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LABOR DAY IS MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Local scouts attend national event
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District attorney's office raids dogfighting operation

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The Appalachian Judicial Circuit District Attorney's office and Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson, acting on intelligence provided by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and Norred and Associates, raided an alleged dogfighting operation near Ellijay, Ga. Thursday, Aug. 21.

Gerald Holcumb, the apparent owner of the operation, was arrested and charged with felony dogfighting, being a felon in possession of a firearm and possession of marijuana. Authorities seized 11 dogs along with suspected dogfighting paraphernalia.

Several dogs had scars consistent with dogfighting.

Holcumb, a.k.a. "Irish Jerry" is reportedly an influential figure in the underground dogfighting circuit who has been involved with dogfighting since 1966.

"Today's raid is yet another blow to the dogfighting world," said Chris Schindler, deputy manager of animal fighting law enforcement for the HSUS. "We commend District Attorney Joe Hendricks' investigators for taking dogfighting allegations seriously and bringing animal fighting suspects to justice."

Dr. Melinda Merck, forensic veterinarian and leader of

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Are you ready for some football?



Gilmer Bobcats will break out of their pack Friday night against the Rebels of Fannin County at 7:30 p.m. at Huff-Mosley Memorial Stadium. Read more in Sports, page 1C.

Stabbing leads to murder charge

by Al Summers
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A Gilmer County man now faces a murder charge after he stabbed his roommate in the chest last Wednesday, Aug. 20. The incident happened at a residence on Old Ridge Road which is off Orchard Road.

Richard Brian Baggs will be charged with the murder of Albert Campfield after Campfield was removed from life support systems. He had been flown to Erlanger Medical Center Wednesday evening and was pronounced

clinically dead Sunday, Aug. 24.

According to Capt. R.T. Henry of the Gilmer County Sheriff's Dept., the incident occurred after the two men got in an argument over who was to drive a small, ATV four-wheeler. The verbal disagreement then escalated into physical violence. Henry said alcohol did play a part in the incident.

Deputy Steven Holcumb and K-9 officer Rico assisted in the capture of Baggs, who is being held at the Gilmer County Detention Center.

An agent from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) was in on the investigation of the incident.

In other law enforcement news, Gilmer County deputies were called to a location off Hwy. 382 to investigate a suspicious person living in a tent. When officer approached Jason Bradford, 34, he fled. After a brief foot chase, he was eventually caught by Dep. Leon Davenport. Davenport was assisted by Holcumb and Rico during the chase.

Upon investigation, Bradford was charged with

theft by receiving a motor vehicle (an ATV), attempting to flee or elude, misdemeanor obstruction of an officer, and possession of marijuana. He could face other charges.

Thursday, Aug. 21, deputies Davenport and Teresa Sullivan responded to an accident off Yukon Road. Near the scene, Davenport observed two white males walking along the road. The men fled when he spotted the officer.

During this time, Det. Eldridge Harper was responding to a burglary scene in the general area. After further

investigation, it was determined that the two individuals were responsible for the wreck in an automobile they had stolen.

They were also connected to the burglary Harper was investigating.

Gregory Scott Richardson Jr., 20, was charged with burglary, theft by taking of a motor vehicle, underage consumption, and pedestrian under the influence.

Sean Timothy Rogers, 19, was charged with burglary, theft by taking a motor vehicle, possession of untaxed alcohol,

misdemeanor obstruction of an officer, public drunkenness, and possession of alcohol under age 21.

Dep. James Knight also assisted in the apprehension of the suspects.

Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson had high praise for his officers who handled the three cases, including the K-9, Rico, who assisted in the capture of two fugitives.

Henry said the investigation into the explosive device found two weeks ago on Conasauga Road was ongoing by agents from the GBI.

Holiday closings Times-Courier schedule

With Monday, Sept. 1 being Labor Day, all Gilmer County offices will be closed, along with the city halls in Ellijay and East Ellijay, the Gilmer County Library, chamber of commerce, the post offices and all banks.

The Times-Courier will be closed Monday, Sept. 1, and will reopen at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 2.

The deadline for real estate advertisements will be Friday, Aug. 29, at noon. The deadline for legal advertisements will be Aug. 29 at 5 p.m. The deadline for submissions will be at noon Tuesday, Sept. 2, and this deadline will be adamantly observed.

Please try to submit advertisement and news copy to us Friday, Aug. 29. This will ensure that your material gets published in the Thursday, Sept. 4 edition.

Have a safe and happy Labor Day from the publishers and staff of the Times-Courier.



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County revenues down; departments facing budget cuts

by Becky Antworth
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County spending is mostly on target this year, with actual expenses falling within two percentage points of where they should be. That's the good news. The bad news is that county revenues are only about half of what they should be.

Through the end of July, expenditures and revenues should both be about 58 percent of yearly totals. Total expenditures are currently at 60 percent, with all major departments either on or below this mark. It's an accomplishment that's unfortunately been overshadowed: total revenues from the unrestricted general fund are only at 32 percent of their projected totals.

Departments set their projected revenues based on the previous year's collections, and come to an agreement with the BOC. Chairman Farist, however, said that much of the

process is subjective, which may be a large part of the problem. If revenue projections are set too high and can't be reached, the county ends up spending more than it earns.

Departments below the 58 percent target, and possibly facing a yearly shortfall, include probate court, which has currently generated 34 percent of projected revenue; the tax assessors office at 52 percent; magistrate court, 41 percent; clerk of courts, 43 percent; animal control, 12 percent; detention center, 43 percent; planning and zoning, 39 percent; landfill, 45 percent; and the airport has barely gotten off the ground, currently at less than one percent of its projected revenue.

It's not just departments. Bus transportation revenue is down, presently at 35 percent; hotel, beer, wine and local sales tax revenues are all below where they should be.

Much of the shortfall may be linked to general economic downturn.

Court clerk Glenda Sue Johnson said her revenues are largely dependent upon the real estate market. They collect fees from real estate deed recordings, which are down this year. Fewer sales also means the office misses out on transfer taxes. "This is the first year I haven't brought in more than my projected revenues," said Johnson. "It's definitely linked to the real estate decline." Nonetheless, her office likely would have been on target had their projected revenues not been increased from 2007, after they brought in more than was projected. Johnson said she agreed to the increase, but in retrospect says she probably shouldn't have.

"We knew a slowdown was coming," she said. "It was poor planning."

The Planning and Zoning Department similarly points to the downturn in the building industry. "When there's no building, when subdivisions are not being subdivided, revenues will be down," said Jim Smith,

director of Planning and Community Development.

Smith also said children's participation in league play is down this year, in every sport except soccer, meaning the Parks and Recreation department has not been collecting enrollment fees.

Probate Court Judge Anita Mullins said her decline in revenue comes directly from a decrease in traffic tickets, with fewer people on the road. In addition, when Hwy. 515 was annexed to the city of Ellijay and East Ellijay, something the county presumably approved, traffic ticket money was diverted away from the county. "There was no way of knowing how much it would affect us," said Judge Mullins. "The traffic is killing us."

Magistrate Judge Robert Kincaid said he's lost revenues because of Wal-Mart. When they recently went to a national collection agency, they took two-thirds of his bad check

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