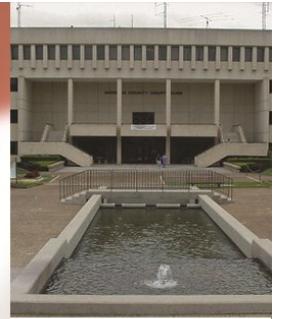




First Courthouse

THE VOICE OF MORGAN COUNTY

Keeping you informed / Telling untold stories



Current Courthouse

MORGAN COUNTY COMMISSION

March 2013

VOLUME 1, NO. 2

The Nelson Story

A Life of Caregiving

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

For years this couple went to their respective jobs each day and returned home in the evening to take care of two aging parents and a daughter with dyslexia.

They worked another shift plus overtime as caregivers and educational coaches.

No one could have imagined what life was like for Tim and Jeni Nelson as they faced sickness and ultimately death.

Today, after laboring and toiling



Jeni and Tim Nelson took care of his parents (top left wedding photo) for four years in their home in Hartselle. A wave of illnesses struck and ultimately led to the deaths of all of Tim's immediate family members.

with family health issues, Tim and Jeni are enjoying a stable life with lots of freedom.

"We were lost. We didn't know what to do for a while," Jeni described their life after the family deaths. "All of the deaths occurred within a year and a half and Tim's mother died right before the Thanksgiving holiday in 2008. We had to figure out how to be a family of four again."

The hankering for caregiving remained. They found a way to make Christmas special for others.

"After Tim's mother died I can remember sitting at the

dining room table and thinking about what we could do as a family rather than just sit there and feel sorry for ourselves," Jeni said. "We decided to provide a nice Christmas meal to people who were alone. We went to the elders of our church, Hartselle Church of Christ and asked if members would help us get that started. On Christmas Day 2008 we prepared meals, with everyone bringing dishes, and fed 250 people."

It became an annual event with the number of recipients growing to about 1,000 over a three-year span.

The beginning

The Nelson family's story unfolds in 2004 when Tim's mother, Shirley and father, Carroll Nelson Sr. moved from Texas to live with them at their Hartselle home.

Shirley Nelson had developed kidney complications and was blind from diabetes. Her husband had been diagnosed with kidney cancer and given three to six months to live.

"Tim's Dad had taken care of her for two years and then he was told he had cancer that had spread to his lungs and bones," said Jeni. "Around that same

time Tim's brother, Carroll Jr. was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease (also known as ALS, a destroyer of

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Inside

Help a child:

Mentors needed to give hope for future. SOS offers program, page 10

Frugal spending puts \$1.2 million in Morgan reserve, page 4

Seniors at Eva Center, pages 12,14



Passing the torch to another generation

Retired Circuit Clerk Orr : "Time for new blood"

By Sheryl Marsh

Communications Director

Eighteen years ago John Pat Orr walked into the Morgan County Courthouse where voters had sent him to assume his role as Circuit Clerk.

The date was Jan 17, 1995. He was 42.

His last day on the job was Jan. 11, 2013 at age 60.

He turned over an operation that he had seen go through technological changes and economically trying times to Attorney Chris Priest, his successor.

When he first took office Orr faced mounds of criminal and civil cases for which he was responsible for keeping as clerk of the court. At the time there were thousands of cases that had not been tried. Three new judges were elected along with Orr in 1994 and as they started to whittle the backlog of cases, Orr and his staff played a major role because the clerk's office is basically the lifeline of the court system.

Orr's humbleness won't let him take credit for the role he played to help bring stability to the system.

"I would say I just tried to keep up with the judges because they really worked hard," he said. "There's been a lot of cases moved in this county in the last 18 years and Judges (Steve) Haddock, (Sherrie) Paler and (Glenn) Thompson did it. The credit goes to the judges for working and not slacking. This office is really the support staff for what they do."

He said District Court judges, past and present, worked hard to maintain efficiency as well.

"Judge (David) Bibb and Judge (David) Breland were excellent judges and judges (Shelly) Waters, (Brent) Craig and (Charles) Langham are keeping cases moving, also."

Prior to becoming circuit clerk, Orr was chief of



Circuit Court Clerk John Pat Orr, left, retired after 18 years in office. He turned over the duties to Attorney Chris Priest, right, who took office Jan. 15.

the Hartselle Police Department 14 years. While in college at Jacksonville State University he was a city police officer. After completing college he moved back to Hartselle and worked for the sheriff's department. He has 17 years in law enforcement.

Circuit Judge Glenn Thompson said Orr's public service has been remarkable.

"John Pat became chief of police in Hartselle shortly after I became municipal judge in 1980," said Thompson. "We both came to the courthouse in 1995. The whole thing that epitomizes his career as circuit clerk is that he is a straight shooter with people. He tells them the truth whether they want to hear it or not. He always treats people right and he has consistently required that of the people who worked under him. I think he has truly been a public servant and has served the public well as circuit clerk and in law enforcement."

Orr and his wife, Candy have two children, Wes Orr and Lurie Hallford.

His retirement plans include spending time with his grandchildren.

"We'll do whatever they want to do. They are the bosses," he said of grandsons, Jay Hallford, 9, and Brooks Hallford, six months, both of Montgomery, and Charlie Orr, eight months, of Hartselle.

In addition to grandkids, he plans to work on the family farm and hunt.

"We own a small farm on the south side of Hartselle and I've also rented my cousin's little farm to put some of our cows," said Orr. I've got plenty of bush hogging and cutting to do. I'm going to hunt, fish and tend to cows. I might find something to do a couple days a week. I plan to enjoy retirement."

Orr said it was time for him to retire, and he's confident that Priest, 38, will serve the citizens of Morgan County well.

"Chris will do a great job," he said. "I'm convinced of



Orr on one of his final days in office.

Please see Orr, page 3

Swearing-in ceremonies for judicial officials



Circuit Clerk

Probate Judge Greg Cain administers the oath of office to Chris Priest as daughter, Isabella and wife, Ruth hold the Bible. Priest's ceremony was held Jan. 9 and he took office Jan. 15.



Circuit Judge

Circuit Judge Steve Haddock administers the oath of office to Jennifer Millwee Howell during a ceremony on Jan. 14, as her daughter Anna Kate holds the Bible and husband, Johnny looks on. Howell took office Jan. 15.

Orr

Continued from page 2 that."

Orr decided not to seek re-election last year and voters elected Priest for the job.

What did Orr like most about being circuit clerk?

"Just working with people, especially jurors and helping people who came into the office," Orr said. I just always enjoyed it, but after 36 years between law enforcement and the courts it's time to let some new blood take over."

The circuit clerk's term is six years, and duties include managing absentee voting as well as receiving passport applications.

Other judicial officials begin new terms

In addition to Circuit Clerk Chris Priest and Circuit Judge Jennifer Howell taking office, three other judicial officials began new terms, but did not have formal swearing-in ceremonies.

Circuit Judge Glenn Thompson, who won re-election in November, started a fourth term in January and so did

Circuit Judge Steve Haddock, who did not have opposition in the primary or general elections.

District Court Judge Shelly Slate Waters was unopposed in both elections and began a second term in January, also.

Non-profit organization has office furniture for sale

The Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center has office furniture for sale at prices that are below wholesale cost. The items include: Executive desks, computer work desks, credenzas, book shelves, file cabinets, conference tables, various chairs and more.

Examples: Leap chairs sold new starting at \$500 will be sold for \$50; and wooden executive office suites sold new at \$3,500 will go for less than \$1,000. To make an appointment call 256-686-2999 or go by the office at 1629 Fourth Ave. SE. All furniture is used and sold "as is" and funds will be used to help the Entrepreneurial Center continue to encourage, enthuse and empower business start-ups and small businesses to grow and

be successful.

The center is a non-profit organization based in Decatur.

Larry Wayne is Executive Director.

(A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT)



Garbage pickup

There will be no change in garbage pickup for Morgan County residents on Good Friday which is March 29. Environmental Services employees will run regular routes.

Decatur Third Friday offers family fun

Beginning this month Decatur Third Friday will be the focal point of historic downtown.

The monthly event promises fun for the whole family. Special features will include the Blue-Gray Museum, restaurants and vendors at Bank Street and Second Avenue.

Third Friday will be held from March through Oc-

tober from 4:30 to 9 p.m., and will provide live entertainment while promoting tourism and shopping.

Save the dates:

- March 15
- April 19
- May 17
- June 21
- July 19
- August 16
- September 20
- October 18

Frugal spending puts \$1.2 million in general fund reserve

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

Frugal spending during the 2011-2012 fiscal year left an overflow in Morgan County's General Fund and added money to reserve coffers.

County officials spent \$447,255 less from the general fund last fiscal year and that amount combined with other revenue boosted the reserve fund, according to Commission Chairman Ray Long.

"Nearly every department came in under budget," said Long. "This is the result of our elected officials and department heads being wise and conservative with taxpayer dollars, along with an additional \$700,000 in unexpected revenue. We were able to add \$1.2 million to our reserve fund. It's very important for us to build our reserve fund so we will be able to respond if an emergency comes up."

In addition to spending less, the county received rebates from health insurance and the projected tax revenue was also higher. Long said 10 percent cuts the commission ordered for departments the prior year also contributed to the savings. "Our department heads and elected officials took our budget crisis seriously," Long said. "It's one thing to say it, but we've got the numbers to show that we've got good people

handling our tax dollars." The excess was revealed in the county's year-end financial report. "Our goal is to get the reserve up to \$2 million and I believe we're headed in that direction," said Long, who is in charge of day-to-day operations. Commissioners are pleased with the county's financial condition. "It just shows what kind of

department heads and elected officials we have, who realize that if they don't need the money they turn it back in, and it can be used elsewhere," said District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark. "Hopefully, we'll try to complete the jail annex and we'll be able to use some of the savings. I think our revenues are going up and our local economy is getting better."

EMA Operations Officer Cantrell elected president of state NAMAA

Johnny Cantrell, operations officer for Morgan County Emergency Management Agency has been elected President of the North Alabama Mutual Aid Association, the oldest association of its kind in the nation.



Cantrell

He was elected to the position in December.

Founded in the early 1970s, the organization allows local governments to provide assistance between entities during times of disaster. NAMAA encompasses 16 counties, including Morgan, Limestone and Lawrence and six affiliate counties including Etowah and St. Clair.

As president Cantrell will preside over meetings that are held throughout the various counties involved in the organization. Also, he will represent NAMAA during meetings in Washington and other areas.

"I look forward to serving as president and representing the association," he said.

Cantrell has been with Morgan EMA 12 years. Prior to his county employment he was in the U.S. Air Force 10 years where he was in military intelligence assigned to the anti-terrorism unit.

Employee in spotlight



Roger Shipley

Roger Shipley went to work for Morgan County right after high school almost 29 years ago, and worked his way from laborer to foreman of a district shop.

Shipley, 46, is the county's longest serving foreman. He works for District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher.

Shipley's first job was in the District 2 shop under the late Commissioner Charles Sparkman in 1984. Stisher, who first worked as foreman for the late District 3 Commissioner Joe Summerford, observed Shipley from a distance.

"When I made my mind up to run for commissioner, I would think about who I would want to appoint as foreman," Stisher said. I had noticed that Roger really focused on his work in District 2. He was committed to each job that he did. I felt like he would be able to lead District 3 as foreman. So, when I got elected in 1996 I asked him to serve and he accepted."

Shipley is in charge of overseeing 12 employees each day.

"I supervise the guys and daily activity, and Don tells us where to go. "I enjoy working outdoors. I

like the construction type work. I worked part time when I first went to work for the county.

Then, in October of 1984 I became fulltime and worked my way up from laborer to operator 3, the highest in operating heavy equipment. Then, when Don got elected I came to District 3 to be his foreman."

In addition, he does the payroll for the shop periodically when the administrative assistant is not available.

Stisher said Shipley was not given a favor. "He earned a right to be foreman due to his knowledge, skills and devotion," said Stisher. "He served as foreman both of my first two terms, and when Kevin Murphy was elected he saw fit to keep Roger as foreman. Then, I returned in 2008 and felt that he had still earned the right to remain in the position. He does a very good job of running day-to-day activities, and he's dependable and responsible."

Shipley was born and raised in Morgan County, and graduated from Danville High School.

He and his wife Regina live at Danville. They have a daughter, Scarlett and son, Boone.

★ Publication online

The Voice of Morgan County is published quarterly. This is the second edition. The free publication is delivered by mail to 40,000 homes throughout the county. It may be read online also: www.co.morgan.al.us. Click on the newsletter icon on the website's front page.

Nelson story

Continued from page 1

muscles). At that point we had to figure out what to do to help his parents. We talked to them and decided as a family that we should move his mom and dad to Alabama with us. So, we prepared for them to live with us and our two kids."

The transition

In preparation for Tim's parents to live with them, they purchased a bigger house, and they had a company pack and move the couple's belongings from their Texas home.

Jenny would unpack the boxes after work during the evening.

"We wanted our home to be a replica of theirs, so I would take things out and let her feel them to get her input," said Jeni. "We set up our house exactly like theirs in Bay City."

Tim said doing that kept his mother from bumping into things because her surroundings were arranged basically the same.

Tim's father actually got better after moving in with them.

"He was better because our caring for Shirley helped him a lot," said Jeni. "He ended up living three years beyond the doctors' prediction of three to six months."

Their lives changed drastically over the next four years.

From breakfast to supper, until bedtime Jeni and Tim would provide care for his parents, while helping their daughter Mallory cope with dyslexia and supporting their son, Taylor in extracurricular activities.

"Our chores were before and after work," Jeni said. "Tim's mother's needs were demanding. She had to eat three meals plus snacks, and because she was diabetic she had to eat at certain times. She couldn't go to the bathroom alone or bathe herself so we had to do that."

Call for Cocoa

Shirley Nelson's blindness caused her to have a problem keeping up with time.

"Every morning Tim would make her hot chocolate, but then she would wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning because she was blind and didn't realize the time. She would yell to Tim: 'Hey Mr. Cocoa man' can you bring my hot chocolate?' Tim would get up and fix it for her, and we would have a rough time getting back to sleep."

Hours before the early morning beverage call Jeni would feed her mother-in-law a late night snack and both Tim and Jeni would take each parent to the bathroom throughout the night.

It was difficult for Tim to see his



Carroll and Shirley Nelson

father lose his independence.

"A 17-year Vietnam veteran, who overcame polio as a kid now had to depend on me to go to the bathroom. I had to literally stand him up to use the urinal," said Tim. "My Dad was always a strong man, who adored my mother and took good care of his family."

Tim was the younger of two children and said he was sheltered. He never imagined he would have to keep things together as the health of his parents and older brother deteriorated.

"I was a mama's boy, and I think it was always understood that Carroll Jr. would be in the lead role in the time of a family crisis, but after he became ill at age 38, I had to step up and be the rock for our family," Tim said.

Tim and Jeni hired someone to stay with the couple during the day, and they were on night duty. While taking care of his parents Tim and Jeni would alternate helping Mallory with her school work.

"We got a baby monitor to put in their (Tim's parents) room so we could hear when either of them needed us," Jeni said. "I can remember one night when they both got really sick. I was in the bathroom with Mrs. Nelson and Tim was in the bathroom with Mr. Nelson. It was a long night."

During the illnesses in their home, Jeni was dealing with health issues with her twin sister, Laurie, who was born with Spina Bifida, incomplete

development of the spinal cord or its coverings. Jeni's family lived in Mississippi and she would often travel there to help her mother care for Laurie. Also, Jeni's grandmother was ill and she had to go to Mississippi to help her. Tim and their children had to take care of his parents for a brief period.

"The children were great. They did what they could and were a lot of help," Tim said.

Jeni's grandmother died in August 2007.

The caregiving took its toll. "I was tired all the time, and it was definitely emotionally stressful every day trying to make sure everybody's needs were met," said Jeni.

Doctor's house call

About a week before Carroll Nelson Sr. died, Tim's and Jeni's family physician made a house call, not for the aging parents, but for the young caregivers.

"We had been up four nights straight, with barely any sleep, and we were worn out," Jeni recalled.

The doorbell rang. "It was Dr. Andrew Dukes, a wonderful doctor and great friend," said Tim. "He said he came to see how we were doing and one look at us answered his concerns. He told us to go upstairs and get some sleep and that he was going to spend the night. He sat in a chair in Dad's room. This gave us more strength, not only because we got needed sleep, but to know that someone cared so deeply

to do what he did for us. On our own we would never ask for help because we didn't want to burden anyone."

"We did it because of family and because of God's agape love we have in our hearts."

—Tim Nelson

On
to next
mission
Page 6

Tim's father died a week later in April 2007.

In August 2008 a call came informing that Tim's brother Carroll Jr. was critical, at the point of death. Tim and Jeni packed the family, including Shirley Nelson into a vehicle and went to Texas.

By now Shirley Nelson's health had worsened and Jeni had to coach her to get out of a wheelchair and walk across a ramp to get to the facility to see her dying son.

She did it and, "He took his last breath after hearing her voice," Jeni said.

Shirley Nelson was now the sole survivor, and due to her health continuing to fail, the time came that Tim and Jeni had to make a decision concerning institutionalized care for her.

"Doctors told us that we needed to put Mrs. Nelson in a nursing home because she had gotten to the point where she couldn't help us care for her," Jeni explained. Her legs were like spaghetti noodles. She had lost total use of them. That was one of the most difficult decisions we've ever made."

Shirley Nelson died in October 2008.

Coping with the deaths through God

Tim didn't have time to mourn.

"I had to keep moving," he

said. "When you have so many loved ones sick at the same time you have to move on to the next one. I had my little pity parties to myself, but I had to keep strong and make sure that I was there for them."

Their rock was: "God. We couldn't have done it without Him. He worked through us to give us the strength to cope with the situation," Tim said.

"God's hands were all over it," Jeni echoed.

After the deaths Tim and Jeni started over.

"We had to re-establish our family relationship and our relationship as a couple," said Tim. We did so and we have a wonderful life. But, losing your whole family like I did makes you feel that you lost a part of your identity. There are some things we did as a family that only we could laugh about. But, I have Jeni and our wonderful children. What she did for my parents was amazing. She is a great woman. There's so much I have to be thankful for."

Any regrets about caregiving?

"None," said Tim. "I would've had regrets for the rest of my life if we had not done what we did. I would do it all over again. We did it because of family and because of God's agape love we have in our hearts. It's been an interesting journey to say the least. It builds character and makes you appreciate family. It makes you appreciate life."

On to next mission

Tim and Jeni Nelson combined strengths to care for aging parents, will do the same while caring for children who need home, family

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

More than eight years ago when terminal illnesses struck Tim Nelson's family he had a wife who helped him take charge and deal with the crises.

He was glad he had met and married a girl named Jeni Lawrence 15 years earlier.

After four years of rest from providing around-the-clock care for Tim's parents, the couple will soon become foster parents.

"God has been dealing with us about doing this for a long time and we've got to do it," Jeni said. They are going through training with Agape Services of North Alabama.

How they met

Jeni's family moved from Mississippi to Bay City, Texas in 1986 to follow her father's job with a nuclear facility.

Jeni met Tim when she went to his brother's video store for a movie and from there they started dating.

She was 17. He was 20.

They married in 1989 and Tim said he knew he was getting a good spouse, but he had no idea how deep-rooted her goodness and strengths were until his parents came to live with them and they became their caregivers.

"I don't take any of the credit, she deserves it all," said Tim. "You should have seen what she did for my parents. She is a great woman, wife and mother to our children."

Jeni responded modestly and then praised her husband.

"I think our strengths and weaknesses fed off of each other," said Jeni. "Early on we found out how to balance our strengths and weaknesses and that makes us work extremely well together. Tim is so understanding and kind."

Their unity was an anchor for them when Tim's parents, Carroll and Shirley Nelson moved in with them in 2004.

Both had hearts for taking care of them, and Jeni had some knowledge about how to do it.

"All my life I watched the women in my family care for people," she said. "My grandmother took care of my grandfather for 12 years after he became ill, bathing him, feeding him, and shaving him. My mother has been taking care of my twin sister Laurie for 42 years every day of her life, so I don't think I know any different."

When they first got married Tim and Jeni lived in Houston, but big city life was not for her.

"I'm a small town girl from Mississippi, plus the economy was a lot better in this area than there," she said. "So, we decided to move here and start our life. My parents had moved from Bay City to Decatur, also."

Jeni is Circuit Judge Glenn Thompson's judicial assistant, and Tim is an acquisitions manager for All Points Logistics in Huntsville.

They moved from Decatur to Hartselle in 1996.

Eight years later they bought a new home to accommodate Tim's parents.

Although caregiving was tough, they had humorous times. "At one time I called it the MASH unit," Tim chuckled.

While taking care of Tim's parents, they were coping with their daughter, Mallory's dyslexia. Before she was diagnosed with the learning disorder and double vision, it appeared that the Nelsons couldn't get out of the rut with their daughter's inability to do her school work.

So, while juggling caregiving duties Jeni and Tim were helping Mallory through tears and screaming, which made for more late nights.

At the same time, they were supporting their oldest child, Taylor in his extracurricular activities.

Educators in the Hartselle school system encouraged them to seek help and after that the struggle with Mallory began to dwindle and soon she became an honor student. Today she is a member of the National Honor Society and when she graduates in May she will have completed three semesters of college. During the summer she plans to complete a



The Nelson family at home in Hartselle. From left, Tim, Jeni, and their children Mallory and Taylor.

fourth semester.

"After she does that she will enter Athens State University as a junior," Jeni said. "She maintains a 4.0 GPA in her college work and we're very proud of her."

Their son, Taylor, 22, is completing his college education online through Athens State University. He has two semesters remaining before earning a bachelor's degree in business management.

"He got an opportunity to work in his field of study, so we encouraged him to take the job while finishing his education," Jeni said.

Through all their struggles, "God was blessing us and He is continuing to do so," she said. "We took it one day at a time and He led us through it and took care of all our needs and concerns. He has blessed our family."

Their caregiving is not over.

The couple is looking forward to sharing their life with children who need a home.

"We started foster parent classes to be able to help children," said Jeni. "This is something that Tim and I have talked about and prayed about for a while. The thought kept coming back to us and we know it's something God is leading us to do. We want to work where He needs us."

**"All my life I watched the women in my family care for people. My grandmother took care of my grandfather for 12 years after he became ill, bathing him, feeding him and shaving him. My mother has been taking care of my twin sister Laurie for 42 years, every day of her life, so I don't think I know any different."
—Jeni Nelson on caregiving**

Got a story?

We want to tell it

We know many interesting stories are out there and we want to tell them.

If you know someone with a special hobby or talent please feel free to recommend them for a feature story in *The Voice of Morgan County*. This is the public's publication and we want you to be involved.

Consider this an invitation to submit story ideas that you would like to see come alive in print.

Please contact Communications/Community Relations Director Sheryl Marsh at 256-560-6093 or via email: smarsh@co.morgan.al.us.

Morgan had steady sales tax gain throughout 2012, still increasing

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

Morgan County had about a 5% increase in sales tax for the 2012 calendar year and the first quarter of the current fiscal year, which began Oct. 1 and ends Sept. 30.

The county's sales tax office collected \$18.6 million during 2012. The total for 2011 was \$17.8 million.

"As a general rule we are up almost 5% but we are still not at the level we were in 2008 when we collected \$20 million," said Sales Tax Director Ed Sims. "We've been showing a gradual, steady increase and I believe it will continue."

Comparing monthly collections, Sims said October and November were extremely high, but December was slightly down from the same period during 2011.

"My speculation is that people spent a lot shopping in October and November and didn't have much to do in December," said Sims. The collections for October and November were way up and that's all I can attribute it to."

December's collection was \$1.8 million, which was 1.4% lower than December 2011, Sims said.

Collections come from two taxes.

The one-cent sales tax is collected for the three school systems in the county and a

two-cent tax is for county schools only.

Sims' office disburses monthly payments to the school systems from the sales tax collections.

County Commission Chairman Ray Long said he's pleased with the increase.

"We're glad it's up," said Long. "This means more money for our schools to make our systems some of the best in the state. The increase also indicates that the economy is slowly turning around and we are optimistic about the future."

Sims provides the commission with monthly sales tax reports.

Local businesses file monthly tax returns on gross sales receipts.

The county established the sales tax office in 1991 with Sims as director.

Commissioner Jeff Clark loses longtime foreman, friend

Morgan County District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark lost his longtime shop foreman and close friend in December after he lost a bout with cancer. Irvin White, son of former District 1 Commissioner, the late E.V. "Plug" White, died Dec. 15. He was 48.

Irvin had grown up around county government through his father who served on the County Commission for almost three decades. Clark succeeded

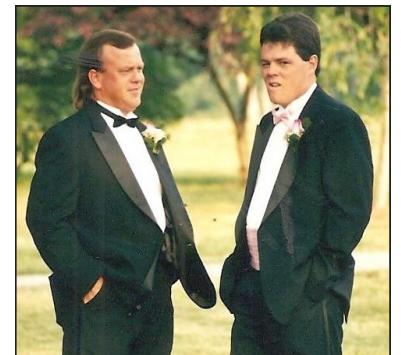
Plug White when he retired in 1998. Clark won the election and named Irvin foreman of his District 1 shop. The two grew up together.

"He was the only one I knew when I started to school," Clark said. "We graduated from high school together and when he got married I was best man in his wedding. "Irvin was not only an asset to the county, but he was to me, also. If I wasn't at the shop I didn't have to worry about a thing

because he knew exactly what needed to be done. Irvin was just like Plug, he could get along with anybody, and everybody who knew him liked him."

White's wife, Shelia succeeded him in death. He is survived by sons, Tommy Irvin White and Austin Beasley, his mother Anne White, brother Jim White and sisters, Renee Goree and Alodie Brown.

Morgan County employees and officials express



Irvin White, left and Clark on White's wedding day.

condolences for the family's and Clark's loss.



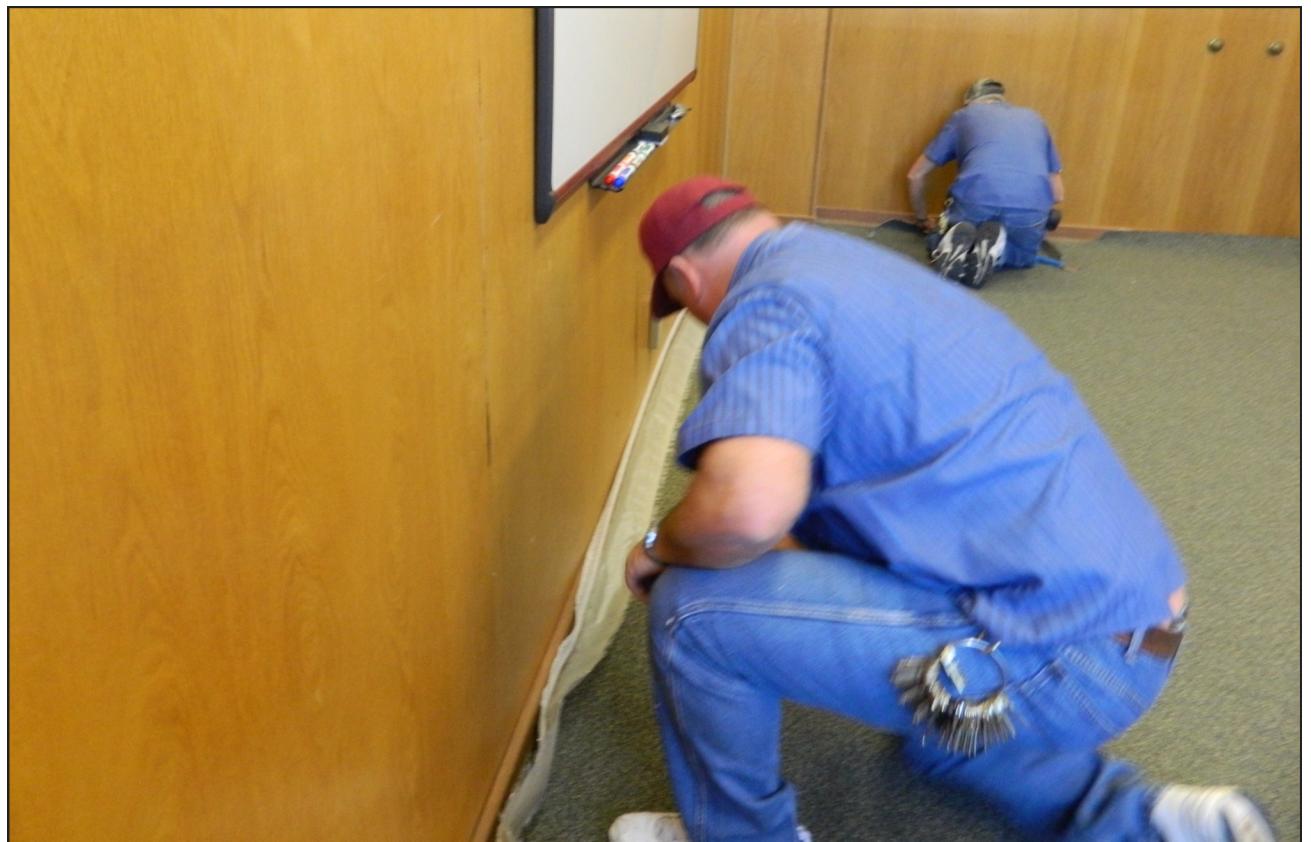
Video tour of county on website

Keeping with promoting Morgan County, our website is undergoing re-design and we have launched a video tour of the county and its offerings.

The video was created for the purpose of showcasing the county's assets in various areas including business, industry, education, real estate and quality of life.

"As county leaders I feel it is our responsibility to help promote our area," said Chairman Ray Long. "We look for every opportunity to do so and we grasp all that is good for the county. The County Commission is united in its goals and when industrial and business leaders see that, coupled with our marketability, they want to locate here. People are the same way. They want to dwell in a place that's thriving and government works in concert to promote growth and quality of life."

Check out the video:
www.co.morgan.al.us



Saving more tax dollars

Morgan County maintenance employees save thousands of taxpayer dollars by doing work that would normally be done by a contractor. Maintenance Director Wayne Lindley, forefront and Jackie Fortenberry install new carpet in an area of the revenue commissioner's office in January. The maintenance staff installed carpet and tile throughout the entire office.

Morgan EMA on top of storms

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

When disastrous weather strikes the area Morgan County Emergency Management Agency is prepared to alarm the public and cast an emergency response plan that involves multiple agencies.

EMA has a facility located in the basement of the courthouse that's equipped with an operations command center, office for amateur radio operators, and sleeping accommodations. It also has an auditorium that doubles as a storm shelter.

As the anniversary of the April 27, 2011 tornadoes approaches, EMA is ready to deal with the tornadic season that usually arrives with spring.

"The National Weather Service has designated Morgan County as storm ready and we're on a list of the counties that are considered prepared for disastrous weather," said EMA Director Eddie Hicks.

Morgan County had more than two miles of devastation from the April 27 tornadoes that claimed lives in surrounding counties, including Limestone and Lawrence.

"We were blessed not to have any fatalities, but about 100 homes were damaged," Hicks said.

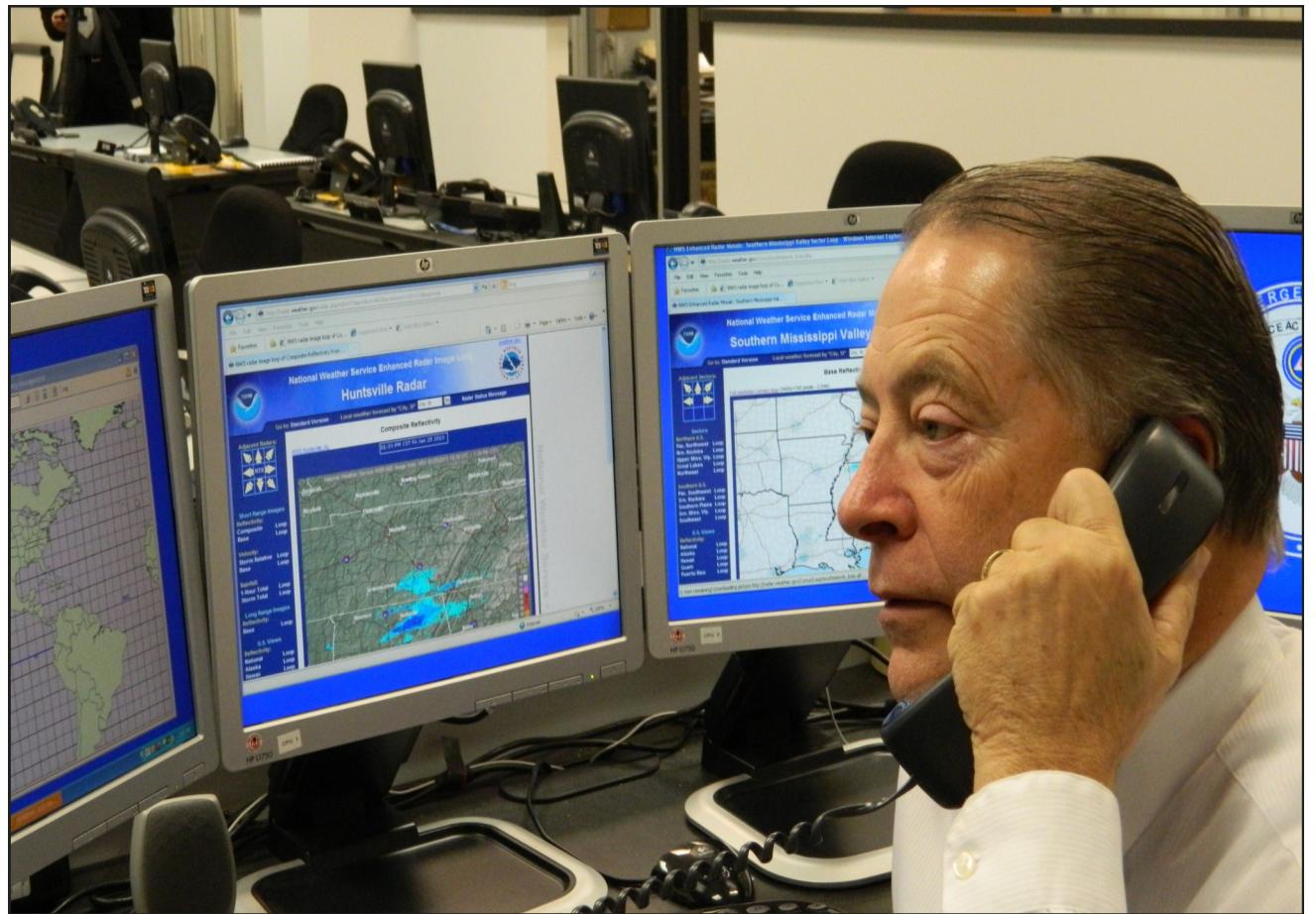
Most of the devastation was in the Hulaco community.

"April and May are usually the months when conditions are favorable for severe weather," Hicks explained. "The change from winter to spring and the change from summer back to fall and winter pave the way for storms."

Guided by weather tracking, EMA activates emergency plans according to reports from the National Weather Service.

"NWS will issue a watch for a large area that could be four to six hours long," said Hicks. "The conditions during a watch period are favorable for severe weather. We will then activate our operations center based on the watch. We meet with elected officials, law enforcement, and school officials to discuss our emergency response."

When the weather service issues a tornado warning, EMA monitors the situation and, "If the tornado touches down and does damage the operations center is staffed immediately to start emergency response,"



EMA Director Eddie Hicks monitors weather screens in the operations command center.

Hicks said.

The staff consists of first responders, including the sheriff's department, Decatur police, fire and rescue, Hartselle police, as well as other entities.

EMA Operations Officer Johnny Cantrell or Hicks is in the command seat during

these events. If it's a Tennessee Valley Authority operation one of its representatives would be in charge.

The center has 26 desk stations that have telephones and computers.

"They mainly answer phone calls from their respective agency and report

the status of the situation," Cantrell said.

Adjacent to the command center is an office for the amateur radio operators, also known as Ham.

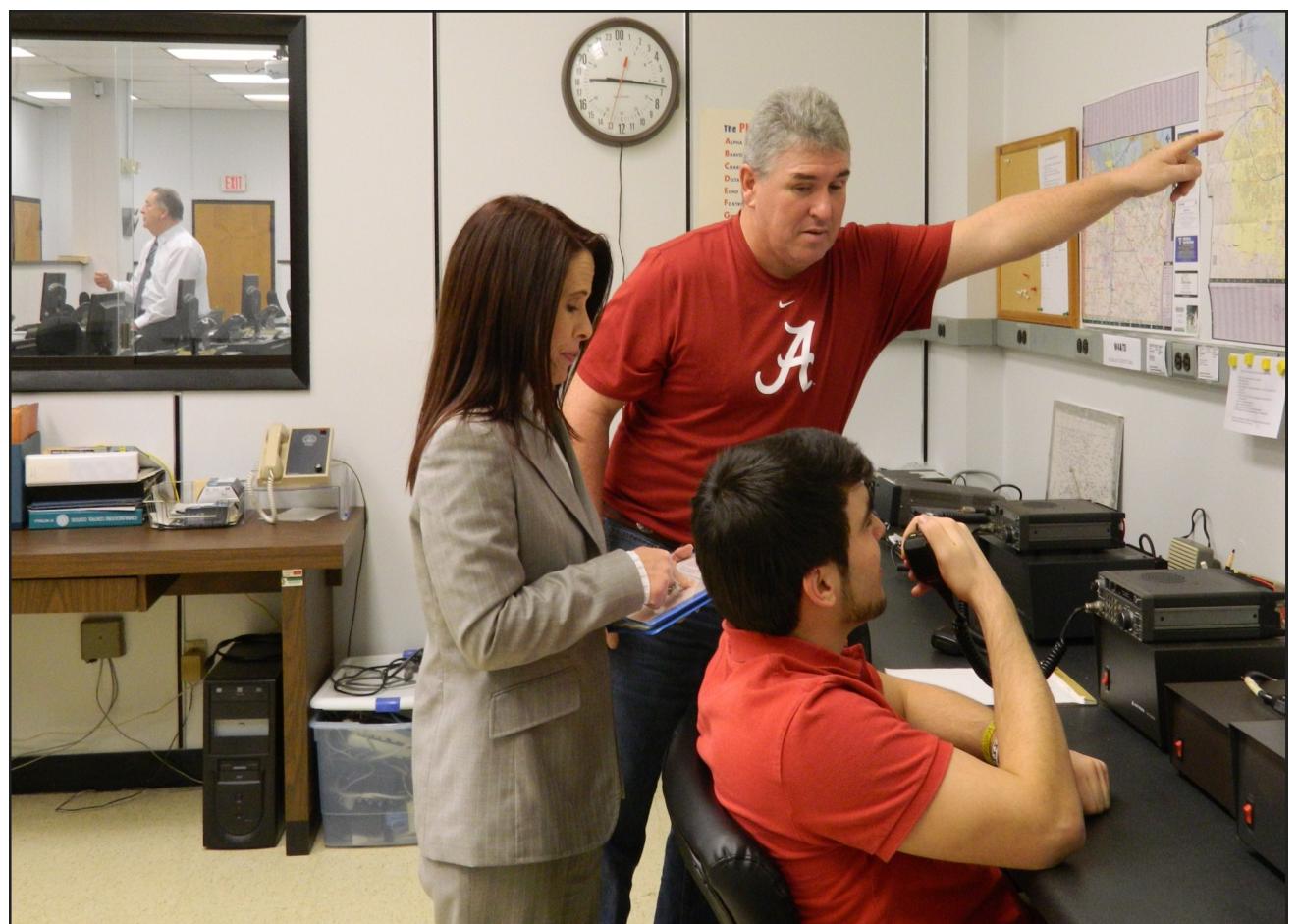
"They come in and talk to spotters and other Ham operators to communicate what's going on," said

Cantrell.

Three tornadoes hit Morgan on April 27, 2011 and Hicks said spotters, including county officials and employees were helpful.

They saw one of the tornadoes zipping through.

"Commissioner Don Stisher
Please see EMA page 9



Radiological Emergency Preparedness Planner DeDe Hayes, left, and Operations Officer Johnny Cantrell give instructions to intern Matt Teague (seated) about mapping in the amateur radio operators' office that's adjacent to the operations command center.

EMA

Continued from page 8

and his crew were out working and served as spotters,” said Hicks. “They informed us that the tornado was going into Hulaco.”

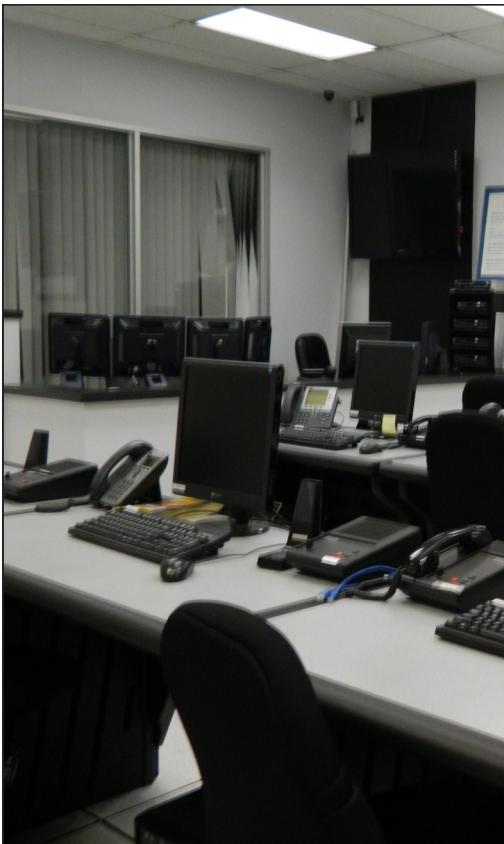
A tornado hit the Northwest section of the county and a second hit near the same area knocking out power. The third struck the southeast part of the county, which includes Hulaco, Hicks said.

Although prepared to cope with severe weather, Hicks is hoping this season is not favorable for tornadoes.

“We’re prepared for the worst, but we’re hoping for good weather,” Hicks said.

“Certainly, we never want a repeat of April 27.”

Most of the properties destroyed or damaged during the storms in 2011 have been replaced or restored in the Hulaco community.



This operations center was built when the courthouse was constructed in 1975 and has been upgraded throughout the years with electronics and visual displays. It is a state-of-the-art facility.

Morgan County has nine public shelters for residents’ safety during severe, threatening weather. Grants have been approved for two more, and construction of two facilities is scheduled to begin soon.

Morgan storm shelters

<p>Danville Volunteer Fire Dept. 5798 Highway 36 West, Decatur Two shelters, capacity 98 each</p> <p>Trinity Town Hall 16 North Seneca Drive, Trinity One shelter, capacity 98</p> <p>Somerville Town Hall 192 Broad St., Somerville One shelter, capacity 98</p> <p>Punkin Center Volunteer Fire Dept. 116 Kirby Bridge Road, Danville One shelter, capacity 98</p>	<p>Massey Volunteer Fire Dept. 386 Evergreen Road, Danville One shelter, capacity 80</p> <p>Morgan County Courthouse 302 Lee St. NE, Decatur Basement open during severe weather</p> <p>Decatur City Hall 402 Lee St. NE, Decatur Basement open during severe weather</p> <p>Priceville City Hall 242 Marco Drive, Priceville Basement open during severe weather</p>
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Safety tips

In homes or small buildings: Go to a basement, cellar or to an interior room such as a closet or bathroom on the lowest level. Upper level floors are unsafe. Wrap in overcoats or blankets for protection against flying debris.

In schools, hospitals, factories or shopping centers: Go to interior rooms and halls on the lowest level. Stay away from glass, enclosed places or areas with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums and warehouses. Crouch down and cover your head.

High-rise buildings: Go to interior small rooms, halls, restrooms or designated shelter areas. Stay away from exterior walls, elevators, doors or glassy areas.

Automobiles or mobile homes: Abandon immediately and go to a substantial structure or storm shelter. If a structure is not available get in a ditch or depression, lie down and cover your head with your hands.

To prepare for tornado: Store water in covered containers. Always keep available supplies such as flashlight, radio and first aid kit.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Help a child

Mentors needed to give hope for the future

By Sheryl Marsh

Communications Director

Morgan County System of Services endeavors to improve the quality of life for children who are in homes where there is no guidance to mold and steer them in the right direction for their future.

To help these children, SOS offers The Game Plan, a mentoring program that places an adult in the life of each child.

The children's family situations differ.

"Basically, the majority of the children we work with do not have positive role models in their lives," said SOS Director Sara Bruce-Hall. "We have some children who have incarcerated parents and a lot of children are from single-parent homes. A lot of the time they don't have any quality time in their lives with an adult who can show them a different side of life. Just being a good listener or shooting hoops or taking them to McDonald's for a meal from the dollar menu will be a huge difference from what they've experienced."

Currently, SOS has 29 residents, who have been trained or about to be trained and matched with children in the mentoring program, according to Kim Gulley, Game Plan coordinator.

"We have just a variety of people, everybody from fitness coaches, manufacturing employees, professors to homemakers and retired people," Gulley said.

At one time about 50 children had been recommended for the program which started in November 2011, but now there are about 30 or 35.

"For whatever reason, all the children have not been in the program because they've either been placed outside the county or something else has taken place," said Gulley. "Then, some have come into the program and gone right back out."

Most of the children are placed in the program through the court system and other referrals come from the school systems and agencies such as the HANDS Home, Gulley said.

During the short time of Game Plan's existence positive results are surfacing.

"We're starting to see some good stuff," Gulley said. "It takes a while to get things going, getting mentors matched with children and for relationships to build. We're hearing positives from kids and adults. One girl in high school made all As and Bs and one C on her report card. She was ecstatic. She was proud of herself. That's not something you see a lot these days in teens. She told me: 'I didn't know I was that smart.' I said we did and I'm glad you discovered it."



The program has its challenges keeping up with children, who move from one location to another.

"Contact information changes and when mentors go looking for the kids they've moved," said Gulley. "We can keep up with them pretty good while school is in session but during the summer it becomes challenging in some cases."

Mentors give the children time they need from adults.

"I have one mentor who picked up a teen almost every day and they went to Books-A-Million to work on homework to help her pass first se-

mester," Gulley shared. "Then, we had a young man who is interested in art and his mentor took him to Carnegie Visual Art Center. Another kid really wants to pursue a career in auto mechanics and his mentor lined up all of his contacts."

"The mentors are doing everything to help them with their studies, while taking them for recreational outings," Gulley added. "They're doing everything from grabbing a burger to going to the park, going shopping and in the fall they went to high school football games."

The program still needs mentors.

"These are kids who are really on the brink of being success stories but they need someone to spend some time with them and give them the courage to dream," Gulley said. "I worked in the court system for 13 years and it's different when you're out there at their homes seeing and hearing what the mentors witness about these children's challenges. We have an opportunity to make our community strong simply by spending time with a kid, showing them that you care and that they can count on an adult to help."

Bruce-Hall said people shouldn't believe myths about children from troubled families.

"I can't over emphasize the importance of having good volunteers from the community to share time with our children," said Bruce-Hall. "Probably, a popular misconception is that because many of our children have been involved with law enforcement they would be difficult to work with. That's not true. The truth is that they are probably more receptive than other children because they don't have role models in their lives."

"I've heard a lot of children say: 'I don't have anyone'. Being a mentor would fill a huge gap in their lives, she added. When we have someone from the community spend time or donate something to help a child the children comment: 'It's good to know that somebody cares.' Being a mentor to children gives them hope for a future."

Mentoring

The children in need of mentoring are mostly teenagers, who don't have adult role models in their lives to provide nurturing encouragement or support in academics or other areas.

Many of them don't participate in extracurricular activities and some have parents who are incarcerated or have various issues that hinder relationships with their children.

Research shows that children who meet regularly with mentors are 52 percent less likely than others to skip school. Mentoring deters students from dropping out of school. An analysis of mentoring programs by Jekielek, Moore and Hair concluded that when children have mentors they have better attitudes and behavior at school.

Benefits of mentoring:

- Helps improve a child's self-esteem
- Helps students set career goals and encourages them to pursue them
- Teaches them life skills
- Introduces them to professional organizations and resources

Lack of mentoring places children at risk for:

- Teen parenthood
- Substance abuse
- Criminal behavior
- Low self-esteem
- Poor school performance
- Disciplinary issues

SOURCE: Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership



Chairman delivers positive State of the County address

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

During his State of the County address on Feb. 28 Morgan County Commission Chairman Ray Long explained how elected officials and department

heads worked together to cut spending and rid the county of financial restraints.

He told a crowd that gathered at the Turner-Surles Community Center that the county saw major improve-

ments in budgeting in 2012 with almost every department spending under budget.

"When we passed the 2011-2012 budget things were tough," Long said. "We had asked every department to cut their budget by 10 percent. We had anticipated starting the budget year with nearly no reserves. We asked each department head and elected official to try their best to stay within the budget that had been passed. It was a very lean budget. Each one of them realized how serious the financial condition was. The bad economy had finally caught up with Morgan County. No longer could we spend at will. Our department heads and elected officials came through for us. Several departments came in under budget."

The departments were the

commission office, courthouse maintenance, data processing, and animal control. In addition, Long said Revenue Commissioner Amanda Scott and Probate Judge Greg Cain both stayed under budget and Sheriff Ana Franklin's jail budget was under. Long noted also that the Board of Registrars stayed within budget.

Long provided figures to back his words about the county's financial soundness.

The county's assets total \$41,820,000, which is a \$770,000 increase over the prior year, Long said. The county's reserve has \$1.7 million with a \$1.3 million increase over the prior year. The road and bridge reserve fund has \$1.9 million, an increase of \$190,000.

Property taxes collected included \$300,000 more than the collection in 2011, Long said.

Long talked about unity among the commissioners.

"In November 2010 your commission made a pledge to each other that we were going to work together for what we thought was best for Morgan County," he said. "I want to report to you today that we have kept that pledge. The commission has had only one vote that wasn't unanimous and even that one vote didn't produce controversy. We just moved on to the next item. I am proud of our commissioners and I hope you are, too."

The crowd applauded.

In concluding, Long predicted a bright future for the county.

"Morgan County is in good shape," he said. "I see things only getting better in the years to come."

The crowd gave Long a standing ovation.



Chairman Ray Long gives State of the County address .

Update

Road, bridge projects under way in districts

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

Work is still abuzz in all four districts of the county with road and bridge projects in progress.

District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark's shop employees are doing preparation work to accommodate a new Priceville High School.

"We're working on improving the intersection of North Bethel and East Upper River roads in preparation for the new school," said Clark. "We're going to put in turn lanes and widen the roadsides. We're also getting North Park ready to start the baseball and softball season."

District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest has multiple projects going on, also.

"We're completing a new soccer field at West Park and it should be ready for soccer season," said Vest. "We're also improving a restroom, putting in new playground equipment and a new pavilion at the park. In addition to that we have committed to partner with the City of Hartselle on a sidewalk project on Main Street where we'll put down asphalt, curbs and lighting to match the Streetscape layout."

West Lacon Road Bridge is out in District 3 and should be replaced by



West Lacon Road in District 3 is closed while a bridge is being replaced. Officials say they expect the work to be completed some time in April.

early April, according to Commissioner Don Stisher.

"The work started in November and we're looking forward to its completion," Stisher said. "OZ Davis Road washed out during all the rain we had in January and we replaced it. We are also continuing to work on our new shop that we plan to occupy soon."

District 4 Commissioner Greg

Abercrombie has the architectural plan for a senior citizen center at Union Hill and that project should get started soon.

"We're also working on a parking lot for Tri-County Fire Department," Abercrombie said. "We accepted a bid for construction of a concession stand at Brindlee Mountain Park. We have a full slate of projects on tap."

Morgan County new, expanding industries

From Jan. 2012 through Dec. 2012

New Companies

Busche, Hartselle, \$21 million investment, 200 jobs

Jemison-Demsey LLC, Decatur, \$28 million, 28 jobs

Total investments: \$49 million; 228 jobs

Expanding companies

Daikin America, Decatur, \$9 million investment, 25 jobs

Feralloy Corp., Decatur, \$7.7 million investment, 13 jobs

Gavilon Grain, Decatur, \$6 million investment, 8 jobs

Hexcel Corp, Decatur, \$150.5 million investment, 35 jobs

J&M Signs, Decatur, \$5,000 investment

Micor Industries, Decatur, \$3.1 million investment, 40 jobs

Nucor Steel, Decatur, \$43 million investment, 8 jobs

Precision Machine Service, Decatur, \$200,000 investment, 2 jobs

Russell Forest Products, Hartselle, eight jobs

Tanksley Machine, Decatur, \$500,000 investment, 3 jobs

Toray Carbon Fibers, Decatur, \$97 million investment, 43 jobs

United Launch Alliance, Trinity, 75 jobs

Valley Rubber, Falkville, \$1.6 million investment, 20 jobs

Yates Industries, Decatur, \$2.9 million investment, 11 jobs

Total expansions: 29; investment: \$387.6 million; jobs: 309

Morgan County totals: 31; investment: \$436.6 million; jobs: 537

SOURCE: Morgan County Economic Development Association President/CEO Jeremy Nails.

Aging with something to do

Eva's Hudgins planned to "stomp a boogie"

at senior center in February on 96th birthday

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

He goes to the Eva Senior Citizen Center every day for recreation, fellowship and a hot meal, but a day in February would be different for Abraham Hudgins.

He celebrated his 96th birthday, and said he planned to dance.

"I'm going to stomp a boogie," Hudgins chuckled. "I aint stomped a boogie in a long time but I'm going to do it."

Hudgins, of Eva, is one of 15 aging residents who enjoy going to the center each day. Their reasons for going vary, but they all bond together through telling jokes, playing games and breaking bread.

On this day in January Hudgins and a group of men, including cousin, Horace Hudgins, of Hartselle, were

Senior center, the heart of Eva
Page 14

heavily involved in a game of Rook.

Between card shuffles they paused long enough to tell why they go to the senior center.

"I like to come to be with people," said Donald Allison, 73, of Eva. "If you're by yourself you could dry up on the inside."

His wife Atha walked in and said she enjoyed quilting at the center, but she wasn't going to participate that day because of an ailing back.

Jack Garnett, 77, joked: "I like to come and get a bite of pickle every now and then, but on a more serious note I

do like the good fellowship.

Across the room a group of women were quilting.

Each woman seemed to have a passion for the craft.

"I come because I want to and I like quilting," said Robbie Childers, 84. "I also like the fellowship and I come just about every day."

Florence Hale, 84, said quilting is her main attraction and, "I like coming here because they've been very nice to me."

Close to noon they started gathering at the dining table for lunch. On this breezy day the main course was chili.

After lunch they resumed fellowshiping.

"They start leaving shortly after lunch," said Ruth Livingston, director of the center.

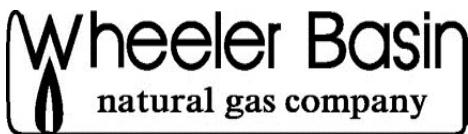
"Sometimes the Rook players will stay longer and the women will stay longer to



Abraham Hudgins

quilt. It just differs on certain days." By the way, Abraham Hudgins did have a birthday party on Feb. 21

with a cake and all the trimmings. He didn't "stomp a boogie", but he had a good time.



April is National Safe Digging Month and Wheeler-Basin Natural Gas cautions residents to call the company to have underground utilities located before planting flowers or trees. Doing so protects you as well as your utility service.

Unintentional damage to underground facilities during digging is a significant cause for disruption in services and other vital service operations. Damaging a natural gas pipe isn't just an inconvenience, it's a hazard to you, your neighborhood and community. Wheeler-Basin is a member of 811 and has distribution lines serving Falkville, Priceville, Somerville, Trinity and surrounding areas. Sometimes WBNG pipelines are marked with signs that are used to indicate approximate locations of the pipelines, which are buried underground. The signs are usually at major roadways and railroad crossings and intervals along major thoroughfares. Markers should not be relied upon for the exact location or depth of a pipeline or the number of lines in the vicinity. It is a federal crime for any person to willfully deface, damage, remove or destroy any pipeline sign or right-of-way marker required by federal law.

In the event of a natural gas emergency or if you have questions, please call the WBNG office: 256-974-9023.

(A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT)



The quilters

The ladies at Eva Senior Center work together to piece a quilt. This is one of several they have made. After the April 2011 tornadoes the women gave more than 20 quilts to residents affected by the storms. Around the quilt, from left, Lora Garnett, Ruth Livingston, Florence Hale, Commission on Aging Director Debra Gardner, and Robbie Childers.

Bidding for United Way

Employees, officials participate in silent auction, county's annual fundraiser for local agency

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

Morgan County employees raised money for United Way and had fun doing so at a silent auction held in the courthouse basement on Dec. 13.

Employees and elected officials participated.

It was fun to watch employees coming back to check on bids they'd placed on certain items. If they had been upped they would go a little higher.

Local merchants donated items for the auction.

"We couldn't have done this without our local businesses," said County Commission Chairman Ray Long.

"We are proud to live in a community where people care about others and are willing to give of their resources to help others. "We also appreciate our

employees and officials supporting the silent auction and look forward to a bigger one next year."

George Pollitt, executive director of Morgan County United Way, was appreciative of the county's fundraising efforts.

"I think the auction was a great idea," said Pollitt. "It's an innovative way to raise money. The community really needs the support because a number of our agencies are struggling to meet their budgets. We are really grateful for everything the county has done."

The sheriff's department held separate fundraising events, which included a hot dog sale.

Donors

Alabama Electrology

AutoZone (Beltline Road and Sixth Ave.)

Burningtree Country Club

Café 113

Cricket By The Creek

Domino's Pizza

Java Jaay Café

Jimmy Smith Jewelers

Lowe's Home Improvement

McBride's Florist

O'Reilly Auto Parts (Beltline)

O'Reilly Auto Parts (Sixth Ave.)

Pepsi Cola Bottling

Precision Tune Auto Care

Shumake Furniture

Simp McGhee's



Morgan County employees and officials ponder items to place bids during a silent auction at the courthouse in December. Local merchants donated a variety of merchandise and certificates.



Morgan officials open district shops for annual spring cleanup week April 22-27

If you have items, including furniture that you want to discard, the week of April 22-27 will be the time to do so. That's when Morgan County commissioners will open district shops for the public to bring unwanted items for free disposal.

The commission designated the week for the county's annual spring cleanup.

Also, Adopt-a-Mile volunteers will be out picking up litter and Environmental Services Director Ricky Brooks encourages all residents to participate.

"We'd like everybody to get out and do something," Brooks said. "Just picking up litter on your street or in front of your house will be a big help. We'll have bags available to give out if you come by the office."

The building is located on Industrial

Drive in Hartselle.

Shops in districts 2, 3 and 4 will open from 6 a.m. to 4p.m. Monday through Thursday and on Saturday from 7 to 11 a.m. District 1 shop on Central Parkway in Decatur will not accept items during the week, only on Saturday because of the shop's limited space and close proximity to the landfill.

Residents who don't want to take discarded items to a district shop may take them directly to the landfill at no cost during cleanup week. When going to the landfill proof of residency must be presented. Landfill hours are 6 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday.

Unacceptable items include shingles, tires, household garbage, lumber and hazardous chemicals.

Senior center...

By Sheryl Marsh
 Communications Director

Ruth Livingston doesn't want to think about life without the Eva Senior Citizen Center. She's been director there over 20 years, but it's more than a job to her.

Like the other seniors, she likes the recreation and fellowship.

"I wouldn't know what to do if I didn't come to work every day," said Livingston, 86. "I get to help people and it gives me something to do."

Morgan County Transportation/Commission on Aging Director Debra Gardner said the Eva facility was the county's first senior center and it's considered the heart of Eva.

"It's a very special group of people out there," Gardner said. "I always enjoy going out there spending time with them."

While running the center Livingston participates in quilting with the other ladies. They sit around a large table on which a quilt is spread.

"We have a ceramic keel in the back where we used to do a lot of ceramics," Livingston said.

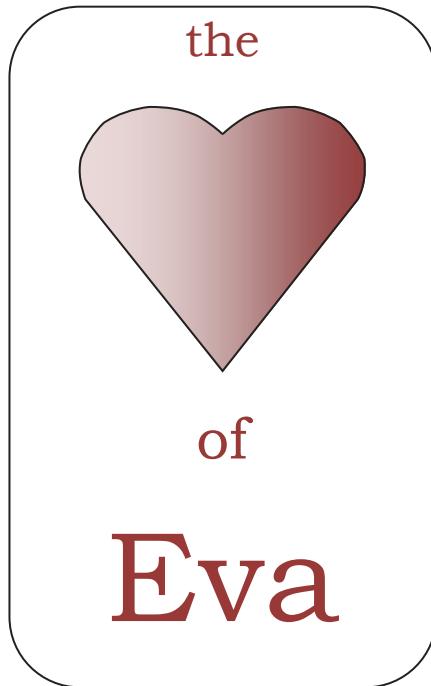
"Ceramics were a fad, so we just stopped doing them. We have a lot of fun activities still, especially with the quilting. We made quilts and gave to people who were affected by the tornadoes in 2011, and that made us feel real good to be able to help."

Livingston's first job with the county was as a van driver.

"Then, they laid me off and I went to work for a nursing home for about two and a half years," she said. "When an opening became available they hired me back and I've been here since. We have 15 who come on a regular basis. Our greatest service is our homebound people. We have 18 people for whom we deliver meals to their homes."

Livingston has seen change during her tenure at the center.

"When this program first started our van picked up at least 15 people a day," she said. "They are all deceased now and our van



doesn't pick up anyone. A lot of people have retired and they're driving good cars and some have other places to go. Back then people didn't have anywhere to go except to church on the weekend. But, we're proud of our group that comes every

day and it really fills a void."

She said her son, Eva Mayor Gary Livingston asks her from time to time about retirement, and she jokes with him about it.

She shared thoughts for not wanting to retire.

"Why should I sit at home and look at four walls when I can get out and be with people," she reasoned. "It's good to have a job, but it is also good to be able to congregate with people. I've been a widow since 1973 and it's been a lifesaver for me."

Morgan Senior Centers

Eva center 3824 Eva Road, Eva	Morgan City center 221 Park Road, Union Grove
Falkville center 1076 Culver Road, Falkville	Neel center 6950 Danville Road, Hartselle
Florette center 61 Florette Road, Somerville	Somerville center 48 Main St., Somerville
Hartselle center 406 Nance Ford Road, Hartselle	Turner-Surles Sycamore St. NW, Decatur
Lacey's Spring center 10139 Highway 36 East	



Refinancing jail bonds saves almost \$3 million

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

The Morgan County Commission will save nearly \$3 million by refinancing bond issues obtained in 2003 and 2004 to build the county jail.

Montgomery-based Merchant Capital LLC refinanced the 2004 bond series in two parts. Last month the commission adopted resolutions authorizing the issuance of

General Obligation Refunding Warrants for Series 2013 A and Series 2013 B.

“The original rate was 5 percent and it’s 2.5 percent to refinance,” Chairman Ray Long explained. “We didn’t extend the length of the bond issues, therefore we will save all of the money that otherwise would’ve gone to interest. With refinancing of both bond series we will save almost \$3 mil-

lion of taxpayers’ money.”

The jail, which opened in 2006, cost more than \$23 million.

Merchant Executive Vice President Ken Funderburk commended Long’s wisdom on refinancing the bonds.

“There was a decision point last summer where the chairman was challenged to accept a savings that would have generated at that time or wait in hopes

of a greater return and the chairman chose to wait and it turned out to be an absolute stellar decision,” Funderburk said.

“We look to save money in every possible way and this was a good time for us to do so with the extremely lower interest rate,” said Long.

“We had an opportunity to refinance this series when we did the 2003 series, but we saved more by waiting.”

New tag renewal notices require more information for verification

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

When you get a tag renewal notice this year it will be in letter form rather than the usual card, which listed vehicle descriptions and tag costs only.

The Morgan County license commissioner’s office changed the document style to collect insurance information to comply with the state’s newly amended insurance law, according to Deputy License Commissioner Helen Hill.

“We had to redo our notices to add space to capture information such as policy numbers and insurance company numbers which are required for verification of current insurance,” said Hill.

The law, which requires licensing officials to use a statewide online system to verify valid insurance for those registering or renewing registration for vehicles, became effective Jan. 1.

The biggest problem has been with insurance information not being in the system.

“It started off slowly because all of the insurance companies have not gotten their information online,” Hill explained. “So, for those we were not able to verify coverage. They had to show us their insurance documentation or have their company fax us something. I would say initially that happened with about 40% of the people and it’s down now to about 10%.”

There are minor problems with people who do mail transactions.

“They need to make sure that all of the information regarding insurance, all required numbers are filled in on the tag renewal notice, Hill said. “If they don’t complete all of the information we’ll have to mail it back to them and that’s time consuming. They need to also make sure they put down a daytime phone number so we can call them rather than just send back the documents for completion.”

When people purchase a new or used vehicle and go to the office to register it they must insure the automobile before going there.

“They need to have insurance verification documentation with them,” Hill said. If they don’t insure the vehicle first they won’t be issued a tag.”

She anticipates the process becoming easier.

“Once we get their information in the system the first time we won’t have to do it again unless they change insurance companies,” Hill said.

However, the office will have to use the online system to verify insurance coverage during each transaction.

Judicial officials



District Attorney Scott Anderson

Phone: 256-351-4610



Circuit Clerk Chris Priest

Phone: 256-351-4794

State courts
Morgan County’s judicial system comprises a district attorney, three circuit court judges, three district court judges and a circuit clerk. The officials are elected countywide, and represent the state of Alabama through the judicial branch.



Circuit Judge Steve Haddock

Phone: 256-351-4750



Circuit Judge Glenn Thompson

Phone: 256-351-4785



Circuit Judge Jennifer Howell

Phone: 256-351-4700



District Judge Shelly Waters

Phone: 256-351-4765



District Judge Brent Craig

Phone: 256-351-4760



District Judge Charles Langham

Phone: 256-560-6087

HAPPY EASTER

Thanks to our sponsors

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.

Any business interested in becoming a sponsor of this publication is encouraged to call Communications/Community Relations Director Sheryl Marsh at 256-560-6093, or send her an email: smarsh@co.morgan.al.us

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