Saluting those who keep us safe

Community leaders honored public safety personnel throughout Cobb County during an Oct. 7 event, kicking off a week-long appreciation of these professionals and the services they provide.

The awards ceremony at the Cobb Galleria Centre included the selection of EMT-Intermediate Kim Burnette as Public Safety Employee of the Year.

In June 2012, Burnette was traveling to her shift at MetroAtlanta Ambulance when she witnessed a hit-and-run accident. A vehicle traveling southbound veered from the right side of the road, striking a tractor-trailer driver as he was exiting his vehicle parked on the shoulder. Burnette immediately pulled over and rushed to check on the driver, officials said. When she arrived at his side, she realized he was in critical condition. After notifying a bystander to call 911, she began CPR. Other bystanders worked at her direction to aid the truck driver.

After several minutes of CPR, the truck driver began breathing on his own, and Burnette kept the patient in a stable condition for 10 minutes before a local EMS arrived.

Residents, government officials, public safety agencies and business and community leaders are given the opportunity to nominate public safety personnel for the prestigious honor. This year, the Cobb Chamber of Commerce received 20 nominations. Award winners were chosen from these nominations by a committee of volunteers.

The Medal of Valor is the highest award recognizing an individual for an act of bravery in a life-threatening situation. The award is only presented when a deserving candidate is found.

This year the Medal of Valor was presented to two nominees: Officers Grant Goforth and Rachel Sneed of the Cobb County Police Department, who rescued a man from the Chattahoochee River in 2012.

The Award of Merit recognizes an individual for an act of courage, demonstrating genuine care and concern for the citizens of the community and going above and beyond the call of duty, often resulting in a life being saved.

Multiple Awards of Merit were presented during the ceremony, honoring Det. Ray Drew of the Cobb County Police Department, Paramedic Eric Baker and EMT Adam Hodges with Puckett EMS Unit 340 and the members of the Cobb County Sheriff’s Office Fugitive Unit.

The Distinguished Achievement Award recognizes an individual whose service and performance has exceeded the demands of his or her job. The 2013 award recipients were Paramedic Phil Douglas of MetroAtlanta Ambulance and Lt. Pat Stewart of the Marietta Fire Department.

Public Safety Appreciation Week is celebrated annually to provide the Cobb community an opportunity to thank public safety personnel who committed their lives to service. The week runs through Oct. 13 this year.

To read the biographies of each nominee and the actions that led to their nominations, visit cobbchamber.org/publicsafety.
Main library renamed for longtime advocate

The Cobb County Central Library was recently renamed in honor of resident Charles D. Switzer, who has served as an advocate and volunteer for the library system for more than 30 years.

The Sept. 27 event drew a large crowd of Cobb officials as well as county employees to recognize Switzer’s many contributions to the community.

Switzer was appointed to serve on the Cobb County Public Library System Board of Trustees in 1982 and was elected chairman of that board in 1999. He served 14 consecutive terms as chairman until retiring in January.

During his years of service and leadership, there was tremendous growth and development within the library system. His diligent efforts to improve Cobb’s quality of life resulted in a successful bond referendum to build four new libraries and expand an existing one, the installation of an online catalog and other advanced library technologies, the opening of three regional libraries and the renovation and expansion of the Georgia Room.

Switzer also served on the committee to establish the Cobb Library Foundation, a nonprofit organization with the mission of raising private funds to enhance programs and services of the library system. The Charles D. Switzer Library is located at 266 Roswell St., Marietta.

Fall festival this month

Cobb County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department along with Cobb County Public Safety, Safe Kids Cobb County and Cobb County 4-H are hosting the 14th Annual Fall Festival of Fun. 4-7 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 31, at Jim Miller Park. This event will provide the children a safe alternative to traditional Trick-or-Treat in their neighborhoods. The festival will include arts and crafts, games, inflatable rides, activities from the police and fire departments, costume and coloring contests, a photo booth and other surprises. Parking, entrance to the park, games, candy and contests are free (there is a fee for concessions and inflatable rides). Wear your Halloween costume and be sure to bring a bag to carry all of your candy.