

# Poll Worker Opportunities

Lorin Chandler encourages others, including high school and college students, to take part in the election process as a poll worker. Getting ready to graduate from Truett-McConnell University next week, she hopes to become a history teacher and encourage her students to get involved in elections, too.



**Poll worker Lorin Chandler, left, daughter of Mark and Shannon Chandler, holds a sample ballot with Mary Hammontree, chief registrar/elections supervisor, inside the room at the Whitfield County Courthouse where all voting machines are stored between elections. (Photo by Mitch Talley).**

**By MITCH TALLEY**

*Whitfield County Director of Communications*

When Lorin Chandler becomes a high school history teacher, she plans to encourage her students to get involved in the election process.

No surprise, considering the 22-year-old has already served as a poll worker herself in the past 14 elections under Whitfield County Chief

Registrar/Elections Supervisor Mary Hammontree.

“Lorin came to work in 2014 as a poll worker and has really excelled,” Hammontree said. “She’s been a manager, assistant manager, she’s been all over the county. She caught on quick. She just absolutely excelled, and I love having her here. She loves the government, loves the history behind all the voting, so it worked really good. She does anything I ask her to. If I call her the night before she’s supposed to go somewhere and say, Lorin, could you please go here instead? She does it, no questions asked.”

Chandler - who celebrated her birthday on May 3 and then will be graduating with a history degree from Truett-McConnell University in Cleveland, Ga., on May 13 – hopes to enroll at the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega next year and get her master’s degree and teaching certification.

Lorin’s mom, Shannon Chandler, works in the Whitfield County Tax Assessor’s Office and steered her into becoming a poll worker three years ago.

“Mom said, hey, Lorin, there’s this really cool job. You know you want to be a history teacher, you want to be involved – because at that time I was thinking about the political aspects of what I could do with a history degree. She’s like, well, you could look at this and see what it’s all about and that way you can learn more and have some experience. And so I started it.” The rest is history, you might say.

“The first election I worked, I thought this is so scary, I don’t know what I’m doing,” Lorin said with a laugh. “But then the second one, I was like, I really like this ... I could get into this.”

Now she has worked at four elections in 2014, two in 2015, six in 2016, and three more in 2017.

“I loved the fast-paced presidential election last year,” Lorin says, “because in some of the elections where it’s just local, you sit there and you wait and you may have 90 people come in all day to vote. But then with the presidential, it was voter after voter after voter. That was my favorite part of it.”

Lorin says one of the things she enjoys about being a poll worker is meeting “all sorts of people from all walks of life, and their ages can be from 18 to 100.” In fact, Hammontree says the county’s oldest voter during the

past presidential election was 103.

Poll workers don't have to report to work very often, but when they do, the day starts early and ends late. They have to be there an hour before the polls open at 7 a.m. to set things up, and they're there for two or more hours after voting ends at 7 p.m.

"They have to close all the machines down, do all the paperwork, make sure everything matches up," Hammontree said of the post-closing activities. "It's a lot of things that goes into working the polls – people don't realize. It's not just sit there all day long and smile; there's a lot of things involved in it. Then they have to bring everything back to me that night at the courthouse, so it's a long, long, long day for them."

It takes a lot of people to run an election since by law at least three poll workers are required at each of the county's 23 precincts.

Hammontree would like to see more young people involved as poll workers since the law allows people as young as 16 to serve in the position. "I would love to have other college kids like Lorin to do it because they're so smart and we're going more technology driven," she said. "There are some things I want to incorporate into the polling places, and I would love some college kids to be able to do that. When I really need them is like during the May and November elections, and next year we'll have the governor's election so it would be awesome to have a couple of new college kids to be able to float around."

Anyone interested in becoming a poll worker first needs to fill out an application, and if hired, undergo two to four hours of training each year "because the state requirement is that regardless how long they've been here, they have to come to a training each year."

Hammontree also encourages anyone who can't commit to a full day at the polls but can contribute two or three hours, to come and serve as a volunteer. Even high school students at least 16 years old are eligible and sometimes earn extra credit in their government class.

"They *will* be able to get extra credit in my class," Lorin says with a smile, "because you learn a lot at elections. I've gotten to meet so many interesting people, people that you make connections with – oh, you work here? Can you tell me something about this? Or just get your foot in the door at other places. That way whenever you do graduate from high school, if you don't choose to go to college, that's fine – college isn't for everybody. But if you have those volunteer hours or if you decide to work at another

election, then you've got your foot in the door with some of those people that you make relationships with."

For more information about becoming a poll worker, call Mary Hammontree at 706-278-7183 or e-mail her at [mhammontree@whitfieldcountyga.com](mailto:mhammontree@whitfieldcountyga.com).