

# Inside Chattooga

C H A T T O O G A C O U N T Y  
G O V E R N M E N T

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- FEB 24 – LITERACY COUNCIL SPELLING BEE
- APRIL 9 – FLOWER SHOW AT SUMMERVILLE DEPOT
- APRIL 9 – EARTH DAY CELEBRATION, DOWDY PARK

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## VETERANS SERVICE DEPARTMENT TO OPEN IN SUMMERVILLE

Commissioner Jason Winters met with State Representative Barbara Massey Reece and Tom Cook, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Service on February 4 to discuss opening a Veterans Service Office here in Summerville.

Based on this meeting, it is expected that the Summerville Veterans Service Department office will be completed in 4 to 6 weeks, with office space, supplies and volunteers being provided by Chattooga County. Deputy Commissioner Cook plans to begin itinerant service to this office soon by sending a field service officer from the Lafayette office one day a week. This field service officer

will be able to work with veterans through the federal Veterans Affairs (VA) claims process. Services will include advising veterans on how to document their claims, locating and submitting copies of required information and following up on submitted claims.

A meeting to discuss the volunteer staffing model is planned for Monday, March 7, at the Chattooga County Civic Center at 10:00 a.m. Commissioner Winters is seeking approximately 20 to 30 volunteer veterans that may have had experience with the benefit process to volunteer up to 3 hours a day twice a month to help staff the Veterans Service Center. "Lots of time veterans

just need encouragement to begin and continue through the benefit process which can be inundating. Hopefully, this will allow local citizens a chance to help encourage our veterans to apply and participate in available Veteran's Services," said Commissioner Winters.

Chattooga County has approximately 2400 veterans. Last year the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs distributed more than \$4 million in veteran benefits in Chattooga County.

Any questions on the Veterans Program can be directed to the Chattooga County Commissioner's Office, at 706-857-0700.

## 2011 LEADERSHIP CHATTOOGA

Chattooga County will be implementing the 2011 Leadership Chattooga program for select local high school Juniors.

This program is designed to enhance youth leaders' skills and knowledge so that our local community can become

and remain successful. The goal is to allow local students to take an in-depth look at local and regional government, businesses and resources so they may gain a full understanding of the opportunities this community and state offer. It is hoped that with this knowledge they will want to

become deeply involved in our community to promote development and to improve the quality of life for our residents.

One of the biggest challenges facing our small towns today is the increased migration of our young people to larger metro-

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LEADERSHIP CHATTOOGA

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politan areas. This is largely because of job opportunities and activities that can be found there. The Leadership Chattooga program's goal is to show our youth that there are industries and employment opportunities here in Chattooga County and the Northwest Georgia region that would allow them to come back to this community after college.

This type of resident reten-

tion can build a much stronger community with leaders that have deep local ties.

The program is loosely based on the Georgia Academy of Economic Development's Leadership program that is designed for local business leaders and government officials.

Candidates for the 2011 Leadership Chattooga pro-

gram will be selected by an application process. Application for this program is open to any high school junior in the county. Applications will be reviewed and candidates will be interviewed and selected by a committee at each local high school.

Leadership Chattooga will meet one day per month for the months of March, April and May.

*"We are thrilled to be able to offer a program like this to our high school students within the county. This is the type of program they will greatly benefit from, not only for the knowledge they will gain, but it will also be very helpful to them on their college applications," states Commissioner Winters*

**We are glad that Magistrate Tracy Maddux has had a speedy recovery and is back at work!**

CHATTOOGA COUNTY AGRICULTURE CENTER FINISHED

The first stage of the Chattooga County Agricultural Center is complete. This was the building of a pavilion that will serve as a multi-purpose facility that can be used for livestock shows and other community events. The county is now working on adding restrooms and a parking lot.

This is a project that has long

been in the works for Chattooga County. County funds were originally set aside for the project under former Commissioner Mike Dawson. Chattooga County Farm Bureau also donated money toward the project. The land for the building was donated by the Chattooga County Board of Education.

The pavilion is located on

Highway 100, across from the Chattooga County Superintendent's office.

Currently, the county and the City of Summerville are coordinating the first event, the Farmer's Market that has been previously held at the Presbyterian Church in Summerville, which will be in April. For more information contact the Commissioner's Office.

4-H LEADERSHIP DAY AT STATE CAPITOL

On February 7th, Chattooga County 4-H youth, leaders and volunteers traveled to Atlanta for the 10th Annual Leadership Day and 4-H day at the Capitol. Leadership Day, sponsored by the Department of Community Affairs and held at the Atlanta Freight Depot, is designed to

recognize the efforts of leadership programs like 4-H.

The day included speeches from Governor Nathan Deal, Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle, DCA Commissioner Mike Beatty, as well as many other elected officials and community leaders.

After Leadership Day concluded, 4-H'ers visited the State Capitol, where they met with their local representatives, toured the capitol and witnessed the legislative process in action.



**Local 4-H group at the Georgia State Capitol with Representative Barbara Massey Reece**

**RAILROAD REPAIRS TO BEGIN IN APRIL**



**Summerville Train Depot**

A meeting was held at the Lafayette

Depot to discuss the Rail Line Rehabilitation Project by Chattooga & Chickamauga Railway Company that will be getting underway this month.

C&C will be repairing the rail line from Chattanooga, TN to Lyerly, GA. They will be replacing rails, repairing bridges, repairing crossings and replacing over 17,000 cross ties.

This will entail opening the railroad crossings at several locations in the county and city. The rail line will be extended past the turntable in Dowdy

Park, to Lyerly at milepost 397.

Road closures due to railroad crossing construction will be announced by Public Works. Work in Chattooga County is not expected to begin until April. C & C is expecting each crossing to be completed in one day.

The project is expected to be complete by June, just in time for the Tennessee Valley Railroad's Steam Engine excursions to come to Summerville in the Fall.

**K E E P C H A T T O O G A B E A U T I F U L**

Chattooga County is currently applying to form the "Keep Chattooga Beautiful" program, an affiliate of the Keep Georgia Beautiful and Keep America Beautiful programs.

The Keep America Beautiful system is a grassroots process of education to action. By involving people from many sectors of the community, it

will build a partnership to improve Chattooga County by conducting cleanups, hosting recycling drives, protecting water quality and more.

Keep Chattooga Beautiful will host their first community event on April 9. This will be the county's Earth Day Celebration and is scheduled from 10am to 3pm at Dowdy Park.

The event is open to everyone. There will be various educational programs and children's activities geared toward litter control, recycling and conservation in our community. Join us for a fun-filled day with great music, food and family entertainment. For information on how to become involved, contact the Commissioner's office at 706-857-0700.

*"Joining Keep Georgia Beautiful will allow Chattooga County to become eligible for many grants and educational programs," says program director Sylvia Lee Keziah.*

**C O M M I S S I O N E R S P E A K S T O M E N L O S T U D E N T L E A D E R S**

Commissioner Winters visited Menlo school on Wednesday, Feb 16, to meet with their student leadership group.

Winters spoke to the group about the job duties of the Chattooga County Commissioner and explained how that affected them as students and as residents of Chattooga County.

The students were also able to ask the Commissioner questions and enjoyed a lively game of rock-paper-scissors with him before he left.

The student leadership team is comprised of 5-8th grade students that are nominated by their teachers based on leadership qualities they display in class. There are 2 students

from each grade represented.

The leadership program is designed to be mainly an avenue of communication between students and the administration. The students meet once a month with administrators and discuss school issues, then take the

information back to their peers. The leadership program is headed by Principal Mike Martin.



**CHATTOOGA COUNTY  
GOVERNMENT**

P.O. Box 211  
10102 Commerce Street  
Summerville, GA 30747

Phone: 706.857.0700  
Fax: 706.857.0742  
Email: [chattcom@windstream.net](mailto:chattcom@windstream.net)

*Inside Chattooga* is a monthly newsletter from the Chattooga County Commissioner's office that highlights happenings from around the county.

If you have an event, story or idea you would like to see in "Inside Chattooga" or would like to participate in any programs or events featured, please contact Sylvia-Lee Keziah at the Chattooga County Commissioner's Office, 706-857-0700.

**S P O T L I G H T   O N :   J O N   P A Y N E**

In every issue of *Inside Chattooga*, there will be a **Spotlight On** feature that will interview one of Chattooga County's elected officials. This month, the spotlight is on Jon Payne, Probate Judge and Elections Superintendent.

***Things you might not have known about Jon Payne:***

- He is celebrating 36 years in office this month. He was elected on February 24, 1975 and sworn in on February 26, 1975. His first paycheck was for the 2 1/2 days between the election and his swearing in.
- He worked as a Sheriff's deputy

under Gary McConnell for 4 years prior to being probate judge.

- He is not planning to retire.
- He has a wooden rocking chair in his office that he sits in regularly.
- He loves to deer hunt. He started hunting in 1973 and finally got 2 nice bucks this past season.
- He especially enjoys chauffeuring his parents, Dr. Marlin and Mrs. Montyne Payne around town.
- His office has already had 3 district meetings about the 2012 elections.
- He serves as the part-time Magis-

trate Judge under Tracy Maddux.

- The longest time anyone in Chattooga county has waited to come into his office to probate a will after a relative's death was 80 years.



**Probate Judge Jon Payne**