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Cullman's Monday Newspaper

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PLUS Area Athlete Spotlight, New Year's Resolutions, and More! LOOK INSIDE

CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS

Don't Do the Laundry

By: Natalie Bonner
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qrnews/nbonner



Fireworks ring in another new year for Cullman. *Photo by: Jessica Norrell*

The first of the year is always marked by a new beginning and a sense of awareness that carries the hope of an even better year to come. Since we are not fortune tellers, mind readers or psychics, we are limited in what we can do to make sure we have a good year.

There is, however, a host of customs, traditions and superstitions practiced the world over by people in order to ensure a good year is had.

Certain foods and activities are either encouraged or forbidden on the first of the year. New Year's Day is full of random foods, odd behavior and interesting practices. Many believe that what you do on this day will predict the pattern for the rest of your year.

A typical "good luck" meal cooked on the first of the year should include greens, legumes, pork and a dessert delicacy.

Translated in the South, however, a traditional New Year's Day menu usually includes: collard greens, black-eyed peas, pork and sauerkraut (no real reason for the garnish) and Grandma's homemade apple cake.

Everyone knows why we consume this traditional feast. Or do they?

Greens are cooked in order to ensure financial prosperity; legumes are representative of coins; pork is eaten to signify progress as the pig roots forward; and any type of cake, cookie or donut circular in shape, symbolizes the idea that we have come "full circle" as one year ends and another begins.

"We cook black-eyed peas, which is an old Southern thing to do that's supposed to bring good luck," Star Craighead said, a Michigan native in town with his wife for the holidays visiting family. "I'm going to make my wife eat 12 of them, one for each month, but I'm going to eat a few bowls full."

Another food custom is to eat 12 grapes, one for each month. This custom of Spain urges the eater to pay attention to each grape as you eat them. If any grape eaten is sour, then said month in rotation is rumored to be a rough one.

Discouraged foods can include lobster as they move backwards and chicken since they scratch backwards, both of which can represent ill progress or setbacks.

It is also customary to leave a little bit of food on your plate past midnight to ensure a full pantry of goods for the new year.

In his online article, "How and Why Do We Celebrate New Year – Traditions and Celebrations around the World," HubPages Contributor, Kevin Peters, explains "The whole range of celebration of the New Year's Day basically stems from the various ways ancient societies used to greet the new harvest seasons. It was their customs to drape themselves with new clothes, replace the old interiors and households."

These handed-down customs and practices are performed to secure a fruitful, prosperous year. People all over the world carry out these traditions or so-called superstitions in preparation for a new year.

"Symbolically, [the] New Year signifies a renewal of life. Hence, the spirit of celebration for the regeneration, while discarding the old and worn out. The customs and practices, though modified through the centuries, have still their distinctive strains in the ways we welcome each onrushing year," Peters writes.

There is an ongoing list of activities to do or not to do on the first. A popular one being—don't do the laundry. Are we promoting lethargy all of a sudden? Not at all. There is an interesting reason for the boycotted household chore, though.

"I don't do laundry on the first because it means you may wash someone out of the family, according to the superstition," said Vicki Bagley, of Cullman.

Other bizarre superstitions, customs and traditions are practiced by many.

Nearly everyone partakes in the practice of kissing loved ones at midnight in an effort to keep those dearest to them nearest.

It is also customary to not allow anything out on the first of the year (garbage, etc.) as one would like for something to first be added, rather than subtracted.

The number one disapproved activity on the first is to do anything negative that may hinder or contribute to an unsuccessful year. Working all day, crying and cleaning are three frowned-upon examples of actions to perform on the first of January as this predicts an unfavorable routine for the remainder of the year.

Some Cullman County residents find more reason in tradition versus superstition. "I'm not really superstitious to tell the truth. I think it's just a norm we have for the holiday, a tradition to follow," Cullman resident, Kevin Moss, said.

On the flip side, there are those out there who simply do not alter their routine at all and do not abide by any holiday hoopla, with zero fear for implied consequences or warnings to a dim year. "I don't follow any [superstitions] because it's against God. It is witchcraft, and you could lose your soul," West Point resident, Betty Carnes, stated.

As noted, the New Year is a beautiful beginning and an inviting opportunity to make of it what one will. Just as the closing of a year is a bittersweet, candid experience as we reflect on our experiences.

As Warrior resident, Dannie Ray Ellison, effectively said, "That year is gone. It won't ever be back. We all have a New Year's resolution in our lives."

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Lifestyle - Religion

Joey Coots - Real Life Purpose

By: Dawn Owens
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qrnews/dowens

For some of us, trying to find our purpose in life can take a lifetime, for others they seem to just stumble upon it, but for Joey Coots, pastor of Journey Church in Eva, Alabama, he believes that every one can have purpose for their life, with the help of Jesus Christ.

Joey Coots has been the pastor at Journey Church since September of 2002. It's come a long way since his arrival and now the church boasts 200 attendees each weekend including visitors.

Their vision of Real Life Purpose centers itself on the idea that people need to be real. Real about who they are and where they are at in their life. "The greatest journey in life is living. If you get real with yourself, you can start living your real life now, " shared Coots.

Coots, a native of Falkville, hasn't always been a pastor of a church. He found a love for music at the age of 14.



Pastor Joey Coots *Photo by: Emily Durden*

After attending Wallace State, Coots moved to Nashville to pursue music professionally and traveled with various groups all over the country. This experience gave him the opportunity to see churches of all shapes, sizes, and denominations.

It's also what has prepared him for a pastoral role. Coots began his call to pastor at the age of 27 at Hopewell Baptist Church in Danville, Alabama. It was a traditional southern Baptist church, established in 1824 and one of the oldest churches in Alabama. Coots and his wife Kim went into the church with a new vision. Once that vision took hold, the church grew from 30 to 240 plus.

When Journey Church was in need of a new pastor, Coots was not searching for a new opportunity. He was content right where he was at Hopewell. But after a request from some of the folks at Journey and a period of prayer, he felt God opening the door to him to pastor at this new church.

Now 9 years later Coots is constantly pushing the envelope on how the church presents the gospel to its attendees and the community.

See Coots Page 11

What to Do When You or Someone You Know Miscarries

By: Dawn Owens
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Dealing with a miscarriage is not an easy thing to do whether you are the one who is experiencing it or supporting someone who is going through one. Most people struggle with how to act, what to say, what to do or what not to do.

As a woman who has experienced two miscarriages prior to having my now two-year-old son, I never really understood the pain that a couple could go through when they miscarried until my husband and I experienced it ourselves.

Even though years have gone by since we experienced that trauma I still struggle with knowing the right thing to say or do when a friend calls or contacts me to talk about their miscarriage.

It's a sensitive topic to deal with and I've found that the only way to address it appropriately is with Godly wisdom, discernment, and supernatural amounts of love.

When I went through my first miscarriage many people gave me names and numbers of women that I didn't know.

They thought that talking to someone, even if they were complete strangers, might help. Personally I found this quite odd and never took them up on their offer.

Our first pregnancy only lasted four weeks. I found out on Friday we were pregnant and by Monday we had lost the baby.

Our next pregnancy was a bit different. This time I was eight weeks pregnant and was on assignment, traveling for my previous employer.

I was several hundred miles from home at West Georgia University training a team at the college. I started miscarrying during that training and by the time I got back to my room that afternoon I was starting to bleed heavily.

After a command from the OB/GYN on call from my doctor's office, I was on a plane back to Ohio, where my husband and I lived at the time.

I will never forget the pain, anger, and shame I felt miscarrying our baby in the Atlanta airport.

People didn't know what to say. Sometimes they said the right thing, sometimes they didn't. At times I was functional, others I was angry, but mostly I was sad. I couldn't understand why God would allow this to happen to us, not once but twice.

We were both Christians who loved God and had sought His will to get pregnant in the first place.

Recently I have learned of a book written by a woman who also has experienced miscarriage. Like me, she didn't have all the answers. She didn't understand why it was happening, but God opened a door of opportunity to her to share her story with others online in a way that brought healing.

In doing so, Bethany Kerr has brought healing to many. Her blog posts on miscarriage generated comments, questions, and words of encouragement from people all over the globe.

In her quest to help others, Bethany made those posts, questions she received and the answers she found available through her book, "Answers in a Time of Miscarriage."

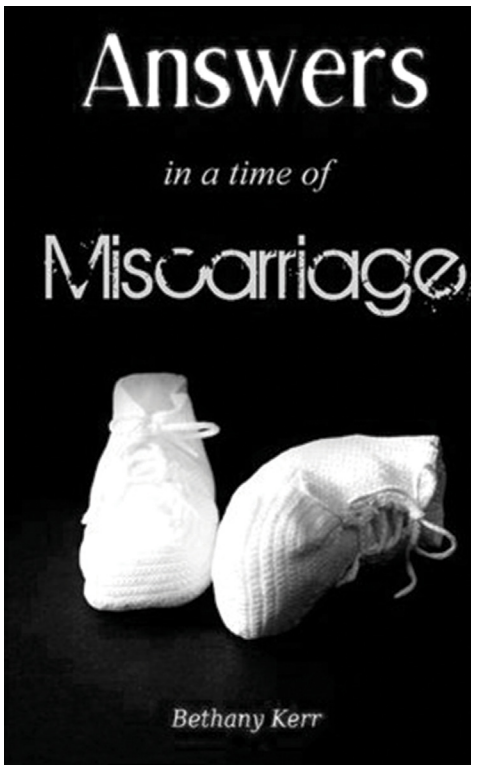
Her book is laid out in a journal format, which guides the reader through her experience. Bethany used her blog posts to articulate her thoughts, emotions, and experiences of losing her child in February of 2007.

Bethany was 10.5 weeks out from her period when she went to the doctor for a routine check-up to get an ultrasound and some pictures of her baby. They were unable to find a heartbeat.

They found that the baby had died at only 6 weeks gestation.

Bethany and her husband, James, had three children at the time and were trusting God for the fourth.

The doctor explained to Bethany that



she could miscarry this coming week but if she did not, she would be able to do a "D & C," dilation and curettage, which is a surgical procedure that often is done after a first trimester miscarriage. A "D & C" was not an option for Bethany.

On February 22, 2007 she wrote on her blog, "I would always be wondering if the baby had been alive and I had actually aborted it. If I am going to have a miscarriage, I'm going to let it happen on it's own."

See Answers Page 11

No(ah)-It-All: Why Not

By: Noah Chandler

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qrne.ws/nchandler

Everyone in the office has been talking about the different resolutions that they are preparing to undertake as the tick-tocking clock slowly drips down to the end of 2011. For some reason I have not ever been one for resolutions, imagine that the guy who doesn't celebrate holidays or birthdays also never makes resolutions, but alas this year I am reaching deep down to pull out this gem.

My resolution for 2012 is a two-part process. This year I plan on living healthier, but just not in the typical manner of living healthy.

The first part requires me to focus more on my physical health. Not the usual, 'I need to lose weight' or 'I need to run more', kind of health resolution, but a real I need to live healthier type of declaration. These past few years have been rather tumultuous to say the very least which has had a direct impact on my old health meter.

Everything is copasetic, so no worries. However, as my 30th birthday struck, it quickly became evident that this man cannot live on 38-cent burritos, beef jerky, chicken broth, cookie dough, and cola alone. Yes, those items were a main staple of my diet over the past decade or so and yes, I do know what wonderful havoc that reckless eating regiment can reap, but I did it anyway. Plus it was a pretty delicious time in life…ah, cookie dough!

The second part to this wonderful living healthier declaration is to learn how to better relieve stress. Since the loss of my father three years back, it has become increasingly evident that when push-comes-to-shove I get extremely stressed out far too easily.

Now most people would not admit this, but then again this is not your average publication so let's say we just roll with it.

Since that loss there have been periods in my life that seem to be harder to deal with knowing that the support I look for is no longer there. Therefore there is nothing left to do but throw that stress in a bag, toss it on the shoulders and continue to push forward knowing that the path is right.

How can this resolution become a reality? Well first off I have to realize what drives both behaviors. The foremost is easy to identify however the latter is a tad more difficult to completely peg.

The reason I chose to eat slightly appetizing extremely cheap burritos and drink nearly a half case of cola each day was simply because it tasted good and I am extremely lazy when it comes to food. If it tastes remotely good I will eat it. Rice with butter, rice with gravy, rice with sugar and cinnamon…wait, there is a theme there.

More effort has to be put in to what I eat, not just relying on a microwave at 2 a.m. to take care of hunger pains.

The latter of the two-part living healthier declaration requires me to acknowledge that I in fact to do not know it all and it is perfectly alright to admit that.

Many try to build up a façade that allows them to appear strong, knowledgeable, and brave, but more times than most they are frazzled, stressed out, and ready to seek cover under a nice blanky. I forfeiting that luxury because that is not who I am.

Basically, I am just a 30-year-old publisher of a great community newspaper who is just trying to provide a living for my crew and their families as well as my own. My father won't be back therefore I have to accept this reality and push forward knowing at least my mother can participate in this fun new venture.

So my resolution for 2012 is to live healthier. If you've been down too then feel free to join me on this new exploration of positivity and better food! Who knows, we may all get together later in the year for a nice picnic with the crew. Happy New Year! Thank you all for supporting this wonderful crew.

Weather

Source: NWS

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Hi: 43	Hi: 42	Hi: 48	Hi: 50
Lo: 21	Lo: 25	Lo: 27	

Monday: Sunny, with a high near **43.**
Monday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around **21**.
Tuesday: Sunny, with a high near **42.**
Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around **25**.
Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near **48**.
Wednesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around **27**.
Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near **50**.
Check **CullmanSense.com** for the latest weather forecast.

About Us

CullmanSense is a weekly print publication based out of Cullman, Alabama. The online site, CullmanSense.com, is a six-day a week publication, which includes arrest and incident reports from Cullman City Police and the Cullman County Sheriff's Office, Obituaries, and other timely information. The site is completely free and does include stories not found in our print edition.

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Sports - Area Athlete Spotlight

Colby Adams: Holly Pond High School

By: Josh McBrayer
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qrnews/jmcbrayer

After 16 games played, Holly Pond's Colby Adams is averaging 11 points, two assists, and three rebounds per game. He is hitting 41 percent of his shots from the field and 80 percent from the foul line, making him the center of this week's Area Athlete Spotlight.

Colby Adams leads the Holly Pond Broncos offense on the hardwood. He is a big shooting threat from behind the three point line and also off the penetrating dribble.

This week Adams took time from his busy holiday schedule of tournament play and family gatherings to answer a few questions for CullmanSense. Below are his answers, along with a few words from his coach Mitch Morris.

Josh McBrayer: If you would Colby, tell our readers a little bit about yourself.

Colby Adams: I am Colby Adams, a sophomore at Holly Pond High School. I play varsity basketball and golf. I have always been around sports, and they are a huge part of my life.

JM: How long have you been playing basketball?

CA: Since my dad is a coach, I have been around basketball all my life, but I played on my first basketball team when I was in 2nd Grade.

JM: What is your favorite sport?

CA: I love playing both basketball and golf, but my favorite sport is definitely basketball.

JM: What is your greatest accomplishment in sports?

CA: I would have to say my greatest accomplishment would be our golf team getting 3rd in the state in 3A last year.

JM: Who has been your biggest inspiration in sports?

CA: My dad had been my biggest inspiration. Sports are also an important part of his life and he has always pushed me to excel and be the best that I can be, not just in sports, but in everything I do and in all aspects of my life.

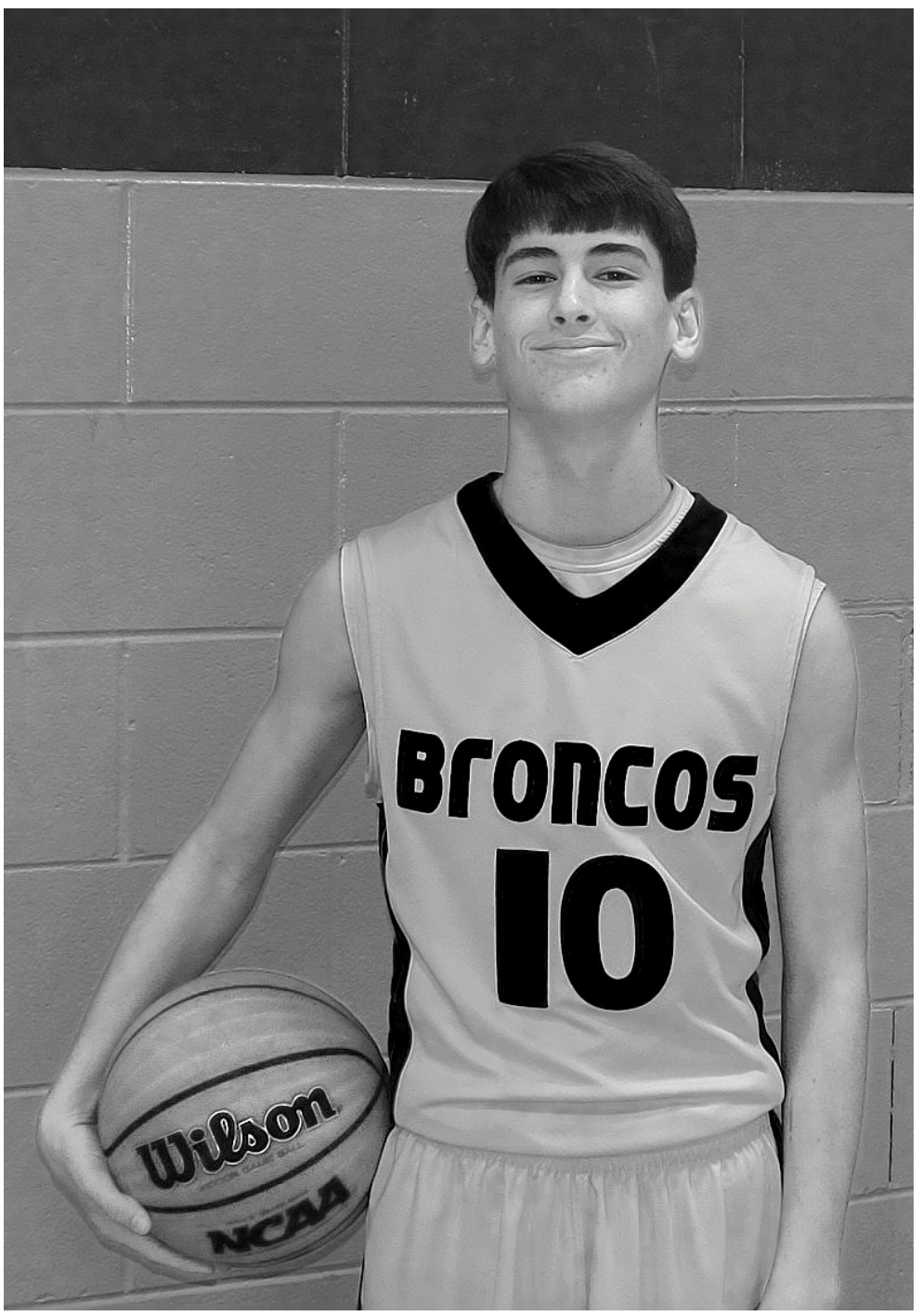
Holly Pond Head Coach Mitch Morris said that Colby is always looking to improve his skills on the court.

"Colby is always working on his game. Whether he is outside at his home shooting or at the gym shooting with his dad or brother, he is always working," Morris said. "He is always working on something, be it shooting, passing, ball handling."

Colby's passion for the game and his love for his team is a wonderful attribute for an already talented athlete.

"Colby has a presence about him. He sees the floor well, looking for open teammates," Morris said. "He has worked hard on his shot in traffic, but he is a pass first shoot second player though he can hit the shots. That makes him a special player. Colby cares about basketball and he cares about Holly Pond."





Cullman County Basketball Schedule

Tuesday, January 3, 2011

Cullman Christian @ Brooklane Boys & Girls

Cullman @ Brewer Boys & Girls

Fairview @ Holly Pond Boys & Girls

Vinemont @ Hanceville Boys & Girls

Thursday, January 5, 2011

Good Hope @ Holly Pond Boys & Girls

West Point @ Vinemont Boys & Girls

Friday, January 6, 2011

Cold Springs @ American Christian Academy Boys & Girls

Cahawba @ Cullman Christian Boys & Girls

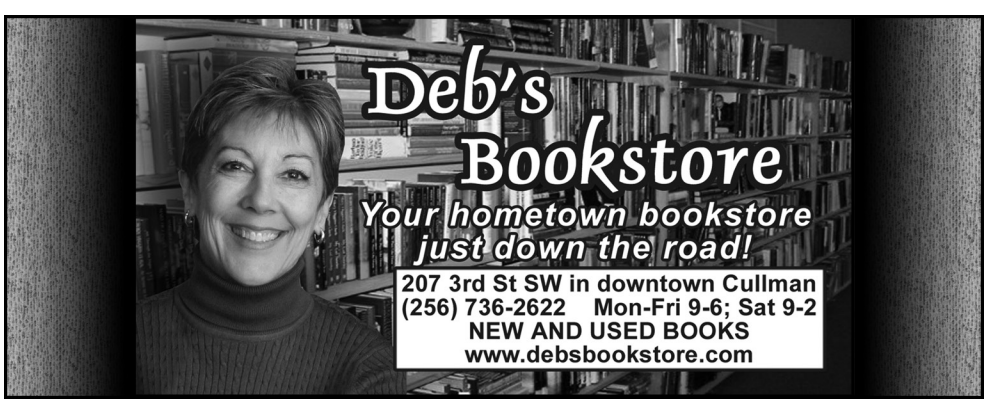
Dora @ Cullman Boys & Girls

Fairview @ Priceville Boys & Girls

Good Hope @ Danville Boys & Girls

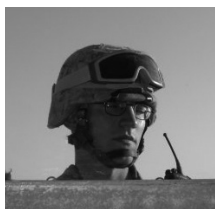
Holly Pond @ Winston County Girls Only

Hanceville @ Vinemont Boys & Girls



Star Wars: The Old Republic

By: Dustin McSpadden
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dmnews/dmcspadden

Don't let the name fool you; this isn't like the same Old Republic that you have played before. It's not like the one with the compelling storyline and new system of consequences that had PC gamers smugly proclaiming superiority in 2003, nor is it like any other of its seemingly endless re-creations.

In this incarnation you have to deal with other people. That's right; you must interact with other players in order to complete this one, because it's a MMO (massively multiplayer online game).

What's that? You say you don't like other people? Why would you buy a video game and shun your real friends in order to deal with virtual people that you have never met before in your life?

Perhaps it's because it allows game producers to milk money out of you continuously for as long as humanly possible. But since you are a hopeless Star Wars geek, you'll get it anyway, and since you are already going to get it, I thought that I should probably give it a shot too.

A few millennia after the events of Knights of the Old Republic I and II, the galaxy is again at war between the Sith and Jedi. No, not the one with Luke and all the others, that is a few more millennia in the future.

You begin by creating your character. Then, you can choose among a variety of races and classes, which is a standard feature for MMOs.

I sampled several of the beginnings, each one with its own custom scrolling text introduction that is indicative of the Star Wars franchise. By using the character's name in the scrolling mass of text the game makes you feel that your character is important, even though there are many others around you.

Unsurprisingly, the Jedi and Sith starting points starkly contrast one another. The Jedi begin their journey in a peaceful, serene setting, while the Sith start in a darker world that players of the Knights of the Old Republic will already be familiar with. I actually felt a sense of nostalgia when I went through Naga Shadow's tomb again.

While everyone likes the ideals of the Jedi, I found their storyline a bit dry and the Jedi rules too restrictive. So naturally I found a lot more enjoyment in playing the amoral smuggler, who is only in it for the money and the dastardly Sith Inquisitor.

On the other side of the spectrum are the Sith missions which were more enthralling and action-packed. I truly wanted to destroy my enemies as a Sith.

But when I played as a Jedi I found myself always taking the same Dark Path which made it difficult to take the Jedi story seriously. Here I was breaking every rule imposed and the game lauded me for it. I wasn't thrown out of The Order or even slapped on the wrist! Instead I was congratulated for actions that should have incurred punishment.

Both sides of the story were fantastically written and surprisingly all the quests had voice acting and dynamic choices that had to be made while they were being given instead of the normal MMO fodder of a giant mass of text that no one reads.

A staple of BioWare titles is companions, and this game is no different. Not only do you have to play with other people, but you get to drag along AI characters as well. Most MMOs keep you hooked with trade skills, i.e. smithing, mining, alchemy, and The Old Republic delivers there as well.

What makes it stand out is that you can send your companion off on side missions to level up your skills for you. Is your inventory full? Send your companion to sell off all your excess junk. Are you getting kicked around? Have your companion break the enemy's fist with their face or even heal you!

While it is a novel idea, the jury is still out on everyone having a companion in an MMO.

Overall the game is fun, but like all MMOs, time is consumed and nearly nothing is accomplished. At least it's something different from World of Warcraft.

Come on back next week when I look at Armored Core V.

Resolve Your Resolution

By: Natalie Bonner
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Picture this: It is the first day of January 1, 2013. The house is immaculate, the children are making up their beds, the coffee is steadily brewing, and you no longer have to wrestle into your skinny jeans because they simply glide right on.

Does this sound like a missing page from a storybook? It can be the first page in your new year, if you only do one thing—resolve your resolution. A perfect ending can be yours if you start with a new beginning. Make and keep a New Year's resolution for 2012 and the perfect opening to 2013 can be yours.

Many assume accomplishing a resolution is an easy feat, but for most, it is actually a difficult endeavor that can be finalized with despair and frustration. Since most people popularly address their shortcomings and issues as they prepare resolutions, it is only common to experience distress as we attempt to correct those "old habits [that] die hard."

Stick to your goal and success will be yours. Whether your goal is to get in shape or cure cancer, remember the only person who can get in the way of your goal is yourself. Read on to find out some of Cullman County residents' resolutions as they embrace the coming New Year. I even included mine . . .

Cullman County Residents' Resolutions:

"I want to read more good books and have better conversations with your children."

—Andrew Siegenthaler
Christ Covenant Church

"My resolution, my mantra, for 2012 is to continue building the foundation of CullmanSense that provides a platform for the community to express itself freely."

—Dustin Isom
CullmanSense Crew

"I want to spend more time with my kids and grandchildren."

—Tresa McCreery, of Cullman

"God has really put it on me that we don't need a New Year's resolution for a new year's dedication to be closer to God than I have ever been, to spend more time with God than I have ever given, and to give more money than I have ever given. I want us to be a church dedicated to God, loving those in our community. Resolution doesn't last but dedication to something does."

—Dwayne Harbison
Cathedral of Praise Church

I will strive to have deeper relationships with those I am connected with.

—Emily Durden, CullmanSense Crew

"We're going to the gym, so my resolution is to get in shape!"

—Tabatha Alexander, of Addison

"I want to make all A's this year."

—Allison Alexander, daughter of Tabatha Alexander, also of Addison

"My resolution is to continue making a living doing what I love. I hope to garner the true meaning of the phrase "Anything is possible." I will continue to chase my dreams to the fullest, while remaining humbled and guided by God, my family and friends."

—Natalie Bonner, CullmanSense Crew

"My goal is to make it another year."

—Mike Hale, of Cullman

"We want to launch life groups (small groups), for a year of growth."

—Tim Herron, Spirit Life Church

"I want to help others become healthy and give people the right knowledge and tools they need to become healthy in their own lives. I'm always excited about a new year. It's very much in my thought pattern about new beginnings. As I look forward to the New Year, I want to grow more spiritually, spend more time with my family, have more traveling adventures, and of course, continue to help others."

—Brenda Dew
Co-owner of Medical Weight Loss Solutions

"My resolution is to make the best, better."

—Harold Grimes, of Fairview

"My resolution for this year, first and foremost, is to continue to seek God to understand His heart and vision for Cullman. I plan to continue advocating for those who advocate for others so that they get to share their stories and educate the community on the needs of Cullman.

In doing so, I hope to educate the citizens of Cullman in a way that perpetuates action. I hope that through my articles, they are compelled to get involved, to give of themselves, and to encourage others to do the same.

I also resolve to seek out opportunities to give voice to people who may not feel heard or need their story told, to causes that have gone unnoticed, and to issues that could be solved if people were aware of them."

—Dawn Owens, CullmanSense Crew

"I do have a sense that God is moving us to not just provide physical labor where we go, but to just walk beside people and the needs of their souls and to hear what their hearts cry out for. Hear their struggles and just do life with them, love them in what they are going through.

I want to help people win, I want them to know the truth of how God loves them, and sometimes we get so caught up in this world that we need help. We need someone to come along side of us and help us to see the truth of who God is and how much He is passionate and how much He loves us.

I want people to be free of the lies they have heard that tell us we are not enough. I want people to know that there is a reason that they are the way they are, and that God may have built them the way they are on purpose."

—Under the Tree Missions

"My goal is to be the best Norrell I can be."

—Jessica Norrell,
CullmanSense Crew

Rediscovering Cullman
Specialty Wellness Healthy Living Store

By: Meghan Nelson
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qrnews/mnelson

Despite my year-long, albeit somewhat haphazard, efforts at jogging, low-carbing, and P90X-ing, I have found myself once again encased in a healthy layer of winter weight. To solve this dilemma, I, like most people, generally follow a solid pattern – that of resolving to lose an absurd amount in the new year, eating odd foods and tiny portions throughout January, gorging on chocolate during Valentine's Day, and admitting defeat shortly thereafter.

This year, however, I decided to try a new approach (because, as we all know but somehow seem to conveniently disregard, doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results is the definition of insanity). Therefore, I strategically determined that the next stop on my rediscovering Cullman journey would be Specialty Wellness, a shop that focuses on healthy living and well being.

Located downtown in the Warehouse District, Specialty Wellness is a fairly new venue in Cullman. It was founded by local Pharmacist, Stephen Skinner, in 2010 and has quickly become the city's most well-rounded source of healthy living products.

Upon entering the tranquilly-decorated store, I immediately knew that Specialty Wellness was an appropriate choice with which to begin my new year. After all, whether it was due to the bath and body products or the multiple selections of supplements, the shop just smelled healthy.

I made my way to the spacious front counter and was warmly greeted by Karli Amonite, the store's residential wellness specialist. Karli shared that she's been working with Specialty Wellness as a healthy lifestyle consultant since October of 2010.

Her specialization is a technique called hair analysis, in which she tests the minerals and metals found in a client's hair sample. This test reveals the metabolic type of a client and reflects on the functioning of the endocrine system. After Karli runs an analysis, she starts each client on a two-month regimen meant to balance the body and improve energy. She also advises her clients to check in with her every two weeks via office, email, or phone.

Although Karli's hair analysis process sounded quite scientific to my rather unscientific brain, her philosophy on nutrition was straightforward and refreshing. "Don't get overwhelmed with fads," she advised. "Keep everything in moderation and don't focus as much on the scales as on your energy levels."



Stephen Skinner, local Pharmacist and owner of Specialty Wellness, stands with Karli Amonite, the shop's Wellness Specialist. *Photos by: Meghan Nelson*



Specialty Wellness offers a variety of food products, including nut butters, jellies, and sweeteners and also sells special allergy foods, such as gluten-free products.

Hearing this sensible strategy, I began to feel that my typical New Year's resolution of massive weight loss and total diet overhaul was perhaps a bit extreme. Since I didn't feel particularly pumped about eating cabbage soup for two weeks straight anyway, I asked Karli what she recommends regarding New Year's resolutions.

"Keep [your resolutions] simple," she shared, "and don't put too much pressure on yourself." Karli suggested that a good resolution might be to have more energy or to learn a new technique, such as yoga. She shared that such resolutions tend to be more effective than being obsessed with a number on the scale.

As I was coming to the delightful realization that my first two weeks of January might not consist purely of cabbage soup after all, I was further delighted to find Stephen Skinner, the owner of Specialty Wellness, entering the shop. While Karli attended to a nutrition-minded customer, I took the opportunity to ask Stephen how he began Specialty Wellness.

Stephen revealed that during his sixteen years as a Pharmacist, he rapidly developed an interest in natural products, supplements, and vitamins, jokingly commenting, "I'm a hundred years too late because of my interest in natural medicines and compounding."

Although he offers several supplements and compounded medicines at his other store, Specialty Pharmacy, Stephen saw a need in Cullman for a place that offers a combination of supplements, foods, and other products for a healthy lifestyle all in one location.

"It's what I believe in, and I have a passion for it," he said. "Everybody is so stressed, and so many people have health problems or don't feel well overall. I wanted to open a healthy living store to help people live a healthy lifestyle."

Feeling a rush of health-minded motivation at Stephen's words, I asked him how he recommends that someone begin changing her lifestyle into a more healthy one. He emphasized that you must first decide that you want to make changes in your life and shared that people generally want to make drastic changes that don't usually last. Instead, he said, it's better to take small, positive steps, such as changing what you drink or beginning a daily habit of walking.

"I believe in people and that they can feel better and do more than they think they can," noted Stephen. "I see people in their seventies and eighties who are vibrant and full of energy, and then I see some people who are thirty to fifty but look and act older than the seventy-year-olds."

To help customers make these healthy changes, Specialty Wellness offers a variety of products. Exploring the neatly-stocked, dark brown shelves, clients

Rediscovering Cullman



Top: Specialty Wellness sells a variety of healthy products, including supplements, bath and body items, foods, and drinks.
Left: Customers can find healthy and delicious snack alternatives at Specialty Wellness.
Right: Stevia-sweetned soft drinks, such as these all-natural Zevias, can be found at Specialty Wellness.





can find several enticing food items, household products, skincare lines, bath and beauty items, eco-friendly products, gluten-free and other special allergy foods, and, of course, a large selection of supplements.

Impressed as I was by this huge array of options, I must admit that the rollbacks and low prices of Wal-Mart are a great temptation to my frugal personality, and I often avoid organic products simply because they tend to be more expensive. Voicing my money-minded concerns, I asked Stephen what justifies spending a little more money on healthy alternative items, and his answer was logical and quite convincing.

"It's an investment in yourself and your family. You can spend money now on eating well and taking supplements, or you can spend it later in life on doctors and drugs."

He went on to add that Specialty Wellness helps decrease the cost of healthy living by keeping several items on sale and offering a customer loyalty program in which patrons build points for every dollar they spend on any item in the shop. He also encourages customers to sample food items before buying them so that they know they will enjoy their purchases. Karli and Stephen both agree that although organic items tend to be more expensive, cutting out junk food and fillers usually compensates for the extra cost.

With my budget fears allayed, Stephen and I began discussing what he enjoys most about owning Specialty Wellness. "I like seeing that we're making a difference in people and helping them live a healthier life with improved quality," he shared, adding that he especially likes to see a person who's problems weren't getting better finally begin to improve after visiting the shop. He also enjoys learning tips, recipes, and other healthy living advice from the store's different customers.

As our conversation wound to an end, I was left feeling both motivated and refreshed. Stephen and Karli's advice on living a healthy lifestyle seemed simple, doable, and far more attractive than most of the diets I've convinced myself to try. I was also both surprised and impressed to find such a well-stocked whole living store in Cullman, which, let's face it, tends to be known more for sweet tea and barbecue rather than Stevia and barley. After my visit to Stephen's shop, I have a feeling that my new year will involve much more time in Specialty Wellness and much less time attempting to make cabbage soup appetizing.

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Mirroring History

Looking Back: Exploring Historic Cullman at Mary Carter Paint Store

Circa 1947-51



Contributed by Cullman County Museum

2011



Photo by: Jessica Norrell

Community Matters

Budget Advice for the New Year

By: Meghan Nelson
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In our world full of credit cards, reward points, and very little actual cash, a New Year's resolution to 'save more money' can be a difficult objective to reach. Aside from the fact that 'saving money' is a vague and somewhat nebulous term, our society constantly presents us with an overwhelming array of things we need to buy – objects that are meant to make us look younger, feel better, or be happier.

Though these items can be highly tempting, I have concluded that slathering myself with facial cream while driving the latest car and wearing a pair of expensive pants really doesn't compensate for the discouragingly awful feeling of being in debt.

As a result of this conclusion, I've adopted a few monetary strategies to help make that New Year's goal a bit more attainable.

The most important part of my strategy originated from the advice of my grandparents – don't buy what you can't afford. Now, I realize that this intimidating feat is sometimes unavoidable. After all, surgeries, doctor's visits, and other activities relevant to our well being are expensive but often quite necessary.

However, a huge flat-screen TV, a new sports car, or a lavish bedroom suit are likely not exceedingly important to our overall health.

Unless you can afford to buy such items without going into debt, it may be a good financial decision to opt for a less expensive, smaller version or even to postpone the purchase until funds are available.

Another reliable way to save more money is to limit the number of times you dine out (including those convenient fast food stops). When we aren't stingily ordering a la carte, a typical restaurant meal at a mid-priced venue is about $25 for my husband and myself, and a general fast food bill is usually around $10.

Even if we only ate at a restaurant once a week and grabbed some fast food three times, we would still be spending around $55 a week on dining out. Factoring in the cost of purchasing food to eat at home rather than at a restaurant, we would save around $25 a week, or $100 a month, by forgoing fast food and restaurant dining.

It's likely not surprising that the third piece of my money-saving plan is to make a budget. While most of us know that a planned, written budget is a helpful financial tool, we somehow find it quite easy to overlook this humble instrument.

Perhaps our disregard is due to the intimidating and restrictive nature that is often associated with a budget; however, making a budget is actually a straightforward task and knowing how much you can spend on what items is often a liberating sensation.

Simply determine the amount of your bills and other necessary payments and purchases, factor in the amounts you want to donate and save, and the remaining balance can be spent on the items of your choosing. (I admit that it sounds much easier than it actually is.)

While 'saving more money' (or in other words, spending less money) requires thought and planning, it is a New Year's resolution that can be doable and rewarding. So, ignore that advertisement for Applebee's, disregard the magazine ad about wrinkle cream, and start your New Year by putting a little money in the bank.

Project Rebound Still Available for Assistance

By: Dawn Owens
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Members of the Cullman County Project Rebound team gather in their office in Cullman. *Photo by: Emily Durden*

It's been eight months since the April tornadoes swept through Alabama and turned Cullman on it's heels. Slowly but surely the city and county have been rebuilding homes, businesses and schools.

But what about those who have been emotionally traumatized by the aftermath of the storm? Is there help available for them as well?

Project Rebound of Cullman County is an organization specifically geared towards supporting the mental, emotional, financial, and physical help of tornado survivors.

According to the Project Rebound website, the state of Alabama's Department of Mental Health "initiated project rebound to provide relief and assistance to communities in the aftermath of a disaster by partnering with local organizations."

Since the April tornado outbreaks, members of the Cullman County Project Rebound team have been going door-to-door to check in on people and see if they need any support in dealing with emotional issues, financial challenges, or personal problems.

Thus far they have visited with over 4,600 individuals not including the educational programs and counseling groups they have hosted. And they are not finished yet. They will continue to make their rounds around Cullman until their grant funds run out in June 2012.

"Project Rebound provides a listening ear to people who need it," commented Jessica Reeves, Crisis Counselor for Project Rebound.

Currently the team is staffed with 10 dedicated team members from Northern Alabama. Within that team is a Team Leader, a database manager, three crisis counselors, a few college students from Wallace State, and a Spanish translator who is able to assist with services to the Hispanic community.

"It's a really big county when you are going door-to-door," said Cynthia Smith, Crisis Counselor. The team has a map on the wall of their office that lets them know where they have been and where they still need to go.

"Always make sure that the person has a Project Rebound T-shirt on or a nametag letting you know that they work with us," explained Tom Mihokanich, the Team Leader. "We also don't take donations, our services are free."

Project Rebound has partnered with area agencies, churches, and businesses that want to offer free assistance to Cullman residents. When they visit a home they have a list of those resources with them to make referrals, as needed.

If you are wondering whether you might be experiencing a reaction to the storm then consider some of these symptoms and seek out help. Are you withdrawing from friends? Do you not want to leave home? Are you having problems adjusting to new experiences? Are you having trouble sleeping? Are you embarrassed about receiving handouts or donations to assist you and/or your family? Are you feeling depressed? Are you experiencing apathy or anxiety?

If you are answering yes to any of these questions you may want to give Project Rebound a call to get assistance. You can call them 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 256-727-5308 or 1-800-639-7326.

The group has also tried to get involved in the schools to reach students in our local area. Thus far they have done workshops and activities with students at West Elementary, Hanceville, and Fairview. They have been teaching them safety related education as well as helping them to express their emotions about the tornados.

They also have a Thursday evening meeting at the Civic Center each week at 5:30 p.m. that is open to the public.

To learn more about Project Rebound you can visit them online at http://www.projectrebound.org/home.html or to get updates on assistance and events you can join their Facebook group: Project Rebound in Cullman County.



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- Shop Around the Corner
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- V&W Food Mart

Puzzles and Comics

THIS WEEK'S WORD SEARCH TOPIC IS: RESOLUTIONS

BY: DUSTIN ISOM

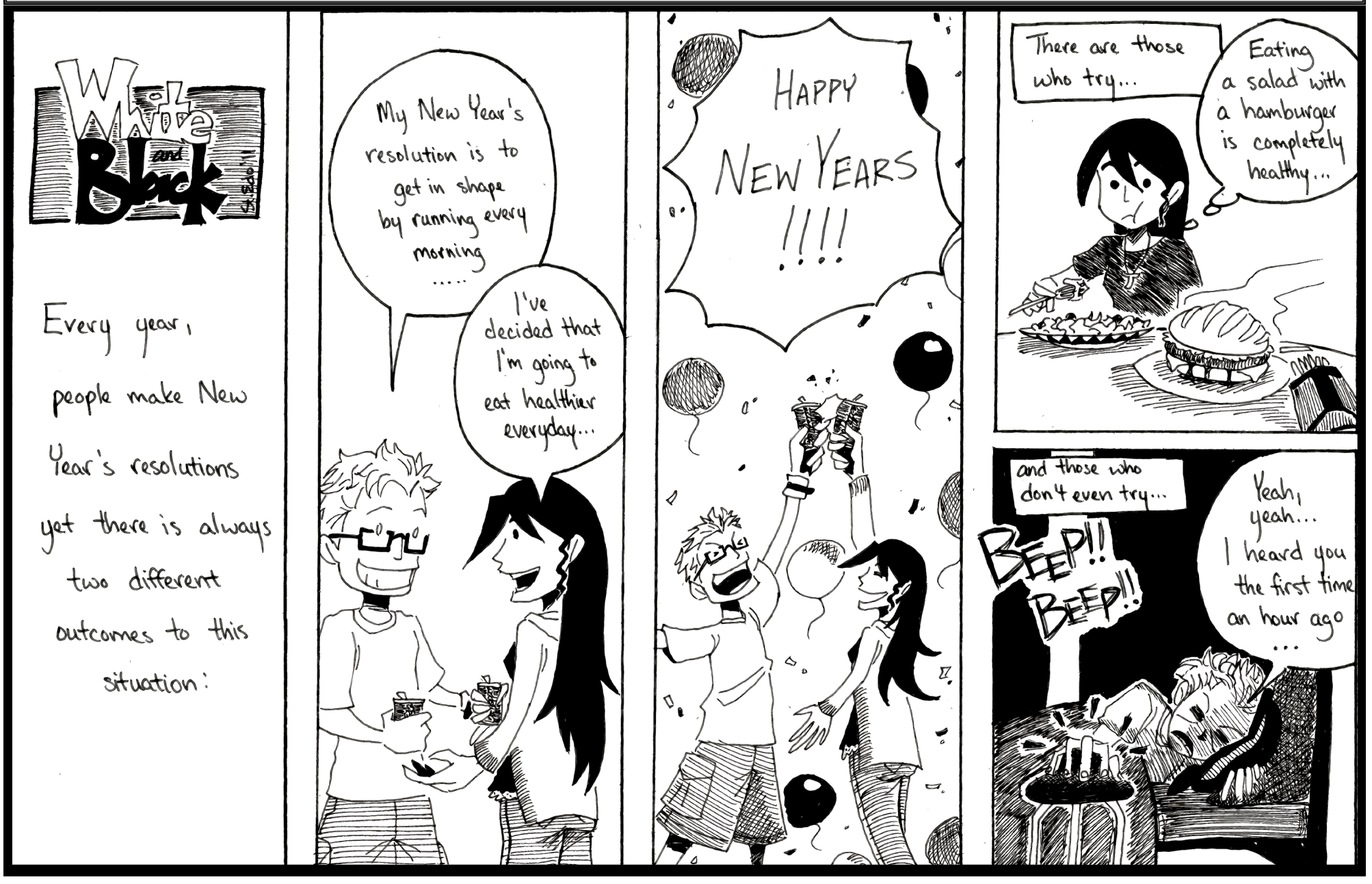
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eat healthy
face a fear
have more family time
lose weight
read more
stop procrastinating

enjoy life
get a higher education
listen better
manage debt
save money
travel

exercise
get organized
learn to play an instrument
quit smoking
sleep more
volunteer

Comics by St. Edo — Anthony Saint — st.edo@cullmansense.com



Community Matters

Coots - Continued

"We use a lot of "shock and awe" to engage our audience," stated Coots. "We'll use any method to get their attention just as long as we don't change the message. We figure if we keep people not knowing what is going to happen on Sunday morning, they won't want to miss."

Coots also mentioned that they will not avoid any subject to preach on. He's preached on a variety of topics that are often times deemed "racy" for the church, including the sexual side of marriage.

It's also important to Journey Church that they are making the message relevant to the community. This year for Christmas they did a "Rockin' Christmas" production, that was standing room only, and brought the Christmas message to the audience through drama and Disney characters.

This fall they changed up the traditional Halloween Festival that they have been hosting for the last 8 years to do something a bit different. This year they hosted "Beans, Greens, and Barn Dancing."

This Easter they'll create a carnival like atmosphere with inflatables, food and an egg hunt.

All of Journey Church's events are free to the community. 'We do not have a cash cow attending our church," explained Coots. "But our people have been faithful and generous in their tithing and it allows us to bless our community."

The majority of the church is run by volunteers, which they have a lot of. Coots is one of the only full-time employees besides an administrative secretary.

Coots' passions about church have now made it into a book. Very recently Coots published "Church Enter Exit" which is a biblical look at how to enter, stay and leave a church. "There are so many books about getting involved in church, but there was nothing out there about how to biblically leave a church," stated Coots.

Coots is a husband to Kim, and a father to four daughters: Kayla, 17, Kylee, 15, Kinley 7, and Trinity Kate 5. He has been married for 22 years. In his spare time he enjoys riding motorcycles, scuba diving, target practice, and hanging out with his wife and kids.

You can catch Coots in his element at Journey Church at the 10:00 a.m. service on Sunday and Wednesday night classes at 6:30 p.m. For more information on Journey Church, find them online at http://iam4journey.com/ or on Facebook.

Answers - Continued

It took a week before she miscarried her child.

But an interesting thing happened during this time. As she blogged, women started e-mailing her questions.

She'd get 5-6 e-mails a week asking her about her miscarriage, wanting to know her thoughts on abortion, what to do for friends or family members going through it.

Bethany was even able to post pictures of the miscarried baby for others to see. Those pictures are now found in her book as well.

Three months later Bethany miscarried a second time and once again she blogged about her experience.

The third pregnancy stuck and she's now enjoying the miracle of Ian, who is the fourth child in the Kerr clan.

I have had the privilege of meeting and getting to know Bethany over the past couple of months. We have shared stories and I have been introduced to all of her children.

Bethany's fifth child is Annah, and according to Bethany, she and her husband will continue to trust God for the number of children they will have whether that is six, seven, or more.

Bethany also did a lot of research for her book. She wanted to make sure it was accurately supported by medical research. She's also put in sections to help people who want to support others through a miscarriage.

"I wanted to include things to say and not say to someone who has miscarried," shared Bethany. There were things that people said that really hurt me so I wanted to share with others how not to do that when they want to help someone who has gone through miscarriage."

The challenge with that is, there is no quick and easy answer. Which is why Bethany's book is such a great resource for those who need it, as there are so few books out there that address miscarriage from a Christian perspective.

You can find Bethany's book online at Amazon.com, at Berkeley Bob's or Her Choice Women's Center in Hanceville, Alabama.

You can also purchase the book online at http://www.preciousinfants.com/miscarriage.htm.

To read more about Bethany check out her blog at http://bethany.preciousinfants.com/.

Relay for Life Kick-Off Meeting on January 12th

By: Dawn Owens
dawnowens@cullmansense.com

If your New Year's Resolutions include getting in shape and rallying around a cause, you may want to consider getting involved with Relay for Life in 2012.

On January 12, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. the Cullman County Relay for Life will be hosting its annual Kick-Off meeting at St. John's Church in Christ Hall.

"Last year 150 people attended the kick-off meeting," stated Mavis Martin Co-Chair of this year's Relay for Life event. "This year the meeting will consist of a Hero of Hope speaker, event and fundraising information and, of course, fun."

Hero of Hope speakers are cancer survivors and caregivers who partner with the American Cancer Society to speak across the Mid South Division sharing their American Cancer Society story with others.

Relay for Life is the American Cancer Society's signature fund-raising event to bring communities together in the fight against cancer. Everyone is encouraged to participate. Teams of 10 to 15 people form from businesses, clubs, families, friends, hospitals, churches, schools and service organizations.

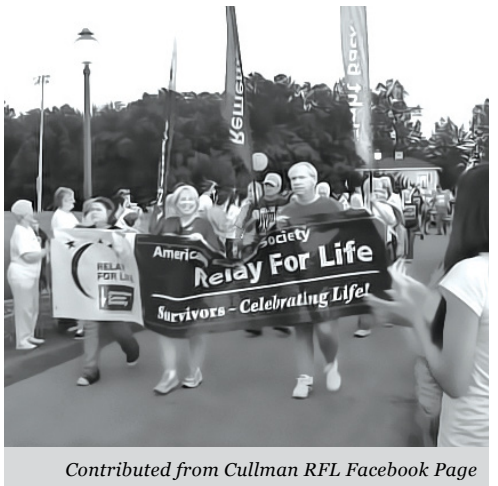
Participants take turns walking on the track and then camping out overnight. Each participant is encouraged to raise at least $100 for the American Cancer Society. This is an opportunity to honor cancer survivors as well as remember the people we have lost.

Last year the event raised $220, 000, this year's goal is to raise $300,000.

The 2012 Relay for Life will be held on May 4-5, 2012 at the Cullman County Fairgrounds. The theme is Power of Purple. Team meetings are scheduled for February, March, and April.

To register your team, learn about upcoming meetings, or donate visit www.relayforlife.org/cullman. You can also find updates on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cullmanrelay.

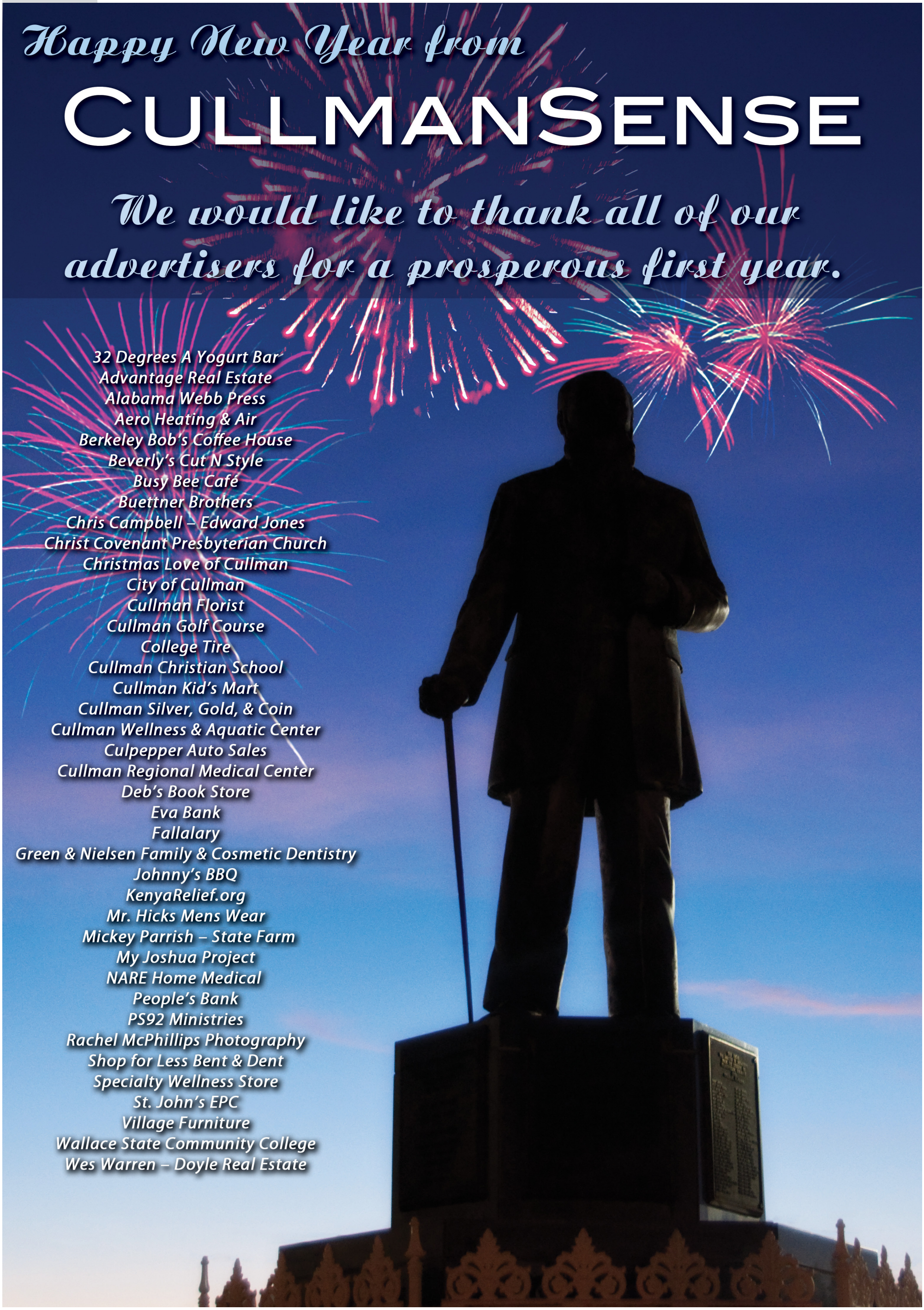
For more information call Helen Hallen at 256-709-4019.



Contributed from Cullman RFL Facebook Page

The crowd cheers on as participants walk in honor of those who have survived and lost in the battle with cancer.




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