

## **Interview with Mr. Greg Martin Bladen County Manager**

**By Leighanne Kelly**

Mr. Greg Martin is the County Manager of Bladen County. He was hired in 1996 as the Assistant County Manager, a position he held for two years. He then moved to Greene County where he served as County Manager a few years. When the Bladen County Manager retired, Mr. Martin was hired to replace him and has been serving in that capacity for the past twelve years. When I went to interview Mr. Martin, I also got the chance to meet Ms. Maria Edwards who was recently hired as the Assistant to the County Manager and Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners.

As County Manager, Mr. Martin has a tough job. He must provide leadership to all of the county departments. He holds monthly Department Head meetings that help keep all departments informed.

According to Mr. Martin, Bladen County has a vision statement to "provide customer-focused, county services efficiently and responsibly." A list of values to support that vision include safety, integrity, responsibility and accountability.

One of the biggest challenges that face Bladen County is funding. Every year, department heads prepare their budgets. Mr. Martin then meets with each department head individually to discuss the requested items. The amount of money requested is always greater than the amount of money available to be allocated to the departments. Mr. Martin works with the Finance Officer to prepare a budget proposal which is then presented to the County Commissioners. Normally, a Budget Hearing is then held for interested citizens and general public. The room in the courthouse is usually packed for this hearing as people show up to speak out for their particular causes. Sometimes the commissioners send Mr. Martin back for additional work on the budget. After much hard work, the budget is finally passed. Each department does not always get everything they request, but each is treated as fairly as possible.

Another challenge is that Bladen is such a large geographic county with a sparse population. That can be a good thing, but it can also make providing services very challenging. An example is that the small township of East Arcadia is located about 30 miles from Elizabethtown. It can take up to 30 minutes for an ambulance of deputy to respond to a call in East Arcadia.

Bladen County has 9 Commissioners. They are the stewards of the county and according to Mr. Martin, they are commissioners for the right reasons. They want to make Bladen County a great place to live. County Commissioner meetings are held twice a month and are open to the public. In addition, they meet for planning sessions to develop the goals

of the county. According to Mr. Martin, this is very important. He said that “we have to focus on where we’re going and how we’re going to get there.” In looking at the future of Bladen County, Mr. Martin mentioned the Planning Department. They are always looking to the future and help guide our county’s growth.

Mr. Martin is a well-liked and well-respected manager. He loves Bladen County and works hard to provide the best possible services to its citizens.