

July/August 2016

# City Beat

## City Opens New Wastewater Treatment Plant

Valdosta and Lowndes County voters who passed a continuation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) referendum in 2013 were publicly credited for the debt-free opening of the City of Valdosta Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) at a ribbon-cutting event on July 12. Over 100 attended the event to tour the public facility that has been built to the highest standards and meets quality service delivery requirements for generations to come.

The event also celebrated the completion of the Force Main Project, which includes the construction of a 6.2-mile force main, four new lift stations, a new headworks structure for the new WWTP, and a 6-million-gallon equalization basin.

The two projects represent the investment of more than \$60 million in the city's sewer collection system over the past three years, of which all major projects were completed ahead of schedule and within budget.

For more on the new plant, visit our [website](#).



## City provides First Step in small business development



The City of Valdosta strives to maintain a proactive business environment and encourages new development in our community. These new businesses provide jobs, enrich the fabric of our community, and stimulate the local economy. A link located on the City of Valdosta's website can aid anyone from the first-time entrepreneur to the seasoned developer with primary steps to building a successful business in the city limits.

Starting a business is exciting; however, it can also be challenging. First Step was designed to be one of the "first steps" in establishing a business. First Step meetings are held every Thursday morning at 9:30 a.m. and last approximately 45 minutes. The meetings are informal discussions that give potential developers a chance to meet with representatives from city departments such as Engineering, Fire, Inspections, Arbor Division, Planning/Zoning, Public Works, Utilities and outside agencies such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Health Department. Citizens must reserve a spot at the meeting in advance.

**See First Step, Page 2**

## First Step (continued)

From the city's website, citizens may access information about First Step and Pre-Application meetings, as well as plan submittal and review, permitting and inspection processes, obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy, and applying for a business license. Additional links on the city's website provide information about the City of Valdosta Land Development Regulations, Valdosta Small Emerging Business Program, Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center, and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce and more.

Contact the city's Planning and Zoning Division at 229-259-3563 for additional information about taking that first step.

## Hundreds Attend Job Fair



On July 19, hundreds of local job seekers attended the Community Job Fair, a partnership between the City of Valdosta, Goodwill Southern Rivers, Epic Advertising and The Beanery. Twenty vendors offered on-site interviews and hopes for future employment.

## Main Street Receives 2016 Accreditation



*Birdie's Market (top) and Book & Table (bottom) are two of the newest businesses in Downtown Valdosta.*



Valdosta Main Street has been designated as an accredited 2016 Main Street America™ program for meeting rigorous performance standards set by the National Main Street Center. This year marks the 32nd consecutive year that the Valdosta Main Street program has received this honor for their exemplary commitment to preservation-based economic development and community revitalization.

Valdosta Main Street is evaluated annually by Department of Community Affairs Office of Downtown Development, which works in partnership with the National Main Street Center. Evaluation criteria determines the communities that are building comprehensive and sustainable revitalization efforts and include standards such as fostering strong public-private partnerships, securing an operating budget, tracking programmatic progress and actively preserving historic buildings.

Over the past 18 months, Main Street welcomed nine new businesses, nearly 60 jobs and over \$5 million in private investments that will bring new development projects and businesses to downtown. Among the exciting developments underway include a downtown Wyndham Hotel, a parking garage and several new businesses.

Furthermore, dozens of downtown events—such as the Taste of Downtown Valdosta, Brown Bag Concert Series, Farm Days, Art Walk, First Fridays, and the Holiday Open House, for example—welcome approximately 40,000 visitors to downtown annually. Last year, Valdosta Main Street hosted a town hall session that resulted in the creation of several new events and processes that have improved communication and increase foot traffic. For example, the lighting in Bennie's Alley has been upgraded to make the popular gathering place brighter and more attractive for pedestrians and outdoor events.

For more information about Valdosta Main Street, call 229-259-3577 or visit [www.valdostacity.com/main-street](http://www.valdostacity.com/main-street).



take  
**ADVANTAGE**  
of the city's  
**SPECIAL PICKUPS**

Summer is a great time to clean and declutter the home, and citizens should remember that the city's sanitation crews will pick up debris piles and large items at no cost to residents, as long as the pickups measure no larger than 4 ft. x 8 ft. x 5 ft.

Citizens are not even required to call Public Works to arrange these special pickups, and this service can prove very useful and convenient for residents who are getting rid of unwanted items and debris.

For more information on sanitation services, call 229-259-3590.



## Valdosta Youth Council Goes The Distance

The Valdosta Youth Council has proudly adopted the .6 mile portion of N. Lee Street, from E. Hill Avenue to Gordon Street. Posing in the photo in front of one of two signs installed on N. Lee Street on June 20 are: Mayor John Gayle, Matthew Hall, Erin Kelly, Drew Correll, Abbi Long, Amelia Barnett and Jalith Harding. The VYC accomplished their first cleanup, collecting six bags of trash on the street that runs in front of Valdosta City Hall as well as into the nearby neighborhood.

The VYC was created for youth to build leadership skills and learn about civic responsibility, to gain a better understanding of municipal government, and to prepare youth for a lifetime of public and community service. In its inaugural year, the VYC accomplished a great deal, including the initiation of an anti-bullying campaign and anti-littering project.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2016-17 council year. [Learn more.](#)



## Valdosta's Own Named State Firefighter of the Year

The city congratulates VFD Firefighter Tangela Rowe for being the recipient of the 2016 Georgia State Firefighters Association Firefighter of the Year award. Rowe will be recognized at the 2016 Georgia Fire Service Conference in Atlanta on Aug. 13 and also at the Firefighter's Recognition Day at the State Capitol on Feb. 7, 2017.

Rowe is one of only three female VFD firefighters in a pool of 110 certified fire service professionals who serve our citizens.

## APPLY NOW FOR Citizens Fire Academy

Citizens have the opportunity to go behind-the-scenes with the Valdosta Fire Department via the annual VFD Citizens Fire Academy. Since 2014, the program has educated citizens and the business community about the services provided by the VFD.

The next annual Citizens Fire Academy will begin in September 2016. Participants are exposed to all aspects of the department's operations and witness demon-

strations on search and rescue, extrication, and fire prevention; participate in the Ride-Along Program, a live burn, high-angle rescue, and how firefighters' personal protective equipment works; visit the 911 Emergency Center and VFD Training Center; and all participants receive their CPR certifications.

To obtain an application or additional information, call 229-333-1835.



# VFD Promotes 14

## Boards & Commissions Vacancies



The Valdosta Fire Department held a promotion and recruit graduation ceremony on July 15 to recognize the following VFD staff promotions in the presence of their families, co-workers and friends. Congratulations to the following:

**Promotions to Lieutenant:** Robert Mercer, Charles Phillips, Anthony Solberg, Jordan Washington, Scott Watson and Ricky Alderman; **Promotions to Sergeant:** Darriet Gordon, Christopher Scott, Scott Garren and Trey Cothron; **Promotion to Special Operations Captain:** Jeffery Thibodeau; **Promotion to Fire and Life Safety Educator:** Tangela Rowe; **Recruit Graduates:** Steve Walker and David Jones.

Citizens who seek a rewarding public service role in the community are encouraged to apply for the 10 positions currently vacant on the city's boards, commissions, authorities or advisory committees. These volunteer positions, requiring only a few hours each month, are designed to give citizens a voice in their local government and allow them to influence decisions that shape the quality of life for residents in the community. Anyone who has been a resident of Lowndes County for at least six months prior to the nomination is eligible to apply.

The city seeks to ensure all citizens are aware of opportunities to serve, to have a professional process through which to seek appointments, to appoint qualified individuals who have a willingness and desire to serve, and to ensure diversity in the makeup of the entities. For more information or to obtain the necessary forms, visit [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com) or call 229-259-3500.

## Traffic Signal Upgrades Underway

A Georgia Department of Transportation project underway in Valdosta will modernize signals and improve pedestrian safety at 12 intersections along North Ashley and North Patterson streets.

The project includes installing intersection video detection systems to improve traffic flow, upgrading all traffic signal equipment and converting the signals to mast arms instead of the current span wire. The signal heads will utilize LED lights, which use less electricity and last longer than incandescent bulbs. Pedestrian improvements will include new crosswalks, countdown signals and wheelchair ramps that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The project will bring the intersections up to current design standards.

Some of the intersections targeted in the project are in the busy Five Points area of Valdosta. The U.S. 41/State Route 7 Business/North Ashley Street intersections are East Gordon Street, East Ann Street, East College Street, East Moore Street, East Park Avenue, Rosedale Place/Bemiss Road, Cowart Avenue, Northside Drive, Smithbriar Drive and the Oak Street Extension. The inter-

sections on SR 7 Alternate/Patterson Street are Smithbriar Drive and Northside Drive.

Work may cause intermittent traffic interruptions, but drivers shouldn't encounter any major delays during the project. Passers-by may notice orange pipes that are behind the curb and sidewalk. Those mark conduits that were bored beneath the road to house the electrical wire used in the traffic signals. The pipes will be cut off and will not be visible when the project is complete. The contractor also dug holes in the striped islands at several locations to locate existing underground utilities. The holes were backfilled and marked with cones, which should be removed today. The striped islands will eventually be raised medians.

Motorists are advised to drive with extra caution when traveling near the work zones. The \$1.8 million project is scheduled to be complete early next year. For more information on the project, contact GDOT District Communications Officer Nita Birmingham at 229-391-5463.



# PROTECT YOUR HOME DURING HURRICANE SEASON

Hurricane season officially began June 1st. By being proactive, homeowners can protect themselves and their property from flooding, which is typically the biggest problem associated with hurricanes and tropical storms in our region. The time to prepare is before the storm, followed by periodic maintenance to keep stormwater flowing off your property and into the stormwater system.

Property owners can prepare for hurricane season by:

- ✦ Keeping debris out of storm drains and ditches.
- ✦ Reporting clogged ditches and culverts.
- ✦ Cleaning out gutters and extending downspouts.
- ✦ Removing all yard items/debris from obstructing storm drains and ditches.

Remember, only rain goes down the storm drain! For more information, contact the Stormwater Division at 229-259-3530.

help us

## Keep Valdosta Beautiful



take our

### Anti-Litter Web Survey

▶▶▶ **CLICK HERE**



don't forget to

# CLICK 'N FIX!

The Valdosta Click 'N Fix app makes it easier than ever before for citizens to report non-emergency issues to city staff. Since its creation in March, several hundred incidents have been reported and successfully addressed through the app, which has proven to be an efficient and cost-effective tool in pinpointing and eliminating problems in the city.

Powered by SeeClickFix, the user-friendly app allows residents to request city departmental services and report quality of life issues. The most frequently reported issues are potholes, trash can violations, street sign issues and overgrown grass, but the app also allow citizens to report 45 other issues, such as dead animal pickup, missed garbage and reports of litter.

The easy-to-use app employs GPS to recognize a citizen's location, offers a menu of common conditions to select from, and allows the user to upload pictures or videos to accompany a non-emergency service request. The mobile app may be used for a variety of

other commonly reported issues such as street maintenance, broken street lights, damaged trees, overgrown lots and others.

Once an issue is reported, the user will receive an email message within half a day acknowledging that the service request has been received by the appropriate city staff. It takes staff an average of three days to address and close each request. Citizens may opt to track their reported concerns, comment on the issue, and view and comment on other issues submitted by others.

Citizens should note that Valdosta Click 'N Fix should NOT to be used for emergencies. For urgent matters that require immediate attention or a police response, call 9-1-1.

The Valdosta Click 'N Fix app is available at [www.valdostacity.com/report-a-concern](http://www.valdostacity.com/report-a-concern) and may also be downloaded from the Android and iPhone mobile app stores. For more information, call the Public Information Office at 229-259-3548.





## Southern Hospitality Workcamp

### Returns for 10th Year

The City of Valdosta welcomed approximately 207 youth and adult volunteers from around the country as they spent June 26-July 2 of their summer vacations serving the citizens of Valdosta through the labor of love event known as the Southern Hospitality Workcamp.

The 2016 Workcamp marks the 10th year the city has hosted this event, which brings in youth to perform basic home repairs, painting and minor construction, at no cost to local elderly or disabled homeowners. To date, the event is credited with repairing 301 substandard local homes (inclusive of the 2016 sites) and yielding a nearly \$2 million economic investment in our community through capital improvements to housing stock, the value of volunteer housing, their spending in our community and the value of their labor.

The “campers” arrived on June 26 to their temporary living quarters at Valdosta Middle School. They spent the weekdays making repairs—which included handrails, decks, wheelchair ramps and exterior painting—to 19 houses in the city limits. The 2016 Workcamp represented campers from eight different states, as far away

as Indiana, Illinois and Michigan.

The home sites were selected by the City of Valdosta Neighborhood Development Division based on qualifying criteria. The homes must be owner occupied, in need of minor repairs and must be located within one of the city’s designated revitalization areas. Homeowners must also meet the age or disability requirement, and they must also meet the income criteria set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In addition to Lowe’s Distribution Center, the Valdosta City Schools System, Group Cares, Wild Adventures, Second Harvest Food Bank of Valdosta and the Valdosta Lowe’s Retail Store played critical roles in the success of the effort. Local Habitat for Humanity and Lowe’s Distribution Center staff members also served as site coaches for the event.

The annual Southern Hospitality Workcamp helps to stop the deterioration of valuable housing stock and places the city closer to accomplishing its goal of eliminating all substandard housing by the year 2020. For more information, contact Neighborhood Development at 229-671-3617.



# Kids

## Always Look Before You Lock

Always check the back seats of your vehicle before you lock it and walk away.

Keep a stuffed animal or other memento in your child's car seat when it's empty, and move it to the front seat as a visual reminder when your child is in the back seat.

If someone else is driving your child, or your daily routine has been altered, always check to make sure your child has arrived safely.

## Keep in Mind a Child's Sensitivity to Heat

In 10 minutes, a car's temperature can rise over 20 degrees.

Even at an outside temperature of 60 degrees, the temperature inside your car can reach 110 degrees.

A child dies when his/her body temperature reaches 107 degrees.

**If you see a child alone in a car, don't worry about getting involved in someone else's business—protecting children is everyone's business, so report it.**

## Here's What You Can Do

Don't wait more than a few minutes for the driver to return.

If the child is not responsive or is in distress, immediately:

- Call 911
- Get the child out of the car
- Spray the child with cool water (not in an ice bath)

If the child is responsive, stay with the child until help arrives, and have someone else search for the driver or ask the facility to page them.

Child Safety Info provided by [safercar.gov](http://safercar.gov)

# Pets

## It takes only minutes to save a life

Leaving pets locked in cars is never safe. But when the weather gets warmer, it can be deadly. High temperatures can cause irreparable organ damage and even death. Protecting animals from an unnecessary death is a problem we can all agree to prevent.

## How to help a pet left in a hot car

Take down the car's make, model and license-plate number.

If there are businesses nearby, notify their managers or security guards and ask them to make an announcement to find the car's owner.

Many people are unaware of the danger of leaving pets in hot cars and will quickly return to their vehicle once they are alerted to the situation.

If the owner can't be found, call the non-emergency number of the local police or animal control and wait by the car for them to arrive.

**Rolling down the windows has been shown to have little effect on the temperature inside a car.**

## Another Important Issue

Citizens should be aware of the valuables stored in their vehicles and take the necessary steps to keep thieves from stealing those valuables or the vehicle itself.

## When You Exit the Vehicle

Don't leave it running, even if you'll be right back.

Never leave the keys in the vehicle.

Don't leave valuables in plain sight.

Lock the doors and roll windows up.

Pet Safety Info provided by [humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org)

## Your Summer Guide To

# HOT CAR SAFETY

Summers in South Georgia usually come with scorching heat, and it's important to remember that leaving a child or pet in a hot car is NEVER an option. Follow these tips to keep the children and pets of our community from serious—or even fatal—harm.