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## **NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on January 23, 2011**

### **Oakwood launches outreach with social media site**

Facebook presence is effort to be more connected with community

In an effort to become more connected with its community, the city of Oakwood launched a new [Facebook](#) page Friday.

A few hours after the site launched, 10 people had followed the page. Stan Brown, city manager, said he hopes many of Oakwood's 5,300 residents will take advantage of the service.

"We wanted to get it out as another way to communicate with our citizens and the community," he said.

Brown said the city has made strides with its outreach in the last few years by improving its community newsletter. He said using social media is the next step of that process and the Facebook page is the first effort in that area. In the future, he hopes the city will take advantage of other media platforms.

Brown said the city began planning for the page a few months ago when officials realized that many Oakwood citizens were passing along information about local events online.

"We realized that we really weren't a player even though some of the citizens were putting messages out there on people's walls," he said.

The site currently features a small background section about the city, including phone numbers and websites for city offices, information for upcoming events and photos from several city functions.

The city plans to use the site mainly as a way to disseminate information about community events. But Brown is also hoping that the page will become a place where residents can weigh in on important issues.

"Where we can get comments from citizens on what they think is important, things that are issues, certainly we'd solicit that information," he said.

Sheri Millwood, chairman of the city's events committee, said she is excited to use the site to promote functions, but like Brown, she thinks the page could have a more profound reach.

“I think it will become a forum for discussions and I think it will be tremendously useful to our city officials,” she said. “I think the officials will be able to learn more of the opinions, the wants, the desires, the likes the dislikes of the citizens, not only the citizens but also of the business community.”

Millwood said that as a resident of Oakwood, she sees a need and a desire for this kind of service. She created a Facebook page for an event last fall and said she was thrilled with the response.

“Even that small amount of time that it was up and running it was reaching people that we probably would not have reached through our normal means of marketing,” she said.

In the future, the page could also be instrumental in more rapidly circulating breaking news, Brown said.

“What we had this last week with the snow, it would have been nice for us to be able to communicate that information,” he said.