

Sophomore Entrepreneur features new clothing Line

Photo: Terrius Mykel



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Demino's clothing line, CREW Fit Clothing, has recently been added to the Thirst Couture clothing store near campus. Demino is one-fourth of SelfMadeDaCrew, which is the name of his music group. The young entrepreneur believes doing music helped with the success of his clothing line. He also stated how that's been his plan from the beginning.

"I want to own a business overall," said Demino, sophomore at the University of West Georgia. "Rap is only temporary.

"What I noticed is that most successful businesses get endorsed by a celebrity to build their brand," Demino continued. "The bigger my music got, the more people noticed my clothes and vice versa. I also throw different type of events in the Atlanta area and on my college campus to promote my brand."

Demino started making music at the age of 15, after seeing the success of his big brothers, F.L.Y, creators of the song "Swag Surfin." "I never thought I would

be a rapper one day," said Demino. The young entrepreneur used to be a basketball player. "It wasn't until my brothers and I made a song one day, playing around, and everybody loved it, Demino continued. "They were asking for more, so we kept it going."

Demino's clothing line has been in Stonecrest Mall and involved in several fashion shows located in the metro Atlanta area. "We had it hung up at a kiosk in Stonecrest Mall, but the owner had to take it down," said Demino. "Too many people were asking for it and they couldn't buy it from me directly." Demino then created a website, ItsDaCrew which helped solve the problem.

The business owner has also participated in charity events. "I know what it feels like to be broke," said Demino. "Now that I'm a little more fortunate, I give back to the homeless and do back to school drives in the hood to help somebody else out."

On the clothing, CREW is spelled in all capital letters. "The word CREW means unity, where we are uniting all the bosses into one group," said Demino. "We consist of DJs, party promoters, musicians,

fashion designers, cameramen and graphic designers.

We are promoting everyone to be their own boss."

Demino stated that students buy their clothing because they support their movement. "Everyone has fun at our parties, looks good in our shirts and enjoys our music," said Demino. "I think they are starting to see our vision, where we have the potential to go and how hard we work for it."

The business owner explained how owning a clothing line and doing music can be stressful. "I'm a full-time college student running an online clothing store, an active rap artist, and event planner," said Demino. "I have a lot of things going on, but I never complain because I'm going to be successful no matter what." The young sophomore strives to be the best he can while balancing all of the things he does. Demino knows that even though balancing both can be stressful, he understands how it's rewarding as well. "When you have people the same age as you or older looking up to you, people telling you how much you inspire and motivate them; it means a lot," said Demino.

"Blessings come back."

Biology building commencing Major Overhaul

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The Biology building is in the beginning stages of its major renovation. The nearly 50 year-old building is going to be expanded and modernized to create an environment that fits the needs of one of the largest programs on campus.

The immediate needs for a renovation were apparent: the roof leaks, the wiring and electrical systems are obsolete, and the building was not constructed for biology to begin with. The building was originally built as the home of the Department of Chemistry and the Department of Nursing. With Nursing in their own building and Chemistry mostly in the TLC, the biology majors were left with a shell of a building not conducive with what they were teaching. "It was always a challenge teaching biology surrounded by superstructure built for Chemistry," Said department

head Dr. Chris Tabit. The renovations will be broken down into two phases and department officials plan for the \$20 million project to be finished by summer 2018.

Anybody that has been to the biology building knows that it is one of the most collaborative departments on campus. The front steps and mail lobby of the building are always littered with students studying and working together on their assignments. The new renovations will feature technology enhanced study rooms, very similar to the rooms in Ingram Library for the students to study more effectively. These study rooms will be equipped with Wi-Fi and power ports to increase convenience for the students. The theme of collaboration runs deep through the department, not just in academic studies.

Traditionally, major professors in a biology department have their own research spaces to do their work privately. This keeps that professor isolated in his workspace but does not embrace the collaborative

nature of the department. According to Tabit, the faculty within the department has given up their private space to create four new collaborative work labs specifically designed for specialized research. The four labs will enable students and faculty to develop their research in micro, molecular, aquatic or terrestrial biology. In addition to the shared lab space, there will be two new 24 seat classrooms, next to two more 60 seat classrooms. A third floor will be added underground, which will host a 117 seat TEAL (Technology Enhanced Advanced Learning) classroom. This room will feature interactive computers that will promote more collaboration and joint learning. Education will be entirely focused on the student. The interactive computers will have the ability to link up and project one image onto all the computer screens in the room. "This comes in handy especially when we are doing something small, like if I do a dissection," said Tabit. "I can project what I see on the microscope to all of the computer monitors so the students have

a better opportunity to absorb what they see, rather than straining their eyes to see a wall projection."

Controversy surrounded the decision to make the changes to the building. It was apparent the facility needed to be modernized to accommodate the students, but how they were going to do that was yet to be determined. The department, along with numerous construction companies, determined that it would be more beneficial to gut the current building and renovate from the inside out, rather than rebuild from the ground-up. That is because quite simply, they don't build them like they used to. The aged building is built with "good bones" as Dr. Tabit put it. It is a very structurally sound building and students and staff can enjoy the amenities of a new facility while still appreciating the historical nature of the half-century-old building.

The renovation is still in its infancy, but the gears are turning on the project. Soon, we will have a new face of one of the universities largest departments.

Fear For Safety at UWG is Coming to an End

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At a press event, Monday Feb. 13, a suppression partnership was established with local law enforcement at the county and city level with the university police. The main goal of the event was to create an alliance with local law enforcement that will keep the community safe. The partnership included the Carrollton Police Department, the Carroll County Sheriff's Office and University Police. "As the university continues to grow, so does our commitment to provide a secure environment in which students, faculty and staff can learn and succeed," said Dr. Kyle Marrero, the President of the University of West Georgia.

Sale and distribution of marijuana are prominent factors to the crime on campus leading to robbery and assault. The majority of this activity takes place off campus at the apartment complexes surrounding UWG.

"In the last several months, high profile incidents have occurred at apartment complexes adjacent to our campus. These incidents included assault, robberies, gun fire, and related crimes. Local public safety officials say much of this activity results from marijuana use and distribution," said Marrero. "Though some of these activities involve student tenants, often the offenders are not UWG students and have no ties to the University of West Georgia."

Steps are being made to further ensure security at the University of West Georgia. Apartment managers and owners of the surrounding area have been invited to join the partnership in an effort to become a

part of the solution.

"On Feb. 27 at 3:00 p.m., we will bring all of the apartment owners and managers together to meet with them so that we can come together in partnership and collaboration to ensure that our environment is safe," said Marrero.

In some cases, others have said that UWG's admission requirements play a significant role in the crime on and off campus.

"People say that we must be lowering our standards, but in all actuality our incoming freshmen GPA is the highest it has ever been," said Gary Leftwich, the Director of Strategic Communication at UWG. "We are simply having to work to soothe the fears of the community. We are addressing those fears."

"This situation is certainly

not unique to West Georgia. In fact, the University of West Georgia is one of the safest campuses in the University System of Georgia, but that is not enough," said Marrero. "Allowing these issues in certain areas is a threat to our campus and could be detrimental to our students. We are simply not going to allow this environment to continue."

Protect Our Pack is the operation that the suppression partnership is using to ensure safety across campus and throughout the community. Its purpose is to provide resources to students for safety purposes. For example, officers are available to escort students across campus if the students request it. Protect Our Pack also allows students to access UWG cares and report any crime that they feel is important or find helpful re-

sources on a variety of issues.

"Also, to ensure safety and security, we received a Stanley grant in which we received \$150,000 for lighting and video surveillance cameras," said Marrero. "The thing I think is the most important about Protect Our Pack is that the students are taking it upon themselves. They see this as protecting their own pack together."

The efforts to make certain that the safety of UWG is being regulated and improved will begin in mid February and will continue indefinitely.

"We are going to do everything we can do to keep the students, the faculty, and our friends and family around us safe. We are going to do it together as a community," said Leftwich.



Photo: Communications & Marketing Department

UWG and the Leadership Development Institute

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The Leadership Development Institute was held at UWG on Friday, Feb. 10. Held every 90 days, the Leadership Development Institute is a major part of the Engage West Initiative, an online medium for students, faculty members to find out what is going on at UWG. It is a way to help UWG succeed and a way for people to become more invested in the University as well as for the University to be more invested with the people. In order for the Engage West initiative to work successfully, the University needs to have a group of leaders that are well trained and engaged, which is exactly what the Leadership Development Institute is trying to achieve. The session of Friday was focused on "Student Success & Campus Climate-UWG Values and Strategic Alignment."

"To be the best comprehensive University in America - sought after as the best place to work, learn, and succeed, we must create an atmosphere at UWG in which all people feel valued, engaged and connected," said Dr. Yves-Rose Porcena, UWG Senior Diversity Officer. "This LDI is designed to identify and strengthen inclusion initia-

tives that foster genuine and authentic connections throughout UWG and the broader community that will support our 2020 enrollment goals."

LDI is an effective way to teach leaders at the University of West Georgia the many skills that it takes to be an engaged and skilled leader. This Institute is designed for people of at least a director level at UWG, other levels would be assistants, supervisors, managers, etc. It is important for the UWG to have a great team of leaders as the University moves up and strives to become the best comprehensive university in the nation. Not only does LDI hope to make UWG more impactful around the United States, but internationally as well.

LDI helps those attending in many ways that benefit them not only as a person, but professionally as well. LDI helps to connect leaders from all throughout campus, in a variety of different specialty fields. For those in a managing position at UWG, the Leadership Development Institute will help guide them to be able to help inspire those working under them.

The Leadership Development Institute gives the leaders of UWG the skills needed in order to motivate those around them and help connect people at and around UWG as they strive to create a more inclusive UWG in the process.

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All letters must be signed and include a phone number and mailing address for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 350 words and should be submitted by 5 p.m. the Friday prior to publication. Editors reserve the right to edit for style, content and length.

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living west

Fun and Free at UWG

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In an effort to increase student involvement on campus during the weekends, University of West Georgia (UWG) features Fun and Free weekends once a month.

“The reason for having Weekends West Georgia is to give students something fun to do that does not require them to leave campus or spend any money.” said Caleb Nichol, Graduate Assistant and Weekend Programmer at UWG.

The UWG Center for Student Involvement is primarily concerned with ensuring that all students connect to campus and become enriched in the campus culture. There are a variety of events from Standup Comedy, sporting event viewings, as well as coffee and music take place during Fun and Free weekends, so each student feels welcomed.

“We know that students do better in college when they get connected to campus, create friendships and overall enjoy their college experience,” said Nichol. “The main goal of weekend events is to get students to come to free and fun events where they can have fun with their current friends, meet new friends and get connected to campus. This is ultimately going to help relieve stress and leave students healthier, happier, and will help them to succeed in getting their degree.”

UWG is also in the works of creating an assessment that students can fill out to see what students want for the fun and free weekends.

This will help the University create diversity for all the students who get involved. One major event coming up soon is performer Haley Klinkhammer. Klinkhammer is a local artist who has been performing for over ten years now. She kick-started her career by posting her music to social media accounts such as YouTube and Facebook. Klinkhammer said that she is excited to play at UWG and that she loves meeting fans after the shows. Her favorite song to play is Riptide by Vance Joy, but she enjoys performing many others as well. For students who are pursuing music, this event is a chance to listen and get advice on how to get started the way Klinkhammer did. This event is on Feb 25 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the campus center ballroom.

“Advice I have for someone pursuing a music career is to put yourself out there. With the Internet, we all can share music or whatever it is we love with the world. Put videos on YouTube and Facebook - get feedback - find out what works and what doesn’t. That can really help you find direction as an artist.” said Klinkhammer.

The Center for Student Involvement encourages all students to come out and enjoy this special event. The social media page for the fun and free weekends lists details about all upcoming events.

“My favorite part about Weekends West Georgia is when an event goes well and is enjoyed by a lot of students,” said Nichol. “So, please, everyone come out to our events and follow us on social media so you never miss when an event is being held.”

Plant For The Future

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The ladies of the Multicultural Greek Council and Housing & Residence Life have teamed up to present Plant For The Future, a service project to beautify campus and improve the environment, on Feb. 17. Students will be walking around various locations on campus such as in front of East Commons, Bowdon and other select grassy locations approved by facilities and grounds. Certain campus greens such as Love Valley, are restricted.

The Zeta Beta Chapter of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority Inc, (LTA) brought the idea to Housing & Residence Life. Community service is an integral part of their organization. “The biggest challenge was convincing people that this was important,” said Stephanie Hernandez, UWG senior and LTA Chapter President. “This isn’t just your regular service opportunity, this can help better our lives, and life on campus.” LTA will be offering community service hours and t-shirts to whoever lends a helping hand, but that is not the main goal of this event. “It’s more than just service, it’s about preparing for our future,” Hernandez continued. “I was inspired by this quote, I saw on Pinterest, Imagine if trees gave off Wifi signals; we would be planting so many trees and we’d probably save the planet too. Too bad they only produce the oxygen we breathe.”

Hernandez is also a Resident Assistant at Center Pointe Suites, which is how the partnership with Housing & Residence Life came about. “I want my residents to be proud that they were able to leave their mark on campus,” said Hernandez. The event is open to everyone, including students, staff and general public. “As Greeks we do a lot with other Greeks, but I want non-Greeks to be apart too. I want everyone to be a part of this, and be proud as well,” Hernandez continued. “I want people to help make West Georgia a better place, even if it’s only by digging a hole, or planting a tree, you’re leaving your mark.”

The Zeta Beta chapter also has plans on extending this event to other schools. “In the area meeting we were talking about doing it at other colleges. We brought it up to Kennesaw, and Georgia State,” said Hernandez. “Hopefully UGA and Emory can do it as well, it’s just a challenge. We would love to see other schools participate,” said Hernandez.

Business in the Theme of Love

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February is the month of love and whether you are in love, looking for love or falling out of love, local business owner and professional counselor Kim Wilson wants to help the process. Wilson currently owns a private counseling practice called Wilson Professional Counseling. She also has an inspirational blog and recently launched a podcast titled The Amazing Relationships. “I’ve always had a place in my heart for making people feel amazing,” said Wilson, “I’ve been on this mission to spread love for a very long time.” She is dedicated to get her message across through her blog, speaking engagements, counseling and podcasts.

During her undergraduate studies at UWG majoring in Mass Communications and minoring in Psychology, Wilson was given a show at WUTV, the university television station. “During my first semester, I was doing this TV show called “Highlights” where I would go around and ask students people questions.” The show lasted for 3 years and Wilson thought she was sure of where she was going in her career field. After graduating, Wilson went on to work at a radio station. “I started working at a small radio station and I would always find a way to put out quotes and positive messages. The owner would call and say what are you doing, you’re supposed to be playing music.” Wilson realized that she had a passion for helping people and decided to further her studies and acquire her masters in psychology.

Wilson started her business in 2013 and her first blog post came in 2016. When she started her blog

in Wilson took on a different approach to her blog by posting both written and spoken blogs to stand out in the midst of her competition and to marry both of her degrees in one. “Sometimes, I feel like some messages I post need more emphasis on certain words,” said Wilson, “it creates more of an in-your-face message so you can be even more inspired.” She was excited to find ways to marry both of her degrees and put them both to use at the same time in different ways and through different platforms.

The topic of relationships comes up mostly in Kim’s blog and will be the main theme of her podcasts. She is an advocate for healthy relationships. She believes that relationships rule our lives and if we don’t have solid relationships with strong communication, it will affect the way we function. “I want to see people function inside of healthy relationships,” said Wilson, “when we don’t, it impacts how we react, our

motivation, future relationships and how we treat people.” Wilson has dedicated her career to helping people develop better relationships with their peers.

Through all of the work that she does, Wilson just wishes to spread love around by teaching effective communication. “Communication is the most used activity in life,” said Wilson “It’s either going to be verbal, non verbal or written and a lot of times, we don’t use it right but when we learn to use communication right, it becomes a skill.” No matter who the relationship involved be it significant others, co-workers, friendships etc, the right communication is the key to a happy, healthy relationship. “The building block of a beautiful relationship, is knowing how to communicate in a way that helps and not hurts,” said Wilson, “I’m hoping that my blog and my podcast will teach people that love is powerful, it is the solution and is never the problem.”

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Think Carroll First

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The Carroll County Chamber of Commerce has launched the Think Carroll First Campaign. This campaign is a community wide branding. It is a reminder for citizens that they can get everything they want here in their home, Carroll County.

The Chambers website states that their main goal is “Growing Business in Our Community”. They focus on “Building a Stronger Business Community by Engaging Progressive Leadership and Diverse Resources.” Think Carroll First is planning to become a major resource for the county. It was created to support all things Carroll County from shopping, dining and services to exploring all the county has to offer. The intent of the campaign is for all businesses, education, government, and nonprofits to promote their programs and services using the Think Carroll First slogan with their own unique focus. The campaign wants those getting involved to choose positive words that describe their business such as dine, buy, serve, or visit to replace the Think in the sentence Think Carroll

First. Residents will soon see signs all around that say Dine Carroll First, Shop Carroll First, Bank Carroll First, etc.

The Think Carroll First campaign was launched during the 62nd Annual Dinner of the Chamber of Commerce earlier this year. The President of the Chamber, Daniel Jackson, announced the launch of the campaign. It is a campaign that the chamber believes is beyond just retail and dining and making cash registers ring but a chance to expand and remind citizens to choose Carroll first. A big thank you was given to Kelly Meigs, who is the Chair of the Chambers Business Development Committee and was the leader of the concept and design efforts for the campaign. Community launch events were held in Downtown Carrollton, Villa Rica and Bowdon in ear-

ly February to spread the word and being to get businesses and citizens involved.

The inspiration behind creating Think Carroll First began with wanting to expand the chamber’s reach. “A lot of chambers prompt shopping local, but realizing we have so many more offers through the county for residents, workers, students, and visitors, we wanted to expand outreach,” said Chamber Senior VP and Business Development Donna Lackey. “We brought together several marketing executives from local businesses to conceptualize the campaign.”

Businesses such as local banks, restaurants and gyms around the county are already geared up and promoting the slogan. As local businesses invest and embrace Think Carroll First, it can impact the eco-

nomie development and bring jobs to the area. The campaign promises to reach all generations and wants the entire community to become involved, not just chamber members. “We are already seeing a buzz with the social media exposure. Our goal is for participants to attract sales and activity to their enterprise before the customers leave the county,” said Lackey. “The campaign wants people to know that if you “Think Carroll first, pretty much anything you need can be found in Carroll County,” added Lackey.

The Chamber has Think Carroll First kits that supply businesses with materials to get started using this logo with their own brand. Anyone wanting to get involved or obtain a kit is encouraged to visit the website www.carroll-ga.org or stop by the Chamber.



Graphic: Carroll County Chamber of Commerce

Zagster Bike Share opens in Carrollton

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On Feb. 3, the Zagster Bike Share program officially opened, providing the residents of Carrollton a with new outdoor activity. The ceremony was held at Laura’s Park at Hays Mill trail-head at 1:30 p.m. The event included a ribbon cutting and an Inaugural bike ride and remarks from the sponsors. The bike share has 10 stations located throughout the community, and provides 50 cruiser bikes for local zagster bike share members. Each member can check out a bike for free during the first hour, then paying only three dollars for each additional use. The bike share will provide easier access to Carrollton greenbelts 18-mile path, the largest paved loop trail in Georgia.

Zagster operates at many different campuses across the states including Ohio State, Duke, Yale and now the University of West Georgia. Many students have already taken advantage of the new bike share, as well as those who work for one of the Bike Shares sponsors, Southwire.

“I love this new program. It has really helped me stay more active, and I believe that it will bring many more visitors to the city of Carrollton,” said Chelsi Womack, employee at Southwire. “I never would have thought that my city would ever get a program like this, but this just shows you how much Carrollton really is growing”.

The Bike share program helps the efforts to make Carrollton a healthy and pleasant community to reside in, while providing little to no cost to the customer. While most say that it is just a great way to stay active, people also use this program for many other reasons. Bike riders use it to run some errands around town, as an activity to catch up with friends, and to even use as a form of transportation to get to and from class. “I mainly use the bike for psychical activity, but I plan to use it often for other things as well, since it is so easily available,” said Womack. “I think students at the university will be taking advantage of it the most, and I am glad that it has brought a positive activity close to campus.”

The Carrollton bike share features the Zagster 8 bike currently for users. This award-winning bike is known for its design. Each bike includes a basket to carry personal items, a bell, reflectors and automatic lights. Zagster has created a website and a mobile app that you can use to locate where the bikes are. With the app, you can obtain a code used as a key, and that key is used to plan their trip around the rider’s needs, and not the locations of the Zagster stations.

The Zagster Bike Share program is the first step towards a change for Carrollton and has set the tone for more attractions to come.

Study: Invasive bugs found in fallen trees years after Storm

Holly Ramer
Associated Press

They may be down but they’re not out: Damaging insects can emerge from fallen trees and logs for several years after a major storm, according to a U.S. Forest Service study that reinforces long-standing warnings against moving firewood from place to place.

Timber that gets blown down, broken or damaged by wind is often cut and used as firewood, which in turn can enable the spread of invasive, destructive insects that drain the life out of forests from New England to the West Coast.

Such pests are projected to put 63 percent of the country’s forest at risk through 2027 and carry a cost of several billion dollars annually in dead tree removal, declining property values and timber industry losses, according to the peer-reviewed study last year in Ecological Applications.

The emerald ash borer alone, now in 30 states, has killed hundreds of millions of trees and has the potential to cause \$12.7 billion in damage by 2020.

After a tornado tore through western Massachusetts in 2011, U.S. Forest Service officials based in New Hampshire collected ash, birch, maple, oak and pine logs from the affected area in 2012, 2013 and 2014, split them into firewood-sized pieces and put them in barrels. They painstakingly counted the insects that emerged from the wood - 32,121 to be exact. Eastern ash bark beetle was the most common, accounting for

85 percent of the total.

Researchers were surprised to find that wood harvested even three years after the tornado produced a significant number of insects.

“It was a little surprising that even after three years, we still found insects associated with recently killed trees emerging from firewood,” said Kevin Dodds, one of the study’s lead authors.

Not all the trees die at the time of the tornado or wind storm. Instead, there is a range of damage and pockets of living trees that create insect habitat over time, researchers said.

“You might think that several years after a windstorm that blows down trees, it would be safe to cut the downed trees into firewood and transport them. But this study shows that some of this downed wood still harbors insects several years later,” said Gary Lovett, a senior scientist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies who was not involved in the study.

While the best solution is to keep invasive insects out of the country in the first place via stronger controls on imports, Lovett said, the study “reinforces the point that we should be using firewood locally rather than transporting it to use in second homes, cabins, or campsites.”

Nearly 40 states have imposed restrictions on the movement of firewood in an effort to protect forests from the pests. In New Hampshire, out-of-state firewood has been banned since 2011 and in some areas, is not allowed to be moved from county to county.

The study was published in January 2017 in the journal Agricultural and Forest Entomology.

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Verizon pulled back into the unlimited data game

Tali Arbel

Associated Press

Verizon, in a major reversal, has joined other carriers in offering an unlimited data plan.

As recently as January, Verizon's chief financial officer said unlimited plans were "not something we feel the need to do" even though rivals had made inroads against Verizon by offering them. Verizon stopped offering such plans to new customers in 2012 and has been trying to push longtime customers off those old plans through rate hikes.

The arrival of the iPhone and other smartphones made unlimited plans more of a rarity as carriers saw opportunities to make money by charging customers based on how much data they use.

But Sprint and T-Mobile recognized in unlimited data an opportunity to snare customers from heavyweights Verizon and AT&T. Because carriers must poach each other's customers to grow, the competition has intensified.

AT&T also started offering unlimited plans after discontinuing them, but they are available only to customers who also subscribe to DirecTV, which AT&T owns. Its prices are similar to Verizon's for a fam-

ily; Verizon is cheaper for an individual.

Verizon's new unlimited plan replaces several higher-data plans and starts at \$80 for one person, not counting fees and taxes. (Existing customers can keep their plans.)

For a family of four, unlimited costs \$180 at Verizon. To compare, Sprint just launched a new promotion for new customers that costs \$90 a month for four lines, and T-Mobile, which includes taxes and fees in its total price, is \$160. AT&T costs \$180 for four but also requires a TV subscription.

Verizon is trying to differentiate itself by letting customers watch high-definition video with the unlimited plan, while competitors run streaming video at DVD-level quality.

T-Mobile responded Monday by saying that it would include HD video as well starting on Friday. Before, customers had to pay extra for HD streaming.

T-Mobile also said that, like Verizon, it would offer 10 gigabytes of high-speed data for a mobile hotspot, so that people can connect on laptops or tablets on the go. After that, slower 3G data will be available for a hotspot.

Of course, like all so-called unlimited plans, Verizon's is not really unlimited. If customers use more than 22 gigabytes of data in a month, their speeds may be slowed if the network is busy.

2016 Traffic deaths jump to highest level in nearly a decade

Joan Lowy

Associated Press

A jump in traffic fatalities last year pushed deaths on U.S. roads to their highest level in nearly a decade, erasing improvements made during the Great Recession and economic recovery, a leading safety organization said Wednesday.

Fatalities rose 6 percent in 2016, reaching an estimated 40,200 deaths compared to 37,757 deaths the previous year, according the National Safety Council. The group gets its data from states. The last time there were more than 40,000 fatalities in a single year was in 2007, just before the economy tanked. There were 41,000 deaths that year.

The increase came as Americans drove more last year - a 3 percent increase in total miles. The council cited continued lower gasoline prices and an improving economy as key factors.

Following an increase in fatalities in 2015, the United States has had the sharpest two-year increase in traffic deaths in 53 years, the council said.

Americans have come to accept large numbers of traffic deaths as inevitable instead of than taking actions that would prevent them, said Deborah Hersman, the council's president.

"Motor vehicle fatality numbers have been ringing the alarm for two years," she said. "Unfortunately, we have been tone-deaf to the data and the carnage on our roadways. If we fail to take action, the death toll will continue to rise."

Jonathan Adkins, executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association, which represents state highway safety offices, said state officials continue to point to three predominant factors in traffic deaths - "belts, booze and speed."

In the last three years, 13 states have raised speed limits on at least some portion of their interstate highways.

"Additionally, driver distraction and our society's addiction to

electronic devices is likely playing a role in the increase in deaths," Adkins said.

The estimated annual mileage death rate last year was 1.25 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles, an increase of 3 percent from the 2015 rate.

Traffic deaths began dropping in 2008 and reached their lowest point in six decades in 2011 at 32,000 deaths. They fluctuated slightly over the next two years, but started climbing in the last quarter of 2014.

As the economy recovered, people not only began driving more, but they also increased more risky types of driving "like going out on the weekends or taking long trips on unfamiliar roads," said Adrian Lund, president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Teens, who have the highest fatal crash rates, are also back on the road after the recession when many of them couldn't afford to drive as much, he said.

The surge in fatalities comes as cars and trucks have more safety features than ever. Nearly all new cars and light trucks now have electronic stability control and rearview cameras, for example. Automakers are also beginning to equip more cars with sophisticated safety technology like adaptive cruise control, automatic emergency-braking and blind-spot monitoring that are designed to prevent crashes rather than merely make them survivable.

Other important safety advances are also on the horizon, including vehicle-to-vehicle communications that allow cars to wirelessly warn each other of their movements in time to avoid collisions and self-driving cars that hold the potential to eliminate human error, a factor in more than 90 percent of crashes.

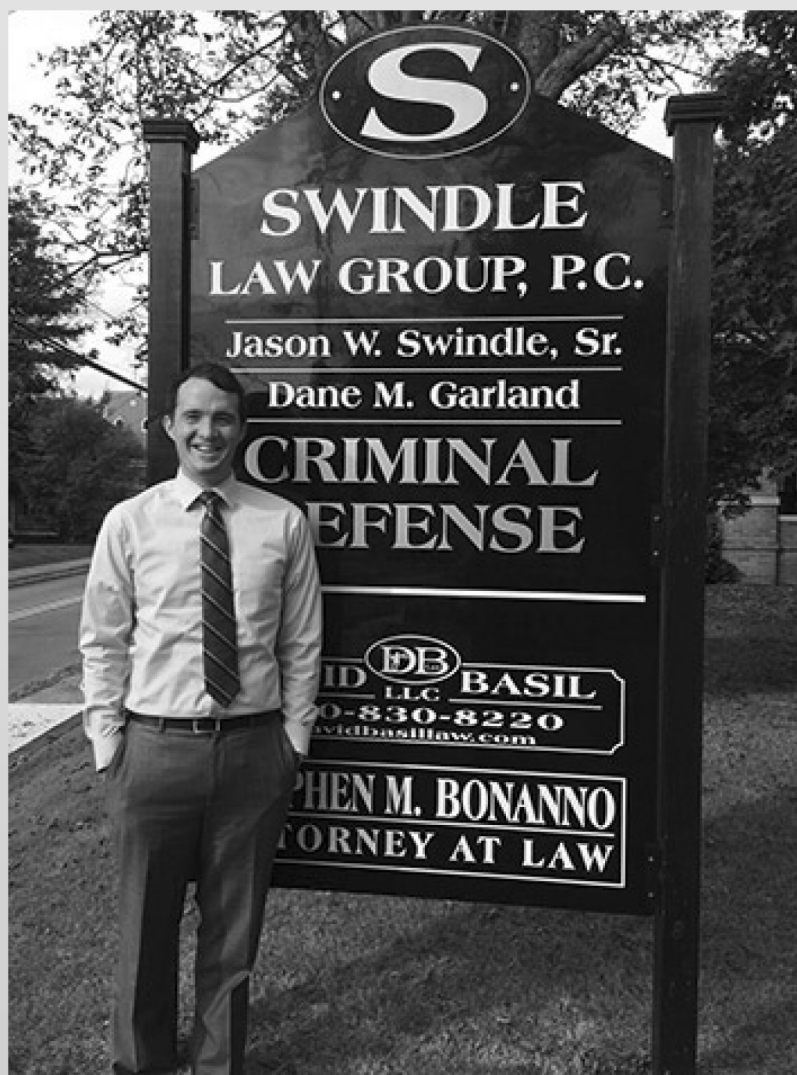
The council's fatality estimates differ slightly from those of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The government counts only deaths that occur on public roads, while the council includes fatalities that occur in parking lots, driveways and private roads.

Last month, NHTSA reported that traffic deaths surged about 8 percent in the first nine months of 2016.



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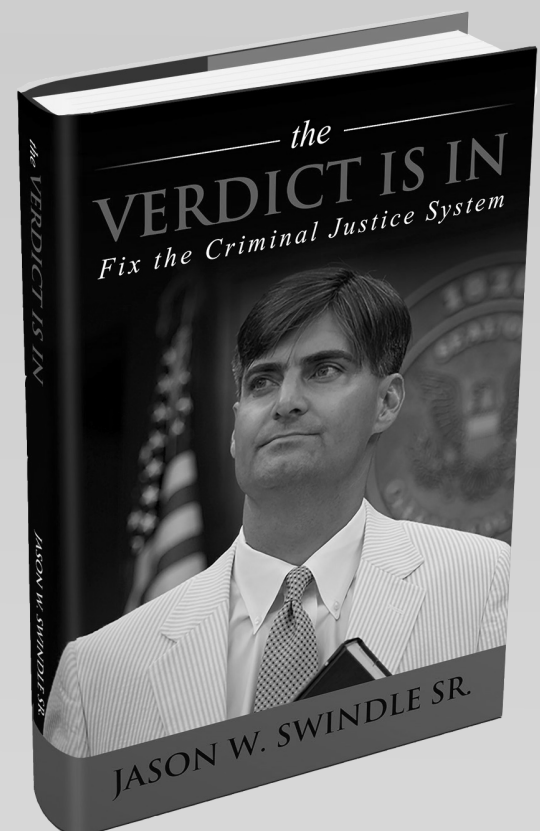
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BaconFest 2017

Nikole Gianopoulos

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Have you ever wondered what 2,250 pounds of bacon looks like? Look no further because this year's BaconFest is filled to the brim with beer, bacon and bands. Atlanta's outrageously savory and oft-salacious annual event is set to return to Atlanta on Saturday, March 25. BaconFest 2017 will take place at Dad's Garage located at 596 Ezzard St. in Atlanta's Old 4th Ward from 1 p.m. – 6 p.m.

"The festival is in its 16th year and has developed a strong cult following," said Matthew Terrell, Dad's Garage Theatre Company communications director. "To help achieve that following we try our best

to utilize most of our traditional channels such as social media and NPR to reach our people."

Guests can choose between Bottomless Bacon tickets and Whole Hog tickets. A Bottomless Bacon ticket is \$45 and includes unlimited beer, bacon and games. A Whole Hog ticket is \$85 and includes bottomless bacon benefits, access to the VIP room, a wider selection of beer and access to an actual whole hog. Those who purchase a Whole Hog ticket will also be given an April Loyalty Card that will get them access to free Dad's Garage shows for the month of April.

"We have different types of beer from year to year, some of it is even local," said Terrell. "The bacon is all one type, but we also have BLTs, roaster hog and cups of bacon to name a few options. Many of our

food vendors have specialty bacon products available."

All festival attendees with a ticket will have the opportunity to participate in the BaconFest games. These games include some of the classics, such as flip cup tournaments and cornhole. Other games include joystick jenga and a wheelchair obstacle course. Celebrity Kevin Bacon also joined in the pork-fueled festivities back in 2012. More activities and information are set to be announced closer to the date of the event.

"Some of our wackiest carnival games are hobo wine tasting and sanitary smooch booth," said Terrell. "They are run by our improvers and you get to interact personally with the game makers."

Tickets can be purchased at the door though pricing is subject to

increase. There is no parking available for this event, so guests are encouraged to take a safe-ride option. This festival is only open to those who are 21 years of age and older.

All proceeds benefit Dad's Garage Theatre Company, a non-profit theatre group that inspires artists and audiences alike by producing innovative works that is locally, nationally and internationally recognized. The annual outdoor festival is a way for the local nonprofit company to secure funds for the upcoming year's performances and visiting comedy acts. More specifically, BaconFest brings in about 10 percent of Dad's Garage operating budget each year.

For more information, directions or to purchase tickets visit www.dadsgarage.com or call 404-523-3141.



Photos: Matthew Terrell / Dad's Garage



sports

Wolves Basketball

Reagan Biddy

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The University of West Georgia men's basketball team has faced a lot of adversity on the court this 2016-17 season. Their current standings within the Gulf South Conference are 6-13 and overall are 9-17. As the reigning 2015-16 GSC champions, it does not look like the team will make it to the 2016-17 championship to defend its title. This season has been particularly difficult for the seniors on the team, with it being their last season. "It's tough for me. Especially with our record now, I'm trying to turn it around," said Shannon Fowler, UWG basketball senior and team captain. "I don't want it to be my last season and we play bad."

Fowler is originally from Long Beach, California and transferred to UWG from Mt. San Antonio. "I liked Coach Cooney, I liked the team, the environment, the school," said Fowler. "I want-

ed to get away from California and isolate myself so I could focus on school and basketball." Fowler has not only been focusing on school and basketball this season, but he has also been working hard to be a leader for his team. "It's been hard for me because I am kind of a quiet guy and being a leader it requires me to talk more and be more vocal," said Fowler.

Fowler has been working towards a new personal record this season. "I'm trying to lead the (Gulf South Conference) in rebounding," said Fowler. He has moved down in the ranking from second to third, but has high hopes of rising to the number one spot in the last few games of his senior season. On Feb. 11 the Wolves broke their losing streak of five losses with a win (88-80) over North Alabama. Fowler scored over his average amount of points which is 13.1 points, and scored 22 points during the game against North Alabama. He was also the third highest scoring player of this game for the Wolves.

The team has three

losing streaks, two of the streaks lasted five games each, and two winning streaks, one streak was five games and the other three. They are currently in the midst of a losing streak. They hold the ninth place spot in the Gulf South Conference and are hoping to make it to post-season. "If we win the next few games then we should be good," said Fowler. "I expect (my

teammates) to come out play as hard as they can and try to win. Hopefully our win will motivate our players to keep playing hard." To be eligible for post-season the team has to be in the top eight teams for the Gulf South Conference. When the West Georgia men's basketball team won last years Gulf South Conference Championship (99-82), they were ranked at number two, over

Alabama Huntsville who was ranked number one. Fowler has high hopes of defending their title for his senior season.

The West Georgia Wolves have two games left in the regular season which are both Gulf South Conference games that will be played at home, in the Coliseum. Come support your Wolves Thursday, Feb. 23 and Saturday, Feb. 25.

Photo: Wolves Athletics



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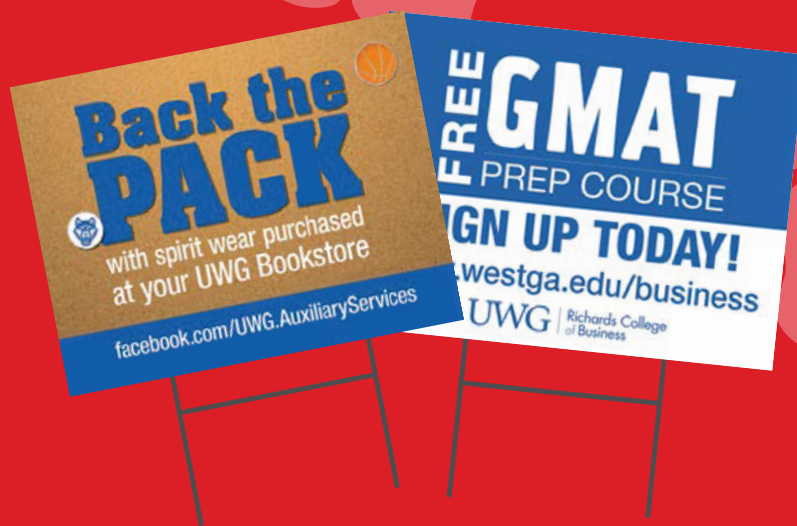
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