

# Summer is time college football recruiting fires up

Sports, 9A



**SAT 2 SUN**  
Your two-day newspaper



# THE BRUNSWICK NEWS

The Voice of the Coast

EST. 1902

Volume 109, Number 240

Save up to **\$153** with coupons inside today including exclusive local offers in **COUPON CLIPPER** on the wrapper of advertising fliers

www.TheBrunswickNews.com

JUNE 18-19, 2011

35¢ or less home delivery • 75¢ newsstand



## DAYBREAK

Your weekend in Brunswick and the Golden Isles

### The Weather

#### Saturday

HIGH

**94**

LOW

**74**



#### Sunday

HIGH

**94**

LOW

**75**



### Weekend heat index will feel like 100-plus

Actual air temperatures Saturday and Sunday won't be too bad (at least by South Georgia summer standards), but the combination of heat and humidity will produce heat indexes both days that will feel as hot as 102. As for rain chances, the key word is "slight." There is a slight chance all weekend, with a 30 percent chance Saturday and 20 percent Sunday and 10 percent Sunday night. **Tides and five-day forecast, 14A**

### Worth doing

#### Festival celebrates Gullah Geechee

The Georgia Sea Islands Festival Saturday and Sunday will be a chance to see how much Gullah Geechee are part of the fabric of the area. There will be singing, basket making, games and food. The festival is from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday at Gascoigne Bluff, on St. Simons Island. The park is at the intersection of Hamilton Road and Arthur J. Moore Drive.

#### Jekyll Island turns back page of history

Jekyll Island is building a history event around the ruins of the Horton House. The event with re-enactors, music and food will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

### Talk about

#### A solution for bogus property values

How could the chief Glynn County property appraiser and the board that oversees him just make up numbers? And is just correcting them a solution? **Editorial, 6A**

### Smoke warning

#### Wildfire smoke can create road hazards

Enough smoke from the Okefenokee fires is drifting into the Golden Isles that motorists at times could encounter fog-like conditions. Drivers should be particularly careful on high-speed roads.

### Inside The News

2 sections/34 pages

**Advice** 2B      **Local** 2-4A  
**Graham** 6A    **Lotteries** 3A  
**Business** 14A **Obituaries** 4A  
**Classified** 8B **Sports** 9-12A  
**Comics** 7B    **State** 3A  
**Crossword** 7B **Sudoku** 7B  
**Editorial** 6A    **Television** 5,6B

# Major wildfire threat spreads

## Flames force residents to flee

By **MICHAEL HALL**  
The Brunswick News

Cheri Griffin has her important belongings packed and ready to go, with her car facing the road – just in case she has to make quick exit and evacuate her Brantley County home.

"This is the first time I have ever had to worry about something like this. What do you take and what do you leave behind?" she asked, with a heavy breath and a concerned look.

Griffin was not alone in her tough decision, as the Race Pond fire that started May 25 near the Ware-Brantley county line, crossed Ga. 121 Thursday night and forced

the evacuation of 50 homes in the community around Randall Crews Road, just 4 miles south of the city of Hoboken.

Griffin was given a voluntary evacuation notice. She packed baby pictures, family items and, most important, her late husband's old wallet.

"You just don't know what is going to happen, people don't need to take that lightly," Griffin said.

Others were not given a choice on whether to flee the advance of the wildfire burning outside the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and north of the larger Honey Prairie fire in the refuge.

Please see **WILDFIRE, 4A**



Michael Hall/The Brunswick News

A South Carolina Forestry Commission firefighter sprays water Friday on a hot spot near Randall Crews Road in Brantley County.



*Why the St. Simons beach is fading as a tourism lure*

## Visitors want other attractions

By **ANNA FERGUSON HALL**  
The Brunswick News

"Excuse me?" Dan Desmond asks a local resident while wandering near the St. Simons Island pier. "Do you know where I buy tickets for the trolley?"

Following a brief exchange of information and a quick handshake, Desmond and his wife Rita walk to the ticket station and wait for the morning tour of the island.

On their first visit to the coastal Georgia shore, the Desmonds were impressed by what they saw. Sure, the tide was high and the beach had been all but swallowed, but they didn't come here hoping for sandy shores.

Having traveled the country in their recreational vehicle for the past 11 years, the Desmonds had their fill of sandy shores and tourist-filled beaches. On their current city hopping route, the pair wanted to go somewhere and experience

something other than shell searching and wave jumping.

"We'd heard really great things about being here, and we figured we'd give it a shot," Dan Desmond said. "We're on our second day, and we've found there is a lot to do. The people are really accommodating and the attractions are unique. It's a nice spot you guys got here."

This is precisely the reaction Scott McQuade hopes to hear from visitors. As executive director of the Golden Isles Visitors and Convention Bureau, McQuade has the job of with attracting tourists and visitors to the area.

Though tagged as a coastal beach community, the region lacks the sprawling white sands found in nearby Florida and the Carolinas. Glynn County's beaches are smaller and, in some areas, practically vanish when high tides flow in.

Please see **TOURISM, 5A**



The Brunswick News/File photos

Scott McQuade, executive director of the Golden Isles Visitors and Convention Bureau

# Child molested at center, suit says

## Allegation arises after judge lifts ban

By **LOUIE BROGDON**  
The Brunswick News

The appointed legal representative for three children allegedly mistreated last year at Safe Harbor Children Center has filed a lawsuit against the shelter at 2215 Gloucester St., including a new allegation that one child says a volunteer molested him.

The lawsuit comes just one month after a juvenile judge restored Safe Harbor Children Center to full operations after he had found evidence of mistreatment and inadequate procedures. All of the alleged mistreatment happened before the leadership of Safe Harbor was changed.

Michael Harry, appointed by Glynn County Probate Court to protect the children's interests, filed a complaint Friday in Glynn County Superior Court demanding monetary damages from the center for alleged negligence in providing inadequate care to the children.

Allegations that one of the children was picked up by his neck by a Safe Harbor employee, who had previously been found guilty of family violence, outside the Boys & Girls Club in Brunswick, along with various other claims of abuse and mistreatment, were brought to light in Glynn County Juvenile Court in September.

Friday's suit against the center for neglected children cites those allegations, but also alleges that one of the children was sexually molested by a volunteer identified in the suit only as a "pastor."

The volunteer allegedly frequently slept in

Please see **SUIT, 4A**

# Turtles return to sea after care on Jekyll

## Crowd gathers to watch release into Atlantic

By **ANNA FERGUSON HALL**  
The Brunswick News

Riding bikes Friday toward the Great Dunes Park beach on Jekyll Island, Skip Davis and Mandy Shy paused, observing the crowd gathered along the seashore.

"What's going on? A religious ceremony?" Davis asked, turning to his wife.

Shy also took a glance in the direction of the ocean, taking in the throngs of onlookers.

"I don't know," she shrugged. "Maybe it's a baptism of sorts."

While not an actual religious ceremony, the event did have very deep meaning for many spectators and participants. It was a turtle release, led by the Georgia Sea Turtle Center.

A large loggerhead turtle named Phantom was the first turtle released to its natural world after being rehabilitated at the center.

A patient at the turtle center for two years, Phantom had been treated for severe injuries to his left eye, upper beak and throat area. Now eating on his own and able to survive in the wild, the large loggerhead is recovered and could be released back to the wild, said Rachel Thomas, a rehabilitation technician at the center.

Please see **TURTLES, 5A**



Nick Nichols/The Brunswick News

Georgia Sea Turtle Center staff members carry Phantom, a loggerhead turtle, to the Atlantic Ocean at Jekyll Island Friday to return him to the wild.



Phantom, with a tracking transmitter on his shell, heads to sea.

Call 265-1104 for convenient home delivery



6 56525 10471 8

# Tourism: Ambiance draws visitors

Continued from 1A

The local tourism team's task is to bring in visitors for reasons other than sandy shores.

"Certainly, the beach and ocean are prime reasons why people come. Our research shows that visitors almost always go to the beach at least once while they are here. But that is not the only reason they come," said McQuade. "They come for the diversity of attractions, the people, the charm of the area. There is a broad range of activities and events to keep a variety of demographics busy. That's why they come."

While visiting a friend who lives on St. Simons Island, Keith and Corie Reins said they have stayed active with a long list of activities provided by their local pal. On it were days' worth of activities and attractions, with no mention of the beach.

On Day 2 of a week-long stay, strolling through the St. Simons Pier Village area, the Athens natives browsed storefronts and drifted toward the pier, taking in the cool morning air and the smell of salt water.

"We've been shopping and eating and just enjoying being here relaxing," Corie Reins said.

"This isn't the kind of place people go looking for a killer beach getaway," added Keith Rein. "We came to relax and enjoy the lack of craziness that we get in our day-to-day lives."

Unwind. Unplug. That's the message Erica England is working to spread from her post on Jekyll Island.

As communications specialist for the Jekyll Island Authority, England is out and about on the island every day, often forgetting about the serene and historic setting in which she works. Away from the office, though, that story changes.

On off days, England can regularly be seen traveling about the island, showing family and friends the valued historic nature of Jekyll. In its storied past, the island has been host to numerous events with world leaders, politicians and key national decision makers. It has been home to millionaires, a prized vacation spot for elected officials and holds the title as "Georgia's Jewel."

"It's so easy to forget about the past and history of this island and all the surrounding islands," England said. "That long list of history is a huge reason people say they come here. It's a great place



Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

At the St. Simons Island Lighthouse Museum store Friday, clerk Karla Strauss, left, hands visitor Craig Brown of Elberton a lighthouse guide while Coastal Georgia Historical Society public relations director Jerri Hager, center, looks on. Store clerk Kathy O'Brien is at the back of the counter.

to just forget about the rest of the world, get back to basics and enjoy an uncomplicated vacation."

Historical ventures are a major reason why so many individuals and families come to explore Georgia's coast, said Jerri Hager, public relations manager for the St. Simons Island Lighthouse and Museum. This summer, staff at the lighthouse and museum are anticipating having more than 30,000 visitors, with tourists coming from across the nation, though mostly from the Southeast, looking to dive into the heritage of the seaside region, Hager said.

"People love all the historical aspects of our area," she said. "There is so much here for people to see and do, to learn and experience."

In 1974, the Brunswick-Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce recognized the ample opportunity it had to cash in on the mystique of its coastal home. That year, it formed the Brunswick-Golden Island Convention and Visitors Bureau as a way to promote and enhance visitation to the isles.

"We saw a great opportunity to capture tourism as a great industry to improve our community," said Woody Woodside, president of the chamber. "We recognized back then how much industry could be generated through tourism, and it has been a successful market."

So successful, in fact, that tourism is the No. 1 industry in the

county, said McQuade, accounting for nearly \$1 billion in revenue every year. Annually, about 2.3 million visitors trek to the Golden Isles, expecting a family-friendly, calm yet entertaining environment, free of rush hour traffic and full of attractive options.

That may be a hard expectation to live up to, but the Golden Isles does it, McQuade said.

Every year, those 2.3 million people are made up of an array of demographics. Families with tiny tots and older adolescents, couples without children, individuals and tour groups encompass the range of visitors who regularly seek the comfort of the Georgia coast, McQuade said.

And every year, those 2.3 million people participate in an multitude of activities. Biking, shopping, golf, historical ventures, lounging with family, eco-tourism, and yes, even beachgoing, are all commonly cited occurrences for tourists, McQuade said.

"We have a broad range of activities for a very broad audience," McQuade said. "We see the weekend warriors from Atlanta, the snowbirds every winter, the tour groups who stay for a day and the leisure travelers who stay for a week. Just as diverse as the people are the activities they participate in. That is a major appeal to our area. There is something for everyone."

Tapping into the range of ac-

tivities and diversity of the tourists has been the new marketing strategy for the convention and visitors bureau. Rather than gearing advertising toward families looking for a beachside getaway, the bureau is now encompassing its assorted menu of activities for its broad range of tourist demographics.

"We're changing our advertising focus to include more golf, more of the heritage tourism, more of the eco-tourism activities," McQuade said. "We want to delve into all we have to offer, and that still does include the beach."

"Unlike some coastal island communities, though, that is not all we have to offer. From our research, we know people are not just coming here for the beach. They come for all we have to give."

This new approach is working, McQuade said. The area is seeing about a 10 percent uptick in visitation, even in a weak economic atmosphere. That, he added, is not just a good sign, it's a wonderful sign.

"Some areas have been fast to recover from a bad economy, while others have not even started to recover," McQuade said. "The fact that our needle is pointing in a positive direction is a great thing. I think our efforts are successful."

"Tourism is a very important industry for our community. We are going in the right direction."

# Turtles: School will track one in ocean

Continued from 1A

Phantom, though, did not appear ready to leave his Jekyll Island home. He swam back toward his handlers several times before finalizing his decision that, yes, he was ready for his wildlife home.

Driving from Hartwell to see the release of Phantom, Sarah LeCroy was thrilled to watch the large shelled-creature return to his habitat. An administrator at Barnes Academy, LeCroy and a group from the private school adopted Phantom as a school-wide project. They will track his paths through the ocean the next few school years from a transmitter attached to his shell.

Seeing his release was a special moment, she said. "It was very important that I be here and, sort of, you know, be here for him and support him," LeCroy said. "We'll be following his growth and movement, and it should be a very special thing for our students and our staff."

Minutes after Phantom was freed to the Atlantic Ocean, four smaller rehabilitated turtles were taken back to their watery homes. With some spectators holding posters of images and encouraging words, staff from the turtle center released Dia, Super Nova, Flash and Leo to cheers and applause of 100-plus onlookers.

The crowds gathered near the ocean line were not a surprise to center volunteer Linda Kirby. At every turtle release she has attended, people came from across the Golden Isles to watch as the recovered reptiles made their ways back home.

"People love to come out and show their support," Kirby said. "This is the typically huge crowd we usually see. It's an experience that, if you don't live here, you don't see often. A once in a lifetime opportunity."

Following the release of the five



Nick Nichols/The Brunswick News

Terry Norton, Georgia Sea Turtle Center director and veterinarian, pours concrete into a reef ball that will contain the remains of Griffin, a loggerhead turtle who had to be euthanized.

recuperated sea turtles, center staff returned to the clinic for another turtle ceremony.

To remember Griffin, a loggerhead who had become an unofficial mascot of the center, but who failed to recover and had to be

euthanized, volunteers and staff poured cement for a large concrete ball to contain Griffin's ashes. The ball will be placed July 11 in the ocean near Miami, as part of an artificial marine reef.

"This is the first long-term pa-

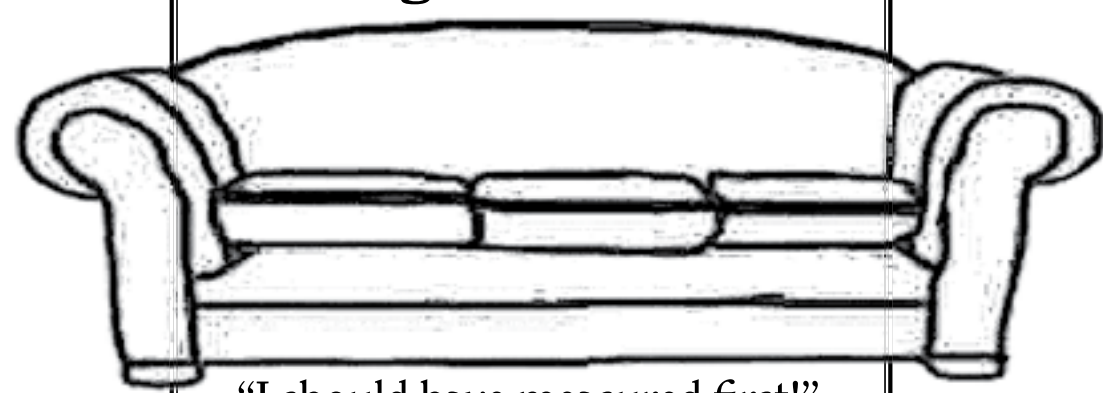
tient we have had who has been put down," said Betsy Coy, center general manager. "He was a loved turtle. We felt, in this instance, it was special, and we needed to remember him in a special way."

Having seen reef memorials, rehabilitation technician Thomas suggested the idea to staff, to much praise.

About six weeks after the reef ball is placed in the ocean, new life should start to attach to it and create a new, living reef, said Georgia Frankel, executive officer of Eternal Reef Ball company, which donated the cement structure to the center.

"I think I'll write, 'Welcome home,'" Thomas said, when asked what she would write on Griffin's memorial ball. "That's where we are sending him, back to his home. By placing him in this reef, he will be encouraging future life and be back into the fold of the ecosystem. It just seems like a great fit."

## Design Mistake #18



"I should have measured first!"

Now on Consignment at the...

Designer Consignor

912-279-2478

1700 GLOUCESTER STREET

Hours  
T-F 10-5  
Sat. 10-4



Tickets Now on Sale  
www.mcgladreyclassic.com  
Official PGA TOUR Event Hosted by Davis Love III  
October 10-16, 2011 • Sea Island Golf Club

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY • HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

**RODNEY HEAD**  
You are the best  
Daddy any two  
girls could ever  
ask for! **WE LOVE  
AND MISS YOU!**  
Dawn and Debbie

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY • HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

**Grand Opening**  
June 24th at 12:00 Noon

Strawberry Shortcake  
Key Lime  
Elvis  
Ray

**Pam Pam Cup Cakes**

1514 Newcastle St • Brunswick, GA • 912-342-7653  
Open 9 AM - 6 PM

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Due to road construction North Altama Avenue will be closed from 6/22 - 8/10 with traffic being directed through a median crossover to South travel lane between Coastal College of Georgia and the Fairgrounds. Southbound Altama Avenue traffic will travel along the shoulder with a lane shift. Please use alternate routes when possible to avoid traffic congestion. Please be advised to use extreme caution and reduced rates of speed for your safety and the safety of others. We apologize for any inconvenience to you during the course of construction.

**THOMAS TILE CO. INC.**  
912-269-9000  
Since 1985

**Ceramic, Marble & Stone Installation**

**Pre-Cast Installation**

**Floors, Patios & Baths**

**Waterproofing Specialists**

**WE HAVE A LOT IN COMMON, WE UNDERSTAND**

Organizing an

**Auto Immune Disease Support Group**

at  
**Longhorn Steakhouse**  
100 Glynn Isles - Brunswick, Ga.  
**10:00 AM - 11:00 AM**  
**Saturday, June 25, 2011**  
bwkautoimmune@gmail.com

**Your Coastal Source for Everything You Need to Print**

**Sea to Sea PRINTING & PUBLISHING**

Reagin Printing and Darien Printing have joined together to become *Sea to Sea!*

Charlie Williamson (Darien Printing) Leroy Reagin (Reagin Printing)

Brochures • Rack Cards • NCR Forms  
Business Cards • Stationery • Booklets  
Books • Catalogues • Business Printing  
Trade Show Displays • Posters  
Point of Purchase Labels/Display  
Yard Signs • Banners  
FREE DELIVERY IN GLYNN & McINTOSH

www.Sea-to-Sea.com  
Call 437-1282 and ask for Charlie or Leroy today.