



sixmilepost.com

SIX MILE POST

Since 1972

Vol. 53, #1

The Student Voice of Georgia Highlands College

Rome, GA

October 9, 2023

Investiture ceremony welcomes Hobbs as fifth president

By Savannah Pollocks

Faculty and staff, the USG board of Regents and the community came together to commence the inaugural ceremony of Mike Hobbs on Sept. 28. on the Floyd campus at 11 a.m. to witness Hobbs' investiture.

This came as a long-awaited moment for Hobbs, as he spent the past year preparing to take on this significant role. Many in attendance attested to the authentic and passionate nature of Hobbs and how the college could not have picked a better person for the job.

From his humble hometown of Ansley, Ala., Hobbs became the first in his family

to graduate from high school and college. From there, his focus on education became the most important thing.

Promoted to assistant night manager at the local KFC, Hobbs enrolled in night classes at Jefferson State Community College and realized he had found his path. Through pursuing his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, Hobbs learned the true meaning of perseverance and willpower.

At the beginning of the ceremony, colleagues expressed this sentiment.

"His boundless energy is a reflection of his genuine love for the work and the people he serves," presiding Regent Cade Joiner said.

Pastor Larry Adams of Mt. Zion Baptist Church delivered a powerful opening prayer to set the tone for the day's celebration. Following Adams' invocation, a celebratory video was played, featuring Hobbs' family, friends and former colleagues congratulating him on the occasion.

Jalen Hudson, president of SGA and Brother to Brother, spoke candidly about the impact Hobbs has had, not only on him but also, on other students.

"Whenever you're around Hobbs, if you have his attention, he truly gives you his time, effort and consideration, and in that moment, nothing else matters," Hudson said.

Hobbs' tenacity has allowed him the opportunity to meet people from around the world, including Anat Sultan-Dadon, consul general of Israel to the southeastern United States. She stated how their introduction at the Rome International Film Festival sparked a direction of partnership and association of bringing the film arts to students at GHC and overseas at the Sapir College in southern Israel.

"Georgia Highlands College is hosting a pop-up



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

Chancellor of the USG, Sonny Perdue, formally welcomes Hobbs as the fifth president. Perdue delivered a speech about Hobbs' focus on helping students. "He finds new ways to meet students and everyone else, wherever they are," Perdue said.

exhibit from Israel's national library to commemorate the 75th Independence Day of the modern state of Israel," Sultan-Dadon said regarding a collaboration for displaying art.

Chancellor Sonny Perdue delivered an introduction before Hobbs' inaugural address. He spoke of the lengthy journey Hobbs had taken and the support system that aided him.

"The infection of the passion and optimism and enthusiasm of Mike Hobbs pervades this place, so if you get a little itchy when you get out, just enjoy, because that's the excitement of going forward and Georgia Highlands leadership of Mike Hobbs," Chancellor Sonny Perdue said.



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

Rabbi Larry Sernovitz blows the shofar to symbolize the need to look into ourselves before contributing to the world, emphasizing Hobbs' new role as a leader who is followed by many.

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Investiture ceremony (cont.)

Approaching the podium overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude, Hobbs took a moment to reflect.

"Today is just one of the greatest days of my life," Hobbs said.

Hobbs shared that his family was the driving force in propelling him to take a chance on himself and push the limits of his educational abilities. During his 30 years in education, he's encountered many friends and colleagues along the way who influenced his leadership potential.

"I'll give you my word today that I won't be out-worked," Hobbs said. "I won't sit down I won't stand down. I will fight for us and I will fight for our students. I will make sure that we get every opportunity that we can and every resource that we can to make sure to bring those back to our students so we continue to have success story after success story. I humbly accept the role as the fifth president of this great institution."



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

Bagpiper Laurie Bailey and mace-bearer Steve Stuglin lead the processional into the gymnasium. Dignitaries and faculty followed behind to join the investiture. "The investiture was an excellent way to mark Hobbs' ongoing commitment to our college," Humanities chair Allen Dutch said.



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

SGA President Jalen Hudson speaks on behalf of the student body. "It doesn't matter if you are the valedictorian or if you've failed every class, President Hobbs talks to all students the same way," Hudson said.



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

USG presidents lead the processional in the Floyd campus gym lobby prior to the ceremony. The inclusion of other university presidents identifies the USG working together for success. "Being president is a team effort. It takes everyone, it takes all those behind me, it takes the foundation, it takes the alumni, it takes the students, it takes the staff, the faculty and it takes the community," Perdue said.



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

Custom FunkoPops, inspired by President Hobbs, were set up outside of the ballroom for guests to bid on in the scholarship auction. The five brought in nearly \$1,000, with “80’s Mike” selling for \$320.



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

Human Resources Administrative Assistant Sarah Ozment gets ready to pose for the 360-degree video camera. Organizers gathered ‘80s-themed props for guests to use while recording.

GHC Foundation hosts first scholarship gala

By Anna Crusselle

On the evening of Sept. 29, the Georgia Highlands College Foundation, in conjunction with the inauguration of Mike Hobbs, celebrated its 50th anniversary with the first inaugural Highlands Scholarship Gala.

The event, held at the Clarence Brown Center, located just across from the Cartersville campus, brought together supporters, community members and college faculty to commemorate a half-century of supporting students in northwest Georgia.

The gala, a vibrant affair that followed the investiture ceremony, began at 6:30 p.m. and featured a popular live band, The Guardians of the Jukebox, after dinner.

The evening was marked by enthusiasm as attendees gathered to support the foundation’s mission of providing financial assistance to students pursuing their college degrees at GHC.

Chairman and Treasurer of the Foundation Board of Trustees, Randy Quick, took to the stage to express gratitude for the enduring impact of the foundation’s work.

“They wanted to make an impact on the lives of students in northwest Georgia. Little did they know the impact they would have a half-century later,” Quick said. He emphasized the importance of continuing support, recognizing the foundation board members

and sponsors who were instrumental in organizing the gala.

GHC President Mike Hobbs, the man of the hour, expressed his surprise and delight at the gala, mentioning that he had initially thought the bobbleheads were birthday gifts for him but soon discovered they would be raffled off.

He was ecstatic about the event and described it as “one of the best nights of my life,” stating that he was “walking on cloud nine.”

Dean Leslie Johnson of the Cartersville campus shared her excitement about the smooth execution of the gala. She mentioned that the event had reached its capacity with around 460 attendees and featured bobbleheads for auction just outside the ballroom.

Executive Director of Advancement, Sarah Bradfield, explained that the gala marked a new direction for GHC.

“We’re taking it to the next level. This will become an annual event for GHC where it supports student scholarships,” Bradfield said. “So all money raised will go directly back to student scholarships and supporting students at Georgia Highlands.”

Liz Jones, director of foundation services, also shared her excitement and mentioned that the gala had drawn immense support, reaching capacity in terms of food, tickets, and



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

Guardians of the Jukebox, known for their music covers, enhanced the ‘80s theme and encouraged attendees to flock to the dance floor with crowd favorites like (I’ve Had) The Time of My Life.

seating. She looks forward to the venue for next year’s gala, indicating that there are promising ideas in the works.

“Next year I’m not sure where the venue is going to be, so it’s going to be exciting to find that out,” Jones said.

The Highlands Scholarship Gala not only celebrated the rich history of the GHC Foundation but also laid the foundation for future generations of students and leaders in northwest Georgia.

With the event’s success and the enthusiastic support of the community, the foundation continues to make strides toward its mission of empowering students to achieve their educational goals.

‘Totally radical’ 80s Dance held for students



ABIGAIL HENDERSON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Psychology major Sean Wilson keeps the party upbeat with hits from popular groups and musicians including Madonna, Bon Jovi and Queen.



ABIGAIL HENDERSON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Glowing balloons gave a classic 80s dance vibe in the low lighting while students socialize and dance along to the beat of the music.



ABIGAIL HENDERSON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Colorful 80's decor covers the entrance to the student center ballroom, including a banner emphasizing love for the decade.



ABIGAIL HENDERSON | PHOTOGRAPHER

From left to right, Naima Atalla, Madison Signoret and Sharlotte Baine show off their 80's style in front of the themed photo backdrop which featured vintage items like roller skates and boomboxes.

Scholarships offer opportunity, low cost for students

By Anna Crusselle

Scholarships have long served as a beacon of hope for students pursuing higher education, offering financial assistance to those who aspire to a brighter future.

The Senior Financial Aid Counselor at Georgia Highlands College, Lisa Garrett, shared valuable insights into the scholarship application process and opportunities available for students.

“Students must meet general eligibility criteria before diving into the application process,” she said.

These include Georgia residency, U.S. citizenship or equivalent status and a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher.

“Once students meet these requirements, they can access our scholarship application system,” Garrett said.

The process begins by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and ensuring all verifications and requirements are in order.

Financial need often plays a significant role in scholarship eligibility, with many scholarships at GHC being

need-based. Garrett mentions that students who are Pell Grant eligible or eligible for a subsidized loan based on financial need can apply for these scholarships.

However, it’s not all about financial need. Garrett points out that there are also scholarships without this requirement, like the completion scholarships available in the fall and spring. These scholarships are primarily for students progressing toward graduation and consider factors such as grade level and GPA.

GHC offers a diverse range of scholarships, including those based on degree pathways such as dental hygiene, nursing, teacher education, and psychology majors.

There are also scholarships for students who have been supported by the Disability Support Office and those involved in social justice causes. Bartow County residents can explore the Bartow County Service Scholarship, which requires community service.

Garrett encourages students to leverage valuable resources like the scholarship application system, Award Spring, which pro-

vides a user-friendly platform to search for and apply for available scholarships.

“The system suggests scholarships based on students’ answers and additional requirements may include essays or letters of recommendation,” she says.

To increase their chances of securing scholarships, Garrett offers several

valuable tips. “Take the application seriously,” she says.

Some scholarships may require essays or more detailed responses, so allocating sufficient time and effort is essential.

She also suggests students submit recommendations. Utilizing the option to upload letters of recommendation can significantly enhance their applications.

Moreover, applying as soon as the application becomes available is wise, as it ensures students don’t miss out on potential opportunities.

Scholarship applications have specific deadlines, typically aligned with fee payment deadlines. After students submit their appli-

cations, it may take two to three weeks for the review process.

Successful applicants will be notified through their GHC student email address.

For high school seniors or prospective college students, Garrett recommends initiating the scholarship search as soon as they decide on their college. Seeking guidance from the Office of Financial Aid can be a crucial first step.

Scholarships represent more than just financial aid; they embody opportunities for students to pursue their educational dreams. With the insights and resources provided by the financial aid staff, GHC actively works to make these opportunities accessible to all aspiring higher education achievers.



Just one more thing...

By Anna Crusselle

College president Mike Hobbs started his journey in academia from humble beginnings. As a first-generation high school graduate, there were few expectations for him to pursue higher education.

At the age of 15, he secured his workers' permit and took on the night shift at a Krystal fast food restaurant. His career path seemed destined for the fast food industry as he later became an assistant night manager at KFC.

However, the driving force behind his achievements was his determined mother. She encouraged him to strive for more, leading him to enroll in night classes.

"When a single mom asks you to do something, you do it," said Hobbs.

Hobbs initially grappled with the demands of academic life, struggling with the unfamiliar concept of studying. Yet, he soon realized the correlation between studying and improved test performance.

"Once you get a little boost of confidence and success, you want more and so I ended up graduating with a bachelor's degree and I thought, wow, I'd love to share that with other people," Hobbs said.

Hobbs' teaching expertise extends across various institutions, including Stanford University, the University of Alabama and

Jefferson State.

His dedication to education and academic administration guided him to the position of vice president at Alabama's largest community college, housing approximately 13,000 students annually.

He had intended to wait until his youngest children graduated from high school to pursue college president.

However, fate intervened when he was recruited for presidency and visited the campus, falling in love with the community. He firmly believes that everything unfolds for a reason and that opportunities present themselves as part of a greater plan.

"I just felt at home and I'm a big believer that everything happens for a reason. You know, God puts things in front of you," Hobbs said.

He aspires to be an integral part of the college and community. His vision includes dedicating several years to GHC and remaining an active member of the community, becoming the 'wise elder' who encourages prospective students to join the college.

"I don't ever want to be a president anywhere else. I want to be those old guys sitting outside the radio station, drinking coffee and telling people about GHC," Hobbs said.

Typically, the delay in inauguration serves the purpose of ensuring align-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Hobbs with his twins, Hannah and Hudson, they are 10 in this picture. "We had twins less than two years after she was born. And so Connie had to really raise the twins because they need so much nurturing as infants."

ment with the college's community and mission. As an access college, GHC offers lower tuition with smaller classrooms, yet aims to provide the same educational experience as larger institutions like UGA or Georgia Tech.

"I don't envision myself as a state university or research university president; I'm an access college advocate. This one-year delay helps ensure all aspects align appropriately," Hobbs said.

In his one-year tenure as president, Hobbs has faced a series of challenges that have shaped his vision for the college's future. Enrollment numbers tell a story of both resilience and growth.

With the latest enrollment

numbers, there has been a notable increase of 4.7%, along with a 3.3% rise in credit hours. Hobbs sees the recent enrollment uptick as a promising sign. He believes it indicates an opportunity to reinvest in the college community and potentially rehire staff members.

The enrollment process includes a nearly 5% increase, attributed to the efforts of staff members like Jennifer Hicks, Stephanie Loveless and Charlene Graham.

The past three years, the college has experienced a decline of 1500 students with a reduction of 54 positions, including both employees and faculty

members.

"Imagine taking 54 hands off the wheel. So when I see those numbers going up a little bit, it says to me that maybe we get to rehire some of these people," Hobbs said.

As Hobbs continues to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented during his time, his dedication to the college and its students remains strong.

Hobbs highlights several accomplishments during his tenure, including the expansion of dual enrollment. Additionally, securing in-state residency for Alabama residents is seen as a crucial avenue for recruiting students.

"The workforce is growing around here. My request to the Chancellor and the Board of Regents about in-state tuition was that there's so many jobs here that we need Alabamians to come and be educated here," Hobbs said.

Hobbs aims to allocate funds and resources to further enhance these efforts, believing that additional opportunities for growth are attainable.

The budget deficit from last year is influenced by a two-year lag in financial reporting, with the current budget being based on the 2021 revenue intake. While recent numbers show a slight increase, these gains won't materialize until 2025.

Hobbs emphasized the importance of being physically present for the sake of

...about Mike Hobbs

mental health and the generation of innovative ideas, recognizing the inherent social nature of human beings.

"I think students deserve to witness activity," Hobbs said.

Students, faculty and staff can actively contribute to the college's growth by embracing the power of education and sharing it with others.

"Everybody says that education can change not just one person's life, but it can change their kids' lives and generations to come. It's great when you have something that's so precious and you want to share it with everybody," Hobbs said.

Hobbs offers valuable advice for aspiring leaders in education and their chosen fields. He acknowledges that despite his own shyness and anxiety, he has learned that

taking chances often leads to positive outcomes.

He encourages students to challenge themselves, embrace their anxieties and not give up.

In terms of engaging with professors, he relays the importance of respecting their dedication to their craft and suggests that students who show interest and engage with professors will benefit significantly from those interactions.

Hobbs stresses the value of surrounding oneself with individuals who are more knowledgeable and capable, highlighting the collective strength that arises from a supportive and talented network.

"Circle yourself with people that can help you get to where you're going. You're only as good as the people you surround yourself with," Hobbs said.

If given the chance to advise his younger self before assuming the role of college president, Hobbs would encourage travel, exploring new places, meeting diverse people and experiencing different cultures.

"When you're growing up and you don't have a lot of financial support, you're not comfortable outside of a certain area. It really doesn't cost as much as you think it would," Hobbs said.

Reflecting on his own visit to Australia, he believes that such experiences, even on a limited budget, open one's mind, enrich personal

growth and contribute to becoming a better person.

Olivia, his firstborn out of three who is now 18, holds a special place in his heart. They have cherished memories of shared dinners in a Dora the Explorer tent and blowing bubbles together.

"She'd be cringing if she heard me say this, but she's my baby. When I see her, she's still three years old and in a pink tutu. She's 18 now and wants to be treated like a grown adult, but it's so hard because I see her as that little baby," Hobbs said.

Alongside Olivia, Hobbs and his ex-wife, Connie, welcomed twins, Hannah and Hudson less than two years after Olivia's birth. Despite their growth, Hobbs remains a devoted father to his children.

Regarding the recent inauguration, Hobbs found deep personal significance in having his children and friends in attendance.

"People ask me to tell my story all the time. People from the outside look at it and they think it's a hardship story, but it's really not. It's my mother's story. It's my teacher's story and it's my friend's story," Hobbs said. He was determined to provide a solid foundation for others to rise upon.

In terms of preparations, Hobbs commended the marketing department for its remarkable work in organizing the investiture.

The event hosted all 26 USG presidents, including

the Chancellor. Hobbs expressed his desire to impress the Chancellor and prove his worthiness of the decision.

The presence of regents and legislators at the inauguration held significance for Hobbs, who wished to showcase GHC as a talent-producing powerhouse in the region.

He praised the particular efforts of Sara Bradfield, Director of Development and Liz Jones, Foundation Director, in organizing the gala.

He emphasizes the importance of being compassionate and considerate towards

others, even in challenging situations.

"Generally, when you think about people that have traumatic experiences in their life, it's easy to go into a shell and shut themselves down. How amazing it is that so many nurses who have had traumatic experiences or hard lives, turn around and then go to help other people," Hobbs said.

As Hobbs gears up for a new chapter in his tenure, his dedication to kindness and resilience shines as a guiding light for the community.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Hobbs at age 15 while serving as a parking director for Rickwood Field, the oldest baseball park in America, located in Birmingham, Ala.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Hobbs and Project Manager Chenise Ryan worked together at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. "Dr. Hobbs and I became close friends and colleagues over 30 years ago when we both worked in Admissions at UAB. He was full of energy and new ideas, thrived on relationship-building and had a passion for working with and advocating for students," Ryan said.

'Barbie' under fire for 'feminist' views

By Emma Webster

Feminism is the idea that society should see men and women as equals. However, some people think feminism represents women as being better than men. One movie that has been under fire for pushing that "agenda" is Greta Gerwig's "Barbie."

Although "Barbie" had brought in many viewers and gained \$162 million at the box office on its opening weekend, making it the current highest-grossing movie of 2023, many people expressed they were not interested in seeing the movie at all. While 55% of polled Six Mile Post readers on Instagram shared they saw "Barbie" and enjoyed it, 18% of readers shared they had not seen "Barbie" and had no interest in doing so.

"Barbie" follows a stereotypical Barbie through Barbieland, a world in which the women, Barbies, run everything from the government to healthcare. The men are referred to as Kens and are superficial.

The Barbies are defined by their jobs, while Kens are labeled by very basic activities, like Beach Ken or Tourist Ken. This mirrors the real world, where society waters down women's accomplishments because they are women.

Barbieland believes that the real world is like their own with a woman-centric society, but when Barbie (Margot Robbie) and Ken (Ryan Gosling) visit the real

world, they realize it's the opposite.

"Barbie" received mixed reviews on its humor, with some saying it was not funny, while others disagreed.

"I really liked the humor of the movie. It was exactly the kind of humor you'd expect from a Barbie movie," Hannah Snipes, a criminal justice major at the Cartersville campus, said.

"Barbie" had fallen under fire for being 'anti-men' and 'promoting feminism.' The film portrays the reverse of how our society views women, showing that it's not right no matter who is on the lower end of the scale.

Towards the end of the movie, the habitants of Barbieland agree that both matriarchy and patriarchy leave someone behind and that they should be equal.

The concept of feminism is consistently misunderstood by society. Anti-feminists try to argue that "Barbie" is 'anti-men,' when in reality, society itself is 'anti-women' and does not like women sticking up for themselves and wanting to be equals. The truth is that anti-feminists don't want to understand the true meaning of Barbie; they simply want to be negative.

"Barbie was made for people who are women or who are already feminists," Levi Marton, a psychology major at the Cartersville campus, said, "If you are not within those two categories, you will not understand this movie at all."



ASHLYN KASTANIAS | ARTIST



ASHLYN KASTANIAS | ARTIST

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8-week courses: new determiners of success

By Tami-Ann Treasure

All online classes offered at GHC are now eight weeks long. Online courses have always been provided and became more prevalent during COVID-19 when we all had to resort to virtual learning. Students previously had the option of taking either eight or 16-week courses to accommodate their outside lives; however, they no longer have that choice.

The reasons for this change are unknown, and many speculations have been made. Some may think getting more students to opt for in-person classes is a ploy, but I am more surprised that this decision was not made sooner, as we live in a virtually-influenced world.

In eight-week courses, the workload can be heavy and accelerated. Success is left in the hands of the student, and there is no space for falling short or pacing yourself as one could in a traditional 16-week in-person course.

"Online courses increase accessibility for those unable to attend traditional in-person classes," Taylor Shuman, a dental hygiene major at the Floyd campus, said.

As a strictly online student since 2020, eight-week courses have allowed me to work full-time while achieving personal and academic goals. There is also a concern that eight-week courses may make upper-level courses too difficult, but not all agree.

"I believe science-based courses such as anatomy and or chemistry could become unmanageable but not for overall general classes," Cassie Dunagan, a dental hygiene major at the Floyd campus, said.

The workload of an eight-week class can

be overwhelming, but it is attainable with proper time management.

Undoubtedly, these courses are strenuous for instructors and students alike. Instructors do a lot of work but can benefit from specific focusing techniques. "Instead of teaching several classes for a full semester, I can concentrate only on the classes I have for those eight weeks, and then I can 'reset' my brain for the next eight weeks. It allows me to give each class more specific attention," Amanda McFarland, part-time instructor of kinesiology and wellness, said.

Eight-week courses have allowed me to take more classes per semester and focus on one at a time, which has assured my success. The time and effort put into these courses can make or break your academic success, and while not practicable for all, I would not trade them for anything.



AINSLEY HOWARD | ARTIST

All online classes have been cut down from 16 weeks to eight weeks.



ABBY CHESNUT | ARTIST

SGA hosts upcoming fall activities

By Savannah Pollocks

The Student Government Association has sponsored numerous events and activities in October.

From 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 4, the Spanish Activities Club will host a literature event at the Cartersville campus library to celebrate Spanish Heritage Month. Students and faculty will read and discuss Spanish literature and poetry, with refreshments to follow.

At 7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 7, Women to Women will host

Sunset Yoga for Women event at the Sosebee Cycling Park in White, Ga. This event will focus on relief and stress management in the changing season and is open to all women, but limited spots are available. Email natalla@student.highlands.edu for registration.

This year, the Floyd campus has been selected to host the annual Rome YMCA BooFest on Friday, Oct. 20, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. The community is invited out to a night of family-friendly activities and entertainment.

Trailing just a week later, the Cartersville campus will



have its Halloween Glow Night on Friday, Oct. 27, starting at 7 p.m. This event will entail trick or treating, a classic Halloween movie, "Halloweentown" at 8 p.m., and a spooky haunted trail from 8:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Refreshments will also be served.

To conclude the month's festivities, GHC has been invited to participate in the Trick or Treat Block Party in downtown Dallas, Ga., from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 31. A tent for school information will be available, as well as pumpkins decorated by student clubs

and groups, which will be on display from Oct. 22 to Nov. 1 in downtown Dallas.

From celebrating Spanish Heritage Month to hosting Halloween-themed gatherings, there's something for everyone to enjoy to embrace the spirit of the spooky season.

November marks RIFF 20th anniversary

By Anna Crusselle

The 20th Anniversary of the Rome International Film Festival (RIFF) will take place from Nov. 2-5 in downtown Rome. The festival was founded two decades ago, with current executive director Seth Ingram taking the helm in 2015.

Headlining guests will tentatively include Ethan Hawke of such films as "Training Day," "Dead Poet's Society" and "Reality Bites," and his daughter, Maya Hawke, most recently of "Wildcat," "Asteroid City" and Netflix's "Stranger Things."

The opening night will shine a spotlight on Georgia's independent filmmaking talent, presenting two feature films; "How to Ruin The Holidays," written by Kevin Gillese and directed by Arlen Konopaki at 6:45 P.M. and "You're Killing Me," written by Walker Harland and Brad Martocello and directed by Beth Hanna and Jerren Lauder.

"How to Ruin the Holidays" notably stars Amber Nash, known for her role as the voice of Pam Poovy on the TV series "Archer," and Rodney Chin, a stand-up comedian.

"You're Killing Me," which is currently available on Showtime, features Anne Heche in her last film and included the contributions of seven GHC students, as well as being filmed entirely in Rome.

One standout film that will be played on is "Wonderfully

Made: LGBTQ+R(eligion)," created by Israeli filmmaker Yuval David, who now resides in the US.

This LGBTQ-focused production explores the intersection of sexual orientation and religion, examining its impact across various religious denominations such as Judaism, Protestantism and Catholicism.

Additionally, RIFF boasts an international shorts block featuring a selection of films from around the world

Highlights to anticipate this year include a student shorts block that will screen at 10:00 P.M. on Saturday, Nov. 4. at the DeSoto Theatre showcasing student films from across the country. Additionally, there will be another student film block at 12:00 p.m.

The Georgia student shorts will feature films from students across Georgia, including those from West Georgia and North Georgia.

This year's festival includes a 40th-anniversary screening of "The Outsiders," featuring a director's cut not seen in theaters, provided by Warner Brothers, and plans to have feature a special guest for this event.

There will be a focus on Flannery O'Connor and the film "Wildcat," with hopes of hosting special guests.

"When we saw that there was a film about Flannery O'Connor, we just knew that it was a perfect fit for our audience to highlight her legacy," division chair of Humanities, Seth Ingram said.

The Flannery O'Connor award for storytelling is a distinguished accolade presented at RIFF. Past recipients include Billy Bob Thornton.

RIFF aims to showcase films that are not commonly seen by general audiences.

"There are great films that you don't see everywhere and then a curated list of films that we try to put together for the audience that supports us," Ingram said.

The festival's jury is comprised of industry professionals, including actors, producers, writers, educators and more, who diligently assess the competing films and engage in discussions to determine the award recipients.

Notable actors among the jurors include Ethan Embry, known for his roles in "A Willing Grace,"

Road Show, a collaborative initiative with RIFF.

The goal is to demonstrate Rome's potential for developing a film commission to explore potential incentives that the city could implement to attract more film production.

Beyond Atlanta's 35-mile filming zone, which requires offering crew hotel accommodations or higher daily per diems, local communities have established incentive programs to alleviate these expenses.

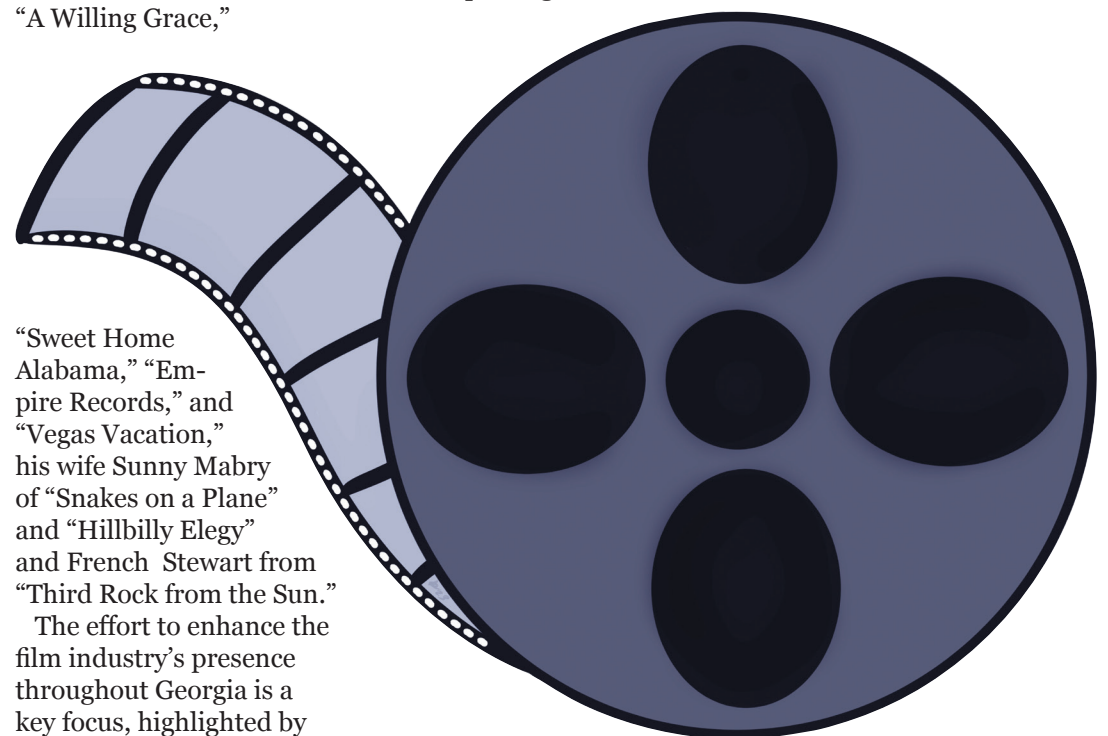
The event seeks to engage local politicians, Chamber of Commerce representatives, and other stakeholders to gain insights from successful community models and promote educational training within the creative economy, encompassing film,

music, gaming, and related industries. A lineup of speakers will address these topics at the Georgia Entertainment Road Show at 3:30 P.M. on November 2 which will be immediately followed by a reception.

"One of my favorite parts is to see all of those relationships start. I see my students and other filmmakers go on to collaborate together, so that's a very rewarding part for me about this whole thing," Ingram said.

Beyond screening the films, various awards are up for grabs, including best narrative feature, best documentary feature, international short awards and more.

The RIFF schedule of events and more information on awards can be found at RIFFGa.com.



"Sweet Home Alabama," "Empire Records," and "Vegas Vacation," his wife Sunny Mabry of "Snakes on a Plane" and "Hillbilly Elegy" and French Stewart from "Third Rock from the Sun."

The effort to enhance the film industry's presence throughout Georgia is a key focus, highlighted by the Georgia Entertainment

Women's volleyball team serves up new beginnings

By Anna Crusselle

The Cartersville Student Center Gym, typically bustling with students pursuing their fitness or basketball goals, now resonates with the echoes of a new endeavor: the women's volleyball team.

This team, among other new league sports, is not just another addition to the sporting landscape; it has provided new opportunities for both player and coach alike.

Although he admitted volleyball isn't his forte and his main duty is to oversee varsity sports, GHC Athletic Director Brandon Harrell took on the role of the team's head coach.

"It's been fun," Harrell said. "I don't know that much about competitive volleyball, so I'm also learning from them."

He recognizes the team's existing strength in organization and emphasizes that his primary role is to provide assistance and advice whenever needed.

He's quick to commend the team's captains, Jordan Michael, Tia Westbrook and Lorissa Banda who, he said, play a pivotal role in organizing and leading practices.

Westbrook, outside hitter, fell in love with volleyball in fifth grade. For Westbrook, this season is about more than just wins.

"I really want to help the girls love the game. We don't necessarily have to win; of course, we want to but I just



ANNA CRUSSELLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

Athletic Director Brandon Harrell gives the team some words of encouragement before practice as he fills in as head coach during their first official season.

want the girls to get to play," Westbrook said. "We have a mom on our team, and a lot of us have full-time jobs and classes. This team gives us all an opportunity."

Despite facing adversity when their initial coach resigned, Michael, setter, said the players stepped up admirably, especially in their dedication and ability to improve.

She emphasized the importance of boosting student awareness and involvement with the team, considering the team's experiences with their first season.

"We only had one home game this season, and it would have been nice for

more students to have shown up to support," Michael said. "In this next spring semester, maybe there could be an Instagram or posters around campus, letting students know there's a team to support or join."

Peyton Owen, a front-middle player, emphasized the positive energy within the team. Owen believes that constructive criticism has been a driving force behind their growth.

Reflecting on their loss against Shorter University from their game on Wed., Sep. 13, Owen acknowledged the need for more offensive play. "From the results of our first game, we definite-

ly learned to be a little bit more offensive," she said. "We played defensively the whole time and weren't taking a lot of opportunities."

As the team geared up for its Sept. 23 game against Andrew College, Owen's mindset was clear: take calculated risks.

"I was too scared to call for the ball at our first game because I was thinking it would hit the net," she explained. "I've learned that I'd rather take that risk of getting a really good point than to not."

Anna Illes, defense specialist, treasures her time with the team as a release from her demanding work

schedule as a Rehabilitation Aide at Wellstar Kennestone Hospital. She noted the team's ability to hold their own while playing Shorter, a testament to their hard work and determination.

"We all worked really hard as a team to make sure we got the ball back and it stood out to me that we stayed toe-to-toe with Shorter last week," Illes said.

As the team works towards their goals on the court, they also serve as an inspiration for those who wish to balance academics, work and the pursuit of their passion.

"I've seen a lot of statistics indicating that students who engage in extracurricular activities tend to excel academically and achieve higher success rates," Harrell said.

While Harrell is quick to credit new president Mike Hobbs for initiating club sports, he also acknowledges the crucial role played by Clifton Puckett, student engagement coordinator, who has handled travel arrangements, scheduling and more.

"Being a club team, you don't have a set conference schedule," Harrell said. "You play whoever you can play, but I think with the success we've had and the number of people interested, there's a much better chance of putting together a longer season next year."

Maintaining a positive outlook, the team eagerly anticipates their upcoming final matches.