



Oconee County Connections Employee Newsletter

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Congratulations to Customer Service Superstar Caleb Howe, who goes above and beyond every day to exceed the expectations of both internal and external clients! A true asset to the Recycling and Waste Facilities, Caleb's expertise, outstanding work ethic, and leadership skills help Oconee County thrive. Thank you, Caleb - we're so happy we get to work with you!



Civic Center

Jennifer Jones

Jail

Ava Molish
Zyqavious Tillman

Parks and Recreation

Jacob Worthey

Sheriff

Keith Black

Water Resources

Jesika Stock



Faces of Oconee

Meet Anna Leigh Hardigree! Anna Leigh joined the county in May 2024 as an IT Support Technician. She also previously served the county as a Parks Assistant, and has diverse experience in the world of tech. Anna Leigh is finishing up her Associate's Degree in Computer Programming and is also focusing on achieving several certifications by the end of the year.

Anna Leigh grew up in Bishop/Watkinsville and currently lives in Athens. Her mother, Cindy Hardigree, had a long career at the county, and Anna Leigh felt Oconee County would be a natural fit for her. Anna Leigh cherishes her relationship with her two older sisters and dotes on her two cats named Magni and Loki. She just celebrated a two-year anniversary with her boyfriend.

When Anna Leigh is not working, she enjoys playing video games, tinkering with computers, programming, and music, particularly going to concerts.

Her favorite thing about her job is being able to help others. "I just genuinely like helping people," says Anna Leigh. "Technology is ever changing, ever innovating, and it's overwhelming. I love being able to make someone's day even slightly better by fixing that 'one thing' that's been bothering them or blocking their day's progress. I love being asked questions about tech, so please let me put my years of nerd prestige to use."

"Anna Leigh is a bright light in this world. Wherever she goes, she radiates positivity, and, mixed with her extensive tech knowledge, she has cemented herself as a valuable member of our team.

One could even argue that she is the bomb dot com," Juan Silva, IT Specialist, says.

Justin Milligan, IT Director, comments, "Anna Leigh's hard work and positivity have been a great asset to our IT team."

Thank you, Anna Leigh, for all you do for Oconee County!

[Watch her Faces of Oconee video here!](#)

Faces of Oconee County Government

▶ 🔊 0:02 / 3:10 [Upbeat Mu] ⚙️

Website Redesign Launch



Updates Are Coming to OconeeCounty.com

On Thursday, September 12, the county website will get a new look! The Website Redesign Team has been working with CivicPlus to launch a redesign focused on intuitive navigation and a mobile first environment to bring a better user experience to our website visitors.

As the update is implemented on the morning of September 12, we ask that you refrain from making changes to the website between **9 a.m. and 1 p.m.** This will help ensure that the designers can work as efficiently as possible.

Please email oconeeconnects@oconee.ga.us with any questions.

Important to note: All the content will stay the same, as we get a new, fresh look.

As a reminder, drop in website training is held every second Thursday from 10 a.m. to 11:30 in the Communications Conference Room.

Preparations for Launch

- Archive/delete old documents from your department page and document center.
- Make current documents ADA compliant (Contact Tristen Thomas with any ADA questions at tthomas@oconee.ga.us)

Checklist For a Strong Password

!m#P52s@ap\$V43

- **Uppercase and lowercase**
- **At least 12 characters**
- **Symbols (!, @, #)**
- **Non-sequenced numbers**
- **No dictionary words**
- **No personal data like a birthday**

The Importance of Strong Passwords in Cybersecurity:

Cybersecurity threats are always evolving, and a strong, unique password is your first line of defense. Test your passwords below by seeing if they align with these general guidelines:

1. Complexity is Key

Use a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters (like !, @, #). Though it may seem obvious, a good password should never be simple.

2. Length Matters

Aim for at least 12 characters. Consider using passphrases—strings of random words or sentences—that are complex. This can be tricky to discern a strong passphrase from a weak one. As an example: “ilovecats24” would not be a good passphrase. “!InthrOughth30utd0Or108670” is a great passphrase.

3. Avoid Common Pitfalls

Steer clear of easily guessable information (like birthdays or names) and avoid predictable patterns (like “123456”). A criminal can be familiar with your personal information, like pet names or favorite music groups.

4. Update Passwords Regularly

It's good practice to change your passwords every 90 days to stay ahead of potential breaches. Frequent changes can thwart attackers who may have acquired your login credentials.

From the IT Workroom

5. Use Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

Enable MFA where possible. It adds an extra security layer by requiring a second form of verification, like a code sent to your phone. You may already be utilizing or at least familiar with some MFA applications, like Microsoft Authenticator. These applications act as another layer of defense against someone logging in to a site/application with your credentials.

6. Watch Out for Phishing

Always double-check URLs, and ensure you're on an official login page before entering your password. This is one of the most common ways organizations are compromised. Criminals can ‘copy’ a legitimate site's appearance to look official, but in truth, they're hoping you enter sensitive information to their malicious site without checking the URL.

7. Education and Training is Vital

Cyber threats are always changing with time. Keep up with the latest cybersecurity news and best practices to stay safe, including at home.

As always, please feel welcome to reach out to the IT Department with any questions, concerns, or recommendations for fostering a stronger defense against Cybercrime!

Stay Safe,
IT Department

Around the County



KOCBC at the Senior Center

Keep Oconee County Beautiful Executive Director Cindy Pritchard hosts quarterly seminars at the Oconee County Senior Center focusing on a variety of topics related to litter, recycling, and beautification. During the August session, Pritchard introduced a special program for Senior Center participants that assists them with hard to recycle items, keeping these items out of landfills. For more information about Keep Oconee County Beautiful, visit www.oconeecounty.com/kocbc.

MACORTS 2050 MTP

MACORTS has prepared the DRAFT 2050 Metropolitan Transportation. All project information is available through the project webpage, where you can review draft documents and provide comments through September 13, 2024. The planning process will extend through the Fall, with final adoption anticipated by October 7, 2024. To learn more about the MACORTS 2050 MTP update, visit online at: <https://www.macorts.org/2050-mtp-update.html>

Communications goes to UGA

We look forward to working with our GradyNewsource student journalists every semester! Their commitment to reporting on important issues in government is inspiring, and we are happy to welcome several student journalists, Sarah Sims, Ethan Wright, and Julianna Russ, to the Oconee County beat! Thank you to the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia for this opportunity to help guide our next generation of government reporters!





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!

Animal Services

Christina Lee 09/21/2022

Board of Elections

Sharon Gregg 09/12/2022
Noah Armstrong 09/11/2023

Civic Center

Shawn Wheeler 09/07/1993
Edwyna Arey 09/05/2017

Clerk of Courts

Carrie Hayes 09/16/2014

Extension Office

Daniel Queen 09/08/2020

Fire

Denise Bradshaw 09/19/2022

Jail

David Knowles Jr. 09/09/2016
Danial White 09/23/2019
Gabriel Fairbanks 09/05/2023

KOBC

Cindy Pritchard 09/12/2016

Law Enforcement

Jeremy Wasdin 09/15/2008
Sonyia Wallace-Burchett 09/15/2015
Stan Swisher 09/25/2017
Baer Schiffer 09/06/2022

Parks & Recreation

Emma Smith 09/06/2023
Haven Newbold 09/15/2023
Lisa Davol 09/27/2004
Pat Sebring 09/11/2017
Samuel Koppenhaver 09/22/2023

Planning/Code Enforcement

Linda Patterson 09/16/1985
Kyle Stephens 09/04/2018

Property Appraisal

Sidney Bell 09/14/2021
Christopher Glick 09/19/2022

Public Works

Will Parks 09/21/1998
Rolland Ebright 09/09/2020

Senior Center

Mark Manning 09/06/2022

Superior Court

Tommy Hewell 09/08/2009

Tax Commissioner

Maggie Hill 09/11/2023

Tourism

Sarah Cumuze 09/28/2022

Water Resources

Jeanne White 09/06/2005
Eddie Fouche Jr. 09/04/2007



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!

Yashica West	09/02	Crystal Berisko	09/19
Stephen Richwine	09/03	Joseph Berryman	09/19
Brian Bray	09/04	Steven Heckler	09/20
Seth McCart	09/04	Jerry Marshall	09/20
Dylan Pulliam	09/05	Joan White	09/20
Donna Fee	09/08	Carsen Dean	09/21
Lance Raines	09/09	Andrew Bishop	09/24
Zyqavious Tillman	09/09	Sarah Baird	09/25
Emily Deal	09/11	Brandy Ervin	09/25
Ryan Meeler	09/11	Joel Allen	09/26
Sandy Maxwell	09/12	Richard Connelly Jr.	09/27
Kevin Hearst	09/14	Chuck Horton	09/27
John Donnelly	09/15	Diane Horvath	09/27
Patrick Holl	09/15	George Kull	09/27
Leah John	09/15	Jacob Payne	09/27
Jeanne White	09/15	Warren Stanford	09/28
Sarah Groves	09/16	Harold Haggard	09/29
Shirley Finch	09/18		
John Jackson	09/18		

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 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.