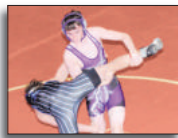




**Times-Courier
Christmas story
contest winners**
See Gilmer Living 1B



**Bobcats
keep winning,
improve to 25-0**
See Sports 1C



**American Legion
Auxiliary spreads
holiday cheer**
See Around Town 1D

Times-Courier

Your Hometown Newspaper Devoted To The Progress Of Gilmer County

VOL. 134 • NO. 52 • U.S.P.S. NO. 630-280

December 24, 2009

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David Ralston tapped to become next Speaker of the House

by **AI Summers**

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A Gilmer County native son and current state representative, David Ralston, has been tapped to become the

next Speaker of the House of the Georgia House of Representatives.

Ralston was chosen by members of the Republican caucus Thursday, Dec. 17, at a meeting held in Atlanta.



David Ralston

Because Republicans hold a majority of the seats in the Georgia House of Representatives, he should be elected when members of the full House convene in January.

The next speaker is the son of Willard and Ernestine Ralston. He grew up in the Cartecay area of Gilmer County and attended Oakland Elementary and Gilmer High School where he graduated in 1972.

During 1972, Ralston served as an alternate delegate to the Republican National Convention held in Miami, Fla.

Fellow Republican and Ralston supporter Joe McCutchen said, "I believe David was the youngest person ever elected as an alternate delegate to the national convention. He had a mind for politics even back in the early '70s. We are proud of him."

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from North Georgia College and obtained his law degree from the University of Georgia in 1980.

Ralston began his political career as a state senator from the 51st Senate District in 1992, a post he held through 1998 when he was

the Republican nominee for state attorney general. Ralston lost that race to current Georgia Attorney General Thurbert Baker.

Ralston then ran for, and won, the House of Representatives seat for the 7th District in 2002. He has held that seat since then.

Ralston has served as the chairman of the House Non-Civil Judiciary Committee and also on the House Appropriations Committee.

In making his acceptance speech last Thursday, the representative said, "You've made a country boy real happy."

Ralston told the *Times-Courier* Tuesday, "I am very humbled and honored that members of the Republican caucus chose to put their trust in me. We are going to put the distractions behind us and moved forward."

"It cannot be business as usual anymore. We are going to do things a little differently. We are going to be more fair and inclusive in our processes," he said.

The future speaker practices law in Blue Ridge. He is married to Jane Ralston and they have two children.

Inmate hangs himself at detention center

by **AI Summers**

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An inmate of the Gilmer County Detention Center died from complications due to his having hung himself last Friday, Dec. 18.

According to Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson, Bryan Marshall Henderson, 26, of an Ellijay address, was found by detention officers in an unresponsive state.

Officers performed CPR on Henderson until emergency management services personnel arrived. The procedure was continued on the ride to North Georgia Medical Center where Henderson was eventually pronounced dead.

Nicholson told the *Times-Courier*, "An investigation is being conducted into the death by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). Preliminarily, the investigation indicates that it had been less than 30 minutes since last contact with a detention officer prior to Henderson being found. An autopsy was performed by the G.B.I. Crime Lab. The cause of death has been determined to be hanging and the manner of death was ruled suicide."

Henderson had been incarcerated Thursday, Dec. 17, for a probation violation.

Commissioners approve \$17.5M fiscal budget

by **Ryan R Rees**

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The board of commissioners approved an airtight \$17,578,591 budget for the 2010 fiscal year at its Dec. 17 meeting.

During discussion of the budget at the meeting, commission chairman Mark Chastain noted that "every department, except the sheriff's department, asked for increases. They didn't get them and everyone seems to be OK with the budgets they have in place."

The 2010 budget is \$1.2 million less than the 2009 budget.

The only major change made at the Dec. 17 meeting from the advertised budget came from a \$32,000 shift of

funds intended for the Appalachian Judicial Circuit court system that is shared with Pickens and Fannin counties. That money was shifted to the contingency reserve budget. The court system has a reserve balance of nearly \$250,000 and the three county commissions agreed the system could use that balance if needed in the coming year.

Most of the expenditures will go to the sheriff's department that will receive nearly \$3.2 million and the detention center just over \$2 million. Fire and rescue will receive \$2.6 million.

The budget also expects to collect \$6.3 million in property taxes, down from \$7.2 in 2009.

Four trash centers will be closed two days

by **Ryan R Rees**

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Four of the seven county-operated trash compactor and convenience centers will be closed Sundays and Tuesdays, beginning Jan. 1.

The changes in operations will save the county approximately \$50,000, according to

commission chairman Mark Chastain.

Three of the seven centers — Tower Road, Coosawatee, Cartecay — are classified as "major" centers with two compactors and single-stream recycling dumpsters and will remain open seven days a week.

The four "minor" centers

are located on Yukon Road, Whitepath Road, Whitestone Road and Tails Creek Road. In addition to being closed two days a week, hours of operation will be altered as well. They will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays, 1 to 6 p.m. Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Fridays and 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Saturdays.

The three major centers will be open from 1:30 to 5:30

p.m. Sundays, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Fridays and 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Saturdays.

Household, bagged garbage can be taken to any of the centers. Bulk trash can be disposed of at the Tower Road location or the Advanced

See Trash page 4A

Times-Courier holiday schedule

In observance of the Christmas holiday, the *Times-Courier* will be closed Thursday and Friday, Dec. 24 and Dec. 25 and will reopen Monday, Dec. 28 at 8:30 a.m.

For the New Years holiday, the *Times-Courier* will close at noon, Thursday, Dec. 31, and remain closed through New Years Day, Friday, Jan. 1. We will reopen Monday, Jan. 4, at 8:30 a.m.

The real estate advertising deadline for the Thursday, Dec. 31, edition of the paper was Wednesday,

Dec. 23, at 5 p.m. The real estate advertising deadline for the Thursday, Jan. 7 edition of the paper will be Thursday, Dec. 31, at noon.

Regular deadlines for all other advertisements and editorial submissions will remain at Tuesday noon.

We hope you have a safe and merry Christmas season with your family and friends.

Enjoy our annual Christmas edition this week, along with the winners of our annual Christmas Story Contest on page 1B.

Wildlife lover Cylke dies at 51

by **AI Summers**

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The wild critters in Gilmer County and north Georgia, especially the injured and infirmed, lost one of their biggest allies with the death of Craig "Grizzly" Cylke last Friday, Dec. 18. He was 51.

Cylke was the director of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Sanctuary where he took in injured, sick and orphaned animals and nursed them back to health. On some occasions he was able to release a healed and rehabilitated animal back into the wild. Others were rehabilitated to the best of their ability and then given homes in the sanctuary.

Cylke spent his days educating kids and adults alike on animals housed at the facility and the importance of maintaining the animals'

habitats both at the sanctuary and out in the wild.

He spent countless hours putting on demonstrations at schools and libraries. He conducted tours at the facility on the wildly popular "Family Days" held on certain Sundays during the summer months.

When he was not conducting a program or tours he was out seeking funds for the facility, often accompanied by his deaf and blind lynx, Taz. He would carry baby critters, everything from opossums to snakes and hedgehogs, around in his pockets and let potential donors get up close and personal with some of the wildlife they would be assisting.

Cylke was interred at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Sanctuary Sunday, Dec. 20. Bernhardt Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.



Photo by Michael Andrews

Craig "Grizzly" Cylke pals around with Ellijay Wildlife Rehabilitation Sanctuary resident Buddy the Wallaby earlier this year. Cylke will be remembered for his unwavering commitment to making a better life for abandoned and abused animals, which, in turn, bettered the community in which he resided.

In this issue...

National/State Roundup	.....2A
Editorial	.....3A
Religion/People	.....8-9A
TV Guide	.....13A
Gilmer Living	.....1B
Christmas Stories	.....3-5B
Legals	.....6-11B
GAHA News	.....12B

Sports	.....1-3C
Focus on Education	.....4-5C
Health & Fitness	.....6-11C
Car Couple	.....12C
Around Town	.....1D
Movies/Calendar	.....2D
Arrests	.....4D
Classifieds	.....6-12D