

January 23, 2007

Our Fourth Year • No. 13

16 pages, 2 sections, 1 insert

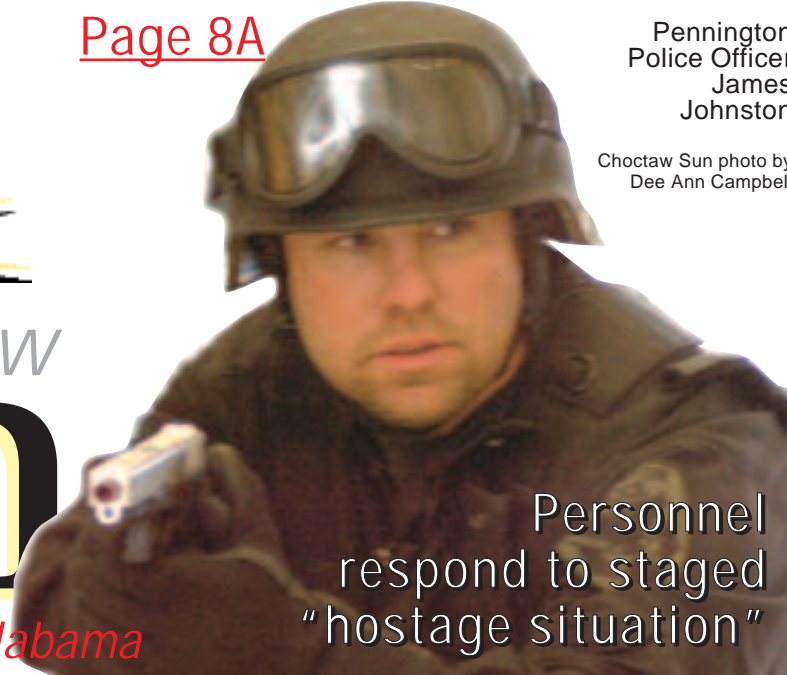
Inside

News & Events	2A
Obituaries	2A
Farm	5A
Editorials/Opinions	4A
Lifestyles	5A
Health	6A
Sports	1B
Education	4B
Classifieds/Legals	7B

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Shining Brightly Over Southwest Alabama



Personnel
respond to staged
"hostage situation"

Briefs



Cast members Bobby Jackson, Georgia Dozier, Kenny Richardson, Ryan Allen, Sydney Mosley and Melissa Snow,

"Smoke on the Mountain" selling out fast

GILBERTOWN — The year is 1938. It's Saturday night in Mount Pleasant, North Carolina, and down at the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, the Rev. Mervin Oglethorpe has invited the Sanders Family Singers to provide an upliftin' evening of singin' and witnessin'.

The audience is invited to pull up a pew and join in the rollicking good time as the spirited play, Smoke on the Mountain, is presented by the Ballet and Theatre Arts Performing Companies.

More than two dozen songs, many of them vintage Southern Gospel, country and bluegrass hymns — *Life's Railway to Heaven*, *Using My*

See SMOKE, page 6B

Almanac

TUESDAY, JAN. 23

Partly Cloudy
Hi 54 • Lo 37
Rain chance 20%
Sunrise: 6:51 a.m.
Sunset: 5:19 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 24

Showers
Hi 55 • Lo 35
Rain chance 30%
Sunrise: 6:51 a.m.
Sunset: 5:20 p.m.

THURSDAY, JAN. 25

Mostly sunny
Hi 56 • Lo 30
Rain chance 10%
Sunrise: 6:50 a.m.
Sunset: 5:21 p.m.

FRIDAY, JAN. 26

Sunny
Hi 57 • Lo 35
Rain chance 10%
Sunrise: 6:50 a.m.
Sunset: 5:22 p.m.

Butler forms downtown beautification committee

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — A group of citizens, business owners and governmental leaders who want to see a cleaner, more attractive Town of Butler have formed a Downtown Beautification Committee, and are inviting all residents and business owners to get on board.

According to Jackie Martin, there was a great deal of excitement when the group first met on Jan. 9th with Mayor Ben Smith to discuss forming the committee, whose primary function will be to facilitate the revitalization project.

In attendance at that meeting were Martin, Mayor Smith, Council Member John A. Boney, Alan Bell, Gayle McPhearson, Deana Nelms, Peggy Whittington, Debbie Bell, and Chamber of Commerce Director Nancy Gibson. Also helping with the project will be Georgia Dozier, Jimmy Cowan, Michael Scott and Shane Jimerson.

According to Martin, the group will be working to improve the "street appeal" of downtown

offices and businesses.

Martin said they hope that more citizens will join with the committee to make Butler become noticed as a beautiful, growing area.

"The committee has already contacted 19 property owners and plans are being made by these owners to paint shutters, awnings, door fronts and front elevations, pressure-wash outside walls, place numbers on buildings and brass kick-plates on front doors and other enhancements to improve street appeal," she said. Two of those owners are even considering constructing front balconies, she said.

In addition, Mayor Smith told the *Sun*, Council Member John A. Boney and businessman Alan Bell are facilitating plans to deal with "eyesores" in the community — rundown, dilapidated buildings and littered, overgrown lots that owners have neglected or abandoned over the years.

"We have tried to get people to do the right thing voluntarily,

See BUTLER, page 6B



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell

Abston takes award in preliminary Junior Miss competition

MONTGOMERY — Choctaw County's Junior Miss Laura Abston won the Scholastic Award during preliminaries at the Alabama's Junior Miss program in Montgomery on Saturday. Her award included a \$1,000 cash scholarship. She is pictured here with State Treasurer and former Junior Miss Kay Ivey and last year's Alabama's Junior Miss Megan Butler. The overall winner for the 2007 program was Morgan County's Junior Miss, Mary Katherine McAnnally of Decatur.



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell
Anna Sikes -- pictured second from left back row -- sits among her classmates in Mrs. Lisa Becton's room at SCES. Pictured on right is her mother Dawn. Dawn and her husband Jerry have been vocal advocates for Anna's special needs education. But many other parents of children with special needs do not know their rights or get involved with their child's education.

IEP's:

Cornerstones of Special Education

Local family airs grievances about lack of individualized plan for their special needs child

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — "I'm not asking for a miracle," says Dawn Sikes of Gilbertown. "I'm just asking them to work with her, to give her what she is supposed to get." Dawn and Jerry Sikes have been fighting a battle for several months, a battle that they say is vital to the development of their special needs child. According to Dawn, they are currently in the process of filing grievances against the school system for what they perceive as a lack of provision for six-year-old Anna's Individu-

See IEP, page 5B

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