



NEIGHBORS

Shubuta opens the local holiday celebration season with its annual parade. See pictures on Page 1C.

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WPD arrests area man in Wal-Mart auto burglary

By Sean Dunlap

A 37-year-old Waynesboro man has been arrested in connection with a Monday, Dec. 6 automobile break-in at the Wal-Mart Supercenter on Azalea Drive.

“We received a call around 11:20 a.m., on Monday about the burglary involving a 1996 Jeep Cherokee in the employee parking area on the west side of the store,” Waynesboro Police Department Chief Investigator Wesley Waites said. “The owner returned about 20 minutes after leaving his vehicle and found that his car stereo had been stolen.”

Waites viewed Wal-Mart’s security camera footage, and discovered a white Dodge van entered the parking lot around 11 a.m., and stopped behind the vehicle that was burglarized.

“A black male exited the white van and allegedly got into the Jeep, and the van parked and waited,” Waites continued.



Pacley

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Supervisors OK memorial addition

By Sean Dunlap

The Wayne County Board of Supervisors on Monday gave final approval to a pair of additions to the war memorial monument on the front lawn of the courthouse facing Azalea Drive.

County Veterans Affairs Officer Truman Williams, representing the local Veterans Day-Memorial Day Committee, had asked supervisors in November to consider enlarging the monument to include names of local soldiers killed in combat in the years follow-

ing the Vietnam War.

“The current monument contains the names of Wayne County’s war dead from 1917 to 1975, and there are at least two more names that need to be added, and we are out of space on the existing granite slabs,” Williams said.

County leaders have also charged Williams and the committee to come up with the criteria for having names placed on the monument in years to come.

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Digital radios provide better coverage for police, sheriff

Hospital also links with system for improved local communication

By Sean Dunlap

If your police band scanner is not picking up as many law enforcement and medical care calls as it used to — there’s a good reason.

The Wayne County Sheriff’s Department, Waynesboro Police Department and Wayne General Hospital’s Ambulance Service have recently moved their communications networks to a new statewide digital radio system.

“The transfer was paid for in large part by a grant from the Mississippi Wireless Communications Commission through its Public Safety Interoperability Communications program, which picked up 80 percent of the cost of the radios,” said Wayne County Emergency Management-Homeland Security Director Todd Cleary.

“The grant paid for a total of 58 digital radios and four mobile units that have better than 97 percent coverage in Wayne County, and is part of a communication system that was established in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.”

Cleary said local entities receiving the radios picked up the 20 percent local match for the grant.

“The digital radios offer more reliable communications in rural areas of Wayne County than the existing analog systems used in the past, and we’re now ahead of the game because many analog radios are being phased out by the Federal Communications Commission,” he continued.

See Radio, Page 6A

Santa Claus gets ear-full during Waynesboro visit



Sean Dunlap/The Wayne County News

The Wayne County Chamber of Commerce welcomed Santa Claus on Saturday, Dec. 4 for the annual “Breakfast with Santa” event at its offices on Azalea Drive in Waynesboro across from the post office. Besides the pancakes and sausage meal provided to children and parents, young people got a chance to sit on Santa’s lap to describe what they wanted for the holiday season. Hunter Williams, 7, and Mae-Leigh Green, 3 months, were among the many that provided their lists to the jolly old elf. For more pictures from the “Breakfast with Santa” event and the Shubuta Christmas parade, turn to Page 1C in today’s edition of The Wayne County News.

School leaders debate need for ‘Data Days’

Early dismissal creating care headaches for families, but officials say time is necessary

By Sean Dunlap

At least two members of the Wayne County Board of Education said they feel like early school dismissals for “Data Days” on Thursdays during the academic year are putting unnecessary hardships on local families and teachers.

However, leaders within the Wayne County School District are countering that the allotted time is a must to allow teachers and administrators the opportunity to work on vital curriculum issues and students’ academic needs.

Leah Parson, who serves as Beat 1 School Board representative, said ending school up to two hours early on Thursdays is putting some parents in a bind to make certain their children are cared for during that extra time away from classes.

“When you are dealing with situations where people are laid off or don’t have a job, then paying for child care is not really an option,” Parson told the board. “I’ve always said anything this school district does should take into consideration the impact those decisions will have on parents and the community.”

District 3 representative Charles Chapman said when the concerns were brought to his attention, he visited with teachers at various schools within the district about the value of “Data Days.”

“Some would talk to me and some would not because they were afraid of repercussions if they spoke about it with me,” Chapman said. “A lot of our teachers feel like there is a lot on them anyway that the state sends down. On ‘Data Days,’ they hold meetings and are taking more materials home with them to work on than they had to deal with before.”

Chapman said, in his opinion, the school district had made it without having “Data Days” in the past, and would favor seeing them discontinued not only for the concerns raised by Parson, but also because of the volume of work being placed upon the shoulders of all instructors.

See Board, Page 5A

Bunch: WPD committed to protecting rights of victims, offenders

By Sean Dunlap

Waynesboro Police Chief Jimmy Bunch said his door is always open and he is willing to address any and all concerns from individuals, entities and groups that have an agenda for the pursuit of justice in the community.

“As the chief of police, it is my duty and responsibility to seek justice in all cases — whether they be misdemeanor or felony offenses,” Bunch

told The Wayne County News.

“The Waynesboro Police Department’s mission is to protect life, property, liberties and the rights of citizens, and to preserve the peace with the city’s corporate limits as guaranteed by the Mississippi and United States



Bunch

Constitutions.”

In that pursuit of justice, Bunch said he wants the public to understand it is law enforcement’s responsibility to protect the rights of the victims of crime, as well as individuals that have been charged with crimes.

“There are times, however, that the victims of violent crimes cannot speak for themselves, as was the case involving a 17-month-old child that was brutally murdered

at a residence on Wayne Street in May,” Bunch said. “Law enforcement will speak for her. An individual was arrested and charged with this heinous crime.”

“An arrest was also made in a home invasion at night involving a robbery and attempted sexual assault of a 100-year-old victim, who has passed away since that incident. Law enforcement will speak for her, and justice will be served.”

Bunch said accusations being

made of citizens arrested under a policy of “just arrest them” does not exist within his agency or any other law enforcement group he knows of.

“However, there is a policy that law enforcement can and will arrest an individual that violates the law as defined in the Mississippi Code of 1972, of which there are 21 volumes and those are supplemented every year,” he continued.

See Bunch, Page 5A

Aldermen take up wiring, phone issues for PD

By Paul Keane

Renovations to the Waynesboro Police Department headquarters on Wayne Street are coming along nicely, according to Police Chief Jimmy Bunch, but wiring issues and possibly a new phone system will have to be decided upon quickly for the project to continue to progress.

Bunch told the Waynesboro Board of Aldermen in Tuesday night’s December business meeting that the project has reached the point where decisions on the placement of wiring for computers and phones have to be made, and he pointed out now might be a good time to replace an antiquated telephone

system.

“The project is coming along fairly well,” Bunch told the Board about the building that once housed the Waynesboro Memorial Library and has been police headquarters for the past few years.

“Before they start closing the walls in, though, we all have to figure out where the wiring is going to go for the phone lines and the computers.”

“And we need to look at getting a new phone system. The one we have right now was originally installed in the 1990s, and we could use an upgrade.”

See Aldermen, Page 5A



Sean Dunlap/The Wayne County News

Hundreds of toys were donated last week in memory of Staclyn Arizona Holyfield, 13, who died following a traffic accident last week.

Toy collection helps families

By Sean Dunlap

Community grief following the recent death of 13-year-old Staclyn Arizona Holyfield has led to a large volume of toys being collected to benefit families in need locally.

Holyfield, a native of Waynesboro and resident of Millry, Ala., was seriously injured in a traffic mishap in Washington County, Ala., on Tuesday, Nov. 30, and died Thursday, Dec. 2 at University Medical Center in Jackson as a result of her injuries.



Holyfield

See Holyfield, Page 6A