

# Berkeley sheriff: Inmate trash pickup a win-win

BY BRENDA RINDGE  
brindge@postandcourier.com

Some Berkeley County inmates are back on the streets, making a positive difference in the county.

A couple months after taking office last summer, Sheriff Duane Lewis reinstated an inmate work crew of eight to 15 nonviolent criminals from Hill-Finklea Detention Center who walk the county's roads picking up trash.

It's a newer version of the old chain gang, without the chains, where inmates work under the watchful eye of a deputy.

✓ "It's been a win-win situation," Lewis said. "There is nothing negative about it. We haven't had any issues at all. The public has been excited and happy to see us using the inmates in this way."

Supervisor Bill Peagler agreed that the program is helpful to the county.

"Not only does it make Berkeley County a better place for our residents to live and work, but it also makes Berkeley County an even more attractive location for new businesses and new jobs," he said.

The inmates — nonviolent offenders who have been vetted through the jail's verification program — work 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day but Sunday.

**"There's nothing negative about it. We haven't had any issues at all."**

**Berkeley County Sheriff Duane Lewis**

Most of the participants are doing time for falling behind on alimony or child support, Lewis said.

✓ "We would not put anybody out there that would be a danger to the citizens," he said.

Dressed in black-and-white striped jumpsuits and wearing orange safety vests and hats, the men use trash pickers as they walk about five miles filling orange trash bags that are hauled to the landfill at the end of each day.

✓ "More than 16 tons of trash have been picked up since the program started in the fall, Lewis said.

The crew also has found several tires and syringes, three knives and a pistol on the roadside, Lewis said.

"An inmate spotted it and stepped away and pointed it out to the deputy, who took possession of it," Lewis said. The Sheriff's Office determined that the gun wasn't stolen but is currently checking to make sure it



BRENDA RINDGE/STAFF

**Under the supervision of Cpl. Emil Mejia, participants in Berkeley County's inmate work program pick up trash along U.S. Highway 52 in Moncks Corner recently.**

wasn't used in a crime.

The inmates are transported to the site in a specially outfitted van that pulls an open trailer with a portable toilet and space for the full bags of trash. They bring box lunches, water and Gatorade from the jail.

"They do not go to restaurants or gas stations," Lewis said. "They don't interact with the public in any way, and they don't know, for obvious security reasons, where they are going to be working each day."

Officials also make sure the participants do not work in areas where they could run across

family or friends.

✓ "At the same time, Lewis wants them to be visible on the road-sides.

"I'm not trying to humiliate them, but I want young people to see the inmates out there working on the side of the road in their community, and hopefully their parents will say, 'See what happens when you commit a crime? The sheriff will have you out here picking up trash for everybody to see,'" Lewis said. "I'm hoping maybe it will stick in some youngster's mind that maybe I don't want to go down that path of crime and

be out here for my friends and parents and grandparents to see me picking up trash. That's really the heart of why I wanted to do it."

Restarting the program, which has been dormant in the county for years, was one of Lewis' campaign promises.

✓ "During the campaign, it was something that I discussed with the public and they really liked the idea, so after coming into office we put it together," he said.

✓ He enlists the citizens' advisory board he formed before the election to tell him where the

## Poll



Is it a good idea to use county jail inmates to pick up trash alongside

roadways? Go to [postandcourier.com/polls](http://postandcourier.com/polls) to vote.

crew is needed.

✓ The program has also been popular with the inmates, he said.

"We have a large number of inmates that want to come and work on the crew," Lewis said. A second work crew is being formed, and Lewis plans to add grass mowing and ditch cleaning to the workers' duties in the spring.

Participants say getting outside lowers their stress level, said Capt. Anthony Phyll, who oversees the program.

"It doesn't bother them being in stripes or what the public will think of them," he said. "They are just happy to get outside for a few hours."

✓ In addition, for each day worked, they get a day off their sentence, he said.

Cpl. Emil Mejia, who oversees the crew, said the work gives the inmates a chance at redemption.

"They want to give back to the community," he said. "They are just trying to get right with themselves."



PROVIDED

Logan gets a big hug from 2-year-old Willa.

## Essay on gentle pit bull wins prize

ESSAY, from A1

saw a photo of a 2-year-old pit bull named Logan.

"I saw his picture and fell in love with him," she said.

A pit bull is an obvious choice, but her husband was worried about having one in the house with a 2- and 4-year-old. He had seen enough pit bulls when trying to arrive people.

Michelle, 45, of Valiant Animal Rescue + Relief in Charleston had taken Logan from a home where he had been

can judge if a child or other dog is small or young, and adjust his play accordingly."

But that was only part of the story. Five years after Logan came into their lives, her husband got sick and was hospitalized. Carroll was home alone with two children, in the neighborhood where she had been attacked.

"During that time, Logan slept in the bed with me at night," Carroll said in her essay. "His large body spooned up against me gave me comfort. I didn't feel

"I can see that his days are short," Carroll wrote. "We will miss him terribly when he's gone, but he will forever be a part of our lives."

Petco got more than 3,000 entries for its annual "Holiday Wishes" contest. The entries were accompanied by grant applications from animal-rescue groups. Petco, along with partner Halo Purely for Pets, awarded \$750,000 worth of grants to 53 organizations. Grants were determined not only by the essay but the size of the organi-

## Summey criticized over vote

MAYOR, from A1

He added that he is a salaried employee of Weber, and "the bottom line is, I don't make any more or less whether that PDD (planned development district) passes or fails. That vote is not helping or hurting me one way or the other."

The Ingleside project is one of the Charleston metro area's largest planned developments and the largest ever in North Charleston.

### 'Emancipated child'

For his part, the elder Summey said he didn't think he did anything wrong when he voted along with the nine sitting council members to unanimously pass the ordinance last month.

"I was led to believe that I could vote because Elliott is emancipated," he said last week. "He doesn't get anything from me, and I sure don't get anything from him. I really didn't think anything about it. I was more interested in the project."

When questioned after the Dec. 17 vote, city spokesman Ryan Johnson also cited the "emancipated child" defense.

"The definition of 'immediate family' in the state ethics act that we have relied upon excludes children who do not live in the household of the elected official or who are not dependents of the official," he wrote in an email.

"I was led to believe that I could vote because Elliott is emancipated. He doesn't get anything from me, and I sure don't get anything from him. I really didn't think anything about it. I was more interested in the project."

Keith Summey

Ingleside matters."

### Poor judgment?

For several months leading up to his Nov. 3 re-election, the mayor staunchly denied accusations of giving favors to friends and relatives from one of his political rivals.

For that reason, he should not have participated in discussions or the vote on Ingleside, said John Crangle of the public watchdog group Common

cause there is nothing better in life than to make a living helping people, and that's what public service is all about, making life better for everyone. It was taught to me and I've passed that along to my children, and hopefully Debbie and I will be able to see it passed along to our grandchildren."

### Ingleside

Elliott Summey said he has been working for years on the 1,500-acre Ingleside project.

The city has spent millions of dollars laying down new sewer lines and major roads — Northside Drive extension, Ingleside Boulevard, Weber Drive — with more to come, including a road connecting to Patriot Boulevard and the new Interstate 26 interchange. Parts of the road network have been planned by North Charleston since John Bourne was mayor in 1991.

More than two-thirds of the land is slated for light manufacturing, retail stores, offices and hotels. A Bass Pro Shops store anchoring the commercial section of Ingleside was to open there last year but was delayed by federal wetlands regulations, according to city officials. The store is now expected to open in 2017, officials said.

Roughly 40 percent of the project will remain undisturbed wetlands, with additional acreage to be dedicated to the city for parks and green space, city of

JOSEPH D. JONES  
1433 SUNBURY LANE  
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29205

9 February 2016

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

I wanted to ask for your assistance on a condition that reflects poorly on our state in both appearance and management. It is a recurring deficiency that needs periodic emphasis but the time between those periods could be lengthened if the program of Berkeley Sheriff Duane Lewis was adopted statewide. Enclosed is an outline of his method of reducing roadside litter as printed in the Charleston Post and Courier on January 11, 2016.

My frequent travel between Edisto Island and Columbia gives me frequent reminders of how poorly we are controlling road right of way trash in some parts of the state. Coming from Edisto everything is fine until you cross the McKinley Washington Bridge on Hwy. 174 and then there is a dramatic change for the worst all the way to Hwy. 17. Where Hwy. 164 connects to Hwy. 174 all the way to Hollywood, "gross" is a good description for both sides of the road. Further down Hwy. 174 you might get on Old Jacksonboro Road to reach Hwy. 17. Old Jacksonboro is as bad as Hwy. 164. All of the above mentioned roads are in **Charleston County**.

Once you pass Jacksonboro on Hwy 64 and take Hwys. 40 and 45 to reach Hwy. 61 you are constantly reminded of how poorly we care for South Carolina's beautiful scenery and appearance due to the abundant litter.. These roads are in **Colleton County**.

As you take the I-95 North and I-26 West interchange in **Orangeburg County** toward Columbia, one sees lots of debris in this portion of the interchange. It has been this way for years and gives a bad impression to many people from "off" that we don't care how it looks. It has been this way for years.

I thought Sheriff Lewis's program had many good points that would bring success anywhere it is implemented. It enhances the beauty of South Carolina, involves local citizens in pointing out areas in need of remediation and improves the welfare of our prisoners by giving them meaningful work and shortening their prison terms.

My goal in bringing this to your attention is that roadside litter is probably a statewide nemesis in varying degrees. It has been in the past. You have the charm, authority and knowledge to direct cleanup efforts to the proper authorities. Many residents and visitors would be appreciative of your efforts.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph D. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joseph D. Jones

P. S. It was good to see you and your family at the USC and U. Conn. game last night. It is nice to know that our Governor has some time to enjoy life even though the game could have turned out better for Gamecock fans.

1 encl.