

The Brunswick News



FAST NEWS

Man reports theft of four-wheeler

A Brunswick man reported the theft of a four-wheeler Thursday from the front yard of his residence in the 160 block of Cherry Lane, Glynn County.

A witness told police that he saw a heavy set male suspect start the four wheeler and ride it away, followed by a truck.

The vehicle was valued at \$4,500, according to a Glynn County police report released Monday.

Golf cart snatched from residence

A Brunswick woman reported the theft of a golf cart Friday from her residence in the 110 block of Regal Road, Glynn County.

The complainant told police that the golf cart was parked in her driveway when it was taken.

It was valued at \$7,000, according to the police report.

Alleged shoplifter taken into custody

A Brunswick man was arrested Saturday for shoplifting an expensive remote control car from S&S Hobbies, at 710 Mall Blvd.

The suspect was caught and arrested after he was identified by witnesses.

The toy was valued at \$630, according to the police report.

Rep. Williams to address Democrats

State Rep. Al Williams, D-Midway, whose district used to include much of Brunswick, will address the Glynn County Democratic Party Saturday.

Williams will speak to the group at 9 a.m. at Ryan's Family Steakhouse on the corner of Scranton Road and Ga. Spur 25.

CORRECTIONS

The News does not like to make mistakes, but if we do, we will correct factual errors in space in this column.

NEXT in The News

In Wednesday's edition, **Local** covers the opening of a murder trial and **Sports** has an advance on the Ryder Cup golf tournament that begins on Friday.



Michael Hall/The Brunswick News

Rhonda Wells obtained important employment skills from the STAR Foundation, becoming proficient in computer programs such as Microsoft Word and Excel.

STAR foundation provides crucial life skills

By ANDREW SMITH
The Brunswick News

HELPINGHands

A continuing look at United Way agencies in Brunswick and the Golden Isles.

Four years ago, Rhonda Wells was 22 and living in government housing trying to support her son and sister by working at a day care center.

While she had always been good with numbers in high school, Wells lacked the basic computer skills commonly required for many entry-level positions. Wanting to give her family a better life, Wells enrolled in the Southern Technological Advocacy Resources Foundation, which was offered free to residents of public housing.

Started as a partnership with the Brunswick Housing Authority, the STAR Foundation trains low-income individuals in computer literacy and life skills for professional and personal growth.

It also is a United Way agency. Skills acquired allow program graduates to maintain higher paying jobs, lessening their need for government assistance and providing the community with a higher quality workforce.

"I wanted to change jobs but needed the skills to take that next step," Wells said. "I was excited to learn and to be able to apply for the jobs that I wanted."

Wells quickly learned the desired job skills, becoming proficient in computer programs such as Microsoft Word and Ex-

cel. Interviewing techniques and customer service were other job skills she picked up.

Even before the eight-week course was over, Wells began working at Gateway Behavioral Health Services and now is billing specialist at Morningstar Treatment Services in Brunswick.

"I was able to take my family from a negative environment and put them in a positive one," said Wells, now 26. "I'm now in a place where I can put my son and sister in tutoring and extracurricular activities."

Wells is just one of the more than 800 women who have benefited from STAR since its inception in 1997.

According to Reida Davis, a former student and now an employee of the STAR Foundation, the program is more than computer literacy.

"This is such an enriching class because it teaches you what it takes to be successful," Davis said. "As my confidence level increased I learned the vocabulary I needed to tell a potential employer how beneficial I would be to that company."

Ellen Murphy, executive director

About the agency

The STAR Foundation, Inc. is headquartered at 1907 Gloucester St. and can be reached at 554-0540 or at www.starfoundation.org

- Staff includes three full-time workers and 20 volunteers.

- Eight-week sessions limited to 24 students.

- An average of 70 students graduate from the program each year.

- STAR is now in its 12th year.

- Provides services in computer literacy, life skills, job readiness and money management.

United Way of Coastal Georgia is conducting its 2009 fund drive. Donations may be made online at www.unitedwayofcoastal-georgia.org.

of the STAR Foundation, said the program also focuses on money management.

STAR uses theoretical currency to teach students how to pay for rent, child care, groceries and even balance a checkbook.

"It's not just about getting a job. It's about keeping a job and having more financially stable families in our community," Murphy said. "We want to produce goal-oriented and self-sufficient individuals."

Atlanta selects site for civil rights museum

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — After two years of planning and fundraising, officials announced on Monday the city's proposed \$125 million civil and human rights museum will be built in downtown Atlanta's prime tourist zone.

The Center for Civil and Human Rights will be located between The New World of Coca-Cola and the Georgia Aquarium. The announcement was made by Doug Shipman, the center's executive director, with Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin at the site.

Coke donated the \$10 million, 2.5-acre parcel near Centennial Olympic Park to the museum in October 2006.

The site was chosen over a location closer to The

Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change — located a few miles away in the same neighborhood as the King's birthplace, the church where he preached and the tomb where he and his wife, Coretta, are buried. Martin Luther King III and Bernice King previously argued that the project should be located in the historic neighborhood.

On Monday, The King Center's chief executive officer, Isaac Newton Farris Jr., called the decision a good one.

"The King Center looks forward to doing everything we can to help ensure that it will be successfully completed," Farris said.

The new museum is scheduled to break ground next year and will showcase the city and state's contributions to human rights efforts around the world.

Former agency director pleads guilty to crimes

Judge sentences Gail Hutchinson to 8 years in prison for stealing from Connie Smith Rape Crisis Center

The Brunswick News

The former executive director of a non-profit agency that helped rape victims in Glynn County pleaded guilty Monday to using its checking account for herself and to pay her own bills.

Gail Hutchinson admitted to Judge Stephen Scarlett in Glynn County Superior Court that she had written checks to herself from the Rape Crisis Center, used center money to pay personal loans and improperly allowed the use of a center credit card, said Donna Sims, special assistant district attorney of the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia.

Scarlett immediately sentenced Hutchinson to eight years in prison, which can be served on probation as a first offender, if she spends three to four months in a probation detention center in the state, makes restitution of \$10,000 to the Connie Smith Rape Crisis Center, the successor to the center where she worked, and performs 80 hours of community service.

Scarlett ordered her to surrender at 5 p.m. Tuesday for assignment to a probation detention center somewhere in Georgia.

Hutchinson pleaded guilty to six counts of forgery, one count of theft by conversion involving the use of a credit card and one count of making a false statement, Sims said. Hutchinson had been indicted Jan. 16, 2008, on 16 counts.

Sims and another prosecutor were brought in to handle the case because District Attorney Stephen Kelley of the Brunswick Judicial Circuit was a member of the former Rape Crisis Center board of directors when the thefts occurred. Other board

members were representatives of the Glynn County Sheriff's Department, Glynn County Police Department and Brunswick Police Department.

The board fired Hutchinson as director in October 2005, after allegations of financial irregularities arose, and closed the center.

Hutchinson had wanted to enter a plea agreement Aug. 15 without acknowledging guilt, in hopes of being sentenced to probation and being ordered make restitution. Scarlett refused to allow it and ordered her to go to trial Monday, at which time she pleaded guilty.

In her plea she acknowledged signing Rape Crisis Center checks to herself after an employee who was supposed to countersign with her had left the agency, Sims said. She also admitted to using center money to make personal loan payments and to pay a dental bill, Sims said.

The financial irregularities at the center came to light in September 2005 when a Glynn County police officer on a routine check of pawn shops became suspicious about expensive tools in their original packaging at one. That investigation concluded that the tools had been purchased with the agency's Home Depot credit card.

Investigators later alleged that Hutchinson had given the card to three persons not associated with the center to purchase items that were not intended for the center.

The three — Julie King, then 46, Rose Rouse, 55, and Willie Gibbs, 50, all of Brunswick — were indicted in 2006 on five counts of financial transaction fraud. They allegedly used the center's Home Depot charge card to purchase \$4,900 worth of power tools, which they then pawned at Southern Pawn.



Thanks to all who are already involved in Glynn County's Partners in Education program. Although partnerships have been established for all schools and several systemwide programs, many schools have more than one partner and opportunities for involvement continue. Individuals as well as businesses and governmental agencies are encouraged to become involved.

For more information about the Partners in Education program, please call Paul McKenzie, 267-4100 ext.1141

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