

# Right to transfer says, 'your pupils are failing'

Dec 16th @ 09:30 give up national ranking

**New rules** add state, federal layers to local education

By MIRIAM HASKELL  
The Brunswick News

Joanne Robison immediately trusted her decision to send her three children to an out-of-zone school to be educated. She knew in her heart that transferring them to St. Simons Elementary from the school they were zoned to attend, Altama Elementary, was the right move.

**122**

How many Glynn County students transferred this year from a Needs Improvement school

**51**

How many transferred last year

**533**

How many Georgia schools must offer the option

In it, he authorized a plan that would lead to the identification of certain schools as in need of improvement, or failing to make adequate progress based on goals set by each state, and give parents the option to remove their children from those schools and send them to another, better performing one.

The legislation, now being phased in nationwide, establishes a goal of having every child performing at grade level in mathematics and reading by 2014. To do so, it sets a variety of requirements and offers some funding to state and local school systems.

Many of those mandates — which are accompanied by the threat of removing federal funding to systems if not put in place — have come under criticism. To legislators, they may appear substantial on paper, but in practice, local systems often lack the budgets to staff and implement the initiatives.

One major component of the legislation is the identification of so-called Needs Improvement schools. To do that, the Georgia Department of Education has set up a series of performance goals, or what it calls Annual Measurable Objectives, that schools and school districts must meet in order to be classified as making yearly



Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

Joanne Robison, center, has federal validation of her decision to transfer her children, from left, Caleb, a third-grader, Joshua, a second-grader, and Kansas, a fifth-grader, to St. Simons Elementary School. Here they are leaving at the end of the day.

progress. This means that each year, individual public schools will be assessed by the state using criteria such as test scores and attendance and can be classified as either making progress or failing to do so.

Schools that do not make state-defined progress face increasingly stringent consequences that can lead to a state takeover of school management. Less serious measures include requiring schools to provide outside tutoring services or, as in the Robisons' case, allowing children to transfer schools.

When transfers were granted last summer, the Robisons' assigned school, Altama Elementary, was classified as a Needs Improvement; their school of choice, St. Simons Elementary, was set up to receive children whose parents opted to pull them out of a Needs Improvement school.

But Robison had picked St. Simons Elementary three years ago, before Altama Elementary received the Needs Improvement school stamp. At the time, just

## The series

- Today: The transfer option
- Tuesday: The new emphasis on testing
- Wednesday: Finding qualified teachers
- Thursday: Bringing special education students into the mainstream
- Friday: Closing the achievement gap
- Saturday: What lies ahead
- The reporter: Miriam Haskell covers education for The News. Call her at 265-8320, ext. 240, to talk about this series.

as now, locally allowed transfers were granted for non-academic reasons, such as problems with a school environment or a school's proximity to a parent's workplace.

Please see TRANSFER, 2A

Decision comes as surprise to mayor

By KAREN SLOAN  
The Brunswick News

The Brunswick Police Department is no longer accredited as meeting the highest standards for police work set by the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies.

The department, without public announcement or informing the mayor, withdrew its application for re-accreditation prior to going before the commission's 21-member board late last month.

The decision to drop its application cost the department not only prestige, but also the more than \$7,500 it had spend pursuing re-accreditation.

Brunswick Interim Police Chief Edna Johnson attended the commission's tri-annual conference Nov. 22 in Colorado Springs, Colo., but told The News she would not comment on the withdrawal of the application. She said she wants to address the city commission before making a public statement.

"I just don't want to say anything about it until I have an opportunity to talk to the commissioners," she said.

Johnson is scheduled to address the city commission at its Dec. 17 meeting. City

Please see POLICE, 5A

## Nuwaubians parade DA, police investigate

By JOSH RAYBURN  
The Brunswick News

Santa Claus. Frosty. The Grinch. Chief Black Thunderbird.

All four were represented in the Brunswick Christmas parade, but only one could end up in court for doing so.

Stephen Kelley, district attorney for the Brunswick Judicial Circuit, said Monday he may seek to prosecute the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors who marched in the parade Saturday handing out literature and asking spectators about the guilt or innocence of their leader, Malachi York.

And the Brunswick Police Department is investigating the group for giving children documents containing profanity.

York, known as Chief Black Thunderbird in the religious sect, will face federal charges of child molestation and avoiding financial reporting requirements in the U.S. District Court in Brunswick on Jan. 5, 2004. The trial was moved from Macon due to pre-trial publicity.

According to the Downtown Development Authority, the parade's organizer, the group did not properly identify itself when it applied to participate.

"They said they were a Masons group, a Shriners group," said Meredith Hanak, DDA executive director. "We had no reason to question them as we wouldn't any

Please see PARADE, 5A

## Major Medicare changes become law

By SCOTT LINDLAW  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush is signing into law the most far-reaching changes in Medicare since the program's inception nearly 40 years ago, checking off another priority amid questions about its fiscal wisdom.

The most significant part of the \$400 billion overhaul adds prescription drug coverage to the federal health insurance program for the elderly, starting in 2006. Beginning

next May, seniors can buy a Medicare-approved discount card for \$30 or less to help offset the growing costs of prescriptions.

But a wide array of other pilot programs are meant to tweak the Medicare system, and will add to the cost of the changes Bush signs Monday.

One of the costliest among them sets aside \$500 million for a two-year, six-state effort for at least 50,000 patients to cover a limited category of self-administered pre-

scription drugs. "No less than 40 percent of the funding shall be for oral cancer," Congress directed in a report accompanying the bill.

Other programs are designed to help health care providers and their patients, including a two-year program to cover chiropractic services without prior approval by a medical doctor.

Still others are aimed at attacking waste,

Please see MEDICARE, 5A

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# Parade: Organizer questions application

Continued from 1A

other group like that. This may lead to making the parade only open to locals.

"There were people who were offended."

Kelley, who saw members of the group handing out literature at Wal-Mart, has no jurisdiction in the federal case but could prosecute the group for lying to the development authority.

"I might look into prosecuting them for submitting false information to a government, which is a felony," he said.

The Nuwaubian delegation in the parade included depictions of the Egyptian pharaoh Rameses, participants wearing bird and cow masks, and a group of mummies carrying parasols.

Mayor Brad Brown was in the

parade and said a document entitled "Medical Records Don't Lie" contained profanity and was distributed along the parade route and given to children.

"Our local police are dealing with it," he said. "They started getting complaints on Saturday, and so did I. Hopefully we can do something about this."

One thing that could happen is the trial being moved out of Brunswick. Kelley said a federal court judge could see the Nuwaubian's actions as polluting the jury pool and decide to change the trial venue again.

Contacted by The News this morning, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Macon, which is prosecuting the case, would not comment on the group's parade actions. A spokesperson did say the information could be used



Bobby Haver/The Brunswick News

The Nuwaubian entry in the Brunswick Christmas parade Saturday marches in ancient Egyptian garb.

during a pre-trial conference set for Dec. 16 in Macon.

\* A view of the parade and the winning entries. 3A

# Medicare: B

Continued from 1A

such as a three-year provision to allow Medicare to contract with private firms for "identifying underpayments and overpayments and recouping overpayments."

The bill encourages insurance companies to offer private plans to millions of older Americans who now receive health care benefits under terms fixed by the government.

"Because of the actions of the Congress, the actions of members of both political parties, the Medicare system will be modern, and it will be strong," Bush said.

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# Police: Mayor wants to know reason

Continued from 1A

Manager Roosevelt Harris said.

The failure to be re-accredited means only that the department does not meet standards set by the accrediting commission, a non-governmental, voluntary association. The department will continue to operate as usual.

The police department was given a copy of the commission evaluator's report prior to the withdrawal of its application, said Maya Mitchell, a program specialist with the commission. The commission's board makes its decisions on accreditation based upon the assessor's report.

"The accreditation program is a management system for CEOs of organizations, which allows them to conduct self-examinations of issues within their own departments," said Janice Dixon, also a commission program specialist. "It also allows them to demonstrate that they are meeting these top standards. For some departments, it's a way to initiate changes."

An assessment team looks at the organization, its structure, personnel matters, hiring, management and operations, among other things, said Dixon.

The accreditation process is time-consuming and involved for the departments that apply.

It can also be costly. For the Brunswick Police Department, which has 78 full-time employees, the cost for the commission's evaluation was \$7,650.

That amount does not include costs associated with the time and preparation involved by the police department itself.

The city police department, initially accredited by the commission in 2000, underwent a three-day on-site evaluation this past September.

The department can reapply for accreditation at any time.

The benefits of CALEA accreditation are numerous, Dixon said. In addition to community confidence and recognition as a top depart-

ment by other law enforcement agencies. Dixon said that commission-accredited departments have more effective administrations and are better equipped to execute policies and procedures.

There are 558 law enforcement agencies in North America accredited through the commission, 40 of which are in Georgia.

Brunswick Mayor Brad Brown said Friday that he had not been

told that the city police department is no longer accredited and is concerned about the situation.

"I would like to know why we are no longer accredited and who dropped the ball," Brown said. "If you are an agency that is not accredited, you are not frowned upon, but to be an accredited department that loses that accreditation certainly is looked down upon."

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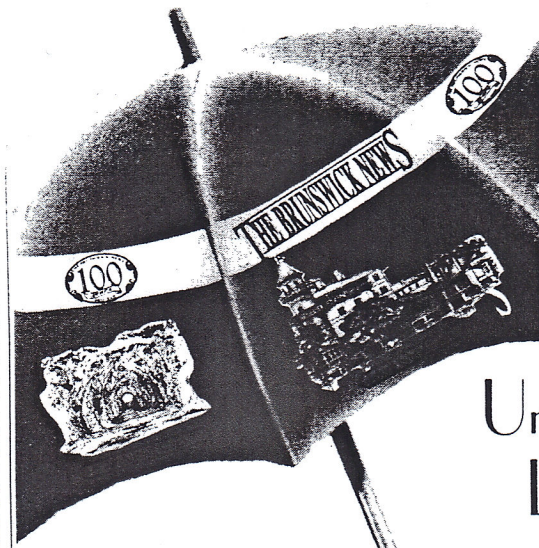
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Front Page Brunswick News  
October 30, 2003

ly time will tell, but there is one certainty: regardless of the outcome of the game Saturday at the stadium in Jacksonville, fans will be on the Golden Isles, and particularly those in St. Simons Island will count themselves as winners by the time the weekend comes to a close.

Thousands of people sporting Georgia football jerseys will mention a few in Florida's Jacksonville area that set up on the island every year to seek prizes in the game.

Alumni students and fans will Daves fans to soak up the island atmosphere, and that's just with Steve Jackson, owner of Major League Restaurant.

It's always a busy weekend for Jacksonville. Things really start to pick up at dinner on Friday, and it continues through the weekend. We go out and find additional staff for a Florida weekend, since we slow down after Day 1.

Our also prepares for the influx of patrons by getting extra food stock, kitchen staff, and turning out our grill staff.

For more on Jacksonville, visit our Jacksonville Florida page.

see D-35, 5A



Alton Gregory, irrigation technician with the Jekyll Island Authority, left, and landscape superintendent Cliff Gawron put the finishing touches on a giant Georgia Bulldog painting behind the No. 7 green at Pine Lakes Golf Course on Jekyll Island Wednesday in preparation for today's 24th annual Georgia-Florida Golf Classic. The 30-foot-by-36-foot bulldog, one of several paintings done throughout the golf course for the tournament, took around six hours and approximately 50 cans of spray paint to complete.

Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

## Catching football fever is easy to do

By BUD L. ELLIS  
The Brunswick News

So, you find yourself looking at the cars with the Georgia flags, the people wearing red and black barking at each other, and you can't help but wonder...

What's all the commotion?

You're not a big football fan. You don't watch the sport. You don't care who wins Saturday's game between Georgia and Florida at Aflac Stadium in Jacksonville.

At least you know, at this time every year,

thousands of people descend on the Golden Isles to cheer for the Dogs, party, spend some money, party, snarl traffic on St. Simons Island, and, oh yeah, party.

But beyond the madness, there is a football game. And just in case you find yourself out and about in the days to come, and you want to fit in, here is a handy list of dos and don'ts for Georgia-Florida weekend.

**Do:** Reminisce Georgia's injuries and recent close victories. Football is a physi-

cal game, and the Dogs are missing some of their top performers. Florida had last week off to rest, while Georgia fans have spent the week complaining that injuries and the Dogs' inconsistent play of late will cost them Saturday.

**Don't:** Ask how the Dogs have fared against Florida in recent years. Georgia hasn't beaten the Gators since 1997 and has lost 12 out of the past 13 meetings, dating to 1990. The Dogs lost only one. Please see TIPS, 5A.

### NSFocus comment

## Water using buries is detected water line

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Wick News

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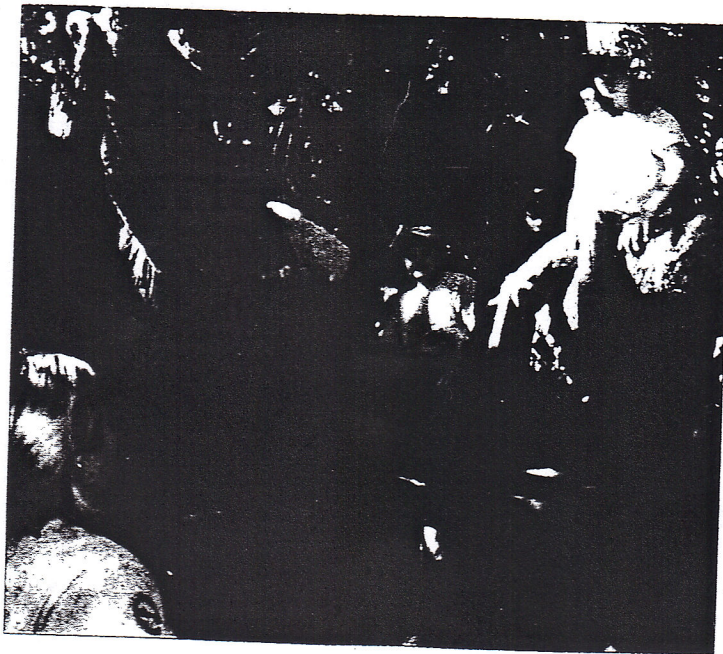
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tigated the area after mplaints of a distinct- nd paper-type material k to crab traps

WATER 5A

## Getting back to nature



Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

Fourth-grade students from C.B. Greer Elementary School take seats on a sprawling live oak tree as they listen to environmental educator Katie Knick, left, during the first day of a three-day visit to the Jekyll Island 4-H Center, which educates school children from all over the state. The students hiked through a maritime forest on Jekyll Island as part of lessons on the ecology of the island. Students will also learn about marsh and dune life on the barrier island. Story, 2A.

## Cult leader to face trial in Glynn

### Police can expect numerous protesters

By KAREN SLOAN  
The Brunswick News

The leader of a religious cult who claims to be from another galaxy will face child-molestation charges in federal court in Brunswick, U.S. District Court Judge Ashley Royal ruled Wednesday.

Malachi York, 58, the head of the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors, could go to trial as soon as January.

York moved to Putnam County, just north of central Georgia, from New York in 1993 and has come under intense scrutiny from local and state authorities and the FBI.

The trial is being moved to Brunswick from Macon because of pre-trial publicity.

When it gets here, police can expect a significant number of York's followers to show up at the federal courthouse on Gloucester Street in downtown Brunswick, Macon Police Department spokesperson Melanie Hofman said.

About 100 York supporters gathered Friday outside the federal courthouse in Macon during a plea hearing.

Please see TRIAL, 5A

### News Wire

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Creek shows debris near the water line, in the stream bank near the outfall pipe; and paper and rag debris is visible in a close-up of the weeds beside the outfall pipe. In addition, a small amount of foam can be seen below the weeds.

Holland collected water samples by the effluent discharge pipe that dumps water into Academy Creek that then flows to the Turtle River and St. Simons Sound.

The state laboratory that tested the water found suspended solids in the water above allowable levels.

Jim Harris, environmental engineer with the EPD, said there is an explanation why the level was high.

"There was river water backing up into the pipe at that time," Harris said. "Water coming out of

time you can see visually with your eyes, there's a problem. People need to know there's something wrong down there."

Laboratory analysis of the level of nitrite, which is associated with raw sewage, was at .01508.

"The sample confirmed in my mind what I saw," Holland said. "Even though it seems like a very small level, it is detectable."

Nitrite is discernible at .004 parts per million.

Harris said the nitrite level was high and that he has no explanation for that. However he said that there are other sources of nitrite besides human waste. They include detergent and fertilizer. The plant does not monitor nitrite levels.

The EPD conducted a walk-through inspection of the city's water pollution control plant earlier

problem is minor.

"Toilet paper is made to dissolve as soon as it gets flushed. Sometimes pieces of rag or paper tower will get into it, they have [a] screen at [the] head of [the] plant that takes out big pieces, but little pieces can slip by," Harris said.

Georgia law states that "all waters shall be free from ... floating debris associated with municipal or industrial sewage ... in amounts sufficient to be unsightly or to interfere with legitimate water uses."

Brunswick Mayor Brad Brown said Thursday he was unaware of any investigation of Academy Creek and the wastewater treatment plant. He added every time he has been there the water has looked crystal clear and he has seen no debris.

last Thursday and Friday, and we just love it. It's a great boost for the restaurants and hotels."

Though the Georgia-Florida golf

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## Tips: Dos and don

Continued from 1A

game last season. Guess who beat them? Yep, the Gators.

**Do:** Talk glowingly about New Orleans. Even if you've never been to The Big Easy, understand it's a Mecca of sorts for Georgia fans. The Sugar Bowl, which Georgia won last year, is in New Orleans. This season, it's the national championship game.

**Don't:** Show up in the Village at

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## Trial: Moved from Macon

Continued from 1A

"Other than just having a large crowd there, we didn't have any problems with violence or anything like that," said Hofman. "They basically just had picnics and played music outside of the courthouse."

The trial comes as a surprise to Brunswick police. The department has not been officially notified of the trial location change, said Sgt. Kevin Jones of the Brunswick Police Department.

U.S. Marshals inspected the federal courthouse in Brunswick and found it acceptable to host the high-profile trial.

York was arrested May 8, 2002.

and initially pled guilty to 74 counts of child molestation and related charges, as well as one count of transporting children across state lines for sexual purposes, in return for a recommended 15-year prison sentence. The plea was rejected by U.S. District Court Judge Hugh Lawson, who said the sentence was not harsh enough for the crimes. Lawson then removed himself from the case and Royal took over. Through his attorneys, York withdrew his guilty plea.

It was former followers of York, both children and adults, who accused him of molesting them. York is also facing charges of avoiding financial reporting requirements.

According to the federal indictment, a woman considered to be York's main wife, Kathy Johnson, is also facing charges of transporting children across state lines for sexual purposes.

The United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors currently has a 467-acre compound in Putnam County, and in addition to claiming to have been from another galaxy, has claimed to be of American Indian and Egyptian heritage.

In Nuwaubian literature, the group refers to York as its god or savior. The group now refers to York as Chief Black Thunderbird, and call him the leader Yamasee Native American Moors of the Creek Nation.

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