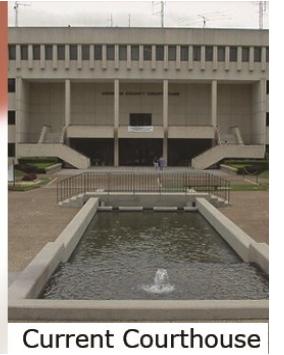




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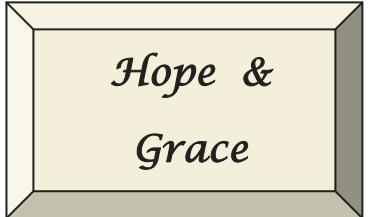
Current Courthouse

MORGAN COUNTY COMMISSION

June 2013

VOLUME 1, NO. 3

Making Dad Proud



Probate Judge Greg Cain's daughters excel in academics, sports

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

As a freshman at Hartselle High Hope Cain is an honor student and pitches softball on a collegiate level, drawing attention from scouts.

Sister Grace has acquired senior status during her third year at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She's an honor student and a member

of several honor societies.

They are making their father, Morgan County Probate Judge Greg Cain proud.

"I have two wonderful girls, and I am extremely proud of them," said Cain. Hope is an excellent ball player and we have had some attention from several, different universities. Obviously it's too early for her to be recruited. Grace would

be on target to graduate a half semester early, but we encouraged her to slow down. I'm extremely happy with what Hope and Grace are accomplishing. We're blessed to have them."

Hope, 15, plays on the junior varsity and varsity teams at Hartselle High. The season began in February and

Please see Cain sisters page 4



Grace

Hope

Morgan's Debbie Penney a valuable county employee



**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

Debbie Penney transitioned from an age of hand-written to computer-issued checks, and she's seen many politicians come and go during her employment

with the county that spans more than 30 years.

Penney is accounts payable clerk for the Morgan County Commission and in that position

Please see employee, page 14

Morgan County Archives

A treasure of knowledge

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

If you're studying family heritage or seeking a public record, Morgan County Archives is the place to go. There, lies a wealth of history and information about people, places and events.

The Bank Street facility is home to thousands of local government records dating to 1818.

Established in 1995 by the County Commission, Archives has become somewhat of a tourist attraction for people seeking information, accord-

ing to Archivist John Allison. "We get the casual visitors, but we also have a lot of people to come for research," Allison said. "We have people who come from other states and lodge here in our local

Please see archives page 3

Security staff keeping courthouse safe

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

Before you get into an office inside the Morgan County Courthouse you must go through their work station.

They are the first faces you see when entering the courthouse and perhaps the last when exiting.

They're there to keep the facility safe through screening visitors for clearance to go throughout the building.

Five men make up the security staff, keeping knives, guns, brass knuckles and other dangerous weapons out of the courthouse.

Those who've been working security for a while have seen

and heard a lot.

"One lady came in with a bottle of beer in her baby's diaper bag," said Sgt. Steve

Poole, security supervisor.

"We haven't found any drugs directly per say, but we have found half smoked marijuana

cigarettes in the basket after some folks had gotten their stuff out and left. I've arrest

Please see safe page 5



Sgt. Steve Poole monitors the first floor entrance.

Inside

Drug court graduates free to live again, page 12

Sheriff's Rodeo, page 6

Senior citizens dance at big party, page 9

Circuit clerk's office dumps paper filing system, page 8

DA collecting delinquent restitution, page 8

Decatur Rotary names Chairman Ray Long a Paul Harris Fellow

By Sheryl Marsh
 Communications Director

Morgan County Commission Chairman Ray Long has been named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club of Decatur-Daybreak.

A donation was made in honor of Long to the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International.



Long

Such a contribution is often made by an individual to recognize the good works of a family member, friend or public servant, according to member Attorney Gay Maloney.

Long was keynote speaker at the club's May 8th meeting and did not know he would be a recipient of the award, but was elated after being tapped.

"I am very honored to receive this award," said Long. "It was a complete surprise. These are the kind of surprises you like to get. Rotary means so much to our area and I'm glad to be a part of such a hard working group. To receive this honor from them means so much to me."

Long is a member of Rotary Club of Decatur-Noon.

Along with the Paul Harris bestowal Long received a pin, certificate and medallion for recognition as a fellow.

District Judge Charles Langham, who is president of the Daybreak Club said Long is worthy of the honor.

"As president I was extremely pleased that our Rotary Club honored Chairman Ray Long as a Paul Harris Fellow," Langham said. "Ray Long, through his leadership and vision, has moved Morgan County forward through tough economic times and has created teamwork among the other commissioners that positively represents and reflects the interests of the people as a whole. He is doing a great job and deserves this high honor."

Paul Harris was an attorney in Chicago in 1905 when he organized the first Rotary Club with three clients, according to Wikipedia. His goal was to create a club of professional and business men for friendship and fellowship. As president Harris led the club to initiate public service

Please see fellow, page 13



Residents who go to the Somerville Senior Citizen Center frequently, came out for a groundbreaking ceremony for a new center that will be built across the street from Somerville Courthouse. Some of the seniors helped Chairman Ray Long and District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest hold shovels in this photo.

Groundbreaking for new Somerville senior center

About 30 Morgan County residents attended a groundbreaking ceremony in April for a new senior citizen center at Somerville.

District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest anticipates work beginning after employees in his county shop completes

site preparation.

"Our work will begin as soon as it dries up and we can get equipment in and start moving earth," Vest said. "We're going to take care of all the site work which includes removal of dirt, building elevations and landscaping the

parking lot."

After they finish Morgan County-based E-Tech Construction will begin construction and Vest is hoping the center, which will cost about \$258,000, will be finished and operating by fall.

"The time it takes to com-

plete construction will be heavily driven by the weather as in any construction project," Vest said. "I'm shooting for October, but you can't say exactly because of the potential weather delays."

The center will be across from Somerville Courthouse .

Revenue Department appraiser earns state certification

Joshua Rains, an appraiser in Revenue Commissioner Amanda Scott's office successfully completed a comprehensive examination recently to become an Alabama certified real property appraiser.



Rains

The Alabama Association of Assessing Officials will hold an induction ceremony in conjunction with its annual summer conference, according to Bill Bass, director of the state Department of Revenue's property tax division. Rains has worked as a county appraiser for six years.

"I'm proud of him in that he was determined," said Scott. "He studied hard and passed the examination. As an ap-

praiser in this office he has always been dedicated and

does an outstanding job." Rains and his wife Cindy

have one daughter, Lexi. They live in Decatur.

Sirens sound off for testing each month, not to be confused with weather warning

By Sheryl Marsh
 Communications Director

Although Tennessee Valley Authority sirens are primarily used to warn residents of severe weather, they are also sounded for testing.

TVA owns the sirens that are placed throughout Decatur and the main purpose is to warn people if an emergency arises at Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant, according to Emergency Management Agency Director Eddie Hicks.

"TVA is gracious enough to allow us to use the outdoor

warning system to also warn of severe weather potential," Hicks said. "Because the main function is for Browns Ferry, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission mandates regular testing of the sirens."

The set date is the second Monday of each month at 9:15 a.m.

Sometimes, on a scheduled testing date the weather could be rainy or stormy, but sounding the sirens isn't necessarily for warning.

It's important for residents to pay attention to all sirens

and check to make sure they're not sounding for weather alert.

"I emphasize that at any time the outdoor sirens are sounded the public should tune to our local media to see why the sirens are sounding," Hicks said. "If there is an emergency with the plant or with the weather the local radio and television stations would be reporting the information on the potential emergency."

Eighteen TVA sirens are placed throughout the city.

Archives

Continued from page 1

hotels, and some go to RV parks. They're doing family research and they stay until they're finished. People who come in are visibly impressed and they say this is the nicest archives they've been to."

Allison runs the department with the help of a part time assistant and four volunteers who help with indexing records and assisting visitors with research. A custodian keeps the building clean and helps Allison with moving and arranging displays.

"Our small staff and volunteers do a wonderful job here and their work is greatly appreciated," said Allison.

Volunteers and Allison's assistant, Libby Boggess say working

at the facility is rewarding for them.

"I enjoy working here, looking back into history, reading about many things I recall that happened years ago," said Lillie Robinson, who does indexing. "I've learned a lot about Decatur since I've been working here."

Volunteer Linda Jones said it's therapeutic for her.

"I have major depression and coming here helps that," Jones said. "I enjoy the work and meeting people."

Jones does computer research to help visitors, and she does indexing as well.

Boggess said being a lifelong native is helpful as Allison's assistant.

"I reckon I know where every

cemetery is and where every school is," said Boggess. "I love to read and I have a good memory, and that's why I'm good at what I do."

Allison, who has been director of archives since 2006, is charged with multiple tasks including keeping dated public records.

"We're the official depository for county records," he said.

"All of the county agencies have records here. We have probate files and county commission meeting minutes that date back to 1818. We also have old license, property tax and circuit court records. Some things are trashed upon arrival, some must be kept forever and then you have those in-between. We have stuff sched-

uled to be kept 50 years, 25 years, 10 or two years. That's the records management side of it. The main point is to organize it and make it available to the public."

Some records such as adoptions are private and Allison said he keeps those from public viewing.

"I have a lot of requests from people looking for deeds and tax records, and I am frequently in contact with various department heads about what's restricted and what's not," Allison said.

Volumes of *Decatur Daily* newspapers from 1919 to date are shelved at the archives.

Over the years people have donated photographs of events and people of interest and

clothing, including uniforms from the Civil War, which Allison has prominently displayed throughout the facility.

"We have a lot of military veteran material on the third floor and we're going to do a display honoring veterans, with particular interest on World War II," he said.

The main exhibits for the first floor will be the Civil War and Scottsboro Boys, which went on display in April. Allison says he hopes to have the war display finished by winter or early next year.

Allison considers archives a valuable attraction

"I think it's a draw," he said. "Archives is a great county asset."



The archives facility on Bank Street is a valuable resource for research for local residents and people from afar. It holds an abundance of the county's rich history. Displays help tell stories. Left, old records and the vault, a remnant from the facility's days as Tennessee Valley Bank. Center, mannequins sport uniforms from WWII, Korean and Vietnam wars. Right, a replica of a ship built at Ingalls shipyard during WWII.

Scottsboro Boys exhibit a permanent display

By Sheryl Marsh

Communications Director

Packed in metal/composite crates, the Scottsboro Boys exhibit hit the road in April, going throughout the state and could possibly go across country.

While one exhibit is on tour another was erected and will be on permanent display at Morgan County Archives on Bank Street.

Local artist Joel McWhorter and wife, Laura, a design team provided services for the display located in a corner room at the facility.

"The permanent display is scaled down from the traveling exhibit," said Archivist John Allison. "The traveling exhibit has 35 frame prints and the one here has 24."

In addition, the mobile exhibit has 10 narrative panels about the trial and photographs from

the proceeding.

Carol Puckett, a member of Southern Literary Trail worked with North Carolina Professor Dan Carter to develop the narrative panels, Allison said. Carter wrote a book about the Scottsboro Boys in 1968.

For the permanent display McWhorter created a mural of the judge's bench from the Scottsboro Boys 1933 trial in Decatur, and a witness chair is placed in front of it. The actual bench that the late Judge James Horton used is currently in the district courtroom on the first floor. The witness chair in the archives display is the original from the trial.

"The artistic design mimics the courtroom scene," said Allison. "It is simply fantastic."

Allison put together the traveling exhibit which had its debut at the Carnegie Visual Art Center from February to

March.

The next stop was the state capitol in Montgomery where it was to be placed in the old Supreme Court chamber, and from there it was going to Tuskegee Institute. The tour proceeds to Mobile, then Tuscaloosa before going to Jackson, Miss.

Allison says the tour could go to major metropolises.

"We've had interest shown from officials in Atlanta, Nebraska, Los Angeles and New York City," he said.

"I talked with the producer of a musical about the Scottsboro Boys in Los Angeles and she was definitely interested in the display."

Gov. Robert Bentley signed a resolution in April pardoning the nine black youths of rape charges leveled against them in 1931. The case drew nation



Archivist John Allison, right, shows the permanent display to Probate Judge Greg Cain, Chairman Ray Long and District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher.

al attention back then and continues to do so today.

"I think with these exhibits it will draw even more interest,"

said Allison. "After 80 years it still has relevance and it will always hold a spot in history. It's a great project."

Cain sisters

Continued from page 1

Hope 's record shows 82 innings and 153 strikeouts on the junior varsity team.

Softball lured Hope at age 6 and she's still dedicated to the sport.

"I love softball because it teaches me life lessons every day, things like how to persevere, dedication and dealing with hard people," said Hope. "I love it because it lets me express my competitive edge and it is a good stress reliever. One of the happiest moments of my life is when we win a big game or tournament and know that all the hard work has finally paid off."

She is a member of the Birmingham Thunderbolts traveling team, whose season will begin this month. Cain is assistant coach.

"The team is made up of girls from throughout the state, who

were born in 1998," Cain explained.

Playing on the travel team has opened opportunities for Hope.

Last year she attended an invitational recruiting jamboree conducted by OnDeck Softball in Birmingham. She was one of 75 players from

across the country to be invited to the Southern Jamboree held at the Shea Brothers Softball Complex. About 20 Division 1 college coaches were

present and Hope got some attention.

Coupled with her softball

Please see sisters, page 14



Left photo, Grace, center, performs testing at Hudson Alpha laboratory. Right photo, Hope pitches a "mean" strike during one of her games.



Hope started playing ball at age 6.

Hope's softball statistics and achievements

Hartselle High's varsity softball team:

Batting average: .445

On base percentage: .526

Junior varsity:

Batting average: .377

On base percentage: .514

One grand slam

So far this season has thrown 52 innings and amassed 153 strikeouts

2012 records

Junior varsity: 15 wins, 0 losses, one save

Birmingham Thunderbolts traveling team:

8 wins, 0 losses, 8 saves

Academic achievements:

Honor student at Hartsell High, and member of National Junior Honor Society

Grace's achievements

Membership and honors: Global and Community Leadership Honors, Alpha Epsilon Delta Pre-Med Honor Society, Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society, Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Golden Excellence Scholarship, Marion Career **Biology Scholarship.**

Experience: Hudson Alpha Research assistant during summer of 2012. Used PCR for DNA cloning, made and ran polyacrylamide gels; and compiled, compared, analyzed and critiqued scientific data.

Research: Microbiology Lab, tuberculosis, renal cell carcinoma, molecular ecology, emergency medical and HHMI Phage Explorations.

Community service: Link-up Mentoring, UAB into the Streets, Children's Hospital Orthopedic Ward, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Turkey Creek Reserve Project and Central Food Bank of Alabama Food Drive.

Seniors at Turner-Surles like good card games, lively party

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

"We're playing a card game called "eight to one", but nobody knows what it is because we named it ourselves," chuckled Judy Little, one of about 35 residents who go to the county's senior citizen site housed at Turner-Surles Community Center.

At least two card games are going all the time. Rook and UNO appear to be favorites.

Like other seniors throughout the county, the Decatur residents go to the center for fun, games, laughter and a nutritious meal.

"I come just to be around

One big party
page 9

other people here," said Betty Thomas, 75. "We like everything about it, playing cards, going on field trips. When we go everybody wins something and that's the best part of it."

"We feel like a bunch of school kids," M.C. Taylor, 88, added to the conversation.

MCATS buses transport the group to neighboring cities, Cullman, Huntsville and Moulton for various events, including health fairs.

Lura Russell, 75, says her fa-

vorite thing is: "The fact that I don't have to cook lunch,"

They eat lunch at 11:30 and on this particular day the meal was

spaghetti/meatballs, salad and chocolate cake for dessert.

Steven Griffin, manager of the senior site, described a typical

day.

"First, we get out 28 meals to

Please see seniors page 9



Senior citizens divide into groups to play various card games at Turner-Surles Community Center.

Safe

Continued from page 1

ed two people who came to the courthouse drunk and I've made several arrests for brass knuckles. It's against the law to carry them."

The County Commission created the security department in 2000 and Poole was one of the first officers. He became supervisor more than eight years ago. He is an Alabama Peace Officer Standards Training (APOST) certified officer.

Poole served in the U.S. Army eight years and completed 25 years including reserve time served with the National Guard from which he retired two years ago.

His military experience as a First Sergeant in the Guard is helpful to him in his security role.

"Being an NCO (None Commissioned Officer) in the military helped me in supervising this unit," Poole said. "The military prepared me for what might happen out here. You just have to expect the unexpected, not routine. It's far from that. People have different personalities and attitudes. It's anything but boring."

Poole said he and the other officers stand ready to respond to outbreaks in courtrooms.

"We've had a number of occasions when people ran out of the courtroom, community corrections or the driver's license office after learning they had outstanding warrants because they didn't want to go to jail. We had to get control of them," Poole said.

The staff is divided between the first and second floor entrances and Poole said the traffic count between the two floors has reached as high as 3,000 per day during high volume court sessions.

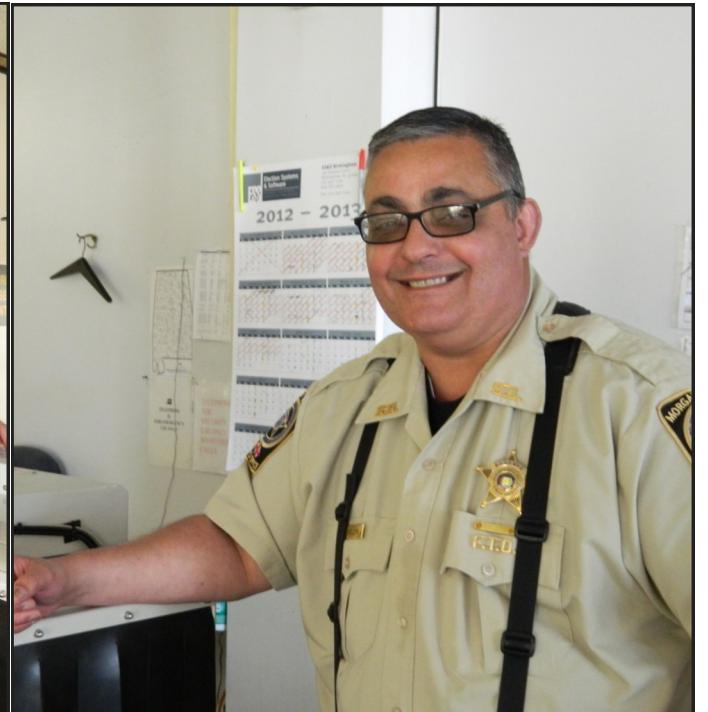
"When we were keeping count the average number a day was between 1,800 and 2,000 on the first floor and 1,500 or 1,600 on the second floor," he said. "But, it's always higher on court days."

All of the security officers like their jobs.

"I love it," said Jose Arboleya, who has 23 years of law enforcement experience. "It's the best work I've done. I like dealing with the people and helping them. I'm very fair with people and diligent with my duties." Arboleya has been with the sheriff's department since 2007 and has worked in courthouse security over a year. His past law enforcement experience was in Miami.

Kyle Johnson has been with the sheriff's department six years and moved to courthouse security in November.

"I like interacting with the public and I love my co-workers," said John-



Left, Kyle Johnson and Gregory Tetreault at one of two courthouse security stations. Right, Jose Arboleya works another station. The officers screen visitors before they enter offices at the facility.

son.

Gregory Tetreault, who is APOST-

certified, also, has worked for the department seven years and just recently joined the

security staff.

"This is an important job, having to make sure the facili-

ty is safe, and it's a job that I love," Tetreault said. "I also love meeting all the people."

Extra duty

Security officer performs marriages for those who don't make it to probate chapel on time

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

When Thomas Farris came to work as a security officer at the Morgan County Courthouse he didn't know he would get to perform duties from his prior profession as an ordained minister.

He doesn't preach between duties, but he performs marriage ceremonies for brides and grooms who didn't make it to the probate wedding chapel on time.

Farris has performed six marriages during his one-year tenure as a security officer.

He explained how he started the extra duty.

"It didn't happen on purpose as much as it did out of necessity," said Farris. "The probate office doesn't perform marriages after 3 p.m. and a young couple went there after that time and came back down, saying it was too late and they really wanted to get married that day. I said I can make that happen. I told them I'm an ordained minister and with permission from my supervisor I can have you married in five or ten minutes. I got per-

mission and pulled them over in front of the snack bar and married them."

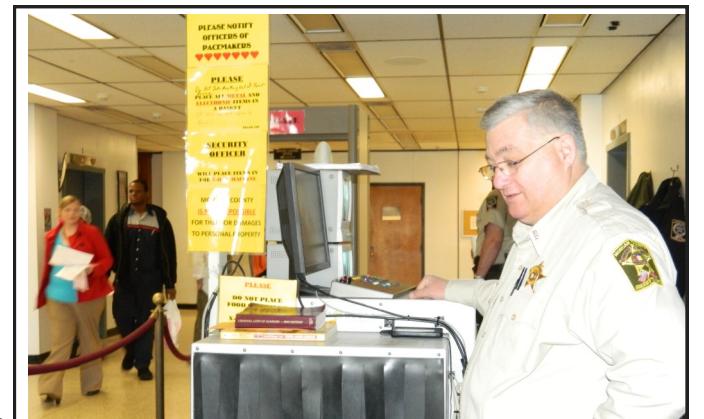
In performing the ceremony Farris says he takes a more biblical approach.

"I know it's more secular at the courthouse, but I put a little Bible scripture into it, such as, 'what God has joined together let no man separate'. And, I talk about the ring and the significance of it, about the never ending love of the circle of the ring."

Before going to work for the sheriff's department at the county jail, Farris was a minister for 28 years at churches in Mississippi and North Alabama.

Being a security officer means a lot to him, also.

"I am a people person to an extent," he said. "I like meeting different people and this venue gives me an opportunity to do that. I've been very pleased working for the sheriff's department and the sheriff. I love our security staff and our supervisor, Sgt. Poole rocks. He knows his stuff and he's passed along a lot of that to us."



Thomas Farris on security duty

During his tenure in security Farris has witnessed some serious situations.

"We have people who come to the courthouse who are irate or polarized," he said. "As security officers we must take care of that without anybody being injured or hurt and we do that professionally. It is our duty to protect the courthouse and keep it safe and we have a great staff doing that."

Although security is his priority Farris welcomes the opportunity to perform marriages.

"When people in the probate office heard about it they asked me if I was the

one marrying people and I told them yes. They were fine with it and said they would send others to me," he said. "I always ask permission, and it's something I enjoy doing."

Chief Probate Clerk Sylvia Tucker said Farris helps the office a lot by performing the marriages.

"We think what he does is great," Tucker said. "Sometimes we're not available because we're tied up doing regular stuff and if it's election time we're knee-deep in it. So, we really appreciate him."

Sheriff's report

Crime numbers declining

Arrests soaring

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

Morgan County Drug Task Force has been busy getting illegal drugs off the streets while the Special Victim's Unit keeps the community safe from sexual predators.

Since 2011 the task force confiscated almost \$500,000 in assets, 600 pounds of marijuana, 11 pounds of cocaine and 14 pounds of methamphetamine related to alleged drug dealers in the county. In addition, 500 meth labs were found and destroyed.

The confiscation came from the arrests of more than 750 individuals, according to the sheriff's department.

"For the first time we are now seeing statistical data that has shown that our drug arrests have increased and our offenders are being incarcerated, and the numbers of property crimes reported have decreased," said Sheriff Ana Franklin.

After Franklin took office in January 2011 she re-connected the task force to the Madison-Morgan High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), which is led by a federal drug task force that targets high-level drug dealers throughout North Alabama.

Franklin created the Special Victims Unit as an arm of the Criminal Investigations Division and the task force. The SVU team investigates child abuse and keeps the sex offender registry updated among other duties.

The county has 340 registered sex offenders.

CID reports a decrease in some areas of criminal activity such as theft which went from 348 cases in 2011 to 292 last year. Burglary cases decreased from 265 in 2011 to 191 last year. Arrests increased. CID made 174 arrests in 2011 and 267 last year.

"The increase was accomplished with a handful of investigators compared to other agencies," Franklin said. "Solving crimes for victims and closing cases in Morgan County is the goal for each of these investigators."

Sheriff's rodeo fun time for kids

Simply special



Sheriff Ana Franklin gives attention to one of the children who attended the Special Needs Rodeo in March.

Children enjoy activities at Sheriff's Special Needs Rodeo at Celebration Arena

Event one of sheriff's favorites

The Special Needs Rodeo is a highlight of the year for Morgan County Sheriff Ana Franklin. Every spring the event is held in conjunction with the sheriff's rodeo at Celebration Arena in Priceville.

"This is the best day of the year to give our deputies, jail staff and employees the opportunity to do what they became a law enforcement officer for, to help those in need," Franklin said.

The attendance this year was around 1,200 and children participated in various activities includ-

ing face painting, ball toss, roping, disco dancing, hay and buggy rides. An hour-long mini rodeo was available for children with special needs.

Proceeds from the event were shared with: Child Advocacy Center, \$1000; Special Olympics Torch Run, \$1,250; Special Needs Accessible Playground (SNAP), \$2,500; and Parents and Children Together (PACT), \$1,000.

The event is open only to schools and organizations that benefit children with special needs.



Nearly \$1 million spent on District 2 roads

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest has spent about \$1 million paving roads in the district and several other roads are on tap for repair and resurfacing.

“We plan to pave a total of 38 roads,” said Vest. We recently finished putting down pipe on Lee Road which also extends into District 3 near Massey. We replaced cross pipes, and we have to let them settle for two or three months before we go back and put down asphalt.”

Roads that have been paved



Left, Turtle Creek Road in Somerville has been paved. Right, District 2 workers finish replacing cross pipes on Lee Road.

in Vest’s district are: Vaughn Bridge, Taylor, Danny Wallace, Liberty, Southeast Byrd and

Lott roads and Turtle Creek Road in Somerville. “Most are getting resurfaced

and some are getting leveled and resurfaced,” Vest said. “We have several other roads to do

in Somerville, but we want to Please see roads, page 14

One bidder pays \$371,000 at annual property tax sale

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

The revenue commissioner’s office had 195 parcels up for bids at the annual property tax sale last month and sold all but 52 of the properties on which delinquent taxes were owed.

The properties auc-

tioned for taxes totaled \$530,980, according to Revenue Commissioner Amanda Scott.

In accordance with state law, each county has to auction properties for non-payment of taxes every year.

“This was the highest number we’ve ever had,”

Scott said. Prior to the auction, and we make every possible attempt to contact property owners about delinquent taxes. We sent registered letters, made phone calls and did everything we could to give property owners a chance to pay the taxes.”

The 52 properties that didn’t sell at the auction, will go on a list at the state Department of Revenue.

The properties that sold at the auction will not go immediately to the buyers. Property owners Please see sale , page 14



Revenue Commissioner Amanda Scott conducts auction of properties in May.

Honoring law enforcement heroes



Annual Law Enforcement Memorial Day at Cotaco Park

A crowd gathered at Cotaco Park at the courthouse on May 15th to honor fallen and current law enforcement officers.

The service was in observance of Law Enforcement Memorial Day. District Attorney Scott Anderson was the keynote speaker for the event; and County Commission Chair-

man Ray Long and Decatur Mayor Don Kyle addressed the crowd, also.

Decatur Police Chief Ed Taylor called roll of officers who died in the line of duty. Family members placed roses at a memorial on which each officer’s name is engraved.

While acknowledging the fallen officers, Anderson

told those present how much he appreciated the work they do .

Long and Kyle also told officers how appreciative they are for the work they do to keep the cities and county safe.

The service concluded with the release of doves, a 21-gun salute and the playing of taps.



Judicial officials create plan for collection of restitution owed in aged criminal cases

By Sheryl Marsh

Communications Director

Morgan County District Attorney Scott Anderson's office has collected almost \$20,000 in restitution that was ordered in circuit court criminal cases dating to 2002.

Anderson, Circuit Judge Glenn Thompson, Circuit Clerk Chris Priest and Community Corrections Director Kim Thurston are working together to collect restitution owed to crime victims.

"We are setting dockets in circuit and district courts and notifying defendants who owe victims that their cases are being called before the court for payment," Anderson explained. "We've had one docket with about 100 cases and out of that number we have had 65 or 70 defendants appear in court. Thirty days after the court proceeding in March my office alone collected over \$17,000, not including what's been paid in the clerk's office or commu-

nity corrections." The district attorney cannot enforce payment, but the court has the authority to do so.

"Technically, a defendant cannot conclude a probationary period until all court-ordered payments are made," Anderson said. "We cannot pursue defendants and make them pay,



so we turn to the court (judge) to issue an order for the payments. I guess you could say the DA's office provides the lightning and the judge provides the thunder."

Priest said he saw an increase in traffic in his three offices after the restitution docket call.

"A lot of people came in with their court orders wanting to make sure of their deadlines to pay," said Priest. "I would say our office has probably collected several thousands in addi-

tion to what the DA's office collected."

"We've really seen a tremendous upswing with collections since the docket in March."

Anderson said the restitution recovery plan was activated in district court over a year ago.

"It's been very successful due to the good work of the district court judges," he said. "We are quite pleased with the results we're seeing from the first restitution docket in March."

Moving with technology

Circuit Clerk's office dumps paper for e-filing

By Sheryl Marsh

Communications Director

Bye, Bye paper files!

Files that once covered employees' desks in the circuit clerk's office have disappeared. The office moved to total electronic filing of criminal cases in January to comply with a statewide Alabama Supreme Court order.

The criminal division is the last to convert to electronic filing in Morgan County.

All court cases, except juvenile and DUI are electronically filed and maintained.

Circuit Clerk Chris Priest says the new filing method not only cleared up space, but it is helping whittle away a backlog in criminal cases.

"It's speeding up the process and it helps us track the cases," said Priest, who took office in January. "It allows us to go through the steps much better."

Filings in criminal cases were lagging six months behind, and now they're 3 1/2 months in arrears, Priest said.

"Going paperless was ordered because of reduction in staff in clerks' offices throughout the state," Priest explained. "We've been straddling for the past two or three years. We were half paper and half electronic and

that caused a lot of confusion. For instance, if a judge looked at a paper file it may not have had all that had been filed in the case. Or, if a judge looked online the electronic file wouldn't have everything that had been filed."

The paperless system requires attorneys and judges to file all pleadings, summaries or any case action electronically.

In cases where defendants don't have attorneys, paper documents are still filed, Priest said. Once they get attorneys the process goes electronic in those cases. Documents that were filed will be scanned into the system.

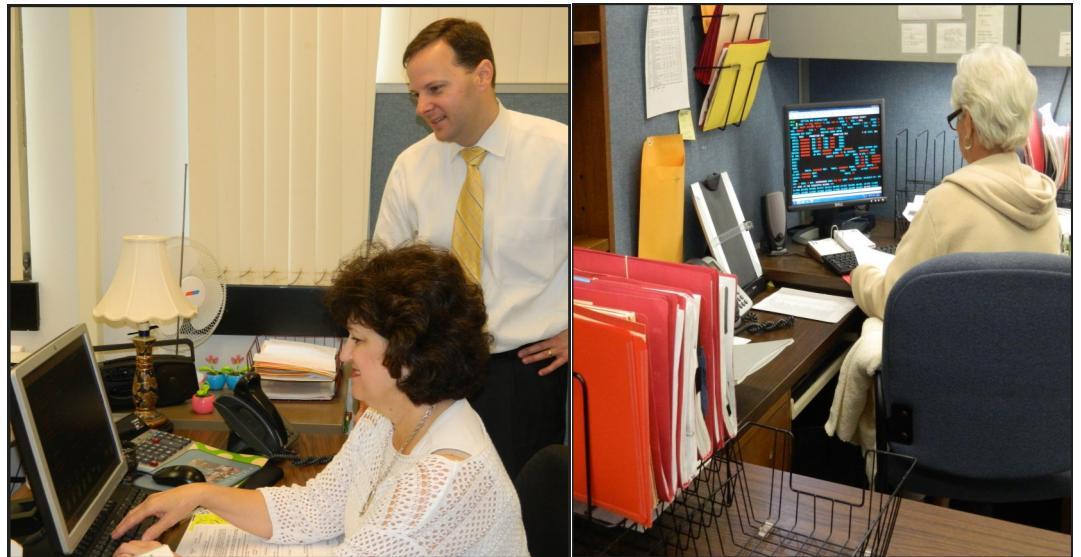
Electronic filing started in district court for civil matters in 2006 and the conversion in district court criminal cases began in 2008.

"It all began here in district court," said Deputy Clerk Janell Conner. "But, I don't know if we'll ever be totally paperless because we use mounds of paper mailing notices to people."

The change to electronic filing in circuit court civil cases started in 2010, said Donna Palmer, a judicial clerk in the office.

Employees say the process works better.

"It's so much faster and the margin of error has declined,"



Left, Circuit Clerk Chris Priest watches as Donna Palmer accesses a civil case. Right, criminal court clerk Marie Kent files cases electronically. The red files in the forefront are among other paper documents that will be scanned for electronic record-keeping.

said Carolyn Brewer.

Juvenile court cases are not filed because they are private matters involving children.

"Only attorney's fees can be filed in juvenile cases because of the nature of the cases," Priest said.

Paper files of DUI cases will remain, also. Conner said those files are kept for record-checking purposes and because of certain information contained in them.

The public may access electronic files on designated terminals on the first floor in the lobby and the fourth floor in the circuit clerk's office. Records cannot be printed from the public computers.

"They can search the online records and if they want copies they have to ask someone in this office for copies which

cost up to \$5 for 20 pages and another \$5 for certified copies," Priest said.

Priest's office has multiple divisions working in three offices on three floors, including child support, juvenile, traffic and criminal misdemeanors, small claims in district court; and circuit court has civil, criminal and appeals.

The clerk's office also handles absentee voting and applications for passports among other duties.

The move to electronic filing has been good for the office, but criminal cases keep coming.

"They're still filing as many cases electronically as they were paper files," said Priest.

"In less than four months they've already filed and processed over 1,000 cases. We average around 22,000 filings each year."

About

The Voice of Morgan County

This publication is a product of the Morgan County Commission and Communications/

Community Relations Director Sheryl Marsh is writer, photographer, page designer and editor.

This is the third edition.



Seniors

Continued from page 4

the homebound and about 9 o'clock the bus arrives and the party starts," Griffin said. "Everybody gets their coffee, settle down and play cards. Some leave around 12:30 p.m. and several stay until 3 or 4 p.m. They really enjoy themselves."



Senior citizens at Turner-Surles play cards a great portion of the day.



May Day

One big party



By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

They did things reminiscent of their past.

Women wore poodle skirts, socks and sneakers and other attire to mimic past decades. Men donned blue jeans and shirts with the sleeves rolled up.

They sang along to music from the 1950s and 1960s, and many of them twisted the day away.

This all happened at Senior Citizens May Day, an annual event put on by commissions on aging in Lawrence and Morgan counties.

About 300 senior citizens

from the two counties attended the event at Moulton Recreation Center in May.

The Hoot Nannie Band of Muscle Shoals lured many to the dance floor as they performed the oldies that included Fats Domino's "Blueberry Hill" and "The Twist".

During a twisting contest a

few of the seniors got down to almost floor level and one actually did so. She won the contest.

Then, there was the line dance to "Elvira".

An Eva woman won a hula hoop contest. She kept with the beat and when it was over the hula hoop was still around

her waist.

"It's good to see them have such a good time," said Morgan County Commission on Aging Director Debra Rains. "They always look forward to this day each year.

"There's usually a big crowd that turns out and they just enjoy being together."



Local students show interest in county government

Banks-Caddell Show Choir performs for courthouse officials, employees

Banks-Caddell Elementary Show Choir performed its final song and dance at the courthouse in May. Under the leadership of Anthony Young, the school's music teacher and director of show choir, the fourth and fifth graders entertained a



group of elected officials and employees.

Before the mini concert began Young explained that each student had to audition to become a member. Also, he said selections were based on academics and behavior.

Young proceeded to direct the group to deliver old-school songs such as Elvis' Jailhouse Rock, Foot-loose and Tina Turner's Proud



Mary. Young choreographed the dance routines for each song the students performed.

They did a total of eight songs.

Their audience gave them a standing ovation.

County Commission Chairman Ray Long welcomed the group.

"We are so proud that you all came here to perform for us.

We are truly honored," Long said.

At the end of the performance Long asked the students to tell their names: "So when you end up on American Idol we'll remember this day," he chuckled.

The children laughed and so did the audience



Banks-Caddell Elementary Show Choir performed for elected officials and employees at the Morgan County Courthouse in May.

St. Ann's Catholic School third graders visit courthouse

Officials share information

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

A group of St Ann's Catholic School students found the workings of county government interesting when they visited the courthouse on May 7th.

Third grade teacher Julie Shedd took her class of 12 students there for a field trip. Some of the children's parents came along.

First, they got a brief history lesson with District Court Judge Charles Langham, who told them about the bench in the first-floor courtroom that was used by the late Judge James Horton in the Scottsboro Boys trial in 1931.

Then, their next stop was in Emergency Management Agency's operations center where they sat at stations and watched projection screens that appeared as Director Eddie Hicks explained how information comes through and is displayed during times of emergencies. Hicks held their attention.



District Judge Charles Langham tells the history of a bench in the courtroom on the first floor. It was the bench used by the late Judge James Horton in the Scottsboro Boys trial.

The young students also showed interest in Revenue Commissioner Amanda Scott's office, asking political questions that Scott answered.

They raved over the various types of automobile license plates in License Commission-

er Sue Baker Roan's office, especially the Auburn and Alabama tags.

Overall, the students said they enjoyed their visit and Shedd said she thought they gathered quite a bit of information about county government.



Judge Langham continues sharing information with the students about the judicial process.



The students at work stations in the EMA center listening to Director Eddie Hicks explain emergency operations.

Construction projects for senior center, ball park progressing in east end of the county

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

Morgan County residents in the east end of the county could have a new senior citizen center by the end of the year, and Brindlee Mountain Park renovations should be finished by August.

District 4 shop employees have finished one ball field at the park and they've started building a second, according to Commissioner Greg Abercrombie.

"We've got about one-third of the dirt hauled for the second one," Abercrombie said. "We just lack putting a fence around the one we've finished."

A contractor is building a concession stand at the park and Abercrombie said the company has 120 days to complete the job.

The County Commission accepted a bid to build a senior center across from Union Hill School and work should start soon.

"I figure this will be about a six or seven month project," he said. "It'll probably be around December before they complete it. The building will be about 3,000 or 4,000 square feet. It will be nice."

The center will replace what's known

as the Morgan City Senior Citizen Center located at Brindlee Mountain Park. "Eventually, we're going to

tear down the old center," said Abercrombie. "We'll probably do that after the new center is up and running

and the park is completed. Both of these projects are major improvements to our area and will improve the

quality of life here." In addition to those projects shop employees continue to make road improvements.



Left, dirt has been tossed for a senior citizen center across from Union Hill School. Right, work is in progress on ball fields and a concession stand at Brindlee Mountain Park.

District 1 doing work For new school

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

When Morgan County commissioners see a need to help with projects for other entities they pitch in.

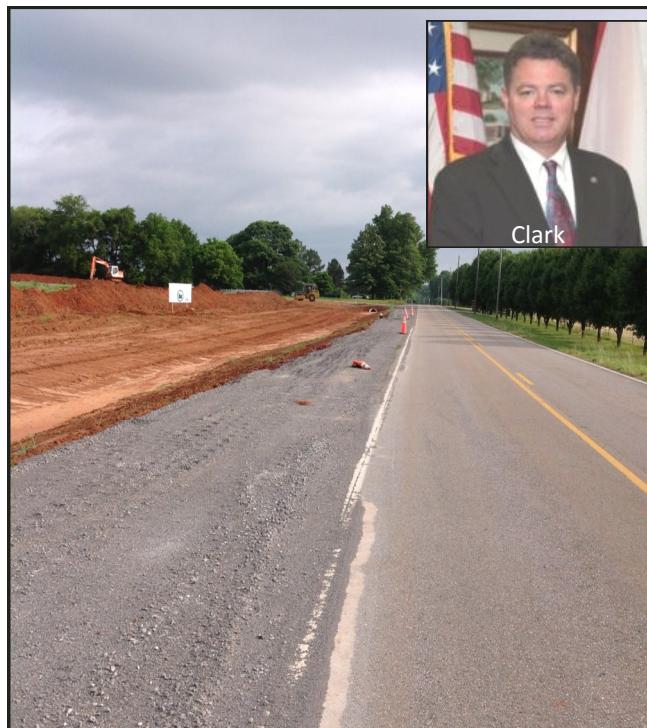
District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark is doing just that for the new Priceville High School. Clark's shop employees are currently building a turning lane to handle traffic in front of the school.

"We're building a center lane that will hopefully help the kids and parents get in and out safer," said Clark. We're also making drainage improvements."

The project will also include building shoulders and paving.

"We don't want to wait until the school is finished to do the work," he said. "We have to do it now."

Clark said the crew will be there



District 1 is building a turning lane for the new Priceville High School. District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark said it will help keep driving safer in the area.

for a while longer.

"I expect us to be there another two months or so getting the shoulders built up and paving done," he

said. "We just try to help wherever we can because this school benefits the whole county and we're just glad to do the job we're doing."

District 3 replacing O.Z. Davis Road



**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

District 3 employees are working to replace O.Z. Davis Road, which washed away during heavy flooding during the winter.

Before beginning on the surface work, shop workers had to do underground detail.

"A large culvert collapsed and

washed out," District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher explained. "They had to unearth and remove huge galvanized pipes and replace them with concrete pipes. They are really large pipes and it's a very deep hole. Currently we are back-filling it and redoing the roadway."

Please see Dist. 3, page 14



O.Z Davis Road construction.

Free to live better life

Drug Court graduates celebrate freedom from drugs, jail

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

At age 14 Michael Brown started using illegal drugs and was addicted for the following 33 years. His wife Renee used drugs for 23 years.

They say the drug usage came to an end when faced with criminal drug charges and they were allowed to enter drug court under Morgan County Community Corrections.

They were the first married couple to go through the program and complete it more than 2 years ago. Today they are drug-free with no pending charges.

Last month, the Browns and other drug court alumni were at the courthouse to attend graduation of two men who successfully completed the program.

The Browns shared their stories while waiting for the ceremony to begin.

"I used marijuana and pills, never crack or meth," said Michael Brown. "The program changed our lives. We're going to church and it feels great. Come Saturday I will be clean for 2 1/2 years."

Renee said she smoked marijuana, but did not dabble with other drugs. She, too, said life is good now that they're drug-free.

"It feels good, said Renee. "There's still a lot of stress, but not because of drugs. It's just everyday life."

The two men who graduated on May 2 received their freedom from criminal charges and earned certificates of completion of the program.

Circuit Judge Glenn Thompson, who presides over drug court, announced the case number and name of each participant and asked Assistant District Attorney Charles Elliott for the disposition of the cases. Each time Elliott responded: "case dismissed".

Elliott also delivered a message from District Attorney Scott Anderson to the graduates: "He wanted me to say to you that this is your shot, so make the most of it." Elliott said Anderson sent best wishes to the graduates.

With his little girl in his arms, one of the graduates said: "She's getting her Dad back today."

Thompson said each man faced

five years in prison if they had not gone through drug court.

Drug Court Coordinator Tammy Jolley addressed the crowd, which included family members and friends of participants.

"It gets better each time, to have them come back and be so engaged," Jolly said of former graduates. "To have them coming back to grab somebody's hand and pull them forward is tremendous."

Another former graduate told the crowd about his drug-free life.

"I got a relationship with my children and my mom got her son back," he said. My father in heaven got his son back."

James Lowery, who graduated from drug court, last year said life without drugs is good.

"My life is a complete turna-

round, compared to what it used to be," Lowery said. "I've got a job. I'm married to a wonderful woman and I'm happy. The program taught

Each graduate faced five years in prison before completing drug court.

—Circuit Judge Glenn Thompson

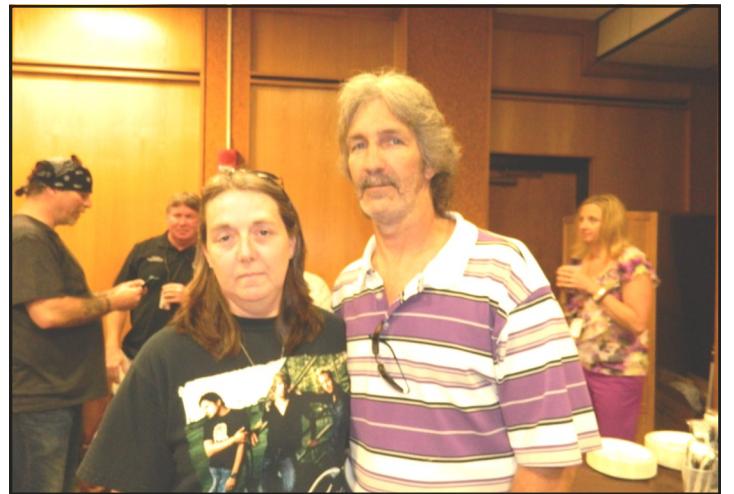
me how to live happy without chemicals. I had been out there 23 years and I got clean in 2010, but it took me over a year to get into the program because they had to make sure I wanted it."

In closing Jolley encouraged the newest grads, telling them that throughout the process they had been told "no" nu-

merous times for different reasons, but that answer would begin to change.

"No has been a huge word for

you," Jolley said. "Because of the time you spent listening to no, you have a future full of yeses."



Renee and Michael Brown attended drug court graduation last month. They went through the program and have been drug-free 2 1/2 years.

EMA performs practice drill with first responders

Preparing for graded drill

By Sheryl Marsh

Morgan County Emergency Management Agency conducted a Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant emergency drill on May 8th to prepare for an exercise this month that will be graded by Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"Every other year we have a FEMA graded drill in June," said EMA Director Eddie Hicks. "This was like a practice exam where you take the test to get familiar with the material before taking the actual test."

Decision makers from agencies who would respond to emergencies, staffed the EMA operations center to participate in the drill. The agencies included law enforcement, fire, medical and rescue as well as volunteer organizations such as Red Cross and the Salvation Army. County government officials also participated in the drill.



Various agencies that provide first-response emergency service were among those participating in the EMA drill.

Morgan County Area Transportation System officials participated in the drill, also.

"MCATS' mission would be to provide transportation for those in the evacuation zone who don't have access

to an automobile," said Hicks. "Every agency involved would work the emergency plan."



New playground

Courtesy photo

County and state officials help with ribbon cutting for the new SNAP entryway playground. From left, Sen. Arthur Orr, Commissioner Randy Vest, Hartselle Mayor Don Hall, Commissioner Don Stisher, Chairman Ray Long and Bob Francis.

Fellow

Continued from page 2

projects, which resulted in Rotary becoming the world's first service club.

The mission of the non-profit Rotary Foundation is to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill and peace through improvement of health, support of education and alleviation of poverty.



Rotarian Henry Bragg presents Paul Harris fellowship to Chairman Long during a meeting in May.

County embraces multimedia, community videos now online

Morgan County has embraced multimedia and now has videos online at www.co.morgan.al.us.

In this publication we have noted the stories with video.

To view them click on the county offices heading, then on communications/community relations, and there you will click on community videos.

Current and archived issues of this publication may be viewed on that page as well.

The Voice of Morgan County is published quarterly and mailed to 40,000 homes throughout the county.

The publication belongs to Morgan County and no portion of it may be re-produced.

Closing of county offices for remainder of fiscal year

The courthouse and other county offices, with the exception of environmental services, will be closed in observance of these holidays:

Independence Day: July 4 and 5

Labor Day: Sept. 2.

Environmental services will run routine garbage routes on the holidays.

Morgan loses former district attorney who served county for more than three decades



Morgan County experienced a great loss with the death of former District Attorney Bob Burrell, who passed away March 15th after a two-year bout with cancer. He was 60.

Bob served this county as a prosecutor for more than three decades, having worked first as an assistant district attorney for eight years and

24 years as district attorney.

He had a passion for this job, which was reflected through his concern for crime victims, especially children. He worked tirelessly on ways to help children, who had been abused. He was the forerunner in establishing the Child Advocacy Center here.

Even after leaving office in January 2011 Bob continued

to work closely with the center and other agencies that serve children.

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange came to Bob's memorial service on March 19th and while talking to people in attendance he shared admirable feelings about Bob's work. Bob's many and varied achievements include the Golden Glove Award he

received for having the highest DUI conviction rate in the state.

Robert "Bob" Burrell was truly an asset to this county and his legacy as a prosecutor will remain, not just here but throughout the state of Alabama.

Morgan County officials and employees express condolences to his family.



Young at Heart holds monthly luncheon

The Young at Heart organization in the Union Hill community gathered in April for its monthly luncheon and New Canaan Baptist Church. Twenty-nine members get together each month to have lunch in fellowship hall. Members bring covered dishes for the gathering. Above members just arriving chat and arrange food on the buffet table.

Genealogical Society hosts luncheon

The Morgan County Genealogical Society hosted a luncheon for officials and employees in May. Members of the Society, who have an office at the Archives facility, prepared the meal and arranged a buffet.

"We really appreciate them inviting us," said District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark. "The food is absolutely wonderful and we enjoy chatting with them."

In addition to the county officials and employees, members of the Society's board of directors attended the luncheon.

Society member Rhona Summerford said they usually have a meal weekly, "But, not of this magnitude. "We like to prepare a large meal when we have guests."

Archivist John Allison said the women do a great job in their work at the facility.

"We cannot thank them enough," said Allison. "They're great. Their purpose is to promote the study of genealogy in the county. They help people research their own local roots and they also help with historical studies. They help us with anything we need help with."



Officials and county employees chat before lunch. Below, left, Society members Jake Sturdivant and Rhona Summerford talk while Society President Anthony Patterson and District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark observe some of the displays in the room.



Farmers expect greater harvests after warm-up

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

Lingering cold and rainy weather delayed growth of some crops but did not hinder spring harvesting for local farmers who sell their produce at the Morgan County-Decatur Farmers Market.

The market opened April 20 and vendors began to move in with a few crops that included strawberries, greens and sweet potatoes.

Farmers were hopeful for bigger harvests as the season trended toward warmer temperatures. "All of that rain and cold weather held up stuff that was planted," said Burl Slaten, manager of the market. "It put us four weeks behind. When we opened last year we had two people sitting here with strawberries. This year, they're just starting to come. We're also late on vegetables. People got stuff planted, but it's just sitting there because it's been too wet and too cold."

"I've had all kinds of stuff planted, peas, beans, potatoes and all that, but it's growing very slow," said Ruth Freeman. "As soon as we get some hot temperatures everything will kick in and go to town."

Other vendors, Lee and Marie Hart, and Marilyn Champion experienced the same.

"We've got a lot planted but they're growing slow," said Marie.

Please see farmers page 15

Employee

Continued from page 1

she issues checks for millions of dollars, paying the county's bills for all departments.

"My work is never done because bills come in every day. There's always work waiting for me," said Penney.

Penney's work history started in 1973 in the Board of Registrars, then for an independent company that did the county's property appraisals.

"The Board of Registrars was in the basement of the old courthouse when I first started working for the county," she explained. While I was working for the reappraisal company Porter Lee Hanes, who was our tax assessor at the time, asked me to come to work in his office, so I did. I worked there until September of 1976 and left to have my first child, Jennifer."

She decided to stay home and be mom for a while and in 1978 she went to work at Bethel School teaching kindergarten. Meanwhile, she had a second child, Julie in 1980 and in 1983 Penney returned to the courthouse, but this time in the county commission office.

Initially, she was a receptionist and would relieve



Debbie Penney

the switch board operator. After the accounts payable clerk retired, Penney moved into the position that she holds today.

Chairman Ray Long described Penney as hard working and knowledgeable.

"She's a real asset to the county," Long said. "She watches taxpayer dollars, making sure that all expenditures are in accordance with law. She's just a good, all-around employee. We're proud to have her as part of our staff."

Penney said technology has lightened her work load.

"We used to write checks and address envelopes on a typewriter. Every day we would write checks and try to get them in the mail," she said. "Technology is wonderful. Now, with computer programs we run checks once a week. It's nice."

Debbie graduated from Morgan County High

School (Hartselle High). She is married to Jimmy Penney and they built their home "on the farm where I was raised." "I love it and wouldn't leave it for anything."

Daughter Jennifer Cobb, husband Chip and their daughters Gracie and M.K. don't live far away and daughter Julie Penney lives nearby as well.

Debbie and Jimmy spend a lot of time with their children and grandchildren.

Attending youth sports for the grandchildren is often and "enjoyable," said Debbie.

Although Jimmy is retired, Debbie plans to work a little longer.

"I have no immediate plans to retire," she said. "I love my work. We've got a good facility to work in and I've had good bosses. I've seen a lot of politicians come and go and I loved working with them. The county has been good to me."

District 3

Continued from page 11

The road has been out since January and Stisher hopes to re-open it soon.

In addition to that project, District 3 employees are helping Falkville with drainage work.

"The weather delayed the work at Falkville," Stisher said. "So, we had to get back on that and finish it up. We've been overly busy due to rainy weather challenges for long periods of time."

Roads

Continued from page 7

wait until we get most of the construction traffic out of the way for the new senior center before we start asphaltting the roads."

"We've spent right at \$1 million for all the paving that's been done so far," Vest added. "We plan to spend much more on paving until we finish all of the roads listed in the project this year."

The county pays a contractor to do the paving.

Sale

Continued from page 7

have three years to redeem the parcels. During that period, the purchasers will accrue 12% interest on money paid for the properties.

The highest bid for a single parcel was \$26,000. The lowest was a tax payment amount of \$47, Scott said.

One bidder paid \$371,000 for 10 parcels.

Property tax payments become due Oct. 1 and are delinquent after Dec. 31.

Sisters

Continued from page 4

She is a member of the National Junior Honor Society and will be a sophomore at Hartselle High the next school term.

Most recently, she was named a member of EDGE Youth Leadership, which is sponsored by the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce.

Grace is interested in caring for children and plans to make that her career goal. She wants to be a pediatrician specializing in infectious disease.

"Medicine has always been

on my heart, ever since my grandmother died when I was in the fourth grade," said Grace. I always loved science and I want to help people. I absolutely love children and I've worked with them in different jobs. I've worked jobs where there were no children and I missed them terribly. They make me happy and that's why I want to be a pediatrician."

With a Grade Point Average of 3.80, one of the major honors and achievements for Grace was when she was chosen to be an intern at Hudson Alpha Biotechnology in Huntsville. She was a re-

search assistant last summer, and got experience in using PCR for DNA cloning; producing polyacrylamide gels; and she compiled, compared and critically analyzed scientific data. Currently, she is performing research involving tuberculosis, and she has an emergency medical internship.

"She works really hard," her father said. "She's focused and has been throughout all of her schooling. I feel strongly that she will achieve everything she sets her heart and mind on."

Grace attributes much of her determination for suc-

cess to her father.

"If I had to write something for college or admissions into a program I would send him the papers to look over, and when he responded he always told me how proud he is of me and how much he loves me," she said. My mom is equally encouraging. Like, if I don't do as well as I want to on a practice test, she'll say, 'you're going to bring that up I know'. She also tells me how proud she is of me."

"I am an extremely proud father," said Judge Cain. "I couldn't ask for anything more than what they're doing right now."



New flag at West Park

This flag, displayed in West Park, was donated by Woodman of the World, which also gave a flag to North Park on the recommendation of Donald Bray of the organization's Hartselle office.

Vendors who took harvested crops to the farmers market in early May had few selections, but were hopeful for more as temperatures rose. Some sold canned items along with a few vegetables while waiting for a full harvest.



Farmers

Continued from page 14

“Although I must say we do have baby squash, cucumbers and greens. We’ve got corn, tomatoes and okra planted, so we’re keeping our fingers crossed.”

Marilyn, of Champion Farms, had sweet potatoes and strawberries at the market in early May, and she, too, is hopeful for a huge harvest as the temperatures rise.

“We’ve got a lot planted, peppers, squash, cantaloupe, tomatoes, cabbage and watermelon,” said Marilyn. “These cool nights are not good for growing. The ground has to be really warm for stuff to come up. I believe once it heats up everything will do good.”

Slaten said some farmers will likely experience loss of some crops.

“I’d say a few will lose their early plants, but then it’s

going to pick up and do good, probably in about another month (June) the market is going to be running top end.”

Senior citizens may pick up documents to apply for vouchers worth about \$30 that will help pay for fruits and vegetables at the market. Slaten has the information in his office that instructs people on how to apply online.

The County Commission supports the market, which is located on Second Ave. S.E.

TVA builds new center to monitor emergencies at Browns Ferry plant

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

Tennessee Valley Authority now has its own emergency facility next to Morgan County Emergency Management Agency in the courthouse basement.

The courthouse maintenance staff knocked down six small offices to construct TVA’s State Radiological Monitoring Assessment Center. TVA paid for the construction, Maintenance Director Wayne Lindley said.

Officials will use the center when issues arise with Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant.

EMA Director Eddie Hicks said before building the center TVA officials were cramped in the small offices.

“They knocked out the individual offices and made a large operations room instead,” Hicks explained. “They will use it any time there’s an emergency situation at Browns Ferry. They will assemble a group made up of representatives from TVA, the state EMA, the Radiological Divi-

sion of the state Health Department and sometimes members from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. They work together to make decisions about the appropriate response to an emergency.”

About 30 people would occupy the center to perform different tasks.

“The health department would have teams monitoring potential radiation levels throughout the North Alabama area and they would be coordinated out of this facility,” said Hicks.

The new center is the first major update to the EMA department in 30 years.

The center is equipped with equipment like that in EMA’s operations center, including overhead video projectors, televisions, computers and radios.

County maintenance employees performed all of the construction as they’ve done for other courthouse facilities in the past.



Maintenance employees Allen Green, left, Darryl Bolding and Wayne Lindley, director, discuss construction of a command center for TVA in the basement of the courthouse. Right, Bolding maneuvers wiring in the ceiling.



EMA Administrative Assistant Rita Weeks in the new TVA operations center.

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We would like to thank our sponsors for help with the cost of this publication. Our goal is to keep the public informed about how their tax dollars are being spent, and to share interesting stories about people and places in our great county.

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