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TOP STORY >>Murders, military and more make year

By RICK KRON
Leader staff writer

Four murders—the most in at least a decade—a new community center for Cabot; land cleared for a new library in Jacksonville, and local soldiers and airmen serving in Iraq are all part of our month-by-month look back at 2006.

January

Businessman Gary McMillan is named Cabot's citizen of the year.

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The Cabot School District approves funding for a new \$6 million elementary school on 20 acres of land near Stagecoach and Campground roads.

Pulaski County Special School district seeks release from almost 20 years of federal court monitoring. By the end of the year, they were still under court supervision.

Cabot School Superintendent John Holman's salary package of \$181,329 has him ranked fifth highest paid superintendent in the state.

[OBITUARIES >> 12-30-06](#) Sherwood, Cabot and Jacksonville are all told to repay the state for extra taxes they collected. The decision cost Cabot \$46,142, Sherwood \$66,547, and Jacksonville\$42,090.

[EDITORIALS>>Don't violate Constitution](#)

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[TOP STORY >>Area officials reveal their resolution...](#) Little Rock Air Force Base officials discourage its members from using payday lenders. Through fees and other charges, these companies often charge lenders more than 300 percent on loans.

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Remington Arms in Lonoke celebrates its 35th year in business by producing nearly a billion rounds of shotgun ammunition.

Jacksonville Rep. Will Bond loses his bid to become speaker of the state House of Representatives to Benny Petrus, D-Stuttgart.

February

A deadly highway crash on Highway 67/167's Main Street overpass in Jacksonville involves a gravel truck and a number of pickups. The gravel truck pushed one of the pickups over the guardrails down to Main Street and dumped a ton of gravel on top of it. The driver of that vehicle, Jerry Justice, of Ward, was pronounced dead on the scene. His wife and mother were seriously injured.

Nearly 200 members of the Arkansas Army National Guard deploy to Kuwait and Iraq on an 18-month assignment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

•Tavaris Bone, 25, of Jacksonville, turned in himself in the shooting death of Anthony Parker, 20, of 1705 Redmond Road. It was

the city's first murder of the year.

- About an inch of snow hit central Arkansas on Feb. 10, causing a run on essentials at area stores, but didn't affect local schools.

- Lonoke is hit by the arrests of its mayor, police chief, his wife and two bondsmen. Mayor Thomas Privett was charged with using prison labor for his own personal use, while Chief Jay Campbell and his wife Kelly were arrested on theft, sex, and drug charges. The bondsman, Bobby Cox and Larry Norwood were charged with drug counts. Charges would continue to mount throughout the year.

- Pulaski County Special School District picks interim superintendent James Sharpe to lead the district.

- Members of the 50th and 61st Airlift Squadrons and the 463rd Airlift Group are deployed to the Middle East in support of the war on terror.

March

- Three candidates sign up to take on the embattled Lonoke Mayor Thomas Privett in the primary elections.

- Jacksonville attorney Mike Wilson went to court in his efforts to declare pork barrel projects funded through the state legislature's general improvement fund illegal. Part of his efforts were blocked in Pulaski County court, but the court did decide with him on two Jacksonville projects: \$20,000 set aside to the city for undesignated use and \$20,000 set aside

for the Boys and Girls Club.

- Four inches of rain hit the area in less than four days ushering in Flood Awareness Week and causing minor problems. A week earlier high winds blew through the area taking a number of trees and rooftops with it.
- Air Force officials estimate it will cost about \$9 million per plane to make repairs to 82 aging C-130 aircraft suffering wing cracks, including 33 assigned to Little Rock Air Force Base.
- A \$1.2 million town hall at Little Rock Air Force Base was dedicated as part of a multi-million housing privatization program on the base.
- Almost four years after its construction was announced a new \$1 million section of Cabot's Main Street was opened.
- Ten more charges are added to the growing list of counts against former Lonoke police chief Jay Campbell and his wife. Former police dispatcher Amy Staley is also arrested as the sex, drug, and corruption investigation continued.
- Consultants tell Jacksonville it would take \$50 million for the city to have its own school district, and questioned whether the city had enough tax base to support its own district.
- After 25 years of serving Sherwood as alderman and mayor, Bill Harmon, 80, announces that he would be stepping down at the end of the year, saying the next mayor would take the reins of a community that is thriving.

- On March 1, The Leader began its 20th year of publishing and has become the largest paid non-daily newspaper in Arkansas.

April

- Lonoke gets a new police chief to replace Jay Campbell, who was arrested back in February on multiple drug, theft and corruption charges. The city picks Rick Sliger of Eagle, Colo., to lead the police force. However, Sliger resigned without reason before the year ended.

- Pawn shops see a rise in business as gas prices close in on \$3 a gallon in the local area.

- The cost to bring future water to Jacksonville, Cabot and northern Pulaski County doubles in cost, going from \$14.8 million to \$30 million.

- Study shows new impact fees could bring in \$2.3 million annually into Cabot's coffers.

- Plans for an avionics upgrade of C-130E aircraft, many of which are assigned to Little Rock Air Force Base is scrapped by the military. The upgrade would have cost about \$10 million per plane.

- Five of eight Cabot aldermen decide not to seek re-election to the city council. U.S. Rep. Marion Berry also kicks off his re-election campaign to keep his District 1 seat.

- Peggy Anderson is named Lonoke's citizen

of the year.

- Jacksonville Mayor Tommy Swaim announces for an unprecedented sixth term. He ends up unopposed and wins the job again.

- Pulaski County looks at taxpayers to help fund county jail, which is used by Jacksonville, Sherwood and the state as well. It could take as much as an additional \$20 million to keep the necessary jail beds open.

- Officials place the economic impact of the Little Rock Air Force Base on the local economy at \$600 million.

May

- After the primary votes were counted, the Lonoke sheriff's race ended up as a three-peat rematch of current sheriff Jim Roberson, Democrat, and former sheriff Charlie Martin, Republican.

- Rebsamen Medical Center made plans to open a \$3.5 million medical facility on Main Street in Cabot.

- Little Rock Air Force Base sends a C-130 aircraft to Mexico to star in the Transformers movie.

- Beebe names Jim Wooten as citizen of the year, and Bill Pruitt as educator of the year.

- Lonoke County has problems tallying primary vote totals and is one of the last counties in the state to report results—almost a full day after the election.

- Jacksonville starts the process of buying land on Main Street for its new \$2.5 million library. The city purchased the property housing the old Schaeffer Texaco station just west of the Walgreen's.

- Jacksonville's Smurfit-Stone Container Corp. was sold to Texas Pacific as part of a \$1.04 billion deal. The local plant turns about 3,000 tons of paper a month into various types of bags.

- Beebe's Mary Garner was named Volunteer of the Year by the White County Community Foundation.

- The House Armed Services Committee approved funding for the joint education center to be built in Jacksonville for both civilian and military educational use. Jacksonville is providing \$5 million for the \$14 million project through a tax that voters approved in 2004. The base will donate land for the facility just outside the main gate.

June

- Sherwood gives its city employees a two-percent raise to go with a three-percent raise they received in January.

- The Leader wins 31 awards and honors from the Arkansas Press Association.

- Carlisle's Amber Elizabeth is crowned the new Miss Arkansas in ceremonies in Hot Springs.

- U.S. Census Bureau numbers show that Cabot is the second-fastest growing city in Arkansas, just behind Bentonville, and

ahead of Maumelle.

- Jacksonville passes a tougher dog ordinance with stiffer penalties for owners of vicious animals.

- Jacksonville and Sherwood go to court over Sherwood's plans to annex 2,000 acres of raw land taking that city's limits nearly to the southwestern edges of Little Rock Air Force Base.

- Aldermen Wayne McGee beats former aldermen Jim Parks in a run-off to become Lonoke's new mayor. Mayor Thomas Privett, who is entangled in a corruption investigation, was bounced out in the May Democrat primaries. Republicans fielded no candidate for the position, meaning that McGee automatically took over Jan.1.

- Beebe city council decides to try to double size of city again through annexation. Voters said no to the first effort almost a year ago.

- The funeral of Army Specialist Bobby West, of Beebe, who was killed in Iraq, is marred by protests from a religious group that says West's and all soldiers deaths retribution for America's tolerance of homosexuality. A group of bikers, the Patriot Guard Riders, showed up to protect the funeral procession from the anti-gay group.

- Cabot Mayor Stubby Stumbaugh by-passed another chance to run Cabot and instead announced his candidacy for Congress, taking on incumbent Marion Berry for the District 1 seat.

July

A new 7,000-square-foot animal shelter, costing \$425,000, opens in Cabot.

Smokers across the state had to adjust to a new law banning smoking in most public places.

A 203,000-square-foot Wal-Mart Supercenter opens in Cabot just south of the old Wal-Mart Supercenter, west of Highway 67/167.

Christopher M. Johnson, 27, of north Pulaski County is sentenced to 18 years in the smothering death of a 3-year-old. He was convicted of manslaughter in the incident and pleaded "no contest."

Cabot accepts \$10 million bid to build a new wastewater treatment plant that the city needs to stay out of hot water with the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

A \$1.3 million fine forces one businessman to close some of his payday lending operations. The businesses are under fire for making lenders pay back loans at interest rates of 300 percent or more.

About 100 members of the Arkansas National Guard head south to help patrol the border between the U.S. and Mexico. A Sherwood woman, Carolyn Cooper, 53, is charged in the shooting death of her husband at their Sherwood apartment. It was the first murder in the city in almost three years.

A yearlong report recommends that the

beleaguered Pulaski County Special School District be split up into at least two districts and giving Jacksonville its own school district.

August

Charges against former Lonoke Sheriff Jay Campbell, his wife, Mayor Thomas Privett and others escalate to almost 80 counts.

Prosecuting Attorney Lona McCastlain asked that all defendants be tried in a single month-long trial.

Five new subdivisions bring 500 additional homes into Ward.

Sherwood is taken for \$100,000 as contractor cuts corners on roadwork. The city looks at ways to recoup the loss and make necessary road repairs.

Worley's Place, a new three-story \$2 million apartment complex for seniors, opened in Jacksonville. The complex will help dwindle down the two-year waiting list for the city's only other senior apartments, Jacksonville Towers.

Annual audit shows Jacksonville is worth more than \$1 billion.

Three suspects were arrested in the shooting of Justin Davis, 18, of Cabot, outside of Jacksonville High School. Davis was apparently killed when a gun battle erupted after a drug deal went sour.

An Aug. 10 electrical fire destroys the eight-year-old Cabot Junior High North. Firefighters battled the blaze for more than

seven hours. There were no injuries.

An 11-year-old boy is charged with arson for causing a fire that caused about \$400,000 damage to a Jacksonville apartment complex.

Thunderstorms hit the area on Aug. 4 and dropped more than two inches of rain in the area, setting a new precipitation record for that day.

September

A traffic accident involving a tractor-trailer rig and another vehicle on Highway 67/167 between Jacksonville and Sherwood injures seven.

The threat of a massive thunderstorm halts Beebe's Fallfest after just two hours.

Robert Todd Burmingham, known as the Blue Light Rapist, files for clemency after serving one-tenth of his 80-year sentence. Military officials announce more than \$50 million in new construction is planned for Little Rock Air Force, along with more planes and personnel.

The executive director of the Jacksonville Housing Authority resigns amid federal claims that the group mismanaged \$132,000 in grants.

A quarter-cent sales tax, projected to raise \$17 million to fund a new county jail, was soundly rejected by Pulaski County voters.

Parole of murderer Michael Webb, 33, who served just 11 years of a 46-year sentence upsets the parents of the Sherwood teen

that Webb killed in 1993. The parents fought against Webb's release, but the state parole board voted against them. Cabot Junior High North students started school Sept. 5, almost three-weeks late, in a campus of 40 trailers after an Aug 10 fire destroyed the junior high.

About 70 more member of the Arkansas National Guard deploy to Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. In all, the Guard has about 1,700 members deployed overseas.

October

An insurance inspection should that Cabot has outgrown it fire protection and that could mean higher insurance rates for some residents. Cabot Fire Chief Phil Robinson said he was looking at stopgap measures to prevent the insurance increase while permanent solutions could be worked out.

Plans for townhouses on Jacksonville's Main Street were taken to the city council after being turned down by the planning commission. Aldermen were split on the issue, keeping the usually toned down council divisive until the plans were dropped later in the year because of a technicality.

Cabot City Council approved continued commercial development on its Main Street despite objections over area residents

Construction started on Sherwood's first hotel, a two story Best Western, just south of Kohl's off Highway 67/167.

Gasoline prices, for the first time in more than a year, fell below \$2 a gallon in the local area, hitting as low as \$1.93 before moving back over the \$2.10 mark by the end of the year.

November

Sherwood approves plans for a new Wal-Mart supercenter to be built off Highway 107 near Maryland Avenue. The retail giant made a number of concessions on the building design, lighting, traffic signals and land preservation before the city gave approval.

Lonoke picks its third police chief of the year. It started with Jay Campbell who was arrested in February on multiple charges.

Rick Sliger from Colorado was then hired, but resigned about five months later. In November, the city hired Michael Wilson, a sergeant in the department, to run the force.

Hunters found the body of woman in the woods near West Mountain Springs and Longboth-am roads in Cabot. The body was later identified as that of Cabot resident Debra L. Roach, 47, who was first reported missing Oct. 24.

Cabot opens new 194,000-square-foot high school. The new facility was built at a cost of \$17 million.

In mid-November, the state set a January trial for Don Baker, of the operator of a Sherwood mobile home dealership, who was arrested in June on multiple charges of defrauding customers.

After the election dust settled Cabot ended up with six new aldermen and a new mayor.

The Airpower Arkansas open house show at Little Rock Air Force Base set attendance records as more than 220,000 came to see the Blue Angels perform.

Cabot Mayor Stubby Stumbaugh loses his bid to unseat Cong. Marion Berry. Lonoke Sheriff retains his title after another challenge by former sheriff Charlie Martin. Sherwood picks Alderman Dan Stedman to be its new mayor and there are no changes to Jacksonville's council.

December

Rebsamen Medical Center considers building a new hospital further north after losing \$800,000 this past year at its current location.

A consultant tells Jacksonville that it has little to offer tourists and needs to focus on its military history and a district or area to increase tourism.

Cabot's Water and Wastewater Commission advances the city \$240,000 so Cabot can meet its payroll and other bills.

Legislators plan to look at a bill that would limit the amount of interest payday lenders can charge its customers to 17 percent instead of the 300 percent and more the firms normally charge.

Construction starts in earnest on a 12,000-square-foot field house for the boys'

campus of the Jacksonville Middle School.

Pinnacle Structures, a Cabot-based firm, is donating the building, and the school's booster club is funding the rest of the construction.

Cabot city council says no to a planned facility for abuse victims.

Suspect Ezekiel I. Williams, 28, turned himself in and is charged in the shooting death of Shoney T. Allen, 27, of Little Rock. The incident took place Dec. 12 in an apartment complex off Quince Hill.

A special census shows Cabot has grown by about 8,000 from the 2000 census. The extra growth means extra money for the city.

Cabot's \$4.1 million Veterans Park Community Center opened. The facility includes a community pool, a therapy pool, a walking track, meeting rooms and two basketball courts.

Sherwood signs a multi-year contract with Little Rock's Metropolitan Emergency Medical Services to provide ambulance service to the city.

Christopher D. Copeland, 25, is killed after a car strikes him as he walked along John Harden Drive and is dragged more than a mile before the driver stopped. Lonoke and Pulaski county officials are discussing who has the authority in the case and if any charges will be filed against the driver.

Annexation vote does double size of Beebe, and city council now looks at how to provide city services to the new area.