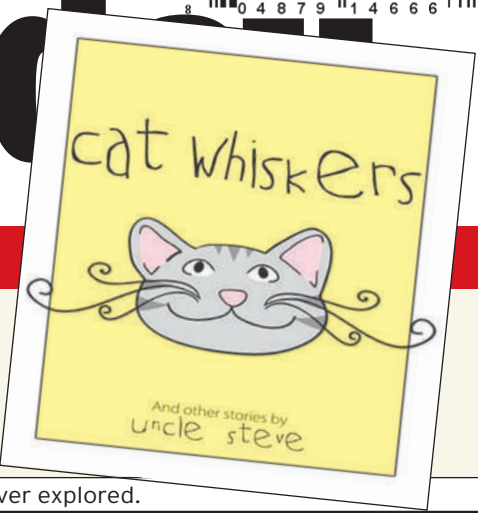


Bluffton Today



BLUFFTON'S ONLY DAILY HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

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TELL US A STORY, UNCLE STEVE

Children's book taps talents at McCracken, SCAD, BT. **INSIDE**

Volume 4, Number 335 • **COMING TOMORROW:** Little known Confederate earthworks along New River explored.

Winter Wonders

Bluffton High School honored its top student athletes at Monday's winter sports banquet. **Pages 18-19**



NEWS

Consolidated court means swifter justice for career thugs

BY STEPHANIE INGERSOLL
BLUFFTON TODAY

A record number of defendants were prosecuted in Beaufort County last week at the same time a "career criminal" was being tried for kidnapping and rape.

For the first time, two courtrooms and two judges are being used simultaneously to handle felony cases in Beaufort County.

That will mean swifter justice for the worst repeat offenders while still allowing the prosecutor's office to handle its usual load of cases, said Solicitor Duffie Stone.

It also means the county can save money by calling only one jury panel for criminal court each month, instead of two.

"It's a win for everyone except the criminals," Stone said.



Photos by Scott Salisbury/Bluffton Today

SEE 'COURT' ON PAGE 10

BLUFFTON TODAY

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We say ...**Patriotism should be contagious**

If every community in America followed Bluffton's lead, not one overseas Marine or soldier would ever lack for beef jerky.

Or baby wipes. Or Xboxes. Or phone cards, DVDs, sunscreen, toothpaste or even homemade cookies.

We featured two groups of Blufftonians in Monday's BT — First Baptist Church members and the Moss Creek Marines — for sending dozens of boxes of goodies to our military men and women overseas. They aren't the only local groups doing so, either.

It's hard to imagine living your life on a forward, isolated military base under constant fire in a desert somewhere thousands of miles from home, fighting for a country you just hope remembers you.

Bluffton remembers, but our Marines and soldiers already knew that.

The First Baptist folks, for their part, "adopt" various military members with box after box of personal goodies, including those cookies we're drooling over. They don't have to do it. They don't know their adopted soldiers. They do it because it is simply the right thing to do.

For the Moss Creek Marines, there's that whole "semper fi" thing, "always faithful," once a Marine, always a Marine. You simply don't stop being a Marine once you're too old to man the frontlines. You just help your buddies in another way.

For the Moss Creek Marines, most recently, that meant adopting an entire battalion of Marines, 1,200 in all, most serving at eight Afghani frontline bases where showers are only distant memories. That's why those baby wipes come in handy.

None of this is cheap. Although the love and prayers are free, it costs big bucks to ship dozens of boxes to Afghanistan and Iraq. But it's worth it, because they're there for us.

Bluffton does its share. Let's hope other American towns follow our lead.

**You say ...****Letter to the editor****Self Help gets help from others**

Bluffton Self Help would like to thank the volunteers and the staff at the Bargain Box for the grant we recently received for our rental and utility assistance programs.

I have had the experience of seeing Mt. Charity, which is located inside the back door of the Bargain Box, where the bags of donations are piled until the volunteers can sort, price and display the items for visitors to purchase. The mountain seems to never shrink.

Through the dedication and hard work of the volunteers, the Bargain Box has returned over \$11 million to the community since 1965. We are extremely grateful for the efforts of the Bargain Box volunteers

who make it possible for Bluffton Self Help to continue our mission of assisting those in a crisis situation with rental and utility assistance during these difficult economic times.

We also would like to thank the Hilton Head Island Celebrity Golf Tournament for again allowing us to be a beneficiary of the 2009 tournament. These funds allow us to continue our children's program.

We work closely with the social workers at the five Bluffton schools for referrals. Gayle Wingo and Kim Capin work all year organizing this tournament and, again, the challenging economy will make it extremely difficult, but they know that the requests for assistance have increased.

Please mark your calendars for this year's tournament, which will be held Sept. 4-6, and support us and the other 17 charities.

Jenny Haney
Director
Bluffton Self Help