

Gwinnett Daily Post

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SUNDAY June 12, 2011

TOP HONORS, 1B

Daily Post names Baseball Players of the Year

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GWINNETT PLACE CID



Business Central

Redevelopment, renovations bring new ventures to Gwinnett Place area

BY TYLER ESTEP
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DULUTH — Drive absent-mindedly down Pleasant Hill Road or Satellite Boulevard and you might miss it, but make no mistake — change is happening around you.

A flurry of new businesses, redevelopment and renovations has taken place in the area surrounding Gwinnett Place Mall in recent months, and isn't showing any signs of slowing down.

"It's a very exciting time for the history of Gwinnett Place," said Joe Allen, the executive director of the area's community improvement district. "Within the next 12 months, you're going to see a lot of physical changes."

Those physical changes will come in the form of planned "streetscaping" projects and the beginning phases of the diverging diamond interchange at Pleasant Hill and

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Top left to right, Kaiser Permanente's new expansion, a new shopping center and the new restaurant The Lobster House, under construction in the former Smokey Bones location, are all examples of improvements to the Gwinnett Place community.

CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER DEATHS

Are strict rules the answer?

River fun but deadly respite from heat

BY JOSH GREEN
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BUFORD — In mapping out a business plan eight years ago, Barbara Russell felt uneasy about putting inexperienced kayakers, canoers and tube-riders on the Chattahoochee River north of Garrard Landing Park, a Roswell green-space off Holcomb Bridge Road.

Any farther north, Russell reckoned, her customers would have to contend with intense water releases from Buford Dam, located 16 miles upriver.

"You know, you don't have those gushes of water here," said Russell, general manager of Chattahoochee Outfitters in Sandy Springs.

On a typical summer Saturday, in

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Daily Post picks up 9 GPA honors

JEKYLL ISLAND — The Daily Post won nine awards in the Georgia Press Association's annual Best Newspaper Contest. The awards were handed out during this weekend's convention held at the Jekyll Island Club Hotel.

Photo Editor Jason Braverman placed first for best sports photo and photographer Jonathan Phillips had first-place finishes for photo essay and sports feature photo and also placed second for best website photo gallery.

Copy Desk Chief Nate McCullough placed second in serious column writing and Sports Editor Will Hammock placed third in sports writing.

The paper was also honored with a third-place finish in the Page One competition and earned third place for Layout and Design. The Daily Post also placed second for Best Sports Section.

The Daily Post competes in Division A, which includes the largest papers in the state.

— From staff reports

Study: GGC's economic impact at \$130.6M

BY HEATHER DARENBERG
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LAWRENCEVILLE — Georgia Gwinnett College had an economic impact of \$130.6 million on the Gwinnett region during the 2009-10 fiscal year, according to an economic study

recently released by the Selig Center for Economic Growth.

GGC's economic impact included generating 870 jobs in the local community, in addition to 478 campus jobs, the report said. Daniel Kaufman, the college's president, said construction of campus facilities alone has generated more than \$300 million since GGC opened in

Lawrenceville in 2006.

"Higher education drives a community's economic engine," GGC president Daniel Kaufman said. "Colleges and universities educate the workforce, create innovations through research and help businesses become more competitive through collaborations. A college's very presence contributes to the local economy

through job creation and spending."

Overall, the Selig Center in the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business found that the University System of Georgia had a \$12.6 billion economic impact on the state's economy during the 2010 fiscal year.

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INSIDE TODAY

Weather

Highs in the mid-90s. Lows in the upper 60s.

Nation

Huge Ariz. wildfire spreads, health conditions worsen

Local

In quest for cityhood, Peachtree Corners fast a draw

USA Weekend

Advice from actor Josh Duhamel on keeping the men in your life healthy

US WEEK

Looking for a movie to see? Check out Michael Clark's

Online

Looking for a movie to see? Check out Michael Clark's

Duncan working on 'plan B' for US schools

BY DORIE TURNER
The Associated Press

strated by what he called a "slow motion train wreck" for U.S. schools, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said he will give schools relief from federal mandates under the No Child Left Behind law if

Congress drags its feet on the law's long-awaited overhaul and reauthorization.

That could mean everything from granting waivers on test score requirements to flexibility on how schools spend federal funding, though Duncan offered few details because he said

the department is just beginning to work on its plan.

The Obama administration has called for an overhaul of the 9-year-old federal education law by the fall, but lawmakers have indicated that won't be possible. Duncan told reporters Friday that his first goal is

for Congress to rewrite the law but he wants to put other plans in place in case that doesn't happen this year.

"This is absolutely plan B," Duncan said. "The prospect of doing nothing is what I'm fighting against."

Duncan has warned that 82 percent of U.S. schools

could be labeled failures next year if No Child Left Behind isn't changed. Education experts have questioned that estimate.

Still, no one thinks states will meet the law's goal of having 100 percent of students proficient in math and English by 2014. A school that fails to meet targets for

several consecutive years faces sanctions that can include firing teachers or closing the school entirely.

And Duncan hasn't been shy about granting waivers. In 2009, he granted more than 300, significantly higher than the number given out a year earlier by his predecessor.

Business

•From Page 1A

Interstate 85.

Already happening, though, is an influx of business redevelopment.

Four new stores inside the actual mall aside, several restaurants have recently made their debut or will soon. Existing sites, including the KFC on Mall Boulevard and the Bruster's Ice Cream on Pleasant Hill, have remodeled or reopened with a fresh coat of paint or new ownership.

The state's largest Quik-Trip gas station has opened in the former Macaroni Grill location near Sweetwater Road, and the Mall Corners Shopping Center has been redeveloped with an AT&T store and several other new businesses.

Large corporations like

NCR and Kaiser Permanente have recently expanded their Duluth operations.

A massive, shining silver mantle already on display, Gwinnett Place Ford offers the most striking symbol of the area's budding resurgence. The dealership owned and operated by Casey Coffey has poured money into its in-progress expansion, buying out nearby vacant shopping centers and making use of previously uninhabited land.

"You can drive up and down Satellite Boulevard and see multi-million-dollar properties and businesses that are thriving," Coffey said. "We are very confident in our location as being a great place to do business here in Gwinnett."

Kenny Ly is the director

of operations for The Lobster House, a Buckhead-feel "lounge restaurant" that is scheduled to open in two to three months in the former Smokey Bones location.

"There's less traffic going on in Gwinnett Place Mall, but Pleasant Hill itself has always been a busy place," Ly said.

"Based on what I see right now, I expect (the restaurant) to do very well."

The resurgence in Gwinnett Place can be attributed to, in part, the cautious recovery of the economy as a whole, and Allen expects the area to "continue to stabilize and push up." The influence of government programs and other tools will likely help that.

At the start of last year, greater Gwinnett Place was officially recognized as a

tax allocation district, or TAD. Also called tax increment financing, TADs offer economic development incentives benefitting "underutilized areas targeted for redevelopment."

In short, the government financing supports projects that produce increased property values, reduce crime, create new jobs and revive underused commercial land.

Allen said he also expects the area to soon qualify as an "opportunity

zone," which would give businesses tax credits for the creation of new jobs.

All that will be needed for Gwinnett Place to battle its biggest demon — a much-maligned public perception.

"I think that's our greatest enemy, perception," Allen said, "especially for people that have been in Gwinnett a long time ... We think we remember how things were way back when. And there have been some changes in this area."

Among those changes, though, Allen is quick to point out, is that crime in greater Gwinnett Place has decreased in each of the last four years. In 2010, 1,504 illegal signs and 8.5 tons of trash were removed from 10 miles of roadway through CID-led efforts.

Gwinnett Place, Allen maintains, is still "the county's central business district."

"I think people know there's still a lot of vitality in this area," he said.

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