

# The Braselton News

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12 pages

## Hoschton brings on interim city admin

By Alex Buffington  
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The City of Hoschton has a new interim city administrator.

Gary Fesperman took the oath of office for the interim position at the Hoschton City Council's May 18 meeting.

Mayor Shannon Sell said

he reached out to the Georgia Municipal Association for assistance with a city administrator/manager. He said they led him to a list of retirees who can work on an interim basis.

Sell added that Fesperman will help "organize the city" and assist the town in finding someone to fill the

position permanently.

Fesperman lives in Franklin County and was city manager of Lavonia for 17 years, according to Sell.

"We are very pleased to have Gary on board. He's already making an immediate impact on the City of Hoschton," said Sell.

The city has been without

a city administrator since the end of 2019, when former administrator Dale Hall resigned. That position was at the center of controversy throughout 2019 after the former mayor Theresa Kenerly was accused of pulling the application of a candidate for city administrator because he is black.

Former city councilman Jim Cleveland also faced criticism during that time after defending Kenerly and stating his opinions against interracial relationships.

Both Kenerly and Cleveland faced backlash and a recall election had been set. The two resigned under pressure in late 2019 before

that recall election could be held.

Hall resigned around the same time as Kenerly and Cleveland.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Also at its meeting, the council:

•approved a rezoning

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## NGHS receives supply of remdesivir

Northeast Georgia Health System is among several hospitals across the state to receive an allotment of the drug remdesivir. The medicine is being used to treat COVID-19 patients with serious symptoms.

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) recently distributed an initial allotment of the drug

See Remdesivir, page 3A

## State cases near 39K

The number of COVID-19 positive cases is nearing 39,000.

As of Tuesday, May 19, at 9 a.m., there were 38,624 positive cases in the state, including 7,002 hospitalizations and 1,649 deaths.

Locally, there have been:

•Gwinnett — 2,695 cases; 105 deaths; 534 hospitalizations

•Hall — 2,169 cases; 42 deaths; 295 hospitalizations

•Barrow — 263 cases; 8 deaths; 66 hospitalizations

•Jackson — 132 cases; 3 deaths; 25 hospitalizations

Northeast Georgia Health System

See State, page 2A

## Braselton seeks artists to beautify doors in historic building

The Town of Braselton is seeking artists to submit designs to beautify the five doors located in the corridor of the historic Braselton Brothers Department Store Building.

"If you are an artist or know one, we encourage you to submit a

See Artists, page 2A



The Peters family Front Porch Project photoshoot depicted a humorous take on the coronavirus. A local photographer, Luciana Sarmento, offered free photoshoots to residents of Riverstone Park in Braselton, asking for donations for St. Jude Children's Hospital. Photo by Luciana Sarmento.

## Front porches of a giving neighborhood

By Alex Buffington  
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A Braselton woman used her photography talents to document life during the shelter-in-place while raising money for a good cause.

Luciana Sarmento, a Riverstone Park resident, recently participated in the Front Porch Project. The project — which captures portraits and memories of families on their front porches — has gained popularity nationwide as families were forced to stay at home due to the spreading Coronavirus.

"The Front Porch Project is not a new concept," said Sarmento. "This has been done all over the country to give families the opportunity to have photo sessions done without leaving their homes due to the shelter-in-place order. Some of these photographers chose



The Mayfields posed for a humorous front porch photo during the COVID-19 shelter-in-place, holding cleaning supplies and a Corona beverage. Photo by Luciana Sarmento.

to charge for the photos and some chose to donate their time."

Sarmento decided to offer free photoshoots to her neighbors in the Riverstone Park community and asked that they make a donation for St. Jude Children's Hospital. As of May 16, she'd raised nearly \$500.

Sarmento said she and

her husband have been donating to the children's hospital for years after they learned the hospital doesn't charge families for care.

"This was only possible because of donations," she said. "We had no children at the time. The decision to donate to St. Jude really came from the heart,

See Sarmento, page 2A

## Braselton 'safest city' in Georgia

Braselton has been named the safest city in the state.

SafeWise recently released its sixth annual "50 Safest Cities" list.

Braselton ranked top on that list, followed by Johns Creek, Milton, Senoia and Summerville. (The Town of Braselton has been listed as the 17th safest city during the previous year.)

Locally, the City of Jefferson ranked 11th; Auburn came in at 15th; Flowery Branch was 27th; and Commerce was 46th.

The list is based on 2018 crime data by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and considers the rate of violent and property crimes in cities meeting the population threshold.

## Numbers declining in Hall, leaders still urge precaution

By Alex Buffington  
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Governor Brian Kemp recently toured the new mobile COVID-19 unit deployed in Hall County. That unit adds 20 additional beds to Northeast Georgia Medical Center Gainesville as the hospital system continues to combat the virus in a county that has been recognized as a COVID-19 hotspot.

As of 9 a.m. on Tuesday, May 19, Hall County had 2,169 confirmed virus cases, according to the Georgia Department of Public Health. It's the fifth hardest-hit county in the state.

Forty-two of the cases resulted in deaths and 295 led the hospitalizations. (Numbers are based on the patient's county of residence.)

But Kemp and hospital leaders said the local numbers have been declining, which they attribute to the community's efforts to slow the spread.

As of May 18, Northeast Georgia Health System was treating 97 confirmed COVID-19 patients. Since the hospital began releasing its data in late April, the largest number of COVID-19 positive patients was recorded on April 29, with 159 total patients. The numbers have been trending downwards

See Kemp, page 2A

MAILING LABEL

## Jackson schools to receive over \$1 million in federal relief

By Ben Munro  
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The Jackson County School System will receive nearly \$1.03 million in federal aid as it tries to navigate expected state-funding reductions in the next fiscal year.

The federal money is part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Securities (CARES) act, passed by Congress in March in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Jackson County's allotment was announced by school system chief financial officer Annah Dodge at the board of education's

May 7 work session.

The money will aid Jackson County Schools' nutrition program — which took a hit with school lunches not being purchased since mid-March — but will generally help close the gap created by reduced state funding as the system tries to budget for 2020-21. The system expects cuts, but does not yet know the size of those reductions.

Jackson County Schools will pair the \$1.03 million in federal money with a healthy reserve as it braces for whatever funding shortfall it faces in 2020-21.

See Relief, page 2A

## Braselton planners recommend denial of town home plans

Plans for a town home development in an industrial area of Braselton were dealt a blow May 18 when the town's planning board voted 3-1 to recommend denial of a rezoning for the proposed project.

The Braselton Town Council will have the final say on the plans at its meeting in June.

Developers want to build 161 town homes on 21.5 acres on Broadway Ave. (Hwy. 124) across from the intersection with Josh Pirkle Rd. The property backs up to I-85 and is in a largely industrial area.

The project calls for

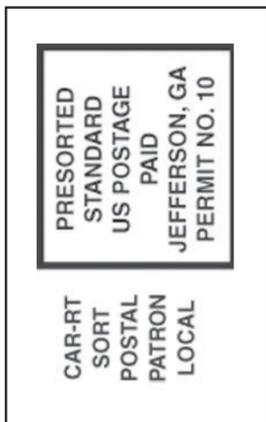
"upscale" town homes of 1,800 sq. ft. minimum. The developers want to rezone the property from M-D (manufacturing/distribution) to R-M (multi-family).

But some planning board members said they thought residential development in an industrial area was not a good fit.

"It's out of place," said Allan Slovin, chairman of the Braselton Planning Commission.

Planner Billy Edwards concurred, saying the proposal goes against the

See Townhomes, page 2A



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