



# Oconee County Connections

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## Employee Newsletter



Volume 6, No. 11

November 2024

### Pumpkin Contest Winners

Check out the amazing talent from our employees and the winner of the contest

### Tire and Battery Amnesty

The whole month of November you can drop off tires and batteries at the Waste and Recycle centers

### From the IT Workroom

Check your knowledge about fake websites

### Human Resources Scoop

Holiday schedules and calendar reminders



*Photo was taken at Heritage Park during the Bat Festival on October 14th.*

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Geographic Information System (GIS) Specialist Shawna Benson visited third graders at Colham Ferry Elementary recently to talk about map making. Shawna is the perfect person to share her knowledge of and passion for cartography!

Cindy Pritchard assisted in the Bat Festival at Heritage Park, showcasing vibrant new bat murals created by local artist Will Eskridge. The event celebrated the importance of bats in our ecosystem and artwork now gracing the park.

## Department Outreach



## Welcome to the Team

### Clerk of Courts

Anita Reimer

### Cooperative Extension

Annie Stephenson

### E-911

Kristy Sweeney

### Facilities

Julius Floyd

### Jail

Jacob Hathaway

Kelda Simmons

### Parks and Recreation

Lorenza Adams

Madison Moore

### Senior Center

Jeannie Caldwell

### Tax Commissioner

Kasey Morton

Check out the creative entries on this page and the next in this year's Oconee County Senior Center Pumpkin Decorating Challenge!

The 2024 winners are:

**In First....Finance with  
Finny the Finance Fish**

**Runner-Up....GIS with  
Map of Oconee**

# Pumpkin Contest



Probate Court:  
Caramel Apple



Finance:  
Finny the Finance Fish

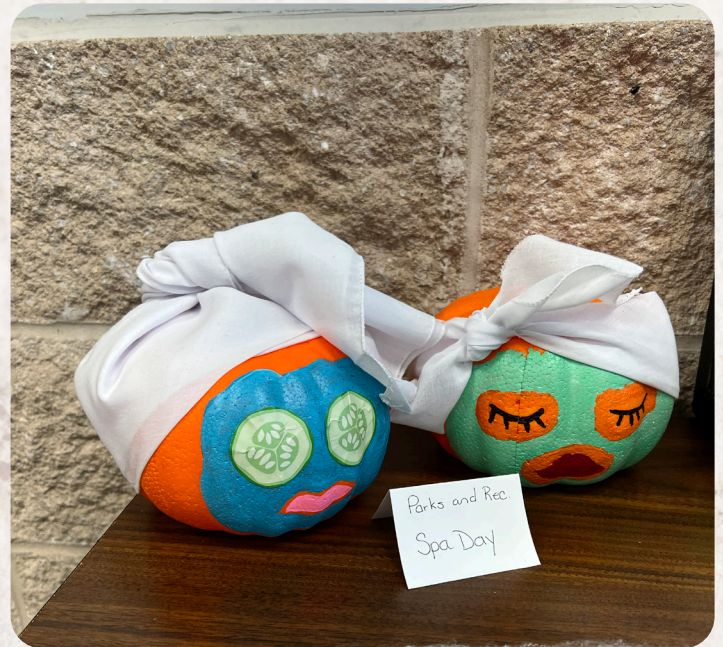


Administration/Communications:  
Charlie Brown



GIS:  
Map of Oconee

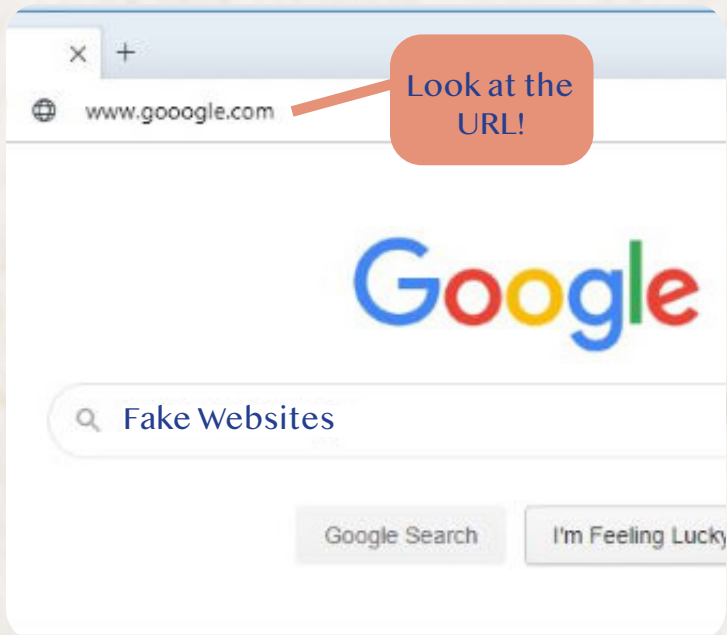
# Pumpkin Contest Page 2



Parks and Rec:  
Spa Day



Water Resources:  
Hocus Pocus



## Spot The Difference: How You Can Identify Fake Websites

Hello, from the friendly neighborhood IT Techs! This month, we want to touch base briefly about fake websites.

Scammers can make fake websites to trick you into sharing sensitive information, such as passwords, payment details, or personal information they can use to steal your identity. Some fake websites can even infect your device with malware! Next time you decide to click on a website, keep the following points in mind!

### How Does the URL Look?

Be wary of any misspellings or unusual domain extensions (i.e: .xyz instead of .gov or .com). Scammers often use slight variations to mimic real sites.

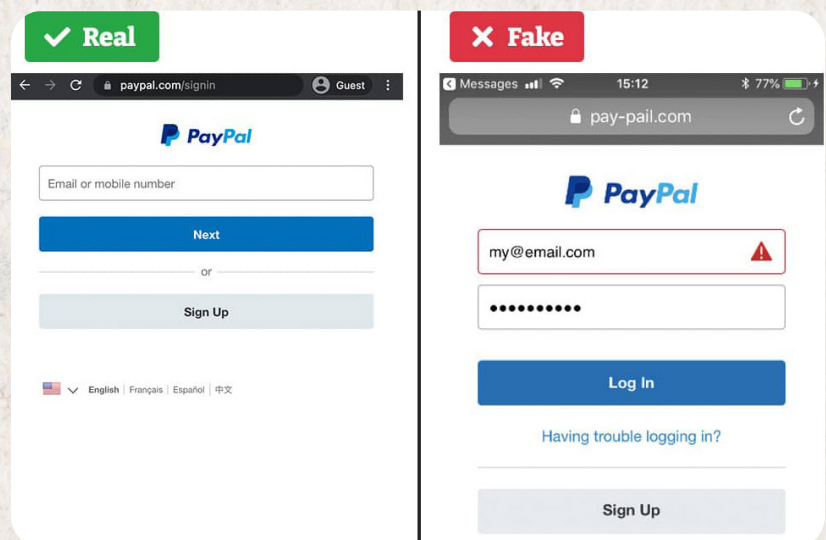
### How Does the Website Look?

Does it look sloppy? Genuine websites usually have polished designs. Look for consistent branding, high-quality images, and correct spelling and grammar. Be extra cautious of sites that have excessive ads, pop-ups, or poorly written content. These can be red flags for fake websites.

Be cautious. If a website feels off or seems too good to be true, trust your instincts. It's better to ask one of us for help if a website is real or not, than to accidentally download malware and infect your computer.

By staying informed and following these tips, you can better protect yourself and Oconee County from risks associated with fake websites!

IT Department



# Human Resources Scoop

## Calendar Reminders:

November 28-29: Thanksgiving Holiday

Dec 19: Employee Holiday Luncheon

## Upcoming Events for Employees!

November 28-29:

### Thanksgiving Holiday

Oconee County will be closed for the holiday from Thursday the 28th to Friday the 29th of November. We hope you have a nice break and thank you for your hard work and dedication.

December 19:

### Employee Holiday Luncheon

Mark your calendars! The annual Employee Holiday Luncheon is scheduled for Thursday, December 19, from noon to 2 p.m. at the Oconee County Civic Center, and we want to see you there. Lunch will be catered by Countryside. Don't forget to come dressed in your best holiday sweater to enter the Ugliest Christmas Sweater Contest!

A huge thank you to our amazing Human Resources team and volunteers who made October's Varsity tailgate party a success! It was fantastic to connect with everyone who attended, and your energy truly made the event special. We can't wait to see you all at our next employee gathering—stay tuned for more fun!





## Around the County

### Tire and Battery Amnesty 2024

The Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission will host its annual Tire and Battery Amnesty for the whole month of November.

To Participate:

- You must be a resident of Oconee County
- No more than 4 tires per vehicle and only car & light truck tires without rims.
- Auto & boat batteries will also be accepted for recycling (no limit).

All Waste and Recycling sites will be accepting items. For more information please call Cindy Pritchard at 706-310-3560 or email [kocbc@oconee.ga.us](mailto:kocbc@oconee.ga.us).

### Invasive Plant Removal-Volunteers Needed

The Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department and the Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission, in partnership with Athens Land Trust and Kel-Mac Saddle Club, will host Invasive Species Plant Removal Work Days at Heritage Park this fall and winter. Work days will take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., weather permitting. The upcoming dates for November are the 5th and 19th!

Registration is required for this event but no experience needed! For more information or to register online, visit [www.oconeecounty.com/heritagepark](http://www.oconeecounty.com/heritagepark). Heritage Park is located at 2543 Macon Highway, Watkinsville.



# Shawn Wheeler to Retire



After thirty-two years of dedicated service, Shawn Wheeler, the first Director of the Oconee County Civic Center, is set to retire. Graduating from the University of Georgia's Grady School of Journalism in 1981, Shawn initially worked in the Office of Student Affairs before taking on the monumental task of being the Director of the new Civic Center in 1993.

When Shawn Wheeler joined the Oconee County Civic Center in 1993, the county at the time had one dance school, church choirs, and a high school drama club. Since Shawn has been at the helm of the Civic Center, drama and dance programs at both high schools have been established, five dance academies have opened, and four community theatre groups have started, and the Oconee County Civic Center has served as a venue for all.

The Oconee County Board of Commissioners presented a proclamation declaring Tuesday, October 29, 2024, "Shawn Wheeler Day" in Oconee County at the Board's Agenda Setting Meeting in October. The Civic Center will continue to thrive as a testament to Shawn's legacy, ensuring that the arts remain an integral part of Oconee County's community.

Throughout his career, Shawn has collaborated with three different Chairmen, twelve Commissioners, five Finance Directors, and six County Administrators, reflecting his remarkable flexibility and commitment to the community.

As he prepares to leave his position halfway through his thirty second year, Shawn looks forward to focusing on personal projects, traveling with his wife, and spending quality time with his son, daughter, and grandchild.





## EMPLOYEE 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!

### Board of Elections

Kenneth Davis	11/05/2019
Shami Jones	11/01/2022

### Cooperative Extension

Patricia McLaughlin	11/18/2019
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### Jail

Joan White	11/13/2006
Krista Dorsey	11/29/2021
Susie Carlton-Gordon	11/15/2021

### Law Enforcement

Dustin Mines	11/29/2021
Robert Perrin	11/01/2021
Vic Green	11/19/2007

### Parks & Recreation

Ethan Barnhart	11/15/2022
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### Property Appraisal

Brian Bray	11/14/2011
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### Public Safety

Lee Hiland	11/06/2006
Lisa Park	11/16/2020

### Public Works

Jamie Howe	11/30/2022
John Green	11/21/2022
Robert Thompson	11/18/2019
Scott Hollars	11/01/2021

### Senior Center

Stephen Baker	11/13/2023
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### Superior Court

Diane Russell	11/01/1991
Lawton Stephens	11/01/1991

### Tax Commissioner

Kendra Freeman	11/15/2021
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### Water Resources

Ginger Thrasher	11/22/2004
Tim Rice	11/02/2020
Tracy Metcalf	11/24/2014



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!

Jean Saint-Preux	11/01	Johnny Richards	11/10
Caleb Howe	11/02	James Rogers	11/11
Laynie Baer	11/04	Kirk Shook	11/12
Kyler Daigle	11/04	Nicole Gueth	11/13
Christopher Haag	11/05	Ava Molish	11/13
William Threlkeld	11/05	Lawton Stephens	11/14
Lisa Davol	11/06	Kayla Houseman	11/15
Joshua Johnson	11/07	Shami Jones	11/15
Annessa Martin	11/07	Guillaume Fielteau	11/16
Rachel Smith	11/07	Noah Webb	11/23
Allen Hawkins	11/08	Ed Carson	11/27
Sam Smith	11/08	Molly Lee	11/27
Jon Holden	11/10	Shelby Gabriel	11/28

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.