

GP production in full swing during COVID-19 crisis

DELINQUENT PROPERTY TAXES

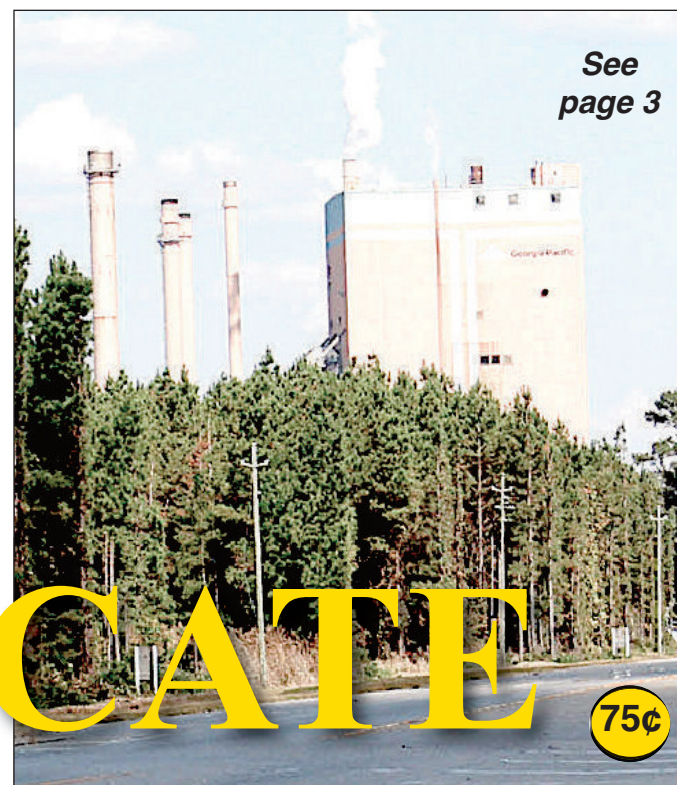
List begins on page 12

The Choctaw

March 25, 2020

SUN-ADVOCATE

Choctaw County's community newspaper



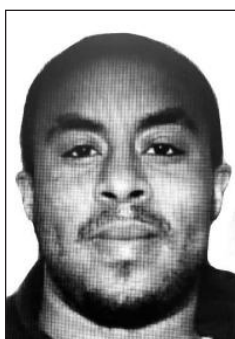
Hearing held for two suspects in Brandon Howard murder

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun-Advocate

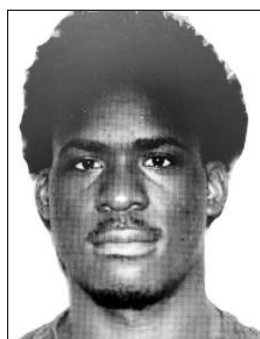
BUTLER – Two suspects in the December 2019 murder of Brandon Howard will be bound over for the Grand Jury after District Judge Joe Thompson heard arguments in a preliminary hearing in the case last Friday.

After clearing the court room due to state mandates against public gatherings because of the COVID-19 virus, Thompson allowed only a small crowd to watch and listen from the hallway during the hearing for suspects Ollie Curtis and Ter'Rion Dunn.

Howard was killed during what appeared to be a robbery attempt at Bedford Pines Apartments on Vanity Fair Drive in Butler on December 2. Howard, who was a resident at the apartment complex and also worked in maintenance at the facil-



Ollie Curtis



Ter'Rion Dunn

ity, was shot and passed away a short time later at Choctaw General Hospital.

Dunn and Curtis were arrested following investigations by the Butler Police Department, assisted by the Choctaw Co. Sheriff's Department.

During Friday's hearing, the prosecution presented evidence against the two

suspects, including testimony by Butler Director of Public Safety Jimmy Huckleba, who answered questions from both District Attorney Spence Walker and two teams of defense attorneys representing Curtis and Dunn.

Huckleba presented information about evidence, including bullet fragments, bloody footprints, money, and shell casings from a .223 caliber bullet. Huckleba said security cameras at the apartment complex where the crime was committed also recorded the scene. He testified about images captured on the cameras showing at least one of the suspects leaving the complex. Testimony also revealed that evidence was later collected at a residence in Pennington, including clothing, money, guns, and other items. Additional evidence was also later recovered during a search of another residence.

See HEARING, page 7

Band director facing charges of transmitting obscene material

By Dee Ann Campbell
Sun-Advocate Publisher

BUTLER -- James William Pierce turned himself into the Choctaw County Sheriff's Department on March 23 and is facing two counts of transmitting obscene material to a child.

Bond was set at \$15,000 for each count.

Pierce has served as band director in the Choctaw County School System since 2007, including working in that capacity at Choctaw County High School and currently at Southern Choctaw High School.

The investigation is being handled by the State Bureau of Investigation.

No other information has been made available by authorities about the allegations or the investigation.

2020 ELECTION

Run-off postponed until July 14

■ Voters can choose to cast absentee ballots

By Dee Ann Campbell
Sun-Advocate Publisher

MONTGOMERY, BUTLER -- Candidates vying for party nominations in two races in Alabama will now have an additional three months to campaign for them, and voters can opt to cast absentee ballots if they choose to do so.

Last week, Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill announced that the run-off elections that had been set for March 31 have now been rescheduled for July 14. The change was deemed allowable by state law since Gov. Kay Ivey declared a State of Emergency on March 13.

See RUN-OFF, page 10



Sign of the Times

Signs similar to this are posted on the doors of restaurants throughout the county as efforts to address the spread of COVID-19 continues. With restaurants now prohibited from offering inside dining, local residents have been taking advantage of the remaining take-out options. Events remain cancelled or postponed, governmental meetings are being changed, court proceedings are altered, and businesses are taking precautions by allowing employees to work from home, closing their doors to visitors, or putting in place other restrictions. (Photo by Colin Merritt)

NO CASES BUT... Choctaw General 'on ready' with supplies, beds

By Dee Ann Campbell
Sun-Advocate Publisher

BUTLER -- Amid national and state discussions over the availability of medical supplies and hospital bed space during the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals with available space could potentially be asked to provide care for patients from other areas. Choctaw General Hospital Administrator J.W. Cowan said that the Butler hospital has not yet been asked to do so, but the facility stands ready if needed.

"Right now, we don't have people here from other areas," he said. "But we are a brotherhood of hospitals and will rise to the occasion."

Cowan said that the hospital is in constant contact with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Alabama Hospital Association, as well as with Rush Health Systems.

"At present, we are okay," he said. "We probably have more resources than some other smaller hospitals, because of our affiliation with Rush."

Cowan said that he is foreseeing the likelihood of getting patients from 'sister hospitals' who need beds. Those patients may not be COVID-19 patients but others who need to remain under care for a short time while freeing bed space at larger hospitals for a growing number of COVID-19 patients.

"In scenarios where they can't take care of the numbers of patients that they have, we may get some who may not yet need to go home," he explained. "They may need to be in a hospital environment or need therapy for a few days, and that's what we do here. There is the possibility for us to be able to help with that."

See HOSPITAL, page 10

Confirmed COVID-19 cases reach 242 in Alabama

■ Alabamians living under new state orders

By Dee Ann Campbell
Sun-Advocate Publisher

MONTGOMERY – A total of 242 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Alabama as of Tuesday

evening, and the numbers are expected to climb. No deaths attributed to the virus have yet been reported in the state, making Alabama one of 18 states where no such deaths have occurred.

According to information from the Alabama Department of Public Health, 25 counties in the state

have reported confirmed cases. Several counties have been added to the list since Monday.

Confirmed cases by county as of Tuesday evening:

Autauga 1
Baldwin 4
Calhoun 2

See CASES, page 7

7 00604 97784 4

Vol.17 • Number 18

14 pages • 1 insert

Copyright 2020

The Choctaw Sun-Advocate

Hometown PHARMACY

69 W. Main Street Gilbertown, AL 36908

(251) 843-2400 ~ Fax: (251) 843-2402

Mon. - Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Closed: Saturday & Sunday

Franklin Primary Health Center

Medical Care

8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Mon. - Thur.

Dr. Bernita Mims

251-843-5537

Dental Care

Thursday - Friday

7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Dr. Alexander Coleman

251-843-2152

PHILLIPS

Funeral Home

Hwy. 17 • Gilbertown (251) 843-5290

Hwy. 17 • Millry (251) 846-6200

Obituary Line (251) 843-5200

choose

CHOCTAW THERAPY SERVICES

For Your Out-Patient Physical Therapy

Phone: (205) 459-7655 • Fax: (205) 459-7128

1951 Riderwood Drive Butler, AL 36904