

# The Ouachita CITIZEN

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INSIDE...

Thursday, April 5, 2012

75 CENTS

## Legislature eyes retirement reforms



Senator Mike Walsworth said he expects "substantial amendments" to Gov. Bobby Jindal's plans

for reforming the Louisiana retirement system.

Walsworth was just one of several area lawmakers to question whether Jindal's retirement plan would become state law.

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## Gilmore, Stevens sentencing set



Two Monroe City Councilmen convicted of bribery

and racketeering will be sentenced April 16 following a decision by U.S. District Court Judge Robbie James to let stand convictions against the two.

Arthur Gilmore and Red Stevens had expected to go to trial again in April.

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## WMHS hosts track meet

Track teams from around the parish will converge on Rebel Stadium April 5 for the Coach Jack Williams Relays. The meet is named in honor of long-time West Monroe Rebels track coach Jack Williams.

Five area schools are set to take part in the relay meet.

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OCC INMATE Sylvester Robinson stirs a massive pot of cabbage in the jailhouse kitchen. Robinson and the other inmates who work in the OCC kitchen prepare more than 3,000 meals a day for a cost averaging less than \$1 per meal.

## 'Dangerously understaffed'

By Michael DeVault  
The Citizen

### OUACHITA CORRECTIONAL CENTER

Ouachita Correctional Center is so understaffed that a prison consulting firm described the jail as "one of the most dangerous facilities" that its consultants had visited.

The Jail Staffing Assessment was conducted by Crout and Sida Criminal Justice Consultants, a national consulting firm that specializes in jail operations. The study was conducted at the request of the Ouachita Parish Police Jury and Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office.

Local officials were on hand in West Monroe Monday for a meeting of the Ouachita Parish Republic Women's Club, where they continued to stump for a 9.2-mill levy to fund operations at OCC.

"The studies show that it is a dangerously understaffed facility at OCC," said Sheriff-elect

Jay Russell. "I fear for the deputies and I fear for those that we incarcerate."

Voters will entertain the 9.2-mill property tax proposal when they go to the polls April 21. That millage represents a combination of two millages that expired in December of last year.

Until last year, the Police Jury collected an 8.6-mill levy to help fund operations at OCC. A separate 0.6-mill levy funded maintenance at the facility.

Combined, the two millages produce roughly \$7.9 million of OCC's \$10.5 million annual operating budget.

The millage proposal on the April ballot would rededicate the 0.6-mill levy to operations as well, for a total levy of 9.2 mills.

Russell said he plans to use the additional funds generated

by the 0.6-mills to hire additional staff at OCC.

Russell said increased staffing levels would address many of the concerns raised in the Crout and Sida assessment.

According to the consultants, the jail's staffing levels are not sufficient to effectively support operations at a facility the size of OCC.

"We were told that most times, the jail system operates at minimum, or low, staffing level," the assessment stated. "We were told of situations where several post positions were simply not filled because there was no one available to fill that position (due to illness or other valid leave times)."

Also, the consultants found numerous cases where supervi-

Please see UNDERSTAFFED / 14A

## Early voting begins Saturday

Early voting for the April 21 general election begins Saturday.

Voters throughout Ouachita Parish will entertain a 9.2-mill property tax proposal to fund operations at Ouachita Correctional Center.

In the City of Monroe, voters will decide whether to re-elect Mayor Jamie Mayo or extend their support to his challenger, retired physician Ray Armstrong.

Mayo led the March 24 primary election with 42 percent of the vote. Armstrong polled 35 percent.

Some 101,320 voters throughout the parish are eligible to take part in the April 21 election. In the city of Monroe, 31,935 registered voters are eligible to cast ballots.

Early voting commences Saturday at the Registrar of Voters office at 122 St. John St. in Monroe and will continue through April 14.

Polls open each day at 8:30 a.m. and close at 6 p.m.

Early voting also will be held at Chennault Aviation and Military Museum on Kansas Lane in Monroe on the following dates:

- Saturday, April 7
- Monday, April 9
- Friday, April 13
- Saturday, April 14

Ouachita Parish Registrar of Voters Christa Medaries encouraged prospective voters to get out early and vote.

"Don't wait because something could come up," Medaries said. "So vote now and you won't have to worry about it."



By Rev. George Wortham

## God's power over death

For many years I was a missionary in Chile, South America. There I witnessed what was called the "cueca sola."

The cueca is the national dance of Chile. It is a joyful dance based on the mating dance of a rooster and hen. It is a romantic dance, a dance of love.

The "cueca sola" is a dance that a woman dances alone.

For almost a decade the military dictatorship in Chile arrested men and took them off to secret locations to be tortured and killed. Their bodies were either dumped in the ocean or buried in the deserts of

Please see MESSAGE / 14A

Saturday, April 14th  
Downtown Winnsboro



Saturday, April 14th  
Downtown Winnsboro

# UNDERSTAFFED

From Page 1A

sors and managers were doing jobs that should have been assigned to deputies.

"While we applaud the work ethic and 'can-do' attitude of everyone involved, this practice identifies two important aspects of staffing this facility," the consultants wrote. "First, there is a chronic situation where there are simply no deputies available to complete critical tasks. Secondly, that while supervisors and managers are performing line-staff tasks to supplement the deficiency in staffing levels, they are under-performing or not performing the essential tasks that they are responsible for, namely, supervising and managing operations in the jail."

Crout and Sida commended operational efficiencies at the jail, but the group also singled out the need for more post officers in the facility.

"The organization is merely trying to operate with the number of staff that was approved by the funding authority," the assessment stated.

By law, the Police Jury owns and funds the jail.

The Sheriff's Office operates it.

Ouachita Parish Police Jury President Shane Smiley said that passage of the 9.2-mill property tax was necessary.

"This isn't a sales pitch," Smiley said. "This is about something the community needs."

Smiley said the individuals incarcerated at OCC represent the worst criminal element in the community.

"You don't want to stand next to those guys at Brookshire's," Smiley said. "It's not a safe environment."

All suspected felons arrested in Ouachita Parish are booked through OCC. According to jail records, seven out of 10 bond out within 24 hours.

The three out of 10 that remain behind bars include violent offenders, rapists, armed robbery suspects and murderers, according to 4th Judicial District Attorney Jerry Jones.

The individuals who are held without bond represent what are called "pre-trial detainees" — those individuals who must remain behind bars pending



Citizen Photo

**OCC INMATES** work to unload and clean food trays following a busy lunch shift. Inmate labor makes up a significant portion of the food services, maintenance and cleaning staff at OCC, according to Sheriff-elect Jay Russell.

trial.

Almost two-thirds of the 1,000 or so inmates housed at OCC are pre-trial detainees, according to the most recent statistics available.

In spite of understaffing at OCC, jail operations at the facility are remarkably

efficient, officials said.

Russell noted that inmates are fed for less than \$1 per meal. They grow much of their own food, work in the kitchens at OCC and maintain parish equipment and facilities, all of which combines to improve

efficiency, according to Russell.

"So don't think for one minute it's a country club out at OCC," Russell said.

Meanwhile, Jones said his office and the 4th Judicial District Court are working in tandem to move pre-trial detainees

through the system as quickly as possible.

According to Jones, more than 96 percent of all pre-trial detainees are processed through the court system within nine months.

"You can't go any faster than that," Jones said.

# MESSAGE

From Page 1A

northern Chile.

These women never saw their sons and husbands again. But they would gather in the central squares of the cities of Chile and dance the cueca alone with a picture of their son or husband pinned to their dress. And they will not stop until they know what happened to their loved ones and hopefully have their bodies returned to them.

I think of the cueca sola when I read about Mary Magdalene in the Gospel of John. She believes that the body of Jesus has been taken.

We know how she feels. Sometimes a grave is the only place we have left to be near someone we love and have lost to death. But like the women of Chile, even this has been taken

from Mary. So even when Peter and John have left, she remains and continues to seek her Lord. She will not stop until she finds him. Mary loves Jesus and it is this love that will not let her stop.

I think we sometimes miss the point of the resurrection. We have this tendency to focus on the miracle of someone raised from the dead. We focus on an act of God's power over death. And yes, this is important.

But Mary was not at the tomb looking for a miracle. She just wanted to find Jesus. What drove her was love, not interest in some supernatural event. She wanted to find her Lord. She was following her heart, and her heart took her to Jesus.

Her heart took her to an

unexpected miracle. What a powerful story we read in the gospel of John.

Jesus just says her name, "Mary," and she knows his voice and recognizes him.

As Jesus had stated earlier in the gospel of John, "I am the good shepherd and my sheep know my voice."

This is the point of the resurrection story. Those who follow their hearts, those who seek Jesus, will find him.

He will call our name and we will know that we are his.

This is the unexpected miracle of Easter. We can still find Jesus.

**Rev. George Wortham is the pastor of Highland Presbyterian Church in West Monroe.**

# EMBRACES

From Page 1A

that's where you have to make most of the cuts. And we still hope to do it through attrition and not have to terminate anyone."

The board also approved a shorter calendar for the 2012-2013 school year. The new calendar is five school days shorter than the current school year. But Coker said the amount of instructional time will actually increase.

"We are adding minutes to the day, from 372 minutes to 380 minutes per day," noted Coker. "Our students are still going to get the same quality instruction they've always gotten, so we feel good about that."

Coker estimated a \$57,000 savings from the shorter calendar, mainly in utility and transportation costs.

For the fall semester, Coker said students will report to school for two half-days, August 20 and 21. Full days begin August 22. The last day for students will be May 23, 2013, when classes will dismiss at 11:30 a.m.

The calendar also built in more in-service days to

prepare teachers for implementation of the "common core" curriculum.

Thanksgiving Break is November 19-23. Christmas holidays begin at 11:30 December 21, and classes resume January 7. The Easter holiday has been combined with Spring Break, beginning March 25. Students return to school April 2.

Also adopted was a recommendation to reduce the number of para-professionals such as hall monitors, again through attrition or by moving them into positions in which they have more direct instructional contact with students.

The final recommendation approved was a suspension of the current practice of hiring college students part-time.

Coker said the nine students now employed won't be fired but will not be replaced when they leave. That will save the system about \$75,000, according to Coker.

Board members also approved a revision to the budget for the current academic year. Business man-

ager Juanita Duke said the revision was needed because of a second increase in the amount the system must contribute to the group health insurance plan.

"They had already approved, and I had already accounted for, the rate increase that took effect July 1," Duke said. "But they came back in the fall, after the budget had already been adopted, and increased the rate another six percent. That was unexpected, and we hated to hear that, but it was kind of a done deal."

Duke said the district will end up with a deficit of about \$3.4 million for the current fiscal year, a bit more than originally projected.

The next School Board meeting will be April 17 at 6:00 p.m.

On the agenda at that meeting will be an item deferred during this week's meeting.

The School Board will discuss whether to change its meeting schedule to ensure that members do not have recurring conflicts which prevent them from attending.

# Group selling hand-decorated eggs

"Angel Ministries Day Program," which is a help outreach for the community's developmentally disabled, will sell hand-decorated Easter eggs during the Easter season.

As part of the "Day Program," members of the "Shared Support" group have decorated the eggs and are inviting the public to purchase them for their

holiday decorations. Eggs are \$2 each or \$5 each if personalized.

To order the eggs, call Mary at Angel Ministries at 388-5100.


Angel Ministries Production Company will also present a musical drama "It's All Because of Jesus" at the annual Easter Party at Care Solutions, 509 North 2nd St., Mon-

roe, and a production open to the public on Sunday, April 15, at 2 p.m.

Several of the cast members, along with choir members, have developmental disabilities.

The play is free to the public but donations are appreciated.


For more information, call 362-0036.



## Your Dental HEALTH

by William C. Johnston, DDS

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SECOND THOUGHTS

Dental patients have many reasons to prevent periodontal (gum) disease before it exerts far-ranging adverse effects. Aside from the more immediate potential consequences of gum disease, which include inflammation and possible tooth loss, research links gum disease with heart disease, diabetes, lung problems, and premature and low-weight babies. Fortunately, early stages of gum disease can be reversed with professional cleanings and at-home brushing and flossing. In more severe cases that involve buildups of hardened tartar, professional "scaling" and "root planing" may remove unwanted deposits above and below the gumline. However, only patients have it in their power to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, which research now shows

increases the likelihood of developing severe gum disease by 30% to 60%.

Gum disease can be tricky, sometimes causing little or no pain before permanent damage is done to your teeth. That's why regular dentist visits is imperative. Call ARROW DENTAL CENTER at 318-361-0381 to schedule an appointment or visit our practice at 1507 Lamy Lane Suite A, Monroe. We provide state of the art, lifetime dental excellence.

P.S. Both smokers and non-smokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke may come in contact with toxins in the smoke that increase inflammation and oxidative stress.

ARROW DENTAL CENTER  
1507 Lamy Lane, Suite A, Monroe, LA  
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