



Photo: Madeline Wilbanks, *The West Georgian*

College Students: Shaping American Politics

By Kayla Henderson
Copy Editor

Tumultuous is one word of many that would describe how 2020 started and would end. A world ravaged in a once in a century health crisis, a movement for civil justice, and an election fueled by two candidates who were unparalleled to one another in every way shaped 2020. The election was the thread that somehow tied all of these events together.

Many firsts would emerge after the long four day wait for the official election results, including the first female vice president, the highest number of votes cast in a presidential election and the highest voter turnout seen to date. Closer to home, the election marked only the beginning of the race for Georgia’s Senate. After a tight race, no candidate was able to hold a majority of the vote. This inducing another two months of campaign time to get the vote and claim the two senate seats for the state. Behind the scenes, a new group emerged that would help turn Georgia into a blue state for the first time since 1992: college students.

First time voter, Emma DiPuma, a sophomore at the University of Georgia, helped affect this change through her work with Public Citizen, a non-partisan organization to get out the vote in Georgia for the fall 2020 election. A native to Rome, GA., she watched optimistically as her state flipped overnight, giving her a newly refurbished optimism after a long election cycle that had most people counting down the days until the election ended. As it became evident there would be a Senate runoff, work began for helping to reignite the momentum for getting voters back to the polls on Jan. 5.

The Senate election had a lot at stake, especially for progress with actions such as healthcare, minimum wage, and climate change.

“Progressive politics is so important right now and I was especially interested in their work with climate legislation,” says Emma. “I’m currently getting a B.S. in Environmental Geography with plans to work in science policy. Having the opportunity to work with an organization [Public Citizen] that has people doing exactly what I want to do was super cool and made me more confident in my plans.”

While the internship was remote, there was no shortage of work to be done. The youth vote was on the radar of many of the candidates running. Politicians can campaign anywhere, but no one knows a place more than the people who live there. Emma focused most of her work on the campus community at UGA.

“We used a variety of different methods but the most successful one for me was doing class raps,” says Emma. “This involved reaching out to hundreds of professors in all different departments and asking for five minutes of their class time to talk to their students about voting in the election.”

In addition to speaking directly to her classmates, she used outlets like social media to reach out to her peers. Public Citizen wanted to advocate helping young people learn from others who are their own age. Social Media has become one of the most pragmatic tools for political work. Young people, who hold a strong online presence, are especially susceptible to being able to use platforms such as Instagram to share their voice. Other methods were also helpful for getting out the word to the community such as phone calls, postcards and flyers.

“Part of our internship was reaching out to neighborhoods where the general population is

people of color since those areas are heavily targeted by voter suppression,” says Emma. “With these communities, I reached out by doing phone banking events and also writing postcards as well.”

Many organizers believe that the election brought a new outlook that hard, grassroots work will be laid out for future elections. Emma says that she saw this same outlook once the election was over and she could finally see what all her hard work had accomplished.

“I didn’t see much of an impact until after the election was over. During the process, it was disheartening because I felt like all I was doing was annoying people with the information they’d heard a million times already,” says Emma. “But once voting started and the turnout numbers were even higher than they were during the general election, there was a cool moment where I realized that I helped that happen.”

Emma is already looking to the future with plans to continue the work she started. Her experience allowed for growth, pushing her out of her comfort zone and helping prepare her for her career.

“At some point, we need to transition into electing younger representatives so that the elected officials are part of the demographic they’re representing,” says Emma. “We need policies that focus on the future rather than on the present, and to do that we need representatives who are looking into the future themselves. For this to happen, young people need to get to the polls and need to educate themselves on voting.”

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NEWS

Sexual Assault Reported at Center Pointe Suites

By Madison Creech
Contributing Writer

A report was made to University Police about a sexual assault that happened in the early morning on Feb. 2 at Center Pointe Suites. Since this time, many students, especially students that live in and around Center Pointe have been concerned for their safety while living on campus.

“It honestly is so scary,” said University Suites resident, Jordyn Meeks. “It makes me feel like I cannot go anywhere alone. I may not live there, but I live right next to Center Pointe in University Suites. It’s crazy because we hear how scary being a woman can be, but to think that we may not even be safe in our own dorms—It’s eye-opening for sure.”

Many other students have expressed their concerns about the situation as well. With all the security located inside the dorm facilities, the incident came as a big surprise to the residents. Because of COVID-19, students are no longer allowed to bring guests into the hall. Students have to swipe into the building multiple times, as well as their room. However, even with these measures in place, incidents are still bound to happen.

“A lot of times when we talk about safety tips, there’s this connotation that ‘well you should have to do X, Y, and Z to prevent A, B, and C,’” said UWG’s Title IX Coordinator, Dr. Erin Williams. “It’s really not any victim’s responsibility to prevent a crime. The goal of the institution is to shift that culture of the campus to more of preventing violence in the first place, instead of having a response to violence.”

Safe-Line for Sexual Assault

By Brittany Hall
Contributing Writer

UWG students received an email regarding a sexual assault case on campus on Feb. 6. A report was made to the University Police Department that a female student was raped at Center Pointe Suites. Therefore, one student decided to create a safe line to help prevent another sexual assault incident on campus.

UWG student, Imani Johnson, created the After Dark Safe-Line to prevent another sexual assault case from occurring at UWG. The After Dark Safe-Line is a support platform for ladies who have been sexually abused as well as a hotline for the women to use if they feel themselves in an uneasy situation and need help.

“When I first saw the email about the sexual assault on campus I was immediately overwhelmed with thoughts and emotions,” said Imani. “I just could not believe it, so I decided to create something to help prevent more instances of this happening again or worse situations.

“I decided to help make the students aware of the many resources on campus,” continued Imani. “As well as give the students support from their peers to ensure that they have someone to talk to about their experiences and have a way to get home safely.”

Imani plans on putting the After Dark Safe-Line into action as soon as possible. The sophomore decided it was best to promote the idea as much as she can, especially after the incident that occurred.

“I plan on getting the service around first by flyers and hosting an informational meeting and hopefully meeting with our school administration to team up with campus police,” said Imani. “Once more students and people are aware of our service, I plan on expanding the service with the help of my executive board and coming up with ideas to further our dedication to helping others.”

Imani ensures that the After Dark Safe-Line will be free for students and will have volunteers.

The Title IX Office focuses on prevention and how students can protect themselves if all else fails in these types of incidences. The office also provides education for students about consent and non-consensual sexual contact. Some of the best tips in regards to these types of attacks are to be aware of your surroundings and avoid dangerous situations, keep doors and windows locked when home alone and when possible walk with others, especially at night.

UWG also offers different campus resources that can help students in these kinds of cases. The Counseling Center, University Police, as well as the Health Advocates that are provided by the Health Services and Title IX Office are just a few resources available to students. Also, many faculty and staff at UWG are mandated reporters. This means that if a student went to a resident assistant or a professor and told them of an incident, the assistant or professor would have to report it to the school. This is because they have a responsibility to protect other students from this happening again at UWG. If a student would not like to report it, the Counseling Center is confidential and is more than willing to help students.

Since the first announcement about the assault, an update has been provided to the UWG students to make them feel more secure in their university and schooling environment. This announcement stated that the victim knew the suspect. It also said that there has been no evidence that the suspect committing these acts is choosing random members of the university community.

Although anyone can volunteer to become a member, they will have to prove that they are reliable and trustworthy to take on such a huge responsibility.

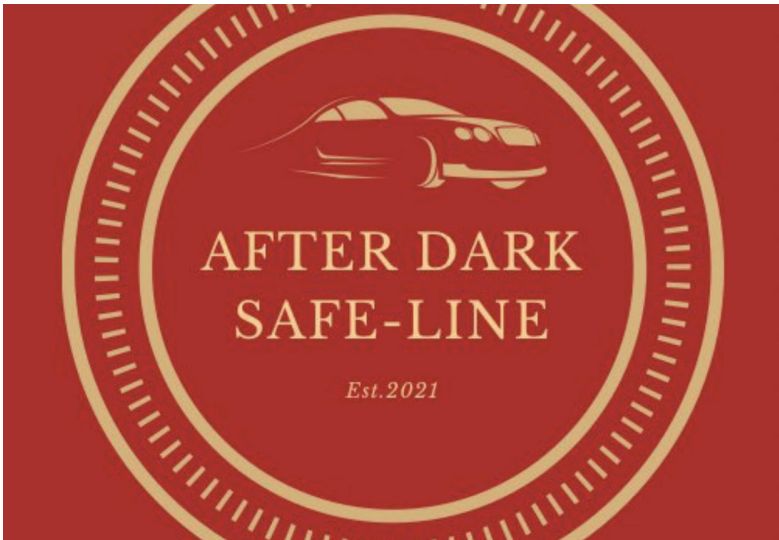
“The After Dark Safe-Line will be free to use,” said Imani. “However, I would love to sell defense keychains for the students that would like to have some type of protection with them in case there are situations where we or the police are unavailable and use the profits to go towards the safe line and to donate as well.

“Anyone can join the safe line,” continued Imani. “But I will most likely create a questionnaire for the students that would like to help and participate to make sure that not only I, but fellow students can count on them in a time of need and dedicated to create ideas to make sure that the university also has voices that want to ensure safety on campus as well.”

Imani is elated and proud of herself for creating such an amazing service for the ladies at UWG. She will run the business until she graduates and then she hopes to find someone trustworthy enough to take over once she leaves.

“It feels amazing to create something that could help so many people in so many different ways and to be able to get advice, motivate and support others and offer ways to keep our students, especially our ladies, safe on campus,” said Imani.

Image courtesy of Imani Johnson



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NEWS

Bridging the Divide: The Black Alumni Network

By Kayla Henderson
Contributing Writer

After graduating in 2015, Brooke Lane realized the gap between black alumni and UWG. Co-founding with fellow graduate Greg Amadi, together they created the Black Alumni Network (BAN) in 2018. While there were many successful programs for current students, a disparity lied among black alumni to connect with one another past graduation.

What began as a GroupMe with around 100 members, has expanded into the official affinity group for black graduates at UWG, with over 700 current members and 16 members on the executive board. BAN has even begun partnering with other campus organizations including another black alumni organization “Old Skool.”

“We started this network as a means to connect black alum,” Brooke says. “We noticed that there was a disconnect between the school and the black alumni that wanted to remain connected but didn’t necessarily know how.

“We figured that we could be the liaison,” Brooke continues. “I had a great experience at UWG but everyone did not share my same sentiments. We started with just a GroupMe and were able to have some honest conversations about how we could give back to current black students and bridge the gap from undergraduate to alumni status.”

BAN works with alumni to help foster growth for current students. The organization raises money to help support scholarship opportunities for students such as the Lillian Williams Scholarship Fund and the Black Student Scholarship.

In honor of Black History Month, the organization partnered with the UWG Bookstore to re-release a limited edition UWG Black Alumni Network Tee, in honor of Lil-

lian Williams—the first black student to attend West Georgia College in 1963. A direct portion of each purchase of the shirt will go towards supporting BAN and its work at UWG.

“Since our founding, the university has really made an effort to support black alumni and ensure inclusion along with other alumni affinity groups,” says Brooke. “The alumni are extremely excited about being able to connect with each other and the school. They are eager to get involved.”

Brooke currently serves as president of BAN and was recently named one of UWG’s Thriving Under 30 award recipients in 2020. Sponsored by the UWG Alumni Association, the Thriving Under 30 award is given to alumni who have created a lasting impact on their community. Brooke was one of 17 chosen for the 2020 Thriving Under 30 class out of hundreds of applicants.

“The legacy that I hope to leave with UWG is that I’m a person of the people and I live to serve,” says Brooke. “I hope that my service to the school, students and black alumni leaves a lasting impression and that the people that follow in my footsteps carry on our vision for the Black Alumni Network with great pride.”

Photo courtesy of Brooke Lane



Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene Expelled from Two Committees

By Abby Grizzard
Contributing Writer

United States House Committee Chair Marjorie Taylor Greene has been removed from her seat due to her social media posts dismissing conspiracy theories regarding sensitive content. Greene was removed from her position on the Education in the Workforce and Budget Committee by a 230-199 vote majority in the house on Feb. 4, 2021.

“Greene will no longer be allowed to participate in this committee work,” said political science professor Karen Owen. “However, she can be involved with the overall legislative processes. She can introduce legislation, co-sign on bills, she can vote on legislation in the school chamber. She won’t be able to specialize in a committee.”

Greene’s posts spread conspiracy theory ideas such as 9/11 and school shootings from previous years. She originated her claims from the conspiracy theorist group QAnon, a group known for creating and spreading conspiracy theories regarding the government. She dismissed and apologized for her claims on the House floor.

“School shootings are absolutely real,” said Greene during the vote. “I want to tell you 9/11 absolutely happened. I do not believe that it’s fake.”

Her actions upset many Americans and both parties within the House, exemplifying the effect that social media plays in politics today. Greene’s posts are an example of the scrutiny and repercussions one can face when express-

ing their opinions publicly through social media platforms.

“I think social media is playing a role in everyone’s life if you’re on it,” said Owen. “It’s very easy for individuals to access it and post things and not be scrutinized when they originally post. For many politicians, it’s a really simple way to communicate and help people understand what they’re doing in politics.”

The Democratic party pushed for Green’s removal from the committee. Many assume that this decision will increase division among the Republican and Democratic representatives in the House.

“I believe she needs to be held accountable for what she said,” said Owen. “We all have to be held accountable for what we say that can be harmful to someone. However, I don’t think the Democratic party should have been the one who held her accountable. Historically, the party you are in is the one that reprimands you or does something to make you aware that you can’t say things like she said.

“Once the House majority turns to the Republicans, they will be in many ways wanting to affect any Democrat who says something that is inappropriate and they will act to strip them from their committee,” continued Owen. “This is going to set a precedence that the other party can censor or affect members of the other party.”

Greene has expressed her condolences and apologized for her posts although she wore a mask showcasing the words “free speech” to her vote in the House. Greene addressed social media posts such as claims that the Sandy Hook shooting was staged and many other conspiracies stemming from the organization QAnon. She claims she has since stopped reading and supporting QAnon’s content.



Photo courtesy of the Associated Press

ENTERTAINMENT

The Digital Uprising
During COVID-19

By Brittany Shadix
Contributing Writer

When classes went completely online last spring, UWG Online and UWG Information Technology were able to accommodate students who relied heavily on campus internet by providing MiFi devices and free Wi-Fi access points. Data from UWG Online shows that the department received approximately 200 inquiries related to internet access, and 30 emergency MiFi devices have been distributed since the spring of last year. However, short-term, temporary accommodations are not sustainable for the increase in reliance on high-speed internet.

“Limited access to the internet makes completing my assignments and schoolwork online more difficult,” said UWG student, Cierrah Dedman, who lives off-campus. “To get my work done, I have to carve out specific times to either travel into town and go to a coffee shop or go to my parent’s house to use their internet. I stay out of my house most days since there is no internet connection available.”

In wake of the ongoing pandemic, a light has been shone on the digital divide across the country. As schooling and working from home have become a common practice that will likely remain the norm, high-speed internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Recently Carroll Electric Membership Cooperative (EMC) and broadband provider SyncGlobal Telecom have teamed together to fix this issue by creating a fiber optic network in order to help bridge the digital divide.

Upon completion of the first phase of fiber deployment, the service from SyncGlobal Telecom will be available to more than 9,000 homes and businesses in parts of Carroll, Haralson and Heard counties affecting UWG stakeholders.

“Our broadband project will allow for students to have legitimate broadband and manage schoolwork or remote jobs,” said Vice President of Communications and Economic Development for Carroll EMC, Jay Gill. “Not only does SyncGlobal Telecom and Carroll EMC serve the campus of UWG, but many of the students live off-campus and are non-traditional or commute. People don’t

Photo: Brittany Shadix, *The West Georgian*

always realize you can travel half a mile and be in a rural area with no internet access whatsoever.”

In 2019, the cooperative helped fund a state-wide study after hearing pleas from its members to bring broadband to the seven-county service territory. The study revealed 66% of rural Georgians, including two-thirds of Carroll EMC’s 52,000 members, did not have access to broadband connections or adequate internet speeds. While internet providers are slow to update their systems and build their networks outside of urban areas, the Carroll EMC knew it had to be the solution for broadband just as it had been for electricity in 1936. According to Gill, there is no service around that compares to the broadband option coming to the area.

“We won’t have to explain the difference,” said Gill. “People are living with services that can’t stay connected or can barely download an email. I believe they understand just how bad their existing service is. Anything that promises to stream a service and run an email application at the same time is life-changing for some.

“Concern for the community is one of the most important of the seven cooperative principles,” continued Gill. “The digital divide is real, significant and causing problems between rural and urban America. Power cooperatives are one of the only utilities with facilities throughout rural America. We realize that without our help, broadband will never reach those in need.”

The fiber project was announced early last summer and is expected to begin very soon as the companies finalize details. With the ability to maximize user capacity and eliminate overcrowding, the advanced fiber technology will offer up to one GP internet speed. Serviced by SyncGlobal Telecom on Carroll EMC utility poles, the future proof material has the capability to support and adapt to advancing technologies for years to come unlike any copper wire service currently available from cable companies.

“It is the ideal relationship,” said Gill. “We are both local companies run by local residents. Our corporate values and mission align, and our collective goal is to serve our neighbors and the communities we live in. It will be a great, long-term relationship.”



ENTERTAINMENT

America Burns for ‘Bridgerton’

By Abigail Cummings

Contributing Writer

Netflix has had its fair share of hits over the years, but *Bridgerton* has knocked them all out of the water. This new period drama is *Gossip Girl* meets *Downton Abbey* at its finest. Although it has been out for less than two months, *Bridgerton* has already made the record for the highest number of household views at 82 million. Because of its success, *Bridgerton* has already been renewed for a second season much to the excitement of its fans.

The show is set in 1813 during the Regency Period in London and follows the lives of influential nobility as they navigate the debutante season. The show primarily follows the Bridgerton family, with whom it is named after, and its eldest daughter Daphne as she tries to find love in the money obsessed society. Daphne, played by Phoebe Dynevor, forms an alliance with Simon the Duke of Hastings, played by Regé-Jean Page, in order to make her more desirable and so he will be left alone by all of the other society girls. Eventually, we see that these kinds of plans never work and the two fall in love with each other. The show then captures the twists and turns that nobility endure during the debutante season and how they each react to it.

Bridgerton is narrated by a mysterious Lady Whistledown, voiced by the incomparable Julie Andrews, who seems to know everyone’s secrets and dirty laundry, much like *Gossip Girl* always did. A big part of the series is trying to decipher who could be Lady Whistledown. The narration brings an omniscient element to the storyline

Photo courtesy of Netflix

which makes the characters act wary because their secrets could be the next to be revealed.

One of the main reasons why the show is a hit is because of the time in which it is set. People love to see older time periods brought to life on the screen. Everyone wants to imagine themselves in the shoes of the characters, gallivanting across the castle gardens in ball gowns. Hence why titles such as “Pride and Prejudice” and “Atonement” are so popular, or people love *Kiera Knightly*, which is also plausible. The fascination that society has with the Elizabethan, Regency and Victorian time periods lends to the fame of the show.

Another reason for the show’s fame is because of the love story that encompasses it. The enemies to lovers plot and the slow burn of the characters falling in love makes for an interesting storyline. Daphne and Simon create a relationship that many covet after. The chemistry that the two actors convey in their scenes together leaves viewers wishing that they were in the character’s shoes.

Though, the show could have gone without as many intimate scenes as it had. Many of the intimate scenes in the show made for an uncomfortable watching experience and cheapened the relationship that Daphne and Simon had. Nevertheless, society is a sucker for that kind of thing if *50 Shades of Grey* is any indication.

In the end, Netflix hit the ball out of the park with *Bridgerton*. The second season can’t come fast enough for fans of the show. Here’s to waiting for another interesting revelation from Lady Whistledown.

