

SPORTS

Catch previews for this Friday's games in today's sports. See Page B1

THOMASVILLE TIMES



Misti Boles Whitman receives Thomasville Civitan Citizen of the Year Award. See Page B8

Thursday, October 21, 2010

120th Year - No. 9 50 Cents

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2010 ELECTION

Swicegood looks to bring fresh ideas to board

BY ERIN WILTGEN
Staff Writer

Ronald Swicegood, a Democrat from Lexington, will compete for one of four spots for Davidson County Commissioner in the November election.

Running primarily because he thinks that the county could use some change in leadership, Swicegood says that a different point of view will yield positive results.

"We're just going to have to get in there and look through everything and see what kinds of new ideas new members can bring to the board," he said. "I think we're going to have to try some new things that we haven't tried before."

With a sluggish economic recovery, bringing more jobs to the area remains top of every politician's mind. Swicegood says he is no different, naming economic development one of his top priorities. But he says the Davidson County Economic Development Commission needs some work.

"We need to go in and look at economic development and go through them with a fine-tooth comb," he said. "They've made a few improvements here lately, but the last few years they haven't been up to scratch."

An important aspect of stimulating the local economy involves encouraging the growth of small business, Swicegood says.

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2010 ELECTION

Small business development at top of Yates' agenda

BY ERIN WILTGEN
Staff Writer

With more than two decades worth of business experience under his belt, Todd Yates has certainly felt the ups and downs of the economy. He's navigated government regulation, endured the growing pains and celebrated the thrills of expansion.



Yates

Now, the Republican from Lexington hopes to put that hard-earned knowledge to good use as he competes for one of four spots for Davidson County Commissioner in the November election.

Owner of three companies — Yates Disposal, Yates Paving and TCB Builders — Yates says small businesses are crucial to the local economy. "They're the backbone of Davidson County," Yates said. "We've got to work together with the businesses to make it more small business-friendly. It's a tough job. I'm in business and have been for 25 years, and this is one of the worst years I've seen."

And Yates says government's role in helping these companies make it through the rough economy is simply to stay out.

"We've got just too much government control over the small businesses," he said. "It's putting them out of business."

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TIMES PHOTO/ELIOT DUKE

Maj. James Mills of the Thomasville Police Department will retire on Jan. 1, 2011, after 30 years of service to the department.

BIG SHOES TO FILL

Maj. Mills to retire after 30 years of service at TPD

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

Thomasville Police Department Maj. James Mills considers himself a novice historian. There are few places around town where Mills doesn't know an interesting fact or tidbit that dates back well before he joined TPD as a young police officer in 1981.

After spending the past 30 years writing his own history at TPD that saw him rise all the way to second in command, Mills is ready to start on the next chapter of his life. Effective Jan. 1, 2011, Mills is retiring, feeling the time is right to pass the torch to a younger generation.

"I was told early in my career that a police department is a gladiator's arena that is best fought

'In my heart, I'll always be a cop. It's just time to turn a new chapter ...'

— Maj. James Mills
Thomasville Police Department

by young gladiators," Mills said. "In my heart, I'll always be a cop. It's just time to turn a new chapter and let the young gladiators handle it."

Mills came to TPD in 1981 after serving in the Air Force, and would spend the better part of three decades ascending up the ranks. He served as a shift patrol sergeant, shift lieutenant,

ant, district watch commander, community policing coordinator and TPD's training director. He worked under four different police chiefs — Don Truell, Larry Murdock, Ronald Bratton and current chief Jeff Insley — and can remember a time when officers actually had to share radios and write out their own police reports.

"I never thought I would see the day I carried around a BlackBerry," Mills joked. "I feel like I'm the last of the dinosaurs. I take being a public servant literally and I followed that philosophy. I tried to deal with one person at a time and I tried to treat people like I would treat my own mother or sister."

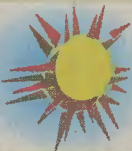
Now that Mills has decided to

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Today's Weather



Sunny, 75/41



TCS program reducing teen pregnancies

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

Teenage pregnancy is an issue thousands of young people across the country deal with every year. Thanks to increased awareness and prevention programs, the rate of teenage pregnancy has steadily declined over the past two decades, especially in North Carolina.

In 2009, the teenage pregnancy rate dropped to all-time low in the Tar Heel State, according to statistics compiled by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. New data shows that teenage girls between 15-19 had 1,256 fewer pregnancies in 2009 from 2008, as the rate fell from 58.6 to 56 percent per 1,000 girls.

"It's very exciting," Mary Jane Akerman, wellness coordinator for Thomasville City Schools, said. "It's not just women, it takes two."

TCS and Communities in Schools of Thomasville have partnered with North Carolina Public Health have found great success implementing prevention programs that have led to a 16.6 percent drop in Davidson County's teen pregnancy rate. Programs such as Teen Pep Peer Education and the Making Proud Choices curriculum inform young students about the choices they make when it comes to their bodies and the impact those decisions can have. In 2009, TCS received a statewide award for recognition as one of the state's top school systems when it comes to addressing teen-

age pregnancy.

"I'm very proud in the fact that we have one of the strongest pregnancy prevention programs in the state," said Akerman. "We have a very broad comprehensive program in our schools. We try to get the kids to realize the impact of a child born to a teen, whether it's financial or emotional"

TCS starts out educating middle school students about puberty and age-appropriate programming continues throughout high school. Teen Pep is a course for credit that junior and seniors at Thomasville High School take to become educators for other students. The program is in its fourth year and was the first one to be implemented in North Carolina.

"It's a powerful model because

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Book signing to raise funds for CIS

Phyllis Stump, award-winning author and playwright, will have a book signing of her most recent novel "The Story of a Mountain Midwife" at Monkeez Brew, 32 E. Main St., today from 4 to 7 p.m. Signed copies cost \$14, and \$5 from each book sold will be donated to Communities in Schools of Thomasville.

For more information, call (336) 474-4233 or (336) 474-4245.

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