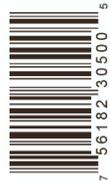


Wednesday, December 19, 2018

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Catoosa County Player of the Year and Catoosa County Pitcher of the Year

Sports, page B1



Vol. 65, No. 51 ♦ Three sections ♦ 7513 Nashville St., Ringgold, Ga. ♦ 706-935-2621

Rossville man charged with murdering uncle

By Adam Cook
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A Rossville man was arrested Dec. 9 after allegedly shooting his uncle during an early morning domestic dispute, police say.

According to Catoosa County Sheriff Gary Sisk, 37-year-old Bounmy Manhrasamy of Ros-

ville is being held without bond at Catoosa County jail while facing charges of murder and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime.

Sisk says the Catoosa 911 Center received an "active shooter" call at 9:14 a.m. Sunday advising that one man was wounded and that the shooter was still inside

the residence at 218 Steele Road in Rossville off Mack Smith Road.

"Upon deputies' arrival, the shooter (Manhrasamy) exited the residence and surrendered to law enforcement," Sisk said via press release. "Deputies entered the residence and located the victim, identified as Somvang Vorachak with a gunshot wound to the chest."

Sisk says deputies began giving first aid to Vorachak until EMS arrived, but that the 60-year-old succumbed to his injuries.

Sisk said Manhrasamy was the nephew of Somvang Vorachak. "The two lived in the same residence and were having a domestic dispute which led to the shooting," Sisk said.



Bounmy Manhrasamy

For the latest on local news, visit catoosawalkernews.com.



The Catoosa County News

Ringgold makes urban camping ordinance official

♦ With the ordinance in place, the Ringgold Police Department will issue warnings to anyone violating the ordinance.

By Adam Cook
ACook@catoosanews.com

The city of Ringgold unanimously approved the final reading of its new urban camping ordinance Monday night, Dec. 10, which is designed to keep people from setting up permanent residences on public property.

Ringgold's homelessness, or "urban camping" issue, has been a hot topic of conversation in recent weeks after residents complained about a handful of men living under the bridge along U.S. Highway 41 next to the Ingle's grocery store.

Those complaints were received by Councilman Larry Black, who spearheaded the city's creation and implementation of the ordinance.

SEE **CAMPING**, A12

Schools launch Purposity program to help students in need

By Adam Cook
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Catoosa County Public Schools has launched its participation in a new community program geared toward helping local students in need.

Purposity, a program that finds purpose through generosity, gives community members the opportunity to anonymously help students and others who may need assistance through an online portal.

The program involves teachers and administrators providing Purposity with details about the needs of a student or individual in the area, and then the organization feeds those stories into a network where those signed up can choose to help assist with those needs.

For example, if a teacher discovers that a student is in need of a winter jacket, the teacher can submit a request for assistance for that child. After that, a weekly notification will go out to all the people signed up for Purposity and give any of those people the chance to choose to fill that need by purchasing a jacket for that child anonymously.

SEE **NEED**, A3

Ringgold's Down Home Christmas Parade ignites the holiday season



The Whoville float from "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" was a huge hit at Ringgold's Down Home Christmas Parade Friday night, Dec. 7, along Nashville Street. For more photos, see page A14. / Adam Cook

Woman accused of embezzling \$250K

Bookkeeper had worked for the flooring company for 6 years

By Adam Cook
ACook@catoosanews.com

A Murray County, Georgia, woman was arrested Tuesday, Dec. 11, after a four-month investigation revealed that she allegedly embezzled more than a quarter-million dollars from her Ringgold employer over several years.

According to the Ringgold Police Department, 42-year-old Judy Michelle Hicks was arrested on charges of theft by taking over \$25,000, first-degree forgery, and unauthorized use of financial transaction cards.

Hicks' husband, 41-year-old James Christopher Hicks, was also arrested on a charge of party to a crime for his knowledge of and benefit from his wife's crimes. Both have been released from jail on bond.

Detective Anthony Gregory said the investigation began in the fall when the owner of Happy Feet International, a flooring company in Ringgold, discovered that his bookkeeper, Hicks, had been stealing money for personal use.

Hicks worked for the company for about six years, and Gregory says the investigation revealed that the habitual thievery had been going on for awhile.

"It all went back a while," Gregory said. "She worked there for six years, but it's mainly been the past three to four years that this type of activity has increased. In a nutshell, they found out that a lot of different things were going on."



Forty-two-year-old Judy Michelle Hicks is accused of embezzling more than \$250,000 from Happy Feet International, a flooring company in Ringgold. / Adam Cook

Gregory said credit card purchases led to the initial discovery.

"The owner was reviewing who in the company had credit cards," Gregory said. "There were charges on statements for her card that didn't make sense. She (Hicks) was also writing checks to herself and putting them in her bank account, like extra paychecks."

Once the owner picked up on the activity, Hicks was fired and Ringgold police were notified.

"They immediately fired her and then called us about it," Gregory said. "She was their only bookkeeper and the company has grown to be worth several million dollars, so they didn't notice some of the purchases. Plus, they trusted her."

In November the total amount Hicks had allegedly swindled from the company reached the \$240,000 mark, but Gregory says a forensic audit of all of Hicks' activity revealed other amounts that'd been taken, which pushed to total well over \$250,000.

"The forensic auditor was hired to look at the books," Gregory said. "It's a lot of paperwork and a lot of

documentation to go through. Our case file is about a foot thick."

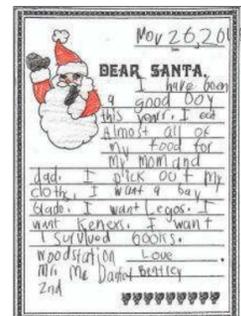
Gregory said the investigation revealed instances when money went into Hicks' personal bank account, paid for her son's braces, another person's dental work, vacations, payments on her credit cards, student loans, groceries, personal items, and even her Sirius Satellite Radio subscription.

Arrest and future of the case

After getting all the evidence in the case lined up, Gregory said he traveled to the couple's home in Murray County Monday, Dec. 10, to make the arrests, but was unsuccessful.

"I went to their residence to get them on Monday," Gregory explained. "He (James) was there, but wouldn't come to the door. They have cameras out in the trees and on the property, so he knew it was the police. Their attorney called a couple of hours later and arranged for them to turn themselves in at Catoosa County jail."

SEE **EMBEZZLEMENT**, A12



Letters to Santa from our school kids. Story on pages C2-3.



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James Rogers coming home for Christmas concert. Singer/songwriter will be performing Thursday at The Colonnade in Ringgold. Story on page A7.