

# Keep it local for holiday shopping

**B**lack Friday is the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season and some shoppers may even wake up at the crack of dawn — or earlier — to take advantage of special sales.

Many of our local merchants are rolling out their best deals this week both for Black Friday and Shop Small Saturday, Nov. 26, and hoping for a good response from Camden County shoppers.

Also known as Small Business Saturday, it's a day to celebrate small businesses and their impact in the community and encourage people to support a small business by shopping local.

For small businesses, the economic impact of the Christmas shopping season can extend far beyond one day or two days after Thanksgiving. Most of us will spend the next several weeks crossing off items from our holiday shopping lists and we don't want a lot of hassle along the way.

When you shop in Camden County, you won't have to worry about bumper to bumper traffic and finding a parking spot. You will probably be able to find a store employee to help you with your purchase if you need one. And you can find all of the holiday necessities you need and still be home by dinnertime.

The best part of shopping locally, however, is the impact it has on your community. Sales tax revenue goes back into our government coffers to pay for things that we need — roads, schools, fire protection, services to senior citizens and much more. Shopping locally also helps keep your friends and neighbors in Camden County employed.

When you shop out of town, you are helping to provide an economic boost to that community instead of your own. You may be saving a few dollars, but that savings can be lost in travel expenses and the time you spent getting there and fighting traffic.

With all of the holiday decisions that lie ahead, we hope the decision to shop locally is the easiest one you will have to make this Christmas.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Park staff didn't follow rules for wilderness area

Dear Editor,  
Cumberland Island is a priceless treasure to our local community, state and nation. Thousands of people visit Cumberland Island National Seashore each year. Since 1982, a part of the island has been a federally designated wilderness area and is the only one in Georgia managed by the National Park Service. The NPS is responsible for enforcing the wilderness act but on Cumberland Island they have violated it. Following Hurricane Matthew, the NPS brought in crews with chainsaws to clear the wilderness hiking trails violating the non-motorized equipment rule.

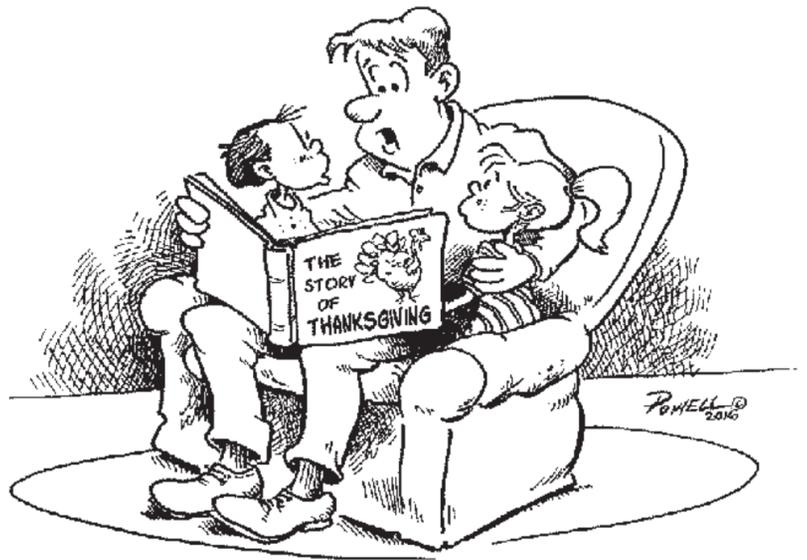
The NPS must be held accountable and end its repeated mismanagement of the island's wilderness area. We urge the public to send comments to the deputy director, Darrell\_Echols@NPS.gov, in the Southeast Regional Office, and voice concern for protection of this unique resource.

*Stephen Cofer-Shabica,  
president  
Wild Cumberland Inc.*

## JDA is hobbled by commission's request for funds

Dear Editor,  
We know to avoid buying a pig in a poke. Do we know to avoid buying a shiny, empty sack labeled "spaceport" that our commissioners and representatives can later fill with whatever they choose at our expense?

That's the problem with the commissioners' spaceport proposal, and with the Georgia Space Flight Act Rep. Jason Spencer has



**"On July 4th we celebrate Independence Day. On Thanksgiving Day we celebrate our dependence."**

re-introduced in Atlanta.

Both proposals lack necessary details. For the spaceport, we know nothing about the public/private agreement that would be struck. We don't know what spaceflight company would be involved, what vehicles would be used or what trajectory or trajectories the vehicles would follow. We haven't seen the results of a required hazard analysis or a financial study of the project's economic prospects. The county hasn't produced a budget for covering the necessary expenses the project entails.

Mr. Spencer's Georgia Space Flight Act is worded to indemnify spaceflight companies for risks incurred in activities that don't apply to the kinds of activities proposed for the Camden spaceport. It's a placeholder for whatever would later be written into the hollow legislation; a marketing gimmick to show space companies that Georgia is "open for business," to create the appearance of momentum in a project being advanced at whatever cost.

Board chairman Charlie

Smith made clear at Friday's Joint Development Authority meeting that it can't refuse to return \$750,000 to the commissioners — to cover mounting spaceport expenses — of tax money from the 1 mill tax increase specifically earmarked for JDA projects. To return this amount the JDA must close various local bank accounts it holds for land acquisition, leaving the JDA about \$350,000 above standard operating funds to cover product development and land acquisition. Remember, this \$750,000 claw back follows an earlier \$650,000 claw back from the same 1 mill — approximately \$1.3 million this year — promised to the JDA that the county commissioners retained for themselves for spaceport expenses during budget discussions earlier this year.

The JDA is working hard for the county, but is being hobbled by demands from the commissioners and county administrator Steve Howard to continually relinquish funds that it had counted to realize its long-range goals.

Under JDA executive director James Coughlin and chairman Smith's leadership, the JDA has managed its finances so well it's operating at \$36,000 under budget for the year. It's brought a new company, Wildlife Defense Systems Inc., to Camden with the company's promise of 35 jobs now and an additional 35 jobs each year over the next five years. Other projects are in the works.

JDA office manager Teira Cole showed civic mindedness and thrift at Friday's meeting by proposing that she, Coughlin, project manager Darren Harper and the board could save \$1,000 a year of contracted labor by donating a Saturday of their time twice a year to do small landscaping chores at the Camden Industrial Park.

Unfortunately, compared to the out-of-control commissioners' spending on the spaceport project, the JDA's attempts at fiduciary responsibility are like putting a water-saving aerator on a faucet attached to a burst water pipe.

*Jacqueline Eichborn  
Woodbine*

## Get in touch with leaders

**Rep. Jason Spencer, Georgia House 180**  
Jason.spencer@house.ga.gov • (912) 541-0243

**Rep. John Corbett, Georgia House 174**  
John.corbett@house.ga.gov

**Sen. William Ligon, Georgia Senate**  
William@senatorligon.com • (912) 261-2263

# Tribune & Georgian

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## OUR MISSION

The Tribune & Georgian is published with pride weekly for the people of Camden County by Community Newspapers Inc., Athens, Ga. We believe that strong newspapers build strong communities — "Newspapers get things done!" Our primary goal is to publish distinguished and profitable community-oriented newspapers. This mission will be accomplished through the teamwork of professionals dedicated to truth, integrity, loyalty, quality and hard work.

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The final report of the master plan process is due in the spring, but fortunately the city can begin looking at some of the key recommendations now. Business owners have provided ideas on how the city can help boost business and we will be reviewing a number of their ordinance ideas to determine whether more flexibility will help them attract and market to their customers.

A proposal for a limited time "trial run" for temporary signage regulations that would make it easier for businesses to promote their products and services has been developed jointly by the city community development director and business owners. This proposal would be in effect for just one year as we and they measure the effectiveness and any potential downsides.

Downtown and midtown business owners have expressed concern that the upcoming holiday season is critical to their profit line so I have urged staff, business owners and the city council to take the necessary steps



**John Morrissey**

Guest columnist

in the next 10 days to offer any modifications they feel necessary so that we can take action on this matter no later than the regular Dec. 5 council meeting. This is just another way we can demonstrate that St. Marys is a business-friendly community.

Many of you have inquired about the status of the now closed Georgia Power building on the waterfront. I have been in conversation with company leadership since we first learned of its decision to close last summer. As the city's long-term plans envision tourist, boating and

entertainment venues along the waterfront, this facility at 108 St. Marys St. is a pivotal property that needs to become an integral part of not just our landscape but our revitalization plans. Any decision regarding sale or lease of Georgia Power's buildings statewide will likely not be known for several months. I am in regular conversation with company leadership and will keep you posted as we seek the opportunities and highest potential for this key location.

As we enter the holiday season, there are dozens of community-wide events coming up including our traditional White Lighting festivities, Christmas in the Park, Christmas Tour of Homes and the live nativity, all designed as family events.

A couple of weeks ago I enjoyed another neighborhood event designed to bring families together with our public safety leaders to entertain youngsters. The first-ever harvest festival, organized and led by Pines resident Juanita Thompson (better known as Miss

Foxy), entertained youngsters from the Pines and nearby neighborhoods. With the help of dozens of business and individual sponsors, the St. Marys police and fire departments and the sheriff's department, lots of games, raffles, hamburgers, hot dogs and the like were enjoyed by a large crowd. It was a great day for one of our neighborhoods to shine.

Finally, the elections are over. On the local level, the voters sent a positive message that our city is on the right track in moving forward. We each take that vote of confidence seriously and know you have expectations that we will deliver.

We will strive to continue to be transparent and open, knowing that we can achieve more by working together with citizens to create that "One St. Marys Vision" our master plan seeks. Thank you for your votes of confidence.

John Morrissey is the mayor of St. Marys. He can be contacted at john.morrissey@stmarysga.gov or (912) 510-4041.

## LETTERS POLICY

• Letters submitted for publication must include the writer's full name, street address and telephone number for verification purposes. Unsigned letters will

not be printed.  
• Letters should be no more than 500 words.  
• Letters will be edited for grammar, punctuation, spelling and profanity.

• Writers are limited to one letter per 20 days.  
• Letters written on behalf of a community organization must be signed by at least one member of the group.  
• While attempts are made to print all letters that meet

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• Letters may be mailed to P.O. Box 6960, St. Marys, Ga., 31558; delivered to 206 Osborne St.; faxed to (912) 882-6519; or emailed to editor1@tds.net.