

# Rabun County Alliance

formerly West Rabun Property Owners ~ Est. 2001



## Spring 2020 Newsletter

*“Seeking Leadership and Accountability in Government”*

### RABUN COUNTY GOLF COURSE

Rabun County Golf Club and the Rabun County Board of Commissioners are proud to present a new clubhouse at the golf facility, which will be opening soon. The building is virtually complete and its surroundings are now being finished. Parking will be greatly improved from the previous clubhouse, and the building and its view will be a welcome sight! The opening date will be announced later. The new clubhouse, built with SPLOST funds, is a replacement for the golf shop that was built in 1989 using the original swimming pool pavilion structure.

In the late 1930's, a group of businessmen from Clayton saw the need for a recreational facility in the depression-burdened area of Rabun County. Ten of these far-sighted men contributed their own money to buy 125 acres of land south of Clayton, and began the process of building Rabun Country Club with the help of the Work Projects Administration. The WPA was a federal “New Deal” program formed to build infrastructure and give jobs to people who were suffering from the Great Depression. A golf course, tennis courts, and swimming pool were built and deeded to the City of Clayton to maintain. A marble plaque stating “Rabun Country Club 1940” still greets people today.

### 2020 PRIMARY ELECTION

Due to the Public Health Emergency brought on by COVID-19, opportunities to vote in person in the upcoming primary election may be limited.

The General Primary has been moved to June 9, 2020 with early voting beginning May 18, 2020 thru June 5, 2020. Social Distancing will be in place which means 6ft apart and only one voter at a time in the office to vote. We would also like for the public to wear personal protective equipment to help protect the poll workers. So, if you choose to come in and vote in person during early voting please plan for a longer wait time and standing outside the office 6 feet apart.

On the day of the election, June 9, 2020, Social Distancing will also be in place and again keep in mind that you could have longer wait times and be at a higher risk so please wear personal protective equipment to protect you and those around you. The General Primary ballot is long and will take more time to vote so this could also add to your wait time.

Application for official absentee ballot is available for all voters and gives you the safety of voting at home. As we have come to learn, things can change rapidly, so voting by mail may be a good option. If you need an application for an official absentee ballot or if you have any questions please call the office at 706-782-1878. — *Tammy Whitmire, Board of Elections*

[RCA: A sample ballot is available for you to review online at [rabuncountyalliance.com](http://rabuncountyalliance.com).]

### 2020 UNITED STATES CENSUS

I hope this article finds everyone doing well as we continue to follow the Governor’s “Stay at Home” order. I can’t thank everyone enough for their cooperation during this most unusual time in our county and our country. I believe things have gone well in Rabun County and that this will all be over soon and things will begin to return to normal.

The last two weeks of March you should have received a letter from the Census Bureau with a 12-digit code on it that would allow you to go online and complete the Census. Some may have received one or two additional letters. Later, you probably received a postcard reminder to complete the Census. If you did not receive a letter, you can still go online and complete the Census at [my2020census.gov](http://my2020census.gov), just go to the link below the area asking for your 12-digit code.

During this Pandemic the Office of Outreach Operations of the Census Bureau has made some changes. The Bureau suspended field operations until April 30 and may make additional modifications as needed. Non-response field operations have been delayed, as well

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR:** Visit the Chamber of Commerce at [gamountains.com](http://gamountains.com) for Rabun County events.

Visit [georgiapowerlakes.com](http://georgiapowerlakes.com) for helpful lake information from Georgia Power.

Visit [lakerabun.org](http://lakerabun.org), [lbca.net](http://lbca.net), and [seedlake.org](http://seedlake.org) for the various Association events.

Men’s Christian Fellowship meets every Friday, 7:45–9:00am (706-782-7425 for more info).

Visit [rabuncountyalliance.com](http://rabuncountyalliance.com) for items of importance you may hear or wonder about between newsletters.

#### ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP

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**V.P. Environment**  
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**V.P. Health Care**  
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**V.P. Roads**  
David Bacon

**V.P. Fire Protection**  
Justin Upchurch

**Neighborhood Watch**  
Stacye Morgan

**Website**  
Mike Hammer

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as the counting of the homeless and group quarters. Self-response options such as mailing in the paper form, responding by phone, and responding online will be extended from July 31 to August 14. Detailed information on these changes can be found on the main U.S. Census website at [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov).

If you do not have access to the Internet or Wifi, we have set up the Wifi at the Civic Center and the Library without password protection so that anyone can use a laptop or mobile device from the parking lots to access the Internet. Many students have taken advantage of this by using the Chromebooks that were issued to them by the School System. Once the Library opens back up you will be able to use the three new computers, purchased with Census money, that are dedicated just for citizens to complete the Census.

I want to encourage everyone to complete the Census as soon as possible. The numbers are used to help determine the distribution of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal and state funds. We're talking hospitals, highways, rural roads and school lunch programs. The main purpose of the Census is to determine the distribution of the 435 Representatives in Congress. The 2010 Census resulted in Georgia gaining an additional Representative. So please take the time to complete the Census. It is very important for our county and our state. *—Kent Woerner, Census Manager*

## A DIFFICULT BUT APPROPRIATE DECISION

My name is Mike Walters and, as communicated earlier by Charlie Brundage, I made a recent decision to retire from my role as editor of the Rabun County Alliance Newsletter. Since making that decision, I have become comfortable that it was an appropriate decision, but I also acknowledge that I gave up something that meant the world to me. A few years ago, I was diagnosed with early stage Alzheimer's (an affliction that took my brother's life at the tender age of 61) and knew that my cognitive capacity would only deteriorate in the years ahead. So I knew then that I was facing the decision I made in the near-term future.

I had a good career with The Coca-Cola Company and was well treated, so I was able to retire and focus entirely on my own interests in my mid-50's. And one benefit of my fortunate career was the decision Joan and I made to buy a lakeside home on Lake Burton. We had visited people there and the opportunity to establish a residence on the lake was joyful. As it turns out, it was one of the best decisions I think we've ever made.

The big benefit of retiring was that, after years of working hard to establish a comfortable retirement, I was then able to focus on doing something that I never seemed to have the time to do while employed: give back to the communities which I so enjoyed. And one of the first things I did was get involved with the Lake Burton Civic Association. One benefit of that involvement was that I got to know many people, including Charlie Brundage, a rabid Rabun County supporter and the head of the Rabun County Alliance. As things progressed, Charlie asked me if I would consider getting involved with his newsletter, and I was honored to do so.

I have told many people that Joan and I were very fortunate to have "discovered" the magnificent aura of the Lake Burton environment. Incredible natural beauty, wonderful people from many places, a great golf course (yes, I'm an avid golfer) and a very comfortable place to spend time. And becoming the editor of the RCA newsletter gave me the desired opportunity to give back to this community that I truly loved. "Giving back" included communicating the beauty and majesty of the area, identifying things that would improve life for those who resided there, helping locals make good decisions about prospective County commissioners who could continue the uptick of lifestyles in Rabun County, etc. Anyone who resides in Rabun County understands these things, but Charlie's request that I edit his

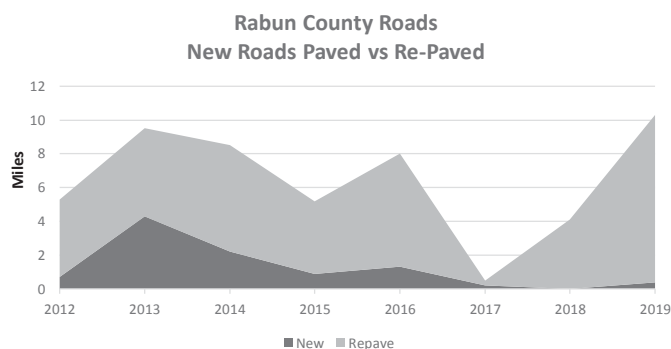
newsletter gave me the opportunity to broadcast those messages to many folks, some of whom are only part-time visitors.

I am very thankful for the opportunity I had to communicate my positive view of life in Rabun County, and help identify things that might add to the quality of life there. From time to time I got messages from newsletter subscribers that reinforced my conviction that we could and did make a difference in lifestyles there. Now I will simply sit back and enjoy one of the most beautiful and relaxing places I ever could have hoped to enjoy, Lake Burton and Rabun County. *—Mike Walters*

*Rabun County Alliance has been very fortunate to have Mike Walters as the editor of the Rabun County Alliance newsletter for the past eleven years. His dedication to Rabun County and to this organization has been outstanding. He has done a wonderful job editing the newsletter and promoting life in Rabun County. His influence will be terribly missed and we thank him for all of his efforts and hard work.*

## COUNTY ROAD WORK WITH SPLOST FUNDS

The graph below illustrates the miles of new roads paved versus repaved roads. There is a road paving contract let for an additional 11.8 miles for repaving some roads in 2020. This includes Burton Dam Road, Wolfork Road, Murray Cove Road, Germany Mountain Road, and Bridge Creek Road. If you believe the County should put more attention on paving new roads, we strongly encourage you to



make your opinions known to County officials.

"We do have plans this year to start paving some of the roads we widened last summer. We have not determined which of these roads we are going to pave yet. The asphalt plant has just reopened for this year and we generally start out by doing patching and maintenance on the roads from damage that occurred over the winter." *—Scott Provance*

## STATION #3 GUN RAFFLE

Tallulah-Persimmon Fire Department is raising funds for new equipment with a raffle for six firearms—a 12-gauge over-under shotgun, a Savage .308 Winchester bolt-action rifle, a youth Cricket .22LR bolt-action rifle, an ATI .22LR carbine, and two Glock .22LR pistols. Raffle tickets are \$20 each, limited to 500 total tickets, and are available for purchase at Reeves Hardware in Clayton and at The Farmhouse Market on US 76 West.

With large gatherings still likely an issue in the coming weeks, the drawing will be conducted on a Facebook live stream on June 2, 2020 at 7pm. Six tickets will be drawn, one winner for each gun. Entrants do not have to be viewing online in order to win. Winners will be contacted after the drawing, and background checks will be required before a prize can be claimed.

Visit the Tallulah-Persimmon Fire Department on Facebook for ongoing news and updates about the Department, the Raffle, and to watch the June 2 drawing.

## LAKE BURTON CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

Lake Burton is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary this summer with many exciting events. This list is tentative based on COVID developments in Rabun County and Georgia. Please refer to the Lake Burton Civic Association calendar of events for updated information prior to each event at [www.lbca.net](http://www.lbca.net) or follow the events on Facebook or Instagram this summer.

### MAY

**Wooden Boat Parade/Show:** Sunday, May 24, 11 am  
Start–Timpson Cove, Show–LaPrades Marina 1pm

**Arrival and sale of “Southern Eden”:** a Centennial History of  
Lake Burton, by Michael Maffett, LBCA Member

### JUNE

**Lakes Fire Department Fish Fry Fundraiser:** Saturday, June 13  
Time TBD, place–Lakes Fire Station

### JULY

**Lake Burton Fun Run:** event is cancelled for this year

**Annual Lake Burton Fireworks Show:** Saturday, July 4, 9:30pm

**Wildcat Fire Department Fried Chicken:** Saturday, July 22  
Time–TBD, Place–Wildcat Fire Station

**LBCA Charity Golf Tournament:** Friday, July 31  
Registration opens 7:30am, Place–Waterfall Golf Club

### AUGUST

**Tour of Homes:** Saturday, August 1, 9am–3pm  
Tickets are Required

**Centennial Plaque Dedication:** Saturday, August 22, 10am  
Place–Lake Burton Park

### SEPTEMBER

**Closing Fireworks Show:** Labor Day Weekend, 9:30pm  
Place–North end of lake, bridge on US 76

## NEWS FROM LAKE RABUN – 2020 ACTIVITIES

Lake Rabun Association is concerned about the health and safety of the Lake Rabun Community. Because of the COVID-19 virus, they have canceled all Memorial Day Weekend activities. This includes the Trustees meeting, the Saturday night party, and the General Membership meeting. All activities for June have also been canceled.

At the end of May, LRA will consider what to do about July 4th events. There may be some activities and not others. The July 4th plans will be communicated as soon as decisions are made, and those decisions will be made with everyone's health and safety in mind.

## CORONAVIRUS—IT IS NOT OVER—TAKE CARE!

A brief snapshot of COVID-19 cases for Georgia State, Rabun County, and surrounding counties.

		Cases	Deaths
Georgia	April 1st	4,744	154
	May 1st	27,680	1174
Rabun		13	1
Towns		21	1
Habersham		343	8
Stephens		87	1
Oconee SC		25	0
Macon NC		3	1

## RABUN COUNTY RECYCLING

During this trying time the County Recycling Centers have kept operating as normal. Boggs Mountain facility operates Monday thru Friday 8:00–5:00, Saturday 8:00–12:00. Laurel Lodge Road facility will keep its normal Summer schedule, Friday 12:00–5:00, Saturday and Sunday 9:00–6:00, Monday 8:00–6:00. All other Centers are open Monday thru Saturday 7:00–7:00, Sunday 12:00–5:00. *Remember, everything that we recycle saves tax dollars.*

## FIRE SERVICES REPORT

This year has gotten off to an interesting start, to say the least. As far as call volume, Rabun County Fire Services has responded to slightly more calls than last year with our total as of April 24 at 530. I would like to say that it has been business as usual with our department but we all know better! Our department has had to adapt to all of the changes brought on by COVID-19. Across the county, all the departments have had challenges to overcome while facing this outbreak. We have made several changes in our response protocols as well as staffing that I would like to share with you.

We implemented a lockdown of all of our facilities to the public. With the shelter in place orders, we suspended all training meetings and departmental activities with the exception of responding to emergencies.

Our normal staffing has the four paid personnel responding from Fire Station #1 in Clayton to all calls across the county Monday through Friday and two firefighters on the weekends. Because of the risk of cross contamination of 4 personnel if one was to get exposed, we made changes and spread ourselves out in the county. One at Station 1 (Clayton), one at Station 3 (Tallulah-Persimmon), one at Station 4 (Lakemont-Wiley), and one at Station 5 (Valley). This manning is only in effect Monday through Friday from 8am until 4pm. We felt this necessary because if all 4 personnel working one day got infected, that would account for half of our entire paid staff.

To protect the volunteers that do such a great service to the community, we altered our responses to medical calls to hopefully lessen the chance of contaminating one of them. Nothing has changed as far as our response to auto accidents, traumatic injuries, and all types of fires.

I cannot say enough about how our people, volunteers and paid staff alike, have stepped up to this challenge and performed amazingly. I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the citizens as well as businesses in this great county that have supported us during these trying times. From making sure we are fed, to donating face masks and hand sanitizer, to keeping us in their thoughts and prayers daily, we have been blessed as a service to be supported by the people of our county. The individuals and businesses are too many to list. Please know that your contributions have not gone unnoticed and we as a service thank you from the bottom of our hearts. As I have said before, this is what makes Rabun County such a great place to live and work! If you need anything, please reach out to me at [jupchurch@rabuncounty.ga.gov](mailto:jupchurch@rabuncounty.ga.gov) or 706-782-2751. –Justin Upchurch

## SHERIFF'S REPORT

With the COVID-19 Pandemic encroaching on our daily lives whether personally or professionally, I thought I would let you know how your Sheriff's Office has been responding to the health concerns created by this virus. Our staff first started making changes at the detention center by limiting the inmates' contact with the public. We temporarily suspended in-person visitation, outside work detail activity, and mail service with the exception of correspondence with the inmates' attorney. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic started, we had implemented video visitation to allow the inmates visitation with their loved ones for the same cost as a voice call. We have also





## Rabun County Alliance

*formerly West Rabun Property Owners*

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*Rabun County Golf Club will soon open its brand new clubhouse at the public golf course south of Clayton.*



put into operation a mail service that will open mail, scan, and send it to the inmate's account. This process is similar to email communication ensuring that they can read letters from their loved ones. This preventive method eliminates exposure to the mail for both employees and inmates. Although we have suspended several of these things out of an abundance of caution, the leadership of this office has worked to find a sensible alternative that protects the health of the inmates as well as our employees. We have also increased the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting our detention center. With the assistance of our medical company, we have applied a medical screening for both arrestees entering our facility as well as employees. Staff are wearing masks at all times when contact is made with an inmate. By being proactive with prevention, we have been fortunate to have no reported cases in our detention center.

The Sheriff's administrative office at the courthouse has stopped or limited public access. If someone comes to the office for assistance, our staff will practice social distancing and they will meet the individual in the parking lot for service with their need.

Most non-emergency calls are being managed by phone and we are using the postal service or email to send copies of accident/incident reports to the requesting parties. For additional prevention and safety for employees and citizens, our deputies are only responding to emergency calls to limit their contact with the public.

Our hope is that by being aware and using caution, we will reduce their chance of contracting COVID-19. All deputies and necessary staff who interact with the public have been issued the proper protective equipment to use while responding to calls. They have also received sanitizing products to disinfect themselves and their vehicle after the call has been closed.

We appreciate the patience and understanding that has been shown for our office during these procedural changes while we try to make the best decisions for our employees as well as our citizens. We may have temporarily changed some operating procedures, but we have not changed our commitment to serving our citizens. We encourage you to continue to follow the current health safety guidelines provided by the CDC. By the time the next newsletter is published, I pray we are under better circumstances and we have a healthy Rabun County and nation. —*Sheriff Chad K. Nichols*

### **DO YOU HAVE COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL SKILLS?**

With Mike Walters stepping down as Editor of this newsletter, Rabun County Alliance is looking for someone with a like-minded appreciation of all that Rabun County has to offer, interest in our local government, great communication skills, and available time to devote to shepherding this newsletter into existence every three months. If this description fits you, please contact Charlie Brundage of the Rabun County Alliance at 706-782-4043.