

**SENIOR NIGHT**  
Local schools like Rabun County salute their basketball seniors — SEE SPORTS SECTION



**Racking Up A Win**  
More than 400 attend One for the Wall Deer Contest as award-winning antlers on display — SEE PAGE A5



# The Clayton Tribune

THURSDAY, February 2, 2023

theclaytontribune.com

Vol. 126, No. 2 ■ \$1.00

## Rabun selected for housing study



By Megan Broome  
News Editor

### Lack of affordable housing a critical problem

The growing need for affordable housing in Rabun County continues to be a hot-button issue as an influx of tourism and people moving to the area as permanent residents have affected housing availability for many working families within the past few years.

Commissioners, city officials and members of Forward Rabun, a public-private partnership for community and economic development, have held numerous town halls and grappled with how to manage growth throughout the county

while providing affordable and available housing and jobs for people.

Public officials are working to address the housing crisis and Rabun County was recently selected for a housing study.

A panel from a prestigious

international association of real estate and land use experts visited Rabun County this week on Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 1-2, for a hands-on study of ways to address housing affordability and availability in the county, according to a press release from Forward Rabun.

Please see **STUDY, A7**

Today, Feb. 2, before 5 p.m. is the deadline to cast your ballots for Rabun County's best of 2023. Ballots are available at *The Clayton Tribune* office at 84 Plaza Way in Clayton.



## STAR Student Krockum strikes academic chord with Leff as her 2023 STAR Teacher

**Rabun County High School**

By Megan Broome  
News Editor

Rabun County High School senior band student Skylar Krockum is a leader to her classmates when it comes to music and learning as she was recently named the school's 2022-2023 STAR Student.

The Student Teacher Achievement Recognition (STAR) honors the highest achieving high school seniors and the teachers who have been most instrumental in their academic development. To be named a STAR Student, a student must meet certain criteria such as they must be in the top 10 percent of their class and have the highest SAT score that is at the national average or higher, according to the Professional Association of Georgia Educators website.

The recognition also looks at extracurricular activities among other criteria for the honor.

Krockum chose Dr. Matt Leff, director of bands at RCHS, as her



Megan Broome/The Clayton Tribune

Senior Skylar Krockum is the 2022-2023 Rabun County High School STAR Student. Krockum, who plays the saxophone, chose Dr. Matt Leff, RCHS director of bands, as her STAR Teacher because of the significant positive impact he's had as a mentor in her life. Krockum had the highest SAT score for the Class of 2023.

STAR Teacher.

The STAR Teacher is selected by the declared STAR Student for having made the most significant contribution to the STAR Student's scholastic development, according to the website.

"We are excited to have Skylar represent Rabun County High School as our 2022-23 STAR Student," said RCHS Principal Justin Spillers. "She is an incredible young lady and we couldn't be more proud of her."

Krockum said she has always loved music and has played the saxophone for many years. She said she loves "the versatility" of the saxophone and that it has a

Please see **STARS, A6**

## County library has limited opening after water damage

By Megan Broome  
News Editor

After being closed since December due to water damage, the Rabun County Public Library had a "limited opening" Feb. 1 with patrons being able to access and utilize only certain areas of the facility.

The library will be open with limited availability through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and closed on Saturday.

Library Branch Manager Dyana Costello Banks said the goal is to open fully on Monday, Feb. 6.

The library closed until further notice because of a pipe burst during the extended cold weather over the Christmas holiday weekend last year.

The building, located at 73 Jo Dotson Circle, Clayton, suffered water damage. The burst pipes were discovered when a staff member was at the library to collect items from the book drop during the holiday weekend, Banks said.

Banks said that during the closure, staff and crew members worked to restore portions of the library that were damaged.

During the limited opening, patrons will have access to the Community Room located in the front of the building.

"The restoration is complete, but the clean-



Megan Broome/The Clayton Tribune

Beginning Feb. 1, patrons can once again return books to the blue library return bins located in the parking lot. The feature was closed during the library closure for renovations. No late fees were accumulated for patrons during the closure.

ing is still ongoing," according to a post on the Rabun County Public Library Facebook page.

Banks said all due dates have been extended until Feb. 6 and no fines should have been accrued during the closure.

Banks said the blue library return bins located in the library parking lot were opened back up Wednesday, Feb. 1, and patrons can once again drop off checked out items.

Banks said during the limited opening, shelves featuring new books,

Please see **LIBRARY, A8**



Rabun Gap-Nacoochee STAR Student Aidan Min selects Chip Miller as STAR Teacher; Tallulah Falls School STAR Student William 'Trey' Greene chooses Adam Greiving as STAR Teacher ■ See Page A3



## Blessed in God's grace

Choices Pregnancy Center holds blessing for new ultrasound machine

By Megan Broome  
News Editor

Choices Pregnancy Center was lifted up with prayers, love and support Saturday, Jan. 28, as dozens of people attended the open house and blessing for the new ultrasound machine.

The faith-based, non-profit is located at 790 N. Main Street Suite 202, Clayton and offers free and confidential resources to pregnant women and parents from the moment of conception through the ear-



ly years of life, among other helpful resources. The grand opening was held on July 15, 2022.

Carla Wright, executive director of Choices Pregnancy Center, said the organization welcomes all faith-based

denominations. It offers a resources side and a medical side to gauge the many areas of need for expectant parents.

The resources side offers encouragement and needed supplies such as food, diapers, wipes, blankets and other educational materials while the medical side provides confidential care to clients. The facility also offers parenting classes.

"We're so excited," Wright

Please see **BLESSING, A8**



Father Luis Alvarez blesses the new ultrasound machine.

Megan Broome/The Clayton Tribune

3 sections, 28 pages

INDEX

WEATHER

Church..... B7 Obituaries ..... A6  
Classifieds ..... C1-12 Opinion ..... A4  
Community Board ..... A5 Police Blotter..... B2

High 45-59  
Low 33-42

Rain showers  
See page A2.



**99 KOLBY LANE, CLAYTON, GA 30525**  
Park Model Log Cabin located on a secluded lot between Clayton & the Chattooga River near Bull Stuce. Check out the screened porch, it's absolutely awesome! 3 B/R septic installed for future build/additions. A great base camp to live simply & efficiently in the North Georgia Mountains!  
MLS# 10116910 • \$165,000



**RE/MAX**  
Town & Country

**JONBARNWELL**  
TEAM

29 E SAVANNAH ST.  
CLAYTON, GA 30525  
**REMAX.COM**  
O: 706-960-2304  
C: 706-490-0326  
BuyRabun.com



**434 CHARLIE MOUNTAIN ROAD, CLAYTON, GA 30525**  
Lake Burton golden-age cabin and bathhouse situated on a very nice waterfront GPC lot near Anchorage Marina. Long range sunset views of Timpon Cove, deep water at the dock, and the most convenient access available to Clayton shopping and restaurants. This is a great location to build your dream home!  
MLS# 10090759 • \$1,250,000

## IN BRIEF

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE A2

Tick Road, Clayton. The menu includes: Starters: Tossed Caesar Salad; Entrees: Romano-style chicken, veal marsala with egg fettuccine, Marzetti casserole; Sides: Creamy polenta, cauliflower oreganata, Italian roasted potatoes, balsamic roasted tomatoes, toasted parmesan breadsticks; Desserts: Tiramisu trifles, blueberry cheesecake.

### Clayton Cafe & Market Raise a Fork for Great Causes Spaghetti Dinner

Clayton Cafe and Market will be having its Spaghetti Dinner Raise a Fork for Great Causes event benefiting Place of Hope on Monday, Feb. 20, beginning at 5 p.m. with the last seating at 7:30 p.m. Cost is \$25 per plate and serving salad; spaghetti; dessert and drink (beer and wine additional charge). Volunteers are Vaughn Rogers and a crew from Reeves Ace Hardware.

### Rabun Rendezvous returns in February

The Rabun Chapter of Trout Unlimited is proud to announce the return of a longstanding annual tradition. The 36th Rabun Rendezvous -- a full evening of entertainment celebrating rivers, streams, trout and trout fishing -- will return Saturday, Feb. 18. Join us at the Dillard House Conference Center starting at 4:30 p.m. for a pig-pickin', followed by a dinner buffet, music from the Foxfire Boys and our famous raffles and silent auction loaded with goodies for everyone in the family! Get your advance tickets online for \$45 per person, \$25 for youth under 15 at rabuntu.org. After a

three-year hiatus, Rabun TU members are excited to revive the annual Rendezvous, offering great eats, toe-tapping bluegrass music and a fantastic auction of fishing gear, trips, artwork, local services, themed gift baskets and more. We'll have something for every member of the family. Proceeds from the event support our mission of protecting and improving the coldwater fisheries of Northeast Georgia. Your support will allow us to sponsor fishing education programs for youth, women and military veterans, and assist with stream restoration and other habitat improvements that benefit the trout we all cherish.

### MedLink Women's Center Chamber After Hours and Open House Event

Forward Rabun/Rabun County Chamber of Commerce would like to invite everyone to an After Hours and Open House Event for MedLink Women's Center on Thursday, Feb. 23, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at 563 Mountain City Road, Clayton. Come out and enjoy some great refreshments, network with other local businesses, and help welcome MedLink to Rabun County.

### Rabun County Democratic Committee to hold election

The Rabun County Democratic Committee will hold an election for its State Representative to the State Democratic Committee at a County Committee meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 28, at 4 p.m. at the Parker Ranch. The County Committee will also elect officers to fill the vacancies of Chair and Third Vice Chair. Nominees are J.M. (Mac) Bennett for State Representative, William Stueck

for Chair, and Dee Daley for Third Vice-Chair. Please submit additional nominations to Chair@RabunDemocrats.com. For more info see rabundemocrats.com.

### Popular Master Gardener classes starting soon

Start your new year off right! Do you love gardening but want to learn about proper horticultural practices and make a difference by applying your new-found skills back in your community?

Apply now for the next Georgia Master Gardener Class starting March 7! Sponsored by the University of Georgia Extension Volunteer Program, classes are open to citizens in White, Habersham, Rabun, Banks, and Stephens counties in north Georgia. You'll receive training and education to give unbiased, research-based, helpful information to the public in these communities.

Classes begin March 7, once per week, 8:15 a.m.-noon thru May 23. Most classes will be held at the extension office in Habersham County (Clarkesville, Ga.), with some field trips and online lessons. After you complete the course, 50 hours of volunteer service are required in the first year with many projects to choose from in easy-to-achievement gatherings with like-minded folks. Twenty-five hours per year are required thereafter. Fee is \$150 for 42 hours of expert instruction and your very own Georgia Master Gardener 680-page Handbook. Jan. 20 is the deadline for more information and to register/pay at your county extension office.

■ Rabun County 706/782-3113  
Visit this website for more details, a list of class topics and dates, and more info on master gardener events and happenings [www.http://headwatersmastergardeners.org](http://headwatersmastergardeners.org).

### Rabun County Republicans Precinct Caucus

The Rabun County Republican Party will convene a Precinct Caucus to elect Delegates and Alternate Delegates to the Rabun County Republican Party Convention on Saturday, March 11, at 9 a.m. at Clayton First United Methodist Church north campus, 205 Ministry Mountain Drive. The County Convention will then convene at exactly 10 a.m. for the purpose of electing county party officers, delegates and alternates to the Ninth Congressional District Convention and the Georgia State Convention. Additionally, the Rabun County Convention will conduct all other business as necessary. All Rabun County residents who are legally registered to vote and believe in the principles of the Republican Party are urged to participate in this process. The Ninth Congressional District Convention will convene on Saturday, April 15, at 10 a.m. at a "The Venue at Friendship Springs" in Flowery Branch. The District Convention will be electing officers for the district and State Committee members for the next biennial. The Georgia Republican Party State Convention will convene at 2 p.m. on Friday, June 9, at the Columbus, Ga. Convention and Trade Center and will elect state party officers for the next biennial, in addition to conducting all other business as necessary. For further information, contact Edsel Fickey, chairman of the Rabun County Republican Party, at 404-316-7821 or RabunGOPchairman@gmail.com

### Rabun County Planning and Zoning to hold soil erosion class

The Rabun County Zoning

Office will be holding a Soil Erosion "Blue Card" Class on March 14 and 15. Anyone needing certification or to recertify needs to call Shylan Wood at Rabun County Planning and Zoning 706-782-1579.

### Mountain City Playhouse

NO SECOND SATURDAY DANCE ON FEB. 11 DUE TO THE F.A.I.T.H. BALL

■ Feb. 3-April 21 – Ballroom Dance Classes 6-6:45 p.m. Basics; 6:45-7:30 p.m. Advanced (as needed); 7:30-8 p.m. Social Dance; Cost per class: \$10/adult, \$5/student  
■ Feb. 18 – 6:30-8:30 p.m. – Ties and Tiaras Dance Details to come  
Calling all Mountain City, Dillard, Otto dancers, we will have a reunion. Please join us Saturday, Feb. 25, at 6:30 p.m. for a night of family fun. Kornbread Kreek will be playing all your favorite tunes. Admission is \$10/adult, \$5/student  
■ Blue Ridge Activity Center (BRAT Center)  
Feb. 11 – Parents' Night Out 4:30-9:30 p.m.  
Feb. 18 – 4:30-8:30 p.m. – Open Gym  
Feb. 25 – 4:30-9:30 p.m. – Open Gym  
Please check out our [mountaincityplayhouse.com](http://mountaincityplayhouse.com) website for more information.

### Clayton Baptist Church offers free groceries

Free Groceries every first Tuesday of the month at Clayton Baptist Church. This event is open to everyone, and is organized through There's Hope for the Hungry.

### 'Wonderful Wednesdays' at Wolffork Baptist Church

"Wonderful Wednesday" is for kids! Each

Wednesday from 6-7:20 p.m. we offer a wonderful experience for kids, Pre-K through teens, starting with a light meal ... then fun, games, music, activities and learning from God's Word! Wolffork Baptist Church is located at 453 Wolffork Church Road, Rabun Gap. For more information, directions, or a ride call 706-782-7624 or Email: [kids@wolffork.org](mailto:kids@wolffork.org)

### Ladies Community Bible Study

Join us as we study the Gospel of John in Community Bible Study every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to noon at Clayton Baptist Church. This nondenominational Bible study is open to all women. Child-care is available. To learn more or register, visit [rabuncounty.cbclass.org](http://rabuncounty.cbclass.org).

### North Georgia Technical College Rabun County Classroom open

North Georgia Technical College has reopened its Rabun County classroom. It is located at 46 Plaza Way in the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia building. It is open Mondays and Wednesdays. Please contact Stephen Kramer at [skramer@northgatech.edu](mailto:skramer@northgatech.edu) or call 706-754-7839 for more information.

### Kiwanis Club of Rabun County

The Kiwanis Club of Rabun County meets every first and third Thursday of the month at noon at United Community Bank, second floor in the conference room in Clayton. Bring your own lunch. If your passion is children and you love camaraderie, come join us! For more information, call either Debbie at 706-490-3258 or Dina at 706-331-1221.

## STUDY

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

### Rabun County selected for ULI TAP study

The study was conducted by the Atlanta Chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), which is "the oldest and largest network of cross-disciplinary real estate and land use experts in the world," along with its affiliate the Terwilliger Center for Housing.

"We are very fortunate to be selected after a competitive application process for this ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) study which will bring knowledge of how other communities like us have approached the problem of housing availability and affordability for working families," said Rick Story, executive director of Forward Rabun, in a press release.

In addition to the ULI TAP study, Rabun County was recently chosen to be a participant in the University of Georgia's Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) to assess the housing situation in the county.

Story said both of these resources are beneficial to the county.

Robert Pittman, co-vice chair of Forward Rabun, said the TAP panelists are experts in the field and travel to different areas so they can gauge what a community's problems are. Pittman said the group uses that knowledge to showcase how Rabun County compares to other areas. Pittman added that locals are the best resource in highlighting the needs in the county.

### Gathering local input

Mickey Duvall, busi-

ness and economic development strategist for Forward Rabun, said the panelists were scheduled to talk with dozens of people in the county with different professions including educators, realtors, small business owners, manufacturers, and others to get input from different points of view and different kinds of people.

"It takes input from all of these fields," said Forward Rabun Board member Dr. Stephen Arbitter about the importance of talking to many people.

Pittman said panelists look at areas all around Rabun County that "would be the best sights for further housing developments."

After the two-day field research, panelists presented preliminary findings to Forward Rabun. Those preliminary findings were not available as of *The Clayton Tribune* press time. The panelists are expected to report back in approximately six weeks to present complete findings.

The ULI TAP study is funded by contributions from the national ULI office, the Lake Rabun Foundation, the Development Authority of Rabun County and Forward Rabun, according to the press release.

The cost of the study was not disclosed to *The Clayton Tribune*, but officials said the benefit significantly outweighs the cost.

"This study will be helpful in providing community feedback," Story said about its importance. Story added that there is not a quick solution to the housing problem, but that Forward Rabun is working with the county and cities to address it.

Pittman said the goal is to be "proactive and not reactive" and to let growth happen "for us" and not "to us."

### Bringing jobs to Rabun County

Arbitter said housing is an important topic and cited that many professions, such as teaching, are having difficulty in hiring people because they cannot find places to live. Arbitter said there are "very real, on-the-ground reasons" why this study needs to be completed.

Arbitter added that commissioners and city officials also are working to update zoning ordinances in their respective areas to try and alleviate problems in order to bring affordable housing to the county while preserving the beauty that the mountains have to offer.

"Housing is a key to enhancing our labor force, providing local employers with the workers they need to run their businesses successfully, and improving quality of life for so many

residents-something we heard about loud and clear from our surveys, town hall meetings, and other public input for our strategic plan for economic development," Pittman said in Forward Rabun's press release.

Pittman also highlighted the importance of how to balance economic development while preserving the beauty and integrity of the land in Rabun County.

Forward Rabun conducted a strategic plan for community and economic development in Rabun County last year to gain input from locals around the county and discuss their "vision" for the future of the county.

Pittman said it was clear in the strategic plan that lack of affordable housing is a critical issue in the county. Pittman said other topics mentioned by participants in the strategic plan were the importance of preserving

the beauty, heritage and small-town way of life in Rabun County while also bringing better jobs.

Claude Dillard, chair of Forward Rabun, said it is important to discuss infrastructure as well because high-density housing requires good and reliable infrastructure.

"Nobody knows Rabun County like its residents, but I believe we will benefit greatly from the extensive experience in the housing industry of the panelists and the insights they can give us regarding our specific situation here," Dillard said in the press release. "Improving housing availability and affordability in Rabun County is certainly a long-term effort, but now is the

time to get started."

### About the ULI TAP study

A TAP panel consists of unpaid volunteers from the 1,500 ULI members in the Atlanta District Council chosen specifically for each assignment. Panelists usually include at least one for-profit or nonprofit developer, designer and/or planner, market and/or financial analyst and a regulatory expert.

The ULI has recently completed similar studies in Cashiers, N.C.; Vail and Steamboat Springs in Colorado; and other communities where tourism is a major economic driver.

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Please take notice that the Rabun County Board of Commissioners will conduct a public hearing on a proposed amendment to the CODE OF ORDINANCES OF RABUN COUNTY, GEORGIA. The public hearing will take place at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, in the court room of the Rabun County Courthouse, 25 Courthouse Square, Clayton, Georgia, 30525. After said public hearing, the Rabun County Board of Commissioners will convene their regular monthly meeting on said Tuesday, February 28, 2023, in the same court room of the Rabun County Courthouse, 25 Courthouse Square, Clayton, Georgia, 30525 for the purpose of, among other things, having the second and final reading and approval of the proposed amendment to the CODE OF ORDINANCES OF RABUN COUNTY, GEORGIA.

The purpose of the aforesaid hearing at 6:00 pm on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, in the court room of the Rabun County Courthouse, 25 Courthouse Square, Clayton, Georgia, 30525 is to discuss, consider and receive public input concerning the amendment to the CODE OF ORDINANCES OF RABUN COUNTY, GEORGIA as follows:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 56 OF THE RABUN COUNTY CODE TITLED "ZONING" to impose a short term moratorium on any development/building projects that are non-traditional and not specifically provided for in the current Code of Ordinances.

The first reading of the amendment to the CODE OF ORDINANCES OF RABUN COUNTY, GEORGIA was approved by the Board of Commissioners at its January 24, 2023, regular meeting.

Interested individuals may review the proposed amendment to the CODE OF ORDINANCES OF RABUN COUNTY, GEORGIA by contacting the Clerk of the Rabun County Board of Commissioners, the County Administrator in the Office of the Rabun County Board of Commissioners, Suite 201, 25 Courthouse Square, Suite 201, Clayton, Georgia, 30525 or a copy of said Ordinance amendment is on file for public inspection at the Office of the Clerk of Rabun County Superior Court for the purpose of examination and inspection by the public and also at the Office of the Clerk of Rabun County Commissioners, Rabun County Courthouse, Clayton, Georgia..

## The Clayton Tribune

### Immediate Opening for

### NEWSPAPER DELIVERY PERSON

This requires driving to our printing plant in Cornelia each week (we provide the van), picking up bundles of newspapers and distributing them to stores and rack locations throughout Rabun County.

Must be able to lift newspaper bundles, collect money from racks and dealers, keep accurate records and perform other duties as required.

Reliability is a must.

For more information, please contact:

Enoch Autry, Publisher

[EAutry@cninewspapers.com](mailto:EAutry@cninewspapers.com)

706-782-3312