



# Circleville Herald

THURSDAY  
June 12, 2008

50 cents

9171  
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NANCY RADCLIFF/Circleville Herald

Karen S. Brown, pictured with her attorney, Stephen Gussler, pleaded guilty to taking money from the Sheriff's department while employed at the Pickaway County jail.

## Brown pleads guilty to theft

### Officer accused of stealing cash from Pickaway Co. jail

By TRISH BENNETT  
STAFF WRITER

A veteran corrections officer for the Pickaway County Sheriff's department pleaded guilty to one count of theft in office Wednesday in Pickaway County Common Pleas court.

Karen S. Brown, 46, of Circleville, was charged with stealing more than \$5,000 from the

Pickaway County jail between March 2006 and March 2008 by altering the amount of deposits to several accounts.

Judy Wolford, Pickaway County prosecutor, said the actual amount of the theft is closer to \$18,000, but an exact figure is pending completion of a state audit of the jail accounts.

The charge of theft in office for amounts more than \$5,000 but less than \$100,000 is a third degree felony. It carries a maximum penalty of five years in state prison and up to \$10,000 in fines.

According to Emily Frazee,

spokesperson for the state auditor's office, an audit of the Sheriff's department's jail accounts is being handled as part of a county-wide audit currently underway, and results likely will not be available until the end of summer.

A state audit is considered standard procedure when a theft is discovered or suspected within a government agency, she said.

"We obviously can't look at every department within every government agency at once," Frazee said. "But we take things like this very seriously, and when we're alerted of a problem, we can

go into that area and provide an independent auditor's perspective."

Brown worked as a corrections officer for the Sheriff's office for 13 years and served as the jail secretary. She resigned from her position after being placed on paid administrative leave pending a pre-disciplinary hearing.

The theft was discovered when Sheriff's department officials noticed a discrepancy in cash withdrawals and daily deposits in the jail accounts.

After an investigation by Sheriff's detectives, Brown was  
See THEFT A2

### CIRCLE AREA HUMANE SOCIETY

## Abused animals to get shelter

### Society buys building with estate donation

By TRISH BENNETT  
STAFF WRITER

For the first time in its history, the Circle Area Humane Society will have its own shelter facility, thanks to a donation from the estate of former member Mary Virginia Crites Hannan.

Christine Roan, president of the society, said the group recently used part of the donation to purchase the building at 185 Island Road, with the rest earmarked for renovating and equipping the building as an official animal shelter.

"The Pickaway County dog shelter will still handle dogs," Roan said. "Our shelter will mainly be for cats and any abused, neglected or abandoned dogs we take in from cruelty cases."

Roan said the society hopes the building fund will cover the cost of renovations, equipment and short-term operation of the  
See SHELTER A2



NANCY RADCLIFF/Circleville Herald

Christine Roan, president of the Circle Area Humane Society, plays with Hope, a Bull Mastiff mix who needs expensive heartworm treatment to survive.

## Big crowd brings questions about hospital's future

By WAYLON STRICKLAND  
STAFF WRITER

It was standing room only at Berger Hospital Wednesday night during the first of two public forums to discuss Berger's proposal to convert from a public to a private, non-profit health system.

A largely supportive crowd of more than 150 people turned out for the first public meeting to be held on the issue since the Berger Board of Governors began discussing the conversion in November.

"I think the meeting was very positive," Berger CEO Larry Thornhill said. "It was a good opportunity for the public to come out and be informed about the conversion."

Board member Dr. Charlie Hedges, Thornhill and hospital President Tim Colburn gave a presentation explaining the technicalities of the conversion and why Berger is considering the conversion.

"These meetings are the next logical step in the conversion process," Colburn said.

The conversion process is essentially a change in governance structure and a way for the hospital to remain competitive into the future, according to Thornhill.

Thornhill said 95 percent of Pickaway County residents aren't concerned if Berger

becomes a private hospital as long as the quality of care and availability of services remain high, which Thornhill maintains will happen.

Public concerns were best summed up by the last comment of the night from Circleville resident Bob Johnson.

"We're trying to be supportive, but we want to know what we're supporting," Johnson said.

Several people at the meeting also said they were concerned the conversion was similar to a takeover deal with Mount Carmel Health System that fell through in 1999. That deal would've seen Mount Carmel purchase a majority 60 percent stake in Berger for between \$40 and \$50 million, taking it out of local control.

Circleville resident Bob Snead raised concern about the loss of transparency and public accountability should the conversion go through.

As a public hospital, Berger currently must conform with Ohio Sunshine Laws, which protect the public's right to freedom of information. If the hospital converts, the hospital won't have to comply with that, although it will be subject to scrutiny from the Internal Revenue Service because it would have to file a yearly tax return, which doesn't happen now, according to Colburn.  
See HOSPITAL A2

## Weapons stolen

### 11 semi-automatic guns taken

HERALD STAFF REPORTS

ASHVILLE — A break-in at the Ashville Hardware store last week resulted in the theft of 11 semi-automatic weapons and ammunition for them, according to Det. Jeffrey George, Ashville Police department.

The break-in occurred

some time between the close of the business Thursday night and opening time Friday morning, he said.

Police have questioned several suspects in the case, and more information will become available as the investigation continues by Ashville Police and the Pickaway County Sheriff's Office.



## Commercial Point royalty

2008 Homecoming Queen Aryn Gritter, 15, center, was crowned 81st annual Commercial Point Homecoming queen Wednesday. She is the daughter of Todd and Jennifer Gritter of Commercial Point. First Runner Up (left) is Allison Sark, 15, daughter of Bill and Susan Sark of Circleville. Second Runner Up (right) is Lauren Seger, 16, daughter of Tara and Daniel Reese of Williamsport. The Homecoming festival continues through Saturday at the men's club.

TRISH BENNETT/Circleville Herald

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### Deaths

Gene "Pete" Jordan, 64  
Susan Walker Samuel

### Home Delivery

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### News tips

474-3133

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Good Day,  
Dale Boone

Thank you  
for subscribing  
to the  
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