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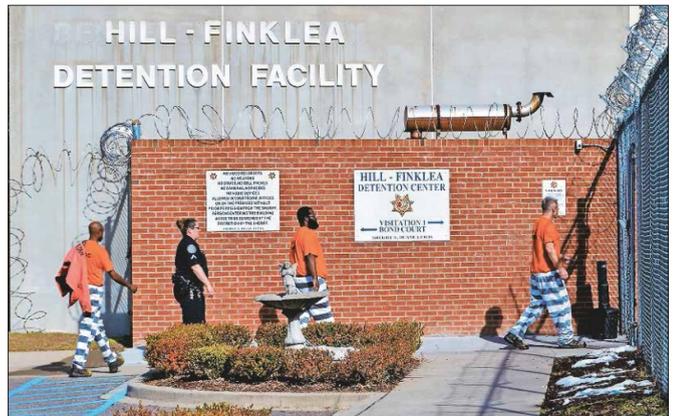
Officials say local jails facing staff shortages

BY MATT BISE
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On Oct. 25, the director of the Hill-Finklea Detention Center in Berkeley County went to the county council for help with what he called a “semi-crisis.”
 The jail is facing a shortage of staff who interact directly with the criminal population on a daily basis. Because of the safety issues such a shortage can cause, jail director Randy Demory asked the council for money to spark recruitment from what is already a shallow pool of prospects.
 At any given time, there are over 400 inmates inside the crowded Hill-Finklea Detention Center in Moncks Corner. But the county is losing officers at a disturbing rate. While turnover is

often high, there is no one applying to fill the new vacancies. It’s a double whammy that caught Demory by surprise.
 “Right now we’re down 16 line officers, and that’s 16 people out of 54 that actually work in the jail directly with the inmates,” Demory told The Berkeley Independent a few days after the council meeting.
 Since January, the jail has lost 29 of those crucial line officers, which was over half of the 54 needed. It has been a struggle to get the numbers back up. It is the worst Demory has seen it. The facility was down 15 officers at one point in 2016, but this shortage is different.
 “The difference between now and 2016, in 2016 we were getting applicants and in September and October

of 2016 we had 43 people apply, and in September and October of 2021, we’ve only had six people apply,” he said.
 For the short term, the council agreed to allocate \$20,000 for incentive efforts to help with recruitment. Demory said new hires will get a \$500 sign-on bonus and employees who refer new hires will also receive \$500. It’s a fix he hopes will fill some gaps in a competitive hiring environment.
 Right now, once they are hired by the county and all of their training is completed at the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, Demory told the council, a detention officer in Berkeley County receives about \$37,000 annually.
 The South Carolina Criminal Justice



Hill-Finklea Detention Center in Moncks Corner. The jail has lost 29 detention guards since January and currently has a shortage of 16.
 MATT BISE/STAFF



A former police officer with Summerville Police Department was arrested for allegedly punching an individual during a traffic stop last year.
 MATT BISE/STAFF

Former officer arrested for alleged assault

STAFF REPORT

On Oct. 29 agents of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division arrested a former officer with the Summerville Police Department for apparently assaulting an individual while conducting a traffic stop last year.

The agency announced Robert Barrineau, 37, was charged with third degree assault and battery. He was booked at the Dorchester County Detention Center. The request for the SLED investigation was made by SPD officials.

Investigators from SLED report that on Aug. 20, 2020, when Barrineau was still an officer with the department, he made a traffic stop on an individual and began ordering the person from the car without telling them the nature of the stop. The arrest warrant said that Barrineau then began to pull the person out of the vehicle and punched them in the face with a closed fist.

SPD officials declined to comment about the investigation to The Journal Scene.

“Our agency is going to let SLED investigate this matter,” SPD Lt. Chris Hirsch said. “It would be inappropriate to comment while the investigation is on going. Thank you for understanding.”

Barrineau was the second former police officer within a month to be arrested. On Oct. 13, SLED agents arrested Wade Rollings, 46, who has been accused of stealing guns from SPD’s evidence and selling them to a pawn shop. Investigators said he sold the weapons on Dec. 14, 2020, shortly after he was terminated from his position at SPD.

In both Rollings’ and Barrineau’s cases, SPD officials asked SLED to investigate.



Nexton Elementary ESOL teacher Susan Nelson and her co-teacher Cynthia Montana work together with all of the multi-language and general education students within the class setting. Recently, the class has been working on writing and illustrating spooky stories.
 PROVIDED

Summerville teachers aid students learning English during COVID

BY ABIGAIL HUTCHINSON
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Imagine walking into first grade not speaking the language the teacher used for instruction. Then, months later, transitioning to learning from a virtual platform, where faulty internet connection and the minor crackling of a candy wrapper or bark from the neighbors’ dog can present unforgiving background noise.

For many students throughout the nation, this was a reality at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has presented an array of unique struggles for families and educators, but for fami-

lies who speak English as a second language, trying to navigate everyday life felt especially difficult.

At Nexton Elementary, Susan Nelson, who is an ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) teacher, has tried to ease that burden.

Nelson was a grade teacher for 25 years, but new teachers ESOL full time.

She helped pioneer the school’s language lab, which was designed as a way to supply ESOL students additional services. It began just for kindergarteners who had little to no English skills, and expanded this year to work with students in all grades.

Nelson says since students already receive mandated academic services outside the lab, the goal

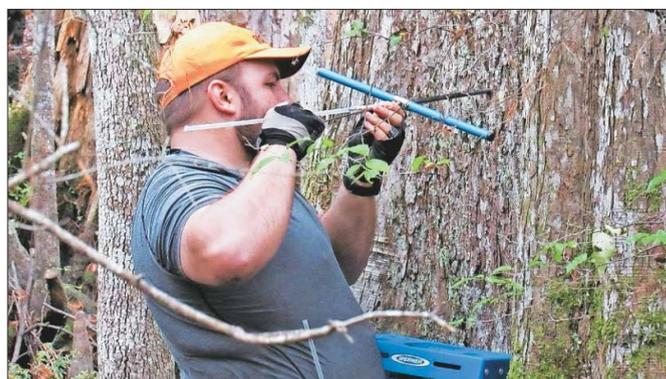
of the language lab was to build community between the students and act as an extra support system for learning.

“I started this (language lab) two years ago, but COVID hit and all the personal things you can do in the classroom haven’t really happened,” Nelson said. “I’m trying to get the kids a sense of community and then also the parents so that they can lean on each other and kind of just feel a sense of belongingness to the school.”

When COVID first hit in March 2020, Nelson was teaching a class of first graders. In her class, Nelson remembers having around six students

Please see **TEACHERS**, A3

Research at Beidler Forest plans to assess climate change



Clay Tucker from the University of Alabama takes a sample from a bald cypress tree in Beidler Forest in fall 2021.
 PROVIDED

BY ABIGAIL HUTCHINSON
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Just a few exits away from the hum of the rapidly growing Summerville area is a quiet forest home to bald cypress trees, rooted deeply into soil that has supported their nearly 1,000-year lifetime.

These cypress trees, located in the midst of Francis Beidler Forest’s nearly 18,000-acre wildlife sanctuary, are some of the oldest trees in the United States.

Shortly after the sanctuary first opened in 1977, researchers took samples from many of the trees to get an idea of just how old they were, said Matthew Johnson, who is the

Beidler Forest Audubon Center director. By creating a hole that’s about half an inch in diameter, researchers used an increment borer to extract small samples of wood from the tree to study.

More than 40 years later, that data is still being used to learn more about climate change over time. Recently, researchers from the University of Alabama (UA), alongside additional colleagues from Europe, visited the forest to take more samples that will be used to compare past and present data and how it relates to the changing climate.

“Researches just came out this past

Please see **FOREST**, A4

