

COASTAL OBSERVER

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Golf course owners want to negotiate higher density

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Tom Stickler and Stephen Goldfinch agreed that the wording of a new zoning district for the Founders Club and Litchfield Country Club golf courses needs more work, and were pleased that the Georgetown County Planning Commission last week urged County Council to defer action, but not for the same reason.

Stickler, president of the Hagley Estates Property Owners Association, said the wording for the district needs to better restrict residential development if the courses close.

Goldfinch, a state senator and attorney representing the owners of the courses, said the district allowance of one unit

for every five acres is too restrictive.

"We're making every effort to satisfy the homeowners," Goldfinch said before the Planning Commission met to review the proposal last week. "So it doesn't turn into an Indian Wells."

That course in Horry County, like the Founders Club and Litchfield Country Club, is also owned by the Founders Group. Goldfinch said he was representing the company "in a limited capacity." He represented the homeowners at Indian Wells when the Founders Group wanted to redevelop it in 2019. The plan was rejected and the course has sat vacant ever since.

The Founders and LCC courses are currently zoned
SEE "ZONING," PAGE 3



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

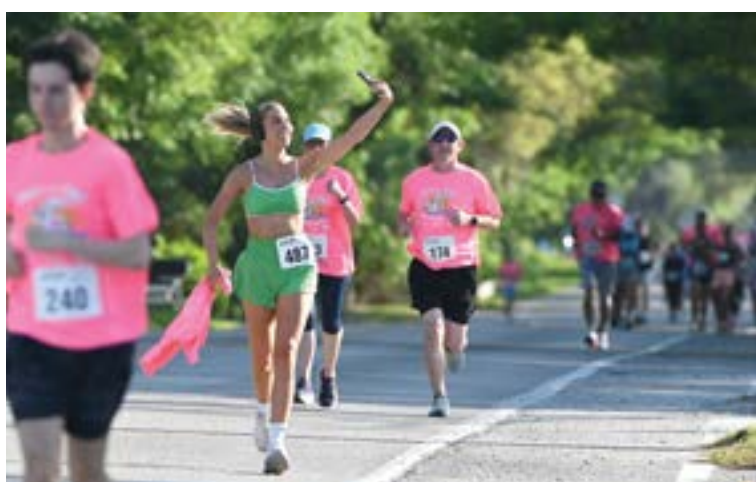
Stephen Goldfinch, right, watches as the audience applauds the commission's decision.



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Run, rabbit, run

Marisa Clare of Murrells Inlet gets a ride over the finish line from her husband, Timothy, in the Race for the Inlet Bunny Run. Tony Casey of Pawleys Island won the 5K event in 18:17. It was a photo finish for Gracie Hicks, right. The race, sponsored by Murrells Inlet 2020, drew 418 runners and walkers on Saturday.



SCHOOL SAFETY

Board's new committee looking for consistency in buildings that vary in age

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

After 19 students and two teachers were killed at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, in 2022, Georgetown County School District officials started giving tours of schools to first responders to familiarize them with the buildings.

"If there is a major incident, it's not just going to be the city police responding or the sheriff's office," Alan Walters, the district's chief operating officer, told a school board safety committee last week. "You can have something happen in Georgetown and Midway Fire might come. And they've never been to a school in Andrews."

In addition to getting to know the schools, the tours give the first responders a chance to get to know each other.

"If there's a major incident, all of those folks are going to be there anyway," Walters said. "Let's not wait for something bad to happen. Let's get them out there now and let's go over the plan and collaborate."

Walters appreciates the feedback from the first responders, he said, since firefighters, EMTs, law enforcement and

emergency management people all look at things in different ways.

The school board created the safety committee earlier this month to review the district's current safety and security protocols and make adjustments if necessary.

One of the challenges,
SEE "SAFETY," PAGE 4

Resource officers follow policy of zero tolerance

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

People read about threats, fights and other incidents in Georgetown County schools and ask the sheriff "what's going on?"

Nothing that isn't going on in schools across the state, Sheriff Carter Weaver tells them, "we're just better at writing reports."

That might sound flippant, he said, but it's grounded in policy.
SEE "OFFICERS," PAGE 4

PALMETTO GIVING DAY | The Village Group

Rural nonprofit's focus on education takes many forms

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

When you think of The Village Group, many things come to mind: a summer academy for kids, a scenic bike ride, a cultural center.

Since 2017 the nonprofit has partially paid for those programs through money it has raised during Palmetto Giving Day, a 36-hour fundraising event hosted by the Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation.

"Palmetto Giving Day is a game-changer for our organization," said Ray Funnye, executive director and co-founder of the nonprofit with his wife, Queen.

Last year The Village Group raised \$316,506, the second most among all the Palmetto

Giving Day participants. That total put the nonprofit over \$1 million raised during the event's first seven years.

When The Village Group was founded in 2006, the Funnyes and other community members realized that education was a key component in breaking the cycle of poverty.

"It's still happens to be the number one concern of our community. We have to teach and educate," Funnye said. "What's the transformational matter that you want to do? What's going to transform this community from being a poverty-stricken community to a thriving one? That's really powerful."

The Plantersville Summer Academy began in 2009. Children travel from all over George-



The Plantersville Summer Academy draws students from around the county.

Riley Lehman/Coastal Observer

town County to attend the seven-week program for students in kindergarten through ninth grade at Plantersville Elementary School.

"The growth has been phenomenal over the years," Funnye said.

Academy staff test the students at the beginning of summer, and then again at the end.

"We see the growth over the months and we have some positive results," Funnye said. "That's important."

Along with the academic
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Signs of the season: Crosses and eggs abound for Easter.
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Theater: One year later, "Nana" takes her mischief from New York City to Las Vegas.
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