

# Courthouse arson trial moved to back burner

## Another continuance granted in case

**DUANE SHERRILL**  
News/Sports Smithville Review  
Smithville, Tennessee

The man accused of setting fire to the courthouse almost two years ago, causing over \$100,000 in damage, has been granted another continuance for his trial.

During a brief hearing last month, Judge Gary McKenzie granted the defense for Gary Wayne Ponder, 55, a continuance of trial after finding the defendant's medical condition could be affecting his mental state. The judge reset the trial date for May 9 and ordered that Ponder undergo another evaluation. Monday the case was delayed again upon a defense motion and no new trial date was immediately set.

As grounds for continuance, Assistant Public Defender Scott Grissom produced a letter from Sherry Wright, a nurse practitioner at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, who saw Ponder on March 21 and found him to be confused. According to Wright, Ponder is being treated for cirrhosis of the liver and that complications from this condition causes confusion. Judge McKenzie granted the motion for

continence, stating that, by allowing time to ascertain the defendant's medical condition, it could save the case being sent back down on appeal if there should be a conviction.

Smithville Police charged Ponder on Wednesday, June 15, 2016 after he was seen on the courthouse surveillance video system intentionally lighting fire in a newspaper recycling bin on the first floor vestibule. The video, which is the centerpiece of the state's case, showed on Tuesday, June 14, 2016 Ponder grabbed newspapers from the recycling bin and started the fire by lighting them with a cigarette lighter. The fire damaged the wall behind the recycling bin and cracked a window in the vestibule near the first floor entrance of the courthouse. Local attorney Jim Judkins saw the fire and tried to

douse it with coffee and other drinks before he was given a fire extinguisher to put out the flames. Total damages to the courthouse caused by the fire came to \$120,706.52, the amount covered by insurance. The courthouse also had a new fire alarm installed after the fire since the alarm did not sound despite the size of the fire and smoke.



PONDER



Photo provided

The DeKalb Prevention Coalition was recently presented \$3,000 from the Caney Folk Music and Arts Festival. Pictured is Carl Massaro (Festival Co-Founder), Ashley Anderson (B Presents Marketing Director), Lisa Cripps (DeKalb Prevention Coalition-Coordinator), Norene Puckett (DeKalb Prevention Coalition-Community Outreach Liaison) and Stephen Mccord (Festival Co-Founder).

# Caney Folk Music and Arts Festival donates \$3K

**DUANE SHERRILL**  
News/Sports Smithville Review  
Smithville, Tennessee

The Caney Folk Music and Arts Festival team has presented the DeKalb Prevention Coalition a check for \$3,000 to help support their work here.

The Caney Folk Music and Arts Festival was inspired by a shared love for music and the arts, the unspoiled beauty of Center Hill Lake, and the sheer majesty of the gorgeous Caney Fork River. Perched along the Smithville highway, Cherry Hill farm played host to this all day family-friendly event, celebrating excellence in American music and craft artisans.

When developing the festival, DeKalb County resident Carl Massaro and his co-founder Stephen Mccord decided that they wanted to find an organization

who is doing important work in the community to be a beneficiary of any money raised by the festival. The co-founders discovered the work of the DeKalb Prevention Coalition, whose mission is to unite community leaders and citizens of DeKalb County forming strong partnerships across major community sectors with the goal of reducing substance abuse.

The coalition works in DeKalb County in various ways to reduce dependence on harmful and potentially lethal substances such as prescription drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. During the festival an auction was held and extended after the festival ended.

On April 24, the team from the Caney Folk Music and Arts Festival presented the DeKalb Prevention Coalition with a check for \$3,000 to help support their continued work in DeKalb County.

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# Sheriff urges beware of conmen

**DUANE SHERRILL**  
News/Sports Smithville Review  
Smithville, Tennessee

Read the fine print anytime you contract for work around your house. That is the warning from Sheriff Patrick Ray whose office is already getting calls about questionable business practices by some local contractors and freelancers.

"Make sure you know who they are and that they are a credible business," said Sheriff Ray in warning residents about signing any contract for things like driveway

sealing, paving and various painting jobs. "We are already starting to get the calls."

The sheriff said springtime is usually the time property owners are approached by individuals and businesses about sprucing up their property, the most common job being driveway sealing. Ray suggests you read a contract fully, especially the fine print on the bottom, before affixing your signature to any legal document.

"If you have any problems about the person not doing what they said

then you are welcome to call us here at the sheriff's department," Ray said, noting that due to the wording of contracts that most cases are not criminal in nature, meaning the victim will have to sue to get their money back if the job is not done right. "Many are civil actions."

The sheriff advises residents to go to the Better Business Bureau's website and check out anyone who is asking to do home improvement work. Any complaints registered against the business or individual should appear on the site.

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**FREE HEARING TESTS**

Free electronic hearing tests will be given this month for all seniors. Hearing Health Center in Smithville will offer this testing for anyone who suspects they are not hearing clearly. Using our video otoscope, we will be able to show you the inside of your ear canal. Let's see if your problem could be as simple as too much earwax. We will then give you a full hearing evaluation, including speech understanding tests. Your results will be explained to you in clear, easy to understand terms and although we encourage early correction of hearing loss you are under no obligation to purchase.

- Approximately 15% of American adults (37.5) 18 and over report some trouble hearing.
- People suffering with Diabetes are four times more likely to develop hearing loss.
- People with hearing loss wait an average of seven years before seeing help.
- A 12-year study by Johns Hopkins School of Medicine found that untreated hearing loss increased the risk for dementia.
- Only one out of every five people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wear one.

Demonstrations of the latest technology in better hearing will be available. Hear for yourself how easy it can be to understand clearly again. This is an easy and safe way to get the answers to your hearing questions. Hearing Health Center has been serving DeKalb County over 34 years and prides itself on being a great customer service company.

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THANK YOU, DISTRICT 7!

I couldn't have done it without you!!  
Let's do it again on August 2!  
Sincerely,  
Beth Pafford  
Candidate, 7th District Commissioner

POLITICAL AD PAID FOR AND APPROVED BY CANDIDATE, BETH PAFFORD

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