

Valdosta Teen Critically Injured on Dirt Bike at Pineview Drive Intersection

By Carol A. Gasser Moore

LOWNDES COUNTY, Georgia – Valdosta Police Department (VPD) Chief Leslie Manahan has released information about a serious May 6th accident. VPD reports that about 9:07 p.m. on Monday, that SGMC (South Georgia Medical Center) Emergency Medical Services, Valdosta Fire Fighters, and Valdosta Police Officers answered an E911 call regarding a Pineview Drive and Deborah Drive area traffic accident.

The first responders found a 17-year-old male at the intersection, who appeared to be the operator of a dirt bike. The teenager was unresponsive at the scene. Immediately upon their arrival, first responders rendered first aid to the male, and he was transported to SGMC.

Through their investigation, VPD Traffic Unit officers responded. When they began their investigation, officers determined that the teenager was traveling on Deborah Drive. At the same time, a vehicle being driven by a 23-year-old male was traveling on Pineview Drive. The dirt bike entered the intersection and struck the front passenger’s side of the vehicle.

Since his transport to SGMC, the dirt bike’s driver was transported to a Florida hospital. That teenage driver is listed in critical condition. The other vehicle’s driver is reported to have had a passenger who received a minor injury.

The VPD indicates that this accident case is still under investigation.

“Our prayers go out to everyone involved in and affected by this tragic accident,” said VPD Chief Leslie Manahan. “As temperatures warm up, we do see an increase in dirt bikes and ATVs traveling on our roadways. Please ensure that if you are operating one of these vehicles, you ensure that they are street legal and that all passengers wear helmets.”

The Valdosta Police Department has requested that if anyone has any information on this case, they ask that you contact the Valdosta Police Department Traffic Unit at 229-242-2606, the Crime Tip Line at 229-293-3091, or file a tip online at www.valdostacity.com/police-department/.

Editorial: Diverse viewpoints about Lakeland’s parking problems brings discussions about Handicapped needs

By Carol A. Gasser Moore

LANIER COUNTY, Georgia – The fact is that downtown parking is limited. If a person is handicapped, it can be even more limited. For those citizens not making the rounds of Lakeland City Council meetings, Lanier County Board of Commissioner meetings, Lakeland Downtown Development Authority meetings, and other government boards, who hear and are charged with the responsibility to respond to citizen concerns, know that once again, downtown business owners and other sympathetic citizens are again identifying the need for government to get involved and help solve Lakeland parking problems.

Why is parking important? The fact is over the last three or four decades as malls and small shopping centers became the norm for shoppers buying goods and getting services – different from the era in which people walked, rode a horse or bicycle into a downtown area – there is now a resistance to physically support downtown businesses with poor or very limited parking. Consumers expect and demand better parking and are known to simply go elsewhere to do business because their ability to access easy uncomplicated parking is better. It takes less of their time.

Worse, when an area business finds themselves in competition with larger companies whose buildings offer a larger quantity of goods, good parking, and even handicapped parking, customers are most likely over the long term to simply avoid businesses that can’t or choose not to offer the ease of larger buildings and parking lots. Potential customers understand that poor parking, and smaller buildings tend to make the cost of their purchase rise.

The fact is that a short ten minute drive around downtown Lakeland will also make citizens more aware of parking limitations in our area, especially for the handicapped.

With a quick drive, citizens are confronted with the fact that parallel parking only provides about one to two parking spots in front of each current downtown business door, with only rare exceptions. If one is looking at parallel parking, there are no (i.e., zero, nada) handicapped parking. If driving through businesses (mostly newer) with small adjacent parking lots, there are approximately 12-15 parking spaces with only 1-2 designated as handicapped. Contrary to some popular belief, handicapped parking is more likely to be located near ramp entrances that go round about to front doors than just in front of a business’s front door.

There are less than 100 parking spaces available to citizens for use in the downtown area. The Lakeland Downtown is an area that is approximately 3 blocks square. Two businesses, Farmers and Merchants Bank and Lakeland Drug own small employee parking lots as a way to help their employee’s park and go to work.

Functions such as those provided by the Lakeland-Lanier Chamber of Commerce had to be relocated from downtown to the Lakeland Farmers Market and county owned buildings (i.e. Miller-Lakeland Library and Health Department) areas where parking can spill over into the Lanier County Schools owned school building parking lot, especially when streets (with parking) are blocked or parking lots are partially closed in order to provide space for an event.

The fact is that in 1955 the United States of

America through its Congress elevated its standard of living to legally mandate consideration for people with disabilities. This fact is an indication that the Great Generation (WWII veterans) believed that we could set a standard of being compassionate people to legislate that consideration.

It is easy to draw a conclusion from area social media sites that if left to our current citizens, that belief would not be shared by current citizens. In short, the implication is that citizens should lower standards set by earlier generations.

The fact is that only the Lakeland Post Office, the Lanier County Courthouse, Huddle House, F & M Bankshares, Lakeland Drug Company, Jet Store and Auto Zone offer handicapped parking. That’s roughly about 10-12 handicapped parking places in an area with less than 100 parking spots. To make use of those spaces and shop in most of the retail downtown establishments means not only does the handicapped person not park close to a store, but he or she is also faced with crossing the busiest trafficked street in Lakeland.

While a handicapped parker can use a regular parking spot, it means that the person must figure out how to manage stopping and blocking an area in front of the spot, get out, then park the vehicle in a regular parking space.

Are we prepared to revert to a less considerate way of operating in our community? Only compassionate citizens understand and choose consistently to consider the time that a handicapped parker may need to use a designated parking spot in order to make use of and support local downtown businesses.

39th Session CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY

The 39th Session of the Citizens Police Academy (CPA) will be held each **Thursday night**.
April 4 - May 23
6:00 - 8:00 pm.

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 rhancock@valdostacity.com
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