

Rabun County Alliance

formerly West Rabun Property Owners ~ Est. 2001



Summer 2020 Newsletter

“Seeking Leadership and Accountability in Government”

RABUN COUNTY FIRE SERVICES PLACES LADDER TRUCK IN SERVICE

Rabun County Fire Services is proud to announce that it has placed the county’s first aerial apparatus in service on May 14, 2020. The 2001 E-One 75-foot apparatus has already responded to several calls. The truck has a pump rated at 2000 gallons per minute and carries 500 gallons of water. It carries a complement of over 100 feet of ground ladders as well as vehicle extrication tools. The monitor on the ladder can flow in excess of 1000 gallons per minute.

Ladder 1 will respond on all commercial fires and fire alarms, residential fires in which the aerial’s reach and waterflow can be utilized, motor vehicle collisions on the highway, as well as any special incidents where the aerial or rescue tools might be needed. The truck is housed at Fire Station #1 in Clayton, but will respond county wide. We are proud to be able to add this much needed piece of equipment to our fleet and are appreciative of our Board of Commissioners and County Manager Darrin Giles for making the safety of the citizens and visitors of Rabun County a priority. *–Justin Upchurch*

FORWARD RABUN FORGES AHEAD DESPITE COVID-19

Forward Rabun is forging ahead and making great organizational strides despite present challenges associated with the COVID-19 virus. Forward Rabun’s participating entities, the Development Authority of Rabun County, the Rabun County Chamber of Commerce, Keep Rabun Beautiful, and the office of marketing and tourism, have all now successfully co-located to their new offices in the Rabun County Welcome Center, at the intersection of US Highway

441 South and Seed Tick Road, just south of Clayton. And, although COVID-19 restrictions have prevented the center from officially opening, all parties now inhabit the building and are working together collectively, while carefully observing public health protocols and social distancing. And, the arrangement couldn’t be better!

The co-location of these entities under the Forward Rabun organizational “umbrella” includes Rabun County’s Director of Development, Rick Story, Rabun County Chamber of Commerce President and Business Development Coordinator, Juanita Shope, Tourism and Marketing Director, Carol (CJ) Thompson, and Welcome Center Manager, Linda Scofield. This collective team is part of an overall effort to consolidate the county’s economic development entities both physically and administratively, to give taxpayers the best results for each tax dollar spent. And, the newly assembled team has already been hard at work.

Even with the restrictions and drawbacks associated with the COVID-19 virus, the team is offering drive-up service. Those requesting information are welcome to visit the new center, park in designated spaces, and call in for service. Staff members or volunteers will graciously respond curbside with requested information. Instructional signs for this process have been provided on-sight to welcome visitors.

In addition to navigating the challenges of COVID-19, the staff of Forward Rabun has also been hard at work finalizing its bylaws and structure. The cities of Sky Valley, Dillard and Clayton have all agreed to partner with the county in hotel/motel tax dollar-sharing through Forward Rabun. A new Board of Directors will soon be formed, and representatives from each of Rabun’s cities, the school

COMMUNITY CALENDAR: Visit the Chamber of Commerce at gamountains.com for Rabun County events.

Visit georgiapowerlakes.com for helpful lake information from Georgia Power.

Visit lakerabun.org, lbca.net, and seedlake.org for the various Association events.

Men’s Christian Fellowship meets every Friday, 7:45–9:00am (706-782-7425 for more info).

Visit rabuncountyalliance.com for items of importance you may hear or wonder about between newsletters.

**ALLIANCE
LEADERSHIP**

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system, the chamber of commerce, local business and industry and county government will be invited to participate. Rabun commissioners voted Tuesday night to approve their five board representatives who are, Brent Edwards, Robert Pittman, Dr. Stephen Arbitter, Pam Thompson and Greg James.

The diverse make-up of the new board will ensure that economic development activities are guided by both public officials and private-sector stakeholders. Forward Rabun hopes to be a powerful tool capable of many things. But perhaps Forward Rabun's greatest offering will be found in its ability to bring people together.

By mere design, Forward Rabun will facilitate conversation. And, by its very nature, Forward Rabun's board meetings and community groups will offer representatives from each of Rabun's cities the chance to sit down with county officials and local community partners to discuss issues of importance. A shared dialogue around a common table will certainly present itself as a potential venue for collectively solving problems.

An official grand opening of the new welcome center and kick-off meeting for Forward Rabun was tentatively planned for May 15th, but COVID-19 restrictions prohibited these events from going forward. The Forward Rabun board plans to begin meeting virtually if necessary, and a new target date for the welcome center grand opening is anticipated to be later this fall if restrictions are lifted. *—Rick Story*

RAISING THE ROOF FOR ALLISON AND DANIEL

Allison, a native of Rabun County and a graduate of Rabun County High School, was diagnosed with a brain cyst when she was 17. This led to numerous surgeries over the next six years, and in the end, she was left in a wheelchair. She was tenacious—between all those surgeries, she graduated from college with a business degree. Her generous and warmhearted family helped spur her on the entire way. While her life was not exactly how she or her parents had planned, she was determined to face her future with a cheerful disposition. She met Daniel online, and they made plans to marry. Like many young couples, one of their dreams is to live and own their home.

Finding affordable American with Disabilities Act (ADA) homes is not an easy task in Rabun County. The couple had already purchased land for a home, but the costs of building such a specialized home proved to be out of reach. Between her part-time job and medical needs and his job at the Sheriff's Department, they couldn't swing it. But Habitat Rabun could help make it happen. Allison and Daniel applied and were accepted as the 2020 homeowner recipients. Their land was cleared at the beginning of 2020. Then, COVID hit and building stopped for a few months, but their hopes and dreams remained.

"Like so many, COVID has drastically impacted our funding at Habitat Rabun. Normally, we count on the proceeds from our ReStore to pay for one-quarter of each Habitat home. This year, ReStore has been closed for four months! Also, ADA homes cost about 30 percent more," explained Habitat President Pat Stueck. "Habitat believes in homes and communities. More than ever, we need our community to join us any way they can to ensure this home is built."

Event Chair Barbara Anderson said, "We have moved our annual fundraiser, Raise the Roof, from July to September 14, hoping this will help our turnout, be it live or virtual. We need our local community's support as never before to fund Allison and Daniel's ADA home. And we have many ways people can help! You can buy a raffle ticket, make a monetary donation, work on the home, make an in-kind donation to the home build, bid on one of our weekly auction items, and last but certainly not least, attend Raise the Roof. We want to offer a way for everyone to be involved."

The silent auction for the event is now live and can be viewed at Habitat's website: visit habitatrabun.com and click the button for Raise the Roof, or text RAISEROOF to 41444. You can find something for everyone at the auction! Because Habitat requires "sweat equity" of all its homeowners, Allison and Daniel began looking for creative ways to earn some of their hours during the shutdown—you'll see some of Daniel's work during the Live Auction on September 14!

Raffle tickets are on sale now also. You could win a week at North Breakers St. Simon's Island Condo, with an ocean view, two bedrooms, two baths, plus pool and hot tub. Habitat Rabun would like to thank Scott Poss and Poss Realty for their generosity in donating this to Raise the Roof. To buy tickets, visit habitatrabun.com or text BEACHRAFFLE to 41444.

There are still a few event tickets left for the Raise the Roof Gala. These can be purchased on the website also. To learn more about Allison and Daniel's story, visit the Raise the Roof event page found at habitatrabun.com.

"Daniel and I are so thankful for the Habitat selection committee," said Allison. "We are so grateful that they saw our need and trusted us to be partner homeowners. We appreciate the entire Habitat Board and volunteers who are working together to make this happen for us. We are also so grateful to everyone in the community who is helping us with our dream; you have no idea how much this means to us."

RABUN COUNTY ROAD WORK WITH SPLOST FUNDS

Georgia Department of Transportation Report in Road Miles:

Year	County Paved	County Unpaved	County Total	State Roads
2018	227	134	361	63
2005	225	160	380	63

The Rabun County report since 2016 to the present has shown 1.8 miles of roads paved and 32.76 miles of repaved roads. This is a large difference in paving versus repaving roads. We do not know why there is a difference in road miles between the years and the totals are wrong.

The road department is currently widening the 2.43 miles of the gravel part of Wolf Creek Road and finishing repaving 11.8 miles of five roads in the county. The county is scheduled to pave .5 miles of Boykin Road and then will work on the repaving of Dear Hill Road.

If you know of a county road that you think should be paved, check with the county to see when they plan to pave it.

RABUN COUNTY PROPERTY TAXES

Notice of the 2020 Real Assessment was sent on June 10, 2020 to property owners. This is what your tax bill will be this Fall. The county has approved last year's millage and the school board's millage will be the same or a little less. If you are one of the Georgia Power lake lease holders, you received your lease tax assessment in July for 2019 taxes. Your 2020 tax assessment should be the same. The Georgia Power lease lots in Rabun County provide a total of about 25% of the total property taxes paid in the county and pay for about 94% of the Georgia Power tax bill.

RABUN COUNTY RECYCLING

We are doing a good job of recycling. Below are the statistics from the last two months.

- 9 tons of aluminum cans ➤ 106 tons of cardboard
- 119 tons of scrap metal ➤ 10 tons of plastic

All of this saves the costs of the garbage landfill. This is very good but we can do even better and save more tax dollars.

GENERAL PRIMARY RUNOFF ELECTION AUGUST 11, 2020

9th District US Congress

Republican Matt Gurtler and Andrew Clyde
Democratic Devin Dandy and Brooke Siskin

50th District State Senate

Republican Stacey Hall and Bo Hatchett

- Early Voting starts July 20, 2020 thru August 7, 2020 8:30–5:00, Saturday voting will be August 1, 2020 from 9:00–4:00 at the Elections Office at 18 Old Raco High Dr. Suite 105, Clayton GA 30525
- Day of Election is August 11, 2020 7:00 – 7:00 at the Rabun County Civic Center
- Absentee ballot applications are available now. Last day a ballot can be mailed out is August 7, 2020
- Absentee ballots have to be back in the Elections Office no later than 7:00pm on August 11, 2020
- Absentee ballot drop box is located at the Elections Office at 18 Old Raco High Dr. Suite 105, Clayton GA 30525 (the box has 105 on the side of the box)

We will still be practicing Social Distancing and will be asking voters to wear a mask.

CORONAVIRUS IS TAKING ITS TOLL

A snapshot of COVID-19 cases for Georgia State, Rabun County, and surrounding counties. The three-month difference is overwhelming.

	August 1		May 1	
	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
Georgia State	186,352	3,752	27,680	1,174
Rabun	186	3	13	1
Towns	107	1	21	1
Habersham	1,011	48	343	8
Stephens	542	10	87	1
Oconee SC	671	5	25	0
Macon NC	439	2	3	1

REALTY SALES FOR FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 2020

The sale of homes in Rabun County has been very good this year. These sales have reduced the number of homes available for sale in the county. Realtors think the next big happening in real estate in Rabun County will be an increase in the sale of land and lots.

RABUN COUNTY ALLIANCE

The RCA financial report from August 1, 2019 through July 31, 2020 is as follows:

Newsletters & Printing	\$ 1,204.00
Mailing & Postage	1,028.96
Website	343.95
Billing	200.00
Total (12-month spending)	\$ 2,776.91
Balance on hand	\$ 7,220.76

In November, we plan to mail a sample ballot to all households in November that are registered to vote in Rabun County.

SHERIFF'S REPORT

I want to start out in this quarterly newsletter by saying, Thank You Rabun County! This article is going to be a recap and an update on some past fundraising endeavors in our community.

Since being elected as your Sheriff, the Sheriff's Office has made tremendous strides in protecting and serving our community. One way this has been accomplished is by providing our deputies with good, functioning, up-to-date equipment so they will be able to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. We have worked with Commissioners to try a lease purchase plan for vehicles and equipment, obtained a grant to get computers in them, and focused on the training of deputies and detention officers.

Shortly after I assumed office, I noticed that deputies were lacking needed personal protective equipment such as rifle rated ballistic vest, rifle rated ballistic plates, Kevlar helmets, properly functioning patrol rifles and an adequate number of those so every deputy would be supplied. So, a plan was developed to fundraise for this equipment instead of requesting it through the county budgeting process because the cost could be high just because of the equipment we were seeking at the time. This brings me to the reason of this article—to recognize two of our community members who took on the challenge of fundraising in our community to be able to secure this equipment for the Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Tom Madison led the charge in regards to fundraising for the ballistic vests, ballistic plates, and helmets. Mr. Madison was able to raise almost \$108,000.00 for this project named the Shield616 project. Because of the generous support we were able to upgrade the equipment and have a surplus for future hires. The surplus also allowed us to purchase facemasks through Shield616 after the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Mr. Stephen Wright was instrumental in raising funds for deputies' new patrol rifles and accessories to outfit them. Because of Mr. Wright's diligent efforts, he was able to raise just over \$53,000.00 for this area of need. The Sheriff's Office was able to purchase 27 new Colt patrol rifles outfitted with accessories.

I cannot thank these two gentlemen enough for their support and to all the generous donors in our community. Because of their



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*Introducing
Rabun County
Fire Services
newest addition,
“Ladder 1”*

support for the Office of the Sheriff here in Rabun County, I nominated both gentlemen for the state-wide Meritorious Award through the Georgia Sheriff's Association. On July 29, I was able to present Mr. Tom Madison and Mr. Stephen Wright with the Meritorious Award at the Georgia Sheriff's Association Summer Conference at Lake Lanier Islands. Congratulations to you both and thank you for supporting myself, the deputies, the Rabun County Sheriff's Office and the Office of the Sheriff!

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the Sheriff's Office for future needs you can do so by contacting the North Georgia Community Foundation and request your donation go to the Friends of the Rabun County Sheriff's Office Account. Donations can also be made by visiting their website, www.ngcf.org. –*Sheriff Chad Nichols*

LAKEBURTONCENTENNIALCELEBRATIONS

Lake Burton is closing out the celebration of its 100th year anniversary this summer, with only a couple of exciting events remaining. Also, if you haven't yet, be sure to order a copy of *Our Sothern Eden*, Mike Maffett's new, luxurious look at the history of Lake Burton.

AUGUST

Centennial Plaque Dedication: Saturday, August 22, 10am
Place–Lake Burton Park

SEPTEMBER

Closing Fireworks Show: Labor Day Weekend, 9:30pm
Place–North end of lake, bridge on US 76

Our Southern Eden By Mike Maffett

The unique story of Lake Burton told within a beautiful, coffee table sized, fabric covered book containing 243 pages of over 339 photos and maps of one of Georgia's remarkable treasures. Each copy is \$80 which includes shipping and handling. Get your copies now with credit card, PayPal or check by visiting LBCA.net (scroll down to "Our Southern Eden Purchase It Today!"). ➤ This book is perfect as a gift for friends and family!

Our Southern Eden

A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF LAKE BURTON
AND THE UPPER TALLEHASSEE BASIN

