

# THE VOICE OF MORGAN COUNTY



*Keeping you informed / Telling untold stories*



Postal  
Customer

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
DECATUR AL  
PERMIT #869

MORGAN COUNTY COMMISSION

March 2016

Volume 4 No. 2

## ACCA district meeting comes to Morgan

### *Legislative topics discussed*

**By Sheryl Marsh  
Communications Director**

The Association of County Commissions of Alabama's slogan "67 Counties, One Voice" is more than mere words.

Officials of the organization go out of their way to keep county commissions unified through meetings where information is shared about legislation and other topics that would affect local governments.

ACCA held six district meetings in January, and one for seven

counties in North Alabama was held in Decatur at Burningtree Country Club on Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>.

County Commission Chairman Ray Long, who is president of ACCA Board of Directors, welcomed county commissioners and staff members from all seven counties, which included Limestone, Lawrence and Colbert counties.

"These meetings, as well as others are very beneficial to us as government leaders in our respective counties and statewide," Long said.

**Please see ACCA, page 2**



*Morgan County commissioners, staff and other county officials dine before beginning of meeting.*

## Former sales tax employees promoted to lead Animal Control, Environmental Services

**By Sheryl Marsh  
Communications Director**

Mark Palmer has been director of the county's Animal Services for only five months, but to hear him talk about operations and see him run the department one would think he's held the position for years.

The same applies to Johnny Howell's knowledge and management skills as director of Environmental Services, a position he's been in for seven months.

Both men worked together as license inspectors in the Sales Tax Department, with Palmer being a supervisor, and now they are neighbors at the Industrial Park in Hartselle.

Palmer's and Howell's branding is transparent in their respective departments.

A short term goal for Palmer is to boost adoption rates, and he's seeing positive results from measures

**Please see Animal, page 5**



**Left, Environmental Services Director Johnny Howell, and Animal Services Director Mark Palmer were promoted to lead county departments.**

### INSIDE

**Chairman Ray Long delivers State of the County address, page 4**



**Brewer High School boosting technical career training through partnership with Toyota Alabama, Page 12**



# ACCA

the Retirement Systems of Alabama, saying that changes to the system should not affect counties unless commissions want them to.

The meeting in Morgan was one of six held throughout the state. Others were conducted in Calhoun, Wilcox, Pike, Tuscaloosa and Elmore counties.

Continued from page 1

“We’re pleased with the crowd we have here and appreciate your attendance.”

ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield gave a preview of the current state legislative session, and explained what certain proposed legislation means for counties. Topics included funding for general government services, prison reform, pistol permits and a state lottery.

Brasfield said the largest issue is the general fund budget.

A state lottery bill will get a lot of attention as well.

Brasfield said he believes the bill would make it to the floor, but there’s a problem with designation of proceeds from the lottery. He said some legislators believe that the money should be used to boost the general fund to finance such programs as Medicaid and state prisons, and others believe additional revenue should be used to enhance education.

Brasfield also spoke on reform of



**Above, Chairman Ray Long, left, at the registration table, speaking with officials as they registered for the meeting.**

**Below are snapshots from the event.**



# Commissioners' Report

## Capital projects, paving, helping other entities

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

Commissioners are busy as usual, maintaining county roads, completing construction and planning future road projects in their respective districts, while helping other entities.

District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark's shop recently completed a cul-de-sac at the end of Ben-nich Road and a drainage improvement project on Old River Road.



Clark

In addition, Clark planned to complete a major project on Finley Island Road.

"We're replacing some pipe underneath the road, which is a pretty big job. We've also got a company helping us clear trees from the right-of-way in the area of Red Bank Road. We should have the trees removed by grass cutting time."

District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest has several projects underway and others planned.

"We have three roads that were damaged from flooding that were repaired and pipes replaced," Vest explained. "Construction has started on the new bridge on Kirby Bridge Road. The contractors have really made good progress, and we look forward to its completion and opening this year."

In addition, Vest said the state recently let bids for a new bridge on Vaughn Bridge Road, and utility work on the right-of-way has begun.

"We have 13 roads planned for resurfacing this year, and we just resurfaced the parking lot and walking track at West Park," Vest said. "We also plan to install white vinyl fencing at Neel Senior Center and we're in the process of building a shuffle board court and pavilion at Somerville Senior Center that can

also be used by Somerville Library and the community.

District 3 workers are busy maintaining roads while engaged in several projects, according to Commissioner Don Stisher.

"We have completed the storm shelter at Eva Medical Clinic and we've prepared the pad for one at the park," Stisher

said. "The one at the park should be fin-



Vest

ished around the first of April. We are currently working on a new voting precinct building on Highway 55 East, the site of the old district shop. It is still the voting site although the shop has moved."

Stisher said he's planning drainage improvement for several sites in the district, which will entail installing larger pipes for increased water flow to



Stisher

eliminate flooding on Pine Burr, Bert Stinson, Pleasant Country and Culver roads.

"We are also improving several gravel roads to chip seal, so we have a lot of work to do daily and also have a lot of work planned," he said.

In addition to his district work, Stisher



Abercrombie

Please see **Commissioners, page 12**



District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher sent equipment and employees to help with the final phase of SNAP in Hartselle. Here, workers unload a truck with equipment.

### Televised County Commission meetings

You may watch County Commission meetings on Saturday on WYAM TV 51 in the 8 a.m. time slot. The commission meeting airs immediately after the Decatur City Council meeting. The commission meets the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

# Chairman Long's State of County speech seasoned with comedy, sparks laughter

*140 attended the annual event*

By Sheryl Marsh  
Communications Director

Morgan County Chairman Ray Long sprinkled his State of the County address with a little comedy last month when he spoke to more than 100 people at a breakfast at Double Tree by Hilton-Decatur Riverfront.

He was surrounded by his wife, Regina, their children and grandchildren.

Long's grandchildren, Ellie Blackwood and Chance Brown led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

After invocation by Somerville Baptist Church Shane Lewis, The group ate breakfast, which was followed by Long's speech.

After thanking Ellie and Chance for participating in the program, Long sparked laughter when saying: "I have another grandson in Kindergarten at Priceville Elementary. His name is Tripp and he didn't want any part of speak-

ing in front of a group of people."

Then, on a serious note Long began talking about progress on the new county jail annex construction, and how it will ultimately serve as the corrections facility for all municipalities when Decatur starts sending inmates there.

He talked about budgetary issues the county faced last year, but was able to overcome with department heads and elected officials staying under or within their respective budgets, and returning unused funds from the prior fiscal year.

"I think the folks in Washington could take a lesson from the people who run our county government," he said.

He praised the work of Economic Development Association Director Jeremy Nails and his staff for efforts to attract new industry here.

"Morgan County saw a lot of eco-



**Left, Long's grandchildren, Chance Brown and Ellie Blackwood lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Right, the chairman gives State of the County speech.**



omic growth in 2015," Long said. "We had the announcement of RUAG Aerospace in Trinity, which alone, brings 150 jobs. This project is a \$30,600,000 investment in Morgan County. We also had several expansions announced that totaled an additional 481 jobs with an investment around \$200,000,000. Our EDA staff ranks with the best in the state. We are proud of all the work that Jeremy and his staff do for Morgan County."

The chairman told of projects that each commissioner has under way in his district, and how the commissioners work hard for the public.

"People are going to form their opinions of Morgan County by the way their leaders act," Long said. "It's our duty to put the image of Morgan County first. Personal agendas or grandstanding have no place in an organized government. We work for the people. The people have bestowed on us a great honor by letting us serve them. We don't take that lightly. We are proud of Morgan County and we want you to be proud of how we represent you."

Long concluded his speech on a personal note.

**Please see Speech, page 14**



**Left, Long's wife Regina and their children and grandchildren. Right, District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher and District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark.**

# Animal Control, Environmental

Continued from page 1

he has taken.

“The adoption rate was around 5% when I came in September and now it’s about 35%,” said Palmer. “I believe one of the main reasons it’s increasing is because we’re networking with rescue agencies. We revamped our Facebook page and we’re advertising our animals for adoption regularly.”

Palmer’s efforts to find homes for the animals don’t stop there.

He planned a special event with a rescue group that was held in Jones Valley outside a movie theatre.

“We had seven dogs and all were adopted,” he said.

Palmer has established rapport with local businesses that helps with veterinary services and food for the animals. One company provides spay and neuter services for two cats each month and local grocery stores provide food.

“We never have to buy food for the animals,” said Palmer. “We get truckloads from local stores. Bags might be torn a little or something like that, but there’s nothing wrong with the food. “Every dollar I save on pet food I can use to “vet” the animals. We’re so grateful for all the help we get.”

Also, by connecting with an animal

rescue organization’s website, Palmer was able to get 57 beds donated to the shelter.

“If I had to put a numerical value to the donations, it would be around \$5,000,” he said.

Palmer, who maintains certified law enforcement credentials, is able also to deal with abuse and neglect of animals.

“I’m still sworn through the sheriff’s department, therefore I’m able to make arrests if abuse or neglect is established,” he explained.

So far, he’s made four cases.

Additionally, Palmer has developed a community service program, an outlet that juvenile court may use for disciplinary actions, or top students may use for volunteerism.

“Right now, we’ve got kids who are in the National Honor Society, who are getting credit hours for volunteering,” Palmer said.

The student volunteers perform various duties at the shelter.

Overall, Palmer said he’s optimistic about the future of the county’s animal services.

“I’m just excited about the direction we’re headed and there’s a whole lot more I want to do,” he said.

Palmer has worked with the county

Continued on page 11



Above, Animal Services Director Mark Palmer in one of the shelter’s rooms used for personal hygiene of the animals, Below, the pet food pantry.



Left, supply machines that were placed in the mechanic shop of Environmental Services. Right, Environmental Services Director Johnny Howell shows a diagnostic machine purchased for mechanics to use to determine problems with garbage trucks.



# Sheriff third-year winner of national award

For the third consecutive year Morgan County Sheriff Ana Franklin has won the National Humanitarian Award for production of a Special Needs Rodeo.

Since her election to the sheriff's post in 2010, Franklin has gained statewide notoriety for the caring and hard work she puts into the local event. Participants in the Special Needs Rodeo have soared from 400 to 1,700.

The number of volunteers who help with the event keeps growing as well.

The key behind her successful event?

She has a great strategy for attracting interest. One of her main goals for growing her rodeo is networking and circulating information to other counties. When they need help starting a rodeo she offers assistance, and several volunteers have traveled with her to help plan a rodeo for special children/adults.

Obviously, the Professional Cowboy Association recognizes

her passion for helping children and mentally challenged adults, providing activities for them, as the organization keeps selecting her winner of the award.

She is grateful for the honor but what she does for special children and adults is from the heart. She attributes the rodeo's success to hundreds of volunteers and sponsors, who make it all come together.

Franklin and her staff are planning for this year's rodeo activities. In addition to the Special Needs Rodeo, the sheriff organizes a main rodeo, which comprises several competitions.

"We couldn't have done it without our loyal volunteers and sponsors," Franklin said. "I am grateful for this award because it reminds me of the smiling faces that enjoyed the rodeo."

In addition to Franklin's win, Jail Administrator Larry Berzett won the Outstanding Service Award.



Sheriff Ana Franklin, center, is surrounded by members of her staff and volunteers after receiving the National Humanitarian Award.

## Pistol permits in high demand at sheriff's office

Morgan County Sheriff Ana Franklin attributes a hike in pistol permits to local violence and national terrorism.

The sheriff's office issued 1,411 pistol permits in December. Some permits were first-time issuance and others were renewals, according to Franklin.

Franklin cited the alleged terrorist massacre, which left 14 people dead at a December holiday party in San Bernardino, Calif., and violent crimes locally as reasons for people getting pistol permits.

Many people who went to the sheriff's office had purchased guns for Christmas gifts, Franklin said.

"Parents and young adults want to be

prepared to protect themselves and their loved ones if they need to," she said.

Although pistol permits were up in December, the total issuance of 9,590 for 2015 was slightly lower than a total of 10,420 in 2014.

The sheriff said the lower number is probably because her office started issuing 5-year permits in 2014.

A permit for a single year is \$20, and a multi-year permit would be the total of \$20 for each year.

Lines continue to grow in the pistol permit area of the sheriff's office.



Employees in the sheriff's office get a break after clearing a line of residents seeking pistol permits.

### Hours of operation

Pistol permits may be sought during business hours of the sheriff's office. The office opens at 8 a.m. and closes at 4:30 p.m. Applications are not take at the county jail.

# Veterans of Morgan County exhibit planned for Archives

By Sheryl Marsh  
Communications Director

Morgan County Archives has historical treasures on display that would prompt notable historians to say “Wow”!

Exhibits like the Scottsboro Boys and the Civil War, are jewels to be treasured by tourists.

Archivist John Allison isn't stopping.

The next project is a Veterans of Morgan County exhibit, which is in

the planning stages.

“I've been busy with the other two exhibits as well as the Decatur Depot project, and I've not had time to get started,” Allison said. “We've now turned our attention to the veterans project and we're working with the McCOMM Group that did the Scottsboro Boys and Civil War exhibits.”

Archives has a good stock for display from items that local residents donated, and Allison plans to use all

of them.

“The main idea behind the exhibit is to rotate out and keep things fresh,” he said.

The exhibit will have cabinet displays for military items that include weaponry, badges and a variety of other gear. A main attraction will be a touch screen mounted on the wall in the exhibit area that will contain historical information and photos.

Allison partnered with *The Decatur Daily* to include a published se-

ries of articles, photos and a video of interviews that former Photographer Gary Cosby Jr. conducted with local veterans.

## Items needed

Although items are plentiful, he's still accepting donations.

“We have a lot of World War II items and information, but we want to include all local war veterans from the other conflicts,” Allison said. We need items from the Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. We want to honor our WWII veterans but people will ultimately see veterans from all of the wars included in the exhibit.”

More military weapons are needed, also.

“We have some weapons from past wars that include a captured German pistol, but we could use more,” Allison said.

A deadline for completion has not been set, but Allison is hopeful the

Please see Veterans, page 14

## About

## The Voice of Morgan County

*The Voice of Morgan County* is published quarterly and mailed to 46,000 homes. It is a product of the County Commission and no portion of it may be re-produced. This is the second edition of the fourth volume.

The publication is produced solely by Communications/Community Relations Director Sheryl Marsh.

Please be sure to view community videos on our website by going to [www.co.morgan.al.us](http://www.co.morgan.al.us) There, click on county departments, then select Communications/Community Relations and click on multimedia.



Rendering of Veterans of Morgan County exhibit planned for Archives



@MorganCoComm

Find us on  
Facebook

## Rx cards still available

The Morgan County Commission still has free Rx discount cards for county residents. Collectively, the cards have resulted in more than \$200,000 in savings for people who have used them.

To get your card please go to our website: [www.co.morgan.al.us](http://www.co.morgan.al.us) and click on Coast to Coast to request one. We will mail it to you. There are no eligibility requirements.

# Two new faces in Morgan Board of Registrars office

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

Although they've been voter registrars a short period of time, Lynda Henley and Amy Hamilton have gained an abundance of experience, registering hundreds of voters for primary elections held on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Both women went to work in the Board of Registrars office in September. They replaced Louise Brown and Kate Terry, who worked there for years. Terry accepted a position with the probate judge's office and Brown went to work for the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce.

Hamilton and Henley were excellent choices for the positions, according to the board's Chairwoman Adonis Bailey.

"I love them," said Bailey. "They're doing a great job and we're excited about them. They're finding out what it's like to be a registrar at election time. Right now we see a lot more of each other than we see our families. We miss our former registrars who left, but we still stay in touch with them."

The new registrars are happy with their positions.

"I love it," said Hamilton. "It's a pleasant atmosphere. I like the work and the people



**Amy Hamilton**

who come in."

She, her husband Douglas and their daughters Olivia and Lexy reside in Decatur.

Henley shares Hamilton's love for the job.

"I like being in tune with the political process," said Henley. "It's a great place to learn about elected officials at the city, county and state levels. I like the people

who come to the office. Everybody is so friendly."

She and her husband Phil live in Decatur, and they have three sons, Jimmy, Michael and Patrick.

They helped register hundreds of voters almost daily prior to the primary elections, and now they're preparing for the next election.



**Lynda Henley**

"They've been trained and have had lots of experience in a short time," Bailey said. "They'll be ready."

The jobs are by appointment from state elected officials.

State Auditor Jim Zeigler appointed Hamilton, and Agriculture Commissioner John McMillan appointed Henley. Bailey is the governor's appointment.

## *Morgan residents qualify for low-interest loans from flooding*

### **Homeowners' deadline is March 15**

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest rate loans to businesses and individuals who experienced damage or loss from major flooding in December.

Morgan County Emergency Management Agency Director Eddie Hicks said SBA announced in January that Morgan County had been approved for disaster assistance. Also, Gov. Robert Bentley made an official announcement about the SBA assistance for Morgan and other counties in the state.

Loans up to \$200,000 are available to homeowners to repair or replace damaged property; and up

to \$40,000 for renters and homeowners to replace personal property, according to EMA specialist Brandy Davis.

The term for a homeowner's loan is up to 30 years, with interest rates as low as 1.8% for those who qualify.

The statutory cap is \$2 million for business loans, termed Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL).

The deadline is March 15<sup>th</sup> for homeowners and renters to apply, and for economically impacted businesses the deadline to apply is Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>.

Prior to Morgan being approved by SBA, Hicks

and Davis showed affected areas of the county to Alabama EMA and SBA officials.

"This is an opportunity for people who were affected by the flooding to get their life back to normal," said Hicks. "Some of the flooding in homes amounted to seven or eight inches, and this is an excellent offer to help them repair their property."

Applicants must have credit history that's acceptable to SBA.

The team that came here to assess damage did not find enough for Federal Emergency Manage-

**Please see SBA loans, page 15**

# WANTED!

## Homes for adorable pets

By Sheryl Marsh  
Communications Director

D.J., a German Shepherd had a broken leg and nowhere to go. He ended up at Morgan County's animal shelter and his future brightened almost instantly.

Networking by Animal Services Director Mark Palmer paid off with an out-of-state family adopting D.J., providing the love and caring he needed.

A lot of care was given D.J. before he left for his new home.

He left his furry friends at the shelter and while many, if not all, have been adopted, there are more that arrive almost daily.

Palmer, whose efforts have increased the shelter's adoption rate from 5% to 35%, had about 40 pooches in the shelter last month. There were only two cats.

D.J. was adopted by a family in Michigan, and arranging his trip was interesting.

"All we had to do was get him to Atlanta," Palmer said. "This is where our networking came through. A rescue worker's husband was an over-the-road truck driver and we got D.J. transported to Atlanta and he transported him to Michigan.

D. J. had been hit by a car and his leg had been set. When he came into the shelter he weighed 68 pounds and when he left he weighed 95 pounds."

"He was in pretty good shape, but he had some behavioral issues, probably due to the injury, but the family was going to get his leg re-done and take him for behavioral training."

Palmer said D.J. is settled into his new home.

There are other, similar stories of rescued animals in the county.

"Tank, a Black Labrador had to have a leg amputated. A veterinarian with Animal Tracks sponsored his surgery, and did the amputation pro bono," Palmer said.

Tank got adopted by his foster family in Deca-

tur, who took care of him during recovery and he has a good life, also.

There are more waiting to be adopted.

"We have all kinds, from Chihuahuas to Great Pyrenees," Palmer said.

The adoption fee is \$20, but sometimes Palmer waives fees at his discretion.

"If an animal is in high demand the fee is implemented, but if an animal has been here over 20 days I could waive the fee," Palmer said.

In addition to adopting an animal, the owner gets a \$15 voucher for a rabies shot.

"They can take the pet to the vet of their choice to have that done," Palmer said.

Palmer is pleased with the frequency of adoptions, but he's not slowing in his promotion of moving the animals.

---

Please see Wanted, page 11



# INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING NEEDED

## Chamber hosts public forum for officials to air concerns before the Joint Legislative Transportation Committee

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

Officials from counties throughout the state gathered at Calhoun Community College last month to address a legislative committee about funding needs for infrastructure in their respective areas.

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce hosted the public forum on Feb.1, the day before the current Legislature session began.



**Sonny Brasfield**

The Joint Legislative Transportation Committee heard from several elected and appointed officials as well as business leaders from throughout the state.

Chamber President/Chief Executive Officer John Seymour welcomed the officials to the meeting, which was held at Calhoun's Aerospace Training Facility Lecture Hall.

Seymour also introduced the first speaker, his former colleague Jim Page, who is president/chief executive officer of The Chamber of Commerce West Alabama.



**Jim Page**

Page gave an overview of infrastructure needs in the state and presented statistics on growth in the state. He said the state's infrastructure price tag is in the billion dollar range. Page served under Seymour as vice president of public policy and business development prior to going to Tuscaloosa in 2012.

Association of County Commissions of Alabama Executive Director Sonny Brasfield expressed a great need for infrastructure funding, noting that the last time the state's gasoline tax had been increased was in 1992. Brasfield asked the committee to be fair with potential legislation regarding gasoline tax, and he vowed to at-



Above, officials gathered from throughout the state. Below, from left, Morgan County District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest, Priceville Mayor Melvin Duran and Chairman Ray Long, who is ACCA Board of Directors president, chat before public forum begins.



tend legislative sessions to represent interests of the state's 67 counties.

Morgan County Commission Chairman Ray Long was the third official to address the committee.

He provided information about \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please see Funding, page 11

# Animal

Continued from page 1

since 2001 when he began working in the sales tax office.

## More innovation, energy

Howell is equally innovative and energetic performing managerial duties for Environmental Services.

Howell, who became director of the department seven months ago, said he identified problems and took corrective action.

“I wanted us to be more efficient in several different areas,” said Howell. “One was the issue of garbage cans coming up stolen. We now file police reports to help resolve the matter. We also found that some residences had two cans and were only paying for one, so we collected the extra cans and developed a system to keep up with them.”

Another change Howell made was to make an employee who was doubling as a mechanic and truck driver a mechanic only. Now, he has two full-time mechanics.

The blowout of tires was a huge, costly problem, and that has improved.

“We were having between four or seven blowouts every week, which took up a lot of the mechanic’s time going to change them,” Howell said. “The cost

was enormous. We looked at different brakes and brake drums and started thoroughly cleaning the trucks. We went from up to seven a week to one blowout per month, which is probably the biggest point we’ve scored.”

Also, rather than replacing garbage trucks by the fleet, Howell said he’s replacing two or three as the need arises.

Howell has given the mechanics tools to save money.

“We were spending between \$200 and \$400 for diagnostic fees and now we have diagnostic machines that reveal mechanical problems with the trucks,” Howell said.

Like Palmer, Howell has developed a rapport with vendors.

A company placed two machines filled with supplies, including safety vests, gloves, and products for the trucks.

“The machines don’t cost us anything, and they’re Internet-based to let them know when we’re running low, or out of the something,” Howell said. “An email is sent to the company informing them of what we need and they’ll send us an email showing the same. It gives a detailed record of what’s been taken out and when. It’s awesome.”

Howell is also saving thousands on refurbishing recycling containers.

“We were able to use county jail trusty labor to

repair and paint the recycling trailers rather than have it done outside,” he said. In the past it cost about \$1,250 each and with the trustees we only spent \$150 for supplies. We refurbished 17 trailers.”

Howell, who has been with the county about six years, enjoys the work and looks forward to challenges.

“We want to keep coming up with ideas for improvements and ways to save,” he said. “I am certainly enjoying the work.”

Palmer and Howell are always thinking about saving taxpayer dollars.

They share what they can with each other.

“There’s no need for us not to be able to help each other’s department by sharing something as simple as cleaning supplies. We’re working toward the same goals,” Palmer said.

Howell’s wife is Circuit Judge Jennifer Howell, and they have two children: Anna Kaitlyn, 9, and Ashtyn, 6.

Palmer’s wife is Margaret Palmer, a juvenile probation officer, and they have a son, John Mark, 10, and daughter, Amy, 15.

Commission Chairman Ray Long is extremely pleased with both directors.

“They’re both doing a great job, and I’m glad that we could promote from within,” Long said. “We made great choices in Johnny and Mark.”

# Funding

Continued from page 10

infrastructure needs in the county, which included road and bridge improvements.

“We all need more funding just to keep our roads safe,” Long said. “We’ve still got an old wooden bridge that needs to be replaced, but it’s expensive. In District 2 we’ve got 125 dead-end roads.”

Long said there may be a 26-year period between maintenance of some roads due to a shortage in funding.

Elected and appointed officials in neighboring counties like Madison and Franklin relayed similar needs to the committee.

Although legislation had not been drafted at the time of the public forum, state representatives indicated a bill would be penned for a proposed gas tax hike. A definite percentage was not established although some speakers mentioned as much as 12 percent due to the fact that it’s been 24 years since the last increase.



D.J., the German Shepherd that a Michigan family adopted.

# Wanted

Continued from page 9

“Every day is a good day,” he said. “We have more going out than coming through the front door. We plan to keep our efforts going to exceed the 35% adoption rate, and we are grateful to people in the community who are helping us achieve our goals.”

# Toyota partnering with Brewer Career Technical Center

Morgan County's Brewer High School is on top of technical career training with Toyota Alabama as a partner in education.

Toyota is connected with Brewer High School's Career Technical Program, and last month the company donated 14 automobile engines to the program.

A group of county residents make up an advisory committee, working closely with Morgan County

Schools Technical Director Chris Blevins in efforts to provide career opportunities for students, according to District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher, who is a member of the committee.

The board meets quarterly and hosts an annual banquet in May to recognize students with opportunities for college scholarships, and the board offers assistance to help students achieve their goals, Stisher said.

"I have served on the board for 16 years, and I've seen many young people become successful individuals and business people who contribute to the strength of Morgan County," he said. "The partnership with Toyota speaks highly of the program and recognizes the importance of a quality workforce being prepared at the high school level. We are proud of these students, and feel confident they'll do good in the future."



Left, top and bottom, Brewer High career technical students examine 14 engines Toyota Alabama donated to the center as a partner in education. Above, Bobby Bryson, second from left, shakes hands with Stacy Mullican, leader of Toyota Manufacturing Development Group. Brewer High students on left and right.



## Commissioners

Continued from page 3

is providing assistance for the final phase of SNAP playground. A ribbon cutting for the phase will be held some time in May.

His employees are moving trees from and trimming tree limbs along rights-of-way, which are routine tasks.

Completing the new senior citizen center at Lacey's Spring is priority in District 4. Commissioner Greg Abercrombie said inclement weather has caused delays.

"The wet weather hasn't been good for construction," said Abercrombie. "All we lack is a septic system and the parking lot. When the weather

breaks it shouldn't take much longer."

Meanwhile, paving is underway on a three-mile stretch of Hulaco Road, and paving is scheduled for a road at Lacey's Spring and two short roads at Union Hill. Also, Abercrombie received a \$900,000 grant to resurface Eva Road starting at Brewer High School to the top of the mountain at the district line. Also, the money will pay for guardrails to be placed along the road.

"Materials will be used on the mountainous part of the road that will abate ice-skidding," Abercrombie said. "The guardrails and resurfacing will improve this road in a major way."

**hooked on**  
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB  
OF NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA

**FISHING TOURNAMENT**

Ingalls Harbour  
Saturday, April 2nd  
Safelight - 3:00pm  
Entry Fee - \$100  
[hookedontournament.com](http://hookedontournament.com)

**\$6000**  
GUARANTEED PAYOUT!

1st - \$2,400  
2nd - \$1,200  
3rd - \$600  
BIG FISH - \$600  
\*10 PLACES PAID

AWESOME DOOR PRIZES!

REGISTER AT:  
[hookedontournament.com](http://hookedontournament.com)  
Entrusted Tees

OR CALL FOR INFO:  
(256) 340-3466  
(256) 508-1023

Morgan County American Legion  
Post 15 Sponsor of this publication

**JOIN THE LEGION IN  
SUPPORTING VETERANS AND COMMUNITY**

**American Legion Auxiliary**  
- World's largest women's patriotic service organization.

**Sons of The American Legion**  
- Males of eligible parents or grandparents.

**American Legion Riders**  
- Supporting schools, veterans, and service members.

The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization focusing on service to veterans, service members and communities.

**-Meetings 7 PM – The 4th Monday Of Each Month**  
(Except 2nd Monday in May & December)

**-Dancing Every Friday**  
Live Band and Dance Starts at 7 PM.

**-BINGO Every Saturday**  
Guaranteed Thousands in Prizes Each Week.  
Cards Go On Sale at 5 PM - Play Starts at 6 PM.

**Smoke Free Building**

[allegionpost15.com](http://allegionpost15.com)  
[facebook.com/allegionpost15](https://facebook.com/allegionpost15)  
**2607 Highway 31 S, Decatur, AL 35603 PH: (256) 353-5501**

**ROGERS**

**ROGERS GROUP INC.**

*Building better communities from the ground up*

Sponsor of this publication

# Speech

Continued from page 4

“As a small town boy growing up in Somerville I always had dreams of getting to serve the people of Morgan County,” he said. “I was

one of those kids who liked to read the newspaper when I got home from school, before I went out to play. I found a way to show up at the small political rallies. If a state or federal official was coming to Morgan County I always

wanted to be there. You see, I remember the days when we looked up to our leaders. I want to be that kind of leader for you. I work hard every day trying to serve you with honor and dignity. I want you to be as proud of Morgan County as I am.”



Left, Decatur-Morgan County Chamber officials John Seymour and Crystal Brown welcome guests to the State of the County breakfast at Double Tree by Hilton on Feb. 25th. Brown, who coordinated the event, said 140 people attended.

## Veterans

Continued from page 7

exhibit will be in place before the year ends. “If not Memorial Day, certainly by Veterans Day,” he said. “We look forward to honoring our Morgan County veterans with the exhibit.”



# CIRCUIT CLERK CHRIS PRIEST

## WHY HAVE A PASSPORT?

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue or verify United States passports.



MORGAN.ALACOURT.GOV



### Requirements for a passport

#### PHOTOGRAPHS:

You must submit ONE 2" X 2" color passport photo taken within the last six months. Photographs must meet U.S. government requirements, which are listed on their website.

#### PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP:

Expired passport issued to an adult or Naturalization Certificate (must be original) or Certified Copy of your Birth Certificate in the state in which you were born). Persons born in Alabama can go to any local Health Department to purchase a certified copy of their Birth Certificate. It will be issued at the time of purchase. If you were born in another state, you must contact that state's Division of Vital Statistics. There are several sites on the Internet that can assist you in this matter. Persons 15 and older, who held a prior passport, can use that Passport in lieu of the certified birth certificate. This instrument will be submitted with your application and returned within two weeks after receipt of your passport.

#### PASSPORT FEE:

Personal check, cashiers check or money order payable to U.S. Department of State. (cash not accepted). Fees can be combined for persons applying at the same time.

#### Book Fees:

**\$110.00** 16 years of age or older  
**\$80.00** 15 years of age or younger

#### Card Fees:

**\$30.00** 16 years of age or older  
**\$15.00** 15 years of age or younger

#### IMPORTANT:

If you are flying, a book is REQUIRED. The card is valid only for travel by car or ship. Be aware that any emergency requiring flight will require a passport book.

- Children 16 or 17 may appear with one parent or legal guardian to sign the application in the office.
- Children 15 and younger must appear with both parents or legal guardian to sign the application in the office.

#### EXECUTION FEE (Book and Card):

**\$25.00** cash or check made payable to Chris Priest, Circuit Clerk.

#### IDENTIFICATION:

A State issued ID (i.e. Driver's License) or federally issued ID (i.e military) is required. We cannot accept privately issued forms of identification (i.e work badges). If you do not hold identification issued by the State of Alabama, you must present a second form of identification.

Passport Acceptance Office hours are 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Monday - Friday.

**You must arrive so that all transactions are completed by closing.**

**Chris Priest, Circuit Clerk  
Morgan County Courthouse  
302 Lee Street NE  
Decatur, Alabama 35601  
Phone 256-351-4790  
chris.priest@alacourt.gov**

# Faded Morgan

## recycling containers

### are refurbished

Faded, rusted red recycling dumpsters have been refurbished and painted bright blue and placed strategically throughout Morgan County.

Environmental Services Director Johnny Howell said employees and county jail trustees did the work on 17 recycling trailers, which saved thousands of dollars.

“It cost \$150 to refurbish each of the trailers,” Howell said. “They were faded and abused with rock chips and rusting metal. We repaired the metal, the lids and painted them.”

He said the recycling containers were originally placed throughout the county in 1996, and they’ve been refurbished at least once in the past.

Two employees empty the containers daily.

“When they pick up a full one they replace it with an empty one,” Howell said.



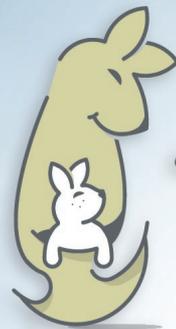
This is one of 17 refurbished recycling containers that are placed throughout the county. The inset photo shows the back of the trailer.

## SBA loans

Continued from page 8

ment Agency (FEMA) disaster declaration, according to Hicks.

“The team was attempting to locate enough damage to qualify for a FEMA disaster declaration, which would have qualified recipients for assistance in the form of grants,” Hicks said.



The Newborn  
center

Sponsor of this publication

# ...IS NOW AT

The Pavilion on the Parkway Campus

deaturmorganhospital.net  
256.973.6000



Decatur Morgan  
Hospital

PARKWAY CAMPUS

Sponsor of this publication



# THE REEVES LAW FIRM

GREG A. REEVES ATTORNEY AT LAW

256.355.3311

232 Moulton Steet, E • Decatur, Alabama 35601 • [www.thereeveslawfirm.com](http://www.thereeveslawfirm.com) • *sponsor of this publication*



Sponsor of this publication



Sponsor of this publication



# RENASANT BANK

Understanding You.®

### Branch Locations

211 Lee St. NE

1830 Modaus Road SW

1309 Stratford Road SE