

douglas county Sentinel

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COMMUNITY, B1

Soldier honored nearly a century after death.

Familiar faces resurface as qualifying ends

Hembree, Snelling back for rematches of 2012

BY RON DANIEL
STAFF WRITER

The rematch is on for two local seats in the Georgia Legislature.

As qualifying ended at noon on Friday, former state representatives Bill Hembree and Bob Snelling had both thrown their names in the hat to take on the

opponents they lost to in 2012.

The Republican and Democratic party primary elections and the nonpartisan state judge-ship election will be held May 20, two months earlier than usual. The general election is set for Nov. 4.

Hembree, an insurance agent from Winston, will face Dis-

trict 30 Sen. Mike Dugan in the Republican primary. The winner will go on to face Democrat James Nixon in the general election.

Dugan, a political newcomer from Carrollton, took 55.79 percent of the vote in a Dec. 4, 2012, runoff with Hembree en route to claiming the open Senate seat two years ago.

Hembree represented part of Douglas County for nearly

two decades in the House and appeared on his way to re-election for another term in 2012 when he changed course and decided to run for the Senate seat that he ultimately lost to Dugan.

Hembree fired warning shots last spring at both Dugan and Rep. Micah Grayley, who won the House seat Hembree vacated, indicating he would probably attempt a comeback this year.

But until Hembree went to the Capitol on Thursday and officially qualified, it was unclear which man he might challenge.

Hembree's candidacy already has people talking, including Villa Rica Mayor Jay Collins, who gave Dugan a full-fledged endorsement when asked about the race.

Collins said Dugan has always

SEE QUALIFYING/PAGE A12

With David McDade's announcement that he will not seek re-election, the race to be the next Douglas County District Attorney will come down to a decision by voters in November. In qualifying earlier this week, current Douglas County Chief Assistant District Attorney Brian Fortner, left, and Assistant DeKalb County District Attorney Dalia Racine, right, threw their hats in the ring for McDade's seat. Fortner is a Republican and Racine is a Democrat.

Sentinel photo illustration
by Mitch Sneed

Fortner, Racine work to be next district attorney

BY MITCH SNEED
EDITOR

While last week's qualifying set up some heated primary races for some incumbents, the race that could be the most interesting is one where there will be an open seat and the candidates have no opposition until the Nov. 4 general election.

Qualifying made it official that in the run to succeed David McDade as Douglas County District Attorney, Chief Assistant District Attorney Brian Fortner will face veteran DeKalb County prosecutor Elizabeth Dalia Racine for the seat. Fortner is a Republican. Racine qualified as a Democrat.

McDade announced Feb. 23 that he would not seek re-election after health issues that have lingered since early December made it impossible. Douglas County Sheriff Phil Miller said that not

having an incumbent for a position this important makes for a unique situation.

"From a sheriff's standpoint, the district attorney is a very vital link in the justice system," Miller said. "We have a county that sees a wide variety of crime, and that makes for prosecution of very complicated cases. So it's important to have someone in that office that has experience and the understanding to handle those tough cases."

"I know that in my time here, Douglas County has developed a reputation of being tough on crime. A big part of that is tougher sentences that come through the prosecution by the DAs' office. I think that has deterred crime to some degree, so for me, I would hope that we could continue that."

Both Fortner and Racine say they are excited about the opportunity and have ideas of ways serve the community as its

top prosecutor.

Fortner, a graduate of North Georgia College and Georgia State School of Law, serves as the Chief Assistant District Attorney for the Douglas County District Attorney's Office, overseeing the daily activities of 12 assistant district attorneys. Fortner, lives in Douglas County and has been prosecuting cases here for 13 years. He has been in charge for the more than three months that McDade has been out on medical leave.

"I have spent my entire career in Douglas County, prosecuting cases here and gaining an understanding of this community and the issue that we face," Fortner said. "I have always dreamed of being the district attorney and have handled every kind of case — from traffic tickets to murder cases. That

SEE WORK/PAGE A12

Misdemeanor Drug Court gears up in Douglas County

BY AMANDA THOMAS
STAFF WRITER

As repeat offenders continue costing taxpayers millions of dollars each year, officials in Douglas County are preparing to launch another program designed to hold these criminals more accountable.

The county's DUI court has been operating since April and county officials are preparing to start a Misdemeanor Drug Court. The idea behind accountability courts is to keep people out of jail and get them the treatment they need to help reduce recidivism. State Court Judge W. O'Neal Detmering Jr. is the department head over the Misdemeanor Drug Court and State Court Judge Eddie Barker is over the DUI Court.

Douglas County has received a \$47,000 state grant to start a Misdemeanor Drug Court and Anita Grainger is the director.

"The DUI Court and the Misdemeanor Drug Court are part of the accountability courts," Grainger said. "Accountability is a big part for the participants. That's why they do have to be either holding a job or pursuing some form of education."

Participants will stay in the program anywhere from 12 to 24 months.

"Even at the end, we will keep track of our participants for five years after they get out of the program to check the recidivism rate," Grainger said. That is a big focus because the idea is to keep

SEE COURT/PAGE A13

Investigators seek suspects in CVS robbery, eye similarities

BY MITCH SNEED
EDITOR

Another local store has been robbed in the early morning hours by armed suspects and officials are now exploring possibility if the same men may be responsible for multiple incidents.

Douglasville Police Department investigators are searching for two men that they say robbed the CVS store at 6031 Fairburn Road Douglasville at 3:27 a.m. Thursday. Capt. J.R. Davidson

SEE CVS/PAGE A12



Surveillance photos

Investigators with the Douglasville Police Department and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office are working to see if the same suspects may be responsible for a pair of armed robberies. The CVS store on Fairburn Road was robbed in the early hours of Thursday morning by two men, one seen in the photo here wearing a red hoodie with a logo on the front. The general descriptions, a shirt worn and the methods and circumstances are very much like a Feb. 19 robbery by the two suspects shown entering a Thornton Road Convenience store.



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Details, Page A2

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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

recidivism down."

Dettmering wants to make clear that no local taxpayer money is going into the program.

"We got a grant for the first six months," he said. "We expect we'll get a followup grant for 12 months starting in July and that absorbs some of the costs."

The exact cost of the program is uncertain right now, but the fees will include a one-time fee of \$95 for testing and a weekly charge of \$50 for court operational costs.

"Participants are expected to pay and it sounds kind of harsh," Dettmering said. "But in most cases, we found that they were spending more money on the drugs or alcohol."

The program will also be funded by a surcharge that's attached to every drug and DUI fine.

"That when it's collected has to be paid to the county and they have to put it aside in a separate account for us to use for treatment so we've got those three things," Dettmering said. "It won't cost the county anything. It won't make the taxes go up. It won't be taking from some other programs."

The goal of Misdemeanor Drug Court is to get people off drugs and back into society, Dettmering stressed the importance of families being involved.

"A lot of them have completely either cut or had the ties cut from their family because of their behavior," he said. "Some of the goals of a lot of these programs is to reunite these people so they do have that support, get them to a place where they can go to those family members and say, 'I really quit, and they can believe it.'"

Bringing an accountability court to Douglas County is something

that officials have been considering since 2001 when Dettmering first became a judge. At the time, former Superior Court Judge Donald Howe talked to him and Judge David Emerson about the large number of accused burglars whose actions are fueled by drugs.

"He had a particular person who had come into his court who just kind of touched his heart that was burglarizing businesses, but his problem was the drugs," Dettmering said.

He admitted that at the time, there weren't many places to put anybody who wanted help. He eventually learned about a new felony drug court program.

"Judge Howe and I went down to one of their conferences and listened to everything they had to say," Dettmering said. "It seemed to us that at that time, the model they were using was spending a lot of resources (and) a lot of money on very few people."

Instead of implementing an individualized drug court at that time, the county implemented a substance abuse counseling program called SHARP (Sobriety, Hope and Relapse Prevention).

"That was kind of for the masses," Dettmering said. "Basically if somebody had a drug problem, we'd send them to SHARP." It was more of an educational program than treatment. The program was eventually discontinued, but the accountability courts are seeking to fill that void.

"I've been impressed with the whole concept and I had not been a particularly enthusiastic person about these programs," Dettmering said. "I just thought it was a lot of resources and not enough people. But I'm convinced that they work."

Officials hope to start Misdemeanor Drug Court on April 1.

eggstravaganza
Douglas County Parks and Recreation presents

The BIGGEST Easter Egg Hunt in Douglas County
Prize Eggs, Candy, Easter Bunny, Face Painting, Music, Inflatables, and more!!

Sunday, April 6, 2014 • 1 pm

- WHO: All kids 12 and under
- WHEN: Sunday, April 6, 2014
- RAIN DATE: Sunday, April 13, 2014
- TIME: 1 pm PROMPTLY (Hunt times will be staggered between age groups)
- WHERE: Boundary Waters Athletic Complex
- COST: Admission cost is free, but a small fee for refreshments may apply.
- AGE CATEGORIES: Adaptive (Field 1), 2-4 (Field 1), Only 1 parent allowed on the field with this age group!!; 5-6 (Field 2), 7-8 (Field 3), 9-10 (Field 4), 11-12 (Field 5)

*Parents will not be permitted in hunt area unless accompanying adaptive and ages 2-4 and are not allowed to pick up the eggs. Only the child hunting the eggs!

Please for everyone's safety, no children under 2 in the hunt area. If you have any questions please contact: Chad Griffin at 770-920-7129 or cgriffin@co.douglas.ga.us

Annual Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt
at Deer Lick Park
2105 Mack Road

Pre-Registration Required

Easter Egg Hunt at night for Kids 7 yrs. and older
• \$5 per person Pre-Registration Required
• Age Categories: 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, Teens 13-16 **Parents will not be permitted in hunt area.
You Must Use Your Own Flashlight To Participate!

Refreshments will be served before the hunt stops and Open for all participants!

Friday, April 11, 2014 at 8 pm
Rain Date: Friday, April 18, 2014

Registration Options:
1. Register in person at Deer Lick Park
2. Register online at www.celebrate2014douglascounty.com

For more information please contact Chad Griffin at 770-920-7129 or cgriffin@co.douglas.ga.us

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