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13 indicted in Macon RICO case linked to prison drugs

BY ALBA ROSA
alrosa@macon.com

Thirteen people have been indicted for allegedly running a drug distribution enterprise in Macon, delivering drugs to prisons, according to court documents released Tuesday.

The organization was allegedly established by Keith Bedding-

field Jr. in Macon, and ran from April 2018 through this January. It was created to allegedly receive "financial benefits through the enterprise through various forms of racketeering activity, including, but not limited to, robberies, attempted murders, murders and the illegal distribution of contraband within the prison(s) where Defendant Beddingfield was

housed," the indictment states. Some of the actions allegedly led to the deaths of India Davis on Jan. 15, 2026, and Pinalkumar Patel on Jan. 20, 2023. Beddingfield was also accused of ordering the death of a witness in his trial between March and September 2018, according to the indictment.



KATIE TUCKER/THE TELEGRAPH

Thirteen people were indicted in Macon on RICO charges accusing Keith Beddingfield Jr. of running an eight-year drug and violent-crime enterprise supplying prisons.

HOW THE ORGANIZATION RAN

The alleged members of Beddingfield's organization, who were minors, packaged drugs

and other contraband at houses in Macon under his control.

The members would allegedly

SEE DRUGS, 3A

Over \$100M invested in central Georgia health care workforce

BY MYRACLE LEWIS
mlewis@macon.com

Central Georgia Technical College is launching a major expansion of its health care workforce pipeline after securing more than \$100 million in public and private funding, an investment officials say could reshape career opportunities for students across the region.

The funding will provide for expanded health care workforce programs, enhanced student support services and "cutting-edge training equipment" for dually enrolled high school students at the new STEM/Allied Health Academy in Houston County, according to a press release from the college.

The initiative, backed by from funds from the Georgia General Assembly and the governor's office, the Houston County Board of Education, the Houston County Board of Commissioners and a \$10 million contribution from Bloomberg Philanthropies, aims to prepare high school students for immediate entry into health care careers through dual enrollment and hands-on clinical training.

"This support will significantly accelerate CGTC's mission to provide accessible, affordable, and career-focused education to the communities it serves," the college said in a statement. "This program is part of Bloomberg Philanthropies' first-of-its-kind initiative that pairs public education systems and hospitals to create high schools in 13 communities around the nation that will directly graduate students into high-demand healthcare jobs with family-sustaining wages."

CGTC President Ivan Allen said the investments from the stakeholders will enhance "earning power" and "spur generational change" for countless students and families across the region.

"All of the local and state partners share the belief that

SEE HEALTH CARE, 3A



WOODY MARSHALL The Telegraph

Judge Edward D. Lukemire granted a 60-day injunction Friday on pending closure of Crossroads Apartments and the eviction of its tenants on Tuesday, March 7, 2014, in Perry.

Houston County judge reflects on career as he retires

BY ALBA ROSA
alrosa@macon.com

Despite the stresses and difficulties that come with presiding over criminal and civil cases for nearly 30 years, a Houston County judge said he is grateful for the time spent on

the bench as he steps into retirement.

Former Chief Judge Edward Lukemire put down his gavel as a full-time judge on April 1. A recent health scare showed him "it was time for me to go," he told The Telegraph.

"I'll be honest with you, I still, after so many years, I

would go to work and I would think, you know, how am I so fortunate to be here now?" Lukemire said.

After studying law at Mercer University, Lukemire was admitted to the State Bar of Georgia in 1980. First, he worked as a clerk for a federal judge in the Middle District of Georgia, then

worked as an assistant district attorney for roughly 14 years, according to Lukemire.

He briefly worked as an assistant U.S. attorney before being elected as the Houston County district attorney in 1989.

SEE JUDGE, 2A

First Presbyterian Church celebrates 200 years in Macon

BY GABRIEL KOPP
Special to the Telegraph

By the time First Presbyterian Church celebrates its 200th year in the city on Sunday, April

19, it will be in the shadow of the church's newly renovated steeple that rises nearly 190 feet over Lamar Park in downtown Macon.

One of the defining features of the Macon skyline, the stee-

ple underwent a renovation starting in 2024 that replaced the church building's copper roof and spire's cladding, along with a number of other projects that have reshaped the footprint of one of the city's oldest

churches.

In September 1958, a century after First Presbyterian found its footing at 682 Mulberry St., The Telegraph reported "the average person entering the church does not realize the tremendous amount of brick work arched over his head, or that height of the copper finial on the steeple."

John J. McKay Jr., a former

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