

This Week:

Sports



High School Football Ready to start up Page 11

Religion



Missionary takes Leap of Faith Page 16

Business



Now Open Jittery Joe's Page 5

Inside:

ANSWER ANGEL	19
CLASSIFIEDS	21
DIXIE DIVA	18
LEADER BOARD	5
MINIPAGE	7
OCONEE FAMILY	18
OPINION & EDITORIAL	4
OUTDOORS	20
RELIGION	16
ROBINSON	18

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From the Oconee to the Apalachee

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Oconee going back to school



Moving in

ROB PEECHER/Oconee Leader

Students and teachers last week at Prince Avenue Christian School began moving furniture to the school's new Oconee County location.

Prince Avenue moves to Oconee

By ROB PEECHER The Oconee Leader

The beginning of any school year can be full of promise and change, but for students at Prince Avenue Christian School, this new school year brings with it some of the biggest changes the school has seen in its nearly three decades.

The most notable change is that Prince Avenue Christian School will be opening in Oconee County at its new location at Dickens' Corner at the intersection of Ga. 78 and Ruth

Jackson Road. Linda Zeagler, director of public relations for the school, said school officials can't wait to get to the new campus. Students, staff and parents started moving furniture into the new school on July 25 for the August 14 opening.

"We're really excited about this move," Zeagler said. "This is a tremendous opportunity to expand our ministry, expand our educational opportunities and reach out to Oconee, Barrow

Please see 'PACS' Page 23

Open house at public schools Friday, Aug. 4

By ROB PEECHER The Oconee Leader

Oconee County students returning to school next week will be able to pick up their schedules and meet their teachers tomorrow, Friday, Aug. 4.

The county schools are hosting a system-wide meet-the-teachers and open house tomorrow and school is scheduled to start Monday.

SEE ALSO

♦ Open House Schedule

♦ School times

♦ 2006-'07 School calendar Page 6

Dr. John Jackson, assistant superintendent for the Oconee County School system, said one of the most notable differences parents can expect this school year will be the new start times.

"Last year we essentially had almost the same start times," Jackson said. "This year we've added a little bit more time between the start times of elementary and secondary schools so we could run separate bus routes."

Jackson said prior to this year elementary age students rode the bus with middle and high school age students.

"This year elementary schools will start at 7:45 a.m. and secondary schools will start at 8:30 a.m. The purpose of that was to put enough time between them so we could make the bus routes completely separate so

Please see 'Back to School' Page 6

'Angel' provides hope to families coping with autism

By ROB PEECHER The Oconee Leader

An angel is performing miracles at Faith Presbyterian Church.

The Mars Hill Road church is where Jennifer Abeles conducts her classes. She has two children attending her program. Abeles, who is known to many as The Autism Angel, possesses abounding enthusiasm coupled with the confidence of someone who knows her business – helping autistic children and their families.

Abeles is the executive director and founder of the Autism Angel Center. The Center offers a variety of services – an early intervention classroom, an inclusive program that helps children with autism socialize with typical peers and training for parents and professionals who work with autistic children. Though her program is not well known locally, Abeles is known across the country for the success she has had in helping children with autism. The family of one of her two stu-

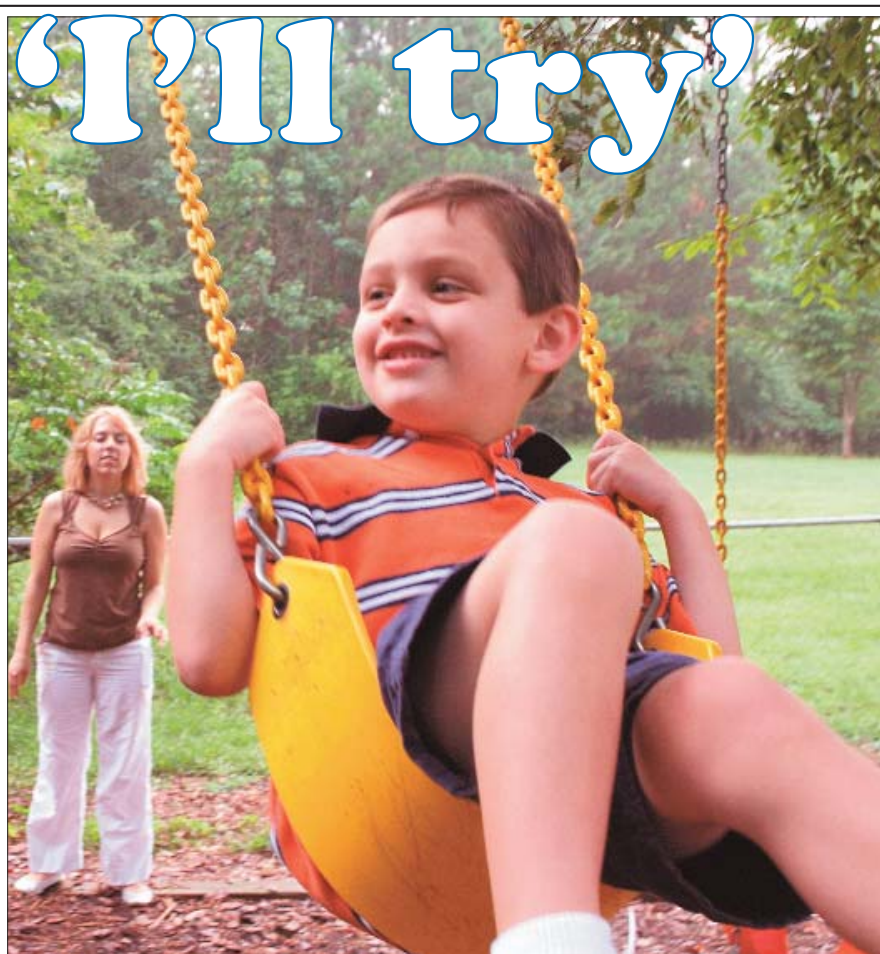
dents moved here from Virginia to put their child in her classroom.

As she talks about what she does, the smile doesn't leave her face. The excitement she has for the Autism Angel Center doesn't ebb. Abeles remains enthusiastic even when she admits that she can not yet afford to pay herself a salary.

"Some days are tougher than other days," she said. "But it's gratifying work, not frustrating. It's tremendously rewarding and humbling – it's an honor to step into a child's life and help remove obstacles to their development.

"Even on a difficult day, I always leave tremendously gratified and feeling good about what we did with the children that day. Always. Teaching kids to be happy, independent people puts a smile on your face. One little boy learned how to say 'Hi' and 'I love you' this week. It's huge."

Please see 'Autism Angel' Page 8



ROB PEECHER/Oconee Leader

Garrett, one of two children attending Jennifer Abeles' TAAP program, enjoys swinging during his time on the playground. Alexandra Holland, an early-intervention specialist on staff at the Angel Autism Center, pushes Garrett. Garrett's parents and Abeles generously allowed a Leader reporter to spend the morning with them. Please see the story page 10.