

New ranger sworn in at Cheaha State Park

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Although just 20 years old, Alex Prickett is already a veteran employee of Alabama's state parks. When he was sworn in Wednesday as a new ranger at Cheaha State Park, Prickett said the welcome he's received there made him feel at home.

State Parks Director Greg Lein administered the oath to Prickett surrounded by park officials and employees outside the park's Vista Cliffside restaurant. There visitors enjoy a panoramic view of the rolling north Alabama hills — another selling point for Prickett.

"You see that every day and it's different every day, especially at sunset," said Prickett, a native of Grant. As a park ranger, Prickett will be a law enforcement

officer. The park has not had someone employed in that status since the previous superintendent, Justin Howard, left for another job last year.

State parks superintendent Kelly Ezell said that Prickett — who is going to the Northeast Alabama Police Academy this month to become certified — is a great addition to the park.

"I think that Alex is the perfect person. He has just come in and been enthusiastic and done a great job up to this point and we're excited for him to go off to the academy," Ezell said.

According to Ezell, a recent rule change permits park superintendents to not have law enforcement certification. Ezell said that new Cheaha Park Superintendent Renee Raney is the first superintendent at Cheaha without law enforcement certification.

Raney said during the interim the park has been in safe hands.

"We have many partners for the safety and security of our park," Raney said.

Raney said the U.S. Forest Service, Cleburne and Clay County sheriff's offices and Alabama Law Enforcement Agency have assisted the park with its law

enforcement needs.

Raney was complimentary about Prickett since he has been at the park.

"This is one of the most exciting days for Cheaha because Alex is a very talented and dedicated resource and I look forward to watching him succeed in this park and across the state," Raney said.

Cheaha is the third state park where Prickett has been employed.

"I started at Cathedral Caverns in 2014, worked there for three years and moved to Rickwood Caverns which is in Warrior, Ala., just north of Birmingham, and I ended up here June 1 of this year," Prickett said.

Prickett held a variety of jobs at those parks, including tour guide, maintenance and assistant manager.

"This park is beautiful," Prickett said.

"I got here and the staff just welcomed me with open arms, they took me in like I've been here forever so that was great," Prickett said.

"When I first got up here, Callie — the assistant superintendent — we went out to Pulpit Rock and I was hooked the first day. I said 'This is now my home,'" Prickett said.



Prickett



- Lance Paul Sorensen, 23, Heflin, attempt to elude, use/possession drug paraphernalia.
 - Jamison Brent Shelton, 40, Heflin, domestic violence, violation of domestic violence protect order.
 - Careache Giles, 26, Mobile, possession marijuana.
 - Jeremy R. Bush, 29, East Mile, possession marijuana.
 - Adam Brandon Motley, 32, Albertville, use/possession drug paraphernalia, possession/receiving controlled substance.
 - Brenda Alewine, 69, Bowdon, GA, menacing.
 - Khiry D. White, 26, Atlanta, GA, possession/receiving controlled substance, possession marijuana.
 - Martinez S. Turner, 23, Anniston, trafficking meth, possession marijuana.
 - Kwacie Denitro Hollida, 29, Anniston, trafficking meth, possession marijuana.
- The people listed in this arrest report, whose names and charges are obtained from public records, are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

Economic development board discuss growth

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Last week the city of Heflin announced the sale of the old Cleburne County High School to developers who expect to create more than 35 jobs by transforming the historically valuable property into an assisted living facility.

The announcement of that \$12 million project came on the heels of another business announcement — Southern Immediate Care, opening in Heflin later this year — which will create 15 jobs with a \$600,000 investment, according to the city's economic developer Tanya Maloney.

"That's a big win for us," Maloney said, "not only economically but also community-wise. We desperately need health care here in our rural communities because rural hospitals are dying."

The two new businesses are part of a larger organized effort to successfully recruit businesses to Cleburne County, according to Maloney.

It wasn't always this way.

Maloney said that less than five years ago there was no structured plan in place for the industrial board to recruit businesses.

"We started having meetings with different stakeholders in the state, communities that look like us and the Department of Commerce," Maloney said.

Maloney said the Alabama Department of Commerce offered a community partnership program which helped public and private-sector officials start a program called Accelerate Cleburne to help recruit businesses.

The Accelerate Cleburne consists of three committees:

- Recruitment, which is handled by the industrial board



Bill Wilson

Tree Brand Packaging in Ranburne which makes wooden shipping pallets expects to double their staff in the next year.

— Retention, which is handled by the Chamber of Commerce

— Renewal, which is handled by the Heflin Main Street Board and tourism initiatives development.

Maloney said the Accelerate Cleburne and investment from the county are the reasons there is an uptick in businesses locating in Cleburne County.

Maloney admits that one of the biggest challenges facing business recruitment is the hilly landscape of Cleburne County.

"We're topographically challenged here," Maloney said.

Maloney said that most industries want property that is flat and "ready to go" so they can be up and running within six to eight months.

Maloney released an economic impact report for 2016-2017 which highlights the following industrial and retail/service recruitments:

Tree Brand of Ranburne, which makes shipping pallets, and Rusken Packaging of Heflin have a combined capital investment of about \$4 million a yearly payroll of \$2.5 million.

Rusken employs 45 and is hiring for a second shift and Tree Brand employs 20 but expects to double its staff over the next year.

In addition, Maloney said, a Dollar General in Fruithurst provides \$70,000 in yearly sales tax there, and an O'Reillys Auto Parts in Heflin provides five jobs (sales tax records aren't complete due to the newness of that store).

CLEBURNE COUNTY Department of Human Resource

Is taking applications for the positions of

Equipment Operator (I, II, III)

These are full time classified positions with benefits, reporting to the Cleburne County Road Superintendent

Starting pay is from \$9.86 to \$12.62
Depending on classification

Applications may be obtained at the Human Resource Office located at: 6751 Hwy 78, Heflin, Alabama 36264 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday until August 24, 2018.

Job Qualifications:

Potential candidates should have the ability to: Report to work on time and exhibit good attendance; effectively communicate information to supervisor and co-workers; crouch, bend, stretch, etc. to perform road construction and maintenance work; follow directions as assigned; possess a valid driver's license; interact with the public and to treat the public with courtesy and respect.

Applications will be classified based on the applicant's ability to operate light to medium county equipment primarily for the purposes of cutting road right of ways (Op. 1), ability to operate equipment including trucks and motor graders in a limited training status (Op. 2) or (CDL) highly skilled in the operation of motor graders (Op. 3).

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