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FAST NEWS

Senators: Let people buy guns in D.C.

U.S. Sens. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., and Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., are co-sponsoring an amendment that would give residents in Washington, D.C., the same right as every other American.

The amendment to the D.C. Voting Rights bill would permit residents of the District of Columbia to exercise their Second Amendment rights – the right to own a handgun.

The senators noted that residents have been barred since 1976 from having handguns until a U.S. Supreme Court decision last year overturned the ban. However, the D.C. City Council is rewriting its gun laws with continued restrictions on gun ownership by law-abiding citizens, they said.

Lawyer asking sheriff to 'prove it'

John Wetzler, a lawyer with offices in Brunswick, is asking McIntosh County Sheriff Stephen Jessup to prove that Jake's Place, a bar in Darien, is a public nuisance that should have its pouring license revoked.

Wetzler is asking Jessup to provide all information and records that would indicate the bar is any more dangerous than any other place with a pouring license. Wetzler is the attorney for Patricia Mention, owner of Jake's Place.

Jessup has asked the McIntosh County Commission to pull the alcoholic beverage license of the establishment following a shooting incident there Jan. 1 that ended with several arrests, including that of Marquis Anderson, 22, of Brunswick. Anderson was charged with aggravated assault on a police officer, possession of a firearm by a felon, possession of a firearm at a public gathering, possession of a firearm by a felon in the commission of a crime, carrying a pistol without a license, pointing a gun at another, discharging a firearm near a public highway, reckless conduct and interference with government property.

The alcoholic beverage license hearing, which has been postponed twice, is scheduled for Monday.

First wave of Jekyll condos finds buyers

Deal with authority a blessing during time of cutbacks

By ANNA FERGUSON
The Brunswick News

Jekyll Island just received great news: the first wave of condominium units at the newly remodeled Jekyll Oceanfront Resort have sold.

The authority announced Wednesday that three buyers signed leases with the resort property, a deal that totalled more than $855,000 and landed the Jekyll Island Authority a percentage of the profit.

"It was a good day and good news," said Jones Hooks, executive director of the authority. "This is the first time the authority has participated in and made profits when condos where sold here. It was a big day."

The timing of the sales could not have been better.

In recent months, the authority has tightened budgets as it struggles to generate revenues in the face of a shaky economy and slow visitation rates.

So much so that in December, a wave of layoffs cut 13 full-time positions and 35 part-time jobs.

In addition, 20 full-time and five part-time employees saw their hours reduced.

"Especially in this economy, to know that these units sold so quickly, it is definitely a boost of confidence," Hooks said.

Through the sale of the units, the authority earned $16,163, or 2 percent of the profit. That won't be the end of the authority's money-making, either.

Under every lease agreement signed for vacation housing units at this resort and all other condos built on the island, the authority will make a similar profit, Hooks said.

The new lease structure assures that the authority will participates in the profit of sales, with both ground base rents and in a percentage of sale profits.

In general, the participation agreements allow for 1 to 2 percent of profits to be acquired by the authority, Hooks said.

Funds received by the authority through condo sales, including Jekyll Oceanfront Resort and any other condo unit lease, are projected to steadily increase in coming years, hitting upwards of $5 million by 2023.

Prior to the new lease structures, the authority did not receive any money from unit sales, Hooks said.

The condo sales in Oceanfront are part of a two-phase project. The second part of the plan is to remodel the 180-unit condo hotel portion of the property, which should move forward at a more rapid pace now that the units have begun to sell, Hooks said.

Two of the buyers sweeping up the first three units were from Georgia. Another was from Maine, which, Hooks said, points to the widespread reputation of Jekyll Island as a vacation destination.

"Here in Georgia, people have known Jekyll longer and have watched it fall into its current state," Hooks said.

"But we are changing that and people across the country are recognizing our efforts. Now we just need to reach our own neighbors and get them, back here, too."

Remodeling of the Oceanfront Resort, which included both surface and structural renovations, began in spring 2008 and was completed by mid-autumn.

When an open house was held in November to show the vacation homes, the event was packed with possible buyers, said Eric Garvey, marketing director for the island.

The first three leases were originally scheduled to be signed by the end of last year, but legal issues about documentations kept the deal from being penned until this week, Garvey said.

The remaining 99 units to be sold should go quickly, Hook said, adding that already, 35 potential buyers have been in talks to sign leases.

"People are eager to get back on Jekyll Island," said Garvey. "This is a real positive jolt to our revitalization efforts. Projects are getting done, and quickly."

Nonprofits weathering times

Despite generosity of many, economy has slowed giving

By ANNA FERGUSON
The Brunswick News

As February reaches its end, nonprofit organizations find themselves wondering about the future.

The 2009 Live United fundraising campaign is set to wrap in the middle of March, but so far, only 83 percent of the goal has been reached.

This year's campaign had hoped to raise $1.55 million, but from where the drive now stands, that appears to be a higher goal than the organization can or will attain, said Missy Lane-Neu, president and chief executive officer of the United Way of Coastal Georgia.

When the final numbers are tallied and all contributions have rolled in, Neu expects to see upwards of 85 to 90 percent of the goal, a decent amount in a rocky economic time, but still a slight disappointment, she said.

It's not that folks aren't donating to the 2009 drive, because they are, Neu said. Although donations have been steady through the 10-month campaign, the amount of funding being donated has lowered with individuals and companies having less money to spare.

"The people we usually depend on for the larger donations, they just don't have as much to give," Neu said. "Everyone is feeling the pinch of a slow economy. People give what they can, but they just can't give as much right now. We understand that and we appreciate all the support we have gotten."

There has been a silver lining to the dark economic clouds. A new batch of donors made up of both businesses and individuals has come on board for the 2009 campaign, Neu said.

Again, the trend of smaller donations has been felt with these new donors, but nonetheless, the fresh cache of future supporters has grown this year and may help in campaigns down the road, Neu said.

"That is good news," she said. "The community has responded to the needs of these agencies. They understand the need we have for such quality services to be available."

For Regina Martin, the support offered through the Live United campaign is paramount to her ability to serve the community. As executive director for the Golden Isles Children's Advocacy Center, Martin uses the donations from United Way to fund therapy programs for children who have been victims of sexual assault and other violent crimes.

Without the bump in budgets from United Way, the center may be forced to reduce its caseload, Martin said.

Martin and her fellow United Way partner agencies are making plans on how to adjust their budgets without the high level of support typically felt from the campaign. That has proven to be a tricky task, Martin admits.

"It would be detrimental if we didn't have all our support from the United Way," Martin said. "It would not only hurt our agency, it would hurt the children we serve and the community as a whole. That's true for us and for all of these agencies."

In the wake of a flagging economy and with fewer funds available, United Way's partner agencies are seeing a rise in the need for their services, said Ellen Murphy, director of the STAR Foundation, which provides job training and life skill classes to the unemployed.

Already this year, with the unemployment rate soaring, Murphy has seen the need for the foundation's services nearly double. When candidates signed on to the most recent eight-week training session, more than 40 applicants registered. The class only has room for 24, Murphy said.

Typically, United Way provides about 9 percent of the foundation's budget. Less funds this year could mean altering the organization's programing, either by adjusting teacher schedules or shrinking class sizes.

In a worse case scenario, Murphy said the agency may even be forced to cut out classes all together.

"Our needs are up and our funding is down. It is, honestly, a little overwhelming," Murphy said.

"Whatever happens, it will be hard, that's for sure. But I think right now, everyone is just doing the best they can."

Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

STAR Foundation director Ellen Murphy leads a class at the Foundation building on Gloucester Street. In partnership with the United Way, STAR provides job training and life skill classes to the unemployed.

To help

To donate, call United Way of Coastal Georgia at 265-1850.

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Battery charges filed

Among reports filed with Brunswick and Glynn County police:

Problem with persons

• **100 block of Airport Road, Glynn County**: Complainant reported her boyfriend hit her in the face Feb. 18. The responding officer noticed a red mark on the complainant's face to corroborate her account of what happened. When the responding officer spoke with the alleged offender he said he was at the scene but did not hit the complainant. The man was arrested and charged with simple battery.

• **Hopkins Homes, Brunswick**: Complainant said her boyfriend beat her up Sunday. The officer observed her eye was swollen and she had a bruise on her shoulder. He explained the complainant that it was her responsibility to secure a warrant for the alleged offender's arrest because the incident had already been reported.

• **100 block of Autumn Ridge Court, Glynn County**: Complainant reported her boyfriend made physical contact with her Saturday. She said he had been drinking and then wanted to go fishing. She hid his keys because he was drunk and did not need to be driving. The alleged offender then grew angry, grabbed the complainant and pulled off her bra. The responding officer placed the man under arrest for simple battery.

Assaults

• **100 block of Glenn Eagles, Glynn County**: Complainant reported she had been assaulted by two of her friends Friday. She said one of them hit her in the back of the head with a wine bottle and then both friends left. The officer asked the two alleged offenders for their side of the story, which did not jibe with the victim's. No arrests were made.

• **400 block of Butler Drive, Glynn County**: Complainant reported her employer pushed her in the chest several times, Saturday. The officer spoke with the alleged offender and got his side of the story. He told the officer he told the complainant to leave the premises and pushed her. He said she attempted to call 911 but he told her she did not need to call the police. The officer placed the man under arrest for simple battery.

Thefts

• **Nimitz Drive, Glynn County**: Complainant reported she saw someone enter her neighbor's laundry room and steal a stereo Thursday. She said she told the male to put the stereo back, which he did before leaving. The officer made contact with the alleged offender and the owner of the residence issued the offender a criminal trespass warning.

• **100 block of Airport Road, Glynn County**: Complainant reported someone stole an awning from his front porch Feb. 18. He said he was going to deliver the awning to someone but it had been stolen. The value of the awning was $5,000.

– Nick Nichols
The Brunswick News

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