

# Rabun County Alliance

formerly West Rabun Property Owners ~ Est. 2001



## Winter 2021 Newsletter

*"Seeking Leadership and Accountability in Government"*

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE — TWENTY YEARS

**Charlie Brundage, Founding Member**

We have existed for twenty years as West Rabun Property Owners and then Rabun County Alliance. All of the founding members that started the Alliance those years ago have passed away, except for myself and one other who moved away.

Because there is no one in line to take over operation of Rabun County Alliance, we have decided to shut down. We have ceased billing members for dues. Newsletters and the website [rabuncountyalliance.com](http://rabuncountyalliance.com) will continue as long as existing funds permit.

If you or anyone you know would be interested in keeping the Alliance going by taking over its operation, please contact me, Charlie Brundage, at 706-782-4043.

### FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE WITH A VACCINE

*Tim Madison, brother of local resident Tom Madison, recounts his experience with one of the COVID-19 vaccines:*

I received my second dose of the Pfizer vaccine on Friday morning. As advertised, the side effects were more pronounced than the first. Initially, there was some minor arm pain which became more pronounced by Friday night. Still, I drifted off to sleep as usual. I was awakened about two hours later by a significant experience of the "shivers." My entire body was trembling. It took some effort to swallow a couple of Tylenol but that, along with 3 blankets, got me settled and back to sleep in under 30 minutes. I awoke Saturday morning feeling fatigue and a headache, but after 3 hours of being awake, those symptoms began to dissipate. A few learnings:

1. The general term "flu-like symptoms" does not include for everyone the bout of shivers. I'm grateful that

I had listened to some interviews of the brave research subjects as they identified their side effects. Without that knowledge, I would have been debating whether to seek medical attention. With that knowledge, I was able to re-frame the uncomfortable experience as what my immune system needed to do when it fully recognized the presence of the vaccine.

2. I'm very grateful that I had the second dose on a Friday so that I had Saturday to recover.
3. When you have the second dose, set up some easy-to-reach water, Tylenol, and blankets in case you experience the shivers.
4. My unpleasant night is still nowhere near the misery our hospitalized COVID-19 patients are experiencing. I have zero regrets and much gratitude for the opportunity to receive this historic vaccine.

Roll up your sleeves the first chance you get! —Tim Madison

### CORONAVIRUS STILL SPREADING, EVEN WITH VACCINE

A snapshot of COVID-19 cases for Georgia State, Rabun County, and surrounding counties as of January 2021.

	Cases	Deaths
Georgia State	727,752	13,065
Rabun	1,318	35
Towns	881	40
Habersham	4,217	116
Stephens	2,617	65

**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

**President**  
Charlie Brundage

**V.P. Editor**

**V.P. Environment**  
Harold Taylor

**V.P. Health Care**  
Dr. Guy Gober

**V.P. Membership**  
Patricia Sheehan

**V.P. Public Safety**  
Chad K. Nichols

**V.P. Recycling**  
J. P. Miles

**V.P. Roads**  
David Bacon

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

**Neighborhood Watch**

Stacye Morgan

**Website**

Mike Hammer

[rabuncountyalliance.com](http://rabuncountyalliance.com) ★ PO Box 377, Tiger, GA 30576 ★ 706-782-4043

## RABUN COUNTY REAL ESTATE

Welcome to 2021 Rabun County! Although the economy took several unexpected twists and turns in 2020, the housing market remains on solid ground as we enter 2021. The market experienced a few changes in 2020 as inventory decreased and buyer demand increased. Buyers' needs have shifted as nearly one-third of aspiring homebuyers would look for a home with a dedicated office and more square footage.

Suburban cities across the U.S. have experienced an increase of new residents looking for more space and affordability in a time of remote work opportunities. What we are seeing is a "decentralization" as Millennial buyers are leaving more expensive, densely populated areas in favor of more affordable regions. What that means for us is that the ability of Atlanta residents to now work remotely is now making Rabun County an even more desirable location to live. Working through our issues with cellular service and high speed internet brings more potential.

As this demand exhibits itself, we are seeing another very important result. Current Rabun County residents are having more difficulty finding homes because of the competitive nature of the market. This demand for homes does not seem to be preferential to one category either, as we see Starter Homes, Next Level Homes and Forever Homes all in high demand. Home prices have increased due to low inventory, which allows sellers to get higher profits from their property.

Whether you need more space or it is time to downsize, the combination of these events could be a great opportunity for sellers. As the weather warms up and our summer population begins to arrive, we expect to continue this "Seller's Market."  
—Ken Fortney, *Poss Realty*

## 2020 PROPERTY TAXES FOR RABUN COUNTY

Property taxes collected in Rabun County were dispersed as follows:

County	\$ 17,289,557
Schools	\$ 16,250,153
Total	\$ 33,539,690

The largest tax payer in Rabun County is Georgia Power, contributing \$9,654,890 to that total. Lake property lease holders reimburse Georgia Power the following amounts:

Seed	\$ 184,047
Rabun	\$ 1,292,515
Burton	\$ 6,450,433

Total property tax reimbursements collected from lease holders by Georgia Power is \$8,750,433, leaving a \$904,457 total paid outright by the company.

## RABUN COUNTY ROADS

Rabun County has many asphalt repairs due to hurricanes that came through and badly damaged several roads. Once the asphalt plant opens this spring, the County is putting out an 8.5 mile repaving package for bids. The County will continue widening Wolf Creek Road for future paving, and is waiting on the box culvert for Bear Gap Road to be engineered, built, and delivered. Everyday maintenance of all County roads is ongoing. If you have any questions about Rabun County roads, call Scott Provance at 706-960-9764.

## COUNTY ROAD PAVING & SPLOST CONCERNS

According to a 2019 Georgia Department of Transportation report, Rabun County contains 63.52 miles of State roads, 361.11 miles of County roads, and Clayton has 79.39 miles of City roads. According to this report, County roads are comprised of 204.32 paved miles and 149.72 unpaved miles.

The Alliance is concerned with the use of local SPLOST funding, which is understood to be earmarked for use on "new projects," being applied to the resurfacing of existing County roads instead of being used to improve unpaved roads. Recent information indicates that the County has resurfaced 54.5 miles of roads using SPLOST funds since 2012, while only paving 10.9 miles of previously unpaved roads over that same period.

## SAM D. KING, 1947–2020

I first met Sam King in 2004 when we began construction of our North Georgia mountain home on Charlie Mountain. For the past 16 years, he has been my friend—in many ways, my best friend. We worked together, laughed together, and sometimes suffered together. He had the ability to make others feel accepted and feel good about themselves, and his quick smile and positive outlook on life were contagious.

During the past several months of his life here on Earth, Sam was very sick. He endured countless trips to the hospital that were painful and often discouraging. His treatments would have caused most men to simply give up—yet I never heard Sam complain about any of it, or blame anyone else for his illness. He never gave up, fighting his affliction with the same contagious positive spirit that he displayed in every other battle in his life.

I know Sam is in Heaven right now. In fact, I suspect he's riding around on his ATV, offering Jesus the benefit of his advice on matters deserving of His attention.

His departure has left a void in my life and many others as well. He was my friend, and I miss him. —Tom Madison

## UPDATE FROM RABUN COUNTY SCHOOLS

We are pleased to report that we returned to on-campus instruction on Jan. 19, 2021. We continue to use all of the mitigation practices that we have in place to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19. Of all of the students that have been quarantined this school year, only 1 has tested positive during the quarantine period. We feel that we are providing a very safe learning environment for our students and staff. Since we returned on Jan. 19, 2021, we have had two cases that required others to be quarantined due to exposure. Our nurses assisted the Health Department in the vaccine process. We eagerly await the availability of vaccines for our employees.

We have approximately 200 students who are continuing virtual learning during the spring semester. This is about 50% of the students who chose virtual learning at the beginning of the year.

Charles Black Construction won the bid for the construction of the Rabun County Agri-Science Center (our farm project) and is currently working with architects and our Ag teachers to finalize the plans. Construction should start this spring.

The renovation of our tennis courts is scheduled to start at the end of the spring season and take approximately one month to complete. With the renovation, a 5th court will be added to allow us to host regional tournaments.

The school system has received additional CARES funds. These funds will pay for the added expenses resulting from COVID-19 and will provide additional services to students who have struggled academically during this time. *—April Childers, Superintendent*

### **RABUN COUNTY RECYCLING**

The recyclables have been good over this last quarter. Please keep up the good work and save taxes! *—Alan English*

<u>Cardboard</u>	<u>Mixed Paper</u>	<u>Scrap Metal</u>
91.52 tons	47.83 tons	144.82 tons

### **FIRE SERVICES**

Rabun County Fire Services was fortunate to have a large donation of smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, combination smoke/CO alarms and fire extinguishers from our local Home Depot in Clayton. This donation will prove invaluable to our smoke alarm program. If you or someone you know is in need of smoke alarms or carbon monoxide alarms, feel free to stop by our headquarters at the fire station in Clayton at 14 Emergency Drive. As a reminder, smoke alarms should be tested monthly and batteries should be replaced every six months when you change your clocks unless you have one of the sealed battery types. Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years. You should have at least one Carbon Monoxide detector if you have any natural gas or propane appliances such as gas logs, gas water heaters, gas stoves, or gas furnaces. February is a great time to remind everyone of home heating safety.

- Space heaters account for two of every five (40%) home heating fires and four out of five (84%) home heating fire deaths.
- Always have a 3 foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.
- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from heating equipment.
- Make sure fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.
- Plug space heaters directly into wall outlets and never into an extension cord or power strip.
- Allow ashes from wood-burning heaters and fireplaces to cool before disposing of them. Place the ashes in a covered metal container and keep the container at least 10 feet from your home or anything flammable.
- If you smell gas, do not light the appliance. Leave the building immediately and call 911 and the gas company.

The COVID vaccine was offered to our paid and volunteer firefighters last month and we had quite a few get their first injection, given by the health department. As always, if you have any questions or concerns feel free to reach out to me at 706-782-2751 or [jupchurch@rabuncounty.ga.gov](mailto:jupchurch@rabuncounty.ga.gov). *—Justin Upchurch*

### **SHERIFF'S REPORT**

The challenging year of 2020 is finally behind us all! As with everyone 2020 has been a year of many firsts and has forced us all to look at different ways to perform our job duties as well as the way we live our lives. We had to make some proactive changes here to keep our deputies and staff safe, to keep the virus from entering our detention center, and to keep the courthouse staff and citizens safe. The one thing that COVID-19 has not changed is crime and thankfully the brave men and women of the Sheriff's Office have performed their duties without hesitation or any hazard compensation. All of the employees have continued to faithfully serve throughout the pandemic not knowing how this virus would affect them along with the worry of possibly taking it home to their loved ones. So, I would like to personally thank all these public servants and to the community for supporting the Office of the Sheriff during these new and unfamiliar times.

As always, the Rabun County Sheriff's Office is proud to provide an annual summary of our service and activities to our community. The Patrol Division, which is our most visible division, responded to a total of 6,734 calls that were dispatched through Rabun County 911. Sheriff's deputies completed 1,074 incident reports, 356 accident reports, and issued 445 citations along with 623 warnings. Deputies provided an array of services, including 167 vehicle unlocks, 1,412 business checks, 84 funeral or other traffic escorts, and responded to 495 business/residential alarms. To proactively prevent crime, deputies patrolled 212,775 miles throughout the year.

As a result of vigilant drug and dealer interdiction, deputies made 100 drug arrests for 2020. The K-9 Unit was deployed 51 times to assist in searching for drugs and missing/wanted people. Our Criminal Investigation's Division opened 162 cases and successfully closed 122 cases in 2020.

A total of 832 people were processed through the Rabun County Detention Center. An average daily population of 71 inmates were housed in the jail. Detention officers transported 171 inmates to court and 13 people to various mental health facilities across the state. We are extremely proud of our continued efforts towards our incarceration, education, and rehabilitation goal as we offered powerful courses to inmates that are designed to equip them with skills to make better life choices upon their release.

The Courthouse Security Division maintained the security of the courthouse during business and after hours. COVID-19 especially made this a challenge and these deputies along with the other offices in the courthouse have done a fantastic job in maintaining safety and keeping our courthouse open daily. These deputies provided security for 235 sessions of court and 33 Commissioners' and/or Planning and Zoning meetings. A total of 20,953 people visited the courthouse in 2020. In addition, a total of 808 civil papers were served. The Training Division not only conducted in house trainings but coordinated trainings through other agencies as well; deputies and detention staff received a total of 2,857 training hours during 2020.

With the unknown of COVID-19 being present for the majority of 2020 this has made our community involvement a little more difficult. With that being said we were still able to interact and be involved with different activities and events over the past year. We started our Citizen's Law Enforcement Academy





## **Rabun County Alliance**

*formerly West Rabun Property Owners*

**P.O. Box 377**

**Tiger, GA 30576**



*Among the many things that Rabun County has to offer, this aerial photo from Scott Poss encompasses the Primary-Elementary-Middle-High Schools, the Recreation Department, and the Arena.*

in March and after one week we had to cancel because of COVID-19. Before the virus was present here, we were able to do some presentations at the primary school before virtual learning was implemented. As stated earlier we were able to graduate 10 inmates from our 7th Prime 4 Life Course at the detention center. Sheriff Nichols was proud to be involved with the formation of the Rabun County Mental Health Task Force involving the public and private sector of Rabun County. Sheriff Nichols participated in the #firstresponderreadingchallenge via Facebook. The Sheriff's Office was able to participate with other sectors of public safety in family events through participation in public safety parades. Through our generous donors of the Shield 616 Project, we were able to use some of those funds to purchase face masks through that organization. Sheriff Nichols also spoke to those assembled prior to the peaceful march through Clayton after the death of George Floyd in Minnesota. The Sheriff's Office participated in the first Faith and Blue Weekend which was started to build stronger bonds between law enforcement and the community. Sheriff Nichols, co-chairman of the Mountain Judicial Circuit Family Violence Task Force, participated in the virtual Vigil to honor the victims and survivors of family violence incidents.

The Sheriff's Office participated in Operation Watchful Eye V. This Georgia Sheriff's Association initiative focuses on every Sheriff in the state checking in on all the registered sex offenders in their counties at the same time. Deputies worked to verify the status of 38 sex offenders living and/or working in Rabun County. Four of those offenders were already

incarcerated leaving 34 to verify. The Sheriff's Office attended meetings with the Boy Scouts showing them the K9s and the benefits of having them here in our county.

Speaking of the K9s, both handlers and dogs were successfully re-certified for another year in narcotics detection and tracking. Capt. Darnell and her staff organized a Christmas toy drive for the inmates' children with help from Tabernacle Baptist Church. Our final accomplishment of the year was receiving a domestic violence grant through the CJCC which will take effect in 2021. For more information on your Sheriff's Office, visit our website at [www.rabunsheriff.org](http://www.rabunsheriff.org), follow us on Facebook, or download our free mobile phone app from your app store.

With all the uncertainty of 2020, I hope we can move forward learning how to live productively in the COVID-19 world. It has presented some challenges at the Sheriff's Office but we have adapted and overcome those for the most part. Some of that is learning new ways to provide our services but, in the end, we are still here to faithfully and without hesitation serve our community to the best of our ability. We pray that we all will have a safe and prosperous 2021!

*I would like to thank the citizens of Rabun County for re-electing me to my second term serving as the Sheriff. A lot of things were accomplished in my first term as promised, but that would not have been achieved without the dedication of all the men and women of the Sheriff's Office. I am excited about the direction of the office and I am looking forward to what we will achieve over the next four years. —Sheriff Chad Nichols*