

“They Answered the Call – Now, So Should We.”

On June 15, I was awakened well before daylight by a text from Matthew Quincey, our sanitation and maintenance superintendent. He advised that a strong storm had blown down the tall communications tower on top of the courthouse and that the roof had incurred substantial damage. He and Gracie Nolin, our custodian, had been on the second floor for over an hour - mopping and strategically placing large garbage cans in an effort to limit the damage. Matt and I were on top of the courthouse ninety minutes later to survey the damage and begin making recovery plans. During the remainder of that day and several days to follow, Matt, Gracie and a restoration company were in the courthouse to clean, monitor leaks and prevent as much additional damage as possible.

Meanwhile, out in the rural areas, Henry County Engineer Chris Champion, Assistant County Engineer Chad Granberry and all available workers were quickly surveying every section of the county in an attempt to determine which roads had been damaged and which ones needed to be closed. They then began to chart a plan to begin the process of debris removal. Over the next several days there was constant communication between all departments as well as with various first responders and law enforcement teams throughout the county. Henry County roads 21, 75 and 34 had to be temporarily closed. There were over 40 sites where debris had to be cleared. Henry County Administrator Ronnie Dollar and Matthew Quincey met with our insurance company. It became evident immediately that the courthouse roof would need to be replaced. Several commercial roofing companies were asked to evaluate the damage and submit proposals. Nearly every office on the top floor was unable to be open to the public for the next ten days. Once the leaks had been patched and most of the damage cleaned up, we were able to reopen the top floor on June 26, eleven days after the tornado hit. The good news is there were no deaths or serious injuries reported. This is not the worst weather we've seen in the past five years – we can all remember Hurricane Michael in October, 2018 – and it likely won't be the worst we see in the next five. But when we work together, we are able to recover from these type events in days rather than weeks.

But as bad as having to close roads and replace the courthouse roof are, nothing saddened me as much as what I saw two days later – only a few hundred yards from our damaged courthouse. Many years ago, a handful of volunteers led by Ken Bedsole enlisted dozens of citizens to help plan, fund and construct one of the most meaningful and historical sites in all of Henry County – the Henry County Veterans Memorial Park. On ten granite monuments were engraved hundreds of names representing every branch of our armed services. Each person reading this column has had family or friends who have served our country and whose names are forever carved in honor (or in loving memory) of those from Henry County who served in practically every war since we gained our independence - 247 years ago this week. Some were summoned – many volunteered. All gave something. Some gave all. Every single one of them answered the call. Now it's our turn. Five of those ten monuments were destroyed by the same storm that took the courthouse tower down. Each of those names of the 'Henry County War Dead' will hopefully be soon re-etched on those five monuments. Elaine Kennedy told me last week that insurance will cover some of it but out-of-pocket expenses will remain. In the past two weeks, I've spoken with State Representative Rick Rehm, State Senator Billy Beasley, U. S. Senator Tommy Tuberville and staff members of Congressman Barry Moore and U. S. Senator Katie Britt. Last Friday, I was presented a \$500 check from a group of Wiregrass leaders who don't even live in Henry County. They wanted to help (anonymously). Let's each of us do what we can. To help, you can call or email Mrs. Kennedy at 334-585-3039 (elainekennedy@msn.com) or contact me at 334-798-0506 (cell) or email (davidmoney3737@gmail.com.) Your checks are tax deductible and may be made payable to 'The Henry County Veterans Memorial Park' and mailed to my attention at: Henry County Probate Office, 102 North Court Square, Suite A, Abbeville, AL 36310. Thanks to all who care enough to help. May God bless each of you and all those who have 'answered the call.'

Thirty Day Review

- If your last name begins with 'L' or 'P', July is your month to renew your tags.
- Probate activity for May: five wills probated, three administrations, one final settlement, nine miscellaneous hearings, four guardianships, three involuntary commitments, one name change and six marriage certificates recorded.
- June 9 – Tina Barnes was sworn in as a new Henry County Registrar
- June 14/15 – Strong storms result in minor damage throughout Henry County
- June 15 – June Administrative meeting
- June 19 – Juneteenth state holiday
- June 20 – June Commission meeting
- June 22 – Great Southern Wood 'First Responder Appreciation' luncheon – Abbeville Fiber
- June 26 – Meeting with U. S. Senator Tommy Tuberville
- June 26/28 – Alabama Probate Judges Summer Conference – Gulf Shores
- June 27 – Henry County employee health screening (great response rate – 93%)
- June 29 – Special called meeting to discuss road and jail issues
- June 29 – H.C.E.D.A. Executive Committee meeting
- June 29 – Reception for Hudson-Alpha at Wiregrass Foundation in Dothan
- June 30 – Wiregrass Forum breakfast in Ozark
- July 4 – Happy Independence Day!

Upcoming Dates to Remember:

- July 17 – Special Session of the Alabama Legislature convenes (re: congressional redistricting)
- July 18 – July Administrative meeting – 10:00 AM – Herndon Building
- July 18 – July Commission meeting – 1:00 PM – Annex Building
- July 19 – Henry County Workforce Development (H.C.E.D.A.) meeting - Ravenwood