

In Photo: The 16 local youth selected for the inaugural Valdosta Youth Council, who are (from left) Nikerria Jones, Matthew Hall, Jalith Harding, James Drew Correll, Jahmareé Council, Russell Hunter, Clara Abbi Long, Mayor John Gayle, Charlesie Hammond, Erin Kelly, Dante' Echols, Margaret Amelia Barnett, Rachel Carter, Taylor Ramsey, and Makayla Jackson. (Not pictured: Zion Leggett and Christayanna Williams.)



16 Selected for Mayor's Youth Council

Sixteen local students were sworn in at the Oct. 22 City Council meeting to serve on the inaugural Valdosta Youth Council (VYC). The VYC, initiated by Mayor John Gayle and approved by the Valdosta City Council at its Sept. 24 meeting, seeks to inspire and prepare local middle school students for leadership and civic opportunities, while allowing them to gain a better understanding of municipal government and community service.

Selection was based on academics, involvement in school and community organizations, leadership potential, and a written recommendation from a school administrator. The City of Valdosta congratulates all the VYC members.

The VYC is guided by an Advisory Board appointed by Mayor John Gayle, who serves as the head of the board. The 2015-2016 VYC Advisory Board members are: Valdosta Councilman Ben Norton, Lynn Orenstein of Valdosta Middle School, Jennifer Williams of J.L. Newbern Middle School, and city staff members Teresa Bolden and Sementha Mathews.

The VYC meetings are open to the general public. For more information, contact City Clerk Teresa Bolden at (229) 259-3503 or Public Information Officer Sementha Mathews at (229) 259-3548. Citizens may also visit the [VYC webpage](#) for more information, or follow the VYC on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ValdostaYouthCouncil.

Tree Lighting Kicks Off Holidays for Valdosta

Mayor John Gayle and Valdosta First Lady Peggy Gayle will officially kick off the holiday season in Valdosta at the annual Christmas Tree Lighting, on Friday, Dec. 4, at 5:30 p.m. Attendees will enjoy a special visit from Santa Claus, as he assists with the lighting of the fully-decorated 30-foot Christmas tree located on the front lawn of City Hall, located at 216 E. Central Avenue.

This year's event will feature the St.

John's Catholic Church Youth Choir, who will lead attendees in singing a few holiday favorites. The City is especially pleased to host this 32-member choir, as it has been invited to travel to Rome, Italy to perform for Pope Francis at his New Year's Day Mass.

While enjoying the festivities, citizens may also enjoy hot cocoa, hot apple cider and other light refreshments.

Citizens are encouraged to stay down-

town after the Christmas Tree Lighting to enjoy the fun dining, shopping and entertainment experience of First Friday, through 9:30 p.m. This First Friday will also include the year's final Art Walk, from 5 to 8 p.m., which allows citizens to experience art in Downtown's most elegant shops.

For more information, contact Valdosta Main Street at (229) 259-3577 or visit www.valdostamainstreet.com.

Free Shuttle Program Rolls Into Town

A pilot bus shuttle aimed at reducing transportation barriers in the community began on Oct. 15, 2015, and will run through June 30, 2016. The program, offered through a partnership of the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), utilizes DHS 5317 "New Freedom" funds designated for tools that overcome barriers that prevent citizen integration into the work force and society.

Shuttle services are offered Monday through Friday. The shuttle begins at 8 a.m. near the Mildred Hunter Community Center and will follow the same loop every hour until 5 p.m., ending back at the community center. To utilize the free shuttle, citizens must complete a mandatory registration form to receive a Client ID Card, which they must present each time they ride on the shuttle.

The route identified on the map to the left was selected to meet local needs identified in an Environmental Justice Study conducted by students at VSU. The study examined vehicular access, English proficiency, age distribution, income and poverty, race, and educational attainment as defined and measured by the U.S. Census.

DHS and the SGRC will collect data (i.e. total number of clients registered, daily ridership statistics, etc.) from the Shuttle program that may be used in identifying the continued need for a shuttle or other type of urban transportation system in Valdosta. For more information, contact Southern Georgia Regional Commission Transit and Mobility Coordinator JD Dillard at jdillard@sgrc.us or at (229) 333-5277.



Local Youth Can Now Explore Firefighting Career

The Valdosta Fire Department is accepting applications for its new Fire & Emergency Services Career Exploring program, which teaches and provides firsthand experience for young people ages 14 to 20 about careers in the field of fire and emergency services. To introduce this program to the community, the VFD will host an Exploring session on Monday, Nov. 9, at 6 p.m., at the VFD Station #1, located at 106 S. Oak Street.

VFD Exploring will meet on the first Tuesday of each month, from 6-9 p.m., throughout

the year and will combine classroom training with hands-on lessons to give members a well-rounded experience of the responsibilities that firefighters face. Although Exploring is a division of Boy Scouts of America, the program is open to both young men and women.

Firefighters and other emergency personnel will teach first aid, fire safety, emergency management, physical fitness, leadership methods, etc., and members may participate in local and national competitions, community events, and real firefighting scenarios in a training setting.

Applications will be available and accepted at the Nov. 9 VFD event. VFD personnel will be on hand to discuss the \$28 membership fee and other program specifics.

VFD Exploring is one of the City of Valdosta's many youth outreach programs designed to engage our youth in their local government. For more information about VFD Exploring, contact VFD Battalion Chief John T. Robinson at (229) 333-1844.



3 Opportunities To Bring Cheer To Others

Shop with a Cop

The Valdosta Police Department is collecting donations for its Shop with a Cop program, which will take place on Monday, Dec. 21, at 7 p.m., at the Wal-Mart Supercenter located at 3274 Inner Perimeter Road. This program aims to brighten the holiday season for Valdosta children and their families by providing selected youth with some holiday shopping money.

This program relies solely on monetary donations. Donations can be made payable to the City of Valdosta Shop with a Cop and may be dropped off at the Valdosta Police Department (500 N. Toombs Street). Contact VPD Officer Vernotis Williams at (229) 293-3099 for more information or to donate.

Shop with a Fireman

The Valdosta Fire Department is also bringing holiday cheer to children through its Shop with a Firefighter program, which will take place Dec. 15 at 6:30 p.m. The program seeks to identify and help Valdosta youth who are survivors of recent fire losses.

This program also relies solely on monetary donations. To those interested in supporting this cause, donations can be made payable to the City of Valdosta Shop with a Firefighter and may be dropped off at the Valdosta Fire Department, Station #1 (106 S. Oak Street). Contact VFD Capt. James Clinkscales at (229) 333-1836 for more information or to donate.

Mayor's Holiday Gift Drive

The City of Valdosta is doing its part to make the holiday season special for persons with developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs who reside at the Parkwood Developmental Center. On Tuesday, Dec. 15, at 10 a.m., Mayor John Gayle and members of the Valdosta Fire Department will deliver gifts to the 120 patients—ages 7 to 71—who reside at the facility.

Local businesses, civic organizations, churches, schools, scout troops, and other interested groups or individuals are encouraged to help with the collection of gifts for this event. Items being collected for patients in time for the holidays include clothing for men and women, hair dryers, small radios and clock radios, matchbox cars/trucks, small musical instruments, and toiletries such as solid deodorant, body wash, body spray and cologne/perfume.

Monetary donations will be used to purchase uncollected items on the list. Unwrapped donations and checks made payable to the Valdosta Fire Department will be accepted through Friday, Dec. 11, at 106 S. Oak Street. For more information, contact VFD Battalion Chief John Henry at (229) 333-1835.

Fall E-Recycling Event is Here!

Citizens who may be wondering what to do with old computers or televisions stored in their garages will be pleased to know that the City of Valdosta Public Works Department, in partnership with Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful and Atlanta Recycling Solutions, is hosting its Fall Electronic Recycling Event on Saturday, Nov. 14, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., in the parking lot of Mathis City Auditorium, located at 2300 North Ashley Street.

These electronic recycling events, held every spring and fall, rain or shine, allow Valdosta citizens to discard used or unwanted electronics in a convenient and environmentally responsible manner.

Electronics that will be accepted free of charge are: Desktops, Laptops, Servers, Mainframes, Network Hubs, Network Switches, Cell Phones, Desktop Phones and Systems, Keyboards/Mice, Check Processing, Gaming Consoles, LCD Monitors, CD-ROMs, Floppy Drives, Circuit Boards, Power Supplies, Hard Drives, UPS and UPS Batteries, Ni-MH/Ni-CAD Batter-

ies, Lithium Batteries, Blu-Ray Players, Cable/Wire, Gaming Controllers, Toner/Inkjet Cartridges, Printers, Fax Machines, Copiers, Scanners, Typewriters, Modems, Stereos, VCRs, Radios, DVD Players, CD Players and Dock Stations.

Televisions will be accepted for a \$20 charge, and CRT PC Monitors will be accepted for a \$5 charge.

The items that will not be accepted at the event are: CRT/Television Tubes, Projection/Console TVs, Washers/Dryers, Vacuum Cleaners, Wooden Speakers, Gas Grill Tanks, Battery Powered Tools, Liquid Containing Devices, Alkaline Batteries, Car Batteries, Toaster Ovens, De-Humidifiers, Gas Powered Tools, Household Trash, Microwave Ovens, Radioactive Material, Humidifiers, Tires, Freezers, Blenders, Mixers, Ovens, Hair Dryers, Ceiling Fans and Refrigerators.

Volunteers will be available at the event to help remove items from citizens' vehicles.

For more information, contact the Public Works Department at (229) 671-3640.

bring one for the CHIPPER

The City of Valdosta and Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB) will again host this year's "Bring one for the Chipper" event—a Christmas tree recycling event designed to help citizens dispose of their used trees in an environmentally friendly manner. Holiday trees will be recycled by chipping, a process that has a variety of benefits for our community.

Residents can drop trees off at any of these three locations from Dec. 26, 2015, through

Jan. 2, 2016: The Home Depot, at 1825 Norman Drive; Wal-Mart Super Center, at 3274 Inner Perimeter Road; and Mathis Auditorium, at 2300 N. Ashley Street. Trees may be dropped off at any of these sites beginning on Saturday, Dec. 26; however, citizens who drop their trees off on Saturday, Jan. 2, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at any of the above sites will receive a free tree seedling (while supplies last). Call KLVB at (229) 671-3698 for more information.

Get Cultured with

Those staying in Valdosta for the holidays can still experience culture from countries around the globe, all from the comfort of their homes.

South Georgia Regional Library now offers library users free access to Mango Languages, an online program that teaches real conversations in over 70 languages. Mango's site is colorful and easy to use, and the best part is

the lessons actually work, while still being fun and engaging. Mango even offers ESL and ELL courses, as well as lessons in slightly less conventional languages, such as Pirate (Aargh!).

To access Mango and begin your journey around the world, visit www.sgrl.org, click the Using the Library tab, then choose Mango Languages.

Holiday Sanitation Schedule

The City of Valdosta will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 26, in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. The Sanitation Division will collect residential garbage only on Thanksgiving Day. Recyclables and yard waste for Thursday and Friday routes will both be collected on Friday, Nov. 27.

Residential garbage, recyclables or yard waste will NOT be collected on Dec. 25 or Jan. 1 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Citizens who normally have their sanitation collected on Fridays should place their garbage, recyclables and yard waste at the curbside by 5 a.m. on Dec. 26 and Jan. 2 for both Friday and Saturday pickups.

For more information, call the Public Works Department at (229) 259-3590 or visit the Public Works page at www.valdostacity.com.

Deck the Halls Not the Streams

Although it may be the "most wonderful time of the year," it can also be the most wasteful. Holiday shopping, gift-giving and family festivities can generate an abundance of waste, so here are a few recycling tips to help keep our city and streams clean:

- Recycle leftover wrapping paper and avoid using foil or tissue paper.
- Decorate eco-tastically and save money by using natural materials.
- Use re-usable bags when shopping or go without a bag altogether.
- Give green gifts and keep it eco-friendly.
- Participate in the city's Christmas Tree Recycling Event (Dec. 26-Jan. 2).

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

CHRISTMAS in Downtown Valdosta

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Dec. 5
10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Get into the holiday spirit by participating in Valdosta's Holiday Open House. Citizens will be able to stroll through the unique shops and restaurants downtown. The steps of the historic Lowndes County Courthouse will feature a schedule full of adult and children choirs and dancers from the local area. On the lawn surrounding the courthouse will be a variety of activities, entertainment, a farmer's market and visits with Santa. The Open House will include the following:

- * Breakfast with Santa will take place at Jessie's Restaurant and Catering. Call Jessie's at (229) 247-4670 for more information.
- * Visits and photo opportunities with Santa will begin at 11 a.m. on the front lawn of the historic Lowndes County Courthouse.
- * Stuff Your Stocking (children's activity) when you visit downtown merchants.
- * Bounce houses and a "Snow" Zone will provide fun for kids.
- * Musical entertainment will be provided.
- * Cruise in by the South Georgia Classic Car Club will take place from 1-3 p.m.
- * Pet adoptions will be available on the courthouse lawn.
- * First Presbyterian Church will host a Bazaar and Bake Sale. Call (229) 242-8376 for more information.

CHRISTMAS ORNAMENT



The Valdosta Main Street office has released its 23rd edition in the series of the Downtown Valdosta Christmas Ornaments, which makes the perfect holiday gift for that special someone. The silver ornament was designed by the Main Street staff and features the Smith Drug and Seed Company Building, which was built circa 1890 and is located at 101 N. Ashley Street. The building now houses the corporate offices of CJB Industries, who renovated the building while still keeping its original character and charm.



The 2015 ornaments cost \$10 each, and ornaments from 2010-2014 can be purchased for the same amount. Ornaments from 2001-2009 can be purchased for \$6 each. These ornaments from previous years are only available while supplies last. Citizens may purchase these collectibles at the Main Street office, located on the first floor of the Valdosta City Hall Annex, at 300 N. Lee Street. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays. For more information, call (229) 259-3577.

STREET CLOSURES

Some streets will be closed downtown during the Holiday Open House and Parade. Central Avenue and Valley Street, between Patterson and Ashley Streets, will be closed from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. North Patterson Street, beginning at Woodrow Wilson Drive through Hill Avenue, will be closed during the Christmas parade.

CHRISTMAS PARADE

Dec. 5
5 p.m.

The Valdosta Community Christmas Parade—one of Valdosta's most popular holiday traditions—will begin at 5 p.m. following the Holiday Open House event.

The parade will start at Woodrow Wilson Drive, proceed down N. Patterson Street, and end at the Department of Health Building. Creative holiday floats will be judged on overall appearance, special effects, creativity, workmanship and use of the theme.

FIRST FRIDAY

Dec. 4
6:30-9:30 p.m.

The popular First Friday event will feature live music, dining specials, shopping, and lots of community fun! This First Friday will also include the year's final Art Walk from 5-8 p.m., which allows you to come Downtown and experience art in the most specialized, eclectic shops Valdosta has to offer.

You can also experience wine and beer tasting at all participating Art Walk locations with a wristband that costs \$20. All proceeds will be used by the Public Art Advisory Committee for future community art projects.

LADIES NIGHT OUT

Dec. 10
5-8 p.m.

Gather your girlfriends and join us Downtown for a fabulous night of shopping, refreshments and fun. Your favorite stores will be open late to help you find the perfect gifts for everyone on your list; and better yet, you can register your holiday wish list so he can't go wrong.