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Protein Plus adds new production facility, grows 30 new Fitzgerald jobs

BY TIM ANDERSON

Allen Conger Jr., president of Protein Plus, was joined by family and local dignitaries as he broke ground on the company's new 25,000 sq-ft production facility. Over the next few years, 30 new jobs will be added to handle the company's growing business.



GROWING DEMAND FOR PROTEIN PLUS' peanut-based products necessitates a factory expansion at the Fitzgerald facility on Kingsborough Road. A new 25,000 sq-ft production facility will open in November. Pictured (from left) at Monday's groundbreaking are: Jason Dunn, executive director Fitzgerald Ben Hill Development Authority, Mayor Mark Masee, Allen Conger, Logan Conger, Allen Conger, Jr., president of Protein Plus, David Conger, County Commission Chairman Steve Taylor and Jeff Lewis, Fitzgerald Utilities general manager.

ALLEN CONGER created Protein Plus to manufacture peanut flour to be used primarily as an ingredient in the products manufactured by other companies. His son, Allen Conger, Jr., bought the business from his father, taking over the business as president in January of 2015, and taking the production retail with its Protein Energy Power drink mix. The drink mix is available in four flavors, two

of which are available in the energy drink for Publix Supermarkets. Walmart," Allen Conger, Jr. "We created a version of noted, "minus some of the

product began selling in 650 Walmart stores in January and February of this year." The product is also available at Protein Plus' website and through their Facebook page. Conger noted that his father developed the formula for the energy drink in 2014, and that after the patent processes and marketing strategies, the product was in its first retailer, Publix, in August of last year. "People are looking for a plant-based energy drink," he said. "Our drink mix is a great pre-workout, workout, post-workout drink or as a meal replacement."

AT MONDAY'S ground- (Turn to Protein Plus, 11-A)

With 5.9% voter turnout, SPLOST passes by 6-to-1 margin

BY TIM ANDERSON

Only 487 or 5.9% of Ben Hill County's 8,230 registered voters cast ballots in the March 21 referendum, but it was enough to renew the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) for another six years. Of the total vote cast, 418 voted "yes" and 69 voted "no."

and 45% going to the City. Although the funds are divided, the City and County will put a portion of their individual revenue back together for joint-funded projects, such as Department of Leisure Services projects of \$1 million. That will include new lighting for Lion's Park,



renovations at the Monitor Center, campground upgrades and paving at Paulk Park, and renovations of the Jessamine Street Gym. Joint funds will be used to upgrade technology at the library, build an addition and upgrade cages at the Humane Society Animal

Shelter and fund \$930,000 for a spec building for the Fitzgerald Ben Hill Development Authority.

The City plans the \$1.4 million construction of a new main Police station, adjacent to City Hall. The County will pass \$1 million to Dorminy Medical Center for reduction of bond indebtedness. Both governments will make substantial investments in public safety with purchases of vehicles and equipment for the (Turn to With 5.9% voter, 11-A)

Judge Cross issues gag order modification, slightly relaxed

BY TIM ANDERSON

Superior Court Judge Melanie Cross of the Tift Judicial Circuit issued her ruling on the motions to lift the gag order in the Ryan Duke case. Duke is charged in the disappearance and

murder of Tara Grinstead in 2005. **JUDGE CROSS ISSUED** a gag order following the Duke arrest of February 23. The order was issued on February 28. The order placed a gag on all court officials, defendants,

defense attorneys and current and former law enforcement officials involved in the case since 2005. The new order leaves those restrictions in place, while slightly modified, and the media is free to report what is in the public

domain or in court records. She notes that the sealing of court documents will be decided on a case-by-case basis with a court hearing, removing a seal on court documents. The media is not (Turn to Judge Cross, 11-A)

Premier Pet Care to cut ribbon Sat.

The community is invited to attend a ribbon cutting at 10 a.m. Saturday for Premier Pet Care.

Owned by Joshua and Janette Chambless, the business is located at 162 Ocilla Hwy.

Colony Pool to cut ribbon on Friday

The community is invited to attend a ribbon cutting for Colony Pool Supply at 10 a.m. Friday.

The business, now under the ownership of Ryan Clemons, is located at 502 W. Sultana Dr.



Anderson a hit, Daryle Singletary next

The crowd was lined up from the Grand Theatre down to Nabila's waiting to be admitted to John Anderson's acoustic performance March 16 at the Grand Theatre, the second of four concerts planned by the Grand Concert Promotions. While organizers were reluctant to call it a sellout crowd, they admit it was close. Anderson himself proved to be a "super nice guy" who enjoyed talking about turkey hunting and fishing before the show. "He was a super nice guy," says Hal Wiley of GCA. Tickets are already on sale now for the next GCP concert. Daryle Singletary and his full band will take the stage at the Grand on Thursday, May 4. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m., and SoulShine will open the performance at 7:30 p.m. As usual, the concert will be preceded by live music on Main Street. Another Fitzgerald band, Nation, will perform from 5-7 p.m. outside. Tickets are \$25 each and may be purchased from the Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Chamber of Commerce or online at www.freshfritx.com. Sponsors of the GCP performances include Community Bank, Southern Eagle Distributing, Southern Veneer, Taylor Towson & Braddy, Colony Bank, Digital Express/Verizon Wireless, Southern Physical and Occupational Therapy Services, Tift Regional Health Systems, Quality Inn, Planters First Bank, Fitzgerald Ford Lincoln, Fitzgerald Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram, Worthington, Casper, Stone, Conger & Associates and South Georgia Radiology.

The more volunteers, the more work can be done on 4th Great Day of Service

Planning is already well along for the 2017 Great Day of Service. The annual community service event, which

brings community members and students together to help others, will be held on Saturday, May 6. This year the focus will be on projects at Ben Hill County schools and school grounds.

Parmer. "They see and learn these things working alongside adults."

Parmer is a member of the event's organizing team, which also includes Susan Hughes, Cam Jordan, Jason Dunn, Jeff Smith, Dr. Shawn Haralson, Tommy White, Art Anderson and Mark Masee.

The one-day, community-wide effort puts adults and students side by side to work

on meeting various needs in the community. In the past, teams have built handicapped access ramps, cleaned yards, painted (Turn to More volunteers, 11-A)

Cancer survivor dinner will be tomorrow

Cancer survivors who wish to attend the 2017 Relay for Life Cancer Survivor Dinner for Life Cancer Survivor Dinner who have not yet reserved a place should call Beth McQuaig McIntyre today at 425-5331.

THE GOAL of the Great Day of Service, now in its fourth year, remains the same — "to teach our students the principals of servant leadership," says the Rev. Jeff

Families can enjoy Junior-Senior Walk Friday night

Parents and families are invited to enjoy the Fitzgerald High School Class Junior and Senior Walk at the Grand Theatre Friday night, part of the FHS prom.

at 8. The 2017 Prom Queen and King will be crowned by FHS Principal Dawn Clements at the end of the walk.

Assistant Principal Isom Harmon will serve as the master of ceremonies. Following the walk, students will proceed to the Garden Room upstairs for an evening of dancing.

Author to speak at museum

Dr. William Thomas Okie, assistant professor at Kennesaw State University, will be at the Blue and Gray Museum tomorrow night to talk about his book, "The Georgia Peach: Culture, Agriculture, and Environment in the American South."

THE PROGRAM starts at 7 p.m. Visitors will also have a chance to see the beautiful restoration of the exterior of the old AB&A passenger depot that the museum calls home. Admission is free.

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