

Sheriff's office holds awards banquet



The Gilmer County Sheriff's Office recently held their annual awards night and presented awards to those who were selected by their peers. Pictured L-R are: Dennis Waddell – Detention Officer of the Year; Rick Clayton – Detective of the Year; Mollie Odenthal – Addressing Employee of the Year; Charlotte Joiner – Communications Employee of the Year; Peggy Long – Administrative Employee of the Year; James Knight – Deputy of the Year; Natalie Wagner – Animal Control Employee of the Year; Dwayne Odom – Court Services Employee of the Year; and Sheriff Stacy Nicholson.

Capitol report

by Representative David Ralston

Georgia lawmakers opened the 2009 Session of the General Assembly this week facing the toughest economic conditions since the Great Depression.

As a result, state legislators began what many believe to be the most challenging legislative session in modern Georgia history.

With a budget shortfall that will probably exceed \$2 billion, lawmakers will be forced to cut at least ten percent from the state's budget.

The challenge will be deciding where to cut or what not to cut.

Legislators will receive Governor Sonny Perdue's budget proposals this week. Next week, the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives will begin in-depth examination of the budget.

The budget crisis will likely overshadow most other issues this session. However, lawmakers will be considering proposals to cap property taxes and to fund transportation improvements in the state.

There is broad agreement in the General Assembly on a plan to freeze or limit increases in assessments for local

property taxes. Although some of the details have yet to be resolved, lawmakers are committed to passing meaningful property tax reform.

Georgia's growth has led to greater urgency for transportation improvements. Lawmakers failed last session to adopt a transportation plan for the state. This year, a plan is being proposed which would allow a group of counties, if they chose to do so, to impose a regional sales tax to support transportation projects.

Other issues will compete for the attention of lawmakers this session, including providing a greater network of advanced trauma care facilities in the state, a proposal to reform the state's juvenile laws, and measures to reform Georgia's death

penalty laws to provide for non-unanimous verdicts in the sentencing phase of a trial.

The past two legislative sessions have been marked by excessive hickering and rancor.

This year, lawmakers will have no time for this sort of behavior. The challenge of this session will require that legislators work hard and to strive for consensus as opposed to friction.

I will be filing these weekly reports from the State Capitol all session. My goal is to inform each of you about the issues and actions of the General Assembly.

I also invite your comments and questions. During the session, I may be reached at (404)656-5943 or by email dralston1@etcmail.com.

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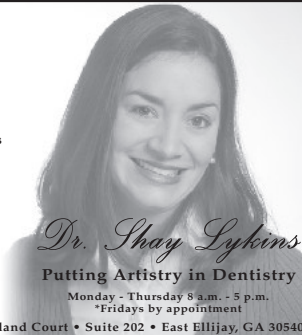
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Assessors approve new mobile home digest

by Michael Andrews
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The Gilmer County Board of Tax Assessors unanimously approved the 2009 Prebilled Mobile Home Digest during a called meeting Wednesday, January 7.

This year's digest is comprised of 2,279 mobile homes. Tax bills for the homes are expected to be mailed out within the coming weeks.

The board also approved using the "Abos Marine Blue Book" to value marine equipment such as boats. The "Abos" guide is considered a leading resource in attaining marine equipment values. Personal property returns will soon be mailed out to all related businesses and boat owners, added Chief Appraiser Dawn Pruett.

In other news, prescheduled board of equalization property assessment appeal hearings started back this week on January 12 at the Gilmer County Library. Additional dates are confirmed for January 13 - 16, 21 - 23, 26 and 27.

Pruett commented that, though a dent had been made in the number of outstanding appeals, many more are still left to be heard. The process is expected to last well into the coming months. Those with dates scheduled in early January should have already received a mailed notice informing them of their specific hearing date.

Also, at the meeting, assessors board chairman Jeff Holloway and secretary Sande Wendall were renominated to their board positions for the current year.

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