

# Magnetics manufacturer breaks ground on \$506 million facility



German magnetics manufacturer eVAC broke ground on March 7, 2024, in the Pocotaligo Industrial Park on a new facility that will see an investment of \$506 million and create 300 jobs.

Sumter Economic Development Board Chairman Greg Thompson welcomed the crowd and noted that years ago, the board commissioned the area "to be part of our industrial landscape."

"Because we were just as confident then as we are now, that Sumter is the ideal location for businesses to grow, thrive, and make a global difference," he said.

Sumter Rep. and Speaker of the House Murrell Smith brought greetings on behalf fellow Legislative Delegation members, who are in session at the Statehouse.



"But this is such a big day and a momentous day for our community, I wanted to make sure I was present, and I'm honored to be here," he said.

The groundbreaking is a testament to the state's economic development efforts, he said, "and the reason is, South Carolina is a great place to do business."

S.C. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Ashely Teasdel  
See eVAC, Page 4

# Library offers wide range of programs

Once a month, the Sumter County Library goes to the dogs.

Therapy dogs, that is.

Every second Saturday from 11 a.m. to Noon at the Main Branch in Downtown Sumter, a program known as 'Read to Me' takes place. Anyone and everyone can come read to a certified therapy dog, enjoy their companionship, or take them for a walk in the children's area.

It's one of many programs offered by the Sumter County Library in addition to the tradition of borrowing books. Patrons can use computers, access wi-fi for their own devices, use study rooms, download e-books, play with STEM toys, make crafts, enjoy an adult coloring class, come watch a movie, join a book club for monthly discussions, or check out a State Park Pass.



Tyler, Courtney and Sadie Gibbs enjoy therapy pups on March 9, 2024, at the Sumter County Library's Main Branch. Below: Joe Joe Perry reads to Fraser.

**"We have a lot to offer our residents and we want people to know what programs and services we offer."**

**Robert Harden**



"We have a lot to offer our residents and we want people to know what programs and services we offer," said Sumter County Library Director Robert Harden. "The therapy dogs have been very well received."

The Read to Me program was started by Dennie Sides, no stranger to this world, having first got involved in 2004 with Paws for Friendship Inc., a Nebraska-based non-profit organization. He has a pair of therapy Schnauzers, Skipper and Sparky.

"I enjoy seeing the smiles on people's faces," he said. "I enjoy the people."

Sides recalled pre-pandemic visits to an elementary

school where a non-verbal student read with Sparky for five or six weeks.

"And pretty soon he started communicating with the other kids. And there was another boy who wouldn't go to speech class unless Sparky would go with him. He laid on the floor and used Sparky as a pillow," Sides said, laughing. "Those are the things I enjoy and they make me keep coming back."

Harden said he's watched the scope of the Library continue to develop to meet the needs of the community.

See **LIBRARY**, Page 6

# Emergency Management earns award



Left to right, front: Robert Benfield presents an award to Emergency Management Director Donna Dew, middle, and Assistant Director Rob Lybrand at the March 12, 2024, meeting of Sumter County Council.

*By: Mary-Kathryn Craft, SCAC*

Sumter County received an Outstanding Safety Achievement Award from the SC Counties Insurance Trusts for its use of a mobile app that helps county employees quickly notify first responders in case of emergencies.

“This is a great example of Sumter County’s commitment to improving the safety and security of its employees and citizens,” said Robert Benfield, director of Insurance Services for the South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC). “Our annual Safety Awards spotlight those projects and dedicated county employees who often work behind the scenes to mitigate potential losses and minimize the impact of unforeseen events, and we are pleased to spotlight Sumter County for its leadership and dedication.”

Sumter County recently implemented the Rave Panic app, which allows county employees to activate a “panic button” via their mobile phone or computer in the event of an emergency. The application notifies emergency services and law enforcement to send proper authorities to the scene and informs other county employees of the situation.

The Rave Panic app has been added to county computers, and employees were given the opportunity to download the app to their mobile devices at no personal expense. The app can also be used to send notifications to county employees for other emergency scenarios or if county offices were to close unexpectedly.

SCAC this year honored 14 counties for innovative programs and protocols used to keep county residents and employees safe.

“These initiatives are often unseen and unsung, so we’re excited to shine a light on the important work being done in our counties,” Benfield said.

Awards are given each year to counties who have made significant achievements in their risk management and safety programs.



eVAC, from Page 1

said when scouting locations, eVAC “saw tremendous opportunity in Sumter County.”

“Local, state and federal support, and coupled with a very skilled and available workforce, this made Sumter County stand out,” she said.

Dr. Erik Eschen, CEO of VAC Group, joked that for a groundbreaking, “the lucky ones do the speeches, the not-so-lucky- ones have to listen to our speeches.”

Today represents “a very special moment in a long journey ... going from paper and planning to realization,” he said.

Three years ago a small contingent from his company flew to Detroit and met with General Motors.

“They want to do something big with us,” he was told, and what followed were in-depth negotiations.

Eschen gave credit to the company’s founders, who started the business over 100 years ago, which led to the innovative technology of permanent magnets today.

We are only part of a long journey here, as well. We are standing on the shoulders of giants, and I’m very honored,” he said.

They’re very proud to be “a great partner and part of Team Sumter,” he told the crowd. “Being in the County, being in the community is just outstanding.”

Sumter County Council Chairman James T. McCain Jr. said we’re experiencing another great day “because today signifies progress. There is no substitute for hard work and I’m proud to be part of Team Sumter as we break ground on our newest partner in this growing community.”

One of his favorite aspects of serving as Chairman of



County Council is welcoming new industry and watching existing industry grow.

“We’re very excited to see eVAC embark on this journey and we humbly offer our support as you build a world class facility which will make all of us very proud,” he said. “This is a huge win not just for Sumter but for the state of South Carolina. Well done.”

Sumter Mayor David Merchant stressed the importance of teamwork and partnerships as the City, County and Legislative Delegation work together toward a common goal.

See eVAC, Page 5



eVAC, from Page 4

“That Team Sumter thing that we all hear and say all the time is real and we appreciate that,” he said.

Merchant noted he heard the word ‘opportunity’ earlier, and it’s up to local government to create the environment for opportunity.

“That is what’s the fun part of our job – we see this, we helped create the opportunity,” for high-paying jobs and growing our community, he said.



**LIBRARY**, from Page 2

“It’s not just offering the computers with internet access, but library staff helping patrons navigate online job applications, find the site they need, or helping patrons with their personal devices, be it their tablet or downloading the app for our E-book collection. Fax and printing services are available for a fee.”

Library staffers routinely take part in literacy events at Sumter schools and other venues as well. “Outreach services are important to let people know what the library offers. We also do library tours, and our annual

summer reading program is coming up and we’re looking to add activities geared toward our teens,” he said.

A new bookmobile took to the road last summer thanks to donations from the Williams-Brice-Edwards Charitable Trust, Sumter County Government, Charles E. Fienning and the Friends of the Sumter County Library. Two local young readers – Clara Jane Zimpleman and Lynzie Hodge – also gave donations.

“Jonathan Courson is head of Bookmobile Services, Brendan Thomas is his assistant and they go out on regular stops around the county,” he said. “They also go to schools for reading events and help in getting the word out about what programs and services we offer.”

[www.sumtercountylibrary.org](http://www.sumtercountylibrary.org)

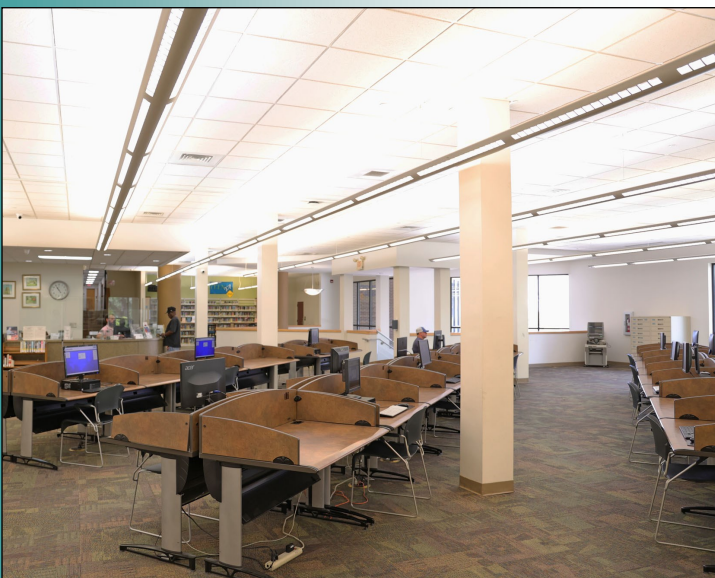


Courtney and Sadie Gibbs enjoy some time with Fraser and his owner Shawna Hilferty. Sadie Gibbs’ shirt shows her love of dogs.

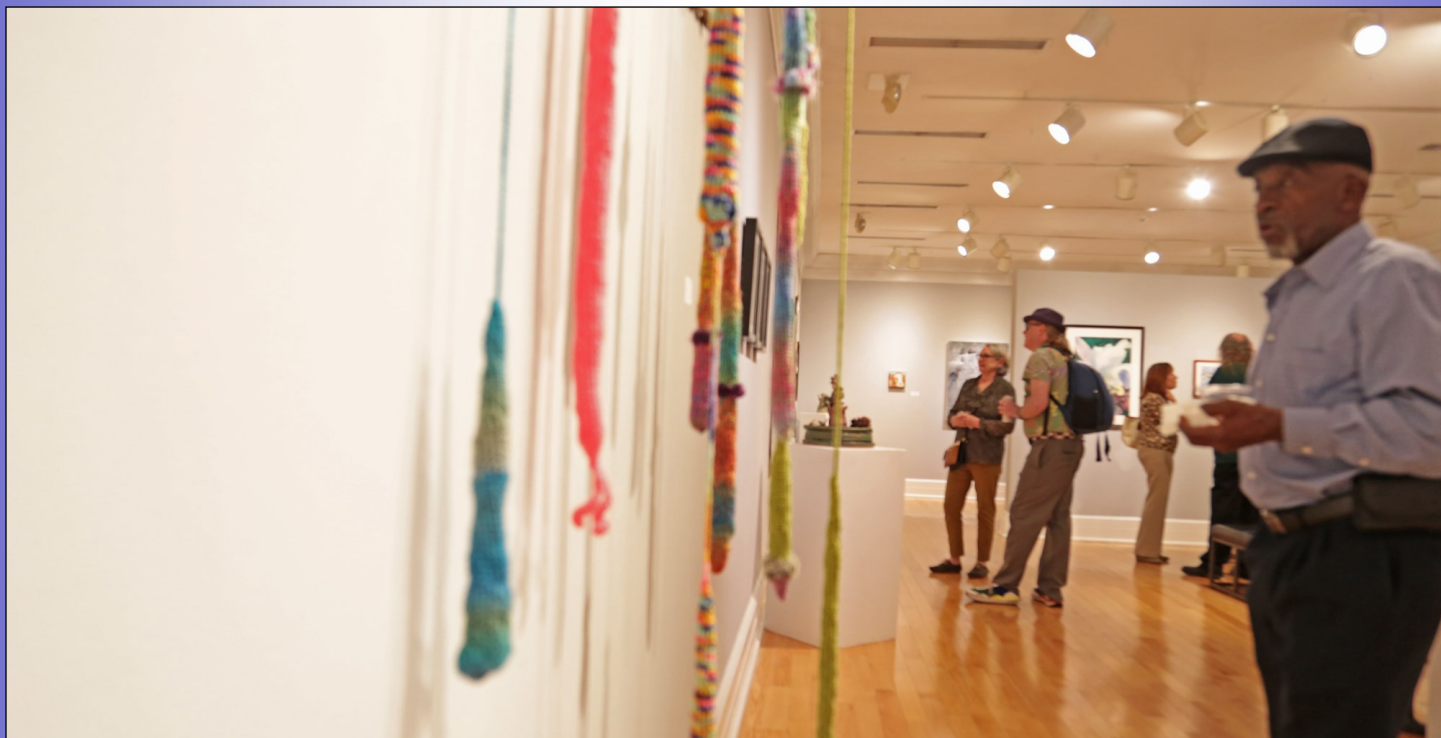


Bottom left: rows of computers with Internet access are available for patrons of the Sumter County Library.

Bottom right: Children and their parents enjoy a Lego class last summer at the Main Library at 111 North Harvin Street.

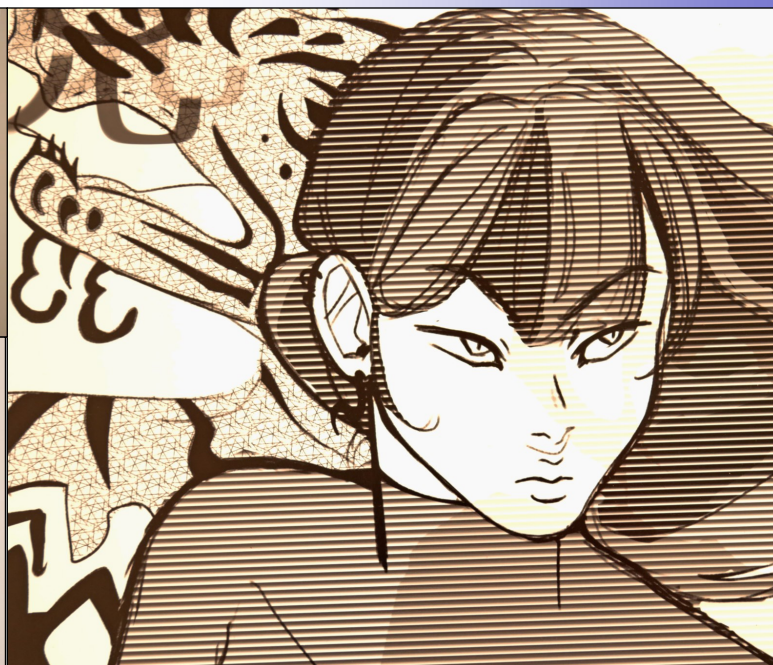


# Sumter Artists' Guild Winners and SHS Seniors Exhibit opens at SCGOA



An exhibit featuring Sumter Artists' Guild Winners and the work of Sumter High School seniors' 'Pathfinders' opened March 8 at the Sumter County Gallery of Art. Heart and Soul Jazz provided music for an evening that was part of the Inspire! Festival. The exhibit honors the late Laura Cardello, an artist and stalwart support of the arts in Sumter. It is on display until April 5, 2024.

The Sumter County Gallery of Art is located at 200 Hasel Street and is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday to Saturday. For more information call (803) 775-0543.









Join Team Sumter  
for the 4<sup>th</sup> Quadrant  
litter prevention  
kick-off event.

March 23, 2024  
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

R.E. Davis College Preparatory Academy  
345 Eastern School Road  
Sumter, SC 29153

Come support our Quadrant 4 schools and churches as they participate in various contests for Stash-the-Trash.

There will be interactive and educational activities for everyone. The City and County will have their litter equipment on display.

FREE T-SHIRTS for the First 250 Attendees

## Sponsors



For more information:  
call 803-436-2241  
or visit

[sumterlitteradvisoryboard.com](http://sumterlitteradvisoryboard.com)

SUMTER COUNTY RECREATION DEPARTMENT

&

EATON CORPORATION

CINEMA

Easter

MOVIE NIGHT

Get ready for an Easter-themed movie for the whole family with the Easter Bunny!

THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2024

6:30PM - EASTER EGG HUNT

7:30PM - MOVIE

Patriot Park Sportsplex-Soccer Field

380 General Drive, Sumter, SC

Bring Your Lawn Chair & Blanket

To Enjoy This Fun Filled Evening

Concessions

Will Be

Available

For More Information:

Call: (803) 436-2248 or

email: [recreation@sumtercountysc.gov](mailto:recreation@sumtercountysc.gov)





FOR EVENT UPDATES FOLLOW US ON  
FACEBOOK @SUMTERSWANCON

## FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2024

University of South Carolina Sumter  
Schwartz Building, Room 127

### 12 PM FACULTY SEMINAR SERIES

*Dr. Andrew Kunka talks about his research in comics studies.*

### 1 PM CREATOR ROUNDTABLE

*Roundtable discussion about making comics with guests Tana Ford, Asiah Fulmore, and Stephanie Williams.*

### 5 PM DRINK-AND-DRAW

5-8 pm  
Sumter Original Brewery  
2 S. Main St., Sumter, SC

Join our guest artists to chat about comics, grab a pint, and watch them sketch some impromptu designs. Feeling creative? Grab a coaster and join in the fun!

## SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2024

University of South Carolina Sumter  
Nettles Building Gymnasium  
10 AM - 4 PM

### 10 AM DOORS OPEN

Vendors and comic artists

### SPECIAL GUEST CREATORS

Tana Ford (*Laguardia, Silk*)

Asiah Fulmore (*Amethyst, Family Time*)

Stephanie Williams (*Nubia, Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur*)

### 3:30 PM COSPLAY CONTEST

Dress up and win big!



# FESTIVAL ON THE AVENUE

**THURSDAY**  
**APRIL 11, 2024**

**Heritage Night - Remembering the Past**  
Mount Zion Enrichment Center  
315 W. Fulton St  
7:00PM

**FRIDAY**  
**APRIL 12, 2024**

**11th Annual Golf Tournament**  
Crystal Lakes Golf Course  
Format: 4-Man Captain's Choice  
Tee Time: 7:30 AM  
Shotgun: 8:00 AM

**A Taste of Soul**  
Farmer's Market (337 Manning Ave)  
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Featured Entertainment  
Renowned Artist and Guaranteed Crowd Pleaser...  
Join Us For The Reveal

**SATURDAY**  
**APRIL 13, 2024**

**Festival On The Avenue Parade**  
Starts Corner of South Main & Bartlette St.  
10:00 AM

**Food, Music & Family Fun**  
Manning Avenue  
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Featured Entertainment  
Renowned Artist and Guaranteed Crowd Pleaser...  
Join Us For The Reveal

**REGISTER FOR GOLF, AS A VENDOR, SPONSOR OR PERFORMER**



CONTACT US  
803.774.2075

VISIT OUR WEBSITE  
[WWW.FESTIVALONTHEAVE.ORG](http://WWW.FESTIVALONTHEAVE.ORG)



# SUMTER COUNTY RECREATION DEPARTMENT SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Program Dates: June 3 – July 26, 2024

EXPLORE TRANSFORMATIVE SUMMER ENRICHMENT  
PROGRAMS LOCATED AT OUR VARIOUS COMMUNITY CENTERS.

## CATCHALL-SHAW COMMUNITY CENTER

2680 Peach Orchard  
Road in Dalzell  
803-499-4134

## EASTERN COMMUNITY CENTER

3675 East Brewington  
Road in Sumter  
803-495-2002

## SALTERSTOWN COMMUNITY CENTER

800 Salterstown Road  
in Sumter  
803-773-0661

## CHERRYVALE COMMUNITY CENTER

343 Confederate Road  
in Sumter  
803-494-4332

## EBENEZER COMMUNITY CENTER

4580 Queen Chapel  
Road in Dalzell  
803-469-7867

## SHILOH COMMUNITY CENTER

475 Puddin Swamp Road  
in Lynchburg  
843-659-4201

## DELAINE COMMUNITY CENTER

5400 Cane Savannah  
Road in Sumter  
803-494-9410

## REMBERT-RAFTING CREEK COMMUNITY CENTER

4050 S.C. 261 North in  
Rembert | 803-432-3188

SCAN QR CODE BELOW



**WE ARE OFFERING ACADEMIC  
ASSISTANCE, CHARACTER  
EDUCATION AND FINE ARTS**

REGISTRATION DATES: MARCH 25TH – MAY 3RD

TO SECURE A CHILD'S SLOT, THE FULL COST (\$125.00 FEE ) FOR THE  
ENTIRE 8-WEEK PROGRAM, MUST BE PAID DURING REGISTRATION.



**Register Online:** [www.sumtercountysc.gov](http://www.sumtercountysc.gov)  
**In Person:** Sumter County Recreation  
Department or The Community Center  
**Contact:** Rec. Department @ 803-436-2248  
or Community Listed