

Meeks Park opens county playground to delight of children, parents alike

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

To the delight of Union County's families and children, and in accordance with state guidelines, Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris opened the Meeks Park playground equipment at the beginning of June.

"We kind of did a soft opening of everything without making a public announcement," Paris said. "We didn't want it to go from not being used at all to everybody coming. We are following the governor's guidelines, and once he said we could open playgrounds, then we had to figure out a way to open them."

Meeks Park was not closed though the shelter-in-place order but remained open for people to exercise so long as they maintained social distancing.

"Every decision with that

park is really difficult, because people have this urgent need to get out, and their kids have been inside for so long," Paris said. "We did make the decision to keep Meeks Park open – not the ballfields so much, but the walking trails – so that people could get out there with their kids at the park."

"We just felt like that was important to keep open the whole time, but now, we are through to this part, and the state is opening things up. We tried to go with the state guidelines when opening things back up."

"We opened the pickleball courts, tennis courts, basketball and skateboard park, although we put signs on most of those limiting the amount of people, and they still have the 6-foot social distancing. Obviously, with the kids on the playground, it is next to impossible."

Regardless of the soft



Families tired of being cooped up at home have been overjoyed in recent weeks with the re-opening of the playground areas at Meeks Park.

photo by Jarrett Whitener



opening, families have taken note.

"I am just happy to get the kids out of the house," parent Jennifer Blake said at the park last Thursday. "It is getting hot outside, and they need to be active and burn off this energy they have built up from being stuck inside all day."

"I'm not that worried about the virus; I think parents are responsible enough to know when not to bring their kids to the park. And they say that kids are less likely to get the virus, so I feel safe bringing mine here as long as it isn't too crowded."

The pool and splashpad areas of Meeks Park remain closed for the time being as the county continues its cautious approach to COVID-19.

"We are staying away

from opening ours until we see if anybody else opens theirs," Paris said. "We know that if we are the only pool opened, then all the surrounding counties will be flooding over to here."

"It is something we hope to get back open, but with people and kids out in the pool, everybody gets water in

their throats and are constantly clearing their throats and spitting water, and it is just a nervous thing."

More information on the pool and splashpad reopening will become available as the county receives additional feedback from the state and surrounding areas.

Local Election...from Page 1A

and/or Political Body (i.e. Libertarian Party) candidates qualify for the November election via petition nomination or write-in candidacy later this summer, the currently unchallenged party nominees will be sworn into office in 2021.

For Georgia House of Representatives District 8, Stan Gunter defeated Steve Townsend to clench the Republican nomination. Districtwide, Gunter received 65.29 percent of the vote with 9,917 votes to Townsend's 34.71 percent.

District 8 consists of Towns, Union and Rabun counties, as well as a portion of White County, and Gunter won Union with 72.44 percent of the vote to Townsend's 27.56 percent.

Dave Cooper ran unopposed for the District 8 seat on the Democratic ticket, and he will square off against Gunter in the Nov. 3 election.

For 51st District State Senator, Republican Incumbent Steve Gooch qualified unopposed, and he will face Democratic challenger June Krise, who also qualified unopposed, in the November election.

For U.S. Representative in the 117th Congress from the 9th Congressional District of Georgia, Matt Gurtler led with 21.31 percent of the vote in the Republican race, followed closely by Andrew Clyde with 18.62 percent in the nine-

person field of candidates. In Union County, Gurtler won majority support with 52.9 percent of voters and 3,306 votes.

Gurtler and Clyde are headed for an Aug. 11 Republican Party Primary Runoff Election to decide which candidate will move on to the Nov. 3 General Election.

According to state law, a candidate may only be nominated for or elected to public office after receiving a majority of the vote, or at least 50 percent plus 1 vote. If no one receives a majority vote, the top two vote getters must square off in a runoff election.

On the Democratic ticket, Brooke Siskin and Devin Pandey are headed for a runoff as well. Siskin received 41.48 percent of the districtwide vote to Pandey's 32.88 percent.

For U.S. Senate, Incumbent David A. Perdue qualified unopposed and will be the Republican nominee in November.

Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff fended off six competitors to win his party's nomination for the Senate race, and he will be headed for a General Election contest with Perdue.

For Public Service Commissioner, Republican Incumbent Jason Shaw and Democrat Robert G. Bryant qualified unopposed and will face off in the November

General Election.

Also for Public Service Commissioner, Republican Incumbent Lauren Bubba McDonald Jr. qualified unopposed. Daniel Blackman defeated John Noel to earn the Democratic nomination, and he will face McDonald Jr. in November.

On the Nonpartisan General Election Ballot, two Georgia Supreme Court seats were up for election, and both incumbents Charlie Bethel and Sarah Hawkins Warren defeated their opponents.

For Court of Appeals Judge, Incumbents Trenton "Trent" Brown III, Christian Coomer, Sara Doyle, Elizabeth Dallas Gobeil, David Todd Markle and Carla McMillian all ran unopposed and are set to be sworn in.

Incumbent Joy R. Parks ran unopposed for Judge, Superior Court of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, and she is set to be sworn in again.

Donald J. Trump won the Republican nomination in Georgia for the Presidential Preference Primary, and Joe Biden won on the Democratic side – both were the only candidates still in the race for their respective parties at election time.

For coverage of Republican and Democratic Party Questions, as well as precinct-level results for all 11 Union County polling places, see full election results inside this week's newspaper.

Workman and Harris Awarded Rotary Scholarships

The Rotary club of Union County is proud to announce that Jordan Workman and Isabella Harris, recent graduates of Union County High School, have received college scholarships from Rotary.

"The UCHS Interact Club, sponsored by the Union County Rotary Club," says Melissa Bridges, the Assistant Principal/Media Specialist for the Middle School/High School, "is happy to congratulate not one but two winners of this year's District 6910 scholarships -- Isabella Harris and Jordan Workman. They have put in many hours of community service as they exhibit the club motto, 'service above self'."

Isabella is headed to Georgia State University to pursue a major in business management. GSU plans to resume classes on campus in the Fall. Bella has a competitive nature and always strives for excellence; she has a love for anything aquatic and is always intrigued by learning new things. Bella says, "I would like to thank Rotary



for giving me the opportunity to better myself so one day I can pay forward all the blessings I have received in my life."

Jordan will be attending University College Cork in Ireland to obtain a law degree and plans to become a practicing attorney. Classes there will be held in person and she will be living on campus. Last year, Jordan was part of a Rotary Youth Exchange Program in Italy. Her hobbies include painting and drawing, and she enjoys



snow skiing and knee boarding. Her favorite quote is by Vivian Greene: "life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning to dance in the rain."

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about Rotary, it has never been easier. For the next several months, the Rotary Club of Union County is meeting on-line via Zoom every other Thursday at Noon. For an invitation to a meeting contact Harvey at (706) 379-3905.