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Hatcher named state's outstanding clerk

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Blount County Circuit Court Clerk Tom Hatcher was recognized as Outstanding State Court Clerk of the Year last week in Nashville during the Tennessee County Officials Conference.

This is the second time in the past three years Hatcher has been selected by his peers for the honor.

Hatcher was elected as Blount County Circuit Court clerk in 1994. He began his career in public service with the Blount County Sheriff's Office, where he served as a patrolman, a criminal investigator and director of the 5th Judicial District Drug Task Force.

Accomplishments by Hatcher and his staff since 1994 include initiating a computer system that makes the office fully automated and providing a computer in the office for public access. A web site is being developed to allow the public to learn more about the Circuit Court clerk's office and the operation of the courts. The computer system already allows access to law enforcement agencies, attorneys, the District Attorney General's office and collections agencies to inquire about cases without leaving their own offices.

Hatcher has placed clerks in all courtrooms to assist the judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys. He has been instrumental in installing a video arraignment system to allow those arrested to be arraigned without having a magistrate go into the secure areas of the Blount County Jail. He has also installed a pneumatic tube system connecting the civil process division and the jail's master control area. This has proven a time saver for clerks, getting documents back and forth from separate areas of the Blount County Justice Center without someone having to walk back and forth.

Hatcher and his staff have also created a cost collection department responsible for collecting court costs, fines and restitution.

He has been active in professional groups related to his work. Hatcher was president of the East Tennessee Clerks Association in 1999-2000 and named East Tennessee State Court Clerk of the Year in 2000. He was president of the State Court Clerks Association in 2000-2001.

Hatcher was appointed to a four- year term on the Tennessee Judicial Council and has been nominated for a second four-year term on the council. The judicial council reviews all legislation concerning the court system and law enforcement, pointing out potential problems and offering suggestions to avoid problems.

Hatcher has served as chairman of the State Court Clerks Association legislative committee

for the past five years and has worked closely with legislators in Nashville. He was the lead person in revamping standard for the municipal courts across the state as well as the restructuring and simplifying of court costs for clerks across Tennessee.
