

Deputies respond to disturbance at Ridge Creek

By Matt Aiken
The Nugget

Local deputies responded to reports of a disturbance at Ridge Creek Academy last weekend as multiple students reportedly began to inflict damage on school property.

The incident began last Sunday morning with a threatened walk-out by a majority of the students at the school formerly known as Hidden Lake Academy.

"About 45 students got upset and said they were leaving and there was no way they could stop them," said Investigator Darren Martin of the Lumpkin County Sheriff's Office.

A majority of those students never left the Camp Wahsega Road campus, or even caused any damage to the buildings since the short-lived rebellion was quickly quelled by staff members as well as other students who convinced most of the teenagers to stay put.

However, a few hours later, several students began to break into buildings and destroy school property.

Officers arrived on the scene and reportedly spotted students running around campus throwing rocks at windows. Some set off fire extinguishers while others knocked over office equipment, stated the report.

"The student activities center took the brunt of the damage," said Martin. "Some of the students were wrapping up shirts and jackets around their hands and busting up windows."

A report filled out by Deputy Brad Farris described the building as "demolished."

"Many windows broken, fire extinguishers had been sprayed, glass [was] everywhere," stated the report.

Four students, three 17-year-olds and a 16-year-old, were arrested and issued juvenile complaints for the charges of unruly child, criminal trespass and criminal damage to property.

Some students fled into the surrounding woods.

It was later discovered that these runaway teens had hiked to Pleasant Hill Baptist Church where they reportedly broke into the Camp Wahsega Road sanctuary and searched for a phone. There was none.

"The whole idea was to go to that church and call somebody," said Martin.

Martin said nothing appeared to be stolen from the church besides a blanket.

He added that four Ridge Creek students had also been picked up, at 4 a.m., the morning before the incident at the Wal-Mart parking lot.

"They were trying to pass themselves off as college students or locals," he said. "They said they were waiting on a ride from someone from the Gainesville area."

Martin said the Ridge Creek staff had not reported the students as missing from the school, but once their identities were confirmed they were returned to campus.

Of those students, two were involved in the reported destruction of property which took place later that day.

On Monday Len Buccellato, owner of the boarding school, said the incident was "not a major event."

"The campus is operating as usual," he said. "Some new students decided to do a walk-out and campus is now operating as normal. This was only a very small portion of the student body who did the walkout."

Lawsuit

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alleges Powers will "... continue to lose such wages in the future."

Last October a Fulton County Superior Court judge granted Dahlonega a change of venue, returning the case to the Enotah Judicial Circuit. Leibel originally filed the suit in Fulton because both Georgia Power and the subcontractor responsible of maintaining the lamp are based in Atlanta. Judge Cynthia Wright ruled, however, that since the incident occurred in Lumpkin County, and eyewitnesses would be more easily accessible here, the suit should be heard here.

In late November the city filed a motion for summary judgment—a request for the judge assigned the case to render a decision. On Dec. 17, Leibel responded to the motion, refuting the city's claim that it was not liable for the accident since it did not own the lamp post. Leibel's response claimed the city had a duty to inform Georgia Power if the fixture needed repair or replacement, and that the lamp post was unquestionably on city property—both a basis for liability.

Before the judge could rule on the request for summary

judgment, however, Leibel filed to dismiss the case with the possibility of re-filing within the six month period allowed. When asked if there was any strategic reason for the move, Leibel said that was something he would not reveal.



Tree-trimming helicopter

There's more than one way to trim a tree, as the helicopters pilots of Asplundh Tree Expert Co. demonstrated last week. Several choppers could be spotted throughout the week as they towed spinning saws along the tree line which bordered Amicalola EMC powerlines. Asplundh representative Tasha Shipp said the technique is new for the company but very effective.

Bigfoot

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They may change their minds, however, when they learn that Sheriff Stacy Jarrard claims to have proven the sighting to be a hoax. Jarrard says he went out the next day to question homeowners in the area. At the first house he stopped at, he says, there were two young men, students at North Georgia College & State University, who were "acting really nervous. You could see their hearts were beating really fast," he says.

The two did not admit to the prank right away, but later in the week they copped to one of them donning a gorilla suit and running across the road in front of vehicles on the night in question. Jarrard says he even has a photograph of the two boys with the gorilla suit.

If Animal Planet does decide not to visit Lumpkin, they will probably still visit the North Georgia area.

"They sent us a letter requesting to film at Track Rock in Union County," said John Campbell with the National Forest Ranger Station in Blairesville. "The area is an archeological site and is purported to have a footprint on Bigfoot."

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