

COASTAL OBSERVER

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WACCAMAW HIGH

Seniors circle back as they head to finish line

BY BROOKE BROMBERG
COASTAL OBSERVER

Ten years after watching the senior walk as a Waccamaw Elementary second-grader, Lailiyn Richardson, senior class president at Waccamaw High School, finally got to walk the halls where it all began for her.

"It's really special to come back and see those kids and remember what it was like," Richardson said as she and her classmates rode packed buses to the elementary, intermediate and middle schools. "That's one of the highlights of senior year, doing the walk through the halls."

The seniors were guided through swarms of younger students while greeted by sounds of clapping, a graduation song, the ringing of bells and best wishes from teachers and staff. The school spirit and outpouring of support was apparent as everyone in attendance was decked out in black and red and all things Waccamaw. Many of the younger kids waved hand-crafted signs that read "Congratulations senior Warriors" and "You are the best!"

While filing down the halls that hold many of their core memories, seniors were stopped by teachers who offered warm embraces to their not-so-little former students and expressed pride for their accomplishments. An emotional moment for both parties, many were seen wiping tears and sharing half-smiles as they coped with leaving a special piece of their childhood behind.

SEE "SENIORS," PAGE 4



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer
Aundrea Greene is greeted with signs and cheers at Waccamaw Elementary.



Above, Jackson Robino flashes thumbs up to Waccamaw Intermediate students while Natalie Reed, a fifth-grader, stretches to show the seniors her sign. Below at right, Tia Pyatt and her son Perckles Pyatt III have a quiet moment as the seniors march through Waccamaw Middle.



SAFETY

Sheriff confronts council with need for more funding

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County employees will get a minimum \$1,500 pay raise this year, with public safety workers due to get at least \$500 more.

Sworn officers in the sheriff's office will get \$4,000 regardless of whether County Council includes funds in the budget.

"I will do a \$4,000 pay increase across the board and use fund balance," Sheriff Carter Weaver told the council. "My fund balance."

He took the stage at Howard Auditorium where the council had moved its meeting because of broken air conditioning in

SEE "BUDGET," PAGE 3



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer
Sheriff Carter Weaver

LAND USE

No sale contract on tract at center of lawsuit

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County no longer has a contract to sell property at Pawleys Island that was once proposed as a technology park.

An offer from an undisclosed buyer last year led to a zoning change to allow a townhouse development and a lawsuit to overturn that change.

"There is no contract on that property," Administrator Angela Christian said.

The county's nonprofit Alliance for Economic Devel-

opment bought the 14.4 acres on Petigru Drive in 2016 using a \$950,000 loan from Santee Cooper. The county made the payments on the loan. The goal was to create a tech park to accompany the expansion of Mercom, an IT firm that owned adjacent property.

When that didn't materialize, the county put the tract on the market.

A \$1.4 million offer was received in 2020 from a developer who planned 182 apartments. That was withdrawn after public opposition.

SEE "LAND USE," PAGE 2

MURRELLS INLET

Campaign for fire tax increase sees no opposition ahead of July vote

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Voters in Murrells Inlet will go to the polls July 25 to decide whether to raise property taxes for fire and rescue services. The referendum comes four years after voters rejected a similar measure.

"I haven't detected anyone who is opposed. Hopefully, it will stay that way," said Tom Swatzel, a political consultant and former Georgetown County Council member. He formed

Friends of the Murrells Inlet-Garden City Fire District to support a referendum that passed in 2015. He opposed one that failed in 2019.

The six-member board of the special-purpose district voted last month to raise the tax rate from 14 to 28 mills over the next five years. The rate will increase by 7 mills the first year to fund pay raises to help attract and retain firefighters and emergency medical workers. That will also allow the district

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EDUCATION | Teacher of the year

Julie Humowitz inspires students in and out of class

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Moments after being named Georgetown County's new Teacher of the Year, Julieanne Humowitz got a hug from Ben Tester, who received the honor last year.

Humowitz taught Tester when he was a student at Waccamaw High School. She's taught a lot of students during her 29-year career.

"I'm humbled, I'm excited, I'm flattered," she said. "I've been here my entire career. I said when they interviewed me, 'I would like to work here my entire career' and that's what I've done. So to finally be able to serve the county in this way, I feel very honored."

Humowitz's best advice to new teachers is to not take things too seriously.

"You're going in there every

SEE "TEACHER," PAGE 4



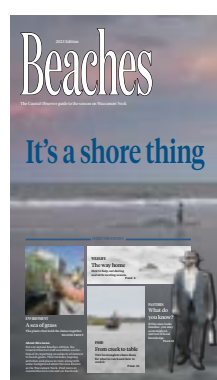
Julieanne Humowitz, second from left, is stunned after being named the 2023-24 Teacher of the Year on Tuesday.

Chris Sokoloski/
Coastal Observer

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The walk: Event draws attention to mental health needs.
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