

Walker County Messenger

LaFayette, Ga.

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FOUNDED IN 1877 — WALKER COUNTY'S OLDEST CONTINUOUS BUSINESS

Four sections ♦ 75 cents

Suit filed against Water and Sewerage Authority

By Jan Morris
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The city of Chattanooga has filed a federal lawsuit alleging Walker County Water and Sewerage Authority has breached its 2016 wastewater contract.

The authority hasn't fully paid Chattanooga for wastewater treatment and disposal, according to the suit. The suit "is a contractual

dispute between the city of Chattanooga and the Walker County Water and Sewerage Authority, not Walker County government," pointed out Joe Legge, the county's public relations director.

"The Water and Sewerage Authority's legal counsel is reviewing the city's complaint," Legge said. "The authority is an independent entity with its own



Shannon Whitfield

employees and general manager," he said. "Many people think it is a county department, but it is not."

Board meetings for the authority are held at 6 p.m. the second Tuesday each month at the Walker County Water and Sewerage Authority, 4665 Happy Valley Road, Flintstone. Meetings are open to the public to attend and voice their con-

cerns about their drinking water.

The authority's board of directors includes Annette North, Scott Abston, William Cooke, vice chairman Micheal Haney and chairman Shannon Whitfield, who is also county commissioner.

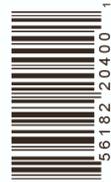
Escalating wastewater treatment costs

In a July 2018 the Walker County Messenger reported

that Commissioner Shannon Whitfield "had been in office a short time before learning that the northern end of the county had an old and decaying sewer system."

"Not only was the system failing, it relies on Chattanooga's Moccasin Bend Wastewater Plant for treatment and is billed for that service."

SEE LAWSUIT, A6



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INSIDE: SPECIAL SECTION
12 pages on county health and wellness

School board plans a property tax hike

Three meetings for public input

By Walker County Board Of Education

The Walker County Board of Education has tentatively adopted a 2019 millage rate that will require a 4.84 percent increase in property taxes.

All concerned citizens are invited to public hearings on this tax increase to be held at the boardroom of the Walker County Department of Education, 201 South Duke St., LaFayette, on Monday, July 15, at 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., and Thursday, July 25, at 6 p.m.

The proposed property tax increase for a home with an estimated value of \$100,000 would result in approximately an additional tax cost to the homeowner of approximately \$31 under the proposed amount suggested, according to the board.

Fourth of July

By Jan Morris
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It was standing room only at the July 3 Patriotism at the Post event in Fort Oglethorpe Wednesday night, July 3.

Vendor lines, especially for cotton candy, stretched across the field that was home to this year's concert and fireworks show organized by the city's tourism association.

Small and large hands held big glowing columns of pink sugar throughout the crowd thanks to a cotton candy-maker named LaDonna of Donna's Cotton Candy in Rocky Face, Ga.

The vendor said she had sold about a hundred of the sugary treat. "Some are small and in bags and some are on glow sticks," she said.

Ashley Harris, one mom with a bag of cotton candy in one hand and a tall glow stick of the pink sweet in another, was waiting on one more glow stick-covered one. Harris said: "I knew if I didn't get a second one (of the tall variety) they would fight over the glow stick."

Gemma Bowen, 7, seemed impervious to the concert

SEE PATRIOTISM, A2



Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit Drug Task Force

Methamphetamine is often sold in bags that each contain 3.5 grams of the drug. The packet is known as an 8-ball because it contains one-eighth of an ounce of the drug. On the market this bag of meth sells for \$150.

BIG ROSSVILLE BUST

Nearly \$250,000 in drugs off street thanks to task force

By Jan Morris
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The drugs seized at a Rossville residence on June 28 had a potential street value of nearly \$250,000, including nearly \$200,000 worth of meth and \$48,000 in heroin, says DeWayne Brown, commander of the Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit Drug Task Force, which spearheaded the drug bust.

The drug task force seized 9 pounds of meth and arrested two people at 819 Park City Road. The task force also confiscated 8 ounces of heroin, 24 grams of psilocybin (mushrooms), a firearm and \$1,300 cash.

The task force, which serves Walker, Catoosa, Dade and Chattooga counties, worked in cooperation with deputies from the Walker County Sheriff's Office road patrol division.

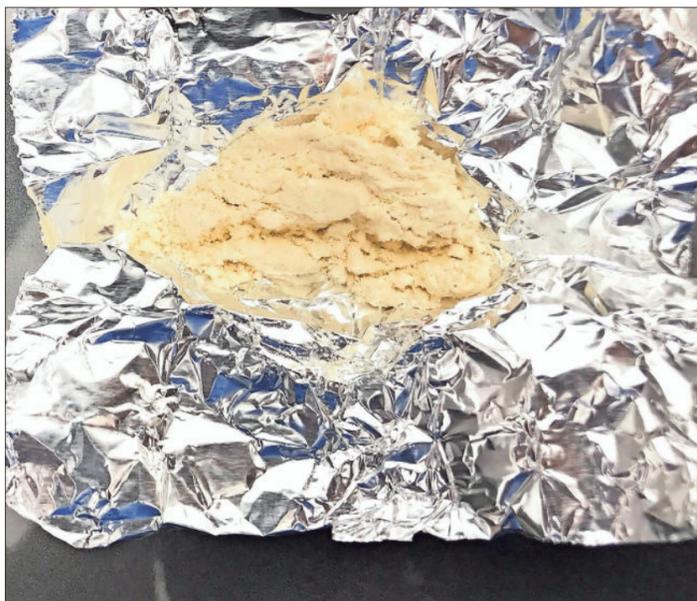
Arrested and charged were: Kimberly Grayson, 49, Rossville, charged with trafficking in methamphetamine, trafficking in heroin, possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime, and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon; Matthew Showalter, 47, Signal Mountain, Tennessee, charged with trafficking in methamphetamine, trafficking in heroin, possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime. Showalter has outstanding felony warrants in Hamilton County, Tennessee, for guns charges.

Meth math

According to Brown, the 9 pounds of methamphetamine seized in the bust equals about 4,082 grams. Each pound of meth contains 453.59 grams of the drug.

Meth is often sold to individual users in what is known as an 8-ball, a package containing 3.5 grams of the drug (about one-eighth of an ounce). That 3.5-gram buy will cost the individual as much as \$150. So if eight 8-balls were purchased, the illegal buy would total 1 ounce in size, yet cost \$1,000.

Cmdr. Brown and those who participated in the Rossville drug bust confiscated as many as 1,275 8-balls



Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit Drug Task Force

Heroin sells for \$200 per gram. One ounce of heroin contains 28.35 grams of the drug.

of meth, not just eight. That's a total street value of \$191,343, which could have adversely impacted 1,275 individual buyers, Brown said.

Meth easily available

"It is just so much easier to get the crystal meth now because it is coming out of Mexico," Brown said. "And it is less expensive. They ship it here in liquid form and then a conversion lab turns it into the end product that is sold."

While metro-Atlanta serves as the main conversion lab location for those in the drug trade, LaFayette had such a conversion lab in operation in August 2018. It has since been dismantled by law enforcement, thanks to the Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit Drug Task Force and its fellow law enforcement agency, the Walker County Sheriff's Office.

More heroin, too

The Lookout Mountain Drug Task Force commander said there is a

"huge increase in heroin right now, too, due to the (prescription) pills being harder to get."

According to Brown, the crackdown on doctors who were writing unwarranted prescriptions, coupled with the greater oversight and monitoring programs for pill purchases, has served to diminish pill availability.

That, therefore, is driving up demand for other forms of heroin to purchase for illegal use, like the pure heroin confiscated in the Rossville drug bust.

Pure heroin is heroin not cut with any other product, such as fentanyl. Fentanyl-laced heroin and other synthetic opioids have been blamed for more than 28,000 overdose deaths nationwide in 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Brown said the Rossville bust did not include confiscation of any fentanyl-laced heroin.

Like meth, heroin isn't cheap. A person can expect to pay \$150 for 3.5 grams of meth, but the same

SEE BUST, A6

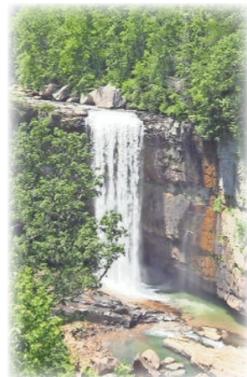
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The 2018-2019 Catoosa and Walker County Athletes of the Year

Sports/B1



Lula lake turns into scavenger hunt scene.

News/A3