

# Calhoun Times

and Gordon County News

Covering Calhoun, Fairmount, Ranger, Oakman, Plainville, Sugar Valley, Resaca and the unincorporated areas of Gordon County since 1870

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## News

**United Way of Gordon County Executive Director Vickie Spence plans to retire this summer**



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## Opinion

**Columnist Coleen Brooks: It seemed like a good idea at the time**



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## Sports

**The Firebirds win area duals championship on Saturday, clinching state berth**



C1

## Council decides on disciplinary action for fire chief

By Alexis Draut  
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On Monday night, the City Council moved to suspend Calhoun Fire Chief Lenny Nesbitt for 30 days without pay following an investigation into his arrest. On Nov. 10, Nesbitt was arrested by the Georgia State Patrol in Fannin County on charges of DUI and failure to maintain a lane.

The charges against Nesbitt were resolved by the Blue Ridge City Court on Dec. 10 without a conviction,

according to a December news release from the city. City Administrator Eddie Peterson put Nesbitt on administrative leave indefinitely on Dec. 20 following the discovery of his arrest.

The investigation was conducted by the Calhoun Police Department and reported to the city. City Attorney George Govignon said the CPD report details will be released to the public soon but did not state a specific date.



Lenny Nesbitt

The suspension for Nesbitt begins immediately. At the end of the 30-day suspension, he will return to work, but will be on a six-month probation period, as was determined by the council on Monday following an executive session.

According to Ryan Powell, the deputy executive director of the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council, Nesbitt did not report his arrest to the regulatory body for peace

officers within the required 15 days of the incident taking place. Normally POST does not deal with fire departments, but Nesbitt's case is different, since he was officially a peace officer, he explained.

Four days after his arrest, Nesbitt notified POST he was choosing to give up his certification as a police officer.

Nesbitt has not responded to repeated requests for comment

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Calhoun Times

## Gov. Kemp visits Dalton to thank supporters

◆ Prior to his swearing in, Gov. Kemp tours across Georgia to reassure he will represent Georgians first.

By Alexis Draut  
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Gov. Brian Kemp visited Dalton this weekend during a part of his per-inauguration tour, where he traveled across Georgia. From Jan. 9-12, Kemp visited eight different cities across the state, hosting events such as a military appreciation breakfast, an event honoring current first responders and law enforcement officers, and a ceremony to recognize Gov. Nathan Deal.

On Saturday at the Dalton Golf & Country Club, Kemp thanked local politicians, residents and members of the Republican Party who supported him.

"We wanted to make sure we got up here to say thank you to everyone and let them know I'm going to be a governor who's working for our whole state, all four corners and everywhere in between," Kemp told the press during the event.

In preparation for his inauguration, Kemp wanted to make sure that the citizens of Georgia know their stories won't be forgotten, and he fully intends to represent every Georgian, he said. He also said it was encouraging to have the support of the presidential administration during the November elections.

Sen. Chuck Payne, R-Dalton, and House Rep. Jason Ridley, R-Chatsworth, introduced Kemp to the podium on Saturday, expressing their support for the then governor-elect.

"This is such a hopeful time. Let this be the day people say hope was restored in the state of Georgia," Payne said. "It's not just about Brian Kemp or Geoff Duncan, it's not just about those of us serving in elected office, it's about everyone in this room."

Ridley said that Kemp will be for the people of Georgia, and the representative is confident the new governor will consistently put his citizens first.

"He's the same every single day," Ridley said. "He can go down to somebody's house, rich or poor, and have a cup of coffee and relate to them because he's been there. I can't be prouder of him."

Gordon County residents were also present at the event, including County Commissioner Becky Hood, County Board of Education member Eddie Hall, and two Republicans who are currently in a runoff for the state House District 5 seat, Jesse

SEE KEMP, A3



Ray Landress, owner of a building that burned down on the night of Jan. 10, cleans up the remains of the burned structure. / Alexis Draut

## Fire destroys storage building

◆ A storage building on Calhoun Precast Shop property is destroyed in a Thursday night blaze.

By Spencer Lahr  
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A storage building on Calhoun Precast Shop property was destroyed in a late Thursday night fire. In addition to the building, a vehicle parked outside and inventory stored nearby were also destroyed in the blaze.

According to Gordon County Fire & Rescue reports:

Gordon County firefighters responded to the reported structure fire at 215 Wrights Hollow Road shortly after 11 p.m. Thursday, arriving at 11:22 p.m. When fire crews arrived they found the building fully involved, along with a power line down around the building.

Firefighters were able to knock down the fire and get it under control by 11:41 p.m. There was a "strong smell of strong solvents," which were kept inside the structure, coming from the burning building, the report stated. A cause of the blaze was not determined.

Troy Landress, a son of business owner Ray Landress, had been staying in the building. However, he was not inside when the fire started.

Ray Landress said he did not have insurance on the building, which was valued at \$30,000, so a fire investigator was not called to the scene. In



A storage building owned by Calhoun Precast Shop burns down late Thursday, Jan. 10, 2018. / Contributed

addition to the value of the building, the vehicle and inventory destroyed were valued at \$20,000 to \$30,000.

The storage building had been on the Wrights Hollow Road property since 1971, Ray Landress said. Along with his sons, he was working Friday to clear the remnants of the burnt-out building to clear out the driveway for the business.

Greg Landress, a son of Ray Landress, said the vehicle destroyed was his brother's, but had not been running. There was a truck parked behind the building that just avoided being destroyed, but the heat from the fire welded the doors shut, busted the windshield and melted plastic materials on it.

"Thank goodness," Greg Landress said of the fire not spreading to other buildings on the property.

Neighbor Randy Sauder was the person who called 911 to report the

blaze, he said.

"Being a wood structure it burned hot and quickly," he wrote in an email.

At one point before firefighters arrived, Sauder said the flames easily reached 100 feet into the sky. He was concerned about the flames reaching nearby trees which were only about 20 feet from his property and the power lines on the property stretched to his garage.

"I was just preparing to go start my backhoe as a defensive measure when the fire department arrived," he said. Sauder said it was fortunate that the wind had died down.

"Had that wind still been blowing this would no doubt have been a much larger fire with much more property damage," he said, adding that the trees that caught fire were less than 20 feet from a recently-completed shop.

## Barton, Vaughn participate in GOP forum

◆ The two candidates left in the race for the state House District 5 seat expand on their platforms and campaigns.

By Alexis Draut  
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On Thursday, the Gordon County Republican Party gathered for a public forum as a part of their monthly GOP meeting where Jesse Vaughn and Matt Barton, both candidates for State House District 5, answered topical questions.

Following the results from Election Day on Jan. 8 –



On Thursday night, the Gordon County GOP hosted a forum for Matt Barton (left) and Jesse Vaughn to answer some questions regarding current events. / Alexis Draut

where Vaughn finished with 33.72 percent of the votes and Barton received 23.15 percent – a runoff election

was set for Feb. 5.

Moving forward with their campaigns, Vaughn and Barton both attended

a local Republican Party meeting last week to further explain their platforms. Topics of questions included religious freedom, taxes, education, casino gambling, prison reform, fracking and medical marijuana.

### Matt Barton

Local Gordon County native, Matt Barton, 46, is a business man who has 10 years of prior experience in the political sector. As the owner of a delivery service, Barton previously served on the Calhoun City Schools Board of Education as well as the Calhoun City Council.

SEE FORUM, A11

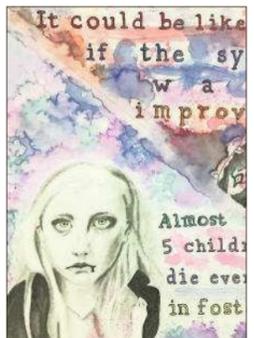
## Young Artists



This artwork is from Sonorville High School ninth-grader Kyrsten Dyer.



This artwork is from Sonorville High School senior Natalia Macias.



This artwork is from Sonorville High School ninth-grader Raven St. John.

The Calhoun Times is looking to feature student artwork in our Young Artists section. Pictures of artwork can be emailed to Managing Editor Spencer Lahr at SLahr@CalhounTimes.com. Please keep photos in their original format and do not alter them. Also, be sure to include the name of student, their grade and the school they attend.