

Oconee County Connections

Employee Newsletter



Volume 7, No. 8

August 2025

Comms Corner

ADA Quick Tips for Word

From the IT Workroom

OC Tech Landing Zone

Customer Service Superstar

Congrats Kendra Freeman!

Volunteer Opportunity

Invasive Plant Removal at Heritage Park



Issue Index

3	Customer Service Superstar Welcome to the Team
4	Comms Corner
5	Pollinator Garden Photos
6	From the IT Workroom
7	Invasive Plant Species Removal
8	Anniversaries
9	Birthdays

Customer Service Superstar

Congratulations to Kendra Freeman, Tax Commissioner's Office, on receiving the Customer Service Excellence Award! Visitors to the Tax Commissioner's Office have commented on Kendra's outstanding customer service skills, and Kendra is always ready to offer assistance with a smile. Congratulations, Kendra, on this well-deserved recognition of your commitment to serving the citizens of Oconee County! We appreciate all that you do!



Welcome to Oconee County! We are glad you are joining our team.

Welcome to the Team

Clerk of Courts
Marcia Locke

Jail
Sam Higgins

County Agent
Alisha Gipson

Sheriff's Office
Greta Cherry
Blake Varnado

Public Works
Alex Bridges
Charles Rudolf

Comms Corner

Welcome to the Communications Corner – let's talk accessibility in Microsoft Word.

Creating accessible documents isn't just about compliance, it's about ensuring meaningful communication. Here's how to get started:

1) Use Document Styles

Apply the appropriate text styles (heading 1, heading 2, paragraph, etc.) to aid screen readers when navigating a document.

2) Add Alt Text - (Picture Format tab > Alt Text)

Provide descriptions for images, objects, and charts to communicate visual content to all users.

3) Keep Headings Short

Aim for titles under 20 words to promote clarity and ease of use.

4) Name Hyperlinks Clearly - (Insert tab > Link > Text to display)

Avoid generic phrases like "Click Here," make links descriptive. Good example "Read on Social Media".

5) Simplify Table Structures

Steer clear of complex designs like nested tables or split cells that can confuse assistive tech.

6) Define Header Rows - (Table Design tab > Repeat Header Rows)

Set header rows in tables so screen readers interpret them correctly.

7) Run the Accessibility Checker - (Under Review Tab)

This built-in tool identifies common issues and offers fixes.

ADA Quick Tips for Microsoft Word

Quick Tips to Make an Accessible Document

- 1 Use Document Styles – Use heading and paragraph styles to structure
- 2 Add alt text to images and objects – including charts!
- 3 Use Short titles in headings – less than 20 words
- 4 Name Hyperlinks appropriately – avoid "Click Here"
- 5 Use Simple Table Structures – avoid nested tables or split cells
- 6 Set column header rows in tables
- 7 Use the Accessibility Checker – Under the Review tab



Be sure to [Download ADA Quick Tips – Word Card](#) for future reference!

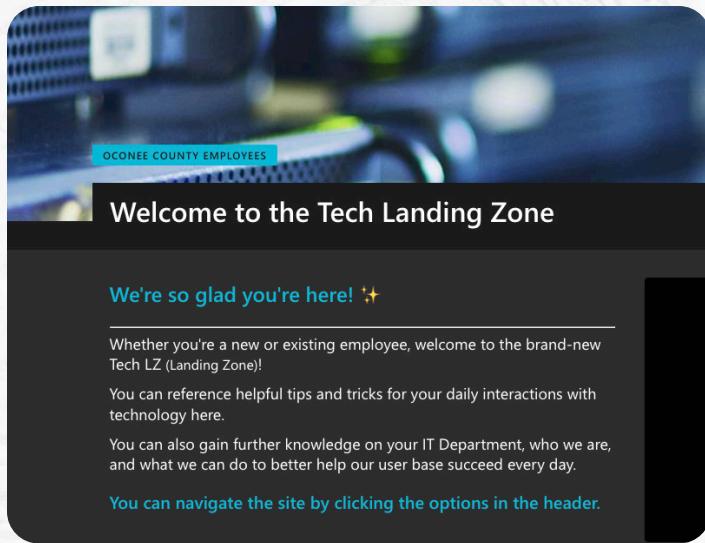
Pollinator Garden Photos

Thank you to everyone who came by to help celebrate the opening of our new Pollinator Garden! We loved seeing everyone enjoying the new garden.

This space is just beginning to blossom! In the coming months, we'll be adding more picnic tables and hardscape features to make it even more welcoming for both people and pollinators.

Stay tuned for more updates as the garden continues to flourish!





From the IT Workroom

Introducing OC Tech Landing Zone (Tech LZ)

We are excited to roll out the IT OC Tech LZ, your go-to hub for technology resources, helpful guides, and IT updates.

Sign in with your Microsoft account (your work email and computer/email password) to access the platform.

Nothing is changing with ticket submissions, please continue to send those to ochelpdesk@oconee.ga.us.

Visit the site and bookmark it for future use below:

[OC Tech Landing Zone](#) or access via the [Employee Intranet](#).

Happy exploring!

— Your IT Team

Knowledge Cafe - Outlook like a Pro

The next Knowledge Cafe will be held Monday, August 11, at 10 a.m. in the North High Shoals conference room in the Administrative Building. Attend via person or via Teams. All materials and a recording of the class will be housed on [the Employee Intranet](#) on the Oconee County website.

Learn to Outlook like a Pro, including using the classic vs new look and RoomFinder. Use the QR code below to sign up!

IT Knowledge Cafe - August



Invasive Plant Species Removal

Another season of Invasive Species Plant Removal at Heritage Park begins this month!

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 next volunteer date is August 26.

Registration is required for this event. [For more information visit our website](#). Heritage Park is located at 2543 Macon Highway, Watkinsville.

Help with removing an invasive species from Heritage Park

<u>AUG</u>	<u>SEPT</u>	<u>OCT</u>
26	9 & 23	7 & 21
<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u>	<u>JAN</u>
4 & 18	2 & 16	6 & 20
<u>FEB</u>		
3 & 17		

9A-1P | Heritage Park

Autumn Olive, though beautiful, is crowding out native species causing ecological harm to our forest and its inhabitants.

No training or experience is required; each volunteer will be trained in identification and removal.



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!

Animal Services

Abbey Ivy 08/21/2023

Communications

Diane Baggett 08/13/2018

Civic Center

Whitney Sperlik 08/03/2003

Clerk of Courts

Angie Elder-Johnson 08/31/1987

Jessica Hart 08/14/2002

Marti Hardigree 08/06/2007

Cristina Prince 08/08/2016

Elections

Jennifer Stone 08/29/2016

EMA

C.J. Worden 08/31/2017

Extension Office

Kelliann Howell 08/01/2023

Facilities

Tracye Bailey 08/10/1998

Fire

Bruce Thaxton 08/11/1997

Russell Henson 08/31/2004

GIS

Shawna Benson 08/08/2022

Human Resources

Jill Faulkner 08/10/2016

Jail

Joshua Morgan 08/15/2016

Zyqavious Tillman 08/05/2024

Law Enforcement

Kandy Marchman 08/06/2001

Quinton Nesmith 08/05/2013

Douglas Mattocks Jr. 08/08/2022

Boris Argueta 08/10/2023

Keith Black 08/05/2024

Parks and Rec

Ramad Hunter 08/20/2003

William Threlkeld 08/08/2023

Jayne Duerr 08/21/2023

Natalie Aguirre 08/24/2023

Laynie Baer 08/28/2023

Lofton Tidwell 08/06/2021

Property Appraisal

Amanda Shelton 08/04/2014

Public Safety

Robert Elder 08/01/2005

Taylor Howell 08/22/2022

Public Works

Michael Weathers 08/09/1993

Charlotte Connell 08/04/2014

James Rogers 08/25/2023

Kyler Daigle 08/19/2024

Senior Center

Virginia Mitchell 08/08/2022

Christi Bittle 08/21/2023

Superior Court

Walker McNiff 08/01/2016

Tax Commissioner

Amanda Mauldin 08/15/2016

Water Resources

Russell Baker 08/03/2020

Chad Wohlert 08/10/2020

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!

Stephen Guest	08/01	Jennifer Stone	08/16
Lorenza Adams	08/03	Kelli Bardner	08/17
Nicholas Chavis	08/04	John Green	08/19
Sophie Warmath	08/04	Sidney Bell	08/22
Todd Gabriel	08/06	Jack Cain	08/23
John Hanley	08/06	Kenneth Davis	08/23
Sheletha Pope	08/07	Marla Brown	08/25
Neang Smith	08/07	Sarah Cumuze	08/25
Liz Smith	08/08	Andy Dunston	08/26
Shawn Corbin	08/09	Kari Giddens	08/26
Gabriel Fairbanks	08/09	Russell Ruggieri	08/26
Bobby Reno	08/09	Kloe Adriance	08/27
Christopher Shook	08/09	Jeannie Caldwell	08/29
Robert Thompson	08/10	William McCarthy	08/29
Rolland Ebright Jr.	08/16	Erin Carlton	08/30
Ramad Hunter	08/16	Chris Glick	08/31
Whitney Sperlik	08/16	Matthew Pilcher	08/31

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.