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Elise Perkins
University of North Georgia

Joey Argento
University of North Georgia

Julia Regeski
University of North Georgia

Sydney Bhame
University of North Georgia

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Donation to Oconee group helps UNG art program expand

Mitch Dowell
Staff Writer-Oconee
MTDOWE5700@ung.edu

The Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation has recently begun a new round of renovations on the School Street Studios building in downtown Watkinsville to help cater to UNG Oconee’s growing population.

According to Stacy Koffman, the head of the art department at UNG Oconee, “The University of North Georgia just donated $50,000 for the renovation of a classroom space.

“One of the driving forces behind it,” Koffman said, “was in order for UNG to stay here, we had to have an Americans with Disabilities Act compliant space, and we didn’t have it.”

Before, the only way to enter the classroom at OCAF was through a door perched above an awkward set of stairs, Koffman said. Along with a new classroom, the renovations will include alterations to the restroom facilities to make them compliant as well. Both the classroom and restroom will be in use by next January.

Koffman also noted that the new space will be over twice the size of the current room used for classes. The classroom, while much larger than the old one, can be utilized as a space for art exhibitions as well.

OCAF intends to make improvements to all three of the buildings. Koffman said the foundation is “currently in the process of what’s called a capital campaign to raise $1.5 million.”

The building itself has undergone many changes over the years. It was once used as a peach cannery and later as an elementary school. When OCAF acquired the building 20 years ago, they had to do many renovations of their own. The building was in a state of disrepair, complete with rotting floors and ceilings. As Koffman put it, “They saved the building basically.”

UNG has been leasing the classroom space for five years, so with renovations that will benefit the school as well as OCAF, “it’s a win-win situation,” Koffman said.
Fall is primetime in Dahlonega. As the tree’s dressings transform themselves, changing the never-ending mountain landscape from purple-green to a cacophony of warm hues, our Appalachian town transforms itself into a bustling, picturesque village. The buildings’ stories seem to quietly whisper their golden tales from the woodland, eerily carried by the chilly Autumn wind as Halloween approaches, evidenced by the haunting stuffed creatures guarding our local institutions. Our town’s history seems to awaken as harvest time comes; the farmers who have farmed here for centuries join in Hancock Park to offer our community some home-grown comfort, as if to make-up for the weather’s sudden rudeness.

And yet this crisp air doesn’t just drive Dahlonegans inward toward cinnamon flavored treats and Netflix binges. It also coaxes Nuggets outdoors, as the community swarms parks and the Drill Field alike to toss a Frisbee, attempt to read their begrudgingly assigned books and absorb the liveliness that the surrounding once-greenery emits.

Personally, I’ve always loved the way Fall seems to nudge people towards the bottom of their to-do list. It’s as though the world becomes suddenly aware that the ease of Summer will soon be ending, and we must prepare for the inevitable coldness. In days of old, when my town and school were founded, settlers took this matter quite seriously, and were forced to bunker down. Unfortunately, these mountaineers didn’t have our luxuries like infinity scarves, Pumpkin Spice lattes or Walmart mass-produced bags of candy to alleviate our pre-Halloween sugar cravings.

UNG, scattered throughout a region known for hitting its peak in Autumn, is no different from those that have pioneered before us. I love the way that my schedule fills to the brim, littered with notes and meetings and events like fresh leaves on a lawn. As Nighthawks, we are constantly hustling from place to place as this season continues, and happily so. I am so glad that I am not alone in my business, and that as I scurry from building to building as the temperature drops, I hop from group to group, all hustling towards their own unique engagement.

As Nighthawks flutter across our campuses, enjoying the busy-ness that only Fall seems to procure, newspapers flourish in an attempt to capture, if briefly, the happenings the will digitally busy-ness that only Fall seems to procure, newspapers flourish in an attempt to capture, if briefly, the happenings the will digitally

Sincerely,

Julia Regeski
Co-Managing Editor-Dahlonega
JCREGE0213@ung.edu
Break the silence: Katie Koestner discusses

Holly Jones
Staff Writer-Dahlonega
HMJONE4144@ung.edu

Date rape. It’s a touchy subject to talk about and even more so for the victims. Katie Koestner, the first woman in history to speak out about her college rape, recently spoke at UNG with aims of preventing future crimes.

Because she openly talked about her experience, Koestner was featured on the cover of TIME Magazine at just 18 years old. Koestner has been on several news and talk shows, as well as given hundreds of speeches about her experience and what she has done to help other women.

When asked about what main points she likes to emphasize in her presentations, she said that besides her story, she likes to define sexual assault and that it can happen to anyone, anywhere.

“I also like to talk about empowerment, stereotypes, media and other pressures that women often face,” said Koestner. Sexual assault has become an even bigger issue on college campuses in recent years and people do not realize how often it happens because it is so under reported.

“I want to bring a human element to a statistic in a crime of silence,” said Koestner. “Most people do not know or meet a lot of people who are willing to say ‘that happened to me’ and people all around you could be a victim.”

Koestner also talked about how men can be victims just as much as women can. According to statistics from Take Back the Night, one in six men are believed to be the victim of sexual or domestic violence in their lifetime.

“Not only are men also victims but they could help the men who do those bad things understand the situations. Men have been absent for too long,” said Koestner. The statistics for sexual assault on college campuses are staggering. The following statistics were compiled by the New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault:

At least one in four college women will be the victim of a sexual assault during her academic career.

At least 80 percent of all sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance of the victim.

Eight percent of college women who were victims of attacks that met the study’s definition of rape did not consider what happen to them rape.

More than 70 percent of rape victim knew their attackers, compared to about half of all violent crime victims.

Five percent of women on college campuses experience rape or attempted rape every year.

In the U.S. military academies, 5 percent of women report surviving rape every year, as do 2.4 percent of the men.

Koestner, now 42 years old, is executive director of Take Back the Night, whose mission is to “seek the end of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse and all other forms of sexual violence.”

Sexual assault on college campuses is a serious matter and thanks to brave victims like Katie Koestner, people are finally starting to pay attention.

If you or anyone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, it is never too late to get help.

For more information about Koestner’s foundation, Take Back the Night, visit takebackthenight.org.

Opinion: Public Safety’s apathy about Yik Yak

Jake Chandler
Staff Writer-Dahlonega
LJCHAN7206@ung.edu

Last Wednesday, Sept. 10, terrorist threats were made on the popular app, Yik Yak. In hindsight they proved fake and false alarms. However, in today’s fast moving, digital culture threats of this matter should not be taken lightly. The threats were based off videos posted online by ISIS where they threatened to attack Georgia Military College in Milledgeville, possibly beyond.

Seeing this, many students were alarmed, and rightfully so. History shows disturbed individuals have gone rogue on college campuses, murdering innocent college students and civilians.

As I sat in my journalism class the staff discussed possible stories for the upcoming week. An editor suggested we take up the “Yik Yak fiasco.” Researching, we gathered information from students who had read the threats. In hindsight, which is always 20/20, we see that they were totally bogus and hollow. However, in the heat of the moment, with the threat of armed attacks on campus, nothing can be taken lightly — please understand our angst.

Following it up, an editor and I sought to gather information from IT. Spilling all to them, aiming to track an IP address, IT contacted Public Safety.

Upon arrival to the office of Public Safety my editor and I were all business. We were concerned for the well being of students on campus. As journalists our duty is to expose what is going on, without a bias. Our job is to report facts, to unearth the hidden and to tell the truth.

However, the officer there appeared
Club Spotlight: Pokémon League

JOIN THE UNG Pokémon LEAGUE!

• CHALLENGE GYM LEADERS!
• EARN BADGES!
• MAKE FRIENDS!
• BECOME THE VERY BEST LIKE NO ONE EVER WAS!

Charles Garcia
Staff Writer-Dahlonega
CMGARC3780@ung.edu

While most of us mourned the loss of summer, one group of students fell upon the semester with a vision. Four friends, Christopher Tiller, Colin Pothoff, James Stephenson and Carl Roach, formed the University of North Georgia’s first ever Pokémon League.

Founded on a common interest, UNG’s Pokémon League became a reality at the beginning of this semester. Although still in its initial stages, this club has been nurtured with a steady flow of dedicated fans and currently boasts around 20 members.

The Elite Four, composed of the founding members, manages the club’s operations and borrows their title from the final bosses in the Pokémon games. Upon arriving to the meeting, I witnessed one Elite Four member carrying out a trainer evaluation. Those interested in joining the group must battle a skilled club member in order to gauge their own ability.

On this particular occasion, the new members delivered a modest performance, only defeating two of their opponent’s Pokémon. Admitted into the group as trainees, these new members may advance up the ranks to become gym leaders of a specific Pokémon type. As the club grows, the members plan on rotating positions as gym leaders and Elite Four members.

While countless games and products exist in the Pokémon universe, the club’s primary focus rests on the contemporary Nintendo 3DS system and its corresponding games. In effect, card games and Gameboy Advance titles will not feature prominently, if at all, during events. Currently, Pokémon X and Y are the chosen titles for battling, but the group is looking forward to upcoming releases.

When asked about the group’s mission statement, Elite Four member, Chris Tiller stated, “to foster a sense of community and friendship among fans of the Pokémon games, since we’re all fans and here for fun.” The group’s leaders also hold ambitious plans for the future, such as staging tournaments with other universities.

The Pokémon League can be contacted on Facebook through their group page “UNG Pokémon League” or you may email one of their members at cwtill5242@ung.edu.

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to blow it off. It seemed as if this was common, just another “tip” — nothing to worry about. From their responses, I gathered one theme: apathy.

On the topic of Yik Yak my editor brought up recent Yaks about sexual harassment she had witnessed first-hand. Yaks were sent out that clearly called out room number and names. By definition this is libel, punishable by law. This cannot be tolerated.

Yet, when it was brought up it was once again shrugged off. According to public safety, harassment via Yik Yak is equated to writing on the bathroom stall, and they are unable to do anything about it. However, that’s not true. IT clearly stated measures could be taken, although it would take some work. Something could be done concerning libel and threats posed over Yik Yak.

Don’t think I’m against Public Safety. In fact, I’m very grateful for what they do, without them, who knows what could happen on campus. I only want to expose their apathy, and call upon them to be more proactive in and around campus; in order to provide better safety and a legitimate feeling of security.

All things considered, Public Safety is a blessing, and we ought honor their service, offer respect, and abide within the law. However, Public Safety needs to step it up. Campus police cannot blow off bomb threats, no matter how informal, as well as libel and slander. Yik Yak is a concrete example of cyber-bullying that needs to come to a complete halt.

Editor’s note: On Friday, Sept. 19, UGA police evacuated an area of their campus due to a Yik Yak threat. A student was arrested soon after, charged with making terroristic threats, and suspended from school.
The new face of racism: Cultural appropriation

Patrick Brick
Staff Writer-Gainesville
PJBRC3496@ung.edu

Let’s talk about cultural appropriation. We are all familiar with Miley Cyrus, right? We are all familiar with her live performances as well, right? Okay, good. These performances are the perfect example of the new face of racism.

Our generation’s version of racism is disguised as cultural acceptance, but is actually just stereotyping and objectification. There is nothing accepting or progressive about how Cyrus uses African American culture onstage. Take her performance at last year’s VMAs, for example.

You might remember this by thinking of giant bears slung on the backs of her back-up dancers, a unitard that looks like a mouse, and a whole lot of twerking.

What you might have missed is the use of African American women as nothing more than props. Here lies the real problem. By using these women in this way, Cyrus is perpetuating an issue that has been permeating American entertainment for ages: the objectification of the black female body and the appropriation of their cultures to fit a personal aesthetic.

You don’t see her dancers’ faces much during the show, but instead you almost exclusively see their backsides, of which Cyrus points at and slaps periodically, which isn’t a very subtle message. She clearly shows that she doesn’t care how talented or how hard these women worked to get where they are, all she wants to do is use them for their bodies.

You can find a few articles talking about the problem with white pop stars “borrowing” black culture, but not enough to really start a sufficient dialogue, so let’s start said dialogue by acknowledging this occurrence. We need to accept that this happens, and that it is not okay. We also need to stop glorifying the people that are part of the problem.

Miley Cyrus, Katy Perry, Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber, and many others are all guilty of this and need to be aware of how their actions affect African Americans and cause their white fans to view African Americans as more of a spectacle and less like human beings.

Media outlets understand white America’s curiosity surrounding black culture, but they need a white face to put it on, which is where the aforementioned pop stars come into play.

If we look at the history of twerking, it has actually been around for centuries in some form or another. It originated in West Africa and was done during joyous and celebratory occasions. There was nothing sexual about it. It started showing up in American media in the early nineties in New Orleans; however, it only garnered real attention in the late 2010’s when white pop stars like Cyrus and Iggy Azalea picked it up.

All this being said, observing and participating in other cultures is perfectly okay. What’s not okay is taking bits and pieces of cultures and stripping them of any real value or sexualizing them for personal gain and recognition.

Live to park another day

Colin Hubbard
Staff Writer-Gainesville
CWHUBB1296@ung.edu

The parking woes at UNG Gainesville continue. It has been like this for years and with the number of students on campus seemingly increasing with each passing semester, this issue isn’t likely to be solved soon. The parking problems make the task of getting to class on time much more difficult. Since no good student wants to be late to class, here are some tips to help you find that all elusive parking spot.

1) Get to school early in the day.
   It’s a guaranteed way to find a spot if you get to the school as soon as it opens.
   “If you want to park as soon as you arrive on campus, get here early,” student Madeline Derusha said. “You’ll just have to kill some time if you don’t have a class at the crack of dawn is all.”

2) Account for parking when planning your commute.
   If you aren’t a fan of killing time at school, the next thing you can do is be prepared to spend some time searching for a spot.
   “I spend anywhere from 20 to 30 minutes a day trying to find a parking spot,” student Thomas Whitley said. “To account for this, you should probably leave your house 30 minutes earlier.”

3) Have someone drop you off.
   If you know someone close to campus, try to get them to drop you off and pick you up. You’re starting to see this happen more often. Of course it may take a little something something to convince someone to be your chauffeur.

4) Stalk somebody.
   You can ask someone you see walking in the parking lot if they are going to their car. If so, offer to give them a ride to their car in exchange for their parking spot. If they don’t like getting into cars with strangers, just follow them.

5) Learn to drive a motorcycle.
   They seem to have no problem whatsoever finding a parking spot.

Parking is going to be a problem no matter where you go on campus, but having some tips to help you in your efforts will never hurt.

Our generation’s version of racism is disguised as cultural acceptance...
SGA planning to push for adding more food options at Oconee

Nathan Tобuren
Staff Writer-Oconee
NSTOBU6422@ung.edu

The campus café at UNG Oconee is making an effort to expand their menu and increase the variety of food available to students and faculty. University officials are pursuing a deal with an outside restaurant that would have them set up a small site on campus.

Lindsay Bailey, director of student involvement, anticipates a chain restaurant to set up shop on campus, but hopes that a local restaurant receives some recognition as well. “The local people that come to mind is Fox’s Pizza,” Bailey said, “because they really want to have some sort of relationship with Oconee.”

According to Bailey, Fox’s Pizza is no stranger to UNG Oconee, adding that the restaurant sold pizza in the atrium all summer while the campus café was not in session.

The addition of a new restaurant on campus will result in an increase of student fees, but it is not as bad as it sounds. “It’s almost like a mandatory meal-plan,” Bailey said, “and Oconee’s meal-plan would be $150.” Bailey stated that if the student does not spend all of the money, the student can choose to either receive what is left over from the original $150 that is paid, or the remaining money can roll over into funds for the next semester. While this plan does seem reasonable, Bailey explained that university officials “were working towards this direction,” but something halted the process.

Bailey, who is also the faculty advisor for the Student Government Association, shared that one of SGA’s primary goals this year is to have a clear course of action in place to help speed along the process of adding more food options on campus. No timetable has been set as of yet, but Bailey hinted that some change could happen relatively quickly because the campus café’s current contract ends at the end of this school year.

“Something different might happen next year, but they’re very clear on saying they’re not trying to get rid of anybody,” Bailey said.

In the meantime, students will be able to use campus cash at Zaxby’s and receiving a 10 percent discount for using a Nighthawks card. This opportunity will not last forever, however, because the promotion ends at the end of October.
Intramural sports hoping tournaments take off

The addition of dodgeball highlights the many changes being made to intramural sports at UNG Oconee for the upcoming academic year.

UNG Oconee currently has six intramurals on schedule for the upcoming year. Taking place during the fall are flag football, sand volleyball and a recently added dodgeball. In the spring, UNG Oconee will offer soccer, softball and basketball.

Lindsay Bailey, director of student involvement, is hoping UNG Oconee will have more success in adding intramurals this year. “We’ve actually had various tournaments throughout the years, and tournaments do not seem to go well on this campus,” Bailey said.

The biggest reason for the change in the number of intramural sports is the addition of the new intramural graduate assistant, Geoff Nelson. A UNG Dahlonega alumnus, Nelson will be directly in charge of all intramural sports this year.

“With me only having to use my time for intramurals,” Nelson said, “it was the perfect opportunity to add some stuff.”

Nelson was selected as the new graduate assistant over a variety of applicants that were interviewed through the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association. Bailey attended NIRSA in order to interview the applicants in person.

“I interviewed everybody,” Bailey said, “and Geoff … interviewed like everyone else, and he ended up being the best applicant, by far.”

Just as in years past, not all intramural sports offered by UNG Oconee will take place on campus.

“The only [sports] that are offered on campus are the sand volleyball and dodgeball,” Bailey said, “and everything else is contracted through Oconee Sports and Recreation, so we just use their space [at Herman C. Michael Park and Veterans Memorial Park].”

Intramural sports at UNG Oconee will be using student officials for the first time this year. This is an idea that both Bailey and Nelson are ecstatic about. Nelson believes that this is an idea that will help intramural sports to grow even more at UNG Oconee.

Each team that wins an intramural sports competition or tournament will receive a free T-shirt and an opportunity to play against teams from the other three UNG campuses. The winning team of that tournament then receives a plaque to be hung up at the winning campus and another free T-shirt.

Other than T-shirts and recognition, Nelson argues that there are more benefits to playing intramural sports.

“It’s just a great way to meet new people,” Nelson said. “It’s leadership building, because you’re working on a team. It’s teamwork. You’re staying in shape. There’s really no reason not to.”

Intramural sports does a great job of advertising through the use of flyers and information tables. Nelson will even sit at random tables in the SRC to talk to students about intramurals. Students can also learn more about intramural sports by looking at their Facebook or OrgSync pages and can sign up at www.imleagues.com/ungoc.

More than just Division II: Club sports for everyone

UNG offers a variety of extracurricular activities to students on each of its four campuses. Many of these activities revolve around clubs.

While students may choose clubs from a variety of fields, recreational sports has a lot to offer. For students who are new to a sport and are looking to get some experience, club sports may be the way to go.

“We currently have 21 sports clubs,” said Derek Leonard, director of recreational sports at UNG. “And that’s just on the Dahlonega campus.”

Club sports are a way for students to get involved in recreational programs that they may not otherwise be able to participate in. They are a step above intramurals, but not on the same level as NCAA athletics, said Leonard.

“Club sports in general are all student led,” said Leonard. “Players organize the practices and practice times.”

Many of the athletic clubs on campus compete with other schools within their specified region.

The women’s rugby team, founded in 2007 at UNG, recently competed in the Collegiate Women’s D2 South division.

While many of the club sports programs compete within sanctioned regions, some of the recreational programs are simply for students to enjoy. White water rafting and rock climbing both fall under this category.

For club sports to move up into the NCAA athletics field, “that’s up to the school,” said Leonard. “There has to be a desire by the athletic program and the university to expand the athletic program to do that,” said Leonard.
Oconee has the need, is there a way?

Conner Pearce
Opinions Editor-Oconee
CLPEAR4337@ung.edu

Computer science majors at Oconee who want to take computer science classes have no choice but to travel. And far.

For Pinal Patel, this means making a two-and-a-half-hour trip twice a week. “Up until now I’ve been taking core classes, so this is the first time I’m taking an actual computer science course,” Patel said. “They don’t offer the CS courses here right now so I’m commuting to Gainesville.”

Despite the extra miles and gas expenditures, there are some benefits to taking computer science courses for students who call Oconee their home campus.

“They are direct transfers to UGA and tuition is a little bit lower here,” Patel said. “It’s smaller classrooms, so if I need extra help I don’t have to wait in a long line of students to get to the instructor. Just like UGA, the computer science courses on the Gainesville campus use Java as their programming language.”

But why are CS majors like Patel having to travel so far to take classes?

“The primary obstacle to offering computer science and information systems courses at Oconee right now is a lack of classroom computer lab space,” Bryson Payne, interim department head of computer sciences at UNG, said.

“We’re very fortunate to have faculty at Oconee who can teach courses in CS and IS – if the new building project is approved, we would love to have a classroom computer lab to bring more computer science and information systems courses to our students at Oconee.”

While classroom space has always been an issue at Oconee, the campus still has computer-equipped classrooms available for some classes, but not computer science. “The tradition has been that English classes (and others) have been using those labs due to space issues,” Payne said.

Basically the school could have space for computer science, but there isn’t even enough room for the English classes.

Casey Bowman, an instructor qualified to teach computer science at Oconee, is hopeful that things will change soon.

“We’re going to be breaking ground on an extension to this building sometime in spring,” Bowman said. “The number of students interested in computer science on this campus hasn’t always been very large, but that’s grown a lot in the last five or six years. There are probably 60 to 70 computer science majors who call this their home campus. So the numbers are there for the classes now.”

Student interest plays a role in computer science course availability, according to Bowman, who leads Tech Club, with a focus on computer programming.

“If the powers-that-be recognize that we have students that are interested in taking CS down here,” Bowman said, “then they might be a little more motivated to make it happen.”

If national trends are any indication, student interest in computer science is on the rise. Enrollment in computer science has soared over the past five years with a 30 percent increase in 2012 alone, according to the Computing Research Association’s annual survey.

It’s paying off, too. A 2013 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that Computer Science graduates were the fourth highest paid majors in the country with an average starting salary of $64,100 and unemployment rate of 8.7 percent for recent graduates. In comparison, anthropology graduates average $27,000 a year and have an unemployment rate of 12.6 percent.

For Patel and others, being able to take CS classes at Oconee could be a convenience with short- and long-term benefits.

“I would definitely have more time to allocate to my studies,” Patel said. “Some days I have to wing it on the lunch with the commute, so sometimes I have to eat in the car. It would make my whole day better.”

An additional computer lab would make it possible for computer science classes to be held on the Oconee Campus.

You listened to us. Now we want to hear from you. Check us out at www.ungvanguard.org