



## **LONGTIME EMPLOYEE SKIP YOUMANS TO RETIRE FROM BRYAN COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH**

**BRYAN COUNTY, GA – May 29, 2020** – After serving Bryan County in various capacities for 24 years, John “Skip” Youmans is retiring from the Bryan County Board of Health, where he has worked since 1996. He leaves the board having achieved the title of Environmental Health Specialist III.

Youmans, who also began to oversee the county’s Animal Control Department around 2001, is originally from Rome, GA, and earned his bachelor’s degree from Armstrong Atlantic University. He started his career out with the Department of Agriculture at the State Farmers Market in Savannah and from there went into the consumer protection industry as a seafood specialist, which also entailed inspections of grocery and convenience stores. Youmans then went into public health in Houston County before eventually making the move to Bryan County.

“When I came down here in ’96, I was scared to death. I was a young person who had been put in charge of a pretty big job and I didn’t know a soul,” said Youmans, who was 31 at the time. “Thank God I had a lot of support with Phil Jones, the county administrator at the time, and Dee Henderson (then-county attorney). They took me under their wings and supported me in the job. After getting up to speed, it’s just a matter of following the rules and regulations. I’ve always been fortunate to have rock-solid support from the community and the commission.”

Youmans’ successor will be Michael “Mike” May, who has worked for the Bryan County Board of Health for three years and now holds the title of Environmental Health Specialist IV. Together, the duo has gotten the job down to a science. Their duties include inspections of restaurants, hotels and public swimming pools; issuing septic system permits; overseeing rabies control; handling individual water testing; and responding to any complaints that are submitted by the public. For several consecutive years now, Youmans and May have completed among the highest number of total inspections, per person, in the Coastal Health District.

“We have a lot of different programs we’re responsible for. Until recently we’ve been only a two-man team so, by necessity, we have to break it up and divide and conquer to get it all done. Recently Bryan County added another inspector, Monique Monreal, to our team. We have to get our work done,” May said.

In tending to so many everyday tasks, Youmans said he’s built quite a rapport with the public. He believes his solid relationship with the community has led to residents feeling like they can trust him to take care of the issues.

“It may sound odd, but complaints help us keep things in line. We can’t be everywhere at once to know what’s going on and where there are problems. We have to treat every complaint the same, no matter how big or small. So, if a report comes in, it’ll be dealt with,” Youmans said, adding that he’s also tried to establish close ties with the county’s administration and the commission. “I think it has been really important for me to stay in close touch with the county and the commissioners in order to best serve the community.”

The two men have been preparing for Youmans' retirement for several months now in order to help ensure a smooth transition. Youmans' last day on the job was May 29.

"The district did a nice job of helping us work everything out. They saw the retirement coming, and I was honored to be promoted into Skip's position effective May 1, so there was about a month of overlap, during which time I learned the ropes from Skip. Skip has done a great job of grooming me," May said.

May originally was employed by the Bryan County Board of Health in March 2017 as an Environmental Health Specialist II, and he and Youmans have cultivated a beneficial and effective working relationship.

"The things I'm really strong at, I respond to," Youmans said, "The things Mike is strong at, he responds to. It's the yin and the yang. Mike's understanding of technology is a real benefit for the future of our department. We have a great working relationship and a great friendship. It has worked out very well."

Though May is sorry to see his mentor leave his post, he wishes Youmans well and hopes he enjoys his retirement. May said he feels completely ready to take the reins.

"It's really a continuation of what I've been doing to serve this community. It's what I enjoy most because it's different when you are lucky enough to live in the community where you work. My kids go to school here, this is where we live, pay our taxes and vote. So, I'm happy to be able to continue to serve our local community here in Bryan County," May said.

"Plus," said Youmans, "I'd be willing to help Mike if he calls me or needs something. He knows – just like I do – that our job is to be good to the people of this community and to help educate them. They need to know the guidelines, and we try to help them with that. We will always be good to the people in the community because they've been good to us."

Youmans' retirement plans include spending a lot of time enjoying the outdoors and attending sporting events. He has a 250-acre farm in Emanuel County, which is just one section of a much bigger plot of family land.

"I have about 130 pecan trees on my land, a pond stocked with fish. Right now, I just have a camper up there, but I plan to build a small house eventually. I'd love to move up there some day. I just love the great outdoors and all the experiences that come with that," Youmans said. "I'm also a UGA football season ticket holder, so I always look forward to the football season."

He and his wife, Cindy, a teacher at Richmond Hill Middle School, have been married for 18 years, and he has two stepdaughters, Brittany and Taylor Ivester, both of whom graduated from Richmond Hill High School.

Youmans, who is 55, marvels at all that has transpired in Bryan County since he first came to call it home.

"When I got here, it was a small community. Richmond Hill High School was a Class AA high school. We had 37 restaurants, and now we've got about 110. I remember how pleased I was when they introduced carbonless copies of inspection forms and now, we upload everything to the cloud," he said, adding that there are two people without whom, he might not have made it as far as he has.

"Betty Lee, a public health tech, worked with me for over 20 years. There's no way I could have accomplished what I have without her and her dedication to this community. And Darlene

Shuman with animal control has been instrumental. I've enjoyed working with both of them," Youmans said.

May, who grew up in a military family, has lived in many different places, but his family spent the most time in Aiken, SC. May graduated from Clemson University in 1999 with a degree in geology and a minor in environmental science. He began his career working for environmental engineering firms, but the job required a lot of travel and May – who had just met his wife – knew he wanted to settle down and work in a position that would allow him to be home most nights. So, he went to work for the next nine and a half years for the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Following that position, May achieved the distinction of qualifying as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS). May worked for the Chatham County Health Department for two years before making the move to Bryan County three years ago.

May, 44, and his wife, Laura, have been married for nearly 16 years and have two daughters, Emma, 13, and Annie 11. He enjoys college football, NASCAR, golf, tackling projects around his house, and spending time with his family.

Youmans concludes, "I believe I have achieved a lot in Bryan County over the last quarter of a century. I know that Mike is best person to take our department to the next level and build on all the progress we have experienced over the years."

To learn more about the Bryan County Board of Health, please visit [https://www.gachd.org/board\\_of\\_health\\_members\\_and\\_pu/](https://www.gachd.org/board_of_health_members_and_pu/).

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