

REGION

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Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

out the renovations at the Calhoun County Coroner's Office.

Improvements renovates Calhoun County office

"With the new facility, we will be able to better serve through a nicer place."

— Coroner Pat Brown

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renovations weren't complete. A single fluorescent bulb revealed from the shadows an unpainted cement wall, a gray concrete floor and an exposed ceiling. "It all used to look like that ... and it used to be I was apologizing to a family from the time they came in here to the time they left."

Brown said family members have to identify the body or wish to view it in about 40 percent of all the cases he works. And body identification or viewing is nearly always somber and painful for family members, he said. What made the experience worse was the smelly, dirty basement - absent of heating or air-conditioning and running water.

"We had no running water, no means of cleaning up blood ... no comfortable area for the family to wait," Brown said.

David Rogers, one of the carpenters who has worked with Brown to turn the basement into a respectable office, echoed Brown's sentiment.

"It was like a dungeon; we've spent about a month working on it, and it looks much better," he said, gesturing to the new yellow walls, blue floors and light fixtures.

One of the newly installed rooms is shaping up to be a waiting area for family members: Brown bought wing-

backed chairs and a desk and hopes someone will donate a couple of couches and an area rug to complete the space.

It's here Brown hopes to let families who've lost relatives sit and collect themselves before moving into the basement's back room, where the body cooler is and where the viewings will take place.

Brown described the renovations as one of the ways he's trying to fulfill campaign promises he made to make the official death process easier for Calhoun County residents.

Brown, the incumbent in the November race, beat out Republican challenger Marvin Southard by promoting his plan to decrease the stress on residents whose relatives have died in a manner that requires Brown's services.

"With the new facility, we will be able to better serve through a nicer place," he said. "At least it's more inviting if you have to be here."

Rogers and Brown expect the renovations to be completed by next week.

"I just think that that's our responsibility (to make body viewing comfortable), even if it's in a basement," Brown said.

Contact Star Staff Writer Cameron Steele at 256-235-3562.

LINEVILLE

Cardboard boatbuilding clinic held

BY JASON BACAJ

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LINEVILLE — Patt High stood before 30 or so people seated along one side of the Lineville Elementary School auditorium, covering the basics of the "Paddlin' for Paws Cardboard Boat Regatta."

"Fireworks, let me cover that," she said. "No live ammo, please."

High, who wore yellow shirt bearing the phrase "Team Dirty Girls, Older Than Dirt," is a veteran of the annual race to raise money for the Randolph County Animal Shelter. This year's race will be held May 14 at Chimney Cove near Wedowee.

Smoke bombs are ok, High said, but no bottle rockets or anything that shoots at other boats.

Last year, High and three of her friends — Team Dirty Girls — built a floating replica of a motor-grader out of cardboard, complete with a smoke-stack fueled by a smoke bomb.

The race costs \$25 to enter all four races for a person, \$50 for a business and \$100 for a business sponsorship for an individual racing team. Plastic, Styrofoam and wood are not allowed if they help the craft float, High said. Neither is wax cardboard, fiberglass or epoxy.

Plastic decorations, however, are encouraged. High's own craft sports a plastic driver.

Last year saw about 600 people turn out for the event, with 35 boats and 77 contestants. The event raised about \$5,500 for the shelter, High said.

"Being on the shoreline is not the best position, being in a boat is what rocks," High said.

She, her husband and a few accomplished racers were there to teach those in attendance how to properly build a river-worthy corrugated craft.

Stacking the cardboard in alternating corrugations builds a stronger floor — key for heavier people, High said. That's how they built the floor for their floating motor-grader, she said.

Walking around the black and yellow four-person cardboard raft, Ronnie Griffin, 10, explained his boat plans. He and five other Boy Scouts hope to build a paddle-wheel boat — which is allowed to have metal or aluminum holding the paddle-wheel together.

It might sport a compressed air cannon to fire water balloons at other boats, he said. But definitely a couple of slingshots, at least. He plans to enter the boat in both the races and the demolition derby.

"We'd probably win both," Griffin said.

However Griffin's craft turns out, it should be a success for the Randolph County Animal Shelter. High expects 50 or more boats this year with possibly 1,000 people watching from shore. That would bring in about \$8,000 to the shelter, she estimates.

Not only that, but it brings in the money in a fun way, she said.

Building the boat is almost more fun than racing, said Barry Morris, one of the accomplished racers at the clinic.

His boat, the "Loch Harris Monster," won so convincingly last year he decided to retire it.

"The animal shelter would've made more money if we donated the \$250 we sunk into materials to build (the Loch Harris Monster)," Morris said. "But that's not the spirit of it."

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Hannah Wilson, left, and Lauren Phillips participate in a cardboard building clinic

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