

# Manager's Comments

## Striving for safety

**D**uring the Alabama Rural Electric Association Annual Meeting recently Clarke-Washington EMC was presented an award for working the entire year of 2006 without a loss time accident. This is quite an achievement and one I am very proud of. In fact we have now worked 170,000 hours without a lost-time accident.

Thanks to all the employees for maintaining a culture of safety for not only their own benefit, but for that of the general public. Clarke-Washington EMC is safety accredited by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, a distinction which designates electric cooperatives that meet the high standards of safety of this national program.

Rely for Life events have wrapped up for the year. I have heard excellent numbers reported on the fundraising efforts for this year. Everyone in each Relay community has worked hard to come up with creative fundraising ideas as we


move closer to finding a cure for cancer. Clarke-Washington EMC is proud to represent all our communities that have such heart.

Kate Simon of Thomasville High School and Tyler Chastain of Leroy High School are the winners of our NRECA Washington D.C. Youth Tour. They will spend a week this summer visiting our nation's capitol and learning about electric cooperatives. For many years Clarke-Washington EMC has sponsored students from our area to participate in this excellent program.

While enjoying these long summer days, remember it is also severe weather season. Clarke-Washington EMC wants to help you and your family be as prepared as possible when severe weather threatens our communities. Severe weather safety tips are listed in the following pages.



Clarke-Washington EMC received an Alabama Rural Electric Association Safety Award for completing one year without a lost time accident for 2006. The award was presented at AREA's annual meeting in April at the Mobile Convention Center. The following men helped contribute to this award: front row, James Koen, Terry Hooper, Bobby Pritchard, Arthur McBride and David Bryant. Back row: Jimmy Hudson, Bill Bumpers, Kenny Harrell, Harold Hoven, Steve Sheffield and David Anderson.




**Clarke-Washington EMC**

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Mrs. Annie Lou Downey

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28th Annual MOWA Choctaw  
Powwow

**To report  
a power  
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Cooperatives  
  
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# Summer Assignment: Electric Coops and Washington D.C.

**T**wo local high school juniors, Kate Simon of Thomasville High School and Tyler Chastain of Leroy High School, are representing Clarke-Washington EMC this summer as they spend a week experiencing the sites and history of Washington, D.C. They are joining students from rural areas across the United States for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual Youth Tour.

Kate Simon is the daughter of Mark and Marsha Simon of Thomasville and Tyler Chastain is the son of Becky and Greg Chastain of Jackson.

"Youth tour is a once in a lifetime opportunity for high school students. Clarke-Washington EMC has been sending students to D.C. for many, many years and it is always a worthwhile investment of

our time and resources to expose rural youth to this experience," said Stan Wilson Manager of Clarke-Washington EMC. "For many students Youth Tour gives them confidence as they begin to make their future education and career plans."

Both high school juniors, Simon and Chastain earned this opportunity by participating in Clarke-Washington EMC's Washington D.C. Youth Tour contest. Juniors from each high school in Clarke and Washington County submitted an essay on the topic: In the past 70 years, how has your rural electric cooperative improved life in this community and in Alabama?

Essays were submitted anonymously and judges selected the top male and female essayist from each school. Those winners

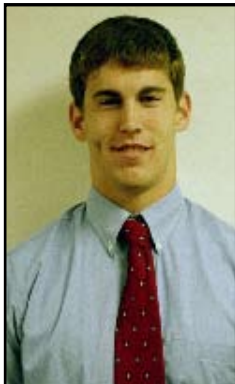
were asked to partake in an interview session with a panel of three judges at Clarke-Washington EMC office in Jackson.

Students were interviewed on their knowledge of rural electric cooperatives, the history of Clarke-Washington EMC and current events. Judges were Melanie Harrison from Southern Pine Electric Membership Corporation, Shawn Woodham from Alabama Electric Cooperative and Ted Hazen city councilman from Chatom.

Along with Simon and Chastain, this year's participants were Sydney Baxter and Adam Miller from Fruitdale High School, Melissa Boucher and Jordan Englert from Jackson High School, Jessica Givens from Leroy High School, and Caleb Clardy from Thomasville High School. Givens and Englert were chosen as alternates.



(Top Left to Right) Thomasville High School junior, **Kate Simon** is the winner of the Clarke-Washington EMC Youth Tour contest. She is spending a week this summer attending the NRECA Washington D.C. Youth Tour. Her parents are Mark and Marsha Simon of Thomasville. Leroy High School junior, **Tyler Chastain** is the winner of the Clarke-Washington EMC Youth Tour contest. He is spending a week this summer attending the NRECA Washington D.C. Youth Tour. His parents are Becky and Greg Chastain of Jackson. **Sydney Baxter** of Fruitdale High School. **Adam Miller** of Fruitdale High School.



(Bottom Left to Right) **Melissa Boucher** of Jackson High School. **Jared Englert** of Jackson High School was an alternate for Clarke-Washington EMC Youth Tour Contest. **Jessica Givens** of Leroy High School was an alternate for Clarke-Washington EMC Youth Tour Contest. **Caleb Clardy** of Thomasville High School.

# Black Belt Treasures found in Grove Hill

By Anna Wright

If you are looking for a great place to get away or need an inspiring day trip, Black Belt Treasures in Camden is sure to satisfy your creative appetite. Just an hour away, Black Belt Treasures is an art gallery and store showcasing the work of local artists.

Black Belt Treasures was formed when the Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Planning Commission began looking at the resources of the Black Belt region from a tourist's perspective. What they found was that many people were creating quality fine arts and crafts in the Black Belt region. With such a collection of diverse art being created here, the committee began searching for a way to showcase this exceptional talent. The idea of a gallery was suggested as a successful way to display all these hidden treasures, and as a result, Black Belt Treasures gallery was formed.

Black Belt Treasures is located in downtown Camden in the former McGraw-Webb Chevrolet building on Claiborne Street.

The gallery opened in September 2005 with 80 artists' work on display. Today it exhibits the work of more than 225 individuals within an 18 county region: Pickens, Greene, Hale, Perry, Marengo, Sumter, Choctaw, Wilcox, Dallas, Monroe, Conecuh, Butler,



Lowndes, Montgomery, Macon, Clarke, Washington and Bullock. Visitors from 36 states and 10 foreign countries have signed the guest book at the gallery.

"It is very important to us that what we sell in the gallery represents the finest the Black Belt has to offer," said Sulynn Creswell, Director and Gallery Manager of Black Belt Treasures. "We want everyone to know that there is something great to see here."

Black Belt Treasures is a nonprofit organization supported mainly by the Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Planning Commission, Alabama Rural Conservation Development and the University of Alabama.

One of the charms of Black Belt Treasures is that of many of the artists are from right here in Clarke and Washington Counties, and the surrounding areas: Fruitdale, Thomasville, Chatom, Alberta, Jackson, Hybart and places in between. Your next door neighbors' quiet hobby might be proudly on display in the gallery.

One in particular is Mrs. Annie Lou Downey of Grove Hill.

Playing with dolls for most girls is a childhood pastime. Dressing up Barbies and rocking their babies to sleep evokes memories of carefree times that are full of imagination and innocence. For Mrs. Downey, she was such a girl

growing up in her country home in rural Clarke County. But it was beyond her imagination that she would make a career out of a childhood pastime as a middle-aged adult.

An antique cupboard in the front window of Black Belt Treasures is full of carefully displayed porcelain dolls. They each have sweet dispositions and are dressed in clothes that suit their personalities. A small sign tells the story of their creation by Mrs. Downey:

*On a whim, Mrs. Downey took a ceramics class in the early nineties and enjoyed the creation process so much that she moved on to doll making. After many seminars and classes, she now holds a master's degree in doll making from Seely Porcelain Studios and is a certified Seely instructor. She has opened her own studio in the home where she was born and raised, and teaches classes in porcelain doll making to students ranging in age from 8 to 80.*

*Mrs. Downey creates a piece by first pouring slip into molds thus creating green ware. After a soft fire in the kiln, she uses a wet cleaning method that eliminates flying dust. Each piece is placed on silica sand for firing to the bisque stage. The piece is china painted and fired again. Then*

*eyes, wigs, and body parts (either porcelain or fabric) are attached to create the finished doll. Mrs. Downey uses her childhood seamstress training to make fine clothing for the dolls that match the high quality of workmanship in each of these little girl's treasures.*

"I thought, 'If anyone can learn to do this, then I can learn to,'" she said. "I got my slip out and started pouring."

One of her daughters caught interest as Mrs. Downey was beginning to learn the detailed techniques of porcelain doll making. The two continued to make dolls and began taking the Seely Porcelain classes together in Pensacola.

By that time the porcelain doll making business was booming. Mrs. Downey and her daughter were making the dolls and supplying doll stores with merchandise.

With such a great studio in the house where she grew up (located a few yards away from her present home) she began hosting ceramic classes. Her students would make dolls, baskets, Christmas ornaments and other home décor items.

"I have had a lot of fun making dolls, and we have a lot of fun here in the classes," Mrs. Downey said.

Sitting for a few minutes in the studio in the old house one can see why many of Mrs. Downey's students say coming to her classes is therapeutic. The cool temperature, soft sunlight shining through the large windows, and comfort of the old house eases one into a state of relaxation after getting settled in the wide, cushioned chairs.

For many, it is the highlight of their week.

When making dolls, each student picks a porcelain doll mold and begins the process of pouring the slip, firing the piece and choosing the color of its eyes and hair. When they are finished they name



their dolls and dress them.

On one occasion a student heard that President Bush would be visiting the Mobile area and decided to make two twin dolls with features similar to that of the First Daughters: twins, Jenna and Barbara Bush. It was a likely chance the dolls would reach the girls, but after a few phone calls, the dolls were presented to the President and given to his daughters.

It is the treasures like Mrs. Downey creates that make Black Belt Treasures such a great place to visit. There is a story behind each individual piece.

Black Belt Treasures mission is to provide an economical outlet for local artists to sell their work, and a place to promote arts education. The arts education program teaches classes to adults and school-aged children throughout the year. These classes help preserve the skills of arts and crafts from generation to generation.

Each July Black Belt Treasures'

hosts a Summer Arts Camp for school children.

Creswell beams at the success she has seen in some of the younger students. One child in particular, had some learning challenges and was enrolled in camp. The classes tuned into his creative side, and he began to really excel with the art he was creating. That fall he entered his work in the West Alabama Fair and won three first-place ribbons. Through the arts education program he was able to find a positive outlet where he could channel his energy and build up his confidence.

Pieces of work displayed at the gallery ranges from

contemporary to traditional, to pop art and classical art, and everything in between. You'll find monogrammed koozies, luggage, fabulous jewelry, literary pieces, kudzu baskets, quilts, scrap iron sculptures, oil and water paintings, photography, baby clothes, knitted scarves, painted china plates and much, much more.

When you visit you are sure to find a treasure especially for you.

*MRS. ANNIE LOU DOWNEY: Mrs. Annie Lou Downey of Grove Hill pins a dress to one of her porcelain dolls. Many of Mrs. Downey's dolls are on display at Black Belt Treasures art gallery in Camden.*

*BLACK BELT TREASURES: Kudzu baskets, upholstered pillows, ceramic vases and many other treasures are found at the Black Belt Treasures art gallery in Camden.*

# MOWA Princess welcomes all to the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual MOWA Choctaw Powwow

**E**rin Johnston, MOWA Princess along with the MOWA Choctaw Powwow Committee would like to extend an invitation to everyone to come and enjoy the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual MOWA Choctaw Powwow, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, June 14-16 in Mt. Vernon.

Erin is the 16-year-old daughter of Todd and Hazel Johnston of McIntosh and is a junior at Citronelle High School. She has two sisters Courtney Baker of Hugo, Okla., and Brittaney Roney of McIntosh.

Erin is the reigning Senior Princess of the MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians. She is a member of the Red Eagle Singers and Reed's Chapel Memorial Dance Troop. Educating the public about her native heritage, participating at various powwows, and competition dancing are among Erin's favorite things to do. She takes a very active role in her community by volunteering with the Indian Education Department at McIntosh Elementary School, where she assists in teaching students the Choctaw Social Dances, various

powwow style dances and the Choctaw language.

Traveling is a major duty of the tribal princess and Erin has been fortunate to represent the MOWA tribe all over the Southeast: Choctaw, Miss.; Echota Cherokee Powwow in Cullman, LIHA Powwow in Roberts, La.; The United Houma Nation in Houma, La.; Mobile County Environmental Center, Calcedaever Cultural Day in Mount Vernon, and McIntosh Elementary Cultural Festival.

Erin was invited by the Choctaw Nation in Durant, Okla., to participate in their Thanksgiving festivities. In November, she received national recognition when she along with her sisters was featured in *Native Times Magazine*.

Please remember to bring your lawn chairs. This is a family oriented event that can be enjoyed by all ages.



## 28<sup>th</sup> Annual MOWA Choctaw Powwow June 14, 15, & 16 in Mt. Vernon

Headstaff:

- Head Man Dancer: Yogie Bread  
(Kiowa/Cherokee), Little Rock, Ark.
- Head Lady Dancer: Hauli Warrior  
(Ponca/Tonkawa), Tonkawa, Okla.
- Master of Ceremonies: Larry Richard  
(Abenaki/Choctaw), LaFayette, La.
- Arena Director: Harold Comby  
(Mississippi Choctaw), Philadelphia, Miss.
- Head Gourd Dancer: Tony Conrad,  
Baton Rouge, La.
- Host Southern Drum: Otter Trail,  
Mountain View, Okla.
- Host Northern Drum: Red Eagle,  
McIntosh, Ala.

First Grand Entry will be at 6 p.m. Friday night  
\$5 Admission, age 5 and under get in free

*2006-2007 Mowa Tribal mother and princesses who have represented the tribe during the past year. Niggan Sunray, Tiny Tot Princess; Tribal Mother, Patricia Sheban; Morgan Taylor, Little Miss Princess; ABriana Taylor, Junior Princess; and Erin Johnston, Senior Princess*

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