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Burton Brambles boasts a Christmas spread

BY JILL HOLLOWAY

As the holiday season approaches, everyone is looking for the perfect gift for their friends, neighbors, and co-workers. While traditional gifts may include items from the big box stores or local markets, a fun option is a fresh jam from Burton Brambles, located in Coolidge.

Owned and operated by Frank and Natalie Burton, the farm produces fresh blackberries, blueberries, and strawberries.

The Burtons began with six acres of blackberries in Coolidge. However, their operation has since grown to produce blueberries and blackberries on more than 100 acres of land in both south Georgia and Tennessee.

Before growing high-quality blueberries and blackberries, both Natalie and Frank had traditional jobs outside the farms.

"I was a teacher at Jerger and went into education," Natalie said. "Frank went to college to be an accountant and worked for Flowers with a minor in

Finance."

After a stint at Flowers, Frank decided he wanted to go into farming, thus beginning the future of Burton Brambles.

"We had a big dream to own a blackberry farm and put in a lot of hard work to make it happen," she said.

After years of farming, the Burtons decided to launch a line of products in 2023, including jams, jellies, sauces, and syrups, hoping to bring fruit to their customers' tables.

The line was an immediate success, as was their drive-thru line, where customers could pick up fresh berries the Burtons would handpick.

"During blueberry and strawberry season, we have drive-thru sales," Natalie explained. "But, our main focus right now is our line of products, which I am just so excited about. The more houses and kitchens that we can get into helps us spread our farm fresh product."

Natalie went on to say the farm has only been in the retail world for a short period. Previously, they only did commercial retail.

See BURTON, Page 5C



Photos submitted by Jill Holloway

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BURTON: Continued from Page 4C

“We grow for three different commercial companies, Gem-Pack Berries, Dole, and Giumarra, and that’s where we distribute our fresh berries all over the US,” she said.

However, last year, the couple decided to use their berries to make products.

“We work with two different companies to make our products,” she said. “If you see our logo on a jar, our berries are in it. We don’t buy fruit to make our line.”

For those who are craving the taste of fresh berries, these jams and jellies can be just the pick-me-up. But, because the products use exclusively Burton Brambles, once the berries are out, the product is gone until the following season.

“We have everything from jams, and barbecue sauce, to cobbler kits,” said Natalie. “The cool thing is the products exploded last year. We did a show every weekend from September to December.”

Burton Brambles traveled across the south and to Jacksonville to market their new products, hoping to draw interest. Natalie said she quickly learned how passionate people have become about knowing where their food comes from.

“It was so cool; I got to meet so



Photos submitted by Jill Holloway

many new people,” she said. “They loved the idea of farm to table, and meeting the farmer.”

While at the various shows and markets, Natalie revealed the farm’s newest gift boxes, including a Southern Belle, a Grill Master, Bonnie’s Blueberry Box, and a Sassy Strawberry Box.

“Some people are really hard to buy for, so who doesn’t want a box with a cobbler kit, a strawberry salsa, and a

pepper jelly,” Natalie said.

Those interested in these boxes for friends or as corporate gift boxes can order online. But, locals can pick up in Coolidge from Burton Brambles, or at Relish.

“The website will notify them once I have packaged the product and that it is ready and they can pick it up whenever is convenient for them,” Natalie said.

As the gift boxes continue to be

packaged for customers, blueberries are still a top seller in the drive-thru.

“Everyone raves over our Patricia blueberries because they are so big and delicious,” Natalie said. “When you go to the grocery store, you’re getting something that was picked a week or two ago, whereas when you get this, it was picked the day before. This is such a fresher product and option.”

The blueberries are also used at local schools, including Thomasville City Schools and Thomas County Schools for lunches.

“The strawberries were new this year and we did a drive-thru for them as well,” Natalie added. “A lot of our products include the strawberries, but our top seller is the blackberry cider.”

The cider is non-alcoholic but can be used as a cocktail mixer, appealing to various customers.

“You can heat it up and have a delicious cider or you can drink it cold with your favorite cocktail,” Natalie said. “We’ve partnered with lots of different people to help us come up with different cocktail recipes and right now on our site, we are creating a recipe page on how to use our products.”

Natalie encourages people to visit the site and hopes locals will consider shopping at the farm this holiday season.

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Farmers honored at Harvest Celebration

BY ADELIA LADSON
adelia.ladson@gafnews.com

MOULTRIE — The Chamber of Commerce's Annual Harvest Celebration at SRTC treated local farmers to an evening of food, fellowship, and prizes in early December.

"This event will be an effort to honor the farmers of Colquitt County for their commitment and dedication to our community," said Chamber President Caitlyn Hatcher before the event.

She said during the celebration that, to her, it was a really neat event because the Chamber's Ag Committee prepared and cooked the meal, along with the Colquitt County FFA.

She also said that the vendors that made donations and set-up booths were all agriculture related businesses or businesses that worked with agricultural businesses.

"It's a lot of ag people helping each other out," she said.

The cash donations that were collected from the 14 vendors at the event totaled \$2,500, Hatcher said. She added that all of it went to the cash prizes given out to the farmers during the celebration.



Adelia Ladson/The Moultrie Observer

From the left, Moultrie-Colquitt County Chamber President Caitlyn Hatcher and Greta Collins from Farm Bureau choose tickets for door prizes at the Harvest Celebration.

See HARVEST, Page 7C

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HARVEST: Continued from Page 6C

The vendors also donated door prizes as well, she said. The registration desk gave each farmer a raffle ticket when they walked in the door. Hatcher said they had about 165 farmers RSVP for the Harvest Celebration.

“We had more RSVP this year than normal,” she added.

National Beef donated the meat and Southern Valley and Market Produce donated fresh vegetables for the event’s dinner. The Chamber’s Agricultural and Rural Services Committee Chairman Allen McCorvey headed-up cooking and preparing the meal. Dessert and drinks were provided by Georgia Farm Bureau and ABAC students assisted with the event, too.

“We pulled out all the stops to do this tonight,” said McCorvey. “We didn’t open a single can.”

He said that they were proud to support farmers and agriculture, which was the biggest industry in the county.

“We realize it’s the glue that holds this community together,” he said.

Georgia cotton farmers donate socks to homeless shelters

STAFF REPORTS

VALDOSTA — On behalf of Georgia’s 3,500 cotton farming families, the Georgia Cotton Commission recently donated 12,000 pairs of socks to various homeless shelters across the state.

Farmers delivered socks to Open Arms in Albany, Brother Charlie’s in Tifton, Lowndes Associated Ministries to People in Valdosta, Voluntary Action Center in Calhoun, The Sparrow’s Nest in Athens, The Hope Center of Toccoa, the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia in Macon, the Atlanta Mission, the CSRA Economic Oppor-



Submitted photo

The Georgia Cotton Commission recently donated socks to homeless shelters across the state, including LAMP in Valdosta.

tunity Authority in Augusta, Open Hearts Community Mission in Statesboro and the Homeless Authority in Savannah.

Georgia Cotton Commission Chairman Bart Davis, a cotton farmer

from Colquitt County, said, “We hope the donation of socks throughout the state will bless many people who are in need, especially during this Christmas season. It brings me great joy for us

as cotton farmers to be able to give back to our communities in a positive way.”

The Georgia Cotton Commission is a producer-funded organization located in Perry.

The Commission began in 1965. Georgia cotton producers pay an assessment enabling the Commission to invest in programs of research, promotion, and education on behalf of all cotton producers of Georgia.

For more information about the Georgia Cotton Commission please call (478) 988-4235 or visit us on the web at www.georgiacottoncommission.org



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Lowndes farm honored with centennial award

BY RACHEL LARSON

LAKE PARK — Carter Farms, located in Lowndes County, was awarded the Centennial Family Farm Award in October during the annual Georgia National Fair in Perry. This award recognizes farms owned by members of the same family for 100 years or more.

“The centennial farm designation recognizes the hard work of our family members through the years,” said Ronald Carter, the current owner of Carter Farms. “I’m honored to receive this award on behalf of my ancestors and the future generations that will continue to farm this land.”

Carter Farms is a 129-acre farm located in Lake Park.

“Once I graduated high school, I moved to Florida to work for Mt. Dora Children’s Home from 1958 to 1959. I returned to the family farm to help my dad with farming,” Carter said.

Carter said his father, Darvin Carter, inherited part of the farm from his own mother, Florence Carter, when she passed. Over time Darvin Carter acquired the other portions of the farm that were owned by cousins. When Darvin Carter passed away he left the farm to his wife, Urrie Copeland Carter, who eventually gave ownership to Ronald Carter in the early 1980s.

Ronald Carter said the farm has included a variety of crops and livestock through the years, such as cattle, hogs, chicken, lambs, corn, soybeans, tobacco and peanuts. He said some of the buildings still standing at the farm were constructed by his father, who was a skilled carpenter as well as a farmer.

“There have been good times and hardships on the centennial farm,” Carter said.

See **LOWNDES**, Page 9C



Submitted by Joy Carter

Ronald Carter’s family accepts the award on his behalf. Pictured from left are Charles Crosby, Lauren Crosby, Joy Crosby, Eli Crosby, and Andy Carter.

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LOWNDES: Continued from Page 8C

"I remember as a child our farmhouse burning so we had to remodel the smokehouse and move into it for a short time," he said. "We had a tobacco barn burn down too. Recently, we had damage to our equipment shelter and corn crib from Hurricane Idalia and Hurricane Helene. Also, we lost multiple pecan trees from the hurricanes – some were more than 50 years old."

Carter Farms continues to be a family farm. Ronald Carter's children, Andy and Joy Carter, were involved with 4-H and Future Farmers of America growing up. Both went on to receive the American FFA degree.

"They both showed steers, heifers, lambs, pigs and chickens on the county and state level. In 1989, Andy exhibited the Reserve Champion Market Steer and the Lowndes Area Market Beef Show and Joy exhibited the Grand Champion Homegrown steer. Joy also exhibited the Grand Champion Market Steers in 1991 and 1993, as well as the Reserve Champion Market Steer in 1992," said Ronald Carter.

Today, Andy Carter maintains a beef cattle herd at the farm and works as a soil conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Joy Carter works as the assistant executive director for the Georgia Peanut Commission.

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Echols County's Highsmith receives Georgia Farm Bureau District Award

STAFF REPORTS

MACON — Echols County Farm Bureau member Ryan Highsmith received the Georgia Farm Bureau's 10th District Young Farmers & Ranchers Achievement Award during the recent GFB 10th District Annual Meeting in Waycross.

The Achievement Award is given to honor farmers and ranchers between the ages of 18 and 35 who earn the majority of their income from production agriculture.

Highsmith is a fifth-generation beekeeper who has grown his operation from 200 hives he purchased from his grandfather in 2010 to approximately 1,000

hives now. He provides pollination services for crop producers in Georgia and California. His bees also produce strain honey and cutcomb honey from pollinating approximately 8,000 leased acres.

He is chairman of the ECFB YF&R Committee, and he and his wife, Kelsie, serve as GFB 10th District YF&R chairs on the state YF&R Committee. Ryan also serves on the ECFB Board of Directors as corporate secretary.

Highsmith earned an associate degree in diversified agriculture from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. He lives in Lake Park along with Kelsie and their two children, Ryder and Kollins.



Submitted photo

Ryan Highsmith of Echols County received the GFB 10th District Young Farmers & Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture Award and Volunteer of the Year Award. From left are GFB 10th District Directors Lamar Vickers and David Lee, Highsmith, GFB President Tom McCall and GFB 1st Vice President Daniel Johnson.

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