



Tribune-Press

Volume No. 129 Number 21 USPS 640-300 Gouverneur, New York Friday, February 19, 2010 \$.75 per copy

Village officer struck by fleeing car, local man jailed on several charges

By Dick Sterling

A local police officer will miss a few days of work, but is lucky to be alive after he was struck by a fleeing vehicle while investigating an unrelated disturbance at Palms tavern, William Street, early Sunday morning.

Gouverneur Village Police reported that they arrested a Gouverneur man on felony assault, aggravated drunk driving, and related charges after officers were summoned to the Palm's parking lot, William Street, to quell a disturbance at approximately 1:53 a.m., Sunday morning.

Dustin A. Hitsman, 21, of 282 County Route 11, Gouverneur, was taken into

custody after police officers had responded to a disturbance in progress call in Palm's parking lot. Mr. Hitsman was observed by police operating a vehicle recklessly and failed to comply when officers told him to bring his vehicle to a stop.

Village Police Patrolman Jason D. Whitton was struck by the vehicle operated by Hitsman. Officer Whitton was thrown over the front end of the vehicle and to the pavement. Mr. Hitsman then left the scene of the incident and drove off. Patrolman Steven M. Young began a pursuit of the suspect vehicle and managed to stop it on Clinton Street near the



DUSTIN HITSMAN

Barney Street intersection. Hitsman was taken into custody by Patrolman Young just moments after the incident at Palms.

Mr. Hitsman was charged with aggravated driving while intoxicated (BAC over .18), reckless driving, leaving the scene of a personal injury accident, failure to comply; unsafe start and assault in the second degree, a class D felony.

Officer Whitton was treated and released at Edward John Noble Hospital, Gouverneur, for injuries consisting of bruises and contusions about the body.

Mr. Hitsman was arraigned before Gouverneur Town Justice Stanley H. Young, Jr., and remanded to the St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility pending further court action. He was remanded on \$5,000 cash or \$10,000 bond.

Gouverneur S&L names Charles C. Van Vleet Jr. new President and CEO

The Board of Directors of Gouverneur Bancorp, Inc. and its subsidiary, Gouverneur Savings and Loan Association this week announced the promotion of Charles C. Van Vleet Jr. to President and Chief Executive Officer. Kimberly A. Adams was named to the position Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.

Mr. Van Vleet succeeds retiring President and CEO Richard F. Bennett, a twenty-four year veteran of the Company. Mr. Van Vleet was also elected as a member of the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders, held on February 8.

Ms. Adams succeeds retired Vice President and CFO Robert Twyman. In this role, she will oversee the accounting, reporting and all other financial management functions of the company.

Mr. Van Vleet brings over twenty years experience to the position. He joined the company as an assistant vice president in 1996 and in 2001 was named a vice president. In August 2005 he was named senior vice president, and has been executive vice president and Chief Operating Officer

for the Bank since July 2009. Mr. Van Vleet has also served as Secretary since 1999. Previously, Mr. Van Vleet held the position of Assistant Vice President with First National Bank of Northern New York and Key Bank of Northern New York.

Mr. Van Vleet stated, "We are deeply grateful for Mr. Bennett's leadership and contributions over the years. Fortunately, he assembled a very strong senior management team; we are ready to take the Company forward in our service to the community during this period of not only significant risk, but of significant opportunity as well."

Mr. Van Vleet is a graduate of Hugh H. Williams High School in Canton and SLTNY Canton, with a degree in Business Administration and Management. He resides in Gouverneur with his two children, Charles and Sarah, both students at Gouverneur Central School.

Ms. Adams has broad experience in the accounting industry, including positions of compliance officer, and senior accountant at Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center, Ogdensburg, accounting manager at Massena Memorial Hospital, Controller at Georgia Marble Company, and senior accountant with the New York State Department of Labor. She joined Gouverneur Savings and Loan in May 2009 as Accounting Manager.

Ms. Adams is a graduate of Lisbon Central School and Clarkson University with a Bachelors degree in accounting and technical communications. She received her Masters of Business Administration degree from SUNY Institute of Technology in Utica/Rome.

Ms. Adams resides in Lisbon with her husband Randy. She has two sons, Dustin, a radiology technologist in Albany Medical Center's cardiac cath lab, and Craig, a student at Albany College of Pharmacy, and a granddaughter, Ryleigh, also of Albany.



VAN VLEET



ADAMS

The fine art of spelling!



The contestants for the annual Gouverneur Middle School Spelling Bee pose for a group photo prior to the event last week. Sylvia Wentwick (below right) was the only student to make it through the competition without misspelling a word. (Rachel Riley photo)

Gouverneur Middle School presents annual spelling bee

By Rachel Riley

One by one they fell. All it took was a misspelled word, and you were out of the competition.

The Gouverneur Middle School presented its annual spelling bee just before the annual mid-winter break.

About 30 students took part in the contest and, of course, only one was left spelling... correctly that is... when it was over.

Congratulations to Sylvia Wentwick, an eighth grader at Middle School, who out-spelled all of her opponents.

Finishing a close second was Sara Bates. Third place honors went to Kaila Smith.



400 Memory Quilts for wounded vets made in Richville

By Rachel Riley

As three women sit quietly sewing patterned quilt squares at Hart Country Fabrics Store in Richville, war still rages on in Iraq and Afghanistan.

American troops are getting wounded every day in the line of duty for our country. As the 400th memory quilt is finished, it's an accomplishment that draws the reality of war to the forefront of small communities in the North Country. Mini-memory quilts have been assembled for wounded veterans, a small token of appreciation for the sacrifices they have made, since 2007.

The operation is a branch off from a similar Texas project called Tribute to the Troops. Hart Country Fabrics and Quilt brought the idea to the North Country and incorporated the help of the Richville Rockets 4-H Club and many others willing to lend a hand for a priceless cause.

Initially the quilts were for deploying soldiers, but a request from a Fort Drum commander lead the ladies to make memory quilts for the wounded. Even as the 400th one is finished, the job is not done.

"We've been at this a long time. We've met the soldiers these have gone to and we can't just give these few. I think everyone has someone they know going over there," said Marlene Hart, owner of Hart Country Fabrics.

"We probably won't stop until the war is done," said Pansy Higgins, one of the quilters.

A surprising number of female soldiers have been



Pansy Higgins (left), Marlene Hart and Sharon Sawyer stand with a memory quilt at Hart Country Fabric, Richville. Over 400 of the quilts have been sent to wounded soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. The group promises to keep making the quilts until the war is over. (Rachel Riley photo)

injured during combat, a fact that has the quilters making a variety of designs to accommodate all tastes.

Company Commanders hand out the quilts to individual soldiers, some of

which have never had a hand-made quilt before, and they truly appreciate the gesture. Mrs. Hart told of one soldier who laid his quilt on his pillow before bed every night, another female

soldier mentioned she hung hers on the wall to look at every day.

It's a small "Hart-felt" and homemade thank you in a time where things like that matter most.

Winter Demolition Derby rescheduled to March 7th

By Dick Sterling

Due to a conflict with an event to be held at the LaFargeville Speedway on Sunday, February 28, officials with the Gouverneur and St. Lawrence County Fair have decided to change the date of their winter demolition derby to Sunday, March 7, at 1 p.m.

The derby will take place in front of the grandstand at the Gouverneur Fairgrounds. The event, weather permitting, will take place on a sheet of ice.

There'll be a \$20 entry fee with a 75 percent payback for heat winners. The champion will receive a trophy and \$350.

Those who wish to participate, or would like more information, can call Derby Superintendent Brennan Shampine at 405-7703 or Fair President Don Peck at 771-7690.

Entry applications are available at Newvine's or G&R Auto Parts. Drivers can pre-enter or enter after 10 a.m. on derby day. Admission for spectators will be \$10.

Rec Center's Winter Fest concludes this weekend

By Dick Sterling

If you're one of those who enjoy the crisp North Country winter, or are just looking to add a little family excitement to your lives, get ready to be a part of the Gouverneur Recreation Center's Winter Fest, which wraps up this weekend, in and around Gouverneur.

All this week the Rec Center has been featuring a variety of fun activities for Gouverneur's youngsters.

Tuesday afternoon was set aside for a karaoke kids contest. Several youngsters were doing their best to sing some of their favorite songs, much to the delight of their friends and Rec Center staff.

Wednesday racers had their little machines ready to race in the annual Remote Control Car Race. Thursday many were on hand to show off their expertise at Wii sports tournaments.

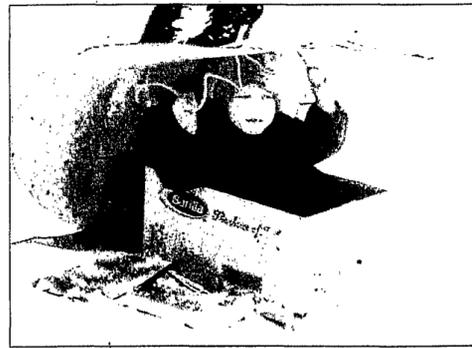
This morning (Friday) Girl Scouts learned some of the finer points of bingo strategy as they enjoyed a

brunch and bingo with area senior citizens.

Saturday, February 20, marks the return of Henry's Mind Blast Chess Tournament from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contestants will be grouped by age and prizes will be offered. Competitors come from near and far to match wits in this unique competition planned and enjoyed each year by Gouverneur Attorney Henry Leader.

On Sunday, February 21, the annual box sled races will be offered at Hopper Hill, next to Mills Park on Johnstown Street. Families can design and build their own sled, and then see who ends up the king or queen of the hill. There's no admission charge and prizes will be offered. Registration starts at 12:30 p.m. and racing will begin at 1 p.m.

Make plans to be a part of the Gouverneur Recreation Centers Winter Fest, concluding this weekend in and around Gouverneur.



One of the box sled racers prepares to head down Hopper Hill during last year's races. The Rec Center will host the annual event Sunday beginning with registration at 12:30 p.m.

Broom Ball Hockey Sunday

Ice skating at the Gouverneur Fire Department's new rink, located on Route 11 south, behind the fire station, will be closed to the public on Sunday, February 21, for the entire day to allow the department to host a day-long broom ball hockey tournament.

Broom ball games will begin at 1 p.m. and the public is invited to watch the fun.

The rink will reopen on Monday at its regular time. Questions about the rink, or the tournament, can be directed to department members at 287-1537.