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Convenience, service through technology

Saving money and expediting customer assistance is the goal as Cobb County Government continues to improve its use of online services and automated technology.

Earlier this year, State Court, having placed court calendars online, also installed display monitors to assist the public in finding cases and courtrooms.

The Cobb County Police Department, in addition to its ongoing PENS email notification program, is now participating in an online social networking application to help keep residents better informed.

And in November, the Cobb County tax commissioner unveiled the latest innovation in tag renewals, as a new motor vehicle kiosk opened at the South Cobb Government Service Center.

Meanwhile, the Cobb County main Web site, **cobbcounty.org**, will be redesigned during the upcoming year to better operate on portable devices such as smart phones.

Those checking the Cobb County Web site are using mobile devices more often. The planned redesign of the site will improve their experience.

Cobb County Webmaster Mike Lee said those who use the site are using personal devices more often. He expects they will overtake the number of people using desktop machines during 2015. The revamp will adapt the site for these mobile users.

"It will tailor the way our site is displayed depending on the device," Lee said.

Accessiblity is the reason the police department is giving a new private social network a try. The free site, known as Nextdoor, groups its users by neighborhoods and allows them to share news of incidents in their areas.

Where the PENS program helps the police notify residents of news through direct emails, the addition of the nextdoor program allows those residents to respond to messages and give officers feedback about incidents.

"It allows for two-way communication," Cobb County Police Chief John Houser said. " We can send something out and they can reply to it."

Ease of service is one of the benefits of the new option for annual tag renewals. The automated kiosks immediately dispense tag decals and customers can use them to renew up to 10 vehicles in one transaction for a nominal convenience fee.

Insurance and emissions are electronically submitted, so there is no paperwork required except driver's license, renewal notice or the tag number.

The kiosk accepts Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express. There are currently three kiosk locations in Cobb: the Main Tag Office at 660 South Cobb Drive, the AAA office located at 1197 Johnson Ferry Road, Suite 100 and now the South Cobb Government Service Center, 4700 Austell Road, Austell.

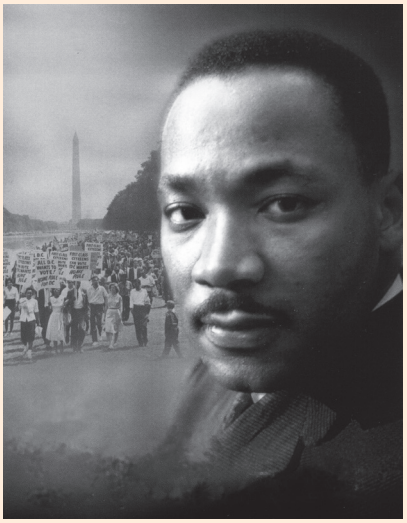
The kiosk at the government service center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Performers sought for Cobb County MLK tribute

Auditions to perform for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. tribute at the Cobb County Civic Center will start 10 a.m. Saturday, **Jan. 3**. The theme of the event is "50 Years Later: Believe It, Achieve It." Those interested must call 770-425-5757 to reserve audition slots. Acts can include dance interpretations, dramatic readings and musical performances. There is a three minute time limit for each performance.

Subsequent auditions will take place 6 p.m. Thursday, **Jan. 8** and 10 a.m. Saturday, **Jan. 10**. Auditions will take place at the Jennie T. Anderson Theatre, Cobb Civic Center, 548 S. Marietta Pkwy., Marietta.

The celebration, sponsored by the Cobb County branch of the NAACP and Cobb County Government, will take place 10 a.m., Monday, **Jan. 19**.



AikWah Leow

South Korean visitors meet with Cobb officials

Cobb County leaders hosted a delegation from South Korea for almost a week in November. Cobb County and Seongdong-Gu, a district in Seoul, have had a sister-city relationship since 2007. Seongdong-Gu is one of the 25 "gu," or districts, which make up the city of Seoul, South Korea. The delegation toured various sites around Cobb, including Kennesaw State University, Marietta High School and Dobbins Air Reserve Base. County and Korean officials also discussed the economic benefits of the relationship.

Award to recognize diversity

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2015 Creating Community Awards, which will be presented by the Cobb Board of Commissioners and the Cobb Community Relations Council. The purpose of the awards is not only to recognize good works in the county but also to provide a model and inspiration for the rest of the community.

Nominees may be an individual, team or organization that has made possible the inclusion of Cobb's diverse communities. Diversity could be identified as race or ethnicity, age, religious, disable or gender.

An independent committee will be formed to choose one recipient from each commission district. The deadline for nominations is **Dec. 17**, and nominees from previous years may be re-nominated.

To download the nomination form, visit the Community Relations Council Web page at cobbcounty.org. Nominations should be emailed to ccrc393@gmail.com.

Help keep the pounds off during holidays

UGA Cobb County Extension Services staff has a fun way to help you avoid weight gain over the holidays. The Zero Weight Gain Holiday Challenge and newsletter will provide tips about how you can eat more wisely and become more active. Sample topics include dealing with the restaurant frenzy, 10 ways to lose weight, modifying recipes, exercising safely, stress eating, healthy snacks and keeping healthy while traveling. Seventy-eight percent of last year's participants reported that they normally gained weight over the holidays. However, at the end of last year's challenge, 56 percent did not gain any weight and 22 percent said they gained only a small amount of weight. The majority of participants planned to use the information to help them control their weight after the holidays. To receive the newsletter, contact Cindee Sweda at 770-528-4070 or cindee.sweda@cobbcounty.org.

Cobb County...Expect the Best!

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