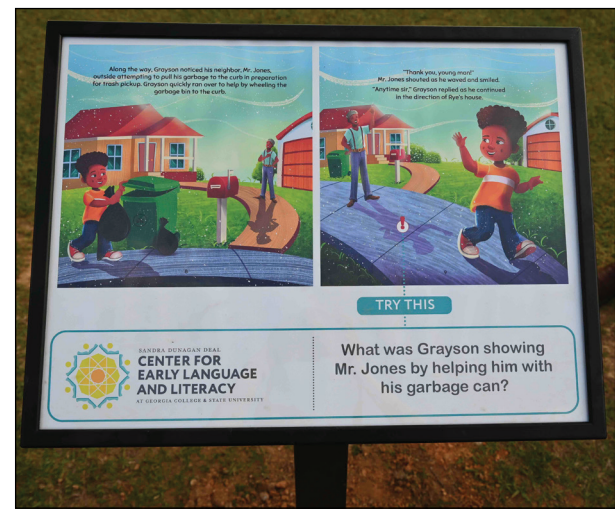




Georgia College's Deal Center opens Tale Trail for Baldwin County families

Growing up all her life in Baldwin County, Ruby Zachary has seen a lot of changes. The latest makes her especially proud. "Pride and happy, pride and happy, yes," Ruby said. "It's real nice. I have no words for it. It's really special. I'm real proud." She's talking about a new feature on a walking path at Collins P. Lee Community Center in Milledgeville. A dozen storyboards now sporadically dot the sidewalk path—enticing families to enjoy the outside together while reading the children's book, "Grayson's Play Date," written by Ruby's son, Steve J. Zachary Jr. It's all part of Tale Trail, a newly installed, shared storybook project funded by the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia College & State University. Even more emotional for Ruby—the trail resides where her old elementary school used to be. The Harrisburg Elementary School has long since been torn down. Only a small portion remains, housing the neighborhood's Collins P. Lee Community Center in Milledgeville. The area has drastically improved, thanks to devoted management by a vibrant civic group that cares strongly about the people living there. They hold food and clothing drives, free health screenings with Georgia College's School of Nursing and maintain the community's vegetable garden. With Tale Trail, the community center is now also a place where families enjoy reading. The quarter-mile trail meanders through sun and shade passing a picnic pavilion, garden and rolling forest. Each storyboard includes questions and activities to increase engagement and understanding. The first storyboard has a QR code for visitors to scan and hear a recording of the author reading his book out loud. Another QR code at the end pulls up a survey, so participants can share their thoughts. A ribbon cutting was held in early April to officially open Tale Trail at the Collins Center. Members of the Milledgeville-Baldwin County Chamber of Commerce provided the ceremonial ribbon and scissors. Former District 2 County Commissioner Tommy French was there to unveil a bench in honor of the late Deacon Joseph Ward Sr., who started the community garden. Ward's wife, Gladys, and their son and daughter spoke in his memory. The author was present, as well, with his son, Grayson, the book's main character. Grayson just turned 8 years old. "To me, the trail is for kids to not only be able to get out there and exercise their bodies but also to be able to exercise their minds," Zachary said. "But they also push toward a goal. The goal is to make it to the end of the trail, read the book and give your perspective on the story by answering questions and doing the activities. This is major for the kids." Tale Trail is only the first of many literacy ventures to come for Baldwin County, according to Dr. Lindee Morgan, executive director of the Deal Center. "Although the Deal Center is a statewide entity, we are part of Georgia College and part of this community," Morgan said. "Every year, we want to do a few projects that contribute to the local community. The

idea for Tale Trail is rooted in our mission to facilitate language and communication development and get children on the path to reading proficiently." "The more parents interact and talk with their children in those early years," she said, "the better prepared they are going to be for formal reading instruction later on. As they read the pages on this trail, it gives families something to talk about." An impressive takeaway from the ribbon cutting is the number of university and community groups that came together to make Tale Trail possible. The idea was originally Kimberly Scott's. As administrative office manager for the Deal Center, she turned to co-worker and early language professional development specialist Jamie Thomas, who then shared the idea with Janet Cavin, who heads Georgia College's Communities in Schools program. Cavin suggested they contact Harrisburg residents at the Collins Center. They "enthusiastically accepted the idea and paved the way for what we're celebrating today," Morgan said. The group even suggested a few local authors. That led to Zachary giving permission to use his book and for its pages to be enlarged by Georgia College's Creative Services with vibrant colors. To install storyboards, Thomas turned to Ashley Copeland, director of Community Engagement and Service at Georgia College. Copeland arranged for 15 members of Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity to spend an afternoon digging 12-inch holes, quick-cementing posts into the ground and bolting Plexiglas® storyboards onto stands. President and junior finance major Riley Kerstine of Marietta, Georgia, said his fraternity "loves to give back." It's important to be seen in the community doing acts of service, he said, because Baldwin County surrounds the university and, therefore, is a home away from home. Freshman Jake Caren of Kennesaw, Georgia, is majoring in business management. As the fraternity's community service chairman, he was happy their muscle work resulted in families reading and spending time together. "We want to make a good impression and leave our footprint in the community, so they can remember us," Caren said. "We love doing manual labor and building stuff, and it's a wonderful day out. It'll be nice for people to walk, stop and read about the story." The book follows Grayson, who's off to meet a friend. On his way, he has many adventures, doing good deeds for his neighbors. Written in 2017, the book has become part of a series on obedience, respect, charity and dignity. Zachary has given hundreds of his books to schools in Tampa, Florida, where he now lives. A graduate of Baldwin County High School, he also donated 150 books to the Early Learning Center in Milledgeville. He stopped to talk with a mother, Chandra Kilpatrick, who was on the trail reading the book to her four children. The author took her hand in his and promised the county hadn't seen the last of him. He intends to dedicate his time, more books and "love" to the community. "It still hasn't settled yet. I'm still in disbelief. What a great honor,"



Above: Author Steve Zachary holds the ceremonial ribbon with Deal Center Executive Director Dr. Lindee Morgan, as Joseph Ward Jr. does the cutting.

Zachary said. "At the end of the day, I'm blessed to be able to have 'Grayson's Play Date' here and to show kids another way of learning, another way of caring for yourself and another way of respecting yourself." He credits his mother, Ruby, for setting him on the right path. "Don't just run around outside," she'd tell him. "Come in and read a book." Now, Ruby will bring her two great-grandsons to the trail and read her son's book to them. This is the purpose of Tale Trail. Passing the love of reading down from generation to generation. "As we prepare to embark on a shining journey through the Tale Trail," Morgan said, "I'm filled with hope, and I'm filled with anticipation for the impact it will have on this community." "When adults engage young children in conversations and interaction and it's connected to a book," she said, "we lay the foundation for future reading success, and we foster a lifelong love for literacy."

GCSU writing award finalists share creative works, gain recognition

The 15th annual Margaret Harvin Wilson Writing Awards ceremony took place March 28 at Georgia College & State University. Out of 63 submissions, five finalists were selected from different writing categories including poetry and short story. In the first year and sophomore category, sophomore Kennedy Welker of Peachtree City placed first and third for her poems "The Last Sheep" and "December 2016," respectively. Placing second, is sophomore Alexia Schauer of Johns Creek for her short story "The Pearls of Majorca." In the junior and senior group, junior Charlotte Axel from Wind Lake, Wisconsin, won first place with her poem "Psalm for Bachman's Warbler." In second place is junior McKenzie Weathers-Skinner of Statham for her poem "Natures Prison." Placing third is senior Lauren Macer of Cumming for her poem "Grow me Towards the Sun." During the ceremony, finalists read excerpts of their written works. Each student was awarded



Writing award finalists with GCSU President Cathy Cox. a certificate and cash prize. First-place winners received \$1,000. Welker put many hours into her works. She submitted two poems and one creative, non-fiction short story. She didn't expect to win the award. "The writing was fun. I enjoyed every minute of it," Welker said. "Placing first means the world

to me." This recognition for her writing gives her confidence, pushing her one step closer toward accomplishing her goal. "I've always aspired to become a full-time author," Welker said. "I can see myself writing from a small cottage somewhere and sharing stories with the world." "Knowing how to write is important because there's great value in words and how we use them," she said. "It's incredible to discover what you can do with words if you're given the opportunity." Being at Georgia College was the first time Axel felt she was part of a community of writers. She plans to spend her winnings on books and traveling to present research at conferences. She encourages her peers to enter the Margaret Harvin Wilson Writing Award. "It's nice to have an opportunity to read your work and be celebrated," Axel said. "There's nothing to lose."

Did you know?

Tonight, Tuesday, April 16, you can be the first to hear original songs written by music and music therapy students at Georgia College & State University. Come marvel at their talent. This free "Songwriters" concert is at 7:30 p.m. in Max Noah Recital Hall. Students enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor in Music Therapy or Masters in Music Therapy programs will present original compositions from classical and tradition to modern and folksong styles. "Moonlight Lullaby" by Preston Raburn will be performed along with the GeeCee Saxophone Quartet. Liam Mueller will perform "A Homeless Man Aggressively Came Up to Me for Money" with violin, voice and Ethan Chase on piano. Sara Carr will do "Tiny;" Campbell Random will perform "Fountain of Youth" and "The start of the end;" Oliver Sanchez will present "Forget me," "Lust" and "Island Boy;" and Meghan Jennings will do "If You Want Me To," "Blank Slaters and Small Towns" and "Sugar and Spice."

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/events

What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Tuesday

16

Noon-2 p.m. GCSU Campus Petting Zoo at Ina Dillard Russell Library greenspace. Sponsored by Campus Activities Board.

2:30 p.m. GCSU's Rural Changemaker's Lecture Series hosts two speakers, David R. Montgomery and Anne Biklé, who will talk about reclaiming health and growing food in good soil. At McIntosh House.

7:30 p.m. "Songwriters" concert featuring original works by GCSU Music and Music Therapy students in Max Noah Recital Hall.

Wednesday

17

6:30-8 p.m. GCSU Creative Writing Program undergraduate and graduate students will read their original works in the Pat Peterson Museum Education room at Ina Dillard Russell Library.

5-7 p.m. the GCSU Art Department holds "Presence," an exhibition of student art and research from this academic year at Leland Gallery in Ennis hall.

6-7:30 p.m. GCSU's Music Therapy program and the Life Enrichment Center present the "Old Time Rock and Roll" concert in New City Church at the Mill, 224 E. Walton Street, Milledgeville.

Thursday

18

10 a.m.-2 p.m. GCSU Student Media Day will be on Front Campus with multiple student media groups tabling information. Larra Lynch, former anchor and current news director at 13WMAZ will give a talk later in the event about her professional career.

6-7:30 p.m. GCSU's Music Therapy program and the Life Enrichment Center present the "Old Time Rock and Roll" concert in New City Church at the Mill, 224 E. Walton Street, Milledgeville.

Friday

19

11 a.m.-noon Dr. Ayesa Liles, associate professor of Criminal Justice, will speak about a student podcast featuring stories of incarcerated individuals. The talk will be in the Pat Peterson Museum Education room at Ina Dillard Library.

Saturday

20

8 a.m.-2 p.m. GCSU's Office of Community Engagement and Service will hold a free public event & community yard sale, "Greenway Day," at Oconee River Greenway in Milledgeville. Includes Kids' Corner, guided nature walks, food truck, music, full moon float and more.

4-9 p.m. GCSU Softball vs. USC Beaufort in a doubleheader at Peeler Complex.

7:30 p.m. GCSU "Music at the Mansion" concert and celebration of spring at Georgia's Old Governor's Mansion.