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Times - Courier

Your Hometown Newspaper Devoted To The Progress Of Gilmer County

VOL. 134 • NO. 35 • U.S.P.S. NO. 630-280

August 27, 2009

EST. 1875 • CONSOLIDATED 1916 • 50 CENTS

School superintendent responds to Swine flu concerns

Following the death of a medically fragile child two weeks ago in a Chattanooga hospital from H1N1 flu, the Gilmer County Board of Education has been swamped with calls from concerned parents.

Board Supt. Randy Parson has posted a message on the school board's Web site (www.gilmerschools.com) to answer many of the concerns parents may have about the flu that also has been called the swine flu.

"We've had a ton of calls but there's no reason for panic. We're monitoring the situation and being

extremely careful. We're not going to close the schools unless the state health department tells us to," he said.

Officials from the North Georgia Health District, a branch of the Center for Disease Control, said Tuesday there were no reported cases of hospitalization due to H1N1 flu in Gilmer County.

However, there have been isolated reports of the flu affecting students in the county but not documented by the CDC.

A spokesperson for the NGHD said that Parson has been very proactive by stay-

ing in contact with the agency on a daily basis.

"The child who died was not in class this year so there was no contact with current students," Parson said.

"Right now, we are being extremely careful. If a student has flu-like symptoms, we immediately send them home. If that student is medically fragile, we alert the parents as well.

"Several parents want to hold their students out of school. That's fine, but we warn them the student may get too far behind, which could cause later problems,"

he added.

Parson did note that a student at Ellijay Elementary School was confirmed to have the flu last week and was held out of school three days but returned to school Monday, Aug. 24, after being cleared by the family's doctor.

"That's the only way we'll deal with this is with a doctor's order," Parson said.

Key school personnel went through a training session with the North Georgia Health District last week and will have another training session before the end of this week.

One more time...



No left turns are allowed from North Main Street onto North Avenue between the posted hours on the sign above while school is in session. Period.

Dog potentially exposed to rabid raccoon near Ellijay

North Ga. Health District
www.nghd.org

A female pit bulldog was potentially exposed to rabies in a raccoon found dead at a home on Rockingham Way in the Coosawattee River Resort subdivision near Ellijay. The exposure happened Tuesday, Aug. 18.

On that Tuesday morning the homeowner awoke to find her female dog in close proximity to the dead raccoon. Gilmer County Environmental Health officials later found puncture marks on the raccoon, which they believe were made by the dog in a confrontation with the animal.

The raccoon tested positive

for rabies Thursday, Aug. 20, and since the dog was not current on its rabies vaccination, the owner was supposed to have decided whether to have the dog euthanized or placed in a state-mandated quarantine for six months. However, the dog has now been killed by lightning, so no further action is required.

There was no human exposure to the raccoon.

"The main lesson to learn is that we must keep our families and pets safe by maintaining rabies vaccinations in our domestic animals," stated Andrea Wheeler, Gilmer County Environmental Health manager.

"Rabies is a deadly disease, and no one ever wants to

have to make that heart wrenching decision to have their pet put down because they failed to provide its vaccination."

Wheeler added as a reminder to area residents that \$10 rabies shots will be offered for cats and dogs Saturday, Aug. 29, from noon to 3

p.m., at the new Gilmer County Animal Shelter located at 4152 Hwy. 52 East. The Appalachian Animal Hospital will sponsor this clinic and Gilmer County Environmental Health officials will assist.

For more information about the clinic, call 706-635-2166.

Collection of taxes to go as scheduled

by Michael Andrews
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As the Gilmer County Board of Assessors met Thursday, August 20, chief appraiser Dawn Pruet informed board members that the 2009 County Ad Velorem Tax Digest has been approved by the Georgia Department of Revenue and that a subsequent notice approving the collection of real and personal property taxes has been issued.

When contacted, Gilmer County Tax Commissioner Melba Bennett said that the commissioners' office has not yet decided upon the specific date when tax bills will go out, but that they may be sent out sooner rather than later.

"The commissioners were wanting to get the bills out earlier and leave our due date the same. I think maybe it would be good if we could do that, so everybody could know a little bit earlier," said Bennett.

Bennett added that mailing the bills out earlier would give taxpayers more time to prepare. "Right now, people who are working outdoors might have a little more money (for taxes) than they would when the weather gets really bad," she added.

Bennett said, too, that if

Deputies diffuse serious situation

Special to the Times-Courier
Gilmer County Sheriff's Office

The last few days have been especially busy for deputies with the Gilmer County Sheriff's Office. With all the heavy rain in the last seven days, the 911 center dispatched 29 motor vehicle accidents. A total of 17 of these were in the jurisdiction of the sheriff's office and were predominantly serious injury accidents.

Another serious incident occurred Saturday, Aug. 22, when deputies spent several hours dealing with a barricaded subject. Deputies had previously on Friday served Otis Defoor a temporary protective order as a result of a civil domestic issue.

Deputies responded to

Defoor's residence pursuant to a 911 call that he was threatening harm to himself and others. Upon their arrival, Defoor confronted deputies, brandishing a knife.

Deputies contained the area and attempted to talk Defoor into surrendering. After approximately four hours, the situation began to escalate, and deputies made entry into the residence and subdued Defoor without serious injury.

"The deputies did an excellent job of containing this incident and preventing Defoor from further injuring himself," said Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson. "The outcome of this incident is a direct result of the specialized, quality training that my deputies have received."

Reduced-cost shots at Animal Shelter grand opening

North Ga. Health District
www.nghd.org

The new Gilmer County Animal Shelter will celebrate its grand opening by offering \$10 rabies shots for cats and dogs Saturday, Aug. 29, from noon to 3 p.m.

The new animal shelter is located at 4152 Hwy. 52 East on the first road to the right past the Gilmer County Detention Center.

Rabies is a deadly disease. It is critical that pet owners vaccinate and keep their pets vaccinated against rabies.

The Appalachian Animal hospital is sponsoring this reduced-cost rabies shot clinic, and they will be assisted by employees of the Gilmer County Environmental Health Department. For more details, call the animal shelter at 706-635-2166.

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One last huddle before it begins for real



Members of the Gilmer High Bobcats football team huddle around head coach Wes Tankersley to get final instructions before their first game this Friday night against the Fannin County Rebels in Blue Ridge.