**No tax increase for county, town**

**Employees to see pay raises**

By Melissa Dean

County and town employees will notice a slight uptick in their paychecks next year. Madison County commissioners passed their budget Monday, June 30 with a two percent raise for all county employees—the budget also includes added funding for the school system.

“We are looking county employees to Barcombe—They deserve at least a cost of living increase in wages,” Commissioner Jim Baker said. “We are acknowledging the hard work and dedication of our county employees.”

Commissioner Bill Briggs said, “I hear that all the departments are working hard and they are delivering the services.”

The board agreed to the deficit to continue to maintain their tax collection rate to be consistent with other counties across the state.

“It would be illogical to change our tax rate from 0.52 to 0.56 when we are not collecting our taxes now at 0.52,” said Baker.

Lamberson said that he hopes to bring a proposal to the board in the upcoming months on a feasible way to bring the revenue back in.

“Why would you raise taxes when people are not paying their taxes,” said Lamberson.

Despite a low tax collection rate, Madison County School System received a budget increase.

Through several educational activities from digital storytelling to improving literacy skills through a reading and writing program, students are empowered to harness the key to their own success education.

**Marshall man faces felony charges**

Sex offense, possession and delivering to a minor

By Melissa Dean

A Marshall man was arrested last week after authorities believed he engaged in intercourse with a child and sold illegal drugs to minors.

James Dale Ryan, 34, of 601 N. Main St. Marshall was arrested June 3 by the Madison County Sheriff’s Office and faces multiple felony charges including sex offense, possession, and delivering to a minor.

Ryan faces felony charges of sexual offenses with a minor, or deliver, maintaining a dwelling to minors, and delivering a controlled substance to a minor.

The victim’s name will not be released.

In addition to the sexual offense charges, Ryan faces multiple felony charges after detectives believe he sold and delivered marijuana to minors under the age of 16 between June and July 2014.

According to the warrant for arrest, there is probable cause to believe that on June 13 and July 2014, Ryan “unlawfully, willfully and maliciously did engage in a sex offense, who was at the time mentally disabled.”

**Harmonies in the hills**

**A Creative Coupling**

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success-education. “The goal is really to empower girls into believing in themselves, improving their literacy so that they can reach a higher level of education and open their eyes to more opportunities,” said Hicks.

PAGE, the program, formerly the Spring Creek Literacy Program, emerged based on the childhood experiences of its founder, Deborah Hicks. Hicks, a first generation college student, grew up much like her students. Educated in public schools and from rural Appalachia, Hicks rose from her humble beginnings to earn a doctorate in Special Education Development from Harvard University in 1988.

“I think (the program) gives them a sense that they can achieve their dreams and they can be whoever they want to be if they just stick with education that’s their ticket,” said Hicks.

Through a method coined the “Girl Effect,” PAGE’s educators facilitate writing, reading, and creative learning activities that foster 21st century literacy skills, critical thinking and leadership.

“It’s basically a trickle-down effect,” said Hume Kirk, Under-Gard. “You educate these young women and you empower them. We believe that if you can push them on to higher education and later on to leadership positions the power that they have can strengthen their community and strengthen our children. The girl effect you empower a woman, you empower a community.”

The program has since expanded their reach to educate nutritional awareness through a new farm to table initiative, empowering girls into believing they can reach a higher level of education and open their eyes to more opportunities, including the entrepreneurial world.

“The program and the ‘girl effect’ has already taken root in Madison County, girls enjoy healthy outdoor activities and educational field trips from visiting a local organic farm to what life will be like as a college career.

“The girl effect” is there to be,” said Hicks. “Encouragement that one day may journey back to the valleys of Spring Creek. “You don’t have to try and act different. You just get to experience your feelings.”

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