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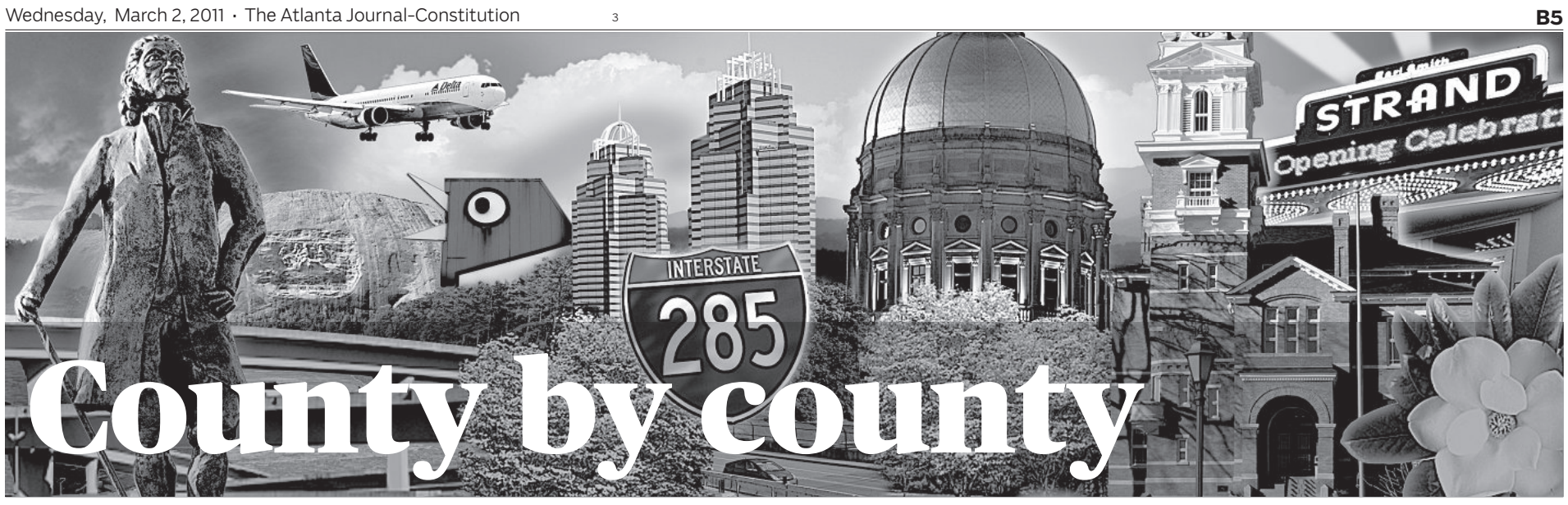

County by county

Atlanta

Ravens' Michael Oher speaks at Pace Academy

Baltimore Ravens star Michael Oher, subject of the Oscar-nominated film "The Blind Side," visited Pace Academy Tuesday. Oher led a motivational discussion about his life, which is featured in his book, "I Beat The Odds: From Homelessness To The Blind Side and Beyond." The visit was part of Pace Academy's Diversity Program Speaker Series.
D. AILEEN DODD

Civil rights group holds round table Monday

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights will host a media round table at 10:30 a.m. Monday to discuss new information on funding, programming, human rights exhibitions, the building and groundbreaking.

The round table will include former Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, who co-chairs the NCCHR board; Doug Shipman, NCCHR CEO; Deborah Richardson, NCCHR executive vice president; and Jill Savitt, NCCHR Human Rights Exhibition coordinator. The round table will be held in the 15th floor board room of the Southern Co., 30 Ivan Allen Jr. Blvd. N.W.
ERNIE SUGGS

APS gets $1 million gift from Emory alumnus

Atlanta Public Schools will launch the "Graduation Generation" project today after receiving a $1 million donation from Emory University alumnus Rick Rieder to fund the program at Coan Middle School.

The project will include workshops, mentoring, tutoring and other programs for both students and their parents and guardians. It is tailored for students in sixth through 12th grade, with a goal not only to see them graduate high school but also prepare them for the rigors of college. KRISTINA TORRES

Fulton officer to speak to children about safety

Fulton County Police Officer Nadia Byrd will talk to children about safety, strangers and drugs today at the Bowen/Bankhead Branch library, 2685 Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway. "Stranger Danger" is for children ages 5 to 12 and starts at 11 a.m. Information: 404-792-2646. JOHNNY EDWARDS

Hometown Heroes
Neighbors doing extraordinary things

Boy Scout Henry Tucker and his father, Jim, look over blueprints for gardens Henry is building at a center for homeless women in Marietta. Henry took on the project to help the women and to earn his Eagle Scout designation. **Stuart Hendrick** Special

Scout's field of dreams aids homeless women

Teen builds vegetable garden at center, gains more than badge.

By **Bill Hendrick**
For the AJC

Some are methamphetamine addicts. Others are hooked on alcohol. All are homeless. But every single one is trying to recover.

Another thing all 21 residents of Marietta's B.J. Crafton Women's Center have in common is "immense" gratitude for Henry Tucker, 17, who has dedicated his spare time to building a vegetable garden with 13 raised beds at the home for the homeless.

Henry, a member of Boy Scout Troop 75, came up with the $9,684 project as a way to earn his Eagle Scout designation, but it's come to mean far more to him.

"It's a 'Field of Dreams' for them, and for me, too," said Henry, a junior at Pope High in east Cobb. "This will help them get back on their feet. Raising their own vegetables will give them something to do they'll enjoy, but they'll grow their own food and maybe even make some money for the center by selling some stuff at the farmer's market."

He says the gardens will be ready for planting in a month or so.

"I think it's amazing what Henry is doing," Cobb County Juvenile Judge Juanita P. Stedman said. "The women will like it. It'll make them feel good. They are excited. And it will help them."

Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens, formerly chairman of the Cobb County Commission, is excited, too.

"As the proud parent of an Eagle Scout, it is heartwarming to see the great work of our future leaders as they improve our community," Olens said.

Lead therapist at the center, Wynema Barber, said the residents are "very excited" about growing their own vegetables, for food and possibly to sell for pocket money at a farmer's market.

When Henry began thinking about an Eagle Scout project, he wound up in Stedman's court, not because he was in trouble, but because he'd heard she knew about the center.

She told him that gardens could help in the rehabilitation process. So Henry decided to take on what Scoutmaster Tom Welch, 49, of east Cobb, describes as one of the most ambitious Eagle projects he's ever heard of.

"He's had to raise money, talk to a landscape architect and a contractor, and knock on doors for contributions," Welch said. "For a high school student to be doing this, it's really impressive."

With the pro bono help of landscape architect Will Goodman and contractor Tomas Aloisio, the young man is eager to get his hands dirty.

"The goal of my project is to help these women never be dependant again on drugs or charity," Henry said. "We expect to have the women working in the gardens by the end of March."

Suggest a Hometown Hero
Every other Wednesday, Bill Hendrick shines a spotlight on extraordinary and selfless acts by our friends and neighbors. To suggest someone for this feature, e-mail writer@billhendrick.com.

DeKalb

Supreme Court upholds murder conviction

The Georgia Supreme Court has upheld the murder conviction of a Clarkston man who shot and killed a man at an apartment complex on North Hairston Road.

George Smiley is serving a life sentence for the Sept. 1, 2006, killing of Samuel Williams, 21, of Stone Mountain. Authorities said Smiley shot Williams in the head after he was told that Williams had smashed out the windows of a GMC Jimmy SUV owned by Smiley's mother. The state Supreme Court upheld the murder conviction, obtained by DeKalb County prosecutors during an October 2007 trial, in a decision issued Monday.
BILL RANKIN

Notre Dame president to speak at Emory

The Rev. John I. Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame, will speak on "Passionate Convictions and Respectful Conversations: Faith in a Pluralistic Society" at Emory University in April.

Jenkins was elected president in 2004 and is the author of "Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas." He will give a public talk at 7:30 p.m. April 14 at Glenn Memorial Auditorium, 1652 N. Decatur Road.

Tickets are $10 for the public and free for students with an ID. Tickets are available at www.aquinas.emory.edu or by calling 404-727-6352.
SHELIA M. POOLE

Police close records office for lunch hour

Residents can no longer pick up DeKalb County Police Department reports during their lunch break.

Starting Monday, the department will close the central records' office between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday.

Records will be open 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1:30-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday. Records will remain closed on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

The scheduling changes are part of the department's efforts to be more "efficient with manpower," police spokeswoman Mekka Parish said.
MEGAN MATTEUCCI

Interchange dedicated to late tax commissioner

An interchange at I-285 and Memorial Drive will be dedicated this week in honor of former DeKalb County Tax Commissioner Tom Scott.

A dedication ceremony is scheduled for 3 p.m. Thursday at the tax commissioner's office, 4380 Memorial Drive.

Scott served as a state senator for eight years and as DeKalb's tax commissioner for 14 years. He died in 2006 of leukemia. A memorial garden in honor of Scott has been planted at Memorial and Northern Avenue. State Rep. Stephanie Stuckey Benfield announced the new interchange will be named after Scott.
MEGAN MATTEUCCI

Clairemont highlights Walk to School Day

Decatur's Clairemont Elementary has been selected by the Georgia Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School Resource Center as the featured school for today's second annual Georgia Walk to School Day. This recognition highlights Clairemont's six-year commitment to increasing its walking and biking population. Today, students will gather in the auditorium for words from Mayor Bill Floyd, while also screening student-made videos highlighting their walking and biking experiences.
BILL BANKS FOR THE AJC

Southside
South Fulton, Clayton, Fayette, Henry

Fayette to consider new rule to raise bees

To bee or not to bee? That is the question Fayette County commissioners will try to answer today as they consider a zoning request from a local beekeeper.

Michael Maxwell of Fayetteville is asking the board to allow beekeeping in R-40 zones – areas permitted for single-family homes and gardens. According to county ordinance, beekeeping is considered livestock and prohibited from R-40 zones.

Fayette County commissioners will meet in a workshop session at 3:30 p.m. today. KATHY JEFCOATS FOR THE AJC

Henry opens reservoirs for fishing today

The Henry County Water & Sewerage Authority opens some of its drinking water reservoirs to local residents to fish beginning today. The authority's Tussahw and Gardner (Indian Creek) Reservoirs will be open on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. through the end of November. Fishing on authority reservoirs is available to any Henry County property owner with an active reservoir use permit issued by the authority. Permits are available for $45. Information: www.hcwsa.com TAMMY JOYNER

Black-tie Arte Gras fundraiser March 12

The fifth annual Arte Gras will be held at 7 p.m. March 12 at the National Archives at Atlanta. The black-tie gala supports the scholarships and arts in education programs of Arts Clayton. The event is $125 per person or $1,000 for a table of 8. Cocktail hour, dinner buffet and music will be featured. The archives is in Morrow. Information: www.artsclayton.org or Linda Summerlin at 770-473-5831. Tickets can be purchased by phone, at the Arts Clayton gallery or online at www.artegras2011.eventbrite.com.
TAMMY JOYNER

East Point, MARTA pact may bring sidewalks

East Point officials approved an intergovernmental agreement with MARTA that could see more sidewalks built in the city. MARTA awarded the city a $230,000 grant for bus shelter improvements and sidewalk construction. The city plans to use the funds to build sidewalks on Stone Road, Dodson Drive and Taylor Road. East Point already has $300,000 earmarked for sidewalks that will also be used in the project.
JOHN THOMPSON FOR THE AJC

Fayette cited for helping with facility

Fayette County will be recognized Thursday for its role in the construction of a mental health facility in Fayetteville.

County Administrator Jack Krakeel said the county will be receiving an award during the sixth annual CREATE Community Local Government breakfast at Atlanta's Loudermilk Center.The county donated a former Department of Transportation site on Bradley Drive for the construction of the Fayette Counseling Center.
KATHY JEFCOATS FOR THE AJC

Clayton asks feedback on county website

Clayton County officials are seeking feedback on the county's website. They are interested in your opinions and ideas. To view the site and give feedback, log on to www.claytoncountyga.gov/news-and-events/web-site-feedback.aspx. TAMMY JOYNER

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