

THE BATESVILLE DAILY Guard

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Raucous rally

Lady Southerners surge to beat Lady Greyhounds

SEE PAGE 16

PRICE 50 CENTS

Subpoenas served; cash deposited School officials sued

By LACY MITCHELL
Guard Staff Writer

A former employee fired in November for using school equipment on personal property is now suing his former boss and the Batesville School Board.

By outward appearances little seemed out of the ordinary prior to the board's monthly meeting Monday night.

But in a rather low-key fashion, the seven-member board and Superintendent Dr. Randy Willison were each met with subpoenas upon their arrival at Sulphur Rock Magnet Elementary.

J.D. Johnson, on behalf of Walnut Ridge attorney Larry Steele who represents Richard O'Neal, former district plant director and maintenance supervisor, issued the summonses before the meeting and during a break before executive session.

Dr. Paul Hance, Jennifer Emery, Rodney Stroud, George Latus, Scott Wood, Scott Fredricks and Leonard Tharp (who was absent) make up the board.

The lawsuit filed March 7 in U.S. District Court continues an ongoing conflict between O'Neal and the school that began last year.

SEE SUMMONSES, PAGE 6



LACY MITCHELL

J.D. JOHNSON with the law office of Walnut Ridge attorney Larry Steele looks over paperwork during the Batesville School Board meeting Monday night. He issued summonses to board members before and during a break at the meeting on behalf of former employee Richard O'Neal.

Coffee can yields \$4,500

By LACY MITCHELL
Guard Staff Writer

Batesville School District maintenance employee Larry Hawkins didn't hesitate on Nov. 30 to show Ronnie Coots, director of business and information, the coffee can kept in a cabinet in the maintenance department.

But Coots told the *Guard* on Tuesday he couldn't believe it when he looked inside to find numerous cash bundles rolled up like cigarettes with white slips of paper on the outside and what looked to be amounts

written down, secured with rubber bands. The cash totaled about \$4,500.

Hawkins and Richard O'Neal, former district plant manager and maintenance supervisor who was fired Nov. 11, said the money was acquired by Hawkins who gathered and sold the district's old scrap metal.

It was what might be called a "slush fund," used for undesignated purposes, for example, buying a floral arrangement for a coworker whose relative might have died or a food tray for a work potluck, O'Neal told the *Guard*.

Coots said Hawkins told him the same.

Although the money was found after he was fired and some might think he had something to do with it, O'Neal told the *Guard* he didn't know a lot about it.

O'Neal filed a lawsuit March 7 against the school board and Dr. Randy Willison claiming his civil rights were violated when the board voted to fire him during a public hearing Nov. 11.

Hawkins, he said, would haul the old metal and junk gathered from around the district and sell it to a scrap yard.

"He was always good about labeling," SEE CASH, PAGE 3



TONY MCGUFFEY

INDEPENDENCE COUNTY Justice of the Peace Larry Nelson (center) and Batesville High School Resource Officer Lynn Bachman (right) assist Sheriff Steve Jeffery in unpacking a new computer recently. Bachman, acting on behalf of an anonymous citizen, presented Jeffery with a \$500 check for the purchase of equipment to be used in the sheriff's department's new substation, inside Citizens Bank in west Batesville. "This donation is to show appreciation for all the work our deputies and resource officers do and to help get the new substation up and running," said Nelson, who as the District 7 JP represents west Batesville.

No egg hunt

There will not be an Easter egg hunt in downtown Batesville this year, Main Street Batesville executive director Paula Grimes has announced.

"We were not able to secure the funds needed for this event, and many merchants have indicated that they did not see any increase in business," Grimes said. "We try to make sure that we spend our dollars on activities that benefit our downtown merchants."

Grimes explained that Main Street Batesville receives no federal or state funds for operation costs, and the organization fell short in 2010 with other funding sources — as well as volunteers. "It takes about \$1,500 and we didn't get a sponsor this year."

She added, "Hopefully, the economy will rebound and we will be able to do this next year."

However, Jacksonport State Park and the city of Hardy Advertising and Promotions Commission will still host their annual Easter egg hunts, both on April 23.

Jacksonport's will be in the courtyard; for information call (870) 523-2143 or email jacksonport@arkansas.com. Hardy's will begin at noon in Loberg Park with registration at 11; call Mayor Nina Thornton at (870) 856-3811.

Marshal hired at Concord; city-wide clean-up scheduled

By LARRY STROUD
Guard Associate Editor

CONCORD — Nicholas "Nick" Hunnicutt will go to work as the new town marshal in Concord on Friday, said Recorder-treasurer Jayne Pettit.

And, she said, "That's no April Fool's joke." Hunnicutt, 32, replaces Danny Roberts, who resigned at the end of January.

The city council offered the job to Hunnicutt following a recent special meeting. He was the

only one interviewed after the council looked through the applications, Pettit said.

Hunnicutt and his wife, Cara, and their two little boys have already moved to Concord, she said.

Hunnicutt has been in law enforcement in one way or another ever since he graduated from high school, according to his résumé, working at first as an auxiliary officer. He is a graduate of Arkansas Tech University in Russellville and moved to Concord from Yell County.

He most recently worked for the Ola Police

Department and has also been employed by the Yell County Sheriff's Department and the Centerton Police Department.

Hunnicutt is a fully certified law enforcement officer, being a graduate of the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy.

In other business the council set the date for Concord's annual city-wide cleanup for April 29-30. "This is not for trash — it's for things that are not for normal trash pickup," Pettit said.

That includes old appliances and old furniture,

for example.

Anyone with such items to have picked up should call Paul Foote in advance to make arrangements for him to stop by and get them. Foote's cell number is (870) 668-0013.

The aldermen learned that the annual Senior Citizens Cleanup at the Concord Community Center will begin at 4 p.m. April 11.

"Bring your rakes and other tools," said Pettit. The event is open to the public.

Hamburgers and hot dogs will be served.

