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CULLMAN'S MONDAY NEWSPAPER
CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS

50¢
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A Town of Trees

By: Noah Chandler
noahchandler@cullmansense.com



qrne.ws/nchandler



File Photos

CULLMAN – Nearly ten months back a tornado ripped through Hanceville in the early morning hours of April 27.

Within a few hours responders from Cullman would soon hear that their hometown had been hit by large tornado, gutting downtown Cullman of her historic buildings and homes.

In the hours after the tornados, once some sort of calm had been placed among the residents, those around begin to notice the destruction to not just the homes and buildings, but also to the trees.

The mighty trees that lined so many of the downtown streets and avenues were suddenly gone.

Now almost a year later anyone who had visited the small city prior to that April day would immediately notice the stark difference in the skyline.

So as the rebuilding begins on city staples such as Briscoe Shoe Repair and the Busy Bee Café, the residents too will be getting a boost since the City of Cullman has been approved to be included in the Alabama Tree Recovery Campaign.

"If you look across the city we lost a lot of trees, there's probably no telling how many were lost," Cullman Mayor Max Townson said. "The whole area just doesn't look the same."

This venture is a joint effort between the Alabama Forestry Commission and the National Arbor Day Foundation, whose purpose is to restore trees in North Alabama communities that were destroyed in the April 2011 tornadoes.

"I was speaking to a man from Decatur who asked me, 'Y'all are pretty much back to normal now,' and I replied, 'No sir. It will take about a hundred years before we get back to normal,'" Townson said.

"Some of us won't be around long enough to see them get as big as they were when we lost them. We want our trees back and we want Cullman to be known as a town of trees."

The City of Cullman will receive anywhere from 2,000-3,000 2-4' tree seedlings from the program.

With an average cost per tree sapling of $10, combined with a healthy 3-4,000 tree investment, Townson said he is extremely encouraged by this opportunity to replant a new history for Cullman.

"We are just glad that we were approved. I would hope that all the people would show interest in this because it is a program that we can benefit from," he said. "I think it is great because it will be nice to see the trees get planted and the growth begin."

The saplings will be distributed to private property owners in the city who lost trees due to the tornado.

"Private property home owners could qualify for trees through this program and what this will mean is that they are going to send saplings, some could be anywhere from 4-6 feet tall, to help us get our town back on track," he said.

"The program is only for private property, residential homeowners; businesses and city property are not included."

At this moment no concrete details have been made on distribution, but Townson said that once it is announced residents will definitely know about it.

"As soon as we get all the details we will let everyone know so we can begin taking applications," he said.

"There will be an assortment of trees for everyone to apply for. The different species of trees were specifically chosen for our environment to ensure we have our trees. It is going to be nice to see these trees being planted."

If you would like to share your stories on the April 27th tornado, whether it is through photographs, video, or words, we would love to showcase your memories and recollections of the day of and the weeks that followed.



PRINTED LOCALLY @ PRINTING Alabama Web Press

Lifestyle

Passion for the Kitchen

Send your recipes to recipes@cullmansense.com

By: Annette Harris
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qrnews/aharris

Mexican Chicken Lasagna

This recipe is one I made up after eating at one of my favorite restaurants, Rosie's Cantina, in Huntsville, Alabama.

I couldn't get enough of their Mexican chicken lasagna so I had to try and make it myself. Pretty close!

You can lower the fat and calories if you think that way, ha…by using fat-free soups, sour cream, and shredded cheeses.

This is one of our family favorites and its really easy to make. If there is anyone close to Grandma's age, tell them to duck because they are liable to get slapped! Its that good!

Ingredients:

- 2 -10.5 oz. cans of cream of chicken soup
- 1 - 8 oz. container of sour cream
- 4 - chicken breasts, cooked and deboned
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 4 - 6 large flour tortillas
- 1 - 4 oz. can diced green chilies
- 1 1/2 to 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 1/2 to 2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

*Sometimes I use pepper jack for a little zip.

Directions:

1. Boil the chicken until tender and cool, then debone.
2. Combine both cans of soup, sour cream, pepper, and green chilies.
3. Cut deboned chicken into 1" cubes and stir in with the soup mixture.
4. Spray or butter a 9x13 pan.
5. Layer as follows:
   - Soup mixture with chicken
   - Flour tortillas to cover mixture
   - Some of both cheeses
   - Repeat until everything is used up, ending up with cheese on top.
6. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until the cheese is bubbly and slightly browned.

Banana Split Pie

I love to make this in the summer, but its perfect any time of the year. It makes you look like a hero because its so beautiful, but its really easy and you will be a hit!

Don't worry about the raw eggs in there. Most eggs used today are pasteurized and it hasn't killed anyone in our family! You will love it! It makes two pies, so you can eat one before anyone gets home and have the other one for supper!

Ingredients:

- 1 cup margarine, softened, but not melted
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 2 (9 inch) prepared graham cracker crusts
- 5 bananas, sliced
- 1 (15 ounce) can crushed pineapple, drained with juice reserved
- 1 (16 ounce) container frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1 (4 ounce) jar maraschino cherries
- 1/2 cup pecans (I don't like nuts in things, but its up to you)

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, cream together the margarine, eggs, and confectioners' sugar; beat for 15 minutes. Spread evenly in the graham cracker crusts.
2. In each crust, place banana slices on top of sugar mixture; spread pineapple on bananas.
3. Spoon a little of the reserved juice over fruit.
4. Spoon whipped topping over fruit; garnish with cherries and pecans.
5. Chill before serving.



Photo by Annette Harris



No(ah)-It-All: Is it Valentine's Day Again? Sheesh

By: Noah Chandler
noahchandler@cullmansense.com

Hear ye, hear ye. I declare February 14th the worst holiday of them all. Granted I railed on a soapbox about Christmas and how it is nothing more than mass commercialization, but the dreaded Valentine's Day definitely takes the cake.

Why? Well, to be blunt I am always single and hardly ever able to move away from a computer and also because I've not had my heart shaped cake from The Duchess Bakery yet. Those little moist faux-hearts make me wish I cared more about the holiday because if I did those things would probably taste even better.

Alas, I don't so they won't, but I love them anyway.

Now back to the subject at hand; Valentine's Day and the wonderful reasons why I absolutely despise this heartless day.

Many years back I vented about a somewhat sad time back in elementary school and since then that February 14th date looms in like a beast from the depths just waiting to pop me with a hard reality. Each year the day reminds me how far removed from love I've actually become.

Now, some may think it is not a good idea to just bare your soul, but honestly I have nothing to lose nor gain, so enjoy.

As a young boy I always yearned to be accepted doing whatever I had to do to win the attention of others. Stupidly their jeers were mistaken as cheers and once that was realized some years later I just took to being in a shell.

Somewhat removed as a teenager, I always loathed the day because my peers would be gushing and glowing about the simple items such as chocolate or a card they had received. Meanwhile all I could do was push forward, trying to ignore the glee imploding all around as I made way to the parking lot to escape the day.

Once I hit my early 20s the day was much easier to escape. If you don't date then you don't have to worry about the ridiculousness of the day. However, the question will soon arise one cool February evening whilst playing some trite game on an outdated game console of, "Okay, so when did I become such an introvert?"

This was not just practiced on a once a year basis, but rather lived out over a four year period. Sometimes I would not leave the house for several days just because it just felt to be too much.

During this wonderful span of life many new things were learned such as; a person can sit in one spot for two days straight without moving, that daylight is actually overrated but needed, and that no one wants to visit the self-imposed shut-in.

After a good long bath and a few nights out knocking the billiards around, suddenly I began to feel like my old self… the one that cares not to be the couch dweller, and it felt good. Then that stupid day approached and suddenly it came to realization that everyone was married.

This was the fun phase of life. The one where everyone I had known was married, had a child or children, and appeared to have it all going for them. Meanwhile, the reintroduction to the introverted self was now resorting to eating left over chocolates from co-workers at Blockbuster and Papa John's, still playing videogames, and thinking that next year will be the one I do something on this dread day.

For those who know me, well they expected to see the same scene the following year, which in fairness they did, but come on, they should have had some sort of high expectations, right? Yeah, this is a newspaper so therefore there can be no response, so for the sake of argument we'll just pretended you said, 'yes' aloud.

Now, in my early 30s, I find myself just a day out from this truly deplorable day with nothing on my schedule but a business meeting at 8 a.m. and yet another meeting to follow shortly after. Once the night hits, I'll pop over to The Local Standard for a delicious plate of the best sliders in all of the land, the sweet tunes of whoever is there, and I will sip some of the finest Coke in all of Cullman.

Now granted, this wasn't a true railing on the day, but more a reflection on a life led and dictated by preconceived notions, ideals, and simple foolishness that kept me away from living life. So I encourage you to get out and do something on this dreaded day, whether it be buying yourself a cheeseburger or getting your wife of 50 years that new fan belt she has needed, because before you know it there won't be any more dreaded days left.

Happy Valentine's Day Cullman!

Weather

Source: NWS

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
			
Hi: 51 Lo: 37	Hi: 57 Lo:40	Hi: 62 Lo: 49	Hi: 63

Monday: A 20 percent chance of showers. Partly sunny, with a high near **51**.
Monday Night: A 40 percent chance of showers. Cloudy, with a low around **37**.
Tuesday: A 30 percent chance of showers. Partly sunny, with a high near **57**.
Tuesday Night: A 20 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a low around **40**.
Wednesday: Partly sunny, with a high near **62**.
Wednesday Night: A 30 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a low around **49**.
Thursday: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a high near **63**.
Check **CullmanSense.com** for the latest weather updates.

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

Morgan Pitts: Cullman Lady Bearcats

By: Josh McBrayer
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qrnews/jmcbrayer

This week, the Spotlight makes it to Cullman High School to profile #32 Morgan Pitts, a "big" reason for the success of the Lady Bearcats. She has dominated in the paint for the Lady Bearcats, averaging 10 points, 7 rebounds, and 3 blocks a game. Morgan took time out of her schedule to talk to CullmanSense.

Josh McBrayer: Tell our readers a little about yourself.

Morgan Pitts: I am Morgan Pitts from Cullman, Alabama. I'm 18 years old and 6'1.

JM: Tell our readers how long you have been playing basketball and a little bit about what got you into playing basketball.

MP: I have played basketball for ten years. I started out playing on a park and recreation team. I ended up on an all-boys team. That's where I fell in love with the game. When I got in elementary school, I played on the girls team AND on the boys team.

JM: Tell our readers about your favorite sport and why.

MP: I love basketball because I am very competitive and it is so fun. Basketball is like my get away from everything that's going on around me. When I'm in the game I don't care about anything else.

JM: Tell us about your biggest inspiration in sports and why.

MP: My biggest inspiration in basketball is probably Michael Jordan because he never stopped pushing himself to become a better player. He has inspired me to do the same.

Head basketball coach Jonathan Hays had this to say about Morgan:

"Morgan is a very talented player with even more potential than she has already tapped into. Over the past couple of years Morgan has improved the weaker areas of her game to become a more well rounded player. She possesses many of the skills it will take to make it at the next level: determination, heart, and just love of the game. Morgan's leadership on the team is a fresh and welcomed style of humor and lightheartedness that can break the tension in intense situations. She is a very coachable athlete you only have to tell once to correct mistakes, and if she happens to slip up and make a mistake again, she knows as soon as she does it and strives to not let it again. Morgan is a huge part of our team and the success we've had this year and last. Morgan stands out on a team that has many talented players and depth. We would not be where we are right now if not for her and her leadership and contributions."

For more sports coverage visit:
cullmansense.com/sports.



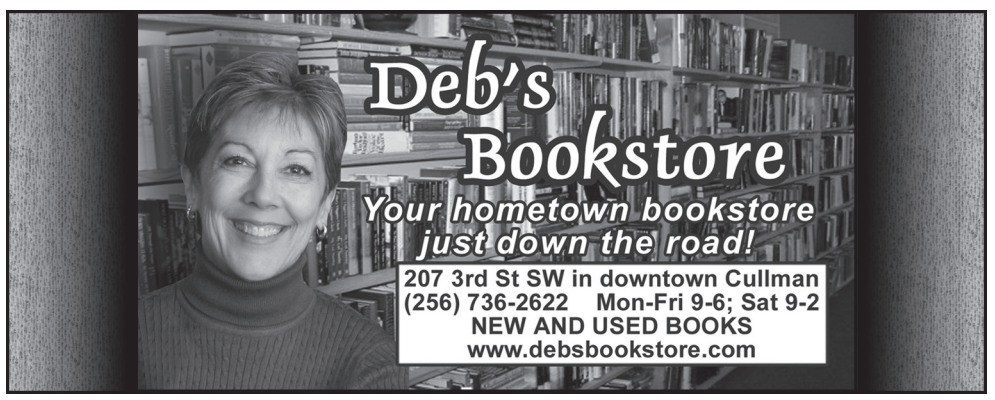
File Photos











Making Dreams a Reality

By: Noah Chandler
noahchandler@cullmansense.com



File Photos

As Americans, we all take pride in the United States and feel we all have a civic duty to perform.

There are many ways to serve our country, but it takes a special breed of person to leave their friends and family behind to join the military and face the possibility of war.

Without a thought of what might happen to their wellbeing, they head into battle to protect the freedoms we enjoy each and every day.

While most return to loved ones without incident, there are those that literally pay for our freedom with their blood, sweat, and tears.

This is where the Homes for Our Troops organization steps in.

"We are a nationwide non-profit (organization)," said Veterans' Liaison Larry Gill. "We build handicapped accessible homes nationwide for the severely wounded troops at absolutely no cost to them whatsoever."

"We have done about 110 homes now nationwide. We still have about 30 to 40 in progress, in one stage or the other, and we are getting ready to build one for CPL (Christopher) Montgomery here in Mobile."

"I went to high school around here" said CPL Montgomery, who lost both of his legs serving our country in Afghanistan.

"We are eight years old next month," Gill said when asked how long the organization had been running.

"We are relatively new as non-profits go. We have really grown tremendously in the last seven years.

In the first few years we might have been doing one or two or three homes a year, as awareness and resources became available. Now we are doing about 30 to 35 homes a year." Gill said.

Larry Gill also spoke of how the Homes for Our Troops came to be and about the application process.

"A local home builder in Massachusetts had seen a news interview with a wounded troop. At one point the wounded soldier had said he lived on the upstairs floor of an apartment complex so he didn't really know where he was going to live."

"Our founder (John Gonsalves) said that these guys are going to need some accessible housing. He applied for the nonprofit (status) and here we are eight years later with over 100 homes built nationwide."

"They apply, we don't really do any outreach, per se," Gill said. "A lot of these guys are in the hospitals together and therapy wards together so they kind of reach out to us or their therapist might recommend them, to check out our organization.

The last couple of years there have been some smaller groups doing what we are doing in different versions, but we are the pioneers."

CPL Christopher Montgomery was the honorary captain for the coin toss at the Senior Bowl in Mobile Saturday afternoon and recipient of a new, handicapped accessible home.

He had this to say about the process and Home for Our Troops organization:

"You go through a process. You apply and they fly you up for a conference. After the conference you get a call. I found out around August (that he had been accepted). It is awesome. I am going to be a lot more independent."

This is an amazing program helping those that protect us every day. For more on Homes for Our Troops please visit homesforourtroops.org.



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Local Artist Profile

Amber Terrell: A Passion for Fashion

By: Natalie Bonner
nataliebonner@cullmansense.com



qrnews/nbonner

A pile of soda tab pop-tops receive a severe (and crucially needed) makeover by the magician-like hands of Amber Terrell, who by means of red material weaves a silver mess into a rock star inspired bracelet.

Having honed her eye for fashion through a medium of outlets over the years, nothing is off limits to the creative wonderland circulating in this talented artist's mind.

Hailing from Long Beach, California, Amber moved to Cullman at the age of 12. Growing up, she remembers looking up to her grandmother, Ellaine, a crafty woman whom Terrell believes can do it all. Her grandmother taught her a variety of crafts from drawing to sculpting clay.

Terrell said, "I owe it all to her for encouraging me all these years."

Her creations consist of necklace charms, pop tab bracelets, headbands, and hats and scarves to name a few. She strives to learn something new everyday and is always on the lookout for new items, which she turns into her one-of-a-kind creations.

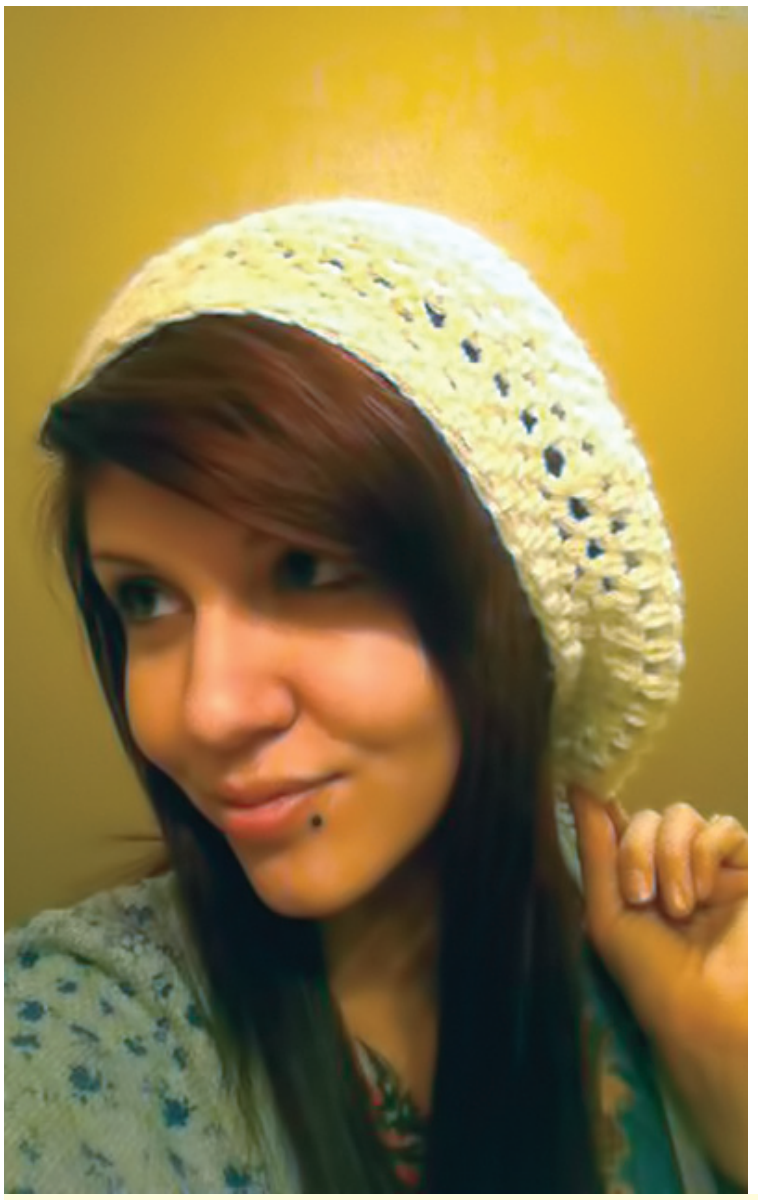
An employee of Rue21, Terrell explains her adoration and appreciation to the brand, "It inspires me very much to see if I can challenge myself to make the things that Rue21 sells. For example, I love the crochet beret hats or what some call slouchy hats, and I taught myself how to make them, and I'm very pleased with how they look."

She credits her grandmother once more for giving her a lesson in crocheting, introducing the elaborate art of the basic chain stitch through the marriage of yarn and a crochet hook.

Amber mainly acquires her work by word of mouth, although she is working on advertising on Facebook soon and is contemplating other online avenues, such as Etsy, to spread the word about her creations.

"I first started selling my stuff about four years ago, starting with my soda pop tab bracelets. I sold them at local concerts as band merchandise, and people just loved those bracelets," Terrell recalls.

Now married to drummer Noah Terrell of the Christian rock band, Nine Lashes, Amber sells those same exact bracelets (custom made for the band) all over the U.S. Given their nearly three month long tour, she will surely be busy meeting the popular demand for the beloved bracelets.





Amber Terrell's creations include headbands, pop tab bracelets, and hats.





"The pop tab bracelets are my absolute favorite. They are fun, different and recycled. It's an awesome feeling to know people love something you made and that encourages me to learn more and more."

Amber's eclectic creations often have a recyclable edge to them as she finds inspiration in everyday items, literally embodying the phrase, "One's trash is another's treasure."

Revealing her quirky nature, Terrell explains the motivation behind some of her homemade goods, "I'm always trying to make stuff out of something. It's not always a good thing. I tend to collect random stuff like Noah's old drum heads and broken cymbals, along with string and old t-shirts to make yarn."

Her free spirited nature seems to be the staple of her creations as they are full of personality and fun. A professional artist, Amber has never had to have lessons in any particular craft or art, although her husband did teach her how to paint with acrylics.

She explains that her creations are not usually normal, although soda pop tabs have made their way in the world through all kinds of jewelry, garnering mainstream attention and popularity. The unique and gratifying quality about the bracelets is that they are given new life through recyclable efforts.

Amber's constant reinvention of herself is defined by expressive pursuits through art, fashion and music. She understands some people might find trying new things uncomfortable, but she reasons, how can one know until one has tried?

"My art is something I'm proud of and something that I can always look back on and know was worth learning or experiencing," Terrell reflects on her creations.

"And when I sell my crafts I know that the people buying them are going for something out of the normal fashion range and trying something that they feel will express themselves as an individual."

To find out more information about Amber's handmade goods, check her out on Facebook at

Facebook.com/AmberViayraTerrell.

Education

Wallace State Breaks Ground on School of Nursing and Center for Science

By: Kristen Holmes

HANCEVILLE – Wallace State Community College in Hanceville broke ground on a new School of Nursing and Center for Science Thursday.

The $25 million facility designed by Williams Blackstock Architects of Birmingham will contain 115,000 square feet of state-of-the-art lecture halls, laboratories, and collaborative learning spaces. It is expected to open in fall 2013.

"This building ensures we advance our reputation as a learning centered college with exceptional student learning outcomes and affirms our strategic emphasis on community and economic development," said Wallace State President Vicki Hawsey.

"Someone once said 'excellence is the unlimited ability to improve the quality of what you have to offer,' and we strive to do so at every opportunity and in every way," she said.

According to Dr. Hawsey, Wallace State's biological sciences classes are currently bursting at the seams in an 18,797 square feet classroom space. The new Center for Science will contain 35,800 square feet of state-of-the-art biology, microbiology, and anatomy and physiology learning labs and classrooms, and will accommodate development of a biotech program in the future.

Nursing students were present in force to celebrate the occasion, along with current and former faculty members in the nursing and biology departments. Alabama State Sen. Paul Bussman, Rep. Jeremy Oden, Rep. Mac Buttram, Cullman Mayor Max Townson, Hanceville Mayor Kenneth Nail, Chancellor Freida Hill of the Alabama Community College System, and Paul Housel representing Congressman Robert Aderholt joined Dr. Hawsey for the event.

"Wallace State is the crown jewel of the two-year college system. The complex is going to be amazing," said Rep. Jeremy Oden. "Wallace State is helping change the face of Alabama."

"If I'm in the hospital, I want someone to take care of me who went to Wallace State," he added.



Contributed

Pictured at the groundbreaking for the Wallace State School of Nursing and Center for Science are, from left, Cullman County Economic Development Director Sammie Danford, Mr. Paul Housel, Hanceville Mayor Kenneth Nail, Wallace State SGA President Kiah Crider, Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System Dr. Freida Hill, Wallace State President Dr. Vicki Hawsey, Alabama State Representative Jeremy Oden, Wallace State Nursing Department Head Deborah Hoover, Alabama State Senator Paul Bussman, Assistant Director of the Cullman Economic Development Agency Dale Greer, Alabama State Representative Mac Buttram, Wallace State Biology Department Head Dr. Fred Halstead and Cullman Mayor Max Townson.

Wallace State's nursing programs currently occupy 29,378 square feet in a building that was constructed in 1983. The associate degree nursing program is one of the largest in the state. More than 600 students are enrolled each semester in the associate degree, career mobility and practical nursing programs. In the new facility, students will have the benefit of 38,650 square feet of learning space, a 9,800 square feet state-of-the art simulation center, and 7,500 square feet of lecture space.

"We are exceptionally excited about the Simulation Center," Hawsey said. "It is designed to replicate a hospital environment and contains four ICU, two Pediatric, two Labor and Delivery, and triage/trauma simulation labs in addition to two nursing stations, two debriefing rooms, four fundamentals bed labs, and an ambulance portico."



A portion of the Wallace State faculty helps break ground.

"This simulation center exceeds any facility in this state and replicates the model learning environment for the future, enabling collaboration between and among health disciplines such as respiratory therapy, radiology, clinical lab tech, EMT/Paramedic, health information management, and medical assisting to name a few," she said.

Chancellor Freida Hill of the Alabama Community College System said that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 3.2 million new nursing jobs will be created by 2018 as a result of a growing elderly population and healthcare reform and that many schools of nursing across the country are struggling to expand to meet that demand.

"I appreciate the efforts that have gotten us to this day. It is a real feat to establish plans for a facility of this caliber," she said. "I can feel the excitement of the students here today. Now the real work begins."

In addition to the state-of-the-art learning and collaboration spaces, this building will house a new Business Development Center with a 500-seat conference space and catering kitchen to support business, industry and tourism in the community.

Community colleges have been called the economic engines of the communities they serve and of this state. An economic impact analysis done several years ago found that for every $1 in Wallace State's budget, $8 was returned to the community.

According to Dr. Hawsey, the college employs more than 500 individuals, serves more than 6,500 students, and has in excess of $52 million currently invested in campus enhancement, renovation and construction.

Wallace State is in the midst of extensive renovations and repairs across campus as a result of the April 27 tornadoes last year while also proceeding with campus enhancement projects that were planned long in advance of the tornado. The addition of campus way-finding signs and new large electronic message board along Highway 31 are immediately visible improvements. The Welding Department has recently been renovated and improvements to the Academy of Cosmetic Arts are nearing completion. A beautification project that will include sidewalks and landscaping along the front of campus is expected to begin this month.

"This college has overcome tremendous challenge as a result of the tornadoes last April and, with Dr. Hawsey's leadership, hasn't missed a beat," said Chancellor Hill. Hawsey received a standing ovation following this remark. Chancellor Hill also recognized Wallace State Executive Vice President Dr. Tomesa Smith for her efforts during the response and recovery.

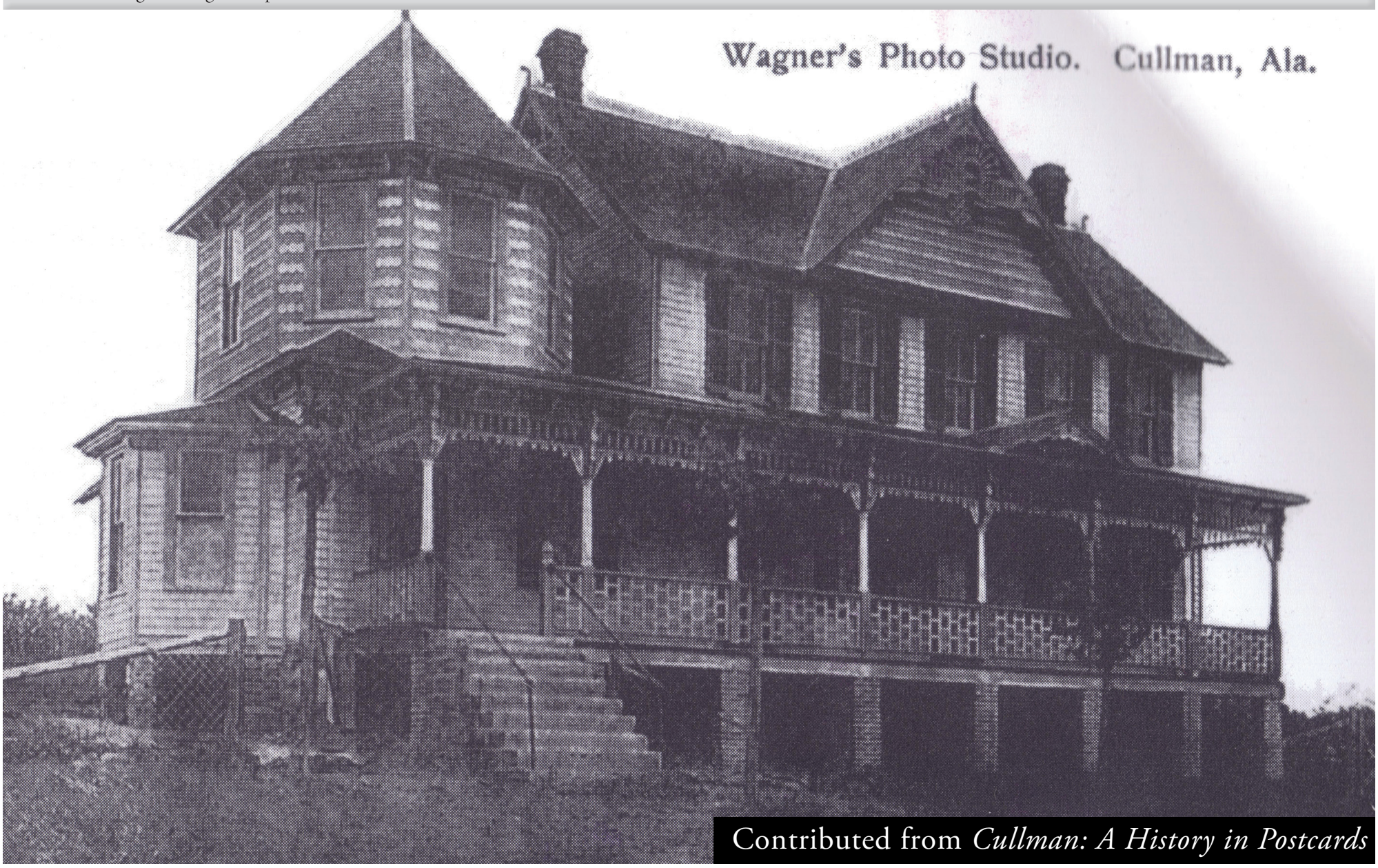
Before the ribbon cutting occurs on the new School of Nursing and Center for Science next year, the Wallace State Future Foundation will be looking for a benefactor or benefactors to honor in its naming.

For more information about Wallace State Community College visit www.wallacestate.edu.

Mirroring History

Looking Back at: Wagner's Photo Studio

The Leonard J. Wagner House had a photography developing room in the basement used by Mr. Wagner. He often hung his prints on the roof and porch for drying. He moved his studio to the current location of the Cullman Times building. The Wagner house still stands in Cullman at 9th Avenue and 3rd street, but sustained extensive damage during the April 27, 2011 tornadoes.



Contributed from *Cullman: A History in Postcards*



Photo by Jessica Norrell

Local Events Calendar

Send your Events to: calendar@cullmansense.com

Monday, February 13th

Overeaters Anonymous Gather at Grace Episcopal
Members of Overeaters Anonymous meet every Monday, at 9:30 a.m. at Grace Episcopal Church in the Carriage House located on Church premises.

Further information is available at 256-747-6218 or 256-352-1143. Everyone is invited to attend these gatherings.

Brandin' Iron Fundraising Dinner for Cullman County Victims Services/Battered Women's Shelter
The Brandin' Iron Restaurant at West Point has plans to host a fundraising dinner from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. to benefit Cullman County Victims Services/ Battered Women's Shelter.

Servers, waiters & waitresses for this event will be guest celebrities including political hopefuls running in the 2012 election campaigns, along with many well-known community members.

Tickets for the meal are $20.00 each and the menu includes pork chops, grilled chicken, fried catfish filet, hamburger steak or a 6 oz. rib eye, a house salad, and side item and drink. Tips left for the wait staff will be included in the donations to the shelter.

For further information, please call the Brandin' Iron at 256-739-1112. Tickets are available through Josh Speakman at 256-736-3814 or 256-747-1604. Come out for a great meal and support one of Cullman's special service organizations

Chocolate Tasting Extravaganza at St. Paul's School
Monday is the night for all 'chocoholics' as a 'Chocolate Tasting Extravaganza' will surely have many converging on St. Paul's School Auditorium to take part in this decadent fundraiser!

The event is sponsored by Beta Delta Chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa Honorary Teachers Sorority to raise funds for their scholarship program which benefits a student who is pursuing a career in the teaching profession.

The Chocolate Tasting Extravaganza is open to everyone. Tickets are $5.00 and can be purchased ahead of time or at the door the night of the event.

Takeout plates will also be available, so come on out and celebrate the delicious "chocolate" and help a good cause at the same time. Bet you'll see your friends there as well, 'cause everyone just 'loves' chocolate!

GED Classes at Desperation Church
GED learning classes are held each Monday night from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Desperation Church. For additional information please contact Ed Oaks at 256-737-9564 or 256-735-6811. These classes are open to the public and everyone who wants to obtain their GED is welcome to participate.

Lap-Band System Procedure Seminar
A free informational seminar on the Adjustable LAP-BAND System procedure will be offered beginning at 6 p.m. in the Col. Cullmann Room at Cullman Regional Medical Center in POB II.

Dr. Mac Cottingham will outline the procedures and open the floor for questions during the one hour meeting. Everyone interested in this surgery is welcome and encouraged to attend this event. Please call 256-736-BAND (2263) to register for this seminar.

Cornerstone Revival Ladies Prayer Meeting
A Ladies Prayer meeting is conducted each Monday night at 7 p.m. at Cornerstone Revival Center. For additional info, call 256-796-2899. All interested women are invited to attend.

Aqua Zumba Classes at CWAC
Everyone is invited to take part in the Aqua Zumba classes which are offered each Monday at Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center beginning at 7 p.m. in the center's indoor pool. Please call 256-775-7946 for additional information! Come start the New Year off with water exercises!

Tuesday, February 14th

Emotions Anonymous Support Group Meeting
An Emotions Anonymous Support Group meets each Tuesday at noon at Grace Episcopal Church Carriage House. Those interested are invited to attend these group sessions. Further information is available through the Group Director's office at 256-734-3605 or 256-796-8440.

Knifty Knitters Meeting
The Knifty Knitters group meets each Tuesday at 3 p.m. at Cullman County Library. Yarn, needles and instructions are provided free of charge and every one of all ages who are interested are invited to attend these sessions.

Further info can be obtained by calling Lesia at 256-734-2720, extension 23.

North Central Alabama Genealogical Society Meeting
Members of the North Central Alabama Genealogical Society meet every Tuesday in the basement of the Wallace State Community College Library for informal study and to help new researchers.

The meeting is from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. and those interested are invited to this free gathering. Come learn about your 'roots'! Call Von at 256-739-2843 for more information.

Wednesday, February 15th

Free Health Screenings at Ed Holcombe Pharmacy
Come on to Ed Holcombe Pharmacy and take advantage of FREE health screenings taking place Wednesday.

These screenings include total cholesterol, glucose (diabetes), blood pressure testing, body mass index testing, body fat analysis, and pH balance testing. No appointment is needed and your results will be given to you in 5 minutes.

Additional tests such as hemoglobin, ALT/AST, H. Phlori, Thyroid, Full Lipid, PSA, CRP and A1c Diabetes, will be available for a small fee. There also will be a 'Silver Plan' available for $65.00 which saves $35.00.

For further information please contact Ed Holcombe Pharmacy at 256-734-1083.

Free Tax Services for Area Seniors
Area seniors can take advantage of free help in preparing their tax returns during the month of February by contacting the Cullman County Commission on Aging which is located at Sportsman's Lake Park and by calling 256-734-1241 for additional information.

Sacred Heart School Family Chili Night
Sacred Heart School is sponsoring a Family Chili Night from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria. Red chili or white chili will be offered, with bread or crackers, dessert and drink for $5.00 per adults and $3.00 per child. Meals will be served on a first come, first served basis.

Ladies' Auxiliary VFW Dance at Post 2214
The Ladies' Auxiliary of VFW Post 2214 invites the community to their weekly Tuesday night dances at the VFW Post building.

The country line dance starts at 7 p.m. each Tuesday night, with admission only $5.00 per person. Concessions are available and all proceeds benefit the Auxiliary's local projects.

Aqua Zumba Classes at CWAC
Everyone is invited to take part in the Aqua Zumba classes which are offered each Wednesday at Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center beginning at 7 p.m. in the center's indoor pool. Please call 256-775-7946 for additional information! Come start the New Year off with water exercises!

Thursday, February 16th

'The Importance of Home Medication Lists' Seminar
Everyone is invited to attend a learning seminar as Paula Burks, R.N., Director of the Critical Care Unit at CRMC discusses the importance of keeping a medication list at home to bring with you for doctor appointments and when admitted to the hospital.

Cost of this lunch and program is $5.00 for WomenFirst/SeniorChoice members and $8.00 for all others. Please reserve your lunch attendance by calling CRMC at 256-737-2600 or register online at www.crmchospital.com.

This is an important topic for individuals and for caregivers as well, so make plans to attend this informative seminar.

County Board of Education Meeting
Members of the Cullman County Board of Education will meet at 5:30 p.m. for a work session, followed with their regular meeting starting at 6:30 p.m.

Overeaters Anonymous Meeting
Overeaters Anonymous meets each Thursday evening at 4:45 p.m. in the Carriage House at Grace Episcopal Church. Everyone is invited to attend these sessions. Further information can be obtained by calling 256-747-6218 or 256-352-1143. There also is a group which meets on Monday mornings at 9:30 am in the same place. Meetings are open to everyone interested.

Friday, February 17th

Evangelist Daniel Ballenger to speak at Cornerstone Revival Center
Evangelist Daniel Ballenger will be preaching and presenting a special music event at Cornerstone Revival Center during two separate services. The first will take place at 10 a.m. and the latter service will begin at 6 p.m.

Cornerstone Revival Center is located at 3151 Al Hwy 69 North, Cullman, Alabama 35058.

Saturday, February 18th

Natural Childbirth Classes
This class is for those who are considering having natural childbirth. Your education, desires and personal support network greatly influence a positive outcome.

In this class you will learn: details about stages and phases of labor, relaxation techniques & comfort measures, how your birth partner can help you during labor, physiological positions and movements for labor, about medical interventions, the role of hormones during labor & birth, and much more.

There are two class locations in the city; please call (256) 962-0975 for directions and registration. Visit http://www.birthingbeautiful.com for more.

Tea Party Meet-n-Greet
The Cullman County Tea Party group invites everyone to come to a 'Meet-n-Greet' gathering beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Cullman's McGukin Civic Center. Candidates running in the March primary are scheduled to appear.

Shag, Bop and Swing Dance
There will be a 'Shag, Bop & Swing' (EC and WC) Dance at the Donald Green Senior Center at Ingle Park beginning at 6:30 p.m. with basic shag moves lessons. The dance will begin at 7 p.m. with music by DJ Buddy Hayes.

Admission to the dance is $5.00. For further information please contact Sherry Boatright at

duckcreek@bellsouth.net.

Everyone is invited to come spend an evening with great music, moves and a memorable time.

VFW Saturday Night Dance
The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2214 invites everyone to their weekly Saturday night dances which begin at 7 p.m. and last until 10 p.m.

Music on Saturday nights is provided by the Boogie Night Band. Entrance fee is $5.00 for each individual. Come on out and bring your dancing shoes and enjoy an evening of great music, fun and fellowship!

PUZZLES AND COMICS

THIS WEEK'S WORD SEARCH TOPIC IS: VALENTINE'S DAY

BY: DUSTIN ISOM

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admirer arrow candles candy card chocolates cupcakes Cupid
diamonds dinner flowers friendship gift heart hugs jewelry
kisses love poetry ring sweet sweetheart thoughtful valentine

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



Community Matters

How to Have an Inexpensively Happy Valentine's Day

By: Meghan Nelson
meghannelson@cullmansense.com



qrnews/mnelson

Having never really considered a flying toddler armed with love arrows (or, in other words, Cupid) to be exceedingly romantic, I have found that Valentine's Day may not deserve all of the pink-hearted importance it receives.

Sure, I enjoy gorging on chocolate, I like to wear the color pink, and I'm not opposed to an occasional bouquet of flowers.

However, I'm highly resistant to three-hour waits at Red Lobster, greeting cards filled with excessively sappy prose, and, of course, the over-expenditure of cash to affirm one's love.

Now, it's simple to avoid long waits and cheesy cards – just go to a different restaurant and buy a different card – but celebrating Valentine's Day on a budget can be an intimidating task.

After all, we are bombarded by commercials and ads convincing us that a heart-shaped necklace of diamonds is the only way to truly express our love and that expensive flowers and fine dining are the best method with which to convince our significant other of our affection.

So, what can be done about these Valentine's Day budgetary dilemmas? Well, I feel that if you love someone, you'll generally express that sentiment to them every day (or almost every day) that you're with them. Thus, there's no need for such overwhelming pressure to demonstrate all of your love on one single day of the year.

Nevertheless, with life often full of duties and responsibilities, it is sometimes fun to have a reason to celebrate or do something out of the ordinary (but that also doesn't land you in a monetary pit of doom).

In order to achieve this balance of frugal, love-filled fun, I've devised a few economical alternatives to otherwise expensive Valentine's Day dates.

The 'Card, Candy, and Flowers Date'

Likely the date most commonly associated with Valentine's Day, this date consists of a glitter-covered, flower-adorned card that somebody else wrote, a box of assorted chocolates (of which you'll probably eat your favorites and toss the rest), and a large bouquet of red roses and perhaps some baby's breath.

The less expensive alternative to such an ideal Valentine's celebration is to simply make a card, split a bag of M&Ms, and pick a flower. The card will have more meaning, the M&Ms won't get tossed (except into your mouth), and the flower...well, it's admittedly not as impressive as roses, but it will probably wilt just as quickly.

The 'Wine and Dine Date'

Somewhat self-explanatory, this date is a evening spent in fancy clothes at a fancy restaurant and eating fancy food. Since we all know that 'fancy' can generally be replaced by the word 'expensive', a more frugal date is usually a welcome option.

To save at least half the cost (or more) of such a date, just clean your house, pop open a bottle of wine, and spend time cooking a meal with your significant other. Not only is it a cheaper way to celebrate your undying love, but it's actually more intimate than sitting in a room full of strangers while trying to determine which fork to use. If you want to add an extra dose of romance, you can even light some candles and change out of your pajama pants.

The 'Diamonds Date'

Obviously, this is the date where you take the advice of countless jewelry store advertisements and choose to affirm your devotion through a mass-produced diamond necklace or set of earrings. I'll admit that there really isn't a cheaper alternative to diamonds...either it's a diamond or it's not. However, while every kiss does begin with 'k', many monetary dilemmas begin with the unaffordable purchase of luxuries such as the aforementioned diamonds.

To save a little hard-earned cash, consider giving a diamond for a more important holiday than one represented by arrow-wielding cherubs and the rather tacky combination of red and pink.

Instead, opt for something a little less extravagant but just as festive...perhaps a hand-written poem or even an iPod mix of classic love songs.

Of course, the cheapest way to celebrate this holiday (and the one by husband and I typically choose) is to lovingly look your date in the eyes, wish him or her a Happy Valentine's, and continue on about your day.

If you're looking for something a tad more exciting, though, perhaps one of these date ideas will help you not only express your love, but also maintain enough cash to pay your bills.

Special *Thanks* to our distributors:

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- Dodge City Shell
- Joe's Freeway Exxon
- Five Points Grocery
- Fallalary
- Graves' BP
- Grumpy's Italian Grill
- Holly Pond Supermarket Chevron
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- Jet Pep-Vinemont
- Johnny's Bar-B-Q
- Rumors Deli
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- Touch of German
- Vinemont Super Saver
- V&W Food Mart
- West Point Superette

2nd Annual

'Crowns for a CURE Pageant'



Saturday, March 17th, 2012
Hosted by the Merchants Bank Relay for Life Team
Located at Cullman 1st Baptist Church
In the ROC (gymnasium)
Entry fee: $35.00
Miss Photogenic fee: $5.00
You can pick up an application at any Merchants Bank location

Admission is $3.00
Kids 6 & under get in free!
0 – 9 years begins at 10:00am
Survivors' Honorary Walk begins at 12:00pm
10 - 23 begins at 1:00pm
For more information contact us at rfl@merchantsbankal.com

All proceeds to benefit the American Cancer Society!

9th Annual Chili Dinner

in Hearin Hall of
First United Methodist Church

February 20th, 2012
4:30-7:00pm

Bobby Nolen's Famous Chili & Grilled Cheese
in your own handcrafted bowl







TICKETS $10

Available at:
Cullman Caring For Kids
First United Methodist Church
St. Johns Evangelical Church

Live Music & Auction

Proceeds benefit:
Cullman Caring For Kids
Food Bank

EMPTY BOWLS
of cullman county

flyer provided through Learn & Serve Alabama grant