

# Ringnecks over the Owen Farm in Alapaha

By Ronnie Gaskins  
Chairman of Board  
Georgia Hunting &  
Fishing Federation

Pheasant shooters, friends and families started arriving early for the Georgia Hunting & Fishing Federation's (GHFF) first of four planned continental pheasant shoots on the Owen Farm in Alapaha. The roster of 20 shooters was obviously anxious to get a crack at the 200 ring-neck pheasants that would be released for the participants over the next three hours.

It was a crisp 37 degrees at the start of February 3, but a brilliant sunrise soon warmed things up, as did Grady Bryan's hot breakfast brauts cooking on the grill. After the paperwork and safety presentation were completed, the group of young men, old men, women, and youngsters bowed for a prayer and pledged allegiance to our flag.

If you have never participated in one of GHFF's continental pheasant shoots, you have missed one of wing-shooting's most enjoyable outdoor events. Pheasants are not native to Georgia and these birds fly fast, high, and will test your shooting skill and equipment. As table fare, pheasants are hard to beat.



The shooters with their harvest of 150 pheasants.

The standard shoot configuration requires ten round bales positioned in a circle 70 yards apart and 150 yards from a peanut wagon in the center, from which the birds are released. With two shooters per bale at any given time, 20 birds are released and the shooters then rotate to the next bale.

GHFF raised the odds this

year by rigging a "catapult" or giant sling shot in the release wagon. Instead of tossing the birds up and out of the wagon by hand, they were catapulted skyward. By the time the pheasants neared the shooters, they were flying at heights of up to 80-feet and reaching speeds of 35-mph or more. Where is Annie Oakley when you need her?

I had a great shoot with my partner Grady Bryan, who lives in the Alapaha area. He shot a mean 3.5" autoloader that could reach out and touch these birds. His wife Jeanne also baked a sour cream pound cake that was to die for. Several hunters brought their dogs to retrieve birds and that was a big help and fun to watch them work.

There were also bird cleaners who field-dressed pheasants for a small fee. Georgia sportsmen are very fortunate to have GHFF putting on these pheasant shoots each year. All of the proceeds from these events are plowed back into sustaining our hunting heritage and promoting hunting and fishing. More pheasant shoots are scheduled on

the Owen Farm in Alapaha: February 17, February 24 and March 17.

To reserve your spot, contact Ronnie Gaskins at 229-445-0804, or email him at ronniegaskins@gh-ff.org. Cost is \$225 per shooter, which entitles you to a GHFF membership, a cap or shirt, lunch the day of the shoot and some take-home birds.

## HEART

From Front

of Lakeland's contribution to the recognition of our local active and retired military celebration.

Mary Holloway, Lanier County Adult Education Teacher provided information about our free local area G.E.D. program. The mayor and council agreed to use the city's marquee to promote the classes which are held at the Lanier County Annex Building, 1042 W. Thigpen. More information may be obtained by contacting Holloway 229-482-3332.

The council's committees meeting on the city's participation in the Tri-county E-911 services and Threatte Arts and Civic Center has been tabled, making a decision pending additional discussions. The City approved and adopted the 2018

City of Lakeland Budget which included revenue from the Water and Sewer Fund at \$727,430.00, the General Fund at \$1,418,498.96, the Sanitation Fund \$248,200.00 and the SPLOST Fund at \$192,540.00. Carter and Sloope Engineering will continue their services for the 2018 Community Development Block Grant. The Associates in Local Government Assistance, Inc. was approved to continue the selection of Grant Administrator Services for the 2018 Community Development Block Grant. The mayor and council talked about annexing Burnt Church Rd., Murray Blvd. and the new ball park and will continue that discussion. This would mean that the city would expand it's boundaries which should help with grants which can help

fund development projects such as the new ball park. The January 2018 Accounts Payables was approved.

Reports were made about City of Lakeland Police Department by Police Chief Michael Slusher. The mayor asked Chief Slusher to give a small amount of information about a recent child abuse case that prompted charges. Fire Chief Gary Yeomans provided his report. Yeomans also asked the council to begin considering the need to hire their first two full-time firemen because there are not enough people who can reliably serve as volunteer firemen when fires occur. Councilman Tony Giddens gave the Fines and Forfeitures Report and Councilman Tim Harrison provided the Animal Control Report.

## Employment and work force up in Southern Georgia during 2017

State Labor Commissioner Mark Butler said today that 2017 was a banner year for job creation and employment in the Southern Georgia area.

The 18-county Southern Georgia region ended the calendar year with 3,489 more employed residents, 2,061 more people in the workforce, and an unemployment rate down .8 percent.

"This is a very good year for the Southern Georgia area," Butler said. "The critical indicators trended in the right direction. I'm expecting the same will continue in 2018."

The region also lost 277 employed residents last month. Still, the Southern

Georgia area ended 2017 with 170,036 employed residents.

The Southern Georgia labor force, the number of residents with jobs and those unemployed but actively looking for work, fell by 220 in December. The area posted a labor force total of 178,206 at year's end.

In December, 1,136 initial claims for unemployment insurance were filed, up by 18 percent from the previous month. In comparison to last December, initial claims are down by 1 percent.

Meanwhile, the area's unemployment rate fell from 5.4 percent to 4.6 over the 12-month cycle. The December

rate, at 4.6 percent, was up by .1 percent from the previous month.

Employ Georgia, the GDOL's online job listing service at employgeorgia.com showed 1,060 new active job postings in the Southern Georgia region at year's end.

The Southern Georgia includes Baker, Calhoun, Colquitt, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas, and Worth counties.

Visit dol.georgia.gov to learn more about career opportunities, Employ Georgia and other GDOL services for job seekers and employers and to connect with us on social media.

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## SHAW

From Page 2

nal Justice Coordinating Council to implement the statewide criminal justice e-filing initiative

- \$500,000 for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to purchase supplies needed to process DNA sexual assault kits

HB 683 is now being reviewed by the Senate. With the passage of the "small budget," our House Appropriations subcommittees have now shifted their focus to the Fiscal Year 2019 state budget.

The House also overwhelmingly passed House Bill 700, a military-friendly measure that would update and expand the National Guard Service Cancelable Loan program to cover the cost of graduate degree programs for National Guard members. About 228 National Guard members currently participate in this program, and extending the program to the graduate level would add about 50 individuals to the program annually and allow Georgia to remain competitive with our neighboring states.

We also passed House Bill 699 allowing firefighters who have served as members of the armed forces to be exempt from firefighter basic training. This bill would make it easier for Georgia's veterans to begin a career as a firefighter as a result of their service and the sacrifices they have made for our country and state.

In an effort to address Georgia's current opioid crisis, the House overwhelmingly passed HB 701 that would update Georgia law by allowing our state to test candidates for all forms of opioids during state employment drug testing but would not affect those with valid and legal opioid prescriptions. According to the Substance Abuse Research Alliance, Georgia is ranked 11th in the nation in opioid overdoses, and 68 percent of Georgia's 1,307 drug overdoses in 2015 were caused by opioids and heroin.

The House also passed a bill that would help protect Georgia's children. House Bill 655 would require public schools, as well as local, and

state charter schools, to post signs with the toll-free phone number of the child abuse hotline in clearly visible, public areas. This 24/7 hotline is operated by the Division of Family and Children Services and the Department of Human Services and allows students to report incidents of child abuse or neglect to trusted individuals.

After much anticipation, the Senate overwhelmingly passed the "Adoption Bill". The final version of HB 159 would update Georgia's adoption laws for the first time in almost three decades and streamline and expedite all types of adoptions in Georgia, allowing thousands of children to more quickly and efficiently find their forever families.

This legislation is one of the first bills of the 2018 legislative session to go to the governor's desk for final approval, and I am proud to see such a significant and meaningful measure pass the General Assembly.



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