby of the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center from 8:30am-4:00pm on December 1. GJAC is located at 75 Langley Drive in Lawrenceville. Compilation and maps were completed by Gwinnett County Historian

Marvin Nash Worthy. Subjects of interest include early Gwinnett census records, pioneer family histories, and Cherokee land and the gold lottery. Call 770.822.7119 for information.

It's time to register for December's **Weekend on the Wild Side** at Okefenokee Swamp. Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation invites children ages eight and older to experience an unforgettable learning experience. From December 5 - 7, campers will observe a variety of species including deer, armadillos, fox, snakes, heron, and alligators. The cost is \$60, which includes camping, boating, and parking fees. Call 770.932.4460.

County holiday schedule

All offices with the exception of those operations required for the comfort and safety of the citizens of Gwinnett County will be closed on the following dates in observance of the holidays. A magistrate court judge will be available at the Gwinnett County Detention Center.

- Thursday, November 27, 2003
- Friday, November 28, 2003
- Wednesday, December 24, 2003
(offices will close at noon)
- Thursday, December 25, 2003
- Thursday, January 1, 2004

Gwinnett County Transit adjusts local bus service

Gwinnett County Transit last month adjusted service on its local routes to boost efficiency. On an average weekday, more than 4,000 riders use Gwinnett County Transit services. Of that number, approximately 3,000 board local buses.

"Gwinnett County and our contractor, *McDonald Transit*, are constantly reviewing the performance of our bus system," said **Brian Allen**, Director of the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation. "We want to improve the overall efficiency of our local service."

Local bus service changes:

- Route 10 – increased number of buses to allow for shorter route times and more frequent service during the morning and evening rush hours.
- Route 20 – route enhancements to bring local buses serving the southern I-85 corridor closer to riders in the Singleton Road area.

- Route 30 – clockwise and counter-clockwise loops, serving the area of downtown Norcross and Technology Park, so buses operate in both directions every 30 minutes. The main portion of the route, from the Gwinnett Place Transit Center to Buford Highway, has buses operating every 15 minutes during peak hours.
- Route 40 – reduced the cycle time on this route, shortening the trip so riders spend less time on the bus.
- Route 50 – this route underwent the most extensive routing and scheduling changes to provide more direct service from the Gwinnett Place Transit Center to the Mall of Georgia, shortening the trip time for riders.

Route maps and schedules can be obtained by calling 770.822.5010 or on the Web at www.gctransit.com.

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