



# The Valley Times-News WEST POINT TIMES-NEWS

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THURSDAY

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**MID-YEAR GRADUATES** — Six Chambers County students were very happy to don caps and gowns, march in to “Pomp and Circumstance” and receive a high school diploma from Superintendent Dr. Kelli Hodge Wednesday afternoon. Each student is a mid-year graduate from a Chambers County public school and is getting a head start in the pursuit of a career. “We are proud of them,” said Dr. Hodge. “We are so pleased to do this today.” Shown above, in front from left, are Jessica Faith Henderson, Brianna Dunn and Justice McCoy. In back, l-r, are Alexander Kane Rackow, James Austin Walker and Arron R. Kennerson. Receiving a diploma but not shown is Marquetta Tucker. (Photo by Wayne Clark)

## Chambers BOE honors mid-term HS graduates

By WAYNE CLARK  
Times-News News Editor

LaFAYETTE — On Wednesday afternoon, the Chambers County Board of Education hosted what Superintendent Dr. Kelli Hodge termed a feel-good event at a feel-good time of year.

With friends and family members looking on, six Chambers County students received diplomas in a mid-year graduation ceremony.

To accommodate a larger-than-normal crowd for a board meeting, the ceremony took place inside the Career Technical Center’s multi-purpose room. Dressed in caps and gowns, the students marched in as a group with the recorded sounds of Sir Edward Elgar’s “Pomp and Circumstance” playing.

Director of Secondary Education Dr. Sharon Weldon introduced each graduate-to-be, and Dr. Hodge presented diplomas. (Photo by Wayne Clark)

## Jobless rates decline in Troup and Harris

By THE TIMES-NEWS

ATLANTA — Unemployment declined in Troup and Harris counties in November, with both counties seeing increased employment and jobless rates under five percent.

The unemployment rate in both counties for November was 4.6 percent.

Harris County’s rate fell from October’s 4.8 percent reading. The county’s civilian labor force increased to 15,848 from 15,776 while employment jumped to 15,115 from October’s 15,019. Unemployment in the

county stood at 733 compared to 757 in October

Troup’s civilian labor force went down slightly to 37,796 from October’s 37,834 while employment grew to 36,043 from October’s 35,995. Unemployment in the county declined to 1,753 from 1,839 in October. Troup’s unemployment rate was down from 4.9 percent in October.

The local unemployment rates compared favorably with the state rate of 5.3 percent, which was up a tenth of a point from October’s 5.2 percent reading.

•See UNEMPLOYMENT, page 6

## Bond issue would bring \$12.7 million to county

By THE TIMES-NEWS

LaFAYETTE — The Chambers County Commission voted Monday to support a \$1.2 billion bond issue that the Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA) will seek legislative approval for during the 2017 legislative session.

The proposal — approved at the ACCA Annual Legislative Conference earlier this month — calls for a three-cent-per-gallon increase in the sales tax. (Photo by Wayne Clark)



**ANOTHER ATRIP?** — This stretch of County Road 281 near the Hickory Flats community is a good example of why the Chambers County Commission supports a bond issue that would bring an estimated \$12.7 million in new funds for roads and bridges to Chambers County.



**SANTA AT THE LIBRARY** — On Tuesday, the roof of Bradshaw-Chambers County Library served as a nice landing spot for a reindeer-driven sleigh. It brought a very popular visitor who met with hordes of local children who are all excited about the Christmas season. In a 4:30-6 p.m. program, close to 200 kids had sat on Santa’s knee in the first 30 minutes of the meet and greet and attendance totaled 467. Local professional photographer Steve Mason was there to take photos. Above, eight-year-old Austin Barber and his six-year-old sister, Ava Barber, meet with Santa. Austin and Ava are the children of Andrew and Britany Barber of Valley. (Photo by Wayne Clark)

## LaFayette lifts water restrictions

By DAVID BELL  
Times-News Staff Writer

LaFAYETTE — LaFayette Mayor Barry Moody announced Wednesday that voluntary conservation measures placed on the city’s water customers last month have now been lifted. The announcement came during a rescheduled city council meeting

after Monday’s regular session was canceled due to lack of a quorum.

Two weeks ago, LaFayette water superintendent Jeff Williams told city officials that recent rainfall amounts helped improve the municipal water supply. Additional precipitation since then has been sufficient to bring storage levels back to normal.

“We want to thank everyone who participated in the conservation effort that allowed our water supply to recover from the recent drought,” said Moody.

Chambers was one of 43 Alabama counties under a declared state of emergency following weeks of drought conditions that have caused significant damage. (Photo by David Bell)



**KMMG DONATES TO TOYS FOR TOTS** — Team Members at Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia recently donated more than 1,500 toys to the U.S. Marine Corps League of LaGrange for its Toys for Tots drive. The toys were donated to the U.S. Salvation Army and Empty Stocking Fund for deserving children throughout the county. Above, Bernard Bledsoe, coordinator of the local Toys for Tots program, presents Stu-

art C. Countess, KMMG’s chief administrative officer, a plaque of appreciation for KMMG’s donation. Additional Marine Corps League members and representatives from the U.S. Salvation Army, along with KMMG’s COO Derek Kim, Chris Miller, director of maintenance and team members from production shops and administrative offices are also shown.

### QUICK CHECK



**National Weather Service Local Forecast**  
Today, partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 60s. Tonight, partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 40s. Friday, partly cloudy in the morning then becoming mostly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s. Friday night, mostly cloudy. Lows in the upper 40s. Saturday, warmer. Mostly cloudy in the morning then becoming partly cloudy. Highs around 70. Saturday night, mostly cloudy. Lows in the lower 50s. Christmas Day, partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 70s. Sunday night, mostly cloudy. Lows in the mid 50s. Monday, mostly cloudy. Highs in the lower 70s. Monday night, mostly cloudy.

YESTERDAY’S TEMPERATURE High...65°.....Low...31°.....Today at 8 a.m.....49°  
RAINFALL (measured at West Point Dam)...Yesterday...0.00”...December...2.77”...2016...29.37”  
WEST POINT LAKE LEVEL...Today...628.23.....Yesterday...628.31.....Generation...6-10 a.m.

### Today’s Bible Thought

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”  
Luke 2:10-14

## Briefly Told

*Briefly told items may be emailed to reporter@valleytimes-news.com. Please keep brief. Announcements are published twice a week.*

- The Circle of Care Center for Families** invites couples to “save the date” for an exciting opportunity to participate in an evaluation of relationship education programming. Evening classes will begin Feb. 2, 2017. Couples are eligible to receive payment for completing surveys. For more information, call Brad Thomas at the Circle of Care, (334) 768- 4091. Registration ends Friday, Jan. 13 at 5 p.m. (Funding for this project is provided by the United State Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant: #90FM0082. These services are available to all eligible persons, regardless of race, gender, age, disability or religion.)

- Chambers County Commission** offices will be closed Friday and Monday, Dec. 23 and Dec. 26, for the Christmas holiday.

- Registration is under way for the following multi-week courses at **Bradshaw Library**: “Crochet,” “Line Dancing,” “Vietnam: The War at Home & Abroad,” “American Sign Language,” “Gardening Basics,” “Art Speaks” and “Natural Solutions: Essential Oils 101.” These classes will run from January-March. For more information about how to register for these classes, please call (334) 768-2161 or email [conniebeil-fuss@chamberscountylibrary.org](mailto:conniebeil-fuss@chamberscountylibrary.org).

- The Valley Lions Club** is selling pecan bags for holiday recipes and gift giving. For more information contact any club member or call 334-756-2646.

- Young Adults ages 16-24.** Do you need a GED? A job? Or assistance with enrolling in college? Attend the YES! Project Orientation at the Circle of Care Center for Families Tuesday Nov. 22 from 10-11:30 a.m. to see if you may be eligible for this excellent opportunity. Eligible participants must be 16-24, not attending high school (withdrawn) without a diploma, or low income high school graduate with a qualifying barrier. The YES! Project will improve your chances of getting a job, find a better job, assist with educational needs for receiving a G.E.D. or degree, technical certificate or skill with paid incentives, support services, college scholarships and most of all work ready to maximize employment opportunities and fill the need for a successful workforce. For more information contact Julie, Amanda or Brad at (334) 768-4091 or stop by the Circle of Care Office, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- Historical postcards**, “Textile Heritage of the Chattahoochee Valley: Early Mills in Valley and Lanett,” are now available for sale at the Cobb Archives. Set of 6 postcards, \$10.

- The Interfaith Food Closet**, which has been serving the community for over 30 years, announces new service times starting Aug. 31: Monday 9-12; Tuesday 1-4; Wednesday 9-12, 5:30-6:30; and Thursday 1-4. The IFC requires a driver license and one of the following: a gas bill, an electric bill, a water bill or a rent receipt. The IFC is a ministry of 20-plus churches that assist families with emergency food. Please call if you have questions, 334-756-3443, or if you would like to make a contribution mail your checks to IFC, P.O. 541, Lanett, Ala. 36863. The IFC services over 100 families each month.

- The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Program**, located at 1220 Hogansville Road, Suite 400, LaGrange, provides services to help persons with disabilities obtain and maintain competitive employment. Persons with disabilities in Troup, Heard and Meriwether counties are served. For more information please call 706-298-7270 or call toll-free 844-367-4872.

- Huguley Sobriety Alcoholics Anonymous** group meets every Thursday and Sunday at 7 p.m. at the Chattahoochee Valley Clubhouse, 501 South Fifth Ave., Lanett. Twenty-four-hour help line for those suffering from alcohol addiction, 706-518-9744.

- Alcoholics Anonymous** meets at First United Methodist Church of West Point on Tuesdays beginning at 6 p.m. The open discussion meeting is held in the third floor Serenity Room.

- Bradshaw Library** will host a Fun Friday event on Jan. 13. Beginning at 11:30 a.m., a free lunch will be served followed by a showing of “Selma” (PG-13). Free popcorn and drinks will also be provided. Pre-registration is required. Please call (334) 768-2161 or email [conniebeilfuss@chamberscountylibrary.org](mailto:conniebeilfuss@chamberscountylibrary.org) by Jan. 12 at noon to make your free lunch reservation.

- On Jan. 23, **Bradshaw Library** will host a Lunch N Learn and book-signing featuring author, political columnist and commentator, Steve Flowers, who will discuss his book, “Of Goats & Governors: Six Decades of Colorful Alabama Political Stories.” Pre-registration to attend is required. Please call (334) 768-2161 or email [conniebeilfuss@chamberscountylibrary.org](mailto:conniebeilfuss@chamberscountylibrary.org) by Jan. 20 at noon to make your free lunch reservation.

- Bradshaw Chambers County Library Travelers** has seats available to visit the Springer Opera House in Columbus, Ga., for the production “Of Mice & Men” on Friday, Jan. 27. The cost is \$52 and includes transportation, admission and a catered dinner. The registration deadline is Jan. 24. For more information, call (334) 768-2161 or email [conniebeilfuss@chamberscountylibrary.org](mailto:conniebeilfuss@chamberscountylibrary.org).

- Chambers-Tallapoosa Head Start Program** is taking applications for the 2016-17 program year for children ages 3-4. To enroll a child, income verification, copy of birth certificate, immunization record (blue slip) copy of recent Medicaid card, copy of Social Security card and physical and dental check-up are required. For questions call Head Start Central Office in Dadeville, 256-825-4204; Lanett Head Start, 334-576-5196; LaFayette Head Start, 334-864-2872; or Plainview Head Start, 334-864-9059.

### Georgia Lottery Numbers

**PowerBall Drawing**  
25-33-40-54-68 PB 03  
**Mega Millions Jackpot**  
\$76 million  
**Fantasy 5**  
14-21-24-26-28

**Cash 3 - Yesterday**  
2-5-8 (PM)  
**Cash 4 - Yesterday**  
0-2-2-5 (PM)  
**Jumbo Bucks Lotto**  
03-10-23-30-34-42

## GRADUATES

**Continued from page 1**

sented each one their diploma. “We’re very pleased to be doing this,” Dr. Hodge said. “We are so proud of each one of these students. They have worked hard to accomplish this, and some of them are graduating early.”

The graduates include:

- Brianna Dunn, daughter of Jennifer Core and Joe Dunn. Brianna completed requirements for graduation Aug. 16. She plans to attend Southern Union State Community College and to pursue a career in nursing.

- Jessica Faith Henderson, daughter of Dexter and Penny Henderson. Jessica completed her requirements in May. She is the 2016 recipient of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority’s first-place Miss Academia Award of \$600. She is currently working with the Boys & Girls Club of Alabama.

- Arron R. Henderson, son of Jena Hill. Arron completed his requirements in September.

- Justice McCoy, daughter of Conswella McCoy. Justice completed her requirements Dec. 12. She will begin her college education at Southern Union in January with the goal of transferring to Auburn University in Montgomery (AUM) to earn a degree.

- Alexander Kane Rackow, son of Daniel Rackow and Amanda Tittle. Alexander is currently employed by Pawn City in Lanett. He intends to keep working there until next fall when he will start school at Full Sail University, where he will study game management.

- James Austin Walker, son of James and Kimberly Walker. This coming spring, James plans to study precision machining at Southern Union.

- Marquetta Tucker, daughter of Karen Cham-

bers and the late Michael Tucker, was not present at the ceremony but has earned a diploma. She completed her requirements in September.

“Congratulations to each one of you on a job well done,” said Board President Bill Martin.

“You all have worked so hard, and we’re all so happy for you,” said Valley High counselor Tolandra Harris. “We’ll assist you in applications to college, if you need us to. We have a good group of parents here today showing their support, and we appreciate that.”

Career Technical Center Director Ken Sealy said he was most pleased that the group of graduates included two students who had attended the school district’s virtual school. “They have set a nice bar for others to meet,” he said.

In business at Wednesday’s session, Dr. Hodge told board members that the school district won’t have to do any short-term borrowing this year to meet the pre-Christmas payroll. “That’s good,” she said. In most years, funds are borrowed so school employees can be paid before Christmas. The money is paid back with interest when funds arrive from the state in early January.

The board backed Dr. Hodge’s recommendations to approve three overnight field trips involving sports teams from Valley High and LaFayette High. From Dec. 21-23, the LHS boys basketball team will be in Camden, Ala., participating in a tournament at Wilcox Central High. From Dec. 27-29, they will be in Norman Park, Ga., taking part in a tournament at Colquitt County High. On March 3 and 4, the Valley High girls softball team will be in a tournament at Troy, Ala.

The board unanimously backed Board President Martin’s recommendation that Dr. Hodge’s salary be set at \$125,000 per year for the remainder of her term. Martin and Board Members Judy LaFollette and Mary Terry recently met to discuss a recommendation. They agreed to the base figure plus all state-mandated pay raises that could be approved. Dr. Hodge will also receive 10 vacation days per year.

In her superintendent’s report, Dr. Hodge said that the schools are now closed for the Christmas-New Year’s holiday. The teachers will be back on Tuesday, Jan. 3 and the students on Thursday, Jan. 5.

## 96% of Alabama is still under drought

**The Associated Press**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — New statistics show that 96 percent of Alabama remains in a drought despite increased rainfall.

An update released Thursday by the National Drought Mitigation Center shows that a sliver of southeast Alabama has received enough rain to be completely drought-free. Rainfall is normal in parts of Geneva and Houston counties.

But the rest of the state remains locked in a

drought, including the state’s largest cities of Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile and Montgomery. Conditions are worst in northeastern Alabama.

The federal assessment says 4.6 million people in the state are still affected by the drought.

Parts of the state were more than 15 inches below normal precipitation before rains returned late last month, and state climatologist John Christy says one inch of rain is needed each week just to improve conditions.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

**Continued from page 1**

Unemployment rates in major regional cities included Columbus at 6.5 percent, down from 6.7 percent in October, and LaGrange at 5.2 percent, down from 5.3 percent in October.

Job seekers and employers are encouraged to use the GDOL’s online job listing service, [www.employgeorgia.com](http://www.employgeorgia.com) to search for jobs or recruit new employers. In November, 1,856 new job openings in Columbus were posted on Employ Georgia. Throughout the state, 62,905 new job openings were posted.

To learn more about career opportunities, Employ Georgia and other GDOL services for job seekers and employers, and to connect with us on social media, visit [www.dol.georgia.gov](http://www.dol.georgia.gov).

## Wishing Well®

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 A Y Y S O O B U U H W N L  
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 S E O I W E O T G N A V A  
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 A N U R D T M E E D E S D

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It’s a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

## ROADS

**Continued from page 1**

increase on gasoline and diesel fuel that would expire when the bonds are repaid.

Currently, Chambers County operates with an annual road and bridge budget of approximately \$2.95 million that has to fund all of the county Highway Department’s day to day operations. Should the proposal receive legislative approval, Chambers County’s share of the bond issue would amount to roughly \$12.7 million, with \$4.6 million of that amount based on the county’s population.

“It would cost us about \$23.5 million to improve every road in Chambers County that has reached a poor service level and is in need of resurfacing or reconstruction,” said Josh Harvill, county engineer. “This bond issue would help us complete several critical projects throughout the county in a much quicker timeframe than is currently planned.”

Under the current proposal, 20 percent of the county’s allocation from the bond issue would be divided among the municipalities in Chambers County based on their population.

ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield said that the minimum allocation for each county under the proposal is \$10 million. The revenue from the bonds can be spent only on road and bridge projects. It cannot be spent on salaries, equipment or any construction other than roads and bridges.

“For a person driving about 20,000 miles per year — which is a very high estimate — this increase would cost about \$25 a year. That’s just a few cents over two bucks a month,” said Brasfield.

According to Brasfield, 53 counties were represented at the business session where the plan was initially unveiled, and all attending counties voted in favor of the bond issue.

The Chambers County Commission will begin discussion and plans in January to identify which road and bridge projects would be funded should the legislation pass.

## LaFAYETTE

**Continued from page 1**

not only tapped water reserves but increased the potential for wildfires, prompting a statewide outdoor burn ban. Those restrictions, too, have since been lifted.

In addition, the city council adopted a resolution renewing a franchise agreement with Marcus Cable Associates, LLC, a subsidiary of Charter Communications, to supply cable television service to city residents. The document also includes a pole attachment agreement regarding the use of city owned utility poles for service distribution and sets annual rental fees to be paid on an incremental basis.

From Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2017, Marcus agrees to pay the city \$18 per pole attachment. For calendar year 2018, the fee increases to \$19 per attachment, and for three subsequent years the amount will be \$20 per attachment.

A separate resolution passed by the council sets new pole rental fees for AT&T to distribute telephone service throughout the city. The previous agreement was executed on Aug. 1, 1926, which set the attachment rate at \$5.25 per pole per annum.

Effective Jan. 1, 2017, the fee will be increased to \$16 per pole attachment, the same amount as what is currently being paid by distributors of electricity in the city.

Mayor Moody also announced that the city’s official New Year’s holiday will be observed on Monday, Jan. 2. City Hall and all related departments will be closed on that day and will return to normal operations on Tuesday, Jan. 3.

And, anyone traveling through downtown LaFayette will notice that the streetscape beautification project around the square is well underway. The work will include new decorative sidewalks, lighting and landscaping made possible by a \$500,000 grant from the Alabama Department of Transportation and additional funds provided by the city. The project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2017.