

COASTAL OBSERVER

Vol. XLIII No. 43

Pawleys Island, South Carolina ~ April 3, 2025

\$1.50

Special election will fill District 6 school board seat

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Kristie Baxley has resigned her District 6 (Pawleys Island/Litchfield) seat on the Georgetown County School Board.

Baxley's resignation was approved by the board this week.

Baxley and her husband sold their house in Litchfield Country Club in February, according to county property records.



Baxley

Moore on March 20, Baxley wrote: "I am resigning due to personal reasons. I will relin-

quish all of my responsibilities and privileges as a board member effective April 9, 2025."

During the comments period of the meeting Baxley said she ran for "a lot of reasons" but two things close to her heart were safety and special resources.

She encouraged the other board members to find out more about - and support - the district's Child Find program, which identifies students will

disabilities so they can get the educational support they need.

"Until we're not putting children on buses for 30 minutes each way that can't communicate, we've got some work to do," she said.

Baxley offered to continue to give the board ideas and solutions on the issue.

"I've been there, I've been through it," she said.

Baxley was unopposed in the November election to fill

the seat formerly held by Lynne Ford, whose home ended up outside of the district in the redistricting that followed the 2000 census.

State law allowed Ford to serve out her term even though she no longer lived in the district, since that was through no fault of her own.

The election to fill the District 6 seat will be July 8.

Under state law, an election **SEE "BOARD," PAGE 4**

LAND USE

Appeals court denies motion seeking sanctions in zoning suit

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The state Court of Appeals last week denied a motion to dismiss an appeal of a lawsuit over the rezoning of property on Pawleys Creek and a request to sanction the neighbors who filed the suit.

Lawyers for the developers of the Magic Oaks project of 27 single-family lots between the creek and Highway 17 claimed that the suit was filed "to hinder and delay Magic Oaks from developing its property."

The suit was filed last year by owners of four neighboring properties after Georgetown County Council approved a "flexible design district" zoning designation for the property. The suit argued that the zoning change was invalid because the county failed to previously bring the zoning into compliance with the "conservation preservation" designation for the property in the county's comprehensive plan.

In addition, the neighbors argued that the council improperly changed the location of a proposed public kayak launch in the development rather than sending the change back to the Planning Commission for review.

Magic Oaks successfully argued in Circuit Court that the claim over the kayak launch should be removed because the developers couldn't reach agreement with another neighbor, who owns the Hammock **SEE "SUIT," PAGE 4**



Photos by Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

Getting their kicks | It was a split decision at the annual faculty/student kickball games at Waccamaw Middle School. The teachers defeated the seventh-graders, but the eighth-graders brought home the "W." At left, Avi Golden loses a croc after kicking the ball. Lily Sekely, above, runs to first base as David Milliken reaches for the ball. Below, Colin Steffen collides with Ben Tester at third base. It was one of two collisions for Tester on the day.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Crime data helps sheriff make case for pay raises

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Data published this week by the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office confirms what residents and local officials know from experience: the off-season no longer exists.

"We used to lock it up Labor Day to Easter," Sheriff Carter Weaver said. "There is no lag period anymore."

The report arrives as Georgetown County Council starts work on its new budget. The council approved funds for eight new patrol deputies in 2023 and pay raises for law enforcement last year.

"There's a fear that not using an information tool such as this to ensure that your public safety resources are in line with other counties and the state will put us back to where we were two years ago with a mass exodus of public safety employees," Weaver said.

There sheriff's office received 41,314 calls for service last year, according to the report, a decrease of 5.7 percent from 2023.

But the number of traffic stops increased by 13.2 percent **SEE "SAFETY," PAGE 4**



Weaver

NONPROFITS | Palmetto Giving Day

From founder's quiet philanthropy, foundation helps donors make some noise

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

More than two decades after Frances P. Bunnelle's death, her name has become synonymous with making life better for Georgetown County residents.

It's not something Bunnelle sought when she established the foundation bearing her name shortly before her death on Nov. 12, 2000.

"Miss Bunnelle did not want a lot of fanfare. She was a quiet philanthropist. She didn't want buildings named after her or anything like that," Geales Sands, the foundation's executive director, said last month during a ceremony honoring Bunnelle for her induction into the Georgetown County Women's Hall of Fame.

The foundation has distributed more than \$26 million in grants since 2003 to agencies that address the root causes of poverty, meet basic human needs, promote economic vitality, preserve the environment or encourage positive youth development

"She realized that her contribution could make a difference in the community that she had grown to love and care about," Sands said.

Since 2017, one of the foundation's most visible outreach programs is Palmetto Giving Day, a 36-hour fundraising extravaganza. This year's event is May 6 and 7.

In the first eight years, nearly \$19 million has been donated to nonprofits that serve residents of Georgetown County. The amount of money raised has steadily increased from \$676,000 in 2017 to \$4.127 million in 2024.

The \$162,194 donated to Helping Hands of Georgetown County during last year's Palmetto Giving Day helped the nonprofit serve 927 people in its dental clinic.

SEE "NONPROFITS," PAGE 2



Matt Jensen of Over the Moon Productions gives a balloon flower to Aubree Calvert, 6, during the Palmetto Giving Day fair last week.

Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Egyptology: Unlikely duo team up to explore ancient mysteries. **PAGE 8**



Arts: Middle school students head to North Shore High. **PAGE 7**



Sports: Offsides call thwarts Waccamaw comeback in boys soccer. **SECOND FRONT**

Obituaries 2
Crime..... 5
Opinion 6
Crossword 10
Classifieds 11

Online
coastalobserver.com

