

Readers' Choice voting halfway over

There's just over two weeks left to support your favorite business places and people in *The Blackshear Times'* third annual Readers' Choice Awards – and enter to win \$50 just for sharing your opinion!

We all have our favorite places to shop, to eat, our favorite repairmen, favorite bank teller and more. This is a chance to recognize those around our area who

offer service with a smile, the best prices and any other reasons they are your favorite. If your favorite didn't take the top spot last year, this is your chance to vote – and urge others to do the same!

A ballot is included on Page 13 of this issue. Just print your choices legibly, tear off the page and mail or turn it in to the newspaper no later than Friday, January 31. All ballots must be

on a page torn from the newspaper. No photocopies are allowed. Selections may come from Pierce, Ware or Brantley Counties.

Readers' Choice winners will each receive a handsome framed certificate that can be proudly displayed. Winners will also have a chance to thank their patrons for the honor in an upcoming special edition.



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The Blackshear Times

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BLACKSHEAR, GEORGIA 31516 • WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2014

16 PAGES, ONE SECTION

BLOOD DRIVE THURSDAY

Another chance to save lives scheduled for January 16 at Offerman Baptist Church hall.

See Page 2

Meth and marijuana operations discovered

A major methamphetamine lab and marijuana operation was discovered in east-central Pierce County early Tuesday morning.

Details are sketchy, but according to Sheriff Ramsey Bennett, a search warrant was executed at a Deerfield Road residence about 5:30 a.m. Tuesday morning. Deerfield Road is located between Trudie Road and Old River Road east of Blackshear.

"While there, we not only found a meth lab, but we found an indoor marijuana growing operation," Bennett said.

Seven people were taken into custody at the home, but Bennett said he did not have the names of those individuals at press time.

"We are still processing the scene and sorting all of it out," he said.

Bennett did say that charges, including manufacture of methamphetamine and manufacture of marijuana, are pending against those in custody.

Additional details will be included in next week's edition of *The Times*.



Displaying our hometown pride

American flags are flying proudly around the community in honor of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Valentine's Day and President's Day holidays, courtesy of the Blackshear Rotary Club. If you'd like a flag at your home or business, or sponsor one on Main Street, see the ad on Page 10 of this issue.

Work beginning at new dry mill site

Groundwork for a new Southern Ionics mineral sand separation plant in Offerman will begin this month, with hiring to potentially begin later this year.

Initial development stages will begin next week with clearing and site grading, says David Settles, project manager. The plant will be

located at the southwest corner of U.S. Highway 84 and its intersection with Zero Bay Road, just north-east of the town.

"We are pushing to complete our plant design early this year and remain several months away from initiating building construction in Offerman," Settles says.

Mississippi-based Southern Ionics announced last March plans to build a multi-million dollar mineral separation facility – or dry mill – with plans to bring a minimum of 35 new jobs to the community. The Pierce County Industrial Development Authority and Southern Ionics closed on the project site in

October.

The plant will process mineral sands from two mines in Charlton and Brantley counties, with the separated titanium and zirconium mineral sands then sold to manufacturers throughout the country and internationally.

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Pierce County Chamber of Commerce board members listen to Blackshear Main Street Manager Tommy Lowmon (right) discuss funding requirements for ho-

tel tax revenue sharing at last Wednesday's meeting. Both groups pledged to work together as the Chamber makes a new push to support member businesses.

BACK TO BUSINESS

New Chamber of Commerce board makes renewed service pledge its members

By WAYNE HARDY
Managing Editor

The Pierce County Chamber of Commerce is getting back to business.

Two hours of spirited talk and frank assessments of past performance last Wednesday resulted in a pledge by a nearly all-new Chamber board of directors to reach out to better service needs of local merchants. Four of the board's six seats changed in December. The new-look group made it clear last week that would not be the only difference starting this year.

"I'm not sitting up here to fail," proclaimed Chamber

Vice President Dana Bowen, who challenged the board to be more responsive to member needs.

Bowen said the Chamber

'Everyone in the community needs to see what the Chamber provides.'

– Dana Bowen
Chamber vice president

needs to develop its purpose and mission and get the community to share their enthusiasm, increasing numbers for the membership-driven organi-

zation.

Blackshear Mayor-Elect Dick Larson gave city backing to the Chamber – and blunt advice on avoiding past pitfalls that made some business owners feel membership didn't offer a return on investment.

"You can't give service sitting on your butts. Show that if you get the money, you will serve them," the long-time banker said. "If you do that, you won't have any problems selling memberships."

Main Street Manager Tommy Lowmon extended an offer for the city to once again contract with the Chamber for tourism promotion in exchange

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'Mattie's House' to offer hope

Proposed Blackshear facility to aid single moms and their child with abortion alternative

Imagine the dread of feeling alone with others around.

A young, unmarried mother learns she is pregnant. She is frightened of an uncertain future, unsure how she will provide for her child – and she is shunned by family.

Members of a pro-life organization say they want to build a home in Blackshear to help women who feel they have no way out by providing support and an alternative to abortion.

"Mattie's House" will be a haven for unwed mothers across 25 counties, operated by the non-profit Planned Childhood Life. Construction is set for this year with plans to open the facility in early 2015.

A preliminary layout shows a campus built in phases on a 2-5 acre site and include a main facility with offices, dining and kitchen areas and space to house 16 mothers. Two smaller homes would provide rooms for 32 more.

"This is to give women another option," says Ken Brady of Blackshear, one of Planned Childhood Life's board members. "Some feel pressured and that [abortion] is their only choice."

The faith-based organization derives its mission statement from Proverbs 31:8 – to speak out on behalf of the voiceless and for the rights of all who are vulnerable.

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'This is to give women another option.'

– Ken Brady
of Blackshear,
Planned
Childhood Life
board member

Honorees named for MLK celebration

By JASON DEAL
Staff Writer

The Rev. Donald Mathis, pastor of Scott Chapel United Methodist Church, will be the keynote speaker and Mary Williams Carter, 101, will be the grand marshal for Pierce County's annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. observance.

Mathis will deliver his address as part of the annual banquet Satur-

day, January 18 at 6 p.m. at the Lee Street Resource Center. Theme for this year's celebration is "Beyond the Dream, Standing Together".

The Rev. Mathis has served Scott Chapel for the past three years and is a full-time pastor in the KES Charge of the United Methodist Church. In addition to Scott Chapel, he also serves the Emory Chapel United Methodist Church in Jesup and the King Solomon United Methodist

Church in Waycross.

He has been in the ministry for the past 20 years and has a five year degree from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

A native of Tifton, he received his education in the Tift County Schools. He earned an associates degree in sociology from Waycross College (now South Georgia State College) and is currently working on his bachelor's

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Mary W. Carter
GRAND MARSHAL



Donald Mathis
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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County to seek bids on changes for NFC and Ag Building offices

Commissioner approval given over objection from Chairman Mitch Bowen

By JASON DEAL
Staff Writer

Commissioners gave approval Tuesday night to seek bids on alterations to both the ag building and the NFC building in anticipation of swapping the offices at each site. The move came over the staunch objections of county chairman Mitch Bowen, however.

For the last several months, commissioners have been looking at the possibility of swapping the senior center, concerted services and food pantry from the NFC building to the ag center and moving the ag center offices to the NFC building. The move is aimed at keeping the federal offices in Pierce County.

In making the proposal to commissioners, county manager Paul Christian recommended moving ahead with the re-location plan.

Before calling the question, Bowen voiced his strong objections to the plan centered around two main points.

First, the chairman questioned whether the renovations to the ag building are worth the cost.

"It's going to take a bundle of money to rebuild," he said.

Bowen suggested the county build a new metal building facility, though he did not say where the building would be located or how much the new facility would cost.

Bowen also said he feels the county will move the seniors again if someone else comes along.

"When the space is needed for something else, we'll move them again," he said.

In addressing the first issue, Christian said county architect Doug Neal has indicated the building is in good shape and only minor alterations and a general overhaul and improvements will be needed at both the NFC and ag buildings.

In response to the second, fourth district commissioner Carl Boyette sought to calm Bowen's fears.

"That certainly isn't our intent," he said.

Brenda Denison, chairwoman of the "swap committee," mayor of Offerman and a senior advocate, came to the podium and, during a 20 minute presentation, rebutted all of Bowen's assertions.

Denison admitted she was

skeptical about the move at first, but she pointed out a recent tour of the facility by all parties involved found the ag building will be adequate.

Members of the committee, including senior center director Phillis Smith, assistant director Amber Steverson, area agency on aging director Nikki Christy, Christian, Community Development Director Dell Brown and Southeast Health District inspector Tony Sapp, toured the facility last Monday accompanied by Neal, county maintenance director Toby Harris and second district county commissioner Bill Cselle.

"The ag building would provide more room, more privacy and it would be easier to heat and cool," she says.

Denison points out climate control has been an issue at the NFC building for the seniors.

She pointed out the ag building is in good shape structurally and the renovation will require only "minor changes."

She pointed out no cost estimates on the renovations have been produced yet.

Christian says that is the point behind the vote to move forward. He explained the project for both buildings would be put out for bids and then commissioners could see the cost and make a final decision on whether to proceed.

Cselle backed up Denison's comments.

"This will work," Denison says. "As long as I've got breath in my body, I am going to stand up for these seniors."

Denison then turned the table and challenged Bowen to lay his plans and proposals for the swap out on the table.

"Do you have another plan, Mitch?," she asked. "Let's see it. Do you have a cost estimate on another building? Why do we need to build another building?"

Bowen did not answer directly, but again pointed out the seniors could be moved again at the "whim of the county manager". Bowen has long been at odds with Christian and has even publicly called

for his resignation.

"I don't want the seniors up here raising hell at me again," the chairman said.

Bowen was referring to the more than three dozen attendees of the Pierce County Senior Center who turned out at the county's November meeting to protest the proposed swap of offices.

"Nobody is going to move them again, unless it is Pearson-Dial," Denison retorted.

Denison pointed out the anger on the part of the seniors was due to the way it was handled last time.

"It was pushed on them," she said. "If someone had gone down there and explained it to them, it would have been better."

Christian reportedly informed the seniors of the plan to swap offices, but then declined to discuss the idea publicly. Bowen, in a sign of rare agreement with Christian, later told the seniors he was "sorry they had to learn about the plan from the newspaper."

The Times did a story on the move after seniors began calling asking for information.

Denison told Bowen to make it a part of the county's official record by including a motion to make the senior center's location permanent at the ag center.

Bowen replied that the county manager had the votes of three commissioners and could do whatever he wanted to.

"I'm by myself. I can't stop it. Are you going to help me?," he asked Denison.

"I don't have a vote," Denison responded.

She again asked that it be put on record in the minutes.

"If y'all do that and go back on your word, none of you will be left up there after the election."

Denison then lectured the commission about working together.

"If you work together, all these things can be worked out," she said.

Commissioners then unanimously approved Christian's

'This will work. As long as I've got breath in my body I am going to stand up for these seniors.'

— Brenda Denison
Offerman Mayor,
'Swap Committee' chairperson

* MLK celebration

(Continued from Page 1)

degree in sociology from Albany State University.

He and his wife, Margariete, have two daughters and a son and three grandsons.

In addition to Mathis' address, the grand marshal of this year's parade, citizens of the year and business of the year will all be recognized during the banquet.

Carter will lead the annual MLK Day parade as grand marshal. She was born, March 9, 1912 to Will and Alice Williams in Ellaville in Schley Co. She is one of six daughters and three sons. Carter and her husband, Albert, came to Pierce County in 1951. Together they had nine children and farmed and raised their family. She is a Jehovah's Witness.

The Carters moved to Philadelphia, PA for 10 years before returning to Pierce County in 1968.

Carter gives God all the glory for her longevity.

"If you put your hand in God's hand everything will be alright," she says. "God was always with me during my times in the field when I was trying to support my family."

Lisa Curry and Germiska McGauley are this year's co-citizens of the year.

McGauley and Curry were selected for their work as directors of the Pierce County Young Adult Community Choir. Both ladies say they are "thankful" and "blessed" to work with the young people in the choir. From humble beginnings, the choir grew from 27 members to 54.

Felicia J. "Lisa" McKinney Curry, and her husband, Joe Curry Jr., have one daughter, Mya Jashae.

She is the daughter of Gwen McKinney and Charles Twyne

and the granddaughter of the late Willie James, Pastor Juanita Monroe and Princess Mae Hamilton.

A graduate of Pierce County High School Class of 1991, she attended Albany State University before becoming a full time student at Okefenokee Technical College. She received a



James and Stephanie Foster



Lisa Curry



Germiska McGauley

Business and Office Technology degree from OTC in 1993.

Curry is a member of Faith Temple Holiness Church, where she serves as youth president, choir member, New Beginnings praise team, and the culinary staff.

Curry has been employed with the Waycross Police Department for 19 years. She served as clerk before being promoted to evidence officer in 1998.

McGauley is the mother of four children Xavier, Maika-

la, Keanu, and Kylill. She is the daughter of Phynola McGauley-Wright of Blackshear and Ulysses James of Offerman, the granddaughter of the late Thomas L. McGauley and Mary J. Hagen-McGauley of Blackshear and the late Ernest and Mary Ester Blake James of Offerman.

A 1992 graduate of Pierce County High School, she attended Okefenokee Technical College and completed certification in early childhood development in 1996. She worked for the Department of Juvenile Justice until joining the Pierce County Sheriff's Department where she is currently employed. She is currently attending Ashford University to obtain her bachelor's degree in applied behavioral science with a focus on criminology.

She hopes to use her degree to help move ex-felons back into society.

She has attended Bethel Temple First Born Church of the Living God all of her life. She serves as coordinator of the youth department, founder and president of the youth praise dance ministry, and a member of the adult and young people's choir.

Reel BBQ is this year's business of the year.

Owners Stephanie and James Foster and their daughter, Jasmine, opened the restaurant on Georgia Highway 121 three years ago.

"Our home is always open to our family and friends and it is normal for us to feed and entertain large crowds on a weekly

recommendation to move forward with the project.

Resident Thomas Ammons then asked to speak.

County attorney Willis Blacknall III recommended against opening the floor for discussion, saying the issue had already been decided.

Bowen allowed Ammons time to speak, as he had asked to speak twice before Denison took the podium. Bowen had overlooked him on those occasions.

Ammons called the ag building "depressing," and said the seniors' current location at the NFC building is excellent but cold. He also asked commissioners to "show him the money" about the project and wanted to know how extensive the renovations are going to be.

Christian and finance director Amy Hitt told Ammons the renovations would be paid for using the USDA loan used originally to finance the renovations to the NFC building. Christian again pointed out the renovations to both buildings would be "minor."

Christian said federal agency representatives have told him they would like to begin negotiations on a lease in March.

Ammons moved on to other subjects.

He also spoke in opposition to the commissioners ending their monthly work sessions. He apologized to commissioners Randy Dixon and Boyette for accusing them of "kicking the seniors out of the NFC building" at the commission's November work session. Boyette accepted the apology. Dixon was not present at the meeting.

He commended Denison for her research and work.

Ammons asked why the county had not sold the old library, though the facility is owned by the Blackshear Woman's Club.

Despite the fact, Ammons had changed subjects several times, Bowen never made any effort to cut him off and move on with the agenda.

Boyette did, however.

"What does this have to do with the ag building?," he asked.

Blacknall then whispered to Bowen to ask him to cut Ammons off at which point Ammons wrapped up his remarks.

School day lost to low temperatures will be made up March 28

The extra holiday for students and staff last week for cold weather will have to be made up.

Superintendent Terri DeLoach announced at Thursday's work session that students and staff will make up the day — at least part of it — Friday, March 28.

That day was originally planned as a holiday for students and a calendar adjustment day (furlough) for staff. It had been planned as the first holiday of spring break — giving students and staff a long week-end at the start of the six-day break.

That will now be shortened to five days.

"We will now have an early-release day that Friday," De-

Loach explained.

District three school board member Jimmy Lynn asked DeLoach to alert board members first before future announcements to call off school.

Lynn said he learned of last week's cold weather closure from parents who called him to verify the news.

"Apparently, it was all over social media as soon as you said school was closed," Lynn said.

Other board members say they were notified by central office of the decision to close the school.

DeLoach defended her decision to close the schools.

"I just couldn't stomach the thought of our little ones waiting out in the 18 degree weather to catch the bus," she says.



Southern Ionics Director of Mining Ron Rose (on stage) discusses the Offerman mineral sand plant to a crowd of about 350 people at the 2013 TZMI Congress, held in November in Hong Kong.

* Offerman dry mill

(Continued from Page 1)

Settles says site preparation will be done by existing Southern Ionics personnel over the next few months. The company could begin to fill new jobs as early as October, depending on plant construction progress. Open positions will be announced around that time.

Though the plant has months until operation begins, it is already drawing interest from a global market.

Southern Ionics Director of Mining Ron Rose was invited

to speak about the Offerman plant at the 2013 TZMI (Titanium Zircon Mining Industry) Congress, held in November in Hong Kong. More than 350 people from 36 countries attended.

Rose shared details of mining heavy mineral sands and its product coming from Offerman, as well as met with potential customers.

"Offerman was in the lime-light in the international stage," Rose says. "We made some good contacts on the minerals sales side."

* Mattie's House

(Continued from Page 1)

That includes preserving lives of unborn children and aiding a mother-to-be through her crisis pregnancy, says Brady, noting the main goal is to show the value of a baby's life, while meeting a mother's needs and ministering to her. Volunteers will assist single mothers with education needs, such as obtaining a GED, as well as teach them how to care for a child and provide a stable home.

A married couple acting as house parents would also stay at the house to oversee daily operation and helpers.

Brady says local response has been "overwhelming" since publicizing the project through its official Facebook page last month. Counselors, educators and health professionals are among those who have offered to help, he says.

Planned Childhood Life is also in talks with potential land donors in Pierce County, Brady says. Volunteers will also be needed to provide overflow homes and temporary post-birth homes for mothers exiting Mattie's House.

Additional needs include a late-model van to transport the women to doctor appointments. Requests for clothes and other items for mothers and babies will be made prior to opening.

Construction will be done in conjunction with the Virginia-based Resurrection Disaster Relief building ministry, though funding will rely on community support through donations. Planned Childhood Life will not seek government-related funds, Brady

says.

Mattie's House in Blackshear is the first of several such homes envisioned throughout Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama, Brady says. Each home operating under Planned Childhood Life will have a different name.

The Blackshear home is named for Mattie Goble, a 6-year-old Waycross girl who died in November after a public battle with cancer, which rallied support across counties. The group asked for her parents' blessing and in honor for the girl's love of babies.

Along with Pierce County, Mattie's House will serve the counties of Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Camden, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Echols, Evans, Glynn, Irwin, Jeff Davis, Lanier, Liberty, Long, Lowndes, McIntosh, Tattnall, Toombs, Ware and Wayne. Women from outside the area will not be turned away if there is room, Brady adds.

Planned Childhood Life was established in early 2012. Along with Brady, the board of directors include Dee Bryant of Blackshear, Michelle Wright Cassidy of Brunswick, Mary Ann Clawson of Waynesville, Donna Grisham of Fort Mill, S.C., Dee Meadows of Waycross and Brenda Page Wildes of Hoboken.

Those seeking more information on volunteering, making a tax-deductible donation or having someone speak about the Mattie's House project should call 912-268-7542. A website is also being developed.