



# county Line

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## Gwinnett Transit celebrates two years

by Karen Lougee, Department of Transportation

Gwinnett County Transit celebrated the second anniversary of Express Bus Service in November. The system that surprised everyone from the outset continues to operate at close to capacity.

Twenty-four Express Buses run on three routes, which allow individuals to park their cars at central locations and take transit to their destinations in downtown Atlanta. The routes also provide reverse commute service, bringing employees to Gwinnett. Express Bus Service runs five days a week during peak travel times. During the month of November, Express Bus Service averaged 1,321 daily boardings.

Local Bus Service operates Monday through Saturday using 36 buses on five routes. Two routes started up in November 2002 and three more were operating by February 2003, connecting neighborhoods and businesses to Gwinnett's cultural, shopping, and educational opportunities. Local Bus Service is hitting projected ridership numbers earlier than expected, with more than 2,800 average daily boardings in November.

The system got its start in 1998, when County commissioners approved a seven-year start-up plan that totaled close to \$80 million for both capital and operating expenses. The funds for those seven years come from a variety of sources: 52 percent from the federal gov-

ernment, 11 percent from the state, 26 percent from Gwinnett County operating funds, and the remainder from farebox returns.

As the system matures, capital costs will be reduced and operating costs will rise. If current federal grant guidelines remain constant, Gwinnett County can expect grants to fund only capital costs. Like every other transit system in the United States, Gwinnett County Transit is subsidized and will have to budget those operating funds.

Forward-thinking planners have already devised one method to control operating costs, which are sure to rise as the system matures. While Gwinnett County has some employees assigned to the transit effort, the County has contracted out operations to McDonald Transit, which currently manages 23 transit operations nationwide.

Improving efficiency controls costs, too. Gwinnett County Transit ad-

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## Celebrating Sugarloaf Parkway

Gwinnett County officials celebrated the extension of Sugarloaf Parkway from Old Peachtree Road to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard with a road dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony December 16, 2003.

The typical section of the \$14.5 million project contains four throughlanes with a 20-foot median, bike lanes, and sidewalks. The 1988 and

the 1992 SPLOST programs, the County's capital project fund, and the Georgia Department of Transportation funded this 0.64-mile project.

Residents now have a continuous roadway to take between State Road 20 in the South Lawrenceville/Grayson area to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard in the Duluth/Suwanee area.





## Teens hope to make a difference with unity walk, celebration

by Danielle Weiden, Department of Community Services

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned racial unity and Gwinnett teens are working hard to continue making his dream a reality. GOT-HOT (Gwinnett Organized Teens-Hope of Tomorrow), a teen-founded youth development program focused on promoting love, peace, and unity among all teenagers, and the Centerville Community Center will hold its second annual Teen Dream Walk on Monday, January 19 from 10:00am to 1:00pm in southern Gwinnett County.

*"The event is such a good feeling event,"* said **Karen Young**, GOT-HOT coordinator. *"Its purpose is not to celebrate any particular culture, but to really celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision by celebrating all cultures. The teens want the event to be an opportunity to learn and appreciate all walks of life."*

The event will open with a unity walk and groups are encouraged to make banners with a unity theme. *"There is nothing like seeing different unity banners representing various groups and organizations parading down the street in a positive way,"* said Young.

After the walk, a celebration will be held at Shiloh High School consisting of musical performances, dances, skits, speakers and food from various cultures. Local teens will have the opportunity to express themselves during the celebration by creating songs, dances, skits, or poems that incorporate the love, peace, and unity theme or celebrate a particular culture.

The Gwinnett County's Health and Human Services Division sponsors the Teen Dream Walk. The division supports positive youth

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## Revitalization Task force working to improve declining areas

One of the major goals of the Revitalization Task Force for 2003–2004 is to complete three pilot studies that will review the causes of neighborhood and commercial decline and develop recommendations for neighborhood improvement. The three pilot studies include the Stone Mountain Highway (Highway 78) corridor between the DeKalb County line and Snellville, the Beaver Ruin area, a predominantly residential area northeast of Norcross, and the area surrounding Gwinnett Place Mall.

The project is being carried out with the assistance of a team of consultants coordinated by HO+K, an architectural/planning firm.

At this point, activity is occurring on two of the three pilot studies. With the Stone Mountain Highway Pilot Study more than halfway completed, the Beaver Ruin Pilot Study started up in November. The Gwinnett Place Pilot Study should begin in February.

The Revitalization Task Force will present its final recommendations to the Board of Commissioners in late 2004.



## Lawrenceville Senior Center offers afternoon classes

Instructor **Monica Copeland** teaches senior **Gretha Pickett** computer basics in one of the Lawrenceville Senior Center's afternoon classes. *"I love the opportunities and love to be in the programs,"* said **Pickett**. *"I gain so much from just one course and am thrilled that these opportunities are offered at Lawrenceville."* The classes are open

to all adults aged 50 and older and payment for most courses is due on the class day. See **Around Gwinnett** on page 4 for a class listing. The Lawrenceville Senior Center is a gathering place for seniors that offers activities and provides hot, balanced lunches to senior clients in a group setting Monday through Friday. For more information, call 770.822.7180.



### Upcoming Property Tax Dates

#### Homestead Filing

The homestead filing season begins January 2, 2004. 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, 2004.

#### Mobile Homes

Mobile home tax bills will be mailed on January 15, 2004. The deadline for payment is May 1, 2004.

For more information on homestead exemptions or mobile home taxes, you may call the Office of the Tax Commissioner's 24-hour customer service line at 770.822.8800 or send an e-mail to [Property\\_Tax@co.gwinnett.ga.us](mailto:Property_Tax@co.gwinnett.ga.us).



## Three-man construction crew priceless to Gwinnett County

by Kinsey Hansel, Communications Intern

Kids in the Collins Hill area should have noticed a difference in the play area at Collins Hill Park. The new playground has more than doubled in size and is filled with all new equipment. A three-man County construction crew was responsible for every step of the project: demolition of the old playground, expansion, and installation of the new equipment, saving Gwinnett County more than \$50,000.

*"Had we not been able to use this crew, we wouldn't have been able to purchase even half*



Luke James, Johnny Posey, and Sam Warbington stand in the playground they installed at Collins Hill Park in Lawrenceville.

*of the new playground equipment because our money would have had to go towards outside labor,"* said **Bill Lunceford** of Parks & Recreation. *"The crew did an excellent job and we have received lots of compliments."*

Crew foreman **Sam Warbington** along with his colleagues **Luke James** and **Johnny Posey** seem to be making a habit of saving the County money. Collins Hill was the fourth playground installation for the crew and they are currently working to fix a fallen slope that is threatening two baseball fields at George Pierce Park. *"We had an engineer come out and do an estimate and it was right around \$400,000 to fix the problem. Sam and his crew along with a crew from the Department of Transportation are working together to fix the issue for less than \$25,000,"* said Lunceford.

*"We just like to do our best,"* said **Warbington**, *"It is for the kids, and we wanted to give them a nice product."* His favorite part of the Collins Hill project involved four 15-year-old shade trees. *"The trees were in the way of the playground expansion, so we took them out and replanted them alongside the new area and so far, all of them are doing well,"* he said.

## Teens Help

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development programs such as GOT-HOT, which meets at the Centerville Community Center on Thursday evenings.

*"Helping to make the GOT-HOT teens' vision and dream to make the world better a reality by sponsoring this event is the least we can do,"* said **Michelle Carew-Besette**, Centerville Community Center coordinator. *"The feeling of warmth, love, and unity from last year's event was so touching that I hope many will take part in the event this year."*

For more information about GOT-HOT, the Teen Dream Walk, or the Centerville Community Center, call 770.985.4713.

### Check it out!

As you settle back in after the holidays, why not choose some reading that reminds you of home? The following books take place in Georgia or have regional settings. Relax and enjoy this wide variety of interesting stories!

*True Hope*, by Frank Manley

*Swan*, by Frances Mayes

*The Old Religion*, by David Mamet

*Last Scene Alive*, by Charlaune Harris

*Lake Moon*, by John M. Williams

*Atlanta Live!*, by Carmen Green

*The Night Spinners*, by Lucretia W. Grindle

*Devil's Hearth: A Fever Devilin Mystery*, by Phillip Depoy

*The Lazard Legacy*, by William Rawlings, Jr.

*My Dearest Cecelia: A Novel of the Southern Belle Who Stole General Sherman's Heart*, by Diane Haeger

List provided by Gwinnett County Public Library. Check availability of these items on the Web at [www.gwinnettpl.org](http://www.gwinnettpl.org).

## Pet Corner



### Pet Corner

Pet Corner

My name is Duke and my new family adopted me last August. I have really long and cute ears and I like to flop them around.

There are lots of wonderful pets like me who need a loving home. If you would like to see photos of cats and dogs currently up for adoption, go to [www.gwinnettcountry.com](http://www.gwinnettcountry.com). You can also visit the Gwinnett County Animal Control shelter at Hi-Hope Road and Ga. 316 in Lawrenceville or call 770.339.3200.





Tuesday **crochet classes** at the Lawrenceville Senior Center start January 6. Class is from 2:00pm – 4:00pm. Call 770.822.5180 for cost and registration information.

**Beginner computer classes** will be held at the Lawrenceville Senior Center every Tuesday from 1:00pm – 3:00pm beginning January 6. Call 770.822.5180 for cost and registration information.

**Beginner Excel computer classes** will be held at the Lawrenceville Senior Center Wednesdays from 2:00pm – 4:00pm starting January 7. Call 770.822.5180 for cost and registration information.

**Yoga classes** will be held every Thursday from 5:30pm – 6:30pm for six weeks starting January 8 at the Lawrenceville Senior Center. Call 770.822.5180 for cost and registration information.

**Beginner Internet computer classes** will be held at the Lawrenceville Senior Center on Thursdays from 1:00pm – 3:00pm starting

January 8. Call 770.822.5180 for cost and registration information.

Gwinnett County Parks & Recreation is offering hundreds of **recreation classes** for adults and children this winter. Registration for classes begins January 12. A registration form and complete listing of classes can be found in the winter issue of Gwinnett L.I.F.E. For more information, call 770.822.8840 or visit [www.gwinnettcountry.com](http://www.gwinnettcountry.com).

Enjoy an evening of **storytelling, cookies, and hot chocolate** at Pinckneyville Community Center in Norcross on January 23. Tales get scarier as the evening progresses. Not So Scary Tales start at 7:00pm for ages 3 – 5. Scary Tales begin at 8:00pm for ages 6 and up. Cost is \$3 per person. For more information, call 770.417.2200.

**Nine-Fingered Liam** will perform at the Gwinnett History Museum as part of the Coffeehouse Nights series on January 23. Coffee-Ceili/dh (*pronounced kay-lee*) features a different Celtic band each month.

Doors open at 8:00pm and admission is \$5. Call 770.822.5178 for information or to receive *Java Jottings*, a monthly newsletter about the museum's Coffeehouse Nights.

The **History Book Club** will meet at the Gwinnett History Museum on January 26 at 7:00pm. The group meets to discuss a different book each month relating to Southern history. The book for this month is *Confederates in the Attic* by Toney Horwitz. Call 770.822.5178.

The Pinckneyville Community Center hosts **art exhibits** at Pinckneyville Community Center, the Gwinnett Historic Courthouse, and the Centerville Community Center. For more information, call 770.417.2200.

Pinckneyville Community Center: **Natural Selections – Images on Cloth**, an exhibition of fine art quilts from regional, national, and international quilt makers, runs through January 28.

Gwinnett Historic Courthouse: **A Work of Art**, a solo exhibition of paintings by Lala Mulherin Streett, runs through February 20.

Centerville Community Center: The **Southern Colours Art Association** exhibit runs through March 12.

## South Gwinnett freshman wins library poetry contest

**Kiera Nelson**, a ninth grade student at South Gwinnett High School, was the grand prize winner for the Gwinnett County Public Library's Teen Read Week Poetry Contest. Nelson's poem *The Art of Poetry (The Poetry in Art)* was chosen from more than 475 entries.

Kiera Nelson and her mother, brother, and one of her friends rode to Discover Mills in one of Lou Sobh's Hummers where Nelson enjoyed shopping with \$250 worth of gift certificates from Discover Mills.

You can read Nelson's poem and other winning entries online under "Special Features" at [www.gwinnettpl.org](http://www.gwinnettpl.org).

## Gwinnett Transit

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justed its Local Service routes in early October in response the tremendous growth in ridership. "These adjustments, while relatively minor, will hopefully make the Local Bus Service more responsive to the needs of our riders," said **Brian Allen**, Director of the Department of Transportation.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) recently acknowledged Gwinnett County Transit's achievement by presenting an AdWheel award for the system's Public Relations/Awareness Educational Campaign.

Gwinnett County Transit prides itself on communicating to the public and reaching diverse audiences. "News You Can Use" informational handouts, notices in the local paper, and posters all work to reach the public transportation audience. Riders also access information and make comments on the transit Web site [www.gctransit.com](http://www.gctransit.com).

## countyline

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