

Community Outreach NEWS

January 2021

Greetings!

Gwinnett Community Outreach promotes strategic communications and outreach with diverse constituencies and coordinates cultural events and programs to encourage and empower residents to be more informed and involved with Gwinnett County Government. Community Outreach News is one way we are able to stay vibrantly connected with our diverse community.

It's a new year and we are excited about all the great things that are in store for 2021! Despite the challenges with COVID-19, we had lots of accomplishments to celebrate in 2020 and are busy planning several outreach events for 2021. Read on for more details and how you can be engaged.

Community Outreach highlights

2020 Year in Review

While we celebrated five years of Gwinnett Community Outreach in 2020, it had been a year unlike any other. In spite of the many challenges that occurred with the ongoing pandemic, we were still able to participate in events and provide programs throughout the year. We greatly appreciate and thank our community partners, volunteers, and residents for their support of outreach programs and projects in 2020.

The pandemic forced us to reduce the number of community events that we participated in and hosted; however, we were able to participate in 49 community events that directly impacted more than 6,000 County residents last year.

Our 11th cohort graduated from **Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy** last November. Dubbed the “most resilient” class, 25 residents participated in socially distant in-person weekly sessions for most of the Fall 2020 program. When sessions could not be held in-person, participants joined in virtually from the comfort and safety of their homes. Our County staff did an awesome job of giving the class an informative, engaging experience, even when we could not all be together in person. Check out pictures from the Fall 2020 Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy program [here](#).



The 2020 – 2021 **Gwinnett Youth Commission** session was held virtually to keep our students safe, but the distance did not stop them from having a great time. The 20 youth commissioners participated in leadership training and learned about their County government and the services it provides. The youth commissioners were inducted in a [socially distanced ceremony](#) last July, and they are busy planning 2021 initiatives of their own. On January 23, the Gwinnett Youth Commission, in partnership with the Gwinnett United in Drug Education Youth Advisory Board, is hosting the 2021 Rise & Shine Youth Leadership Breakfast to bridge

relationships with youth and engaged community leaders.

Our **Community Outreach Advisory Board** continued its work to promote our programs by encouraging involvement, engaging diverse groups of stakeholders, and advising and making recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on additional community outreach initiatives. Their focus last year was promoting participation in the 2020 Census, which wrapped up last October.

COVID-19 forced us to be creative with multicultural outreach events last year. Our annual Multicultural Festival was canceled to keep everyone safe, but we held several cultural observances virtually. We look forward to when we can return to hosting in-person programming that celebrates the rich history and culture of our natives and newcomers. In case you missed them, select the links below to see our virtual celebrations held in 2020:

- [Black History Month: Literacy](#)
- [Black History Month: Military](#)
- [AAPI Heritage Month: Pakistan](#)
- [AAPI Heritage Month: South Korea](#)
- [AAPI Heritage Month: Hmong Culture](#)
- [Hispanic Heritage Month](#)

Additionally, we have two new staff members who joined our team!

Shaunieka Taylor was appointed Director of the Community Outreach Program in October 2020. She is no stranger to Community Outreach, having been a part of developing the curriculum for the Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy and Gwinnett Youth Commission. She has the heart of a servant, with a keen ability to connect with people of all backgrounds and experiences. Shaunieka is a long-time employee of Gwinnett County, serving for 13 years in the Communications Division. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in communications from the College of Charleston and Master of Science in organizational leadership from Brenau University. Shaunieka and her husband, Curtis, are foodies who love traveling, riding roller coasters, and attending comedy shows.



Sarah Park is the Community Engagement Coordinator and was previously Confidential Executive Assistant to District 1 Commissioner Jace Brooks and International Marketing Coordinator with Explore Gwinnett. She is very active in the community, serving on several boards and maintaining a deep and sincere interest in building bridges between our communities and generations. Sarah earned her degree in political science at Georgia State University. She's also a graduate of GLANCE Gwinnett and Leadership Georgia 2017, and she has been accepted to Leadership Gwinnett 2022. Her hobbies include volunteering, traveling, and trying new cuisines and experiences with her husband, Michael, and their daughter, Elroi.

Also, congratulations to **Jessica Stewart**, who was recently promoted as the Community Programs Manager! In this new role, Jessica will manage Gwinnett County Community Outreach's signature programs, including Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy and Gwinnett Youth Commission, and plan other community outreach programs that reach our diverse constituencies and celebrate the vibrancy of our community.

Our team is continuing to grow! We have three openings for a [Community Engagement Manager](#) and two [Community Programs Coordinators](#). If you or someone you know has a heart for serving our vibrantly connected community, visit www.gwinnettcountryjobs.com to apply.

Engagement Opportunities



Celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy

Gwinnett Community Outreach is partnering with the United Ebony Society of Gwinnett County to host the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration Saturday, January 16 through Monday, January 18. This year's theme is: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." The event features a drive-thru donation drive, Saturday, January 16 at Moore Middle School from 11:00am to 2:00pm, for items to help senior nursing facilities and homeless outreach organizations. Then on Sunday, January 17 and Monday, January 18, a virtual ceremony will

stream on the United Ebony Society of Gwinnett County's [Facebook](#), YouTube, and [Instagram](#) pages. Also, the County is coordinating several MLK Day of Service volunteer projects. To volunteer, visit gcga.us/MLKDayVolunteer. Due to COVID-19, the projects are outdoors and will have a limit on the number of volunteers. Gwinnett County offices will be closed Monday, January 18 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Learn how to do business with Gwinnett County

Join our Purchasing Division for a one-hour virtual clinic Thursday, January 28. Hear directly from our purchasing staff on navigating the website for business opportunities, registering as a vendor, and more. To sign up for one of our two virtual sessions, visit gcga.us/QuarterlyClinicSignup.

Save the Date: The Impact of John Lewis

Gwinnett County will celebrate the legacy of the late Congressman John Lewis with a virtual conversation with community leaders **Monday, February 22** beginning at 9:30am. This event will stream live on Gwinnett County Government's Facebook page, [Facebook.com/GwinnettGov](https://www.facebook.com/GwinnettGov).

Applications available for 2021 Gwinnett 101, Youth Commission

Applications for the next Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy are open. The Spring 2021 session begins April 1 and continues through June 22. Visit [Gwinnett101.com](https://www.gwinnett101.com) to download the application; be sure to submit your application before the Tuesday, March 2 deadline.

We are also accepting applications for the 2021 – 2022 Gwinnett Youth Commission through Monday, April 12. The eight-week training sessions take place June 2 through July 27. [Click here](#) for more information and to apply.

Classes for both programs will be in person but limited to 15 people

News Worth Sharing



Meet our new commissioners

Newly elected [Chairwoman Nicole Love Hendrickson](#), [District 1 Commissioner Kirkland Carden](#), and [District 3 Commissioner Jasper Watkins III](#) took the oath of office in December.

Chairwoman Hendrickson served as associate director of the Gwinnett Coalition for Health and Human Services before joining Gwinnett County Government in 2015 as director for the new Community Outreach Division, where she launched Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy, Dinner & Dialogue, and the Gwinnett Youth Commission.

Commissioner Carden is a Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy Cohort 4 graduate. In his professional capacity, he has assisted state and local governments in developing, maintaining, and implementing transportation plans. Carden was elected to the Duluth City Council in 2017 and served on the Duluth Urban Redevelopment Authority. Carden has also worked as an urban planning technician.

Commissioner Watkins is a nuclear pharmacist and is the principal/consultant for Watty Consulting, LLC. A retired lieutenant colonel in the Army, he received the Legion of Merit among other honors and helped coordinate responses to 9/11 and hurricanes Katrina and Andrew. He is a Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy Cohort 7 graduate.

Board of Commissioners adopts 2021 budget

In its first major vote of the year, the new Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners approved the 2021 budget.

The budget for 2021 totals \$1.91 billion, up 3.7 percent from the 2020 adopted budget. It consists of a \$1.47 billion operating budget and a \$441 million capital improvements budget, which includes funds from the County's SPLOST program.



"This budget addresses issues facing the County today and includes funds to help us face future challenges," said Chairwoman Nicole Hendrickson. "It is important that the budget maintain important continuity in the excellent services and programs provided by the County while allowing this new board some flexibility for new ideas."

[Click here](#) to read more about the 2021 adopted budget.

GCPL mobile library van transporting food

The new Gwinnett County Public Library mobile library van has taken on an unexpected mission. Because of the pandemic, instead of delivering books and other services, the van is helping the library's countywide food distribution efforts. GCPL is partnering with local organizations to help residents facing food insecurity, and the mobile library is helping distribute meals at several library locations designated as food distribution sites. Residents can drive through to pick up boxes of produce and shelf-stable food items or individual meals, depending on location. Visit [GwinnettPL.org](https://www.gwinnettpl.org) to learn more.



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