

The Choctaw
Sun

Shining Brightly Over Southwest Alabama



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LOCAL SCOUT PRESENTED WITH
NATIONAL AWARD FOR HEROISM



Choctaw Sun photo by Tommy Campbell

Pictured giving the special lifesaving award to Matthew is a Commissioner of the Choctaw Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, Matthew's parents, Matt and Tammy Lewis, of Sweet Water, and his Scoutmaster, Bob Conner, of Butler.

Ten-year old used Scouting skills to save his younger brother's life

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

MERIDIAN, Miss. — "I was thinking 'what could I do,'" recalls 12-year-old Matthew Lewis. "Then I remembered the Heimlich Maneuver."

Two years ago, Matthew became a hero in the eyes of his family. In an incident that could have meant the death of his younger brother, Matthew would act quickly to save his brother's life, drawing upon a skill he had learned through the Boy Scouts.

On Thursday, April 26, in an emotion-laden ceremony in Meridian that included Scouts and Scouting leaders from throughout the Choctaw Area Boy Scout Council, Matthew was honored with a prestigious award from the National Council of Boy Scouts. Given only to scouts who show heroism in saving the life of someone else, the national award was presented to Matthew for actions taken some two years ago when he used the Heimlich Maneuver to save his brother, Thomas.

At about 2:30 in the afternoon on June 30, 2005, then-10-year-old

Matthew and Thomas, then 5, were at home with a babysitter when the incident occurred. Thomas was eating a bowl of cereal when he suddenly began to choke, unable to speak or to breathe.

Although the babysitter was unsure what to do, Matthew knew. Hesitating only a instant, he began to administer the Heimlich Maneuver. Within seconds, a small ceramic bead was expelled from Thomas' throat, and he was able to breathe again.

"He was fine when that bead came out," Matthew recalls.

Although he received much credit for saving his brother's life, Matthew gives the credit, instead, to his training as a scout.

For the past six years, he has been involved with scouting, beginning in Cub Scouts when he was in first grade. Now as a 6th grader at Patrician Academy, he has advanced to the Boy Scouts and is an active member of Troop 44, under the leadership of long-time scout leader, Bob Connor.

"I was still a Weeblo when Thomas choked," Matthew says. "I was in Pack 43."

As part of their training as scouts, the young boys in Pack 43

were given lifesaving instruction by local emergency personnel, including Choctaw County EMS director Jimmy Cowan.

"That was my first time doing it," Matthew says. "I've had some practices before. But when Thomas choked, that was the first time I've had to use it."

A crowd was on hand for the awards ceremony on Thursday to honor Matthew for his heroism. Standing beside him to receive the award were his parents Matt and Tammy Lewis of Sweetwater, and his scout leader.

"I was surprised," Matthew says. "I didn't know I was getting it (the award). But when I heard them say it was for someone who had saved his brother, I knew."

Matthew says that he would not hesitate to use his lifesaving skills again, should the need arise — whether that means using the Heimlich Maneuver to save a family member, or using the other techniques he has learned as a scout — like CPR — to save someone else who needs it.

"I remember how to do that, too," explains Matthew. "I know I could do it if I had to."

State approves CON for hospital

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

MONTGOMERY — The final step in gaining state approval for the construction of a new, 25-bed Critical Access Hospital in Choctaw County was realized last week when the Ala. Dept. of Public Health's Certificate of Need Review Board approved a CON for Rush Health Systems, Inc.

Rush Hospital had filed a CON request to replace and relocate the original 40-bed Choctaw General Hospital with a brand-new facility. The former Choctaw General closed on April 30, 1993, leaving the area with no in-county hospital or emergency room for the past 14 years.

There was no opposition to the request at the April 18th meeting of the Review Board, CON officials told the Sun.

However, Rush officials are still working to

See HOSPITAL, page 2A

Old traffic ticket results in felony drug arrest of Butler man

COFFEEVILLE — A Butler resident who was stopped by Alabama State Troopers last week in Clarke County ended up being charged with something more serious than a routine traffic violation. Coffeeville Chief of Police Clint Harrell told the Sun that John Riley, Jr., was stopped by Troopers in the Morvin area on Friday night, April 27.

Trooper Gary Garrick learned that Riley was driving with a revoked license and had an outstanding arrest warrant from the Coffeeville Police Department.

Trooper Garrick contacted Chief Harrell, who confirmed that the CPD warrant for yet another ticket for Driving While License Revoked was still active.

After placing Riley under arrest, Garrick and Harrell searched Riley and found what appeared to be several "rocks" of crack cocaine on his person.

He was taken to the Clarke County Jail and booked on charges of Failure to Appear for Driving While Revoked and Possession of a Controlled Substance.

Donations sought to help keep Silas Library open

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

SILAS — Current and former residents of the Silas area, and the county as a whole, are being asked to join forces to support the Silas Branch of the Choctaw Co. Public Library.

"We're asking that people

become a member of Friends of the Library," Debi DuBose told the Sun. "We're asking for individual donations of \$10 or \$20 for a family. It's not that much but it would mean a lot to the library. If we don't do what we can to help the library out, I'm not sure how much longer we will have a library."

Persons who are financially able to do so may make larger contributions, she said, and can make donations in memory or honor of a friend or loved one.

Ongoing funding issues in recent years have forced deep budget cuts not only at the main library in Butler, but at its two branches in Gilberttown and

Silas as well, and — with no permanent funding relief in sight — DuBose said people need to realize that the library cannot continue to pay its day-to-day bills and keep new books on the shelves.

"We don't need to sit back and wait until we lose our library," DuBose said. "I love the

library. I practically lived here when I was growing up and I still use it now in doing research. If it had not been for the library, I wouldn't have learned as much about art and drawing as I did. The books I checked out of the library

See LIBRARY, page 2A

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