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Just saying ‘no’



Peer Positive Influencers with middle schoolers at John W. Hubert Middle School. DESTINI AMBUS/SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

Peer Positive Influencer program trains students on how to handle peer pressure

Destini Ambus
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Jaylen Collins, headphones wrapped around his neck, wore a black jacket over an arctic blue polo. The Savannah High School student sat down with a group of middle schoolers during lunchtime at John W. Hubert Middle School and started asking them questions: name, favorite color, what they liked to do in their free time. Asking these questions was part of his tasks for outreach day, on Thursday,

Oct. 23, one of two days when he and other Positive Peer Influencers—the acronym proudly embroidered on the polo he was sporting—visit a middle school to start forming connections with the kids there. PPI in partnership with the Meditation Center of the Coastal Empire, as well as the Chatham-Savannah Counter Narcotics Team (CNT) trains high school students how to lead discussions about handling peer pressure. This includes refusing drug use and choosing means other than fighting to resolve conflicts.

Benae Joyner, another PPI from Savannah High, said that she wished she had something like the program when she was in middle school. When she attended Hubert, she found herself in a situation where she had to choose between jumping into a fight alongside her friends or sitting out. “At the end of the day, I did end up going into the fight, and suffered [the] consequences,” Joyner said. “When I look back it, I was like, I should’ve chosen another path than doing it. I could have just said no, if I didn’t really want to do so.” That’s what the program is really about, said Lakelin Dinh, a senior

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The 2025 Savannah state of the city event was attended by every member of Savannah City Council on Nov. 5, at the Otis S. Johnson Cultural Arts Center. EVAN LASSETER/SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

Savannah mayor says city is making strides

Evan Lasseter
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Savannah Mayor Van Johnson took on the moniker of Coach Johnson Wednesday night, and this year’s state of the city address was a halftime speech. Donning a coach’s headset and using football metaphors, Johnson highlighted the progress of the first two years of his second mayoral administration. Johnson said in an interview the defining characteristic of the term’s first half was the city “getting into a stride.” That first-half stride reflected movement on key items Johnson highlighted as priorities at his inauguration, including a decision on the future of the Civic Center site, which moved into more tactical planning in recent months, and adopting a vision plan for waterfront redevelopment. The city also adopted a new strategic plan this year and is approaching its first budget cycle with that new vision set. “We said that we would not shy

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New report slams liquefied natural gas terminals for violations

Jillian Magtoto
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

The air around Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Terminals just got thicker. On Oct. 29, nonprofit watchdog organization Environmental Integrity Project (EIP) reported that all seven of the country’s LNG Terminals active by the end of 2024 have violated air pollution permits at least once over the last few years—including Kinder Morgan’s Elba Liquefaction Terminal in Savannah. But it wasn’t the worst violator. The Elba Liquefaction Terminal squeaked by with the least number of air pollution violations of the facilities listed in the

report—one in the fourth quarter of last year—compared to 11 or more quarters of noncompliance at three Louisiana terminals. Still, even permitted emissions can harm the health of nearby communities, according to a report published by Greenpeace USA and the Sierra Club. For Elba Liquefaction Terminal, it estimated an impact of up to \$8.2 million in total health costs per year. LNG plants emit plumes of carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and volatile organic compounds that result in headaches, coughing, dizziness and other respiratory illnesses, according to the nonprofit Environmental Health Project. Long-term exposure can lead to

heart disease, some cancers, and damage to the reproductive system and internal organs. But the U.S. does not seem willing to quit while it’s ahead as the world’s largest supplier of natural gas and largest LNG exporter, stepping on the gas even further. In October, LNG exporters announced plans to more than double U.S. their capacity by 2029, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The report identified 33 potential future LNG facilities, mostly in the Gulf states, five of which are already under construction. “Pollution from the LNG industry is only expected to grow as the industry expands,” said EIP Research Manager

Alexandra Shaykevich who authored the report. And the Elba LNG Terminal itself is also expanding its liquefaction capacity by 400,000 million tons per year. “The Elba Liquefaction Optimization Project is still an active project and remains under development,” wrote Kinder Morgan Spokesperson Carolina Kulbeth in an email. Regarding the 2024 violation, she wrote, “We do not have a comment.” Liquid gold weighs heavy Liquefied Natural Gas is what it See REPORT, Page 10A

