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To:

Date: 12/18/2015 10:31:26 AM

Subject: SC Front Pages – Friday, December 18, 2015

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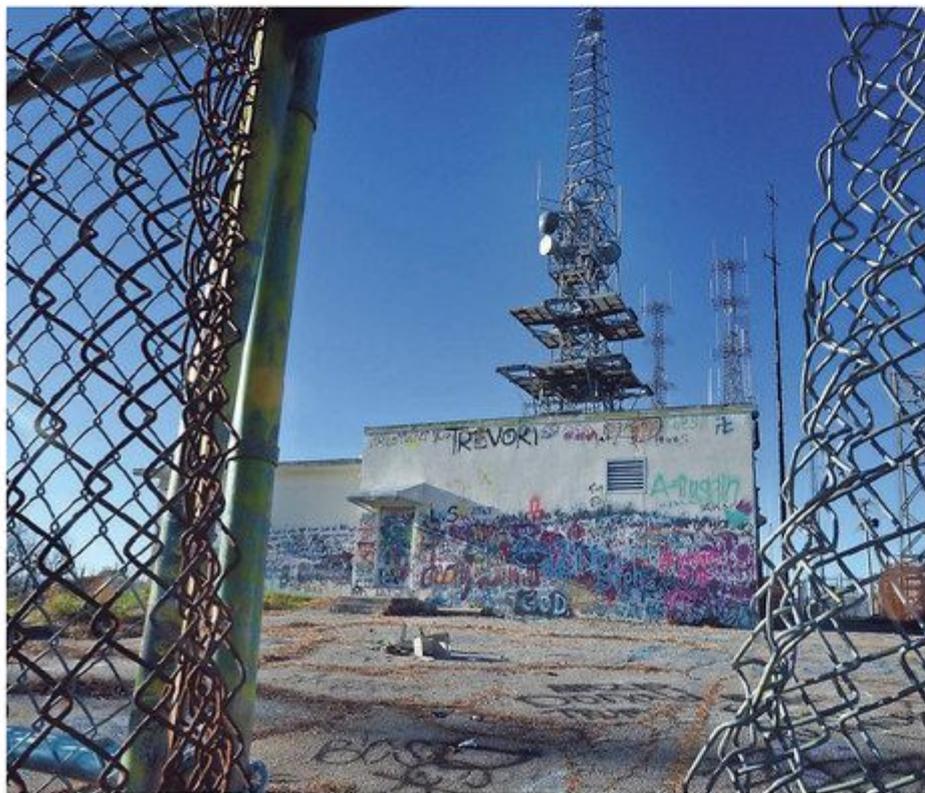
Read the original 1977 reviews of 'Star Wars,' **E-Greenville**

Ways the entire family can celebrate 'Star Wars,' **E-Greenville**

'Force Awakens' director gives tips on watching movie, **E-Greenville**

Upstate fans use 'Star Wars' to give back to community, **Page 3A**

Paris Mt. overlook road set to close



The overlook from Tower Road on top of Paris Mountain is covered with trash and graffiti.

HEIDI HEILERUNN/STAFF

Q: I heard the road to the Paris Mountain overlook spot is going to be gated and closed to the public. Is this true?

Amy in short: Yes. Graffiti, litter and security concerns have led to changes that will bar the driving public from the popular lookout.

A bit more: Known for its grand views of Greenville, Tower Road, the small road that turns off Altamont Road and climbs to the mountaintop where many a radio tower and besotted teenage couple can be found, has in recent years become the target of rampant vandalism.

Graffiti, some of it of a vulgar or offensive nature, covers nearly every reachable surface, including building walls and the road itself. Litter is widespread. Chain link fences are pruned open.

Things came to a head in the last



Amy Clarke Burns

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Q&Amy

year or two when someone armed with spray paint circumvented a fence and concertina wire to deface Greenville County emergency communication facilities located atop Paris Mountain.

"We got tagged, and we got tagged bad," said Rick Blackwell, director of Greenville County E911.

At one point, the county painted South Carolina ETV's transmitter facility, which shares a site with the county equipment, only to have the graffiti back within a week.

"Folks are continuing to climb the fence and come in there," Blackwell said. "It's a security issue for us."

He considered several options for addressing the problem, including perhaps a park.

"Maybe if we made it something where people wanted to go, maybe they'd take better care of it," he said.

That idea would prove unfeasible, and officials explored closing the road to the public.

"I don't like the idea of us taking something away that's been such a hallmark," Blackwell said. "I don't see another way around this thing. Once

See Q&AMY, Page 9A



FILE/STAFF

U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham said money to design and build a courthouse is in bill.

Funding found for courthouse, Graham says

RUDDOLPH BELL
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Money to design and build a new federal courthouse in downtown Greenville has been included in a year-end spending bill that Congress is scheduled to vote on Friday, according to U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham's office.

Graham's office said late Thursday that the bill includes about \$92 million for site design and construction of the long-planned courthouse on what is now a parking lot along East North Street next to the Greenville County Courthouse.

The total cost is expected to be \$103 million and Congress had already appropriated \$11 million, Graham's office said. The two-acre development site was purchased in 2011.

Graham, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, predicted the courthouse would "soon become reality."

"This has been a high priority for community leaders for years, and I'm very pleased it looks like we are now going to get it over the finish line," he said in a statement.

The new courthouse would be 10 stories tall and called the Carroll A. Campbell Jr. Federal Courthouse after the former governor from Greenville.

The building would house the court functions that now take place in the Clement F. Haynesworth Federal Building along East Washington Street.

Graham, who's seeking the Republican nomination for president, said Greenville "long ago outgrew" that "small federal building, forcing many agencies to lease space in areas less convenient for the public and making the court's operations less efficient."

The House and Senate were scheduled to vote Friday on the bill, a \$1.1 trillion measure to finance the federal government, The Associated Press reported.

Greenville Mayor Knox White said it has been about a decade since Congress first recognized the need for a new courthouse, "so we are glad the funding is finally in place. We appreciate Sen. Graham's persistence in moving this project forward. He has been a great partner with the city of Greenville."

2 Chefs leaving Poinsett for Main + Stone

The Post and Courier

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Friday, December 18, 2015

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Deal could save Mt. Holly smelter

CEO seeking to operate plant at 50 percent capacity while lawmakers work on solution

BY DAVID WREN
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Century Aluminum is close to striking a deal that would keep its Mount Holly smelter open while state lawmakers find a way during the upcoming legislative session to let the company,

and other large industrial customers, buy electricity on the open market.

Mike Bless, Century's president and CEO, told The Post and Courier on Thursday that he is negotiating with Mount Holly's suppliers to reduce costs so the smelter could operate at 50 percent capacity during the first

six months of 2016. That would give the state Legislature time to pass a law protecting Mount Holly and other industries from rising power prices.

Mount Holly still would lose money during the first half of next year, Bless said, because it would be operating under an extension of its existing contract with Moncks Corner-based utility Santee Cooper — with electric prices that are roughly double what Century can get on the open market. Bless said the company might be

willing to "work our way through that loss" if a legislative solution is on the horizon.

"The question is how low can we get that loss," Bless said of his negotiations with suppliers. "We're pulling every lever we can."

Mount Holly started shutting down one of the plant's two pot lines — the power-hungry furnaces where aluminum is made — and will lay off hundreds of workers next week. The second pot line is scheduled to close

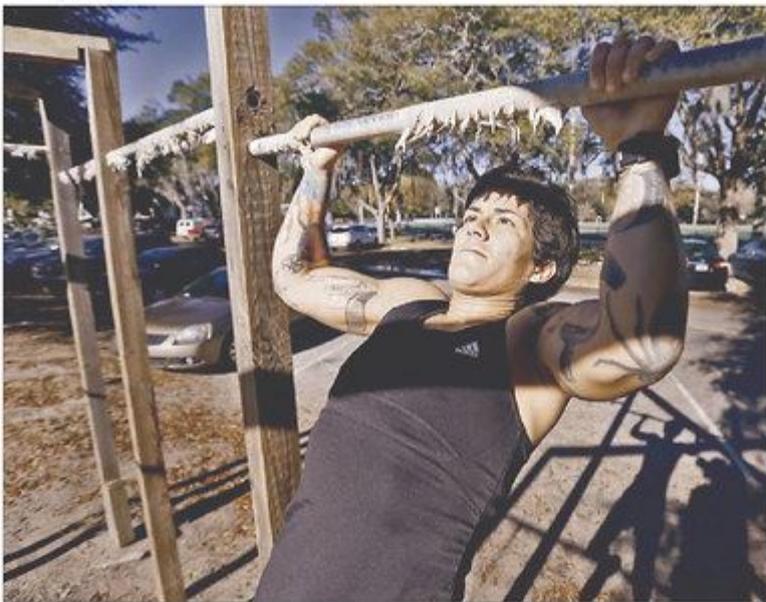
beginning Dec. 26 if Century can't shave enough costs to make temporary operation under Santee Cooper's rates feasible.

State Sen. Paul Campbell, R-Goose Creek, said he and other legislators are working to keep the plant operating at 50 percent capacity for the short term with plans to eventually bring Mount Holly back to full capacity later in 2016.

Please see CENTURY, Page A5

Women in combat: Move sparks debate

Many say defense chief's order long overdue; others disapprove



Allise Berry, an Army veteran who served in Iraq as an interrogator, will graduate from The Citadel in May and wants to move into combat now that the military has opened that option to women.

BY PRENTISS EINDLAY
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Allise Berry wants to be a battlefield soldier but as a woman has been denied the chance.

Now, though, that is changing as the military moves to implement the directive of Defense Secretary

Ash Carter to open all combat jobs to women.

Berry, 32, a Manchester, N.H., native, is an active-duty senior attending The Citadel under a military contract. She will be commissioned as an Army lieutenant when she graduates in May. She feels that combat fits her personality.

"I think that's just what I would be good at. I like being out there and doing things. If it's dangerous that's better," she said.

Carter last week announced that women could apply for front-line battle jobs.

Please see COMBAT, Page A5

PC Poll
Should the U.S. armed forces open all combat positions to women? Go to postandcourier.com/polls to vote.

Syrian refugees settling in S.C.

Haley, who fought federal program, airs her concerns

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN
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COLUMBIA — A middle-age Syrian couple has been settled in South Carolina, despite Gov. Nikki Haley's request that the federal government hold off re-

locating refugees who could be a security risk in the Palmetto State. A second family of 11 adults and children, which started the process before the terror attacks in Paris and California that brought calls from Republican presidential candidates to bar Muslim refugees from the United States, is expected to arrive in South Carolina soon, according to the organization helping relocate the refugees.

Please see SYRIANS, Page A6

Berkeley rejects curbs on shooting

Sounds of target practice prompted lockdown of 3 schools

BY BRENDA RINDGE
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MONCK'S CORNER — After Sangre Elementary School and two other nearby schools were put on lockdown because a neighbor was taking target practice, a Berkeley County councilman wanted to make sure it never happened again.

"We cannot regulate common sense, but we can try to make them think the next time that they want to shoot targets behind their house where there are 6-year-olds 20 feet away," said Councilman Tommy Neswell of the Oct. 8 incident.

Neswell proposed an ordinance that would have banned shooting firearms within 250 yards of schools, houses, playgrounds, parks and day cares in unincorporated parts of the Berkeley County, but couldn't get enough support to pass the measure.

Please see FIREARMS, Page A6

Inside NATION

Defense secretary admits to improperly using his personal email account. A8

Buyer of guns used in Calif. massacre charged with terrorism count. A10

SPORTS

Trevor Gillies to make season debut with Stingrays. C1

Manatee in trouble needs helping hand

Boaters on Cooper asked to help look for second sea cow

BY BO PETERSEN
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A huge, emaciated manatee has been rescued in the Cooper River and searchers are keeping an eye out for a second one, with the water too cold for it to linger. Boaters have been asked to help.

The first manatee, weighing more than 1,300 pounds, was captured below the Williams Power Station in Bushy Park. It was showing signs of cold stress, said Jennifer Koches, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It and a smaller manatee were spotted in the plant's warmer water outflow.

SCUBA crews are watching the outflow for signs of the second animal, and signs have been posted on boat landings on the river, said veterinarian Al Segars, of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources. People who spot the creature are asked to call 1-843-953-9360 or 1-800-922-

5433, or report the sighting at www.dnr.sc.gov/manatee/sight.htm.

"The more people who are out there looking, the better," Segars said.

Manatees can't survive for very long in water temperatures lower than 68 degrees and Charleston Harbor temperatures, alone, are well below that. The animals usually migrate back to Florida when temperatures drop below 70, but stragglers occasionally get stuck in Charleston waters.

Please see MANATEE, Page A6



Showers decreasing. High 66, Low 35. Complete 5-day forecast, B10

Bridge B9 Crooked B8, B4
Business B1 Editorials B12 Sports C1
Classifieds D1 Local B2 Sudoku B7
Comics B5-9 Movies B7 Television B6

Charleston Wine and Design Deals Today
2-hour BYOB painting class. See A2

Brandon McIlwain enrolling early at USC to play football and baseball, 1B



Will 26-day break affect **Tigers'** showing at Orange Bowl? 1B



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The State



USC FOOTBALL
FRESHMAN
PLAYER SHOT

Gamecocks football player Shameik Blackshear shot at a Columbia apartment complex, 1B

EXCLUSIVE | BULL STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

Student housing in first residential plan

Developer to be last in line for county's 50-percent tax break

BY CLIF LEBLANC
 clblanc@thestate.com

Student housing is coming to the Bull Street neighborhood with about a \$55 million, six-building campus of apartment and townhouses that are

markedly different from the high-rises that most other new complexes have offered.

The developer, Haven Campus Communities of Atlanta, plans to build 234 apartments on almost 6.5 acres at Gregg and Barnwell streets off

Calhoun Street, which is the southern boundary of BullStreet Common, according to architectural drawings that Haven submitted to city planners. The site is beyond the centerfield sight line of the city-owned baseball stadium that is

\$55 MILLION

Projected investment

234

Apartments in complex

6.33

Acres that will allow for a campus atmosphere

scheduled to open in April, but doesn't abut the stadium.

The project includes a

SEE APARTMENTS, 7A



Landon McAfee, Rachel McAfee, dressed as Princess Leia, and Thomas Awtrey, dressed as Han Solo, wait in line Thursday to enter the theater at Columbiana Grande on the opening night of 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens.'

'FORCE AWAKENS' THEATER CROWDS

Newest 'Star Wars' film excites fans; screening helps children's shelter

➔ MORE INSIDE

The pop culture appeal of Star Wars



BY AVERY G. WILKS | awilks@thestate.com

Stephen Miano's biggest fear in planning his 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' charity event

SC LEGISLATORS

Attorney general's opinion a blow to ethics probes

BY CASSIE COPE
 ccope@thestate.com

Efforts to expand the investigation of possible ethics violations by state lawmakers have suffered a blow, thanks to opinions from S.C. Attorney General Alan Wilson's office.

In a Dec. 11 opinion, Wilson's office said legislators can spend campaign money on businesses that they or their relatives run. The opinion also said S.C. House majority leaders can send GOP caucus business to their own firms.

The opinions were requested by 1st Circuit Solicitor David Pascoe, who is investigating lawmakers named in a State Law Enforcement Division report. Democrat Pascoe took over that investigation after Republican Wilson recused himself, saying he might have a conflict of interest because of the legislators named in the

SEE ETHICS, 8A





The Beaufort Gazette

FRIDAY, December 18, 2015

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CLOSING IN ON PARK GOAL

Beaufort County secures Huddle House to clear way for Boundary Street park



The Huddle House on Boundary Street as seen on Thursday morning in Beaufort

DELAYNA EARLEY • Staff photo

"It's kind of this perfect moment in time when all of these land owners were willing."

Lisa Lord, Rural and Critical Lands

By STEPHEN FASTENAU
sfastenau@beaufortgazette.com • 843-706-8182

Beaufort County Council took another step this week toward creating a planned passive park and open views along Battery Creek in Beaufort.

Council voted Monday to buy the Huddle House property on Boundary Street for \$506,000. The county's purchase is contingent on Beaufort securing Sea Eagle Market and Beaufort County Open Land Trust buy-

deal currently under contract.

Those acquisitions seem imminent as the entities work to clear the area from United Way on the south side of Boundary Street east to the cemetery.

The work would serve to create an inviting gateway into the city to pair with an overhaul of Boundary Street during the next two years, city and county leaders say.

Report: Obama trips top \$70M

For 2015, estimates put the cost of the Obamas' trips that are all or largely personal at more than \$11 million.

By ANITA KUMAR
Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — There was the weekend trip for President Barack Obama and his daughters to New York, including a Broadway show and a private museum tour.

The ski trip to Aspen, Colo., for first lady Michelle Obama in February.

And lots and lots of golf in Florida, Southern California and Martha's Vineyard, Mass.

Now as the Obama family departs today on its annual holiday vacation to Hawaii, new estimates put the price tag of the Obamas' 2015 trips that are all or largely personal at \$11.6 million for travel costs alone, according to the conservative group Judicial Watch, based on federal government records. That brings the overall cost of personal or largely personal travel to at least \$70.5 million since Obama took office in 2009, according to the group's analysis.

The costs of Air Force One and other government planes as well as helicopters, limos and other unique parts of presidential travel often raise questions about the need.

"My gosh, we can't afford it," said Tom Fitton, president of Judicial Watch, which is pushing for less personal travel and for security changes.

But others call it a necessary part of security and convenience for a commander-in-chief.

"In this environment, I don't think anyone on either side of the aisle is advocating for them to do less," said Dave Carney, a White House political director for President George H.W. Bush and a critic of what he called posh Obama vacations. "No one wants to say we need less security and then something happens."

The White House disputes the travel numbers, saying that some of the trips the group cites include work activities.

Obama's trip to California in June, for example, included a speech to U.S. Conference of Mayors in San Francisco as well as golf in Palm Springs.

PROPERTIES

• Sea Eagle Market and United Way building:

The county's purchase of Huddle House is contingent on Beaufort securing Sea Eagle Market and Beaufort County Open Land Trust buying the United Way building, a deal currently under contract.

• Property owners not on board yet:

Wendy's, a gas station and an old fire station

THE HARTSVILLE MESSENGER

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Mike Brock named finalist for Caterpillar award

BY ARDIE ARVIDSON
aarvidson@hartsvillemessenger.com

Mike Brock, a native of the Hartsville area, has recently been honored by Caterpillar. Brock's Grading and Land Clearing company was selected as a finalist for the Equipment World 2015 Contractor of the Year award, which will be announced in Las Vegas in March 2016.



Brock

Caterpillar sponsors the contest, which is designed to honor construction companies with excellent management practices that have annual revenue between \$3 million and \$15 million.

"Someone has to nominate you, and then they

go through an investigation process," Brock said. "It was a big deal to be honored in the top 12."

Brock said his company is the only one from South Carolina among the top 12 finalists.

"I don't know who nominated us," he said. "This is pretty good for a poor boy from Pine Ridge with not a lot of education."

Brock started in the business

in 1998. He said there are not many people in his industry.

Brock owns a grading and land-clearing business in Hartsville, with an office in Columbia. He is a general contractor. He says his business falls in the \$3 million to \$5 million category. "My grandfather ran a bulldozer all my life," he said.

Learning to operate one was a natural thing for him. His

grandfather, who taught him, is now 89 years old, Brock said.

"He wanted to see me succeed, and he still watches me. I guess he is proud," Brock said.

He said his grandfather worked for him into his late 70s.

Brock started his business with the purchase of 53 acres of land and some equipment.

See BROCK, Page 5A

Seven men arrested in drug sweep

From staff reports

DARLINGTON — The Darlington County Sheriff's Office Drug Unit along with agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and Hartsville city police made several arrests on Dec. 10 on federal weapons and drug charges.

The seven men arrested could face between 10 years and life in prison if convicted of the charges.

Darlington County Sheriff Wayne Byrd said the arrests are part of an ongoing investigation with the ATE.

"There was drug activity and dealership we were aware of," Byrd said. "We had enough to put together a case."

Arrested in the sweep were Andrew Joseph Boan, 31, federal weapons charge.

Kadeem Bragg, 24, federal

See DRUGS, Page 5A

Upgrades of public parking lot coming this weekend

From staff reports

Downtown Hartsville visitors will see infrastructure improvement work in the public parking lot on East Carolina Avenue, near the Hartsville YMCA, on Saturday and Sunday as the lot is seal-coated and restriped.

The portion of the lot closest to Cargill Way, Jones Family Eyecare and Waddell & Reed, Inc. is scheduled to close early Saturday morning to allow crews to seal-coat the lot. The area will close again Sunday morning for the lot to be restriped, and should reopen soon afterward. The adjacent parking areas not owned by the city of Hartsville, closest to Bizzell's Food & Spirits and the front door of the Hartsville YMCA, will not be affected by these closures.

Finest responder



ARDIE ARVIDSON/HARTSVILLE MESSENGER

Lt. James Veney with the Hartsville Fire Department has been named 2015 Firefighter of the Year.

Lt. James Veney honored as Hartsville Firefighter of the Year

BY ARDIE ARVIDSON
aarvidson@hartsvillemessenger.com

Lt. James Veney has been named the 2015 Firefighter of the Year by his fellow firefighters at the Hartsville Fire Department. The award was presented at the annual Christmas dinner Dec. 3.

Veney has been with the department for five years. It is his first time to receive the award.

"It is an honor to be selected and working with these guys," Veney said. "They make me the fireman that I am. They are a great group of guys and lady who I was voted on by."

Veney said he was very surprised, honored and humbled by this recognition from his peers.

"I rank this up there with getting married and having our kids," he said.

Veney said he believes he was chosen for this honor because of his ability to work and get the job done.

"I am always available when someone needs off," he said.

"I am just a humble person. I keep God and family first," he said. "I love serving the Lord, working with people, and I am very thankful."

Veney said what he most likes about his job is that he is able to help someone on

what could be the worst day of their life.

"It could be as simple as burning up the popcorn in the microwave," he said.

Veney said he has always wanted to be a firefighter.

When he lived in Washington, D.C., growing up, Veney said he lived around the corner from the fire station.

A native of Lee County, he is married to Beauty Veney. He has five children, seven grandchildren and an eighth on the way.

He is a Mason and volunteer firefighter with the Lee County Fire Department. He previously worked with EMS in Lee County.

Coker College celebrates winter 2015 commencement

From staff reports

the Sumter ITEM

INSIDE

New crop of toys teaches kids coding skills A6

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Hyatt Place coming to Main Street

BY ADRIENNE SARVIS
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The lead architect for a new downtown hotel announced during Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee's meeting Thursday that it will be a Hyatt Place that will grace Main Street.

The committee approved the hotel designs during the meeting. Meredith Drakeford of Drakeford Architects said the four-story hotel will have a total of 93 rooms, five of which will be handicap-accessible double rooms on the first floor. The Hyatt Place will be located at 14-22 N. Main St. and will fea-

ture the company's signature rooftop design, known as the "edge," an asymmetrical reflective structure, above the driveway entrance that will be between the hotel and C. Anthony's Menswear. Hotel amenities will include a



Illustration provided. Main Street elevation of the new Hyatt Place hotel.

SEE HOTEL, PAGE A7

Toys for Tots in need of donations



KEITH GEORGE / THE SUMTER ITEM

Diane Degman bags up a toy to be distributed to children by the Toys for Tots program at the collection point on Bultman Drive on Thursday. Mayor Joseph T. McElveen and Sumter County Council Chairwoman Naomi Sanders have officially proclaimed December "Toys for Tots" month. Toys for Tots is the annual drive campaign by local U.S. Marines to collect new toys for needy children in the area. Unfortunately, the campaign has more toy requests than toys or checks with Christmas rapidly approaching, said Harvey Senter, local Toys for Tots coordinator. It's not too late to make a donation, however, he said. "Anyone who wants to donate money can mail a check made out to Toys for Tots to 699 Bultman Drive or drop it off at The Sumter Item" at 20 N. Magnolia St., Senter said. "They can also call us at (803) 774-4747." Donations can also be made through the website, www.toysfortots.org.

Superintendent explains audit

School district ended the fiscal year \$45,241 in the black

BY KONSTANTIN VENGEROWSKY
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The Sumter Item sat down with Sumter School District Superintendent Frank Baker on Wednesday evening to further discuss details of the 2015 fiscal year budget.



BAKER

Total revenues for 2014-15 were \$107 million, which exceeded the revenue originally budgeted by \$2.5 million. Total expenditures were \$112 million. The budget was balanced by \$1,405,849 revenue received from other financing sources, including sales of capital assets and fund transfers.

Instructional expenditures came in \$1.8 million less than budgeted.

Supporting service expenditures exceeded budgeted expenditures by \$5.8 million. Operating and maintenance of plant expenditures exceeded budgeted expenditures by \$1.9 million, and student transportation expenditures exceeded budgetary expenditures by \$2.2 million.

Despite variances in revenues and expenditures, Baker said the district ended the 2015 fiscal year on June 30 with a clean audit and in the black. The fund balance increased by \$45,241 over last year for a total of \$1.4 million.

Variances in expenditures included transportation salaries which Baker said were "way" under-budgeted in the summer of 2014. Baker said he believed the reason for the under-budgeting was an oversight by the district's former chief financial officer.

One of the items that was under budget included transportation salaries,

SEE AUDIT, PAGE A7

ReWalk Robotics service engineer Tom Coulter prepares a ReWalk device to allow paralyzed Army veteran Gene Laureano to walk on Wednesday in Bronx, New York. The Department of Veterans Affairs has agreed to pay for robotic legs that could allow scores of paralyzed veterans with spinal cord injuries to walk again.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



VA to provide robotic legs to paralyzed vets

BY JULIE WATSON
The Associated Press

Department of Veterans Affairs has agreed to pay for robotic legs that could allow scores of paralyzed veterans with spinal cord injuries to walk again.

cannot afford the \$77,000 needed to pay for the powered exoskeleton called the ReWalk. The device was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2014 for individuals to use at home. VA officials told The Associated Press that the agency sent a memorandum Dec. 10



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CHRISTMAS SAFETY

Tips to stay safe during the holidays

By **DAMIAN DOMINGUEZ**
ddominguez@indexjournal.com

Greenwood's first responders want to ensure a safe holiday season for all residents.

Whether traveling for the holidays or staying at home, there are some tips that can help make the season safer. When wrapping or setting up presents, keeping boxes for high-priced items out of sight when throwing them away is good practice, according to Capt. Dale Kittles, community services commander in the Greenwood County Sheriff's Office.

"Be aware of what people can see on your front lawn," he said. "Any boxes people can see

Safety Video

Check out a tree safety video at indexjournal.com

of TV's or electronics is an invitation for burglars."

Having motion-activated lights can help, he said. If holiday plans involve any travel, let neighbors know before leaving, so anything suspicious can be reported, he said.

"If you see something suspicious, give us a call," he said, "and if you're going out of town don't hesitate to give us a call and we'll come by on patrol and do cruise checks."

Putting a hold on mail is important because a bulging mailbox can signal an empty home, he said. Even lawn care can help keep a home safer, he said. Tall hedges in front of windows can provide a hiding space for anyone wanting to break in while a homeowner is away, he said.

There are steps to take when decorating a home to make sure the holidays are safe, as well, said Derek Kinney, emergency services director. Checking light strands for frays and keeping any Christmas trees well-watered can reduce fire hazards, he said.

Whether out shopping or while traveling, being more cautious while driving can compensate for more treacherous road conditions and heavier traffic, he said.

"The bypass gets kind of interesting during this time of year," he said. "We get an increase in motor vehicle accidents."

One last tip Kinney had was to check pharmacy hours to ensure that any necessary prescriptions are filled, in case the pharmacy closes for the holidays.

THE FANS AWAKEN



PHOTOS BY JOSHUA S. KELLY/INDEX-JOURNAL

Will Moore of Iva wields a lightsaber as Kylo Ren during the Auto Drive-In's costume contest before Thursday night's premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens."



From left, Will Moore as Kylo Ren, Logan Day as a Stormtrooper, Mikey Monk as Yoda and Hydi Monk as Darth Vader pose with their weapons of choice during the Auto Drive-In's costume contest at the "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" premiere Thursday night.

Lightsaber-wielding characters battle in 'Star Wars' costume contest

By **MARY KATE MCGOWAN**
mmcgowan@indexjournal.com

'Star Wars' opens in Lakelands

Read about other Lakelands residents excited about the new "Star Wars" movie on **4A**.

Dressed as Darth Bane, Arley Hendrick was caught in a lightsaber duel minutes before the premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," but Hendrick, a lifelong "Star Wars" fan, had one task to complete before enjoying the newest installment of the "Star Wars" franchise at Greenwood's Auto Drive-In.

He had to judge the costume contest. As trucks and vans and cars pulled into spots at the 25 Drive-In to be some of the

first to see the movie in Greenwood, creatures from the Republic and the Empire gathered to compete in the contest.

Hendrick, the leader of a local lightsaber enthusiasts group called Carolina Jedi, said creativity and having fun were of the highest importance for the costumes.

Battling with not only costume design, the competitors See **STAR WARS**, page **4A**

First Steps volunteers deliver books to help prepare students

By **MARY KATE MCGOWAN**
mmcgowan@indexjournal.com

A week before Christmas Eve, Abbeville County and Greenwood County First Steps delivered a sur-

about 1,500 books to Greenwood and Abbeville counties since 2007. He said the total books is more than 10,000 at this point.

With age appropriate books for various ages, the group today





Morning News

FRIDAY DECEMBER 18, 2015

TODAY'S WEATHER

Windy and cooler with clearing. High 65, low 28. DETAILS 2A

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The Voice of the Pee Dee

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MORNING NEWS FILE PHOTO

The Florence Christmas Parade will return to downtown Florence Saturday.

Re-establishing a Christmas tradition

BY JOSHUA LLOYD
Morning News
jlloyd@florencenews.com

FLORENCE — Santa Claus is coming to town — on a decorative float, surrounded by mounted horses, racing go-carts and the mighty sound of a high school marching band.

Santa will ride in during the Florence Christmas Parade on Saturday, starting

at 11 a.m. This year's route will be the same route as years past — down Evans Street from Edlsto Drive to the BTC building downtown.

While the Christmas parade is often considered pre-Christmas tradition, just five years ago that wasn't the case for the city of Florence.

Linda Becote, a member of the parade committee

who was president of the Parent-Teacher Association for North Vista Elementary during that time, said children always asked her if they would ever be able to be a part of a parade and she didn't know what to tell them.

"I remember when I was a child how excited I was every year for the parade," Becote said. "I used to walk with my mother and sit up

front to see Santa Claus. It was the most exciting time for me and I couldn't stand to take that feeling of excitement away from the children in Florence."

Along with Pat Gibson-Hye Moore, Becote learned the former organizers were no longer interested in forming a parade so they took it into their own hands

See TRADITION, Page 4A

Darlington Minister arrested on sex charges

BY JESSICA IMBIMBO
Morning News
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DARLINGTON — A Darlington youth minister has been arrested on two counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct involving a minor, according to the Darlington city police.



Reames

The Rev. Kamron Eugene Reames of Georgiana Lane was arrested Thursday after allegedly touching a male juvenile inappropriately on at least two occasions, police

Chief Daniel Watson said.

The alleged victim reported the conduct to adults and the Darlington Police Department initiated an investigation.

Watson said Reames was arrested shortly after the investigation, when "compelling evidence supporting the complaint was substantiated."

According to the Central Baptist Church website, Reames is an associate pastor for Central Student Ministries. He has been with Central Baptist Church since 2002.

Following his arrest, Reames was taken to the Darlington County Detention Center, where he is set to be arraigned this morning.

Expanded bus service planned

BY JOE PERRY
Morning News
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FLORENCE — The Pee Dee Re-

RAINY DAY PLAY



WGAN/MX/MORNING NEWS

Semaj Moses, 9, left, and Zi'yon Barr, 9, play outside in between rain showers on Thursday afternoon in Florence.

Despite the intermittent drizzles, Thursday was a day that beckoned youngsters outside to shoot some hoops or play other games. It was wet but not cold. Today is expected to be a little cooler but not enough to discourage the urge to get outdoors.

Leave the lightsabers in your X-Wing

'Star Wars' opening weekend brings costume restrictions

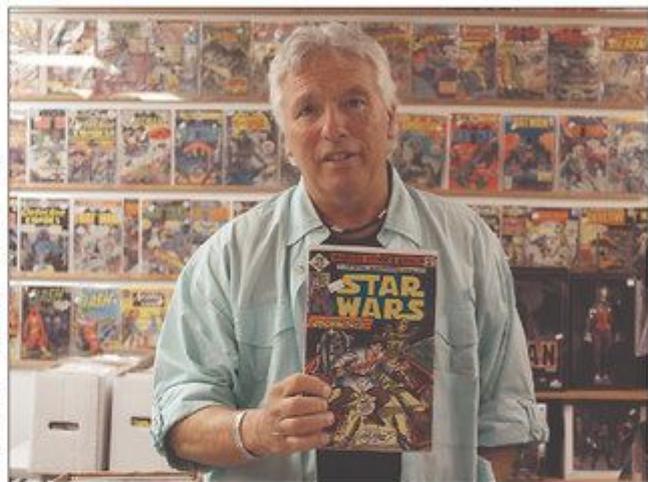
BY DEBORAH SWEARINGEN
Morning News
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FLORENCE — "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" opened Thursday evening at theaters across the nation.

But fans planning to see it at the Regal Swamp Fox Cinemas in Florence should leave their lightsabers and Darth Vader masks at home.

A sign outside the cinema reads: "Guests of all ages with masks, props, face paint or weapons are not allowed into Regal Entertainment Group locations. This includes lightsabers and face-obscuring hoods."

Angie Anderson, the manager at the Swamp Fox, said the regulations were "company policy" but would comment no further. Attempts to reach a representative from Regal Entertainment Group's corporate offices were unsuccessful.



DEBORAH SWEARINGEN/MORNING NEWS



Blackshear recovering from gunshots

South Carolina freshman defensive end Shameik Blackshear, of Bluffton, injured at apartment complex

By HARRISON CAHILL
The (Columbia) State

COLUMBIA — South Carolina freshman defensive end Shameik Blackshear was shot multiple times Wednesday evening at an apartment complex marketed to University of South Carolina students.

Sources close to the incident confirmed Blackshear as the victim of the shooting and said he was



Blackshear

shot in the upper and lower body outside of one of the apartment buildings. According to the Columbia police, who did not identify Blackshear by name, the victim of the shooting was in serious condition Thursday. One source told The State that Blackshear is expected to be OK.

Columbia police officials said the shooting occurred at the Club at Carolina Stadium, located at 100 Catawba Circle — just a stone's throw from the Founder's Park stadium used by the USC baseball team — at 9:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Columbia police collected forensic evidence and talked with people at the scene following the shooting, officials said. Investigators are working to determine a

motive for the shooting, while attempting to identify a suspect or suspects.

Blackshear, from Bluffton, was one of the state's most heavily recruited players the past three seasons. He was unanimously considered a four-star prospect and had scholarship offers from Georgia, LSU and Clemson, among others.

Blackshear was looking for a

fresh start at USC after some troublesome times in high school.

He was injured for much of his junior season, then tore an ACL in the second game of his senior year at Bluffton High. Blackshear's college career almost was derailed before it started by an offseason arrest and petit larceny charge, but those charges were later dropped.

Please see SHOTS on 8A

'EYESORE' NO MORE

Best Western signals new life for old South Forest Beach area



JAY KARR • Staff photo

Cousins Harl Johal, left, and Sam Johal say a few words to the crowd during the ribbon cutting last week for their new Best Western hotel. The cousins restored the decaying property in the Metropolitan Hotel annex on South Forest Beach and turned it into a 63-room hotel. The cousins next plan to turn their attention to a restoration of the Metropolitan Hotel itself.

By ZACH MURDOCK
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Once an eyesore near Hilton Head's busy tourist center, the recently renovated Metropolitan Hotel annex is the first domino to fall in what



IRONMAN RACE

NC spot bumps Hilton Head

According to one Ironman official, organizers had been negotiating with Wilmington for about six months.

By MIKE MCCOMBS
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Hilton Head's loss was Wilmington's gain.

Only hours after informing Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Chamber of Commerce officials that an Ironman race wouldn't be coming to the Lowcountry in 2016, the World

Triathlon Corp. announced on its website, Ironman.com, that the group had purchased the Beach2 Battleship triathlon in Wilmington, N.C.

The event will be renamed Ironman North Carolina, and registration for the Oct. 22, 2016, event will open Friday.

"It's certainly a hotspot for triathlon and a hotspot for us," Steve Meckfessel, managing director of global race

"But it was a rocky road in respect to getting all the permits and certainly in respect to addressing the sheriff in regards to road closures."

Brian Symmes

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