COASTAL OBSERVER

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EDUCATION

District sees scores rise, but still lag state average

By Madison Sharrock
COASTAL OBSERVER

Students in Georgetown County School District improved their scores on the state's standardized tests this year, but still lag behind state averages, according to results released this week.

Scores for students in the Waccamaw schools were above the district and county averages in all grade levels.

SCReady tests students in third through eighth grades on English and math. Grades four and six are also tested on science. The state Department of Education has a goal for 75 percent of students to test at or above grade level by 2030.

The statewide results mark the strongest English results and significant gains in math since the inception of SCReady testing in 2015, according to the state department.

State Superintendent Ellen Weaver said she is especially proud of the progress made in Charleston County.

"These results reflect years of hard work and a shared commitment stretching all the way from the Statehouse to the classroom," Weaver said in a statement. "When everyone shares a vision and pulls in the same direction, our students win."

There are 165 schools that have at least 75 percent of students at or above grade level for English, according to the state department. There are 71 schools that meet the state goal in math.

In Georgetown County, 55.2 percent of students meet or exceed English standards, an increase of 8 points over last year.

Statewide, 61 percent of students meet or exceed English standards, a 7.8 percentage point increase.

In math, 41.4 percent of district students meet or exceed math standards. That's 6.6 points below the state average, but a 4.4-point increase over last year.

That's the highest math performance in the past five years,

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Photos by Madison Sharrock/Coastal Observer

Sea turtles shift from nesting season to hatching season

A crowd gathered at South Litchfield Beach Monday after continuous storms for a chance to see sea turtle hatchlings at a public inventory hosted by volunteers with the South Carolina United Turtle Enthusiasts (SCUTE). The nest was 66 days old at the time of the inventory and had 91 of 98 eggs hatch four days prior. The crowd was able to witness six hatchlings make their way to the water. Sea turtle hatching season runs through Oct. 31.

SALES TAX

Council gets pitch to shift more money to tax relief

By Charles Swenson
COASTAL OBSERVER

An extra 1-cent sales tax will provide an estimated $12.2 million to reduce property taxes in Georgetown County.

Council Member Raymond Newton thinks the county should do more.

The council voted this week to place a local option sales tax referendum on the November ballot. A similar measure failed in 2024 by 54 votes, but voters approved a capital project sales tax that brought in $18.6 million in the first year.

By law, the local option tax revenue must be used to reduce property taxes. But up to 29 percent can be used for local government operations.

Newton pressed the council last week to designate the 29 percent share for stormwater management. Jay Watson, the county attorney, said he didn't think that language could be included in the referendum ballot.

This week, Newton said all the sales tax revenue should be devoted to tax relief. He said there are other counties that do that.

Watson said the breakdown

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PAWLEYS ISLAND | Shifting sands

Project to move inlet faces November deadline

By Charles Swenson
COASTAL OBSERVER

Property owners at Prince George hope to start work next month to relocate Pawleys Inlet and rebuild the dunes in front of their community.

The work needs to be completed by the end of November or it will have to wait until next summer, said Steven Traynum, president of Coastal Science and Engineering, which designed the project.

The work follows the settlement of lawsuits brought by Prince George property owners

Sandbags on the beach at Prince George protect the dunes from the shifting creek.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

after the inlet at the south end of Pawleys Island began migrating farther south. The suits claimed the shift was caused by a renourishment project completed by the town in 2022.

The inlet is now more than half a mile from where it was located before the renourishment. PG Inlet Partners is seeking federal and state agencies to cut a new inlet 1,000 feet south of the public parking lot on the island's south end.

The settlement between the property owners, the town, its contractors and two state agencies provided $4 million for the work, including the purchase of 16 acres south of the parking lot.

Coastal Science designed the town's renourishment project and was a defendant in the suit. As part of the settlement, it agreed to design the inlet relocation project and obtain the necessary permits.

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ELECTION 2026 | U.S. Senate

Fry falls short in bid for statewide office

By Madison Sharrock
COASTAL OBSERVER

U.S. 7th District Rep. Russell Fry swept his eight-county district, but it wasn't enough propel his bid for the Senate seat held by the late Lindsey Graham.

He finished third behind Darline Graham and U.S. 5th District Rep. Ralph Norman, who will be on the ballot in a runoff for the GOP nomination on Aug. 25.

Fry was the second local Republican to fall short in a bid for statewide office. State Sen. Stephen Goldfinch led the field in the June primary for attorney general, but lost in the runoff.

Fry got 19.6 percent of the vote in this week's special primary to replace Graham, according to the unofficial results. Graham handily won the June primary. He died July 11 at age 71.

"I don't know what will happen tonight at 7 o'clock, but in three weeks, we went from a regional candidate to a statewide name that is possibly going to be in the run," Fry said after voting Tuesday morning in Murrells Inlet. "That is a huge amount of surge in just a short amount of time."

Darline Graham, Lindsey's sister, was appointed by Gov. Henry McMaster to fill the

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Madison Sharrock/Coastal Observer

U.S. Rep. Russell Fry, center, with his wife, Bronwen, and their only son, James, 9, after casting votes.

PI COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sex offender scandal leads to school closure

By Madison Sharrock
COASTAL OBSERVER

Kelly Pope hoped to start her fourth year as the lead teacher at Pawleys Island Christian Academy this fall. After the discovery last month that a registered sex offender had been allowed to work at the school and the Pawleys Island Community Church that runs it, she knew that wasn't likely.

The church this week announced it would "formally end" the ministry. A statement cited "recent events, the ongoing investigation, and delays with licensing" for the current school year.

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