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The spirit of '76: County prepares for 250th anniversary

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

There will be fireworks. But when the smoke clears on July 4, 2026, the state commission preparing for the celebration hopes it will reveal a clearer picture of the struggles that led to the founding of the United States and find local communities better able to tell those stories. "We really want local communities to discover their sto-



Francis Marion, left, seen in a print of an 1841 painting, is the county's most prominent link to the Revolutionary War.

ries," said Charles Baxley, a Kershaw County attorney who chairs the SC250 commission. "We want to, as a commission, help people get ready for the tourists that will come, because there will be international publicity about the 250th of the

American Revolution."

The state commission, formally known as the S.C. American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission, is encouraging each county to form its own commission to plan for the commemoration, which runs through 2033. Those that do, will have access to grant funds, currently \$7 million.

"We've put in for more," said Molly Fortune, executive director of SC250.

The commission held its

quarterly meeting this week at Hopsewee Plantation, hosted by the owners, Frank and Raejean Beattie. The plantation is the birthplace of Thomas Lynch Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The commission reviewed more than a dozen grant requests, which included research, preservation of historic sites, tourism planning and events.

"The economic impact on Georgetown County has the

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HURRICANE IAN

Agencies offering aid following declaration

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Two days after opening a recovery center in Litchfield, staff were still waiting for their first visit from someone affected by Hurricane Ian.

It's hard to compete with Thanksgiving, Black Friday and Cyber Monday, said Lilian Tschanett, a public affairs specialist with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

But for businesses, nonprofits and individuals who suffered damage when the Category 1 storm made landfall Sept. 30 on North Island, the agency's programs could be the holiday bargain they need.

The Business Recovery Center opened Monday in Litchfield Exchange, a week after the presidential disaster declaration for Ian. The Federal Emergency Management Agency expects to open a Disaster Recovery Center soon, said Nikki Gaskins, a media relations specialist.

The first place for people to start is with their insurance.

"By law, you can't duplicate benefits," Gaskins said.

The FEMA programs are intended to aid the uninsured

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Pawleys Island lights up for Christmas

Addison Gildea, 7, above, and her sister, Caroline, 3, give Santa their wish list at the Pawleys Island Christmas tree lighting ceremony. They were visiting from Charlotte. Susie Shoman, right, directs the Teach My People Choir in a program of Christmas music. This was the second year the town held the event. It drew about 200 people.



LAND USE

NAACP suit challenges multi-family zoning limits

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A federal lawsuit seeking to overturn Georgetown County Council's denial of an affordable-housing project last year is a challenge to land-use policies that critics say keep property values high by limiting multi-family development.

"Exclusionary zoning cases are kind of the bedrock of fair housing jurisprudence," said Malcolm Peyton-Cook, senior counsel for the Washington, D.C.-based Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, one of four groups representing plaintiffs.

The suit filed last month on behalf of the NAACP and the developer of a project known as Porter's Landing challenges the council's denial of a zoning change to allow a multi-family development on property off Highway 701 in Georgetown that was zoned for a hospital.

The county also faces two lawsuits in state court over land-use decisions. Keep It Green Advocacy is representing citizens and neighbors in trying to overturn the county's approval of a rezoning that reduced the minimum lot size for property off Highway 17 south

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EDUCATION | The esports team

District's newest varsity squad finds value in teamwork

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

In almost all high school sports, an athlete has to be good with their hands.

That is especially true for the Georgetown County School District's newest varsity squad: the esports team.

Twelve high school students from across the county play video games, and compete against each other, and in tournaments.

"I've always loved video games, and I saw it was going to become a thing for the high schools ... and I was like, oh, I'll go ahead and try out for it and see what I can get," said Jacob Ludwik, a sophomore at Waccamaw High. "There's not many people at ... Waccamaw High School that play video games. At least that I know. It feels really good to be around people that I know."



Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

Carvers Bay High classmates Walker Snowden and Matthew Capps challenge each other in "Brawlhalla."

"It's just hanging out with people playing games," said Brody Heineck, a sophomore at Waccamaw High. "How could

that not be fun? I thought it would be fun, but I think it's more fun that I thought, definitely."

Georgetown is one of more than 3,400 districts and individual schools in the High School Esports League, which was founded in 2012. The league hosts games and tournaments on its website.

The district decided to start an esports team in the spring in response to so many extracurricular activities being either limited or canceled during the pandemic.

"We used some of our COVID relief funds to help create a gaming lab at J.B. Beck where our esports athletes from our four high schools could come together as one team," Superintendent Keith Price said. "Esports is a growing trend around the country where students are learning new ways to be teammates and build collegiality."

Students applied to be on the team and were vetted before being chosen to make sure

there weren't discipline issues or other problems. Permission also had to be given from a parent or guardian.

Teamwork is a major component in esports, according to Paul Morris, Georgetown's coach. In many of the games, the Georgetown students compete together, wearing headsets to communicate with each other, and taking instruction from a captain who coordinates their strategy.

"It's like football. If somebody's out of place, the play doesn't work," said Morris, who chairs the English department at Andrews High. "They have to respond in the moment."

"You actually have to talk. You have to communicate a lot. You have to be awake," Ludwik said. "You can't just be sitting there, slumped, not playing the game to your full capabilities. You have to try."

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