

September/October 2015

City Beat



Valdosta Reduces Carbon Footprint With New LED Roadway Lighting

Valdosta is one of the first eight cities in the state to convert to new Light-Emitting Diode (LED) Roadway Lighting offered by Georgia Power. As a result, more than 3,600 of Valdosta's 6,200 street light fixtures will be replaced at no cost to the city—part of a Georgia Power capital investment project to install approximately 407,000 LED roadway lighting fixtures in communities across the state. This initiative was one of many that resulted in Valdosta being named the Smart Energy Municipality of the Year by the Technology Association of Georgia in December 2014.

In August, Georgia Power began replacing 100- and 150-watt light fixtures located on city streets with the new LED light fixture. They will also begin replacing 250-watt light fixtures in October. LED Roadway Lighting is a relatively new technology that will provide many features and benefits at no extra cost to the city. The broad-spectrum white light allows the eyes to see better and has improved color rendering and small-target visibility, all of which enhance safety and security throughout the city. Citizens will notice the reduction of sky glow and even distribution of light on the roadway, as this improvement is intended to effectively light up the streets and sidewalks, not the skyline or neighborhood yards.

The energy-efficient lighting also has a longer life-expectancy of up to 10 years and will be maintained by Georgia Power. Each LED roadway fixture will have a networked lighting control installed that will allow for remote monitoring and diagnostics, enabling Georgia Power to find and fix lights that are not working properly long before anyone else can detect a problem.

The installation of LED Roadway Lighting is expected to be completed by late December 2015. Citizens may access the grid map, FAQ sheets, photos and other information at www.valdostacity.com.

Don't Wait. Communicate.

September 1 is the first day of National Preparedness Month. The City of Valdosta encourages citizens to participate in the theme "Don't Wait. Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today." Now is a great time to make an emergency communication plan for your family. Citizens are urged to spend time with family members and talk about how you will contact each other and where you will meet should disaster strike.

For more information on how to create a family or business disaster plan or for additional preparedness tips, visit www.ready.ga.gov.

Fill the Boot Drive Kicks Off Sept. 3-5

The Valdosta Fire Department and the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) will host a special event on Sept. 3 at 12 p.m., at VFD Station #1, to celebrate their 61-year partnership in raising money and awareness to benefit children and adults affected by muscle disease throughout the Valdosta area.

This event will also kick off the firefighters' annual Fill the Boot fundraising campaign that will take place from Thursday, Sept. 3, to Saturday, Sept. 5, from 3-7 p.m. each day, at the following locations:

Wal-Mart Supercenters

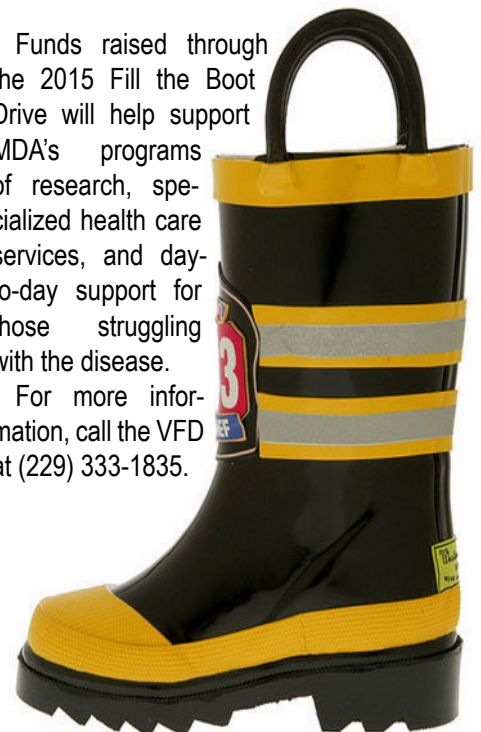
340 Norman Drive
3274 Perimeter Road

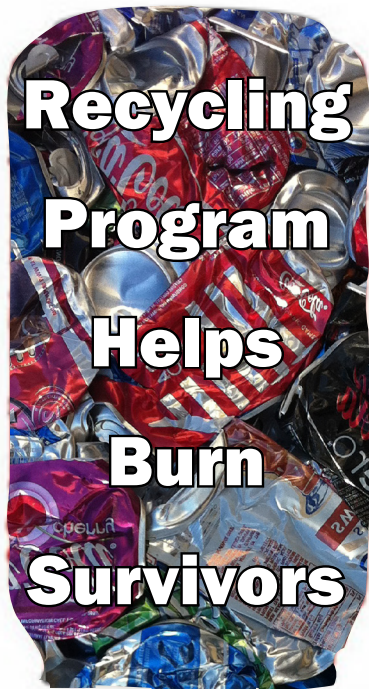
Winn Dixie Supermarkets

4036 Bemiss Road
1105 Madison Highway
3200 North Ashley Street

Funds raised through the 2015 Fill the Boot Drive will help support MDA's programs of research, specialized health care services, and day-to-day support for those struggling with the disease.

For more information, call the VFD at (229) 333-1835.





Citizens who feel good about recycling their aluminum cans to protect the environment may now have the added satisfaction of knowing that their efforts are also helping burn survivors, both locally and across the state of Georgia.

The Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation's Project REACH (Recycling Every Aluminum Can Helps) is a year-round aluminum can recycling program that has—over the last 27 years—recycled more than four million pounds of aluminum and raised more than \$2.2 million for the GFBF's mission and programs. Locally, the Valdosta Fire Department has been collecting cans for the past 10 years and has contributed thousands of dollars to the statewide effort while also keeping these recyclables out of the landfill.

The VFD has a REACH trailer at Fire Station #1 that serves as the collection point for local businesses and organizations who want to donate their empty aluminum cans for the recycling program.

Every aluminum can helps. The VFD welcomes any and all support with Program REACH and the aid it provides to burn survivors. For more information, call the VFD at (229) 333-1835.



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. The First Step meeting 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 and Utilities. Due to the availability of seating, citizens must reserve a spot at the meeting in advance.

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.

Maintain the Right-of-Way

Residential, commercial and industrial landowners are required to mow and maintain the portion of public right-of-way which is adjacent to their property between the right-of-way line (their property line) and the street curb or edge of pavement, according to city Ordinance No. 2011-37, Section 16 LDR, Section 332-1.

"It's pretty simple," said Public Works Director Richard Hardy. "Residents and property owners should maintain their property all the way to the sidewalk. If there is no

sidewalk, then to the curb. If there is no curb, then to the street. Maintaining means keeping the grass cut, the curb or sidewalk edged and the property free of litter. If citizens will maintain their property out to the sidewalk, curb or street, the Public Works staff will take care of the rest."

By taking care of the right-of-ways, citizens are helping to keep Valdosta safe and beautiful. For more information, contact the Public Works Department at (229) 259-3590.





The City of Valdosta will host a 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony on Friday, Sept. 11, at 8:45 a.m. at Valdosta Fire Station #1, located at 106 S. Oak Street. Valdosta Fire Chief Freddie Broome will preside over the ceremony in remembrance of those who lost their lives that day 14 years ago and in honor of the continued efforts of public safety professionals.

City leadership, public safety personnel, city staff and other citizens will pause to

remember the innocent victims and honor the brave heroes who perished during the tragic event. The combined Valdosta Honor Guard and the Valdosta Fire Department Pipe and Drum Corps will perform, and a special flag presentation by the Woodsmen of the World will also take place during the ceremony.

For more information, contact the VFD at (229) 333-1836.



One of One Hundred

Marvin T. Smith's "One of One Hundred" (pictured above), won the Best in Show award at the 7th Annual Valdosta People's Choice Photo Contest reception held at the Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts on July 20. Smith's photograph features a baby red-shouldered hawk in Drexel Park, just one of one hundred species recorded by bird watchers there.

Winning photos have become part of a traveling display that may be viewed from August until December in various city locations. Visit www.valdostacity.com/publicinformation to see the photographs and to learn where the photos will be on display next.

Mind Your Grease

Fats, oils, and grease (FOG) are a real "pain in the drain." When citizens allow FOG products—such as butter, dairy items, cooking oil, meat fat, and salad dressing to go down the drains in their homes or businesses, it can cause many costly problems. Since oil and water do not mix well, these oily substances adhere to the inside of the sewer lines, harden, and eventually result in blockages of household plumbing and city sewer lines, which may also cause sewer backups in the home and sewer overflows in the sanitary sewer system.

In addition, sewer overflows may also dump sewage onto city streets, which may ultimately flow into a storm drain. Storm drains are not connected to the treatment system, so everything that flows down the storm drain goes directly to the nearest body of water.

Businesses that have commercial kitchens are required to have a grease trap, which helps to keep the FOG out of the city's sewer collection system. The grease trap captures and stores the fats, oils and grease until a waste hauler can properly dispose of it.

Here are a few things that citizens can do to keep your drains FOG – free:

- Place a container in the sink to catch greasy food solids, then dispose into the garbage—not in the garbage disposal. Strainers should not be used as they allow grease residue from the food to go down the drain.
- Pour all cooled oils and grease into a container with lid and place in garbage.
- Wipe down greasy pots and pans with a disposable cloth or paper towels before washing in sink or dishwasher.
- Talk with your neighbors about prevention methods for the health of their home pipes and the sanitary sewer collection system.

A City of Valdosta FOG ordinance was established in 2010 to help protect the city's 300 miles of sewer lines. To view this document and other helpful information, visit www.valdostacity.com/utilities or call (229) 259-3592.

City Announces Public Service Opportunities

Citizens who seek a rewarding public service role in the community are encouraged to apply for the nine 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 Mayor and City Council will evaluate the applicants and appoint individuals to the vacancies at the Nov. 5 City Council meeting. Interested citizens have until Oct. 28 to review the membership requirements, complete an application and sign the Code of Ethics form for any of the following positions:

- **Valdosta-Lowndes Co. Parks & Recreation Authority (1)***
- **Central Valdosta Development Authority/Downtown Development Authority (3)**
- **Valdosta Housing Authority (1)**
- **Valdosta-Lowndes Co. Conference Center & Tourism Authority (1)**
- **Valdosta-Lowndes Co. Development Authority (1)**
- **Valdosta Tree Commission (1)**
- **Valdosta-Lowndes Co. Construction Board of Adjustments & Appeals (Electrician Slot) (1)**

The City of Valdosta advertises for board appointments on a quarterly basis, and appointments are made in February, May, August and November, or as vacancies occur. The city seeks to ensure all citizens are aware of opportunities to serve, to have a professional and structured process through which to seek appointments, to appoint qualified individuals who have a willingness and desire to serve, and to ensure diversity in the make-up of the entities.

For more information or to obtain the necessary forms, visit www.valdostacity.com or contact City Clerk Teresa Bolden at (229) 259-3503 or at tbolden@valdostacity.com.

***NOTE: This position, which is for an unexpired term, will be appointed at the Oct. 8 City Council meeting, and the application deadline is Sept. 30 at 5 p.m.**

Fall Electronics 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 Public Works Department, in partnership with Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful and Atlanta Recycling Solutions, is hosting its Fall Electronics 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 N. Ashley Street.

These electronics 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 Batteries, 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, Washer/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.





Share the Road

Remember that the streets of our city are used not only by motor vehicles, but by bicyclists and pedestrians as well. Since bikes are an increasingly popular mode of transportation in the city, all citizens should be aware of the state laws regarding bicyclists. Whether you're in a car, on a bike or on foot, it is important to be considerate of your fellow travelers and mindful of state traffic laws. Doing so will ensure your safety and the safety of others while on the road. Click [here](#) to view Georgia's safety and legal information on bicyclists and pedestrians.



Labor Day Sanitation Schedule

The City of Valdosta will be closed on Monday, Sept. 7 in observance of Labor Day.

The Sanitation Division will collect residential **garbage only** on Sept. 7. Citizens who normally have their sanitation collected on Mondays should place their recyclables and yard waste at the curbside by 5 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 8 for both Monday and Tuesday collections.

The Public Works Department appreciates citizens' cooperation and patience as sanitation workers do their best to pick up both routes—over 7,000 customers—on Tuesday. Since special pickups use additional vehicles and manpower, citizens are urged to minimize any calls for special pickup requests for the adjusted Labor Day schedule.

Citizens may call the Public Works Department at (229) 259-3590 for more information.



Dispose toxic trash with *Care*

A partnership between the City of Valdosta and Care Environmental Corporation that began in 2007 is still working to secure a clean and healthy environment for future generations by providing the proper services to city residents for the disposal of hazardous household waste.

Care Environmental, a hazardous waste transfer, storage and processing facility, located at 714 Gil Harbin Industrial Boulevard, allows city residents to discard of their household hazardous waste each Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Items considered "toxic trash" that may be dropped off at the Gil Harbin site include paint cans, aerosols, pesticides, paint thinner, motor oil, car batteries and almost

anything that should not typically be thrown into the city garbage cans. Words such as danger, warning, caution, poisonous and flammable on the labels can mean a product is toxic.

Although Care Environmental is a full-service environmental waste management corporation for industry, government and residential establishments, the free service is offered to Valdosta residential citizens only. Do not place household hazardous waste items in your recycle bin, green roll out or storm drain. For more information, call the toll free number at (866) HHW-CARE or visit their website at www.careenv.com.

Volunteers Needed

If you, your business or a group you're involved with is interested in making a positive impact on our community and environment, consider volunteering for the following cleanup events, coordinated by Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful:

Rivers Alive

Oct. 3 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

This event is a statewide waterway cleanup initiative. There will be multiple sites for this event, so volunteers are asked to either call or email to be assigned to a location.

Make a Difference Day

Oct. 24 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

This event is a national day of neighbors helping neighbors and is always the fourth Saturday in October. For this event, K.L.V.B., City of Valdosta Code Enforcement, and Lowndes County Code Enforcement work together to identify areas that are in need of cleaning up. These areas can range from neighborhoods to gateways to roadside litter pickups. Again, due to multiple locations, volunteers are asked to call or email to sign up and be assigned to a location.

For more information, call the K.L.V.B. office at 229-671-3698 or email astrickland@valdostacity.com.

GovDeals® Online auction site brings big money back to the City

Waste not, want not. The City of Valdosta is taking this wise saying to heart when it comes to disposing of specific vehicles, equipment, computers, etc., that are no longer needed. Federal and State laws require governmental entities to publicly auction off surplus items to the highest bidder or sell or transfer the items, typically for \$1, to another governmental entity that is in need.

Since 2006, Purchasing Agent Greg Brown has utilized www.govdeals.com to auction off surplus items to over 50,000 bidders across the country – and in the process has recouped over \$500,000 for the city.

Prior to 2006, the city hired an auctioneer who would sell the surplus items – everything from fire trucks to office supplies – to a local crowd of 30 to 40 bidders, bringing in a few thousand dollars

for the city. After attending a class on selling governmental surplus online, Brown now utilizes GovDeals exclusively for almost all surplus items with only a couple of exceptions, such as property.

The city's online auctions drive personnel costs down and revenue up. Items sold online receive higher bids than the same items sold in the past at live auctions, and now only one person is needed to post the items online instead of several employees and an auction company.

The city sells a wide-range of unwanted items, from the inexpensive, such as old desk chairs (\$20), to the more costly, such as lawnmowers (\$3,500) and old fuel tanks (\$6,500).

If you are interested in buying surplus items from the City of Valdosta, register for free at www.govdeals.com.

Walkable Valdosta

As summer turns to fall, and the heat gives way to cooler, more enjoyable weather, remember that our area offers numerous opportunities to soak in the beauty of nature while also staying physically active. Walking, for example, is a moderate form of exercise that is enjoyable and relatively inexpensive to pursue. Here are several examples of safe, off-street locations where citizens can walk, jog, or push a stroller to their destination while reducing vehicular traffic and becoming healthier in the process.

- Enjoy the outside walking tracks at the Wood Valley Community Center, Scott Park, Freedom Park and Payton Park, as well as nature trails at both Freedom Park and John W. Saunders Memorial Park.
- The Valdosta Middle School (VMS) track is available after school operating hours and on the weekends. NOTE: During school hours of operations (weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.), citizens may instead utilize the sidewalk system around McKey Park (across from VMS) for another safe walking option.
- In addition to walking and jogging, the 3.5-mile Azalea City Trail—which extends from Vallotton Park to the Craig Center and along Williams Street—allows citizens to enjoy bike riding, skating and other forms of recreation.
- City sidewalks also offer great walkability options. The city currently has approximately 103 miles of sidewalks, in addition to the 3.5 miles of multi-use trails.

Citizens are reminded to visit www.vlpra.com for information on a variety of outdoor recreation facilities to increase your health and fitness levels within the city limits. For additional information, contact the city's Public Information Office at (229) 259-3548.



Don't miss out on the last two Downtown Valdosta Farm Days of the season, taking place Sept. 5 and 19, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., around the Historic Courthouse Square.

This farmer's market—hosted by Valdosta Main Street—showcases locally sourced produce, food items, and arts and crafts from surrounding areas. Vendors accept EBT, credit and debit cards.

This event was recently featured as one of the "Three Must-Try Georgia Farmer's Markets" on the Official Georgia Tourism & Travel Site. Citizens may visit this article at <http://blog.exploregeorgia.org/georgia-farmers-markets/>.

Downtown Valdosta Farm Days take place May through September on the first and third Saturday of each month. For more information on this or any other Valdosta Main Street event, call (229) 259-3577 or visit www.valdostamainstreet.com.