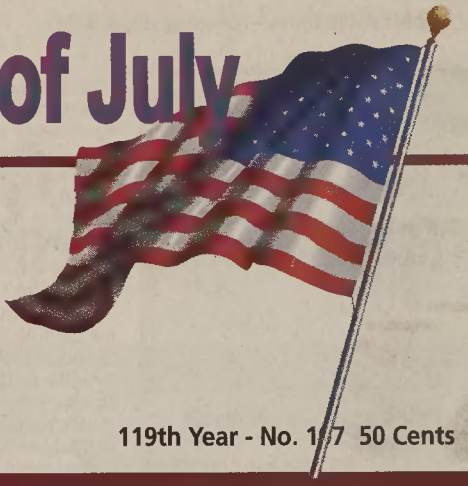


Have a safe and happy 4th of July



Baseball & Fireworks

Join the HiToms Sunday night at 7 p.m. as they take on the Forest City Owls. Fireworks will follow the game.

THOMASVILLE TIMES

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DAY ON THE DIAMOND

Badges for Baseball builds rapport between at-risk youth, officers

BY LISA WALL
Editor

Thomasville Police Department has worked to build respect and rapport with the citizens it serves and protects through its Community Policing policy. Officers with TPD continued those efforts Thursday at Doak Park by kicking off its second year participating in the Badges for Baseball program.

Founded by the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation, Badges for Baseball pairs youths in at-risk communities with local law enforcement officers as a way to teach children lessons both on and off the field.

TPD Lt. Raymond Widener says the program is a good way for children to build relationships with officers as well as learn lessons that will help them in every aspect of life.

"Officers act as mentors and the kids learn how to interact with other children, good sportsmanship, ethics and good decision making," Widener said. "It also helps them learn how to deal with conflict in a sportsmanlike manner."

When fully implemented, Badges for Baseball is a multi-faceted mentoring program that brings the tenets of "The Ripken Way" to young people through a variety of programs, including Healthy Choices, Healthy Children and baseball/softball-themed activities, according to the Cal Ripkin Foundation website. Most importantly, law enforcement mentors work directly with children to enhance life lessons while providing young people with new opportunities to learn, grow and make positive choices for the future.



Lt. Raymond Widener readies for to toss a pitch Thursday at Doak Park as Cpt. Loren Wesley helps a young batter with his swing.

Last year, six TPD officers volunteered to work on baseball skills with 25 kids from the Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club in Thomasville. Officer Jason Annas took on a leadership role in the program, helping to raise \$1,500 through officer and community donations. In addition, Showfety's Uniforms in Greensboro donated \$1,500 worth of baseball equipment to get the

program running.

In recognition of Annas and his involvement with Badges for Baseball, he was presented an autographed photo of Cal Ripkin by Scott Bannister, program director of the Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club of Davidson County. Lt. Widener accepted the gift

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Thomasville woman charged in holiest of crimes

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

Davidson County Sheriff's Office has charged a Thomasville woman with embezzling thousands of dollars from a local church.

According to a DCSO press release, Kathy Koonts Sechriest, 53, of 206 Hasty School Road, was arrested Wednesday and charged with one felony count of embezzlement of greater than \$100,000 after an investigation alleged she stole money from Zion United Church of Christ where she worked as a secretary. Representatives from the church declined to comment Friday.



Sechriest

Detectives received information from Zion United Church of Christ members about possible misappropriation of funds in January, prompting an investigation. A warrant for arrest filed by detective Sam Rabon stated that Sechriest "unlawfully, willfully and feloniously did embezzle \$186,000" from the church and at the time "had been entrusted to receive the property."

"Folks from the church gave us a call and we started our investigation," Davidson County Sheriff David Grice said. "[Sechriest] was the church's secretary and was responsible for writing the checks and balancing the books, and things of that nature. She obviously wasn't balancing the books."

Grice said he couldn't say exactly how Sechriest allegedly embezzled the money because the information is a key piece of DCSO's investigation.

Sechriest was issued and posted a \$100,000 unsecured bond. Conditions of Sechriest's release include that she can't "harass, assault or threaten" members of the church. The investigation alleges that Sechriest embezzled the funds over

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State Highway Patrol changes chase protocol

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

North Carolina state troopers will have to follow new protocol when it comes to chasing suspects who are fleeing the scene of a crime.

Policy changes within the N.C. State Highway Patrol now states that troopers can't join in on vehicle pursuits being conducted by other law enforcement agencies without being asked first. SHP adopted the policy change in June that says troopers must receive a formal request from a highway patrol communication center through the participating law enforcement agency before taking part in any type of chase scenario. Troopers are not allowed to take action by simply receiving a request from another officer.

"The change has to do with allied agency chases," Sgt. B.D. Stalvey with the SHP station of Davidson

See CHASE, Page A4

Chair City offers cool summer activities

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

When it comes to summer, people often think of spending hot afternoons at the beach or by the lake with family, enjoying some well-deserved time off. Thomasville is positioned equally between the coast and the mountains, offering families a vacation choice not too far from home.

Thomasville Parks & Recreation, however, uses summertime to showcase a variety of services right here at home for parents who still have to work during the day while their chil-

dren are out of school. While most Chair City residents know about the city pool located at the corner of Memorial Park Drive and Salem Street, TPR often has a lot more going on for children who need something to do until their parents get home in the evening.

"We've got that going on about every day," Billy Freeman, director of TPR, said about the pool. "We'll be offering swimming lessons starting on July 13 for a two-week period. We try to give kids the best experience we can."



TIMES PHOTO/LISA WALL

A woman plays with her young daughter recently at the city swimming.

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