



THE ISLAND PACKET

Fallen tree causes power outage Sunday on Hilton Head Island

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A fallen tree on a transmission line knocked out power for a huge portion of Hilton Head Island for several hours late Sunday before being restored Monday around 2:30 a.m. Shortly after a thunderstorm swept through parts of the Lowcountry Sunday evening, the

power went out across Hilton Head Island. Residents quickly took to social media, wondering if it was just them. Turns out, it was not; 20,042 meters were without power just after midnight Monday morning, according to Palmetto Electric Cooperative's outage map. The power company addressed the situation with a Facebook post around 11:30 p.m. Sunday. Palmetto Electric

was "experiencing a transmission outage" which was "impacting members on Hilton Head Island." Around midnight, the company followed up with another social media post – and this one identified the culprit. "The transmission outage is a result of a downed tree on Santee Cooper's transmission lines. Palmetto Electric crews will be assisting Santee Cooper to

repair and restore as safely and quickly as possible. Thank you for your patience and understanding!" the statement read. Comments on the post ranged from "oh God help us" to "it's the end of the world, this is giving me anxiety" to more lighthearted takes like "our kids are having so much fun in the power outage!" Around 2 a.m. Monday morning, Palmetto posted again on Facebook with some good news — power had been restored to "all members on Hilton Head Island." "We apologize for the inconvenience, and appreciate your patience and understanding throughout the outage!" the electric company said. Indeed, the outage map showed no meters were out on the island Monday morning. Order had been restored.

24-year-old dies after driving into trees on Hilton Head

BY LI KHAN
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The Beaufort County Coroner's Office has released the identity of a man who died Thursday in a single motor vehicle collision at Sea Pines Circle on Hilton Head Island. Robert Culbertson, a 24-year-old man from Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, died on the scene at approximately 10:41 p.m. Thursday from blunt force injuries sustained in the crash, the coroner's office said in a press release. According to a South Carolina Highway Patrol media release, Culbertson was driving north on Palmetto Bay Road in a 2015 Ford Fusion when he drove onto the traffic circle's central island and hit multiple trees. The collision remains under investigation by the South Carolina Highway Patrol.

Iconic Beaufort tree carving by local legend finds a new home

BY KARL PUCKETT
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BEAUFORT For decades, a weathered but optimistic face with coal-black wide eyes set in circles has greeted Beaufort residents walking along the sidewalk on Boundary Street, in front of a Thai restaurant and sushi bar. On Monday morning, rush-hour traffic rushed past the face like it wasn't there. The drivers may not have even known that the landmark piece of art, carved by a legendary Beaufort figure near the base of the palmetto tree, even exists. But many longtime Beaufortians know about this hidden gem — and the unusual man who created it. On Friday, the city announced on Facebook that it is removing the tree with the face before it declines naturally or is taken down by a storm. However, the city added, the funky art will be saved and placed in new home at Morrall Park at the corner of Craven and Carteret streets, preserving the countenance for future generations. Well-known local artist Hugh Patrick Knox Corry — known to many simply as "Driftwood" — carved the strange face many years ago, City Manager Scott Marshall said. Marc Sviland, a local artist and woodworker, will mount the carving before it is permanently installed at its new location at Morrall Park, Marshall said. "I think this public art like this, we should have it stand out



Water Festival Dusty Vickers just before he jumped from Craig Reave's Gracie Bell shrimp boat and into the Beaufort River.

New Beaufort Water Festival commodore has 17 years experience

BY KARL PUCKETT
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BEAUFORT The incoming commodore of the 2027 Beaufort Water Festival celebrated the cherished appointment by dancing with her husband and sons. The outgoing 2026 leader became the first commodore in the festival's 70-year history to end his reign by jumping from a moving shrimp boat. The highly anticipated "change of watch" came Saturday during the Commodore's Ball near the close of the 10-

day Water Festival. In one of the festival's most cherished traditions, Cori Talbert, who has volunteered with the festival for 17 years, was chosen to lead the 71st festival in 2027 during the ball. Talbert succeeded outgoing commodore Dusty Vickers, who made history when he jumped over the rail of the Gracie Belle, a shrimp boat owned by Craig Reaves, Sunday during the blessing of the fleet. He swam to shore, where he delivered his final remarks. "I can't recollect a commodore actually jumping off a shrimp boat," Vickers told the



Dusty Vickers, the 2026 commodore of the Beaufort Water Festival, swims to shore after jumping off of a shrimp boat during the blessing of the fleet Sunday at Waterfront Park. It was Vickers' last splash as commodore. The annual blessing of the fleet concluded the 10-day festival. Beaufort Gazette and Island Packet Monday. Asked why he did it, Vickers said the move was planned and not spontaneous. He wanted to end the festival "with splash." He added he had a scene from the 1994's "Forrest Gump" in mind when he came up with the idea. In the movie, Forrest Gump, played by Tom Hanks, jumps off of a shrimp boat when Lt. Dan, played by Gary Sinise, arrives to join him in the

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SEE TREE CARVING, 3A

