



*Van Buren County Courthouse*

## County Spotlight: *Van Buren*

Population: 5,508  
County Seat: *Spencer*

### Did you know...?

*Founded in 1848 in Spencer, Burritt College was one of the first coeducational colleges in the South. Unfortunately, economic hardships forced the school to close its doors in 1939.*

*Big Bone Cave in Van Buren County was named after the bones of a giant sloth were discovered at the site in 1811.*

\*For more information, visit:  
<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net>

## New Web Link Highlights Federal Stimulus Information

CTAS now has an information page on its website on the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), commonly referred to as the federal stimulus package. To access this information, go to the CTAS home page ([www.ctas.tennessee.edu](http://www.ctas.tennessee.edu)) and click on the link on the right. Complementing what is available at the federal and state levels through [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov) and [www.tnrecovery.gov](http://www.tnrecovery.gov), this CTAS page will provide frequent updates on county grant and financial information as they become available.

The information is being provided in a coordinated effort involving CTAS and the Tennessee County Services Association, Tennessee County Commissioners Association, Tennessee County Highway Officials Association and the Association of County Mayors of Tennessee.

Some of the information you will find referenced there includes:

- The state Department of Finance & Administration is continuing to revise its estimates of how much Tennessee will likely receive over the next two years from ARRA.
- The State of Tennessee has rolled out a website ([www.tnrecovery.gov](http://www.tnrecovery.gov)) to help county officials and the general public as they follow the projects and spending plans involving the federal stimulus funds being released to the state.
- The state Department of Transportation has included 10 locally owned bridges in its March 20 letting of projects using federal ARRA monies. Under this schedule, the projects could be underway by the end of March, according to state officials.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Clean Diesel Campaign is announcing the Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA) program will soon open its grant program, funded through ARRA. The deadline for proposals will be April 27, 2009.
- More than \$145 million is being set aside to help Tennessee landowners restore thousands of acres of frequently flooded land to their natural state, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Landowners can sign up for the easements through March 27, 2009 at their local USDA Service Center.
- Tennessee school systems are poised to receive an estimated \$194.1 million in new Title I grant funding through ARRA. Specific allocations (how much each school system is projected to receive) can be found at the federal Department of Education Recovery site.
- An additional \$1 billion has been approved for COPS Hiring Recovery Program (CHRP). The application, found on the COPS website, is expected to be open until **April 14, 2009**.
- The federal Department of Justice (DOJ) is awarding some \$47.5 million in formula funding for state agencies that administer VOCA-funded crime victim compensation programs and \$47.5 million in formula funding to state agencies that administer VOCA-funded crime victim assistance programs. For Tennessee, that means as much as \$1.4 million for compensation and another \$911,000 for the assistance.

## New Releases from the Office of Open Records Counsel

The Office of Open Records Counsel (OORC) has released two new policies, a best practice guidelines, a new form and has updated its other forms. All of these new documents are available on the OORC's website at <http://www.tn.gov/comptroller/openrecords/forms.htm>.

**NEW POLICIES:** The OORC has released a *Policy Related to Reasonable Charges a Records Custodian May Charge for Frequent and Multiple Requests for Public Records* (Frequent Requests Policy) and a *Safe Harbor Policy for Records Custodians Who Adhere to the Schedule of Reasonable Charges and the Policy for Frequent and Multiple Requests Established By the Office of Open Records Counsel* (Safe Harbor Policy). The OORC is required by T.C.A. 8-4-604(a)(2) to establish a separate policy related to reasonable charges which may be charged to frequent requesters. While the OORC's normal Schedule of Reasonable Charges provides that a requester cannot be charged for the first hour of labor cost necessary to produce requested copies, the Frequent Requests Policy provides that if a requester exceeds four requests in any calendar month they may be charged labor cost for any additional requests for copies that month. The requester must be informed that the limit has been met before being charged and requests for items that are routinely released and readily accessible are exempt from this policy. Additionally, a records custodian may aggregate the requests of multiple individuals if the custodian reasonably believes such requesters are acting in concert. If the custodian decides to aggregate the requests of multiple requesters, the custodian must file a

notice of such with the OORC pursuant to the Aggregation Form discussed below. The Safe Harbor Policy simply provides that any fee charged pursuant to the OORC's Schedule of Reasonable Charges or Frequent Requests Policy is deemed to be reasonable.

**BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES:** The OORC has released a *Best Practice Guidelines for Records Custodians Responding to Requests for Public Records* (Best Practice Guidelines). The OORC in conjunction with the Advisory Committee on Open Government developed the Best Practice Guidelines to provide records custodians with a general resource that can be utilized when responding to records requests. The

Best Practice Guidelines contains numerous suggestions aimed at making the interplay between records custodians and requesters as fluid as possible. Records custodians are not required by law to adhere to the guidelines but should find them to be a helpful resource.

**FORMS:** The OORC has released a new *Notice of Aggregation of Multiple Requesters* form (Aggregation Form) and has updated its

other forms so that they are consistent with its newly released policies. The Aggregation Form must be completed and filed with the OORC anytime a custodian decides to aggregate the requests of multiple individuals the custodian believes are acting in concert.

Records custodians who have questions regarding the Frequent Requests Policy, Safe Harbor Policy, Best Practice Guidelines or Aggregation Form may contact the OORC at (615) 401-7891 or via email at [open.records@tn.gov](mailto:open.records@tn.gov).

Records custodians who have questions regarding the newly released information may contact the OORC at (615) 401-7891 or via email at [open.records@tn.gov](mailto:open.records@tn.gov).

## Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance (JAG) Grants

The JAG Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, allows states and local governments to support a broad range of activities to prevent and control crime and improve the criminal justice system. Counties appearing on the FY 2009 Recovery Act Units of Local Government List will be eligible to apply for JAG funds. A list of Tennessee's eligible local governments, together with the amount of the allocations to each local government, is available at the following website: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryJAG/recjag/TN.xls>. **Check this list to see whether your county is eligible!**

Information about the JAG program under the Recovery Act may be found at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryJAG/recoveryjag.html>.

The grant solicitation for applications may be found at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryJAG/JAGrecoveryLocal.pdf>.

The Tennessee Department of Finance & Administration's Office of Criminal Justice Programs also has information on its website: <http://tennessee.gov/finance/rds/ocjp.htm>. In addition, we have been advised that the Office of Criminal Justice Programs will be presenting informational seminars on the Byrne JAG Grants on the following dates:

JACKSON - March 23  
NASHVILLE - March 25  
KNOXVILLE - March 26

**The application deadline is 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 18, 2009.**

## Additional Funding for COPS Grants

The U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) has announced additional funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of \$1 billion for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) to award hiring grants. The COPS Hiring Recovery Program (CHRP) is a competitive grant program designed to address the full-time sworn officer needs of state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies nationwide.

Applications will be accepted from **March 16, 2009 through April 14, 2009**.

Applications and additional information about this grant program are available at the USDOJ website: <http://cops.usdoj.gov>.

The Tennessee Department of Finance & Administration's Office of Criminal Justice Programs also has information on its website: <http://tennessee.gov/finance/rds/ocjp.htm>

## Planning and Zoning Workshops

Planning is a process that seeks to guide the future. Decisions regarding zoning, building development, and growth issues affect landowners, neighbors, and the entire community — often with significant impact on property values, community character and quality of life — and even the budget. In order to address these pertinent issues, Planning and Zoning Workshops will be held across the state for local government employees throughout the month of April. The course will focus on the following topics: Legal Basis for Planning, Comprehensive Planning Process and Implementation of Land Use Decisions. The workshops are offered by the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS), but are eligible for four hours of Category A or recertification credit as part of the County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP). To register for a class, select the "Training" tab from the left menu on the CTAS website ([www.ctas.tennessee.edu](http://www.ctas.tennessee.edu)) and click on "Classroom Training."

## Stay Current with CTAS

CTAS strives to provide Tennessee county officials with prompt, accurate technical assistance on a daily basis. In an effort to do this as economically and environmentally friendly as possible, we have increased our email communications. Please take a moment to visit our website to ensure the contact information listed for your county office is correct. We will continue to send certain information via post mail, so be sure to check the accuracy of your listed mailing address as well.

If you are reading our E-News but not receiving it directly, please take a look and see if we have the proper email address listed for you.

To view and/or update your county's information in our directory:

- Log on to [www.ctas.tennessee.edu](http://www.ctas.tennessee.edu)
- Select the "County Officials Directory" tab from the top of the orange menu
- Click "Update County Official Information"
- Select your county from the menu and click "Continue"
- Click on your underlined title or name (depending upon how you searched)
- Follow the steps listed to submit a request to update information

Have comments or suggestions for this newsletter?  
Contact Claire Marsalis at [claire.marsalis@tennessee.edu](mailto:claire.marsalis@tennessee.edu).

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 18-19	County Finance Workshops, Franklin
March 18	TCHOA Region I Meeting, Dandridge
March 30-31	County Finance Workshops, Jackson
March 31-April 1	COCTP Regional Renewal, Jackson
April 1	Planning and Zoning Workshop, Bartlett
April 2	Planning and Zoning Workshop, Jackson
April 1-2	County Finance Workshops, Dunlap
April 6-7	County Finance Workshops, Cookeville
April 8	Planning and Zoning Workshop, Johnson City
April 8-9	Sheriff's Association Meeting, Nashville
April 9	Planning and Zoning Workshop, Knoxville
April 14	Planning and Zoning Workshop, Collegedale
April 14-15	County Finance Workshops, Knoxville
April 16	Planning and Zoning Workshop, Franklin
April 16-17	County Finance Workshops, Johnson City

## Litter Grant Accounting Issues

A letter was recently sent to counties from the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) regarding issues concerning the reporting of leave for employees who are paid under the litter grant program. CTAS is working with TDOT to resolve these issues and will have additional information soon to help you properly account for your litter grant employees. We are working cooperatively with TDOT to develop guidelines for budgeting and accounting for benefits for these employees. In the meantime, if you have questions please contact your CTAS County Government Consultant for assistance.

*County Officials E-News is a monthly newsletter provided by the University of Tennessee County Technical Assistance Service in an effort to promote better county government through direct assistance to county officials and their associations.*

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