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MORGAN COUNTY COMMISSION

March 2014

VOLUME 2, NO. 2

## Help for Veterans living in poverty

### *Must be 65 or older*

**By Sheryl Marsh  
Communications Director**

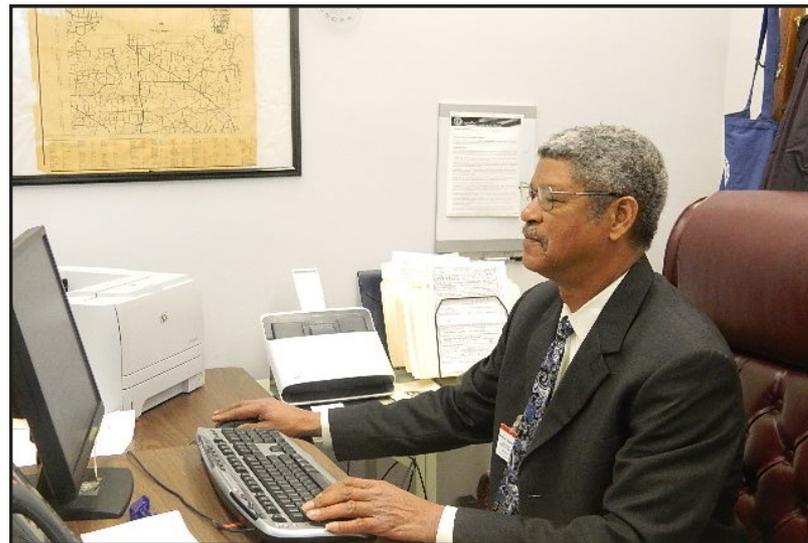
Anthony Robinson likes his job. He loves helping people, especially veterans.

As Veteran Service Officer of Morgan County Veterans Affairs Robinson and an employee assist 10 to 30 people each day who come to the office at the courthouse seeking benefits.

“We help veterans, widows and dependents apply for federal and state benefits,” he said. “There are a lot of benefits available for veterans.”

A huge benefit is one for veterans who are living in poverty.

A veteran 65 or older with a low monthly income or no income is eligible for financial assistance through VA. Veter-



*Anthony Robinson enjoys helping veterans get benefits for time they devoted to military service.*

ans do not have to be disabled to qualify for this benefit.

“The Department of Veterans Affairs gives them a supple-

ment to help our veterans’ reach a higher income for a more comfortable level of liv-

**Please see veterans, page 7**

## Juvenile Drug Court working in Morgan system

**By Sheryl Marsh**

Early intervention for wayward teens through Morgan County Juvenile Drug Court looks promising with children getting off drugs and becoming focused on learning and the future.

“It’s going really well with great participation,” said Morgan County District Court Judge Shelly Waters. “We have some who have graduated from drug court and excelled. Our goals are to have

**Please see juvenile, page 6**

## Wearing two hats

### *Gardner knows county government, has performed multiple tasks, now managing two departments*

**By Sheryl Marsh**

Soft spoken, with a kind demeanor, Debra Gardner doesn’t come off as a person with the hefty responsibilities she has running two major governmental departments.

It’s probably because she knows what she’s doing.

A 21-year veteran employ-

ee, Gardner is director of Morgan County Area Transportation System and Commission on Aging.

Her tenure with the county began in 1992 as payroll officer in the County Commission office.



**Gardner**

After working in that position three years the County Commission chose Gardner, a University of North Alabama graduate, for director of the Commission on Aging.

Before she could complete the first year in that role, former Chairman Larry Bennich, made her director of MCATS, also.

“At first it was overwhelming,” Gardner shared. “We had good people at ALDOT (Alabama Department of Transportation) come and get us set up. They held our hands for the first few years, and we’ve just grown up with it.”

Half of Gardner’s MCATS **Please Gardner, page 15**

## Inside

**Chairman delivers State of the County address, page 3**

**STAR ID: Driver examiners issuing driver’s licenses/ ID cards with added security to comply with federal law, page 5**



**PTIP program growing, page 3**

**31-year veteran employee retires from circuit clerk’s office, page 14**

## Historical treasure

# Renovation reveals Archives hidden features

**By Sheryl Marsh**

Fresh paint, new carpet and a little rearranging brought hidden features to the forefront at Morgan County Archives on Bank Street.

“We were shut down for about three weeks,” said Archivist John Allison. “The maintenance department did all the work, and we arranged all the desks, and records. I think it’s a lot more convenient and it certainly looks a whole lot nicer.”

Allison pointed to an original window of the historic facility saying it had been uncovered during the updating.

“That’s a rain glass window in its original form,” he said. “We cleaned it up and brought it out. “The eagle above it is historic, also. I put Gold Leaf on it and placed it as an accent over the window.”

The archives building was constructed in 1927 as the Tennessee Valley Bank.

Molding around the ceiling jumps out at you, enhancing the architectural beauty.

“The molding has been there all the time you just couldn’t see it because of the color of the walls, which was flat white trimmed in red,” he said.

In addition to moving furniture and records in the main entrance area, Allison also moved some material from the reading room.

“It was stuff that was scarcely used so we moved it,” he said. “We still have it. We didn’t get rid of anything, but you have to ask for it.”

Allison has reserved an area for a Civil War exhibit that’s sure to draw interest.

“I think people are going to be sur-



*Above, left, the window and eagle over the front entrance were restored; right, furniture was rearranged after painting and new carpet was installed. Below, left, Allison stands in Civil War display area; and right, he shows a display of a receipt chest from an old community store.*



prised to learn things they didn’t know,” Allison said.

The display will include an assortment of memorabilia from the war and a massive timeline covering the beginning of the conflict

through reconstruction.

“Information about slavery and the emancipation of slaves will be included, also,” he added. “The only regiment of black troops in Alabama was raised in De-

catur and we will have plenty about that.”

Allison and local artist Joel McWhorter are working on the Civil War project.

“Sen. Arthur Orr made all

this possible by helping us secure \$100,000 through grants from various sources and we are most grateful,” said Allison. “We hope to have the display up some time in the spring. “



*Rendering of Civil War display area.*

# Chairman gets standing ovation for State of County address

*150 attend Decatur-Morgan County Chamber-hosted event*

Commission Chairman Ray Long described a progressive Morgan County that's financially sound in delivering his State of the County address on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> at Turner-Surles Community Center.

The event was hosted by the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce.

"Morgan County is in good shape," he said. "Our finances are strong and we hope the trend continues. The reason our finances are strong is because our department heads, employees and elected officials are using your money wisely."

Long said frugal spending coupled with unexpected revenue mounted a savings to add to the county's reserve fund, taking it slightly over \$2 million.

The chairman also touted an excellent relationship between the commission and the Morgan County Economic Development Association.

"During the past year we've seen numerous expansions announced totaling over \$300 million in investments and will add over 360 new jobs to Morgan County," Long said.

He named companies that expanded and expressed optimism about Remington Out-



*Left, Chairman Ray Long and wife, Regina with their pastor, Shane Lewis of Somerville Baptist Church. Right, Long delivers State of the County address.*



door Co. coming to the area in the near future.

"We hope to have several hundred people from Morgan County working for Remington," he said.

He gave an overview of progression in all county departments, including each commissioner's shop.

Long praised the commissioners.

"I want you to know that we have four, very good commissioners," he said. "These

four men never fail to answer the call of service when they are asked. I am proud to serve with them. Most of you know the history of the commission in years past. It was not good. People had lost respect for our leaders. When I took office in November of 2010 I made a pledge to change that. I met with our commissioners and asked each of them to work together and do what they thought was best for Morgan

County. I asked them not to have personal agendas, but focus on Morgan County. I pledged to them that I would do the same. For almost 40 months of meetings our commission has had only one vote that was not unanimous."

He said that does not mean they don't disagree.

"What it does mean is that your commission is working together to build up the reputation and protect the in-

tegrity of our county," Long said. "When someone thinks of Morgan County we want them to think good thoughts. When a business is doing research on Morgan County to see if they might want to locate here we want them to see good things about how we all work together to make Morgan County a great place to live and raise a family."

The chairman got a standing ovation from the crowd of about 150.

## *New DA program on fast track with over 80 participants*

**By Sheryl Marsh**

Over a year ago a program to help first-time offenders stay out of jail and get back on the right track was just a plan of Morgan County District Attorney Scott Anderson.

The plan, which developed

into the Pre-trial Intervention Program, was implemented six months ago and it's growing with more than 80 defendants participating, according to PTIP Director Becky Bearden.

"It's definitely on its way," Bearden said. "We're still in

the beginning stages and we have a few more things to work out, but I'm very pleased with the way the program is going."

PTIP is designed to give



**Anderson**

individuals charged with minor crimes an opportunity to become law-abiding citizens with productive lifestyles.

"It is for first offenders, who have made mistakes and would likely benefit from us restoring structure in their lives while they take respon-

sibility for their action," Anderson said. "

The program started in district court for misdemeanor charges, and after a few weeks it extended to circuit court for Class-B and Class-

**Please see PTIP, page 11**

# MCEDA honors board chairman, former Decatur Mayor Lynn Fowler

The Morgan County Economic Development Association honored its Board of Directors chairman and former Decatur Mayor Lynn Fowler during a meeting on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>.

Fowler has served on the board since the 1970s and has played a pivotal role in economic development in the community. He has been chairman since 1983.

At the meeting MCEDA President/CEO Jeremy Nails presented a portrait

of Fowler's hands painted by local artist Lee Nabors. The portrait will be displayed in the MCEDA office, right outside the board room.

Originally, the art was painted for the Carnegie Visual Art Center's exhibit titled: "How You have made Your Mark—A Study of Hands. The board also named the meeting room the Lynn C. Fowler Board Room.

Sen. Arthur Orr and

Rep. Terri Collins presented Fowler with a resolution that the state legislature passed in his honor.

"We were so pleased to be able to honor Mr. Fowler," said Nails. "He has been and will continue to be a major cornerstone of MCEDA. He is a true leader of the board and in the community. We cannot thank him enough."



Courtesy photo

*Fowler surrounded by family at an MCEDA board meeting in February where he was honored for his service.*

# Morgan County's EMA Director Eddie Hicks keynote speaker for national conference

Morgan County Emergency Management Agency Director Eddie Hicks was keynote speaker for the 2014 Colorado Integrated Emergency Management Con-

ference held in Loveland, Colorado in February.

Hicks shared experiences from his 34-year career as EMA director, which included working with more than a dozen

presidential declared disasters.

Colorado EMA Manager Mike Gavin said Hicks did a great job as speaker.

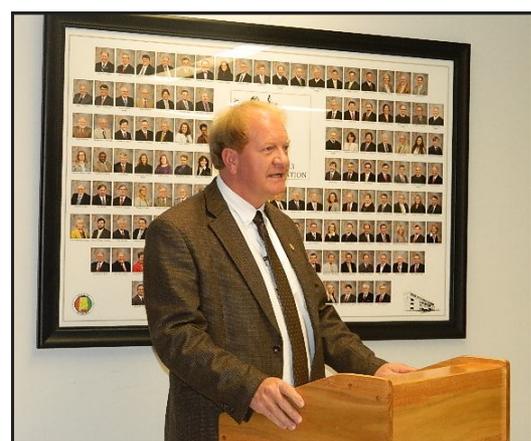
"His sharing of his ex-

perience in Alabama during disasters was excellent," Gavin said.

"I always enjoy representing Morgan County, and this was a wonderful experience," said Hicks.



*Hicks speaks at Colorado conference*



*About 30 people attended a ceremony in February to unveil a new composite of the Morgan County Bar Association. Left, Commission Chairman Ray Long addresses the crowd in front of the composite mounted on the wall. Right, District Judge Charles Langham chats with visitors before the ceremony.*

# New Bar composite unveiled during courthouse ceremony

The Morgan County Bar Association updated a composite of its members for the first time in 12 years. District Court Judge Charles Langham was chosen to coordinate the project with local photographer Ellis Chenault.

"It's been a long time since our last one, which was done in 2002, and we really needed to get a new composite done," Langham said.

Langham presided over a ceremony last month at the courthouse to unveil the photo composite. County Commission Chairman Ray Long gave permission to mount the composite on a wall on the third floor.

# The star ★ adds security

## *Examiners issuing new driver license/ID, to meet requirements of 2005 federal law*

### By Sheryl Marsh

It's optional, but if you want to hop a domestic flight, or enter certain federal buildings, you'll need to provide required documentation to get a star added to your Alabama driver's license or state issued identification.

A federal Act called REAL ID goes into effect Dec. 1 for some people and three years later for others.

Getting the new identification is not required. Drivers may still get a regular renewal at the license commissioner's office.

"It's based on birthdays,"

said Lt. Brant Barnett at the state license examiners' local office. "If you were born after Dec. 1, 1964 the law becomes effective Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> this year. For people born on or after that date it goes into effect Dec. 1, 2017. People don't have to get what we call Secure Trusted and Re-

liable (STAR) ID, which is adding a yellow star to your license or ID card, but in order to fly on any airline they'll need it before boarding a plane if they don't have a passport."

Cpl. Gary Hicks said this will be required for all

Please see STAR, page 6

## Courthouse holiday closings

The Courthouse will be closed in observance of the following holidays during the current fiscal year:

Good Friday: April 18th

Memorial Day: May 26th

Independence Day: July 4th

Labor Day: Sept. 1

## Morgan EMA info by smartphone, free app available

The convenience of accessing information through smartphones prompted the Morgan County Emergency Management Agency to offer an app to keep residents informed about severe weather and other events.

"More and more citizens are relying on their smartphones, so it only makes sense to develop this application and enhance our ability to communicate directly with them" said EMA Director Eddie Hicks.

Real time data is emitted to smartphones in emergency situations.

The free app is now available on all Apple and Android devices.

"This app will be a valuable tool for any natural or man-made disaster," Hicks said.

Features include: emergency information; shelter locations; Browns Ferry information; traffic; school closings, weather conditions and alerts; family emergency plans; and contact phone numbers.

To get the app please go to the appropriate app store for your smartphone: Google Play for android or Apple for iPhone. Type Morgan County EMA app in search field.

"Morgan County is constantly seeking additional ways to keep the public informed before, during and after an emergency situation," Hicks said. "We are doing just that through this app."



Morgan EMA app

# Juvenile drug court

Continued from page 1

them walk out clean with a job or an education plan that they helped develop, and for them to communicate with their families better.”

Since its beginning in 2011 the court's had 29 participants, and seven have successfully completed the program, according to Sherry Hartselle, IT manager and juvenile drug court analyst. A \$50,000 grant from the Administrative Office of Courts funded the program initially, and this year's grant amount is \$22,500, Hartselle said.

Currently, nine children are enrolled in the program, Juvenile Court has two tracks.

“Track I is for more dependent drug users and they have to report once a month,” Waters explained. “They need more counseling and they're drug tested more often. Track II is for children coming out of rehabilitation and like those in Track I they report once a month and are drug tested, but not as often as the others.”

Most of the charges against them are possession of marijuana and some have domestic violence charges, Waters said.

“A lot of them are using prescription drugs illegally,” she added.

Track I lasts a minimum of seven months and Track II is for three months, according to Juvenile Probation Officer Jon Laidley, who is case manager for drug court.

“During the program they have to do community service while maintaining sobriety,” Laidley explained. “There are three phases of Track I and when we first get the chil-

dren they are usually still substance abusers, so they're in what we call Phase 0. When they have the first negative drug screen we placed them in Phase 1.”

Participants receive treatment from Teen Quest and the Enrichment Center. They are drug screened through Community Corrections, Laidley said.

The children are given incentives, such as small reductions in fees or certificates to restaurants for staying on course. They must face consequences for doing wrong,

Laidley said.

When children complete drug court charges against them are dismissed.

“I believe those who have graduated from the program are better for it,” said Laidley. “I believe drug court is successful because it keeps kids from ending up in prison, and none are in prison right now.”

Waters said that partnerships with agencies such as Morgan County System of Services and Decatur Youth Services provide great assistance for drug court. “We're grateful,” the judge said.

## STAR ID

Continued from page 5

domestic flights.

Although the law approved by Congress in 2005, becomes effective this year, Hicks said DPS has been issuing STAR IDs almost two years.

Congress passed the law in response to terrorism against the United States and the new identification is another measure of security, Barnett said.

He said currently airlines do not accept temporary license from travelers. They must have the hard copy, and that could be a problem with STAR ID because the star is not on the temporary license that are first issued.

To avoid having a problem Barnett said people may renew their license 60 days prior to expiration, and they would have a hard copy before traveling.

To get STAR ID a person must provide one of these documents: Social Security

card or a certified letter from the Social Security Administration showing the person's name and number; US military ID card; US military Form DD214; Medicare/Medicaid ID card (SS number must be followed by the letter A); or W-2 tax form. Applicants must verify residency by two of these documents: voter registration card, residential mortgage contract or rental lease; property tax payment receipt (homestead); previous year tax return showing address; vehicle registration; utility bill; state or federal court documents; school enrollment form; Department of Defense form 214; sex offender registration document; homeowners insurance policy, Social Security benefits statement; federal or state check; and military orders for duty station.

STAR ID can only be obtained through the license examiners' office. County

license commissioners and probate judges cannot issue or renew the secure license or identification card.

Examiners must issue the initial STAR license as well as

the renewal.

The local office is located on the first floor of the courthouse. It is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m.

## Morgan Juvenile Drug Court

### Goals

**Reduce** commitments to state Department of Youth Services by 70%. (Before juvenile court was implemented 28 juveniles were committed over a 5-year period. Since drug court only 4 were committed.)

**To have** 60% of participants testing negative for drugs. (During past two years 466 of 710 tested negative.)

**To have** 60% of children complete drug court with no charges.

**Ensure** all participants increase school attendance and improve grades; or prepare for GED, obtain and maintain employment.

### Support network

**(includes, but not limited to:)**

Education liaisons, treatment providers, Morgan County System of Services, District Attorney's office, Community Corrections, Decatur Youth Services, Decatur Police school resource officers, Boys and Girls Club, Mental Health Association of Morgan County, Parents and Children Together, Neighborhood Christian Center, Enrichment Center and Alabama Psychiatric Services.



*State license examiners are issuing new driver's licenses and state identification cards to comply with federal law. Examiner Kyeonna Barrett, left, processes a driver's license for a customer at the courthouse.*

# Veterans

Continued from page 1

ing,” Robinson explained. “For example a veteran getting \$800 a month from Social Security may qualify for an additional amount from VA. This agency is totally separate from Social Security, but it uses SS income toward VA pension benefits.”

The VA supplemental income for indigent veterans is not widely known in the area.

“It’s mostly spread by word of mouth,” said Robinson. “We’ve had people come in who said they were told about it at church, and we’re glad to help them when they come in.”

Robinson and Administrative Support Assistant Karen Lockhart have helped numerous homeless veterans apply for the monthly benefit.

“They are no longer homeless because they get a check every month and can afford a place to live,” Robinson said.

Disability as well as other claims are filed frequently at the local office.

A veteran of any age, who is disabled from service related issues, is entitled to monthly compensation if VA establishes the disability, Robinson said.

Disabled veterans may get housing assistance through HUD as well.

“They could get help for modifying their homes to accommodate their disability,” he said.

Although most of the traffic to the office is from Korean and Vietnam veterans, Robinson says many younger veterans are coming for help.

“A lot of the veterans getting out now are coming in and filing compensation claims, saying they were injured or harshly affected by other elements in the military,” he said. “We have a few amputees who come in and one lost an arm. Another veteran who got out about a year ago had a traumatic brain



**Administrative Support Assistant Karen Lockhart talks with disabled veteran Steve Miller and his wife Kathy.**

injury from a bomb explosion. It’s horrible to lose a limb, but it’s devastating to lose your mind.”

Robinson, who served four years in the U.S. Air Force, which included a tour of duty in the Vietnam War, says times have changed since he was a soldier.

“The military has a transition period now, and the soldiers can file claims and do all the things they would do at this office before they’re discharged,” he said.

“When I was in the military I worked from the day I got out of training until the time I was discharged. Simply stated, I worked on an airplane on Monday and came home on Tuesday.” Robinson anticipates an increase in veterans coming for help.

“As soldiers begin to get discharged from the war we will likely see an influx,” he said. “Some might start the process during the transition of their release but many won’t and we’re here to help them.”

Robinson, who has spent his career in service to others, shared his feelings about his current position.

“When widows of soldiers come in and we’re able to help them get a little money they are so happy and I enjoy seeing them happy,” he said. “Just about everybody seems happy when they leave. Of course, they know we don’t make the decisions. We send their claims to Milwaukee. But, with the information the clients give us we can tell them if they are likely to be approved and about how

much their benefit will be. Our veterans and their families deserve all the benefits afforded them. Helping people is what this office is all about and I like it.”

Lockhart likes helping the veterans, also.

“I get a lot of joy seeing them get what they deserve and making sure they get what they deserve,” she said. Sometimes we have to fight awfully hard with the federal VA, but this office doesn’t back down.” Steve Miller served in the Army from 1976 to 1983, and he’s proud to have the local office to call on for help.

“I think it’s good to have something like this for veterans to come to,” said Miller. “They treat you real good. I’m glad they’re here for me and others. I appreciate their service.”

## About The Voice of Morgan County

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

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

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

## Garbage collection

Morgan County Environmental Services Department runs regular garbage routes on all holidays with the exception of Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Garbage routes are re-scheduled for those two holidays. Other county offices are closed on holidays. Occasionally, district shop workers have to work holidays if there’s an emergency with roadways.



Morgan County Commission



@MorganCoComm

# Banks—Caddell Show Choir presents Christmas musical at the courthouse



*Director Anthony Young, seated above, leads the Show Choir in a Christmas musical that the youngsters presented throughout the area, including the Decatur Board of Education and Community Action Agency. They sang, danced and did a bit of acting.*

The Banks-Caddell Elementary Show Choir brought Christmas to the courthouse on Dec. 17th with singing, dancing and a bit of acting.

Before the performance began County Commission Chairman Ray Long welcomed the youngsters and their Director Anthony Young.

The group, which comprises fourth and fifth grade students, performed Dear Santa, a musical by John Jacobson and Mack Huff.

Young tweaked the play and choreographed the dance routines for the students to perform.

During the holiday season the Show Choir presented the musical throughout the area including the Decatur Board of Education, Community Action Agency of North Alabama, banks and nursing homes.

Several elected officials and county employees attended the program at the courthouse and said they thoroughly enjoyed the musical.



# District shops will open to residents for disposal of unwanted items during county's annual spring cleanup week April 21-26

If you throw it away the Morgan County Commission will discard it for you during annual Spring Cleanup Week, April 21-24 and 26.

During that week residents will be able to take unwanted items, including furniture and appliances to a county shop in their

respective district for disposal. All shops, except District 1, located on Central Parkway in Decatur, will offer the service Monday through Thursday from 6 a.m. until 4 p.m. All shops including District 1 will be open on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup> to receive castaways. District 1 will

not accept items Monday through Thursday because of its close proximity to the landfill.

All district shops are closed on Friday. The shops, including District 1, will open on April 26<sup>th</sup> from 7 to 11 a.m. Residents may also use the landfill during cleanup

week and there will be no charge. The landfill schedule for the week is Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 7 to 11 a.m.

"The commissioners do this twice a year for people who have items they need to dispose of," said

Environmental Services Director Ricky Brooks. "We hope everybody will take advantage of spring cleanup."

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

# Cleanup

Continued from page 8

chemicals.

The cleanup will be in conjunction with efforts by Alabama People Against a Littered State.

Brooks encourages litter pickup in the county during cleanup week.

“We still have a few adopt-a-milers and we would love for them to get out during this time,” Brooks said. “If they need bags they can come by our office to get them.”

Environmental Services is located at the Industrial Park off Thompson Road in Hartselle. Commissioners say they look forward to seeing residents take advantage of this service. “We like seeing our residents, and we certainly take pleasure in offering them an opportunity to discard items that they want to get rid of at no cost to them,” said District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark. “I hope we have a good turnout.”

## Morgan County district shops

**District 1 shop, Commissioner Jeff Clark**

**Central Parkway, Decatur**

**(Open Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup> only due to close proximity to landfill)**

**District 2 shop, Commissioner Randy Vest**

**Shull Road, Hartselle**

**(Open April 21-24 from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. and April 26<sup>th</sup> from 7 to 11 a.m.)**

**District 3 shop, Commissioner Don Stisher**

**Highway 55 East of Falkville at Cole Springs**

**(Open April 21-24 from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. and April 26<sup>th</sup> from 7 to 11 a.m.)**

**District 4 shop, Commissioner Greg Abercrombie**

**Union Hill Road**

**(Open April 21-24 from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. and April 26<sup>th</sup> from 7 to 11 a.m.)**

### Sponsor of this publication

For nearly 50 years, BP Decatur has played a vital role in the Morgan County business community.



One of the many ways BP Decatur employees support the community is by participating in the Decatur Morgan Hospital Foundation Dragonboat Races. 2014 will be our third year of competition.

One Team, One Dream!

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# Senior Living



## Residents enjoy activities at Falkville center

**By Sheryl Marsh**

She's petite, well groomed and smart. She likes having a good time and caring for family and friends.

Meet Vivian Summerford, 94.

She's one of 25 aging residents who enjoy activities at the Falkville Senior Citizens Center.

"I worked for an optometrist 33 years and figured it was time to retire many years ago," she said. "I've been coming here ever since."

Barbara Asherbranner, director of the center, says Summerford has a special place at the center.

"We all look up to her. She's our Mama of the bunch," said Asherbranner.

Summerford, who is grandmother of Morgan County School Superintendent Bill Hopkins Jr., says she spends quality time with her family and she enjoys interacting with people at the center.

"The biggest thing here for me is meeting people, especially those I haven't been around much," she said. "I just like people. I've been coming here for years and I've seen the times and people change. We've lost so many to death."

One day last month while others played card games she sat knitting and smiling.

"I'm always knitting or crocheting something," she chuckled.

Asherbranner said the seniors play various card games like Skip Bo, Golf and Rook, and occasionally Bingo.

Friday is a special day.

"We have devotion every Friday. They read and discuss the Bible, and they love it," said Asherbranner.

Summerford is a leader in discussion of the Bible.

"She's very good at it," Asherbranner said.

The group goes out to eat every other month and this month Asherbranner said she plans to have a pianist come every Monday to provide music. Also, she plans to add a line-dance class for the seniors.

The center was built under the administration of the late District 3 Commissioner Joe Summerford and opened in 1996, according to MCATS/Commission on Aging Director Debra Gardner.

"When I first came the center was in a store front by the railroad tracks," Gardner explained. "I'm glad they have this facility to enjoy. This is a very pleasant group of people. They have a good time and they look out for each other. They just enjoy life."

Vivian Summerford loves life and it shows.

She's vivacious.



*Top, Vivian Summerford, 94, inside and outside the Falkville Senior Citizens Center. She's passionate about spending quality time with family and meeting people at the center.*

*Below, residents divided into groups to play favorite card games.*



# Wanted: Electronic waste

*REWORX is collecting electronic equipment for recycling*

REWORX of North Alabama, a subsidiary of Community Action Partnership of North Alabama, wants your old electronics for its recycling program.

Electronic waste includes computers, PCs, laptops, tablets, cell phones, gaming systems/components, printers, copiers, fax machines, some televisions, alarm clocks, can openers, cameras, microwaves, stereos, toasters, speakers, CD players, DVDs, camcorders, floppy drives, modems, remote controls, MP3 players printer toner cartridges (sealed in plastic bag), and satellite TV controller boxes.

Donors of recyclable items will be given a charitable donation receipt.

You may drop off items at the REWORX warehouse at 1909 Central Parkway SW, Decatur, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. REWORX will offer free pickup for truckloads of items in North Alabama.

Small fees are charged for older TVs because of hazardous materials.

“The older TVs have lead and other hazardous waste inside that we have to dispose of,” said Dwayne Blackmon, sales/customer service representative. “We have to charge for those

because there’s a lot of work that goes into them.”

The fee for a 19-inch CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) television is \$20, and \$30 for large sets, Blackmon said. If a PC is donated with a CRT monitor there is no charge. There is no charge for Plasma TVs and LCDs.

Blackmon said the items

are shipped to a plant in Georgia for processing, but one day he hopes to see a plant here.

“We have a license with a REWORX plant in Kenesaw that shreds and separates all parts and sends them for recycling,” Blackmon explained. “They’re paying us a modest fee.

They provide jobs for

about 60 people with disabilities. If we can get the volume in Decatur we could have a factory here and provide jobs for people with disabilities.”

For more information you may call Blackmon at 256-606-5604 or [www.reworx-na.org](http://www.reworx-na.org).

REWORX receives items daily.

## PTIP

Continued from page 3

C felonies only. Defendants charged with Class-A felonies, such as murder and first-degree robbery are not eligible for PTIP. Currently, there are 42 defendants in district court and 41 in circuit, Bearden said.

“We’ve been working with a lot of defendants with drug charges,” she said. “Most are possession charges. People charged

with trafficking or manufacturing are not eligible for the program.”

The length of the program varies per individual. The average time is 12 to 24 months, but could be longer.

Once defendants complete the program Anderson will move to dismiss charges against them. All restitution to victims and court fees must be paid, also.

## Third Friday is back

Organizers of Third Friday, that begins this month, have scheduled dates for the events that will take place throughout downtown Decatur. New this year is a songwriter showcase. Grammy Award winning songwriters will conduct sessions during six of the eight events.

A variety of live music will be featured, and food vendors as well as artists will be at the events. Classic/antique cars will be displayed as well.

Save these dates:

March 21<sup>st</sup>, April 18<sup>th</sup>, May 16<sup>th</sup>, June 20<sup>th</sup>, July 18<sup>th</sup>, Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>, Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> and Oct. 17.



## Lowering the ceiling

*Maintenance Director Wayne Lindley and employee James Morgan doing prep work to lower a ceiling just outside the snack bar at the courthouse. The maintenance department saves thousands of taxpayer dollars each year by doing work that a contractor would normally do. Maintenance employees have various skills in the carpentry field as well as others.*

# Snow keeps commissioners, employees busy

Inclement weather kept county commissioners and employees busy this winter, working almost around the clock clearing roads. Commissioners reported as much as 7 inches of snow in some areas during snowfall on Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioners and employees monitored and worked around the clock grading roads and applying salt and sand on roads and bridges during the snowfall.

“We were able to clear our roads in a timely manner, and keep them safe during the wintry weather,” said District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark. “The sunshine the day following the second snow really helped. Our crew worked from night through the next evening to make sure the roads were safe.”

District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest said early morning hours were challenging, but the roads were made passable soon after the snow.

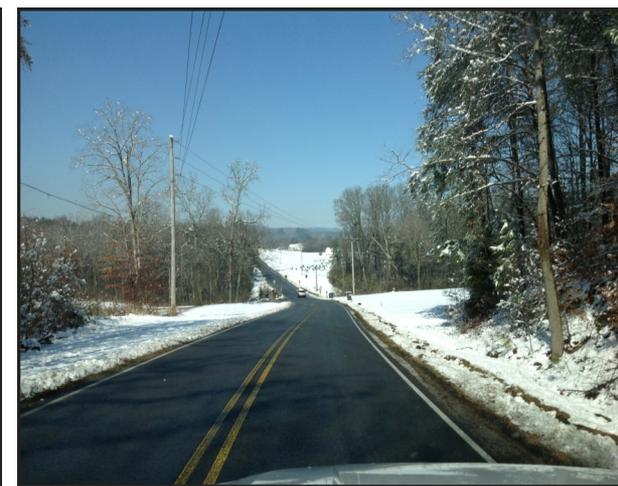
District 3 Commissioner and District 4 Commissioner Greg Abercrombie have higher elevations in their districts and received more snow than the other two.

“We worked long hours, grading, applying sand and salt to keep our roadways safe,” said Stisher. “I was proud that the work got done without problems.”



*Snow and ice blanketed county roads. Above, District 2 employees began clearing roads before sunrise and so did employees in other districts. Below, roads in District 3 from the time the snow fell through to total clearance.*

“I know I measured seven inches of snow at Union Hill,” said Abercrombie. “We cleared all of our major roads first and proceeded to get all of the side roads. I was pleased with the work in my district as well as the others.”



## Spring projects planned for districts, opening new senior centers soon

Paving roads, clearing rights-of-way and improving drainage, are all projects commissioners have planned for this spring.

“We’re going to finish helping with the new Priceville High School among other things,” said District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark. “We’re going to also do some rights-of-way projects as well as clearing trees from Red Bank Road for safety purposes.”



**District 1**  
**Jeff Clark**

In addition, Clark said tennis courts and basketball courts are planned for North



**District 2**  
**Randy Vest**

Park.

“Those projects will be contingent on money from our legislative delegation,” he said.

District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest says only three roads from a paving list of 14 still have to be re-surfaced, and that project is on tap.

“Two of the three adjoin the new Somerville Senior Citizen Center, and the contractor will do those after the



**District 3**  
**Don Stisher**

parking lot is completed at the center,” Vest said. “We plan to complete all pending



**District 4 Greg**  
**Abercrombie**

projects that we started in the past year. We’re still working on West Park improvements, also.”

Vest anticipates the senior center opening soon.

In addition to paving, Vest said 58 roads have been striped in his district. District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher has a full schedule, also.

**Please see projects, page 14**

# MCATS contributes to Decatur's beautification with covered rest area for walkers, bicyclists

Morgan County Area Transportation System is adding a new feature just outside its facility for the public to enjoy.

Still under construction, the covered seating area offers a resting spot for walkers and bicyclists.

"I want people to know that it is not a bus stop," said MCATS Director Debra Gardner. "There are a lot of pedestrians and people riding bikes through this area, which is quite busy and if they get tired and want to rest a little they'll have a spot."

Underwood & Associates designed the project which includes a bench. Attractive land-

scaping will complete the area, linking it to downtown beautification efforts.

"It's really beautiful and fits in well with Second Avenue," said Gardner.

The America Recover and Reinvestment Act of 2009 made the project possible. Gardner said stimulus money her department received through the Federal Transit Administration paid the bill, which was about \$120,000.

Gardner asks people not to toss litter, but to use the trash container that will be placed at the rest stop. "We want to keep it nice,," she said.



*This rest area will add to downtown beautification efforts. MCATS used federal funds to construct the rest spot for public use.*



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## Brewer retires career

# Bids farewell to judicial system after 31 years

By Sheryl Marsh

Carolyn Brewer's career with the judicial system began more than three decades ago in Franklin County. -- Office equipment at the time: pen, paper and typewriter.

Exiting into retirement, she leaves a paperless office, with modern technology.

Brewer's last day in the Morgan County circuit clerk's office was Jan. 31, and she celebrated with co-workers, family and friends.

Before the party she shared memories from her 31-year career.

Her first 15 years were in the Franklin County clerk's office where she quickly realized she was not intimidated by challenges.

"When I started in 1983 there were no computers. When we got a PC it sat in the office and no one touched it for a year because they were afraid of it," Brewer recalled. "I asked that it be put on my desk and I learned how to use it. From there I didn't back away from any new challenge that came through."

She went to work for the Morgan County district court office in 1998.

"I worked for Melba Dutton in the juvenile division," she said. "I worked in that office four years and then I went to the civil division in district court and worked there eight years. I have worked in every division in the system."

Under retired Circuit Clerk John Pat Orr she worked in the child support unit and under current Circuit Clerk Chris Priest she finished her career in the domestic unit.

"I've had some great bosses and co-workers," said Brewer. "I was a single parent for 13 years and I am proud of both my sons, David (Hovater) and Jon (Hovater). I was able to put both of them through college. David has an engineering degree and Jon has a degree in agrono-



*Co-workers crowned Carolyn Brewer queen for her retirement day. Left, Brewer and Circuit Clerk Chris Priest. Right, Brewer wears the crown and enjoys retirement party with her mother, center, and co-worker Janell Conner, left.*



my. I have four wonderful grandchildren of which I am extremely proud."

Priest says Brewer is a great loss.

"She was always the first person to volunteer to help," Priest said. "If there

was a problem she was there to help. She didn't just tell them how to do it, she got in there and did it herself. We're going to really miss Carolyn. Morgan County and the state of Alabama are losing a great

person."

Brewer said meeting new people was good for her and surmised:

"We're all the sum total of everybody who crosses our path."

She shared her plans for

an active life during retirement.

"I want to be able to travel and do things I've never been able to do," she said. "My husband is a big bass fisherman and we're going to enjoy that."

## Projects

**Continued from page 12**

"We plan to finalize renovation of the new district shop on Buster Road," Stisher said. "Also, we will construct a new culvert on Buster Road for drainage, and we will re-surface the road, also. This is a major project in Falkville."

Stisher says he hopes the

new shop will be ready for occupancy and grand opening soon.

Another project is planned for building pads for community storm shelters at Eva and routine maintenance of drainage. Stisher plans to re-surface several roads in District 3 and he said he looks forward to completion of the

bridge on Wilhite Road.

"It appears that the road should re-open during the summer," he said.

District 4 Commissioner Greg Abercrombie said completion of the new senior center at Union Hill is near and several road and bridge projects are planned. A major project restoring Brindlee Moun-

tain Ball Park is under way. A modern concession stand has been built and ball fields and fencing are planned.

"We've got several projects going on and we have many more planned for the district," said Abercrombie. "We're always busy working to improve the area."

# Gardner

Continued from page 1

budget comes from federal grant money, which she obtained through writing proposals.

The transportation system provides pre-scheduled trips for residents to various places, including physicians' offices, grocery and retail stores. Last year MCATS provided 153,291 one-way trips for residents, Gardner said.

The department has 36 buses. Gardner has a total of 52 employees in both departments.

Ruth Coleman, chief dispatcher said Gardner makes her job enjoyable.

"I've been working with her 17 years and she's a good director," said Coleman. "She's great to work with. She makes me feel good as an employee and I like coming to work."

As director of the Commission on Aging Gardner oversees nine

senior citizen centers throughout the county, and the delivery of 180 meals to homebound residents each day.

"Since 1995 every center has moved, or is in the process of moving to a better facility," Gardner said. "All of the county commissioners have always been generous to the Commission on Aging program. Commissioner (Randy) Vest is nearing completion on a new center at Somerville and Commissioner (Greg) Abercrombie is finishing a center at Union Hill. We've recently gotten approval from the Alabama Historical Commission to build a new center at Lacey's Spring. I am so happy to see these seniors get nice places to spend their time."

Chairman Ray Long says Gardner is an excellent manager of both departments.

"Debra has a huge responsibility managing two departments



*Debra Gardner at work in her office on Second Avenue Southeast.*

that provide much needed services for county residents," said Long. "She does a great job with transportation and Commission on Aging, and we're proud

she's here."

When she's not working, Gardner enjoys time with her husband, Dwight, her children and grandchildren.

Daughter, Katye Coats

is a Certified Public Accountant with Abrams and Associates in Florence. She and her husband Matt have a son, Cohen. Gardner's son, Joshua Rains is a certified property appraiser and works in the Morgan County revenue commissioner's office. He and his wife Cindy have a daughter, Lexi.

"I'm proud of both my children and my grandchildren," Gardner said.

She is also proud of being part of Morgan County government.

"I enjoy serving," she said. "I feel very blessed to be able to work for the county. "It's an honorable job that allows us to provide service and help the residents."

Of the people who work under her supervision she says: "We're all a team. I am no more important than the drivers or anyone else. It takes everybody to get the work done. I'm glad to say that we work well together."

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# New polling places for 2014 elections

## Old precinct

10-1 Ryan Baptist Church  
24-1 Brewer High School  
3-14 St. Andrew Church & 3-16  
Cedar Ridge Middle School  
3-17 Decatur Fire and Rescue-Flint

## New precinct

Tri-County Volunteer Fire Dept.  
Florette Volunteer Fire Dept.  
  
Austinville Church of Christ  
Merged with 3-9 American Legion Post 15

3-2 West Decatur Elementary  
3-5 Somerville Road Elementary  
4-2 Oak Park Middle School  
3-13 Morgan County DHR  
7-1 Cotaco School  
8-1 Lacey's Spring School  
9-1 Union Hill Junior High

Merged with 3-3 Aquadome Rec. Center  
Merged with 3-4 Fort Decatur  
4-2 Oak Park Baptist Church  
Merged with 4-2 Oak Park Baptist  
Cotaco Fire Station  
Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Union Hill Senior Center



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