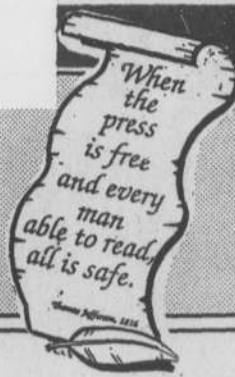


Reader gives his
views on importance
of Freeport

Page 4A



SPORTS

Trojan boys, girls each get
region wins; get ready for
journey to Jones County

Page 7A

WEATHER

Week's outlook:

Weather some-
what warmer with
highs in the 60s
until weekend
when showers
move in. L.Ows in
mid-40s.



PEACH COUNTY

The Leader-Tribune

Vol. No. 106, Issue 2 12 pages

'WHAT THE PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WILL HURT THEM...'

Wednesday, Jan. 11, 1995

50 cents

P.M. PEACH



PACT holds auditions

The Peach Area Civic Theatre will hold auditions for Hansel and Gretel which will be presented in March. The audition schedule: Saturday, Jan. 14, 10 a.m. to noon; Monday, Jan. 16, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Tuesday, Jan. 17, from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. All auditions will be held at the old high school. Young people ages 6 to 13 are encouraged to the auditions. For more information, call Director Mary Paula Hodnett at (912) 825-3860.

Massee holds program

Massee Lane Gardens will hold a Lunch and Learn program Wednesday, Jan. 18, at the Annabelle Lundy Fetterman building. A buffet lunch will be served at noon. Following lunch a program will be presented by Steven Hoy of Harrell's Greenhouses and Nursery in Warner Robins. Cost of the affair is \$15 for non-members of the American Camellia Society and \$13 for members. Reservations are required. For more information, call (912) 967-2358 or 967-2722.



Tag annex office opens

An annex tag office will be open at the Byron City Hall Tuesday, Jan. 31, and Wednesday, Feb. 1. The office will be open every Tuesday and Wednesday until the tag season is over. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

PC, Perry tickets on sale

Tickets for Saturday's basketball game between Perry and Peach County at the Peach County gym, will be available Wednesday through Friday in the high school library. Cost is \$3. Tickets will be limited and can be purchased at the gate if space is available.



Safety seminar planned

Sgt. Jimmy Yancey of the Fort Valley Police Department will hold a personal safety seminar in the Thomas Public Library conference room in Fort Valley on Tuesday, Jan. 24, from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. The public is invited to come out to the library and learn ways to make things safe at home, in the car and on the street. For more information, call Sgt. Yancey at 825-3382 or 822-6976.

Hunt conducts workshop

The next Hunt Primary School Parent Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 19, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Mrs. Joann Denning, director for special education for the Peach County School System will conduct the workshop on Attention Deficit Disorder. Last month's program was conducted by Sgt. Jimmy Yancey of the D.A.R.E. program. All programs are open to the public.

Historical Society meets

The Peach County Historical Society will meet Thursday, Jan. 12, at 7 p.m. at the First Baptist Church Annex on Miller Street. A business meeting is planned and all members are urged to attend with guests.

Byron Library has classes

The Byron Library will be holding adult literacy classes and need adult readers willing to help learners. Tutor training sessions will be conducted and all necessary materials will be furnished by the literacy program. Learners with literacy needs as well as tutors-to-be are urged to contact Beverly Rogers, literacy specialist, at the Byron Library at 956-2200 (Tuesdays and Wednesday) or visit the library on West Church Street.

Chairman addresses taxes

By CINDY MORLEY
The Leader-Tribune

Peach County Commission Chairman Charles Bartlett wants to explain the county's new millage rate - which increased 3.11 mills over last year's rate.

"A lot of people have been asking us about the increase," said Bartlett. "They are asking why it is so high. The county's rate only increased about three mills - from 16.11 to 19.22 - but it also happened that the school board's millage rate went up at the same time."

According to Bartlett, who was set to address the issue at Tuesday night's commission meeting, the school's maintenance and operation millage rate increased almost two mills and the school bond increased from .15 to 4.95 mills. With a state increase of .25 mills, the total millage increase was near 10 mills in Peach County.

Because a mill generates about \$210,000 in 1994, the 3.11 mill increase will generate about \$653,000 for Peach County, Bartlett said. These funds will be used to purchase and install a new computer system for the county (\$246,000), improve fire service from county

PEACH COUNTY MILLAGE RATES FROM 1989 THROUGH 1994

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
State	.25	.25	.25	.25	.25	.25
County	18.89	16.95	16.95	12.57	16.11	19.22
School	9.60	9.45	9.45	10.00	10.00	11.85
School Bond		.15	.15	.15	.15	4.95
Total	28.47	26.80	26.80	22.97	26.51	36.27

fire stations in an effort to reduce lower fire insurance rates (\$90,000) and increase funds for Peach County Hospital (\$141,000). The increased monies will also allow for the hiring of an additional tax assessor, county marshal, and two clerks for Peach County (\$110,000), according to Bartlett.

"We had no choice but to replace the computer system," said Bartlett. "The one we have is antiquated and will not handle the county's needs."

"As for the hospital funds, we increased the money we

gave them, but we still aren't covering all indigent costs."

According to Bartlett, the current commissioners took office with a plan to keep property taxes as low as possible. The first millage rate these commissioners worked with was the 1992 digest.

At that time, the county had a cash reserve of more than \$1 million - more excess funds than are required by the state. According to state regulations, county officials must keep a minimum of four months operating funds in reserves.

"At the time, we chose to absorb a portion of these funds and drop the county's millage rate by 4.38 mills - from 16.95 to 12.57," Bartlett said. "We could have chosen to keep the funds and build a bigger reserve."

The following year, the county absorbed almost \$480,000 and the millage rate was set at 16.11 - still below the 1991 rate of 16.95, Bartlett said.

"This year there were no reserve funds and we were forced to bump the millage rate back up," said Bartlett. "It just happened that we increased the county rate the same time the school board had to increase their rate."

Countdown...



Students are back to work after the Christmas holidays. Here, Derek Tapley, a kindergarten student at Hunt Primary, uses beads to work on his counting skills in Joy Fredericks class. Other students worked on computers and counting boards to broaden their skills. (Staff photo by Cindy Morley)

Students score higher on skills tests

By CINDY MORLEY
The Leader-Tribune

Peach County students showed an increase on the Curriculum Based Assessment Skills Tests and Iowa Test of Basic Skills over last year's scores, according to school officials.

Doris Wilkinson of the Peach County Board of Education, said Peach County's students increased their scores this year on both tests. "We're not where we want to be, we still want to do a lot better. But we showed improvement and that's what counts," said Wilkinson, during

last Tuesday's Board of Education meeting.

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills compares students throughout the country, according to Wilkinson, while the Curriculum Based Assessment Test compares students in different counties throughout Georgia. Both tests are given to third, fifth and eighth grade students.

Wilkinson stated that third and fifth grade students in Peach County "showed considerable improvement."

Wilkinson reported that Peach County students graded high in

computation skills.

"We still need to strengthen our problem solving skills," she said.

The tests include questions concerning math, science, social studies and reading.

In other business:

•Board members re-elected Mike Gilstrap as Chairman and Rachel Rumph and Vice-Chairman and agreed to continue holding meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

•Announced ground-breaking will be held for the Byron Elementary additions Jan. 12 at 10 a.m.

Library plan shelved by state officials

By CINDY MORLEY
The Leader-Tribune

State officials have shelved Peach County's library plans this year.

Gilda Stanbery-Cotney, director of Peach County Libraries, puts the blame on county commissioners because they "refused to sign the state application. Without the commissioners signature, the state kicked out the building program."

But Chairman Charles Bartlett said the commissioners were following the advice of their attorney.

"We didn't refuse to sign the application, we just wanted a few changes to be made in the way it was written," said Bartlett. "We were told that if we signed the application they way it was presented we would be obligated to help fund the construction of the new library. We asked them to write an addendum that stated the county would fund on-going maintenance, but would not fund the construction of a new library. We never heard from them again."

Members of the Library Board had asked county commissioners to fund a portion of the proposed library project. The cost for the county would have been about \$334,000 - to match a state grant of \$1.8 million. Commissioners voted against the request - stating that the question of higher taxes for a new library should be left to voters on a referendum.

Stanbery-Cotney said she isn't sure what her options are now.

"I don't know if the capital outlay funds will be available next year," she said. "There has been major restructuring in state offices, so I'm not sure what funds will be available. But I want to be ready when the time comes. Right now, we are continuing to pursue steps and follow proper procedure to get money from the state in this fiscal year or next fiscal year."

Stanbery-Cotney said members of the Library Board have already given their approval to plans for a new library in Fort Valley - on property donated by Canadyne-Georgia as part of the redevelopment of an arsenic-contaminated neighborhood - and renovations to the Byron Library.

"I don't understand what the problem is," she said. "We have a half-million dollars worth of property and services being donated in order to redevelop an area of town that is in decline." Commissioners said they voted against the project because the size of the proposed library was larger than the county needed.

Hospital Authority plans ER facelift

In a continuing effort to make Peach County Hospital's Emergency Room more patient friendly, members of the Hospital Authority, administrators and several representatives from the hospital staff met with architect Jordan Jelks last Thursday to discuss possible renovation plans.

"At this point, we weren't bound by dollars, we were looking at all possibilities," said Authority Chairman Wilton Walton. "I think the meeting went very well and was most interesting."

"We know we have problems with our emergency room, it was designed several years ago before we had so much traffic," Walton said. "Right now, we are looking at several possibilities for improvement."

"We all agree that if we are going to do something, we want it to be a model for the state," Walton added. "We want to do it right."

Authority members will discuss the proposal at their next meeting.