Making things better is not always what comes to mind when hearing the word “auditor.” Cobb County Water System Director Steve McCullers said it’s no joke when employees of the county’s Internal Audit Department say they are there to help. The department is often invited by other departments to evaluate their operations or consult on issues. “The advice provided is always useful,” McCullers said. The Board of Commissioners presented Internal Audit Director Latona Thomas its Silver Eagle award in March. The annual award goes to a Cobb County department head selected by his or her peers for outstanding management skills.

“Ms. Thomas handles any issues identified with grace and professionalism,” McCullers said. “She is an excellent example of the leadership and teamwork that the Silver Eagle Award annually recognizes.” Cobb County’s budget and financial statements are examined by an outside firm, leaving Internal Audit free to review the various procedures used by the county’s departments and look for ways to improve them. Such audits can last anywhere from six months to a year, and can range from checking cell phone tower revenues to upgrading the county’s street light program. Thomas, who has worked for Cobb County Government since 2006, said the departments who they work with have overwhelmingly embraced Internal Audit’s recommendations. Since 2009, when Internal Audit became a separate department, those undergoing the audit have either agreed, or come up with alternative solutions, in 98 percent of the cases. Each department which is audited also fills out a survey afterwards and during the past five years has given Internal Audit an overall 93.87 percent out of 100 rating. “I believe this underscores our ability to make practical recommendations to improve county operations,” Thomas said.

**Improving government for all**

It’s never too early to get summer camp plans in place. Cobb County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department offers a wide variety of summer camps and activities for youth. Through half day programs, kids can learn the art of comics, the tricks of the theatre and how to turn trash into treasure by recycling, among other enrichment options. Additionally, recreation day camp programs include sports, games, arts and crafts, trips to the pool and gymnastic center, outdoor programming and many other fun filled activities. Whether your little ones enjoy art, are aspiring tennis players or just want to have fun, go to cobbcounty.org/parks to see the options.

**Summer events and camps registration open**

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**Aging by Design kicks off in May**

The goal of the Aging by Design summit and expo is to create awareness, provide direction and promote the creation of a new image of aging in Cobb County. The summit and expo will take place 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Saturday, **May 2** at the Cobb Galleria Centre.

The featured speaker will be Dr. William Cooper, Cardiothoracic surgeon and director of cardiovascular Surgery at WellStar Health System. Other speakers include Dr. Brad Fain, principal research scientist with Georgia Institute of Technology, who will address technology in the home; Bob Carr from Common Courtesy and representatives from Uber will discuss the role of technology in securing transportation and a panel of medical experts from WellStar who will answer audience questions.

Register at any Cobb County senior center or by calling 770-528-5355.

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**New transit service offers FLEXibility**

Cobb County’s latest transit option, FLEX service, began for south Cobb residents in March.

FLEX buses provide curb-to-curb service to riders who make advanced reservations and also transport walk-up riders at designated collection points. As a hybrid service, it offers both convenience and flexibility in connecting riders with their destinations.

The service, which runs 7 a.m.-7 p.m., Mondays-Friday, is open to all riders. “FLEX bus service brings incredible benefits to south Cobb,” said Faye DiMassimo, the director of Cobb County Department of Transportation. “Whether it is work or school or home, FLEX is creating the connections that will get people where they need to go.”

The program is designed to fill gaps in existing fixed-route service. It will operate in three “FLEX zones” in south Cobb: in Austell, Powder Springs and along Powder Springs Road. These zones create access to key destinations, like Cobb Hospital, and provide a critical connection to Cobb County Transit Route 30, which runs from Marietta to the H.E. Holmes MARTA station.

County commissioners and dignitaries from the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta Regional Commission and Cobb Transit Advisory Board cut the ribbon on the new service March 18.

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**Fun event to support pet owners**

Cobb Animal Control staff will host its semi-annual FURever Fest 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, **May 16**, at the animal shelter. This free family event will feature vendors with animal-related businesses and services and organizations that provide education and information on responsible pet ownership. A K-9 officer and the handler will demonstrate the skills these dogs provide as members of the police force. There will also be a D.J. and food. For those interested in adopting, there will be special adoption rates available during the event and each family who adopts will receive a pet goodie bag. This event is part of Cobb Animal Control’s continuing efforts, through public awareness and community involvement, to find forever homes for the homeless and abandoned animals that come into the shelter. For more information on Cobb Animal Control or this event, visit cobbanimalcontrol.org. You can also follow these events at facebook.com/CobbAC or twitter.com/CobbAC.