

Oconee Reflections

Community members clear Harris Shoals Park circa 1990



Editor’s note: The Oconee Enterprise periodically publishes a photo of historical importance. These photos depict people, places or structures in Oconee County that may no longer exist or that represent a vestige of a forgotten era. In November 1990, Steve Brown manned a Bobcat from Oconee Rentals, clearing Harris Shoals Park. Joining him were Watkinsville Mayor Al Giardini, Scott Wyllie, Al Cuming, Bob Ivarie, Joe Thompson, Lawrence Stueck, Bonnie Montgomery and Amrey Harden. [Photo from the Nov. 15, 1990 issue of The Oconee Enterprise]

Looking Back

Forty years ago

Feb. 7, 1985:

- Emergency workers pull a submerged van out of a lake after a single car accident that kills one man.
- State and federal environmental workers begin cleanup of a collapsing building that stores pesticides for cotton farming.
- Two mobile homeowners successfully sue Bogart in petition of zoning ordinances.

Thirty years ago

Feb. 9, 1995:

- Publix will be coming to the corner of Hog Mountain Road and Experiment Station Road.
- Bogart United Methodist’s minister complains to the city council about a neighbor’s illegitimate auto repair business.
- The Board of Education begins reorganizing K-5 programs after

Malcolm Bridge Elementary is built.

Twenty years ago

Feb. 3, 2005:

- The Board of Commission approves rezone applications for Old Farm and Old Farm Estates subdivisions.
- An ice storm topples trees and knocks out power.

Ten years ago

Feb. 5, 2015:

- Watkinsville resident Louise Shearon dies at the age of 101.
- The first cocktail in Oconee County is poured at Cheddar’s Casual Cafe.
- A proposed flyover over Daniells Bridge Road divides the county.
- Oconee resident Kim Lewis donates a kidney to her daughter, Sara Lewis, a junior at Oconee

County High School.

■ Five Points Bottle Cigar Store opens in Oconee.

Five years ago

Feb. 6, 2020:

- Bishop Mayor Johnny Pritchett runs for chair of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners.
- The BOC approves a rezone for a continuing-care retirement facility to be built at the end of the Oconee Connector adjacent to Home Depot.
- Oconee County Middle School Principal Keith Carter is named Georgia Principal of the Year.
- North Oconee High School swimmer Gavin Jones wins the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle at the Clarke-Oconee Area meet and is named Athlete of the Week.

Good News

Prioritize God’s will over our own ambitions

February is an interesting month. It resides in that unique place on the calendar where the newness of another year begins to settle into routine, and the promise of spring prepares to burst forth. By God’s power and design, all things are perpetually being made new (Revelation 21:5).

It is, in fact, the anticipation of this renewal that becomes the seed of our hope. As a verb, the dictionary defines hope as “to wish for a particular event that one considers possible.” As a noun, hope is similar to “confidence.”

Why do we need hope anyway? For starters, life can sometimes seem like an endless parade of presenting woes. Certainly, we don’t deny our less-than-optimal circumstances by using hope as a means to escape from reality.

Rather, clinging to the hope of better days keeps us from throwing in the towel and propels us forward. Plus, our God is a future-facing, forward-thinking God. He tells us to look and perceive the new things He is doing (Isaiah 43:19). In Philippians 3:13-14, the Apostle Paul wrote that he was forgetting what was behind and straining forward towards his prize. We are to look ahead with God.

What is the confident source of your own hope? In your abilities, in your finances, or in our government? However, God has blessed you, remember that the true source of every good and perfect gift is God Himself (James 1:17). In fact, the Scriptures urge us to place our hope in the Lord for the surest possible outcome (Isaiah 49:23).

In your heart of hearts, you may confess that you tried to trust God, but you have lost confidence. You are thinking about a specific prayer that seems to have fallen on deaf ears—the outcome you so desperately desire has not yet been realized. The problem is that often, we pray



Marcia Wilbur
Keeping the Faith

for “my” will be done, asking God to orchestrate life’s outcomes according to our own wishes. We then blame God when things don’t turn out the way we wanted. Little by little, we must come to realize that we are not in control of anything. Only God is.

Our greatest desire must be the accomplishment of God’s will (Matthew 6:10) for any given circumstance. We come to understand His good plans through prayer and the Bible. Proverbs 37:4 tells us to, “Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

That doesn’t mean He will give you every ice cream sundae you pray for. It means that as we seek first His Kingdom and His ways (Matthew 6:33), our hearts will learn to tune into His, and our desires will then align with His best plans for our good and His glory. Have you prioritized God’s will over your own ambitions?

God is closer than our problems, living on the inside of each Christ-follower. He has promised to uphold us with His righteous right Hand (Isaiah 41:10) and to never leave us (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Romans 15:13 tells us, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” There is no joy in worry or despair. God’s plan to upgrade our times of turbulence is to fill us with His very self through His own power. In our own strength, efforts to self-soothe, meditate, escape or control will never result in God’s best plan.

Hope is lost by staring at the problem, the mountain or the impossible situation. The antidote is to keep your eyes on the Lord and receive His love. Tune into His sovereignty and His unlimited power to heal, restore, renew and create new opportunities. He is in the process of restoring all of creation to its intended purpose. His power is not limited by our circumstances.

Reflect on ways that He has already proven Himself faithful. Thank Him for protecting you from harm you never knew about. Identify your own “Red Sea” moments that you can cling to when your confidence and optimism are waning. Give God permission to remind you of His goodness. And remember that your confident hope in God extends beyond the days of your life on earth and into an eternal forever. What great blessings are ours.

So the next time you step in a murky puddle of “life,” do as Zechariah 9:12 commands: “Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope!” God Himself is your fortress, your strong tower. When darkness purposes to overtake you, run and hide yourself in God. Allow Him to hold you captive, to delight over you with loud singing and to calm all your fears (Zephaniah 3:17).

May your word for 2025 be HOPE—not hope in hope for the sake of unfounded optimism, but rather, joyful anticipation of God’s goodness, empowered by the one who loves you best, who is Lord over the impossible and who makes all things new with His unrivaled strength and power.

Don’t lose hope. Don’t give into worry, despair, or anxiety. In Christ, “There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.” (Proverbs 23:18)

Marcia Wilbur is the president of Athens College of Ministry. Opinions expressed are those of the writer.

North High Shoals to improve town park

BY SHWETA KRISHNAN

North High Shoals Mayor Stephen Goad told the town council on Jan. 27 that \$78,000 in leftover American Rescue Plan Act funds was used to purchase equipment and structures for the town park.

The funds were left over from the previous year and needed to be used by Dec. 31, or it would have to be given back, he said.

The purchase includes new saddle swings, two toddler swings, an ADA swing, a hammock-like contraption that kids can sit or stand on and two benches. It also covers improvements to the fence and the enclosure. Lastly, the funds will help with the installation of a new building used to store a rake, subcompact tractor and Bush Hog.

The new equipment will be used as the town reconfigures the park to move the younger kids closer to the building and the older kids on the other side of the treetop. This plan eliminates the winding paths crossing through the park and extends it all with one mulch area.

“We’re going to reconfigure all of the mulch and hopefully be able to reuse everything we have,” council member Eric Wright said.

The tentative delivery date for the equipment is March 3.

“That is subject to change depending on the availability of the installers,” said Town Clerk Sue Bishop.

Wright also indicated that he and the mayor were looking at continuing to improve the park.

“We were looking at the older pressure-treated playset that was out there and looking at the base, and they were starting to get to the point where we should probably replace that at some point,” he said.

Wright reached out to the representative of the company that they have been buying equipment from to get a quote so they can start a campaign to raise money for the park.

“So when people come, we can say, ‘Hey, this is what we want to put here. Give us your feedback. Donate to it, if you want.’” he said.

The vote to reappoint the town accountant, town attorney, building inspector, town historian and town clerk/treasurer were all unanimously approved for the 2025 calendar year. All council members were present at this meeting.

Shweta Krishnan is a Fink Fellow in the Cox Institute’s Journalism Writing Lab at the University of Georgia.

Walking brings huge benefits for low back pain, study finds

Adults with a history of low back pain went nearly twice as long without a recurrence of their back pain if they walked regularly, a world-first study has found.

About 800 million people worldwide suffer from low back pain. It is a leading cause of disability and reduced quality of life. Repeated episodes of low back pain are also very common, with seven in 10 people who recover from an episode going on to have a recurrence within a year.

Current best practice for back pain management and prevention suggests the combination of exercise and education. However, some forms of exercise are not accessible or affordable to many people due to their high cost, complexity, and need for supervision.

A clinical trial by researchers at Macquarie University in Australia has looked at whether walking could be an effective, cost-effective and accessible intervention.

The trial followed 701 adults who had recently recovered from an episode of low back pain, randomly allocating participants to either an individualized walking program and six physiotherapist-guided education sessions over six months, or to a



Dr. Jeff Davenport
Healthy Living

control group.

Researchers followed the participants for between one and three years, depending on when they joined, and the results have now been published in a recent edition of The Lancet. The paper’s senior author, Macquarie University Professor of Physiotherapy, Mark Hancock, says the findings could have a profound impact on how low back pain is managed.

Walking alone not doing it for you? Another proven approach to managing low back pain is hands-on care by highly trained doctors of chiropractic. It’s an efficient, tried-and-true opioid-free approach to low back pain.

Presented as a service to the community by Dr. Jeff

Dr. Jeff Davenport is owner of Davenport Family Chiropractic. Opinions expressed are those of the writer.

PETS OF THE WEEK

Adoptable

at the Oconee County Animal Shelter

 <p>Grace</p>	 <p>Hank</p>	 <p>Hope</p>
 <p>Rosie</p>	 <p>Jinx</p>	 <p>Liz</p>

Looking for families to love them
Thank you for your help.

For more information, please contact The Oconee County Animal Shelter located at 1171 Branch Road, Bishop, Ga. Call them at 706-769-3956, or visit the Web site www.petfinder.com/shelters/GA959.html “Like” us on Facebook at Friends of Oconee County Animal Shelter.

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