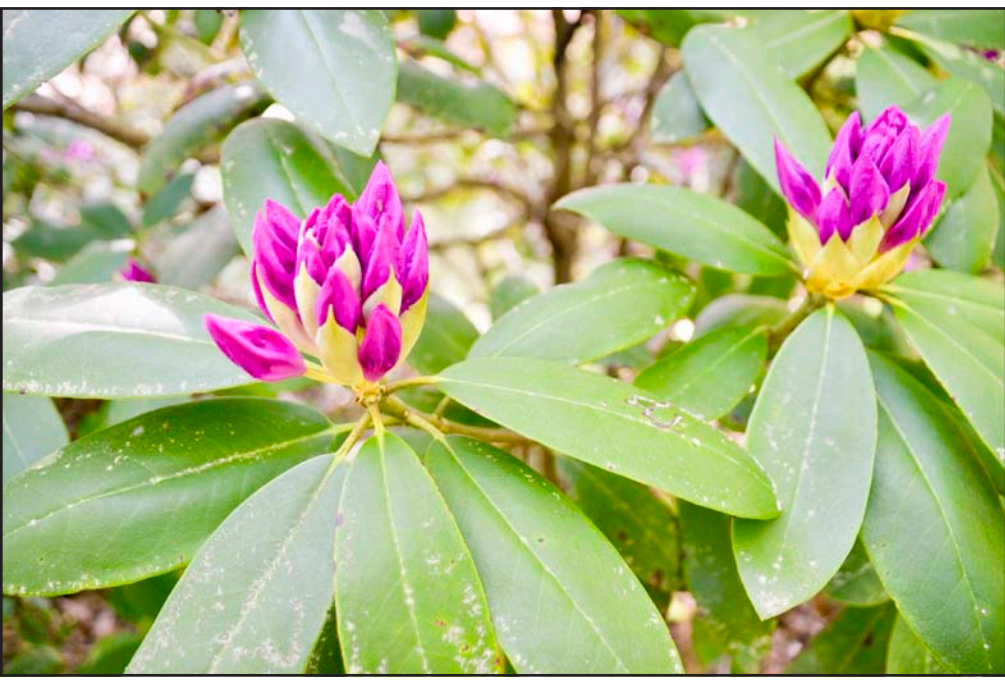


Fears Ease...from Page 1A



Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is in full bloom currently, so folks should be sure to check out the trails and lovely scenery there.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

of people out,” said Janice Flowers, in town from Alabama. “These gardens are beautiful, and I usually visit here once a year.

“We decided to do some camping around here this weekend because we wanted to get out of the house. The way I see it, people are starting to come back out, and I know that some people feel uncomfortable with things reopening, but I personally think it is time to try a little.

“I’m not saying to have everything back to normal, because we don’t need hundreds of people in one place, but to start small like this is good. I know that the concern is people getting sick more now that they are out again, and I am sure that

it will happen somewhere at one of the restaurants around the state opening, but that doesn’t mean it happens everywhere.

“No matter when they open, there will be a risk. I think as long as we stay smart about it, then we can make it through.”

Throughout the pandemic, many people have been concerned about the economic wellbeing of others and how this situation will impact the economy as a whole, including Janice’s husband Bill Flowers.

“I just don’t see why people are getting so worked up about things right now,” Bill said. “This thing has been going on for over a month now, and people are tired of staying

afraid and locked inside.

“There are people that need to get back to work. Thankfully I am retired, but I know if I was still working, then I would be worried about money, because back when I was working, I was living paycheck to paycheck for a while before I got on my feet.

“Some people are worried about this virus and worried about catching it, and others are worried about their homes and families and money. When it comes down to the two, the economy will have a greater impact than the virus. People out of work can be a more long-term problem for them. I think if these places stay closed, they may not be able to open again.”

Local Businesses..from Page 1A

but I guess I wanted some reassurance.

“I started to wait a couple more weeks, but I just went ahead and opened, because we needed the money and I didn’t want to get behind on my rent and stuff.

“We can only have one client in here at a time. I do have another stylist; we have rearranged her stations, and we will be on both ends so we can each have one client after that.

“When a person comes in, they have to have a mask, and we have to have a mask. If they don’t have a mask on, then I have one for them. When they come in, we have to take their temperature and make sure they aren’t showing any symptoms.

“Once we are finished with that customer, then we have to disinfect everything before that next customer comes in.”

Just as businesses can voluntarily open their doors if they’re willing to follow the necessary social distancing and sanitation regime, area residents may decide for themselves whether or not to frequent businesses that are reopening.

“I think it is wonderful and good that they are opening back up while requiring these strict rules to keep everyone safe,” said Peggy Taylor, a client at Hair Dimensions. “As long as we keep these rules and precautions, I feel safe, and I am happy to get a haircut.”

Some local restaurants have also taken steps to open

things back up, with the Sand Bar & Grille having been one of the first in the county to resume more normal dining services starting April 27.

Owner Manny Carrion describes the Sand Bar & Grille as “a permanent fixture in Towns County,” and he aims to maintain the safety of employees and customers alike while letting people come out and enjoy themselves.

“We have created something special there, because it used to only be open three days a week, and now it is open seven days a week,” Carrion said. “It is a destination for Towns County. People are coming from all over to visit us, and it is bringing a lot of money to town.

“With Gov. (Brian) Kemp’s decision to reopen restaurants with the social distancing and the 10 people per 500 square foot limit, we have a nice thing about us, which is we are part of the R.E.A.P. program, which means that we can serve alcohol outside of our four walls.

“The advantage that we have is that I can put tables in the sand and cut down to 50 percent inside the Sand Bar, but we can stay unlimited outside. The only regulation outside the Sand Bar is to abide by the 6-foot social distancing rules.”

As another precaution, the Sand Bar will not have any live entertainment or games through May.

“For my personal phase one of the reopening of the

Sand Bar, we have decided to do no live music, no bingo, and we are only going to be open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.,” Carrion said. “Everyone knows that we are usually open late, but I decided as the owner that we would be responsible and close at 9 p.m. for the first week, and we would reevaluate things on Sunday to see how we feel going forward.

“On top of that, I have brought Jason on board. He is what I call my Social Distancing Officer, and he goes around to make sure there are no (large) groups and that the groups are away from each other. I feel like we are stepping into a very cautious opening.”

Guests of the Sand Bar are happy to have a restaurant open at which they can partake of food and friends on sunny days overlooking Lake Chatuge.

“It is nice to have a place to come out and enjoy some food,” customer Eric Frank said Saturday. “I think that people should be responsible, and they should know if it is best for them to go out or to stay inside.

“I just like that there is an option where I can sit down and have a drink and some food while being outside with a good view.”

The Sand Bar plans to offer regular updates about its reopening process on Facebook, and they invite all who feel comfortable with going out to stop into the restaurant and enjoy the food and the area.

Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites remain open



Stay safe & follow these guidelines when visiting.

During this stressful time, being in nature can be especially comforting. We are fortunate to have a large state park system covering more than 84,000 acres. Gov. Brian Kemp’s Executive Order identified outdoor activity as an essential activity as long as everyone follows CDC guidelines. For this reason, most outdoor areas in Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites remain open, including

trails, boat ramps, golf courses, campgrounds and cabins. Our visitor centers, museums, splash pads, playgrounds, boat rentals and some other amenities are closed.

On pretty weekends, some parks may reach capacity and close their gates for several hours. Please be aware that you may not be able to enter or use amenities by the time you arrive. This applies to day-use visitors; those with reservations may still enter. Check GaStateParks.org and park Facebook pages for updates.

We need everyone’s

help in social distancing. Daily and annual ParkPasses may be purchased online. Overnight guests may self check-in. If you choose to go outdoors, please consider visiting a nearby park. Traveling longer distances to Georgia’s most well-known parks is not recommended. This is also a good time to explore photos and maps on GaStateParks.org, planning future campouts, vacations, family reunions and fishing trips.

We invite you to visit GaStateParks.org/alerts and our Facebook page for the latest updates. Stay safe, everyone!



The Sand Bar & Grille is following many safety precautions while resuming operations, including the installation of this outdoor handwashing station.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener