

Two passions, one new position

■ Jennifer Miller takes role as County Extension Coordinator

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — “This brings together both of my degrees,” says Jennifer Miller. “I’m excited about that.”

She’s been a nurse and, more recently, a teacher. Now her new role will allow her to draw from both of those fields.

As the new Coordinator for the Choctaw County Cooperative Extension System, Miller is filling the position vacated by former coordinator Elaine Alberson, who retired in September. It is a role that she has already settled into after only two weeks on the job, and one that brings together two interests that have been her passions since childhood.

“Since I was a child, I always wanted to be a teacher or a nurse,” she recalls. “I remember wanting to do both.”

Miller’s interest in healthcare prompted her to volunteer at the nursing home while she was still in high school. It was a role that she loved.

But, she says, she also taught swimming lessons to local children during the summer. Like her work in medical care, she gravitated to her teaching role even as a teen.



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell
New County Extension Coordinator Jennifer Miller of Butler has been on the job for about 2 weeks, filling the position vacated by retired coordinator Elaine Alberson. She is married to Alan Miller and the couple has one son, Patton, and another child on the way.

“All through high school, I thought I was going to be a teacher,” she remembers. “But when I went to register for college, I talked to the people in the nursing department and decided to do that instead.”

Miller earned her nursing degree from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, returned to Choctaw County, and got a job in the obstetrics department at Riley Memorial Hospital in

Meridian.

“I enjoyed that,” she says. “I got to help deliver babies, and that was fun. Then I got married and moved to Birmingham, and I realized how much I missed working with children.”

Miller returned to school and earned her Master’s degree in Elementary and Early Childhood Education. Living once again in Choctaw County, she entered the classroom at East

Choctaw Junior High, transferring to Butler Elementary, and then to Choctaw County Elementary following the consolidation of the schools.

“I taught for 7 years,” she says. “I love being with the kids and working with them.”

Despite her love for the classroom setting, when Miller learned of the opening at the Extension office, she decided to apply.

“I felt like this was a

great opportunity,” she says with a big smile. “I was excited when I got the job.”

Through volunteering with 4-H, as well as seeing the Extension System’s role in the community as a whole, Miller says she has always been impressed with the work of those who are affiliated with it.

“I’ve always watched Elaine and Susan (Thompson), and even Elaine Shields (former coordinator),” she explains. “They just seemed to love their jobs, and I’ve been impressed with what they do.”

Miller’s role at the Extension System will include working with people of all ages in a variety of projects that will use both facets of her careers.

“I’m especially excited about working with 4-H,” she says. “I’ve volunteered with 4-H often before now, and I love it. And the best thing is, I get to work not only with kids in one classroom, but kids from all over the county.”

Miller says that she has already sat in on sessions with one of the most successful programs in 4-H, and was impressed with what she saw.

“I sat in on a T.G.I.F. session at Southern Choctaw High School,” she says. “It was great to watch those teenagers talking with the kids that way. It’s a very important program, and I hope we can keep it going.”

Miller also hopes to revive another program that had been successful in the county in the past.

“I’ve been talking with Nancy Gibson (Chamber of Commerce

Director) about getting Leadership Choctaw started again,” she says.

As for her medical degree, Miller says that she is excited about several upcoming projects that will reach out to the public about health-related issues.

“We have the Diabetic Cooking workshop coming up soon,” she says. “I’m excited about that, and I’ll be working with the Health Council on other projects, too.”

“I’d also like to do some workshops on preventive care,” she adds. “Maybe go into the senior centers here in the county and work with them on that kind of thing. I’d love to get that going in the near future.”

After two weeks on the job, Miller says she has already made herself at home in her new office, and has been welcomed with open arms by her new staff.

“The staff here is so good,” she says. “Everyone has accepted me right in. They’re going to be easy to work with.”

Although she is looking forward to her new position, Miller says that she will miss the children in her classroom at CCES.

“The kids were sad when I left,” she says. “So was I. I’ll miss them so much. But the good thing is that I’ll still get to see them, and kids from all the other schools, too.”

In her new job, she adds, she’ll get to teach, to offer medical help, and to work with projects that will help the community as a whole.

“I’m so excited about this,” she says. “It’s like reaching out to everyone in the county.”

SoundOff

Bravo to the volunteers who helped repair Mr. Mosley’s roof! I also was helped by a group of gentlemen with needed repairs to my home. This group was led by the Men on a Mission group from Choctaw County. They gave up several Saturdays for my family. With a thankful heart, I pray that God’s grace and many blessings will shine down upon each of these wonderful people. May His rewards be visited on them. Surely their selfless volunteering is earning each person a few jewels in their heavenly crowns. Thank you, from a grateful person.

Just an anonymous note to encourage you. I love your paper. I live in Clarke County and I am so glad I subscribe to the *Sun*. You cover so many informative issues and events, and your accounts are unbiased, hope-filled, and encouraging. They are not the sensational, bad-news-sells-best, kind of press that other papers employ. Thank you for your good work. Thank you for your vision and character. I feel informed and encouraged when I read the *Sun*. Thank you!

I would like to think that the law treated everyone fairly. Are there still electronic gaming machines being operated in the county and, if so, why would certain places be overlooked?

I’m alarmed about a “serial killer” that’s on the loose in Choctaw County. From what I hear and see, the “killer” is hiding in almost every home. Most of us are inviting this “killer” into our homes. The name of this “killer” is, OBESITY. It’s time for us to

wake up and begin considering our health! I get so upset seeing overweight, tired, depressed, lethargic adults and children alike walking around with no desire to have a more healthy lifestyle. Sadly, these are the same people filling the waiting areas of the clinics and hospitals, spending enormous amounts of money on prescription medication, and still feeling lousy. A friend of mine from Atlanta says if she can spend 30 minutes sitting down for a meal, she can at least devote that much time to exercise in a given day. I am not preaching, but I am concerned about my friends and neighbors. How about it Choctaw County? Let’s get on board with other small towns across the country and get physically fit. I hear the statement all the time, “we need a gym or fitness area here”, but the fact is, you can be fit and in shape without a gym. Feel free to SoundOff, good or bad, because I’d enjoy hearing what others have to say.

Thank you for your paper’s stand on the issue of public records. If a person doesn’t want their name in the jail log, they should think about what it is they are doing BEFORE they do it. A person gets drunk BY THEIR OWN CHOICE. Nobody forces them to take that drink and drive. DUI is not funny, it is not macho. I for one am glad to know that our Troopers are out there getting these drunks off the roads. If any of my children or grandchildren ever get caught for DUI, I would hope and pray that you would print their names in bold-face type and on the front page!

I want to publicly

thank Probate Judge D’Wayne May for leaving the county-owned car parked at the Courthouse when it is not being used on official county business. Thank you, Judge May. As a taxpayer and a voter, I appreciate this.

From the signs posted around Butler, I see that yet another dog has gone missing in the Miller Heights neighborhood. How many does this make? Seven or more? How many more will go missing before the perpetrator is known and punished?

Education begins at home! I am a former teacher and get tired of hearing how a teacher does not like a child and therefore is trying to fail that child. Some parents just assume that their child has done their homework or studied for a test. Please parents, follow up with your children; make sure that they have done their homework or studied for a test. When your child’s teacher tells you that he/she is misbehaving in school and your child responds, “my teacher just doesn’t like me”, please give the teacher the benefit of the doubt. I have several friends who have children. I can tell you that there are some kids who act completely different at school than they do at home. I have seen this firsthand. Believe me, some of you parents would be totally shocked.

OK, I have had it!! People typing SoundOffs can be some of the biggest cowards I know. If a store sells cigarettes to minors, and you have seen it, then name the store. If a teacher is a bar hopper, then name that teacher. It is unfair to make broad statements about every business in this county or every teacher in this county. If you don’t have the guts enough to confront the matter or the store or the person, then

put a sock in it.

I have been here at Willow Trace Nursing Home for a long time and I just wanted to tell you all how much it brightens my day to get *The Choctaw Sun* newspapers that my buddy Tommy brings us every week. He’s a pretty good fellow even though I have to straighten him out every now and again. I’m just kidding! May God bless you and your families. You had a picture of my great-great grand-daughter in the *Sun* a few weeks ago. It sure made me smile! I cut it out and put it on my wall. Getting the *Sun* is such a blessing. I love all of you!

I can not believe all the SoundOffs about school uniforms. Every single time a policy has been written or reviewed about uniforms, all parents have been given the invitation to attend these meetings or give input. Where were these parents then? Why are they just now complaining? It’s just like a poor parent to find something to fuss about other than teaching their own children to take responsibility for their education. I’ll bet the same parents writing SoundOffs complaining about the school system are the very ones coming to the schools cussing and hollering and raising sand because THEIR PRECIOUS INNOCENT CHILD never does anything wrong and doesn’t deserve to be punished. Back in the day when you got in trouble at school, you got in trouble at home. Things were better then. Teachers could actually teach then. NOW, parents waste everyone’s time with silly arguments about what THEIR babies deserve. EVERYBODY’S child deserves the SAME thing — a good education. Now shut up and let these teachers and principals give it to them!!

This is to all of you lazy people who are NOT handicapped but who seem to enjoy whipping into a HANDICAPPED ONLY parking space ... shame on you!

In my opinion, if children are required to wear school uniforms, ALL school personnel should be required to wear them, too. If we are given the bogus excuses that it is for safety reasons, then it seems only right that school PERSONNEL should be dressed in the same manner. The real purpose of school uniforms is to conform the children the be “alike”, to be “equal.” Folks this is called SOCIALISM. Oh, yes I agree, there should be limits on the “styles” of clothes and moral standards, just like it was when we were in school. This idea that uniforms help children who are less fortunate feel less inferior is nothing but bull! What happens when they graduate and go out into the real world? There are always going to be people who have more than they do. Let’s concentrate on EDUCATING our children, rather than trying to conform them all to be “alike”.

I’m offering a little help with the investigative reporting that a writer requested from you last week, which consisted of an allegation about a teacher visiting saloons. First of all, I have been told that this teacher does not teach in Choctaw County, she is in another county; and secondly, if what this parent says is true, then the parents CAN do something about it. Offer proof, then stay on the superintendent’s doorstep until her teacher’s certificate is revoked!

I agree that we won’t see any progress in Choctaw County until the people who own the

business property and land lower their rental or sale prices. I want to put a business in Butler, but a decent-size building rents for \$400 (and needs a lot of improvement), and the better places rent for as much as \$1,000 a month. Remember, this is BUTLER not MERIDIAN. If you want to charge such a high rent, sell your property for a decent price, and buy property somewhere else. Look at all the empty buildings that are not earning a red cent! If you would rent them for decent, fair prices, you would be making money. As it is, you are LOOSING money.

What happened to cleaning up the town of Butler? I still see some buildings and houses that look like a dump!! No wonder these people can’t sell or rent their property. Do you not realize this drops property value? Think about this when you want to sell or rent!!

(ED. NOTE: The clean-up project is ongoing but it will take time as well as volunteers. If you would like to help with the effort, call City Hall at 205-459-3794.)

To the women who are not getting their child support: I want you to know that I had two children when I lived in Choctaw County and rarely got my child support either. I worked two jobs the whole time and raised my boys myself, with no help from their father. But they know who took care of them. They respect me, and they are good respectable men now. They treat me with respect, and they are good fathers to their own children. Don’t worry, women, you can do it by yourself. It may take a lot of work, but just remember that when your children are grown, they will know who took care of them and who didn’t.