



# Oconee County Connections Employee Newsletter

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## Message from County Administrator Justin Kirouac

A “Black Swan” is a completely unexpected event in the financial world that has significant or even catastrophic consequences. I think it’s also a movie about a ballet dancer, though those films aren’t really in my wheelhouse. Let me get the bad news out of the way – the upcoming budget does not contain a step or COLA increase. With the national unemployment rate skyrocketing, this is likely not a surprise, but definitely disappointing. Unfortunately, we may be staring at the Black Swan in this COVID-19 pandemic. While case numbers and trends are starting to look promising (fingers crossed), revenue and economic numbers – particularly sales tax – are knocking us into some frighteningly unknown scenarios.

The initial budget was presented to the Board of Commissioners this week, and it looked a lot different than what I was hoping about two months ago. Potentially this is a short-term dip with a quick recovery; however, we are preparing for longer-term effects and the focus is now on weathering the storm – and the Black Swan going away. Please know that Oconee County Government values your continued commitment to serve the citizens of our county during these difficult times.

## Notes from IT - Security Awareness Training

Our Annual Security Awareness Training has begun! You should have received an email from KnowBe4 with a link to start the training. Security awareness training teaches employees to understand vulnerabilities and threats to business operations. This training will help you protect the county, and it will provide eye-opening information on how to protect yourself.

Users who have never taken our online training will receive a 45-minute training session from former hacker, Kevin Mitnick. A refresher course entitled “Internet Security and You” is offered to all other computer users. There is also an additional training for those users who work from home. Remember to STOP, LOOK, and THINK before you click on a link, give out your personal information, or provide data requested.

Security is only as good as the weakest link. Learn how to defend yourself and our organization against cybercrime. Stay aware and safe!

# Employment Anniversaries

Congratulations to everyone on our team celebrating another year of service to the residents of Oconee County! Thank you for making our organization an outstanding place to work and for your dedication to our community! We appreciate all that you do!

## Administration

Alex Newell 05/16/2016

## Clerk of Courts

Michelle Gearhart 05/17/2004  
Cassie Swisher 05/07/2018

## Civic Center

Christy Layman-Kerns 05/10/2001  
Starr Wright 05/31/2011

## Finance

Melissa Braswell 05/30/2017

## Jail

Doug Baxter 05/21/2007

## Law Enforcement

David Gueth 05/31/2004  
Dee Dee Donaldson 05/08/2006  
Stephen Shaffer 05/16/2011  
Shawn Johnston 05/29/2012

## Parks & Recreation

Stephen Richwine 05/23/2016  
Jake Thornton 05/01/2018  
Zach Churchill 05/06/2019  
Ryan Marrs 05/09/2019

## Public Safety

John Ogle 05/21/2012

## Public Works

Teresa Ebel 05/21/2012

## Superior Court

Eric Norris 05/01/2016

# Welcome!

*Welcome  
to the  
Team!*

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest colleagues - we are so glad you have joined us!

## Clerk of Courts

Crystal Brank

## Finance

Jessica Ellis

## GIS

Matthew Beal

## Public Safety

Heath Paul

# Employee Birthdays

Happy Birthday to everyone in the Oconee County Government Family celebrating a birthday this month! You have our best wishes for a wonderful day, and we hope it's the start of a fantastic year!

Tim Dutton	05/01
Zach Eaton	05/01
Carol Gurley	05/02
Russ Henson	05/02
Christy Layman-Kerns	05/02
Jess Burnley	05/03
Jill Faulkner	05/04
Pamela Hendrix	05/05
Teresa Ebel	05/07
Joshua Morgan	05/07
Brent Sexton	05/09
Chase Brown	05/10
Randall Bolton	05/11
Marvin Poe	05/11
Teresa Wallace	05/14
Gaby Bryan	05/15
Wanda Moody	05/16
Hunter Fouche	05/17
Jacob Barnhart	05/18
Nico Carter	05/19
Lisa Lott	05/19
Nicholas Belcher	05/20
Kyle Davis	05/22
Christopher Norman	05/24
Dean Sutton	05/25
Matt Towe	05/25
Grace Tuschak	05/25
Beth Armstrong	05/27
Kyle Stephens	05/27
Pat Goolsby	05/28
Starr Wright	05/29
Danial White	05/31



## News From HR

Biometrics will be measured in June - look for an email this month from Sign Up Genius to register.





# In Memoriam

## Sergeant Carter Brank Oconee County Sheriff's Office

The Sheriff's Office and Oconee County Government were deeply saddened by the sudden passing of Sergeant Carter Brank on April 18.

Sergeant Brank dedicated his career to service in the United States Navy, the Lexington County Sheriff's Office in South Carolina, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and the Oconee County Sheriff's Office.

He was deeply respected and will be missed by all who knew him, as well as the entire community.



Oconee Connections Employee Newsletter is published monthly by the Office of Communications. We want to hear from you! Please e-mail us with your department news, as well as employee announcements of births, engagements, weddings, and retirements. Please submit news items to [dbaggett@oconee.ga.us](mailto:dbaggett@oconee.ga.us) by the 15th of the month prior to publication for inclusion in the newsletter. The Office of Communications reserves the right to edit all submissions for clarity and length.