

# THE VOICE OF MORGAN COUNTY



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MORGAN COUNTY COMMISSION

September 2015

Volume 3 No. 4

Elected to lead state organization

## Commission Chairman Ray Long is president of ACCA Board of Directors

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

Energetic, passionate,  
great leader.

Those are a few of the  
descriptions given of Com-  
mission Chairman Ray  
Long by other elected offi-  
cials locally and from  
across the state.

And, perhaps, that is why  
his peers elected him pres-  
ident of the Association of  
County Commissions of  
Alabama during the annu-  
al convention in August.

Winston County Com-  
mission Chairman Roger  
Hayes said Long impress-  
es him and he comes to  
the presidency highly rec-  
ommended.

“Since I’ve known Ray  
he’s really taken an inter-  
est,” Hayes said. “You’ve  
got a lot of newcomers  
that didn’t take interest  
like Ray did. I did a little  
checking, too. I talked to  
Larry Bennich, the ex-  
chairman of the Morgan  
County Commission. If

Larry Bennich says he’s a  
good guy I kindly take  
that. I talked with the oth-  
er commissioners, too and  
they’ve got a lot of confi-  
dence in Ray. I’ve seen the  
energy he has and he’s  
really passionate about it.  
He is a good guy.”

Bennich served three  
terms as chairman of the  
commission.

District 3 Commissioner  
Don Stisher, who serves

Please see **Long, page 3**



Chairman Ray Long, behind podium, delivers his inaugural speech after he became president of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama on Aug. 20th.

## Commission frugal with 2016 spending

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

The Morgan County Com-  
mission plans are on schedule to  
adopt a balanced, level-funded  
budget for fiscal 2015-16, which  
begins Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>.

Commissioners reviewed and  
discussed departmental budgets  
during July and August.

“It’s roughly going to be the  
same as last year,” said Chair-  
man Ray Long. The only

Please see **Budget, page 5**

## Morgan DA elected to lead state association

*Popular with peers statewide*

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

After taking office five years  
ago District Attorney Scott  
Anderson blended right in  
with colleagues, gaining re-  
spect throughout the state.

It’s not surprising that he  
has hastened to the top of the  
Alabama District Attorneys  
Association. Recently, An-

derson’s peers, district attor-  
neys from the state’s 67 coun-  
ties, elected him president of  
the association.

Office of Prosecution Ser-  
vices Deputy Director Barry  
Matson says Anderson’s lead-  
ership qualities were seen  
soon after he became

Please see **Anderson, page 3**



Morgan County District Attorney Scott Anderson goes over information in a murder case with Decatur Police Detective Mike Burlison last month while a jury was out for deliberations.

## INSIDE



CAPNA celebrates

50 years of

helping communities

Pages 6, 9

# NARCOG invents new logo, slogan to improve image

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

When Jeff Pruitt became executive director of North Alabama Regional Council of Governments two years ago, he began working immediately to restructure an embattled agency under a hovering cloud of controversy and scrutiny.

One of the first things Pruitt implemented was re-branding.

“To refresh our image we re-invented our logo with a tagline that states: “Positively impacting people and communities”. “We’re extremely pleased with the freshness it exudes. “We also want to do a better job of telling our stories of the different things we’re involved in to inform the people about services available to them.”

An Aging and Disability Resource Center is new, also.

“The call center is for inquiries about



services that could be provided by our office or another agency or non-profit entity,” Pruitt said. “It is a growing program in association with the Alabama Department of Senior Services and much of it is Medicaid funded. The center has been operating for about two years and it has been growing steadily.”

An existing program that a lot of people may not know about is NARCOG’s Business Lending Program.

“It’s been around 15 years and it’s something we like to talk about because it creates jobs through new businesses or expansions,” “We can work with their bank to put together a financial packet to help them get started or expand,” he said.

The lending program is primarily for

small businesses and owners may borrow up to \$250,000.

“Generally, what happens is that the owner and their bank put money into the project,” Pruitt said.

Re-payment plans vary depending on the type of business.

“If the loan is for equipment it must be repaid in 10 years, or if it’s real estate it goes up to 25 years,” he explained. “So far this year we’ve approved five projects for the counties we serve, which are Morgan,



Pruitt

Lawrence and Cullman.”

The loans for those projects totaled between \$650,000 and \$700,000, he said.

Most of the new or expanded businesses create five to 15 jobs. The types of businesses range from a truck stop to restaurants.

The money for the lending program came from several entities, including the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Appalachian Regional Commission, and the state Department of Agriculture.

The state legislature put money into the fund several years ago, Pruitt said.

“It’s a revolving loan fund, and as businesses pay back their loans it replenishes our pool of money,” he said. “And, we do have money to lend.”

Out of the three counties serviced by NARCOG, Pruitt said 40 percent of the loans have gone for projects in Morgan County.

Pruitt has established long-term goals for the agency.

“We want to keep increasing the Aging and Disability Resource Center because that’s where everything starts,” he said. “When we find out what clients need we can direct them to the right agency. We want to continue to see our meals program at senior citizen centers and to homes grow. We have 200,000 meals cov-

Please see NARCOG, page 3

# Alabama Extension brings E-Waste recycling to county

On the surface dumping electronics may appear to be harmless.

But, that’s not so, and that’s why Alabama Cooperative Extension System has brought its E-Waste recycling program to Morgan County.

Urban Regional Extension Agent Allyson Shabel brought recycling boxes to the courthouse in July for donations of small electronic devices such as cellphones and tablets, and ink cartridges from office equipment.

“Our goal is to keep dangerous, toxic chemicals out of the landfill,” Shabel explained. “We send the items to a company for disposal. They remove dangerous chemicals from the devices, and they also educate people about electronic waste and what it can do to you.”

Dangerous chemicals and substances found in electronics

include mercury, arsenic, cadmium, lead, chromium and bromine, Shabel said.

The recycling program originated through Alabama A&M University and Auburn University.

“We take information produced by the universities to the

Please see E-Waste, page 3

## Effects of hazardous chemicals / substances found in electronics

**Mercury:** affects the nervous system

**Arsenic:** causes lung cancer and damages the nervous system

**Cadmium:** causes liver damage and impairs fetal development

**Lead:** damages the brain, kidneys and nervous system

**Chromium:** irritates the nose, throat, lungs, skin and eyes

**Bromine:** affects the respiratory system

**SOURCE:** Alabama Cooperative Extension System



Circuit Judge Jennifer Howell, right, deposits the first item for electronic recycling in a box her sister, Alabama Urban Regional Extension Agent Allyson Shabel brought to the courthouse in July.

# Anderson

**Continued from page 1**

Morgan district attorney.

“He has an impeccable reputation statewide,” Matson said. “His abilities and talents were recognized early by leadership. He’s a good guy who understands what it means to be a prosecutor, which is to seek justice, not just to get convictions, and that is important. It’s not convictions at all costs, it, doing what’s right. He has the ability to bring folks together, and he’s well thought of in the association as evidenced by his rise to the executive committee and on to president of the association.”

During Anderson’s second year in office he was

elected to serve on the association’s Executive Committee, and subsequently he was elected secretary, treasurer and vice president.

“It’s a little unusual to be elected to the executive committee so soon after taking office, but I was glad to have the opportunity,” Anderson said. “I am honored that the association would not only consider me to serve as their president, but elect me to be their president.”

The association meets four times each year and as president Anderson will preside over the meetings. One of his main duties will be to assist the organization with preparing and presenting legislation

that will benefit victims, law enforcement, prosecutors and the public in general.

Anderson will work closely with Matson’s office.

“He will be our go-to person. He will be our ambassador,” Matson said. He is more than capable. “Anybody can ascend to a job and learn to do a job, but you can’t learn to be a good person. Scott loves his family and his community. He talks about his community when he’s not there. He’s just an overall good, knowledgeable person and a joy to be around.”



*Here, a huge crowd gathered Aug. 14th at Hartselle Civic Center for a health fair sponsored by the Alzheimer’s Association, Hospice of North Alabama, The Cottages and NARCOG.*

# Long

**Continued from page 1**

with Long on the Morgan County Commission, praised Long as a leader.

“Ray is a very good asset to Morgan County, and I think he’ll bring that talent to our association,” Stisher said. “He’s full of vigor, life and excitement. He is a champion of just loving one another and getting the job done. He is very energized and I think we are going to have a very exciting and motivational year.”

Prior to the election, Long had served as second and first vice president respectively of the ACCA board.

ACCA comprises county commission members from the state’s 67 counties.

Since taking office in 2010

Long has excelled in county government, completing course work that increased his knowledge to run the daily affairs of the county.

Long exceeded requirements to complete government training for holding public office last year, and was highly commended by officials of Auburn University.

“It is a real accomplishment to have achieved success beyond the basic requirements of the program in your service to your county and its citizens,” wrote Auburn President Jay Gogue. “Your achievement in completing the 70-hour graduate program, over and above the legislatively mandated 50-hour program is evidence of your commit-

ment to improving the quality of life in your county.”

He completed the Alabama Local Government Training Institute at Auburn and received a graduate program certificate.

“I am elated to have completed the studies, which will help me better serve the people of Morgan County,” Long said. “I ran for office to serve our residents and I want to do it with knowledge to run an efficient operation.”

The university’s Center for Governmental Services has an agreement with the Association of County Commissions of Alabama to provide training for county commissions throughout the state.

**Please see Long, page 10**

# NARCOG

**Continued from page 2**

ered in our current budget. And, we want to expand our economic development and lending program, focusing on small businesses.”

Pruitt is getting out of the office to help spread the word about NARCOG services.

“I’m willing to go anywhere to tell our stories about the services we offer and the impact we’ve had on projects in this area,” Pruitt said.

Chairman Ray Long, a member of the NARCOG Board of Directors, said he’s pleased with the progress the agency has made under Pruitt.

“I think the re-branding is a great idea,” Long said. “This will help restore NARCOG’s image. I also think it’s good

for Jeff to go out into the communities and inform people about services. “

## E-Waste

**Continued from page 2**

public,” she said. “We have an office in each county and we’re there for free to assist people with their life.”

Financial planning and resume preparation for employment are included in services the agency provides.

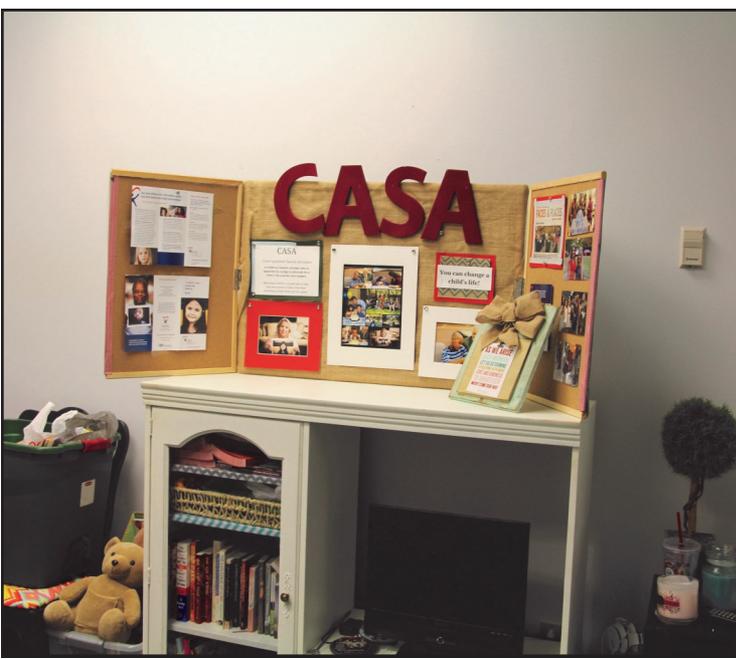
For more information please call 256-612-6766.

# CASA

## The children's eyes, ears, voice



*Above, CASA Executive Director Ahbra Northcutt outside her new office at the courthouse. Below, the inside of her office that's clearly children-friendly.*



### By Sheryl Marsh Communications Director

Child abuse is a growing problem in Morgan County, but residents should know that there are several agencies working together to combat cruelty of children.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for children started operating in Morgan last August and recently re-located its office to the fifth floor of the courthouse.

The new office puts CASA Executive Director Ahbra Northcutt close to the district attorney's office and judges, with whom she works closely on cases involving children. They work with Morgan County Department of Human Resources, also.

"We got our first cases in October and so far we've been assigned 101 children," Northcutt said. "Sadly, we had six last week that we had to turn away because we need more funding and more volunteers."

Currently, 18 volunteers serve in the program.

"Some work, and they might take one case each," Northcutt said. "We have three ladies who work with us full-time and they might have four cases each."

In addition to court placement of children with CASA's involvement, the organization receives private requests.

"As soon as petitions come to the court we get assigned to the cases, and we act on private petitions, also," Northcutt said. "The private

petitions are filed in the circuit clerk's office by family, friends or neighbors (of residents where child abuse or neglect is suspected). Our job is to investigate to determine if the accusations are true or false."

Usually, CASA has three months to investigate before the initial court date. After the investigation, Northcutt and others will meet with court officials and the family to determine what's best for the child or children.

"We write a report and the attorneys look over it as well as the Guardian et Litem," she explained. "Many times after talking with everybody we are able to come to an agreement and we don't have to go to trial. Our goal is to rehabilitate the family."

Most cases involve children ages three to 12, and a few teenagers, and single mothers ranging from 16 to 40 or over.

The abuse is sexual and physical, Northcutt said.

Some children suffer from neglect.

"Some families need help with different things," Northcutt shared. "If a kid needs cleats for football, somebody will get them for him. We are the eyes and ears of the court and the judges want kids to be in safe, loving homes."

CASA representatives make visits to foster homes, also.

"From being a foster parent myself in Morgan County we know that the majority of foster parents are really good parents, doing it for all the

right reasons," Northcutt said. "If we went into a home and saw red flags we would do what's best for the children."

Attorneys say CASA representatives' work is excellent and a money saver on court costs in private cases.

"They're like an extra barrier to make sure kids don't slip through the cracks," said Attorney Kirby Harris Vickery, who serves as Guardian et Litem in many cases.

"When you put these women on a case it's like siccing a dog on something," Harris-Vickery said. "CASA is doing amazing things. I've got 20 files on my desk. The number of files is high because although some children are siblings, they don't have the same father. CASA is on top of every case I have. In private pay cases where the party has to pay Guardian et Litem fees, the amount is lower because CASA does all the leg work, including home visits that would take a lawyer hours to do."

Currently, there are more than 950 CASA programs throughout the United States, and 14 are in Alabama, Northcutt said.

CASA volunteer Melanie Burger gets fulfillment out of helping children who are in abusive situations.

"I feel like it's the most rewarding thing I've ever done," said Burger. "It's the best feeling when you know something you have done caused a child to have a better life."

# Morgan voter registrars add hundreds of new voters from local schools

The Morgan County Board of Registrars took voter registration to several high schools and were successful in lengthening the voter list by more than 400.

Registrars, Chairwoman Adonis Bailey, Louise Brown and former registrar Kate Terry conducted voter registration drives at these high schools: West Morgan, Danville, Falkville, Priceville, Hartselle, Decatur, Decatur Heritage and Bethel Baptist. The registrars explained the election process, from registration to casting ballots. Some of the schools allowed the registrars to speak to their government/economic classes; and some schools were unable to allow the registrars to address classes, but registration was done during

breaks and lunch.

Students were quizzed on their knowledge of local elected officials and upcoming 2016 elections.

“A few classes had some shining stars ready to jump right into politics,” said Terry. “Several classes held a mock election and the kids were able to choose either Democrat or Republican ballots as they pretended to vote for their presidential candidate. The voter drive was a success.”

Registrars registered 413 new voters, who will be able to vote for the first time in 2016.

**A person must be 18 to register to vote.**



*Above, Chairwoman Adonis Bailey talks to a class; below, left, former registrar Kate Terry passes out information to students; and below right, Registrar Louise Brown talks to a class. Collectively, the Morgan County Board of Registrars registered 413 new voters from several high schools throughout the county.*



## Budget

Continued from page 1

department cut will be in Morgan County Area Transportation System because ridership is down. Everybody else will be level.”

The projected General Fund budget is about \$21 million and the overall projected total is about \$45 million, Long said.

A withdrawal from the county’s reserve fund is inevitable due to technology upgrades.

“We will be using some of our reserves like we did last year, mostly because of computer software upgrades,” said Long. “Most of the upgrades will be a one-time cost, so we won’t have those next year. We were fortunate

to have built up our reserve to have the funds we need for this.”

Commissioners are expecting some revenue increases, which include a \$65,000 increase from Tennessee Valley Authority in-lieu-of-tax money. In addition, the commission expects \$15,000 individual increases from jail telephone commission, prop-

erty taxes and state funds for elections.

A \$50,000 decline in federal inmate housing at the jail is projected for the 2016 fiscal; and decreases of \$50,000 from circuit court and \$25,000 from district court.

“Overall, the county is financially sound, and will still have a good reserve,” Long said. “Our main goal is

not to have expenses be more than our revenue, and so far, we’ve accomplished that each year and we will this year. We hope to get more federal inmate funding, also.”

Long said he anticipates the commission adopting the budget well before Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>, the last day of the current fiscal year.

# Celebrating 50 years

1965—2015

## Community Action Partnership of North Alabama hosts reception to celebrate golden anniversary

In August 1965 the Community Action Agency formed to help meet the needs of residents in Morgan and Marshall counties.

Weatherization of homes was a huge part of the services rendered.

During a span of more than 30 years the agency changed its name several times due to encompassing other counties. The current name change to Community Partnership of North Alabama was in 2002, and today the agency comprises 16 counties: Morgan, Blount, Cherokee, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Walker and Winston.

Last month CAPNA celebrated the agency's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at its location on Central Parkway in Decatur. Executive Director Michael Tubbs and staff welcomed partners, affiliates, local, state and federal government leaders, as well as residents at a reception that began around 11 a.m.

A highlight of the celebration was a video presentation featuring people who are closely associated with the agency.

Jim Byard of Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs stated that of 21 Community Action Agencies, CAPNA stands out for forward thinking.

"You cannot do today's job with yesterday's thinking. Fifty years is a big deal. They care about the peo-



Above, a well-wisher looks over old news clippings about Community Action. Below, left, Allison Speegle, executive assistant to the director, makes her way around greeting visitors. Right, Team Lead of Housing Richard Lyons, left, CAPNA Board advisor Pat Busing and Executive Director Michael Tubbs.



# LIFESouth/Morgan County Patriot Day Blood Drive is Sept. 11

Morgan County will partner with LIFESouth Community Blood Centers for the third Patriot Day Blood Drive in memory of victims and honor of heroes of September 11, 2001.

Commonly referred to as 9/11, the day when terrorists attacked this country killing thousands of people, will be etched into the minds of

Americans forever.

On this day each year, throughout the country memorial events are held for the victims and brave uniformed men and women.

“We look forward to doing what we can to assist LIFESouth with their efforts to get blood donations for this worthy occasion,” said County Commission Chair-

man Ray Long. “We’re honored to be able to offer this public facility as a host station for them.”

LIFESouth Donor Recruiter Cherry Hammonds is grateful.

“We are so thankful for being able to hold this drive at the courthouse each year,” Hammonds said. “This is our third and each time we have

great success. We are looking forward to more of the same this year, and we hope that people will proudly join us in our efforts.”

The blood drive will be held Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The blood mobile will be stationed in the parking lot outside the first floor entrance. The public is urged to participate.

LIFESouth will provide a grilled hotdog lunch, and will give away other items such as T-shirts.

“All donations stay in the area for local hospitals,” Hammonds explained. “Blood was needed during that tragic time, and that’s the main focus of our blood drive.”

LIFESouth’s goal is to receive more than 100 donors.

## “The Voice of Morgan County” a winner

# County wins national award for publication

Morgan County received national honor for its quarterly publication “*The Voice of Morgan County*”.

The county’s Communications Director Sheryl Marsh was recipient of the award for the publication she created in 2012 after the commission hired her to develop the Communications/Community Relations Department. The publication is mailed to 40,000 homes each quarter.

The National Association of County Information Of-

ficers, an affiliate of the National Association of Counties (NACo) has held the competition for more than 30 years to recognize the best works of county public relations officials who strive to promote the government entities they represent. NACIO gave awards for



Marsh

communications projects in nine categories, and a panel of judges recommended some entries for three other categories of honor, one being meritorious. *The Voice of Morgan County* was tapped for the Meritorious Award in the publications category.

Entries were based on originality, effectiveness, results, degree of effort, difficulty and overall quality.

“We are proud of the national recognition for the publication that we pro-

duce for county residents each quarter,” said Chairman Ray Long. “It’s a huge honor for the county and the state. It’s something our residents can be proud of.”

District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark shared Long’s sentiment.

“I’m proud of Sheryl’s accomplishments for doing a great job,” Clark said. “We didn’t expect anything less when we hired her. She knows what she’s doing.”

The awards were presented at a NACIO banquet in

July in Charlotte, NC during NACo’s annual conference.

The national competition included entries from counties throughout the U.S.

### About

## *The Voice of Morgan County*

*The Voice of Morgan County* is published quarterly and mailed to 40,000 homes. It is a product of the County Commission and no portion of it may be re-produced. This is the fourth edition of the third 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.



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### **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.

# TRAINING FOR EMERGENCIES

## Morgan EMA hosts regional meeting for practice drill

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

When unexpected events occur that threaten the safety of residents, Morgan County Emergency Agency Director Eddie Hicks wants to make sure his staff is ready.

Hicks is a frequent host of training events that bring together local emergency agencies as well as state and national on occasion.

Recently, Morgan's EMA operations center was the training facility for a regional drill coordinated by the U.S. Coast

Guard.

"In addition to the Coast Guard it also involved the FBI, state troopers along with local and regional agencies," Hicks said.

"We've had other training that connects to this, but this was the first of this kind. It focused primarily on terrorism and we coordinated response to hypothetical threats that were presented, such as a car bomb or an attack on a water treatment facility."

The exercise was called River City Slam and covered ports from parts of Decatur, Gunterville, Scottsboro, up to the Yel-

low Creek Port of Iuka, Mississippi, Hicks said.

Industries on the waterways were involved in the exercise.

"We interacted with the industries situated along the river," Hicks explained. "We would tell them of something happening like a suspicious vehicle, and proper measures would be taken to deal with the situation. The biggest thing is that we coordinated activities from our operations center in the courthouse basement with emergen-

cy



*In foreground, left, EMA Director Eddie Hicks and County Commission Chairman Ray Long confer during the training session.*

Please see EMA, page 9

## Training, education moved Hicks to Master level, staff members earn basic certification

Morgan County Emergency Management

Agency Director Eddie Hicks never stops

learning as evidenced by 2,000 hours of train-

ing during his career.

He's a firm believer that training and education are mandatory in his line of work.

"Continuing education is extremely important because you really don't need your emergency manager learning the profession with on-the-job training alone," Hicks said. "We deal in so many different areas like weather, terrorism, medical, and finances

that we have to be proficient in. We've got to be knowledgeable."

Recently, Hicks' massive hours of training played a major role for him to become a certified Master in emergency planning. Hicks was the first EMA Director in the state to go to the advance level and he was in the first class of nine EMA professionals for Master level training in 2013. Currently, he is

one of 13 Masters in the field.

To earn Master status Hicks had to complete six of 11 areas of service, which include attending conferences, disaster assistance credit, exercise credit, professional instruction, professional assignment, publish an article, legislative contact, Certified Local Emergency

Please see Training. Page 9



*EMA Director Eddie Hicks believes strongly in a highly trained staff. Recently, Brandy Davis, left, received certification in emergency planning; center, Hicks shows his plaque after completing master level training; and right, DeDe Hayes shows her certificate in emergency planning.*

# CAPNA

Continued from page 6

ple they serve and they are working to do things differently,” Byard said.

Byard read a proclamation from Gov. Robert Bentley that outlined the efforts of CAPNA and partners that have had an enormous impact in the lives of people who were recipients of the services over the past 50 years.

Tubbs unveiled a plaque that commemorated the agency’s 50 years of existence, which was followed by a ribbon cutting led by leaders and members of the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to weatherization, other programs include: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program; Homeownership Preparation and Counseling, Foster Grandparents/Senior Companions, Meals on Wheels, and Head Start, which currently serves almost 2,800 children. CAPNA has early childhood classrooms in 15 of the 16 counties in its coverage area. The program provides services for children from 0-5 in Early Head

Start, Head Start and state-funded Pre-K programs and child care partnerships in numerous counties throughout the state.

Four years ago CAPNA became a charter member of NeighborWorks America, which has more than 240

members throughout the nation, who are committed to developing communities and providing affordable housing for low income people.

In addition, CAPNA partners with United Way of Morgan County to provide meals and wellness checks

for 325 residents through Meals on Wheels and other services.

Overall, the agency has many and varied services that help improve the quality of life for the communities it serves.



Community Action Partnership of North Alabama celebrated its 50th anniversary in August. Above and below are scenes from the event.



## Training

Continued from page 8

Manager (CLEM) certification, community involvement, and professional certification.

Hicks sends his staff for training, also. Two employees have earned EMA basic certification after com-

pleting 300 hours of training, and one is at the intermediate level after finishing 650 hours.

County officials say Hicks is a top notch leader in the field.

“Eddie has been in the field for more than 30 years and he is a true professional,” said District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher. “He certainly

does an outstanding job for Morgan County and he represents us well at the state and national levels.”

District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark agreed.

“You don’t find Eddie’s quality of leadership and work every day,” said Clark.

## EMA

Continued from page 8

centers in other counties.”

The drill had about 50 participants over a three-day period.

“It was a very good learning experience because we were coordinating with a good cross section of response groups,” Hicks said.

County Commission Chairman Ray Long, who welcomed the visitors to the event, said he was impressed with the training.

“It’s good that Eddie hosted this event and others that are similar,” said Long. “It gives our county an extra layer of security in the event of an emergency or threatening situation.”

# Long

# At the ACCA Convention

**Continued from page 3**

In addition to the ACCA board, Long was appointed a member of the Alabama Housing Finance Authority by Gov. Robert Bentley.

He holds leadership positions on other boards, also. He is chairman of the Board of Directors for the Tennessee Valley Juvenile Detention Center; chairman of the Morgan County Community Corrections Board of Directors; and he is a member of North Alabama Regional Council of Governments; member of Joe Wheeler Electrical Membership Corporation Board of Directors and Decatur Rotary Club. He and his wife Regina are members of Somerville Baptist Church.

Prior to becoming commission chairman, Long was Mayor of Somerville.

As president, Long will preside over all ACCA meetings, and represent the state at national governmental events, among other duties.

ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield said he looks forward to Long's leadership.

"Ray brings the two most essential ingredients for leading our state Association; he is one of the most energetic individuals I have ever met and he has the respect and confidence of county officials and employees in every county of our state," Brasfield said. "We are excited about what we can accomplish this year under his leadership."

After his inauguration at the convention Long told the crowd:

"As we begin another year in county government I want to thank you for allowing me to be your president. "As we start a new year we will focus on continuing the programs that are already in place, working hard together to carry forward the standard that has already been established by this association."



*Long and wife Regina.*



*Left, Long and his family, right, Long surrounded by all four commissioners.*



*Left, a Mobile County Commissioner and past president Merceria Ludgood passes the president's gavel to Long. Right, Long surrounded by leaders in other counties. From left, Dale County Commissioner Steve McKinnon, Marshall County Commissioner Bill Strickland, Long and ACCA Minority Director Tony Chery.*

# Voter Registrar transitions into new position, new office

By Sheryl Marsh  
**Communications Director**

When Kate Terry went to work in the Board of Registrars she didn't know she would acquire a passion for elections.

Then, it happened.

After she moved from administrative assistant to one of three registrars she found her niche in dealing with the election process from voter registration to ballot casting.

It's that experience that landed her in the Deputy Chief Clerk/Director of Elections position in Probate Judge Greg Cain's office.

Terry started her new job on August 10<sup>th</sup>, and transitioning was easy.

"I feel right at home and I'm working with an excellent staff like the one I left," she said. "I will continue to learn everything I can. Judge Cain is on the cut-

ting edge of technology and I believe he will move Morgan County beyond the 21st Century with elections. I look forward to working with him to make elections even more accessible via the website. There's so much he already offers online, from registration deadline to voting precincts, just to mention a few. He has iPads and in the future we're hoping to have electronic poll books."

Terry replaced JoAnn Wotton, who retired recently.

"JoAnn was a wealth of knowledge," Terry said. "She was so good at her work, and I hope I'm able to fill her shoes."

As elections director Terry will work all elections, covering precincts to make sure poll workers have everything they need; and she will be present at the courthouse when poll workers bring election results.



*Kate Terry began working in Probate Judge Greg Cain's office as Deputy Chief Clerk/Elections Director last month. She had worked in the Board of Registrars office for 12 years.*

Also, Terry will work with Chief Clerk Sylvia Tucker performing duties such as scheduling for employees and serving as a supervisor.

"I'll help address problems that arise, and pro-

vide customer service, filling in when employees are out," Terry said.

Cain said Terry brings a new outlook to elections.

"We are excited to have her on board," the judge said. "Obviously, we're

going to miss JoAnn and all the wisdom she had. We look forward to working with Kate. She brings a unique perspective of elections to our office.

**Please see Registrar, page 15**

# Morgan Sheriff representing county with distinction on state and national levels

*Holds memberships in numerous organizations*

Since taking office five years ago Sheriff Ana Franklin has distinguished herself in law enforcement through organizations on state and national levels.

Recently, she was appointed to the National Sheriffs Association Legal Affairs Committee, which studies legislation and court rulings that affect sheriff offices. The committee is made up of legislators, attorneys (prosecutors and defense), civil rights/victim advocates and law enforcement

personnel. Members attend U.S. Supreme Court sessions to keep abreast of national and local law enforcement issues.

In addition, the sheriff is a member of the National Drug Enforcement Committee and National Victims Committee through the National Sheriffs Association. She is district chairperson of the Alabama Sheriffs Association Executive Committee, and she serves on seven committees statewide.

Gov. Robert Bentley appoint-

ed her to the Juvenile Justice Reform Committee earlier this year.

Franklin says she has acquired vast knowledge from being involved with the organizations.

"The opportunities to serve on these committees have given me insight and education as to new laws and trends in law enforcement, which has greatly helped me in my position as Morgan County Sher-

**Please see Sheriff, page 13**



*Morgan County Sheriff Ana Franklin is acquiring a wealth of knowledge through memberships and involvement with state and national organizations.*

# Mowing grass, paving roads and Construction under way in districts

Work is ongoing in all four districts and mowing grass on rights-of-way is priority. "We've just completed bush hogging on the west side and we're moving on to the eastside, said District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher.

"We're wrapping up a project at Falkville High, and we have constructed one of three pads for storm shelters for Eva. And, of course, we are patching potholes on our roads."

In addition, Stisher said his

shop employees have been removing debris from roadways and improving road conditions.

Recently, workers finished applying chip seal on Parker Gap Road.

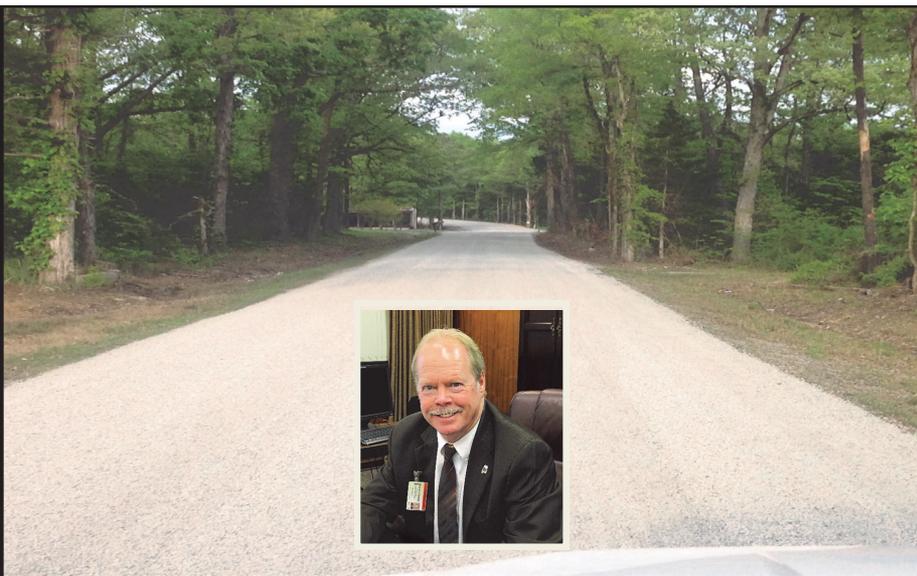
District 1 Commissioner

Jeff Clark said he continues to extend assistance to the county school system, while maintaining roads and rights-of-way in his district.

Progress is being made on construction of the new Lacey's Spring Senior Citizen

Center in District 4. District 2 workers are busy with maintaining roads and rights-of-way.

District shop employees work four days a week, 10 hours each day.



Left, Parker Gap Road in Commissioner Don Stisher's District 3 was improved recently. Right, Construction of Lacey's Spring new senior citizens center is underway.

## Vest earns graduate award

### Model commissioner

District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest received the County Commissioner Graduate award during the Association of County Commissions of Alabama annual convention in August. Chairman Ray Long, who became ACCA president at the convention, presented the award to Vest.

Vest joins a select group of 89 commissioners in the state who have earned this distinction. Vest completed all course work to graduate from the Alabama Local Government Training Institute through Au-

burn University.

"Commissioner Vest's achievement underscores a strong commitment and dedication to public service in county government," said Dr. Don-Terry Veal, director of the Center for Governmental Services and administrator of the program. "The graduates of the program contribute enormously to the betterment and improvement of county government in Alabama, and graduates such as Commissioner Vest serve as a model of the best in our system of grassroots democratic government."



Chairman Ray Long, left, presented the graduate award to Commissioner Randy Vest during the ACCA annual convention.

# Driver's license renewal

## office back on second floor

The Morgan County License Commissioner's driver's license office returned to the second floor of the courthouse in July.

The license division was separated from the tag office and moved to the first floor in 2007.

License Commissioner Sharon Maxwell said she wants all operations in the same office on the second floor.

"I want all of our employees to be together at the courthouse,"

Maxwell said. "We had to take somebody off the line to relieve her (license clerk) for lunch, and with her being up here she can go to lunch and if somebody comes for a driver's license any one of us can go over there and renew it. And, when she's not busy with driver's license she can help us with tag renewals in the express line. I believe we'll have a more efficient operation."

## Sheriff

Continued from page 11

iff."

Franklin is serving her second term as sheriff, and has an ongoing war on drugs. She is re-

sponsible for going throughout the county making major drug busts, that are frequently in homes where children live and are endangered by the illegal substances.

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# Pink for cause

*Sheriff's patrol car painted  
for breast cancer awareness*

Sheriff Ana Franklin likes the color pink.

The main reason is because it's the official color of breast cancer awareness, which the sheriff supports.

She participates in the annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walk in October each year, and she makes a donation from pink T-shirts sales.

This year, the sheriff will be a standout in a pink patrol car that will be used in the annual walk.

"I have owned a pair of pink

handcuffs since I've been in law enforcement, so there has always been that question as to when I would start painting my patrol cars pink since I was elected sheriff," Franklin said.

The vehicle was retired from the patrol fleet due to age, and was scheduled to be crushed, but the sheriff had a great idea that didn't cost taxpayers a dime.

Her father Woody Woodard painted the car for free, and Shelton Sign Company in Decatur donated the lettering.



*Sheriff Ana Franklin and her father, Woody Woodard, left, in front of patrol car he painted for free. Right, employees of Shelton Sign Co.*

"We're so appreciative for the donations. They are for a worthy cause," she said.

"Our surrounding Alabama sheriff offices are getting on board with breast cancer

awareness promotions and we are excited about it. It is a worthy cause."



## CIRCUIT CLERK CHRIS PRIEST

### WHY HAVE A PASSPORT?

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#### 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**

# Registrar

Continued from page 11

There is a program for a person to become a certified elections administrator through the elections center at Auburn University, and it's very intensive training. A person must complete 12 courses and Kate has already finished five of them. By the end of 2016 she will be a certified elections administrator. There are only about 800 or so in the nation. We're looking forward to her receiving that certification."

Board of Registrars Chairwoman Adonis Bailey said she and others in the office will miss Terry.

"Kate and I were friends before she ever came to the office," Bailey

shared "She was just a young, 19 year old, so it's been 12 years that we sat beside each other. We had a special relationship because we worked together and worshiped together. She was family to me so it's like a family member moved out of town. We'll miss her but I think we'll see her pretty regularly."

Terry went to work as an administrative assistant in for the Board of Registrars in 2003. In 2006 former State Auditor Beth Chapman appointed her registrar. The governor, state auditor and agriculture commissioner, each appoints one of the three registrars.

Terry and her husband Jonathan reside in Trinity.

## Cecil Cole retires after 30 years, plans to enjoy his retirement

The Morgan County circuit clerk's office lost 30 years of experience when District Court Magistrate Cecil Cole retired in August.

Cole and his wealth of experience and knowledge will be missed.

"Cecil is knowledgeable and even-tempered, which is a great combination when dealing with the public," said Circuit Clerk Chris Priest. "He looked at issues and did an excellent job of determining what needed to be done in various situations. Every case started with Cecil, all of the misdemeanors and a majority of the felonies. This office will miss him."

Cole said it was time to retire and he plans to enjoy retirement.



Cole holds his 30-year certificate of service.

"I want to do some fun stuff," he said. I want to spend more time with my beautiful wife, Jean and a lot of time with my two year old grandson Noah."

Cole served in several positions during his tenure, and when he retired he was a district court specialist/magistrate.



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