



# county Line

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## Gwinnett County Administrator names senior County management

Gwinnett County Administrator **Jock Connell** appointed three people to key senior management positions within the organization. The appointments were effective immediately after the announcement was made on January 6, 2005.

**Mike Comer** was named to the position of Deputy County Administrator, which was vacated by Connell when the Board of Commissioners named him County Administrator on January 4. Comer, who has served as Director of Financial Services for the past five years, brings to this new position more than 27 years of experience in local county government and a master's degree in public administration. He came to work for Gwinnett County from DeKalb 11 years ago as the Treasury Division Director.

Replacing Comer in the position of Director of Financial Services will be **Lisa Johnsa**, who has been the Assistant Director of Finance for four years. Her tenure with Gwinnett County numbers close to 25 years. She worked for the Tax Commissioner prior to taking a position in the Department of Financial Services 13 years ago. Johnsa has a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Additionally, Connell appointed **Susan Lee** to serve as Director of Human Resources. She has been co-directing the department for two years. Lee, who has a bache-

lor's degree in business administration, has worked for Gwinnett County for 13 years and also has several years of experience in the private sector as a compensation consultant.

Connell expressed confidence in his new appointees, saying, "It is my

*good fortune to be surrounded by the best and the brightest in government, and my intent is to maximize their talents to help me carry out the initiatives of the Board of Commissioners for the good of the citizens of Gwinnett County. I am grateful to the Board for their support as we move forward with these changes."*

## Meet Chairman Charles Bannister



Gwinnett County Commission Chairman Charles Bannister is no stranger to public service or Gwinnett County. He served the City of Lilburn for 10

years, six of those as a council member and four as mayor, and spent 18 years as a state representative. Bannister, who was born in Forsyth County and grew up in DeKalb County, has been a Gwinnett resident since 1972.

The Chairman said that he is enjoying the transition from serving in state government to working on the county level because "local government is important to people – at this level, just about everything you do affects someone directly."

Bannister, who attended both the University of Georgia and Georgia

State University and served in the U.S. Marine Reserves from 1962 – 1967, also had a successful career in the insurance and financial services field. His hobbies include hunting, fishing, golf, and exercise. A runner, he uses exercise to solve problems and shake himself loose of stress.

He lives in Lilburn with his wife of 42 years, Glenda. They have one son, two daughters, and seven grandchildren. Most of his family still calls Gwinnett County or the metro area home, so they spend a good bit of time together.

The new chairman said in his State of the County address before the joint Chamber of Commerce and Council for Quality Growth luncheon last month, "When I ran for this job, I did so out of love for this county and its people. Gwinnett is home for me, and Gwinnett is where my heart is."

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## Learning opportunities abound at Norcross Human Services Center

The Norcross Human Services Center offers English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. All classes are taught in English, so individuals from various countries, backgrounds, and languages may attend any session. Evening ESL classes will offer limited childcare services. Courses run for eight weeks, and the cost is \$50. Class times are as follows:

- Basic ESL: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00am – noon and Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:30pm – 8:30pm
- Intermediate ESL: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00am – noon
- Advanced ESL/Civics Classes: Saturdays, 9:00am – 1:00pm and Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:30pm – 8:30pm

In addition to the ESL courses, the Norcross Human Services Center offers a variety of learning opportunities including computer, Oriental brush painting, job search, and life skills classes. For more information, or to register for any of the winter 2005 classes, call the Norcross Human Services Center at 770.638.5661.



*James Lee instructs students (from left to right) Soledad Ruiz, Yezerely Martinez, and Sung Hui Chang in one of the computer classes offered at the Norcross Human Services Center.*

## We have a new Web site!

Visit [www.gwinnettcountry.com](http://www.gwinnettcountry.com) in February and check out Gwinnett County's new site. It is full of new, convenient features that will make doing business with Gwinnett County simpler and more efficient. Be sure to use the new login feature that will allow you to customize your Gwinnett County home page. Check it out!

## Property tax exemptions available to seniors

There are property tax exemptions available, including several for senior citizens and disabled citizens. The Value Offset Exemption, approved by Gwinnett voters in 2000, is available to any property owner who has a homestead exemption. As long as millage rates do not change, this exemption keeps the county government portion of property tax the same (but not the portions for school, bond, state, etc.), even when there is an increase in property value. Citizens who file for homestead exemptions are automatically given Value Offset Exemptions and do not need to reapply each year unless there is a change in ownership or a name or spelling correction is made on the deed.

Senior citizens owning property may be eligible for exemptions designed for certain groups depending on particular circumstances such as age, disability, and income:

- Regular Senior Exemption
- Regular School Exemption
- Senior School Exemptions (three kinds)
- Floating Homestead Exemption Based on Individual Assessment
- Disability School Exemption
- \$20,000 Senior Exemption

In addition, disabled persons owning property may qualify for other exemptions depending on the degree of disability according to either the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or the Social Security Administration.

All exemptions have unique rules and requirements. To find out if you are eligible or what information you need to apply, call the Tax Commissioner's customer service line at 770.822.8800, 8:30am – 5:00pm. Also, the Tax Commissioner's property tax customer service office is open weekdays (excluding holidays) from 8:30am – 5:00pm; it is located on the first floor of the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center in Lawrenceville.

## DOT public meeting: Widening of S.R. 20

On Thursday February 17, 2005, the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation will hold a Public Information Meeting on the widening of S.R. 20 from Ozora Road to S.R. 81 {Gwinnett County project number 3148; Georgia DOT project number MSL-0004-00 (644)}. The meeting will be held from 5:00pm – 7:00pm at First Baptist Church of Grayson, 2142 Loganville Highway in Grayson.

The design will be presented in an informal setting. Representatives from the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation and Georgia Department of Transportation will present designs and displays to answer questions and discuss the project. For additional information, call 770.822.7400.



## Advice from the Tax Commissioner: Have vehicle emission inspections done early

All gasoline-powered cars or light trucks (up to 8,500 lbs) made in 1981 through 2002 must pass an emissions inspection before a tag can be renewed in any of the following counties covered by the Georgia Clean Air Force program: Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Paulding, and Rockdale.

Keep in mind that vehicles made in 1996 through 2002 can be inspected at any emissions inspection station. Look for an inspection station sign that reads "1996 or Newer Vehicles Welcome" or "All Vehicles Welcome." Vehicles made 1995 and earlier can only be inspected at stations marked "All Vehicles Welcome" because those vehicles require more comprehensive inspections. An emissions inspection is valid for 12 months or for one registration renewal by the same owner.

Have your inspection early. It is best to get your inspection done four to six weeks before the registration renewal date just in case you need time to have repairs made.

Repair waivers are available, and the 2005 waiver limit is \$689. For more information on repair requirements and qualified emission repair shops in your area, you can visit the Georgia Clean Air Force Web site at [www.cleanairforce.com](http://www.cleanairforce.com).

If you are new to Georgia, your vehicle must pass an emissions inspection in Georgia in order to register it in one of the 13 covered counties. Other state emissions inspections are not valid in Georgia. Diesel vehicles or those running entirely on alternative fuels are exempt, and no application is required. Dual fuel vehicles must be inspected only if one of the fuels burned is gasoline.

If you are age 65 or older and are a registered owner of a vehicle 10 or more years old, and if you drive less than 5,000 miles per year, pick up a senior exemption application at a waiver center. For center locations and documentation required to apply, or for additional information about the emissions inspection program, visit the Georgia Clean Air Force Web site.

### Check it out!

The Modern Scholar is a new series of recorded college-level courses presented in lecture-style format. From natural science to religious studies and politics to world history, this unique series offers courses in the subjects that fascinate you. Subjects are also available on CD.

*Ethics: A History of Moral Thought*, by Peter Kreeft

*Journeys of the Great Explorers: Columbus to Cook*, by Glyndwr Williams

*Big Picture Investing*, by Peter Navarro

*History of Women in America*, by Ellen Schrecker

*Judaism, Christianity and Islam: the Monotheists*, by F. E. Peters

*Jerusalem: The Contested City*, by F. E. Peters

*The Bible as the Root of Western Literature: Stories, Poems, and Parables*, by Adam Potkay

*He Said/She Said: Women, Men and Language*, by Deborah Tannen

*The Masters of Enterprise: American Business History and the People Who Made It*, by H. W. Brands

*Discovering the Philosopher in You: The Big Questions in Philosophy*, by Colin McGinn

This list was provided by the Gwinnett County Public Library. Call or visit your local branch for additional selection assistance, or check out the GCPL Web site at [www.gwinnettpl.org](http://www.gwinnettpl.org).

## Pet Corner



### Pet Corner



Gwinnett County police officer **Christina Hughes** adopted a litter of four kittens in November from the animal shelter. The kittens have made a wonderful addition to her family.

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



### Black History Month

Check out the Black History Month exhibit on the first floor of the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center anytime during the month of February.



# WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND GWINNETT

Registration for the new **adult kickball league** is February 2 at 6:30pm at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center in Lawrenceville. The cost is \$340 per team, and divisions include Men's Open, Women's Open, and Coed. The season begins March 7, and games will be played at Bethesda Park, George Pierce Park, and Lucky Shoals Park. For more information, call 770.822.5149.

Registration for **adult spring softball** will be held February 2 at 7:00pm at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center in Lawrenceville. Sign up is by team only. For more information, call 770.822.5152.

Families will love **My Dad is a Pretzel – Yoga for the Entire Family!** Learn how to relax as a family at Bogan Community Center in Buford on February 5 from 10:00am – 11:00am. Families will learn the basics of relaxing through Yoga and receive handouts to help continue the practice at home. Call 770.614.2060 for more information. The cost is \$18 for a family of three and \$2 for each additional person.

Bring your favorite stuffed animal or doll to the **Valentine Tea Party** on February 5 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm at the Singleton Road Activity Building in Norcross. Children will enjoy stories, games, and crafts. Finger foods be served, and the cost is \$10 for one parent and one child and \$5 for each additional person. Parental participation is required. Please call 770.417.2200 for more information.

Enjoy a **free art exhibit and reception** in honor of Black History Month at Pinckneyville Community Center on February 10 from 7:00pm – 9:00pm. The artwork will be on display at Pinckneyville Community Center in Norcross through April 27. Call 770.417.2200 for information.

Hey dad, take your little sweetheart out for a special Valentine's Day treat to the **Daddy and Daughter Valentine Dance** at Pinckneyville Community Center on February 11 or at Rhodes Jordan Community Center on February 12. Both events are from 6:00pm – 9:00pm. Refreshments will be served and all participants will receive a keepsake pho-

to. The cost is \$15 for one parent and one child and \$5 for each additional person. Call 770.417.2200 for more information.

Kids can enjoy an evening of swimming, games, and dinner at **Kids Night Out** on February 11 from 5:30pm – 9:30pm at Bogan Community and Aquatic Center. The cost is \$5 per child. Call 770.614.2060 for more information.

Singer/songwriter and acoustical guitarist Bill Kahler will perform at the Gwinnett History Museum as part of the **Coffeehouse Nights** series on February 11. Doors open at 8:00pm and the music and fun begin at 8:30pm. Admission is \$5. Call 770.822.5178 for more information.

Take that someone special out to the Gwinnett Historic Courthouse in Lawrenceville for a **Valentine dinner and dancing** on February 12 from 7:00pm – 10:00pm. The cost is \$70 per couple for a buffet dinner, commemorative keepsake photo, and special gift giveaways. Space is limited. Call 770.822.5450 to make reservations.

Enjoy a **Valentine dinner buffet** at the Gwinnett Historic Courthouse in Lawrenceville on February 14 at 7:30pm. The cost is \$50 per couple for a buffet dinner, commemorative keepsake photo, and special gift giveaways. Space is limited and reservations are required. Call 770.822.5450.

Leave the driving to us as we celebrate Black History Month and **visit the High Museum of Art** to view an art exhibit by Romere Bearden. The van will leave from Pinckneyville Community Center on February 18 at 10:00am. Pre-registration is required, and the cost is \$10 per person. Bring money for lunch at Gladys Knights. Call 770.417.2200 for more information.

A lecture series on **Gwinnett's African American History** will take place on February 19 from noon – 2:00pm at the Gwinnett History Museum. The cost is \$3 per person. Please call 770.822.5178 for more information.

Don't miss **registration for winter swim lessons** on February 19 from 10:00am –

noon for Gwinnett residents at the Bogan Aquatic Center, the Collins Hill Aquatic Center, or at Mountain Park Aquatic Center. Sign up at the pool where you plan to take lessons. The winter sessions runs from February 28 – March 24. For more information call Bogan at 770.614.2063, Collins Hill at 770.237.5647, or Mountain Park at 770.564.4650.

Keltic Kudzu will perform at the Gwinnett History Museum on February 25 as part of the Coffeehouse Nights series, **Coffee-Ceili/dh**. The doors open at 8:00pm, and the music will begin at 8:30pm. Admission is \$5. Please call 770.822.5178 for more information.

Pinckneyville Community Center will host **free art exhibits** sponsored by Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation. **The Painters of Tannery Row** will run through February 23 at Pinckneyville Community Center. **Paintings by Beth Arnold** will run through March 30 at the Centerville Community Center in Snellville. Call 770.417.2200.

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