

Fireworks set in Homer on July 4

The sky will light up over Homer this July with the Fourth of July Fireworks celebration.

The fireworks show will begin at 9:30 p.m. at Banks County High School.

Job assistance offered to people laid off

WorkSource is continuing to assist people who live in or have been laid off from one of the WSGM Area counties- Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, and White; and fit one of these scenarios:

- Has never been employed.
 - Temporarily or permanently laid off due to COVID-19.
 - Is currently receiving or exhausted unemployment.
 - Has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks.
- For more information, visit the website, www.gmrc.ga.gov/wsgm.

Blood drive planned

LifeSouth invites the community donated blood during a blood drive planned Saturday, Aug. 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The blood drive will be held at Maysville Baptist Church, College and Career Campus located at 15 Homer St., Maysville.

"The summer is typically a tough time for blood collections," LifeSouth leaders said. "Patients in area hospitals rely on volunteer blood donors throughout the summer to ensure that blood is there when they need it most. Give local, save local. Please give blood."

All donors will receive a recognition item and will have a chance to see the helicopters used for transport. Blood donors must be at least 17 (16 with parental permission), weigh at least 110 pounds and be in good health. A photo ID is also required. For more information on donating blood or to schedule an appointment to donate, call toll-free 888-795-2707 or visit lifesouth.org.

Banks County vaccination rate among lowest in state

By ANGELA GARY
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Banks County has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the state with only 22 percent of the residents being fully vaccinated for COVID-19.

Banks County is lower than the state vaccination rate of 38 percent and lower than the surrounding north Georgia county rates, which are all above 30 percent. There are a few South Georgia counties that are lower than 20 percent.

In Banks County, 4,191 of the residents have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

Since COVID-19 was first reported in March 2020, there have been 1,667 cases reported in Banks County, including 36 deaths and 203 people hospitalized. The number of cases reported has slowed down with only four being reported in Banks County in the past two weeks.

Lula Council approves \$1.3 million budget

By SHERRY LEWIS

The Lula City Council met Monday and approved the 2021-22 fiscal year budget.

The general fund budget is \$1.3 million, up from \$1.1 million approved last year. For 2021-22, the proposed water and sewer final budget is \$931,000, up from \$805,387 last year.

Some revenues in the general fund include a franchise tax of \$124,000, and Local Option Sales Tax from Banks County in the amount of \$27,000 and \$552,000 from the Hall County LOST while solid waste collection should be \$160,000.

Included in the general fund expenditures include extra money allotted for salaries. Administrative staff salaries will go from \$222,000 to \$235,000, up \$13,000. City services staff salaries will increase by \$21,365. The amount earmarked will go from \$142,635 to \$164,000.

The council has budgeted \$59,000 for health insurance, up from \$56,000 last year.

Also, the council intends to spend \$26,000 on computer and software and an additional \$5,000 on the wi-fi and Internet.

Water and sewer revenues make up a large part of the utility budget. Water should bring in \$495,000 while sewer should bring in another in \$212,000. While water taps should bring in \$15,300 and sewer taps should bring in \$125,000.

As far as expenses in the utility budget, liability insurance is expected to be \$25,300, up from \$20,000 last year while water and sewer staff salaries is \$181,283, down from \$182,900 last year. Other line items in this budget include EPD monitoring permits at \$8,600 while water line repair is \$5,000. Also included are vehicle, well, and tractor maintenance, among other day to day operation expenses.

The city council should receive additional funds from the federal government's American Rescue Plan. While the amount they will receive has not been determined, they hope to use these funds for water and sewer improvements. Also, citizens will have another opportunity to extend the Local Option Sales Tax for five years when they go to the poles on November 2.



Lula resident Jeff Armour created the sculpture that is in place at Hall County Fire Station 6 in Lula.

Lula artist creates angel sculpture for fire department

Lula resident Jeff Armour created the sculpture that is in place at Hall County Fire Station 6 in Lula.

The new piece of public art will be dedicated to the men and women of Hall County Fire Services during a ceremony next week at Hall County Fire Station 6 in Lula.

The sculpture is one of several "protective angels" sculptures placed at public safety facilities throughout Hall County as a part of the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's Vision 2030 Public Art effort.

"This particular project pays special tribute to those who serve as protective angels within our own com-

munity—the members of Hall County's public safety agencies," said Frank Norton, Jr., chair of the Vision 2030 Public Art Committee. "It really serves a dual purpose."

He adds, "It helps us reach our goal of putting art everywhere while making sure that art is meaningful and significant to those who see it on a daily basis."

Hall County Fire Chief Chris Armstrong said having the piece made by a member of the Lula community is especially heartwarming.

"It is truly an honor to accept this sculpture on behalf of Hall County Fire Services," Armstrong said.

"The support of this community means everything to our agency, and having a local artist craft this piece as a tribute to the men and women who serve him and his neighbors on a day-to-day basis is humbling to say the least."

The brief dedication ceremony will take place at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, June 29 at Fire Station 6, which is located at 6172 Lula Road in Lula.

The art located at Hall County Fire Station 6 was funded through a public art grant from the North Georgia Community Foundation and an anonymous donation facilitated by the Vision 2030 Public Art Committee.

Banks County low on housing supply

There are almost no homes under \$450,000 for sale in Banks County right now.

That's based on a recent report from the Norton Agency which tracks housing and other property sales

in North Georgia. and the surrounding area.

Zillow listings confirm that there are only a few homes in Banks County for sale currently, although there are several tracts of land on the market.

Potential development of subdivisions in the county have been controversial recently as some citizens have spoken out at various public meetings about the need to restrain development in the county. Much of the coun-

ty's growth, especially industrial and commercial, has been on its south along I-85. But the Highway 441 corridor is also seeing some signs of development.

Demand for housing in North Georgia remains

tight in most communities and housing prices have risen dramatically in recent months. Some of that is due to higher lumber prices, but it's also due to a high demand for housing in the region.

Jobless rate decreases for Northeast Georgia area

Georgia Labor Commissioner Mark Butler reports that Georgia Mountains saw an over-the-month and over-the-year decrease in its initial claims in May.

"This is a step in the right direction, but we need to continue to get Georgians back to work," said Com-

missioner of Labor Mark Butler. "Increasing the amount of people in our labor force is critical for us to continue to improve."

In Georgia Mountains, the unemployment rate increased by 0.1 percentage points, reaching 2.8 percent. A year ago, the rate was 7.6

percent.

The labor force decreased in May by 725. The May total was 355,740.

That number is up by 9,705 from the total from May 2020.

Georgia Mountains ended May with 345,630 employed residents. The num-

ber decreased by 1,216 in May and was up 25,907 as compared to last year.

Initial claims for unemployment decreased by 19 percent in May.

When compared to last May, claims were down by about 90 percent.

The GDOL's online job

listing service at employ-georgia.com showed 6,056 active job postings in Georgia Mountains for May.

Visit gdol.ga.gov to learn more about career opportunities, Employ Georgia services, and other GDOL services for job seekers and employers.

BCHS freshment event, open house coming up

A Freshman Pounce Day will be held at BCBS for all rising freshmen.

This student-only event will be held on August 3, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at BCBS.

Students will be able to

pick up schedules before the rest of the school, meet teachers and advisors, find their classes, take a tour, play games, and win prizes.

Bus transportation will be available from central locations in the county. Car rider

drop-off and pick-up will be at the bus ramp.

See the BCBS website and facebook page for more information.

No new student registrations will be completed during Freshman Pounce

Day on Tuesday, August 3, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

A school-wide Open House for grades 9-12 will be held on Thursday, August 5, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

All students and parents/guardians are invited to

attend. Schedules will be available for pick-up during Open House.

No new student registrations will be completed during Open House on Thursday, August 5, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

