



The year in Gilmer: January-May

See Gilmer Living 1B



The year in review

See Sports 1C



Jorgenson's quintet to jazz up BEST Series

See Around Town 1D

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2008 in review

April - July

April

- The Gilmer County Sheriff's Department became "officially certified" by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. Certification means the department "implements policies and procedures that are conceptually sound and operationally effective."
- Three cases of rabies have been reported in the Cherry Log section of Gilmer County.
- Divers pull two bodies from Carter's Lake. One body is believed to be the victim of

foul play, and the other body is believed to be that of a person who had drowned.

•Percy the 'Possum celebrates his fifth anniversary in the *Times-Courier* April 10.

•Local businessman and Democrat Bob Thomas was honored by the Democratic Party at the Ninth District Democrat kickoff banquet at Cohutta Lodge.

•Earth Day is celebrated Saturday, April 19.

• Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson announces

he will seek a second term.

•Edward Lacey and Sid May are recognized for their service to Boy Scout Troop 402 in Gilmer County. Both men received awards at the Northeast Georgia Council Banquet held in Gainesville.

•Gilmer County detectives put a burglary ring out of service and recovered over \$15,000 worth of items.

•Another rabid raccoon was found in southwest Gilmer County April 14. Health officials have been warning pet owners to make sure their pets' vaccinations are up to date.

•Water authority members discuss reimbursing developers for costs incurred when they put in water lines.

•Members of the Ellijay City Council vote to go with a historic district designation for most of the downtown area.

May

•A small plane takes off from the Gilmer County Airport and crashes into some trees at the end of the runway. Two men from Ohio are injured and the plane is a total loss.

See Review page 2A

It's Cookie Time



Photo by Al Summers

Gilmer County Girl Scout, Destyne Riblet, age 8, of local Troop 8146, displays a box of Dulce de Leche Caramel Girl Scout cookies on sale now through the end of January. It's cookie time!

News Brief:

New BOC to meet at new time, discuss new budget

The 2009 Gilmer County Board of Commissioners will hold its first meeting tonight, Thursday, Jan. 8, at its new time, 6 p.m., in the courthouse jury assembly room.

Newly elected chairman Mark Chastain and commissioners Will Beatty and J.C. Sanford are expected to discuss the county's 2009 budget, which has yet to be approved.

Last week, the outgoing commission authorized the use of the 2008 budget until incoming members could adopt a new one.

Chastain said he and his team are putting the "finishing touches" on the 2009 budget, and plan to adopt it at the BOC's Jan. 22 meeting. The budget will be advertised in the *Times-Courier* prior to adoption.

Also last week, outgoing commissioner Ken Bailey announced that construction of Phase II concluded with considerable cost savings to the county. An audit is forthcoming, he said, but enough funds remain to finish and equip the basement for the 911 center.

The BOC awarded the bid for the courthouse parking lot to two companies, Highridge Partners and Lance Grading for a combined amount of \$719,108. Chopped Oak and Flag Pole Roads were accepted into the county road inventory, on condition the right of ways are certified.

Also on tonight's agenda: The appointment of county attorney and county clerk, and a discussion of the future of the old voter registration building.

Seeking shelter:

New, local help for recovering drug, alcohol addicts

by Becky Antworth
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On a damp Tuesday, about 100 strangers walked across the windy darkness of an Alpharetta parking lot toward the glow of a meeting hall and a Cocaine Anonymous meeting.

Spiky-haired teenagers, not yet old enough to buy beer, shoved their hands in their pockets and sat next to snowy-haired grandparents with decades of sobriety under their belts, their faces crisscrossed with the lines of hard living.

Some were from Ellijay, some from farther. Some stood and shared: Old friends can be an addict's worst enemy; temptations lurk in every dollar bill; a single bad day can wipe out miles of progress on the slow slog to sobriety.

Others silently picked up a white keychain — the color of relapse — or orange, pink, or green ones, representing various intervals of sobriety.

Doctors and psychiatrists sat beside construction workers and ex-prostitutes — all of them the same in those chairs, all of them recovering addicts.

In Ellijay, Alcoholics Anonymous meets six times a week. Narcotics Anonymous routinely holds five meetings.



Photo by Becky Antworth

The Isaiah House, a new, nonprofit transitional housing facility for recovering addicts, plans to officially open in Ellijay later this month. Founders Ed and Sally Jeffery have remodeled the house, and await a sunny day to paint the exterior. They'll hold open house Saturday, January 17, from 2 to 6 p.m. They welcome all citizens.

Just how bad is the drug and alcohol problem in Gilmer?

Take just one drug, methamphetamine, a speed-like derivative that's been sweeping the country. Sheriff Stacy Nicholson has estimated that one in ten in Gilmer are habitual users.

Pastor Glen Arnold, born and raised in Gilmer, has been working with local addicts for decades. With 18 years as the pastor of Harvest Missionary, 15 years as a prison chaplain, 14 years as an addict and 26 years of sobriety, he's seen, and ministered to, what must be thousands of people struggling with addiction.

His congregation alone, he said, is about 90 percent addicts in recovery.

"There's not a family in the county that doesn't know somebody who has some problems with [addiction]," Arnold said. "It affects every class of people," — including his own. Arnold was an alcoholic by age 12, he said. "In my family, that's just what we did."

To say it's hard for an addict to get off drugs or alcohol is like saying summing Everest is good exercise — a profound understatement, and an

insult to those who achieve it.

Depending on one's drug of choice, the detox process is a wrenching, sweaty, sickly ordeal. Cells seize in the absence of the substance they've been bathed in for months, maybe decades. It's a series of agonizing minutes that stretch into hours, days if you're lucky, in which the foggy minutia of life is lifted only by periods of painful withdrawal, punctuated by stabbing cravings.

But as hard as it is to get off the stuff, it pales in comparison to how hard it is to stay off it.

"Being an addict, you're always just one step away from being it again — for the rest of your life," said Arnold, who still struggles to stay sober.

Indeed, recidivism runs rampant regardless of drug of choice.

The biggest contributing factor to relapse? Returning to a toxic environment, local experts say. Even if addicts have gone through rehab, they often lack the necessary resources to survive in the real world. Desperation, feeling adrift in their own lives, drives addicts back to drugs as much as the siren song of the substance.

See Shelter page 4A



Ellijay Community Blood Drive

Thursday, January 8
12pm-6pm

Ellijay Lions Club Building



American Red Cross

In this issue...

Editorial.....	3A	Sports.....	1-3C
Obituaries.....	5A	Focus on Education.....	5C
Religion/People.....	6-7A	Arrests.....	6C
Photos of the Week.....	8A	Dixie Divas/Lynn's Zen.....	7C
Gilmer Living.....	1B	Around Town.....	1D
Health & Fitness.....	3-6B	Movies/Calendar.....	2D
Legals.....	7-11B	Extension News.....	3D
Cookie Walk.....	12B	Classifieds.....	6-12D

