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# Metter Advertiser

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## Candler has first COVID-19 diagnosis

by Jerri Goodman

As of noon Sunday, Candler County was confirmed to have its first documented resident with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis.

"Candler County Emergency Management Agency was notified (Sunday) by the Georgia Department of Public Health

(DPH) that a Candler County resident has been confirmed as testing positive for COVID-19," reported Justin Wells, deputy director of Candler County Emergency Management Agency (EMA).

The identity, gender and age of the patient have not been released and, Wells said, will not

be released due to HIPAA laws. However, he confirmed that the case did not go through Candler County Hospital.

"(The Department of Public Health) will not identify the healthcare provider to us," Wells said. While he has seen individual providers in other counties releasing

information about specific victims, he stressed, "but it isn't coming from DPH. I can only confirm that this case is not from our hospital, so the information coming out on the patient must either come from the providers or the individuals themselves."

"We've spoken with Candler County Hospital.

This confirmed case did not derive from a patient associated with the hospital. The hospital CEO Michael Purvis stated the hospital operations are functioning as normal. Citizens are encouraged to use the hospital if needed," Wells continued.

Local EMA partners held a conference call

with County Officials and the Department of Public Health Sunday afternoon. DPH confirmed that a resident of Candler County has tested positive for COVID-19 and is conducting a close contact investigation with the patient.

"Please be aware,"

See CANDLER p.3A



Pictured front to back, left side: Melissa Poole, Sharon Spencer, Amy Holloway, Natuier Deck, Michelle Wagner, Bernice Grooms. Right side: Sadie Caddell, Barbara Mor-

gan, Christina Aldrich, Kristina Gunn, Patricia Hobbs. (Editor's note: The workers are practicing 'physical separation.' They gathered together only for this photo.)

## Feeding a community

by Suzanne Tyson

With school out of session due to the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19, citizens might be a little confused to see the big yellow buses of the Candler County School District on the roads in the middle of the day. Instead of carrying students, the buses are filled with meals to provide adequate nutrition to the children who are enrolled in the local schools.

Since classes have been canceled, Candler County School Food Services and the district's Transportation Department have worked together to ensure that all of the students have food even though school is not in session.

Each morning, the lunchroom staffs at Metter High School and the Candler County PreK-8 Complex arrive for work at 6:30 a.m. They get busy preparing breakfast and

lunch bags to be distributed each day. MHS has four staff members working, and the Pre-K-8 facility has a staff of 12. These 16 workers are pulling off a seemingly impossible task.

"For each child, three bags are prepared," states Jean Salter, lunchroom manager at MHS. Two bags contain lunch items. The third bag contains the next morning's breakfast. "Lunch consists of a

'hot bag' and a 'cold bag,'" explains Salter. The hot lunch bag contains the meal's main dish or entrée. One day recently the hot bag held corndog bites and on another the entrée was a chicken sandwich.

The 'cold' lunch bag might hold chips, fruit, salad or other side items to go along. The bag even contains the necessary condiments to comple-

See FEEDING p.2A

## Commissioners fire EMS director

by Jerri Goodman

In a called meeting on Monday morning, Commissioners voted 5-0 to terminate the employment of Candler County EMS Director Mel Kelly. Commissioners then voted unanimously to appoint Joe Reynolds as interim director while the position is advertised.

"As part of our evaluation process for Candler County EMS during the time we put out a request for proposals for privatizing EMS services, we were not just evaluating private services but we were also looking at our operation and ways we can make things better," said County Administrator Bryan Aasheim following Monday's meeting.

"Through this evaluation, commissioners decided that a change in leadership was needed to move the county forward with our EMS service," Aasheim continued.

Kelly was first suspended on Friday with pay and given the choice of resignation in lieu of termination. He was approached

with the option by Aasheim and County Commissioner Brad Jones.

"Based on where we were with EMS and the consensus of commissioners, I felt this was coming and I wanted to give him an opportunity to resign due to the years of service and the work he has done in the past for the EMS," Aasheim said. "He declined to resign so we called the meeting for today."

Both Aasheim and Commission Chair Glyn Thrift said that the decision to terminate Kelly's position did not negate the contributions Kelly has made to the local EMS.

"He put us on a good track when he was hired," Thrift said. "There is no one incident that happened that led to this decision."

"It was just time for us to go in a different direc-

See COMMISSIONERS p.3A



Mel Kelly

## Former Metterite on front lines of COVID-19 battle

by Suzanne Tyson

Metter native and Metter High School graduate Dr. Jodi Hadden-Perilla is on the cutting edge of research in the battle to

find a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hadden-Perilla and her husband, Dr. Juan Perilla, have been awarded a \$200,000 grant through

the Rapid Response Research (RAPID) program of the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Both assistant professors in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Delaware, the couple is collaborating with a computational virologist at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

In their research, they are using computer simulations to analyze the molecular structure of the virus that is the cause of the current pandemic. According to the scientists, understanding the structure of the virus is essential in understanding the viral entry and infection of human cells. This, they propose, is the first step in developing novel drugs and vaccines

See METTERITE p.2A



Photo by Kathy F. Atkinson

Dr. Jodi Hadden-Perilla and husband Dr. Juan Perilla

## Editorial: Metter, we've got to do better!

by March 24.

As she was sharing this unique data tracker, found at <https://www.unacast.com/covid19/social-distancing-scoreboard>, Chandra Brown told Metter Advertiser, "I'll also point out that more rural communities have higher mobility in general ... That's likely due to the

need to travel further distances for work, food and other essentials. But we see from the initial curve that Candler County can do better."

And she's right. Georgia as a whole scored a 'C' as of Tuesday, so why is Metter rating so low?

See EDITORIAL p.3A



Metter Advertiser was tagged in this photo taken by a Facebook user on Sunday -- five days after the city's new social distancing ordinance passed.



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Obituaries  
Eunice Ann Sewell Collins  
Robert Arnold Floyd  
Huey Higgs  
Melvin 'Gator' Kangeter Jr.  
George W. McGowan

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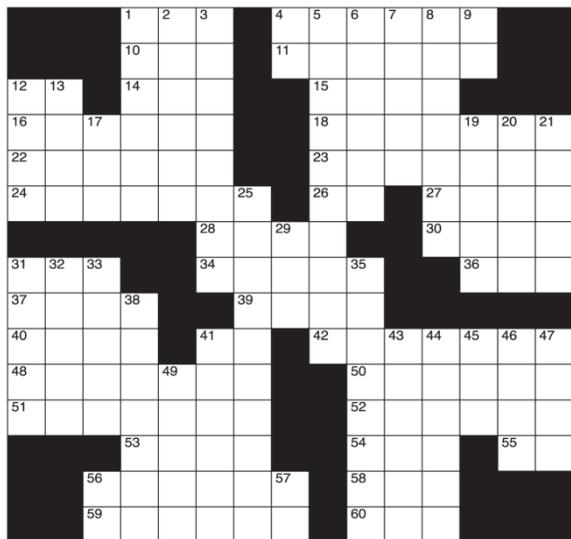
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**M** CROSSWORD PUZZLE  
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- 1. Revolutions per minute
- 4. Hymns
- 10. Brew
- 11. Did not acknowledge
- 12. Atomic #77
- 14. Partly digested food
- 15. Not one
- 16. Lesotho capital
- 18. Copyreading
- 22. Living organism that feeds on organic matter
- 23. One's biological father
- 24. An aggregate of molecules
- 26. Equally
- 27. Khoikhoi people
- 28. Jump in figure skating
- 30. Lantern
- 31. TV network
- 34. Georges \_\_, French philosopher
- 36. Sharp, shrill bark
- 37. Albanian monetary units
- 39. Launched Apollo
- 40. One who graduated
- 41. Exist
- 42. Passed by
- 48. Very unpleasant smell
- 50. Graduates
- 51. Seedless raisin
- 52. Self-protection
- 53. Clue
- 54. Life-savers
- 55. Ingest too much
- 56. Misrepresented
- 58. Small Eurasian deer
- 59. Most mocking
- 60. Soviet Socialist Republic

**CLUES DOWN**

- 1. Flower cluster
- 2. A form
- 3. Inner organ regions
- 4. Local law enforcement
- 5. A citizen of Senegal
- 6. Positively charged electrodes
- 7. Connects granules
- 8. Business practice
- 9. The Mount Rushmore State
- 12. Leader
- 13. Hindu queen
- 17. Proofreading mark
- 19. European country
- 20. Greek mythological nymph
- 21. Grandfather
- 25. Clears
- 29. Amount of time
- 31. Mollusks
- 32. German municipality
- 33. Body part
- 35. City of Angels hoopsters
- 38. Suffocate
- 41. Pleasing to the eye
- 43. Poplar trees (Spanish)
- 44. Ship officer
- 45. Individual investment account (abbr.)
- 46. Prefix meaning within
- 47. Ceased to live
- 49. Day by day
- 56. Not color
- 57. Condition of withdrawal (abbr.)

continued from 1A

**METTERITE**

to combat the disease.

"If you understand how something works, you can understand how to make it stop working," says Hadden-Perilla. The couple believes that their team's work could have an immediate impact on the pandemic – possibly within a few weeks.

Both Hadden-Perilla and her husband have experience in the type of research they are now conducting. Perilla was a part of a team that gained insights into HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and together they have used high-tech tools to study the hepatitis B virus.

Hadden-Perilla says now is a "critical moment" for research to be conducted. "This is a time when both scientists and the public need as much accurate and complete information as possible," she states.

The grant, awarded by the NSF, is based on RAPID proposals that are used in cases requiring quick responses, such as the current pandemic but also in cases of natural disasters.

Hadden-Perilla urges others, "Please remember how important it is to fund basic science research, which enables scientists to develop a fundamental understanding of how systems work."

She adds that once there is an understanding of how a biological system works, elements can be put in place to develop interventions – such as drugs that improve or inhibit its func-

tion to treat disease. She cautions everyone, "Support basic science not fake news!"

Hadden-Perilla is the daughter of Lesia Purvis Hadden and the late Tab Hadden and the granddaughter of Dot Hadden and Troy Purvis.

According to her mother, Jodi was always intrigued with taking things apart and putting them back together – even an old rotary telephone.

"Jodi told me that if she could see things in her head, she would figure it out," explains Lesia.

From Jodi's early years, Lesia says that she always thought, "Wow! This child is unreal!" She is proud of the role that her daughter and son-in-law are playing in addressing this major world crisis. "I believe that God placed them together and in their positions for something like this," Jodi expresses.

Jodi Hadden-Perilla is a 2002 graduate of Metter High School. She received the Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from Armstrong-Atlantic State University, now Georgia Southern University – Armstrong Campus. Her PhD in Computational Chemistry was received from the University of Georgia.

In addition to her position as assistant professor at the University of Delaware, she is principal investigator at The Hadden Lab at the University of Delaware.

Spring break set for April 13-17

**Classes to resume April 27**

Governor Brian Kemp announced last week that statewide school closures will continue through April 24. For Candler County School Superintendent Bubba Longgear, that means it is time to make plans for the local school system to return to classes on April 27.

"Even though the Candler County School District has done a great job of providing engaging work to students and families have been amaz-

ing in their cooperation, there is no substitute for face to face interaction," Longgear said. "Digital learning is an enhancement but currently can not replace the teacher in our daily school setting. With that being stated, again I am extremely proud of all involved for stepping up in these times.

"With the Governor's announcement, we will continue our digital learning focus for CCSD. We will also continue our feeding program for

all students but there are some slight changes. We are limiting the number of delivery sites but enhancing our protocols with social distancing at each site (see related story on Page 1). If you have questions regarding site locations for food pickup please email travislani-er@metter.org.

"Our scheduled Spring Break is April 13-17. There will be no digital learning or food distribution during this week.

"Our hopes and

prayers are to return to school in a traditional fashion April 27, 2020.

"When we return, our focus will be on shoring up gaps that might exist from our digital learning plan and to also salvage as much as possible in terms of events, opportunities, and traditions that are historically a part of the year end of school.

"Stay safe and practice CDC recommendations in order that we might return to school on 4/27."

continued from 1A

**FEEDING**

ment the foods.

Breakfast is in a 'cold bag' because the children are supposed to keep the bag until the following morning.

"The breakfast might include individually wrapped items like a Pop Tart or another item that does not require heating. Breakfast also includes juice and fruit," Salter says. She adds that every meal includes milk, the staple of school lunchrooms everywhere.

The beauty of the delivered lunches is that they meet the requirements of the USDA and MyPlate guidelines. This insures that the children receiving the meals are getting adequate nutrition.

In addition to packing the food items in the bags, each day one of the bags includes a handout with instructions for proper handwashing. This is done to encourage the kids to wash their hands often and correctly, one of the best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

When the day's bags have been packed, two meals for over 1100 students have been prepared. According to Salter, the lunchroom staff has to work hard to get this done in time for the meals to be loaded onto the buses and into vehicles to be delivered by the bus drivers who are used to running routes all over the county.

The meals are delivered in a "Grab and Go" fashion to 14 sites throughout Candler County promptly at 11:30 a.m. each weekday, Monday through Friday. At eight of the sites, a table is set up and the meals are handed out to the students. The students then are to take their bags home to eat.

"They are not allowed to consume their meals onsite," says Salter. This is due to social distancing that is being enforced at the delivery sites. In addition to the eight table sites, there are six sites where meals are delivered straight from the vehicle.

**Meal delivery sites**  
The sites with tables are Dixon Grove Circle, the corner of Bulloch and Lillian Streets, the basketball court-park area on Daniels Street, the Dollar General in Pulaski, the mailboxes on The Hill, the mailboxes at JQ, the corner of Rosemary Church Road and Highway 121, and in Aline at the old restaurant at the corner of Highways 46 and 57. The other sites are at Pence Farms, on Simmons Street, on Terrell Street, at Thain's Trailer Park/Magnolia Bluff, in Deer Run at Coleman Estates,

and on Hensley Road.

The only open, or walk-in, site in operation is Metter High School. Students who cannot get to one of the off-campus locations can pick up bags in the Metter High School lunchroom; however, meals cannot be consumed in the lunchroom.

The sites for distribution have been determined by where most of the students are located. According to Salter, most of the children walk from home to the delivery sites.

"Meals are taken to sites where the most meals can be delivered and where the delivery of food will do the most good," she explains. In some cases where children are unable to get to the delivery site, drivers have been known to deliver meals house to house to make sure the kids on their routes are getting the food they need.

**More than meals are delivered**

In addition to delivering meals to students, the drivers of the Transportation Department are also delivering educational packets to students who might not have internet access, so in addition to filling the stomachs of Candler County students, the drivers are ensuring that each child's educational needs are being met.

According to Travis Lanier, director of Transportation for the Candler County Schools, all bus drivers and monitors are being used in the delivery of meals to students.

"Each person plays an important part," he states. "The drivers and monitors enjoy making sure that all students are being fed."

Lanier monitors the delivery sites to make sure that each site has sufficient meals for the students present and that social distancing practices are in place.

Once the meals leave the kitchens where they have been prepared, the work day is not over for the hardworking lunchroom staffs. They go ahead and begin preparations for the next day, when they get to do it all over again.

"The regular workday for the lunchroom staff when school is in session is 6:30 a.m. until 2 p.m.," explains Salter. "With the delivery meals we have been preparing, there have been days when my staff has worked from 6:30 a.m. until as late as 4 p.m."

**Local heroes in action**

Salter praises the loyalty of the lunchroom workers and says they are determined to do a

great job because they are making sure the kids are fed. Some of the lunchroom workers would legally be able to stay home with their own children and be paid despite not working according to the COVID-19 rules that employers must follow.

Salter proudly states that one hundred percent of the lunchroom workers have been putting in the time, and then some, to make the meal delivery happen.

What makes these heroes of the kitchen do such a formidable job day after day? The answer for the lunchroom worker is the same as the answer teachers give - It's for the kids.

"When we have kids coming into the high school lunchroom jumping up and down at the idea of getting their bag lunches, we know that what we are doing matters," says Salter.

"The kids realize this is different," the seasoned lunchroom lady explains. "They don't know what's up, but they know what we are doing is important to them."

The parents are very appreciative, she adds, due to so many concerns about groceries and the fact that the duration of social distancing is not known.

To put the current delivery of meals in perspective, the Summer "Feed a Kid" program provides 500 lunches on weekdays. With 1100 students being served two meals a day, the lunchroom staffs, with the assistance of the transportation department, are packaging over four times as many meals.

The summer program is planned ahead of time and has a set end date. This project was thrust on these workers with little advance notice, and no one knows how long it will continue.

Kerri Dennis, School Nutrition Director for the Candler County Schools, says that everyone in the Food Services Department and Transportation Departments has been involved.

"I would like to thank all of the people from the bus drivers to the office staff that have helped with the feeding program," she says.

A special word of appreciation goes to her staff for working so very hard to make sure that each student will have two meals every day. "They have gone above and beyond regular work hours to make sure that all of the meals are ready

for the next day's pick up," Dennis adds.

"I cannot say enough about the outstanding job our School Food Nutrition staff and Transportation Department are doing for students," says Dr. Bubba Longgear, Superintendent of Candler County Schools. "Preparing over 1000 meals daily that are delivered to students is a Herculean task," he adds. "This is truly a team effort and a good reminder of what a great community we live in."

The only requirement for receiving meals at the pick-up sites is that the recipients are age 18 or under. There is no charge for meals as they are provided according to the Title I status of the Candler County Schools which serves breakfast and lunch to any student regardless of financial status.

"This is strictly show up and pick up," says Salter, emphasizing that no child should go without food during these uncertain times.

**No meals during spring break**

Parents and caregivers of Candler County Schools' students are reminded that no meals will be delivered during the week of April 13-17. This is the week that was originally scheduled to be Spring Break for the local school children.

**Boys & Girls Club adds Grab & Go site**

In addition to meals provided by School Food Services of the Candler County Schools, beginning April 1, the local Boys and Girls Club will provide a free "grab and go" snack and dinner between 4:45 and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Just as the breakfast and lunch program being provided by the school system, the snacks and dinners for students are available to any local school children, and children must be present to receive the meals. The snack and dinner are available daily while supplies last.

For more information about the School Nutrition Program or to find out how to receive meals for children in Candler County, call the School Nutrition Program at the Candler County Board of Education.

For information about the snack and dinner option provided by the Boys and Girls Club of Central Georgia, contact Lawana Marlin, director, at the local Boys and Girls Club location on Vertia Street in Metter.