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CULLMAN'S MONDAY NEWSPAPER

CULLMANSENSE

COMMUNITY MATTERS

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Local



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Child welfare check leads CCSO deputies to marijuana grow

By: Noah Chandler • noahchandler@cullmansense.com

» Approx. 30 marijuana plants discovered

CULLMAN – A child welfare check led to the discovery of a marijuana grow operation and consequently four arrests at a home located on County Road 821 in Cullman County.

"The whole case started at 11 a.m. Saturday [Dec. 28] as an initial call for a welfare check on a child," Cullman County Sheriff Mike Rainey said. "

Sgt. Terry Smith and K-9 deputy Kevin Lewis responded to the residence where they knocked on the door. As they were standing in the doorway they could smell a very strong odor of marijuana."

The deputies waited at the front door while Christopher Butts retrieved the child from inside the home for a quick inspection.

Sheriff Rainey said once the child was looked at, the deputies asked Butts if they could

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Big Hobby, Small Town Love

Rare Cullman antiques live inside Vincent's Furniture p6



2013 – A Retrospective Look

By: Natalie Bonner

Just as we are sweeping up the leftover tinsel and bits of wrapping paper that have gone astray from our Christmas celebration, we are getting ready for New Year's Eve.

It seems like the same thoughts enter my brain every year at this time. How did yet another year pass by in the blink of an eye?

Every year is filled with daring feats, crazy triumphs, debilitating losses and huge surprises.

As always, we've pressed forward during the year, taking the good with the bad, never really pausing to let it all sink in. Well, now we take a look back over 2013, the year of the Snake in the Chinese Zodiac.

Apparently, "selfie" was the word of the year, made popular by actors James Franco and Russell Brand, among many others.

Of course, it seems we've all fallen victim to the "selfie in the bathroom mirror" shot.

Don't lie – we know you've done it, too. We are as equally ashamed. Fads take off and then we all copy and cringe. It's the nature of the beast.

Facebook has continued its imperial reign, yet Instagram (or IG as it's known) has decided to give social media stalwarts a run for their money as Generation Y has latched onto the photo memorabilia app.

Of course, Vine and Snapchat were just as popular with boatloads of new members signing up to transmit video or picture messages to one another or the public.

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Governor awards grant to assist victims of drunken drivers

By: Mike Presley

MONTGOMERY — Gov. Robert Bentley has awarded a grant to an organization that helps Alabamians who are victims of drunken drivers.

The $27,678 grant will help Alabama Mothers Against Drunk Driving provide victim services including court accompaniment and assistance in filing for victims' compensation. The organization's Alabama office also helps those who have lost loved ones in crashes caused by alcohol-impaired drivers.

MADD provides guidance and support to victims throughout the criminal justice process. The organization operates a crisis hotline for victims, offers individual and group counseling, and helps victims secure other needed services. The organization educates the public about the dangers of drinking and driving and works to prevent underage drinking. Presentations are conducted at schools, churches, and other community meeting places.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is administering the grant from funds made available to Alabama by the U.S. Department of Justice. ADECA administers an array of programs supporting law enforcement and traffic safety, economic development, energy conservation, workforce development, water resource management, and recreation development.

Bentley notified Karen Housewright of MADD that the grant had been approved. Matching funds of $6,919 will supplement the award.

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Peoples Bank Set to Open New Location

By: Natalie Bonner

CULLMAN - Peoples Bank of Alabama is set to open another location where the old Woodland Hospital building used to be, across from Wal-Mart. This expansion comes at an opportune time for the banking branch. Gwen Parker is the senior vice president of the Branch Administration and says this new branch will be a consolidation of the previous Main Office and the Good Hope branch and is planned to take place on January 21st.

"The new location will have an open and welcoming atmosphere that offers a modern way of banking to all," Parker said.

Parker outlined the new setup to include: a beverage center for customers to enjoy a fresh cup of coffee or a bottle of chilled water; a financial education area that will hold various publications on financial education as well as iPads for customers to use while at the bank; and helpful staff present to show customers how to navigate internet banking, bill pay, sign up for mobile banking, and e-statements; as well as enroll in rewards programs.

The new branch will feature teller pods for a more interactive transaction and customer service experience. It will also have a customer service area, a consumer lending area, and a commercial banking area. A new feature they will have is a large safety deposit box area where customers will be able to access their accounts via their palm scan.

"The new branch location will feature digital marketing to make customers aware of all our services while also offering a self-serve coin counter and walk up ATM where you will also have the ability to make cash or check deposits envelope free, enjoy an image of your deposited check on your receipt, get a mini statement of your transaction, as well as change your ATM pin number," Parker added.

Parker pointed out that Peoples Bank currently has 23 branches around north central Alabama.

"Hopefully the modernization of this branch will lead to an update or upgrade of our other branches and future branches to be opened in new locations," she said.

Of course, this new branch will function as the consolidation of two current branches into one, so no additional staff will be added at this time Parker explained.

"This new facility is an investment in our future as we plan to grow our footprint and we feel it will meet our needs for many years to come," Parker stated.

Peoples Bank is confident their new location will improve their level of customer service and provide customers with much more convenience. With their operations and administration offices currently being quartered on the same floors, their plan to move the Main Office to the first floor in January will certainly be welcomed. They have already installed a new drive up ATM out front, and an open house of the entire facility is planned for some time in January.

"After our bank was hit by the tornadoes of April 27th, it has been our plan to locate to a facility where we could house our entire administration, operations, and banking house so as to better serve our customers," Parker said.



» The new modernized branch of Peoples Bank, located in the old Woodland Hospital building, will consolidate the current Main Office and Good Hope branches; will feature "teller pods".

CHAMBER CHATTER

Chamber Presents Check to Cullman Caring for Kids

By: Natalie Bonner

CULLMAN - The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce handed over a generous donation to Cullman Caring for Kids on Friday, December 20. The Chamber presented Javon Daniel with a check for a substantial amount. The money was raised from the Chamber's Second Annual Art After Hours event where local artists were invited to submit their work and half to all of the proceeds from each sale was donated to a great cause. The annual event was a part of the Chamber for Charities program.

Deonne Ludwig is the Director of Membership & Marketing at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce and said that the Chamber for Charities program began in 2012 in the hopes to bring more awareness to our local non-profits and of being able to help or contribute to them in some way.

"For the second year in a row, the Chamber has hosted our Art After Hours – Silent Auction. It continues to grow and we were very proud to present Cullman Caring for Kids a check for over $1000 from our 2013 event," Ludwig said.

"This event has benefitted several people. Local artists have gotten to share their work, community members have been enriched by the experience, and Cullman Caring for Kids benefitted from the event."

Cullman Caring for Kids originally started in 1988 and then became incorporated and received the 501(c)(3) charitable tax status in 1989. They also started their first program in 1989. Their mission is child abuse prevention and awareness.

Executive Director of Cullman Caring for Kids Javon Daniel said, "We began a program in the county and city school systems to increase awareness concerning child abuse. The program was a puppet presentation that dealt with those issues. That program is still ongoing today and has expanded to cover grades K-6. We now do 9 different programs geared towards these issues."

CCfK also runs the community food bank. They run several different programs: a hospital program for new parents; a program in county jails for female inmates; separate programs for teenage boys and girls that teach them parental skills; two radio programs a week called Kids Matter; and they serve as the umbrella agency for CASA - Court Appointed Special Advocates. All donations help with the Food Bank and all programs offered by CCfK.

"This donation is very much appreciated. I was very pleased and surprised with what they were able to do. The Chamber is always very helpful. Cullman is such a giving place. The people here see a need and help try to fix it. We are so blessed to be working and operating in such a great community that is as caring and giving as Cullman," Daniel said.

In addition to helping out a great cause, artists in the community were able to showcase their artistic efforts through the Chamber's Second Annual Art After Hours event. Artist extraordinaire and Manager at Shop Around the Corner Laura Walker said that the annual art event has helped in so many ways and that it gives back to the community in a variety of fashions.

"Art After Hours is a great chance for artists to meet and network with business owners and expose the community to their art and educate them on why they should purchase original art," Walker said.

"Original art goes beyond buying something pretty to hang on your wall. When you buy mass-produced prints – it's pretty but it has no intrinsic value. It's just a piece of paper in a pretty frame, whereas when you buy original art, it increases with age and the art is created from a place of soul. It will move you more. You can't get that from mass-produced art."

Walker elaborated that the event was a success for all involved. She explained that artists tend to work alone so they should seek out opportunities to give back and help whether it is donating paintings, door prizes or free classes.

For more, contact the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.



» Javon Daniel, Cullman Caring for Kids; Laura Walker, Shop Around the Corner & Cullman Art Guild; Chamber Staff: Leah Bolin, Cecelia Smith, Deonne Ludwig and Jackie Moore

CRMC Board Says Thank You to Outgoing Board Member

By: Heather Roberts

CULLMAN — Cullman Regional Medical Center's Board of Directors recently honored board member, Dr. Vince Bergquist, for his service to the community through the Healthcare Authority of Cullman County, Inc. board.

Dr. Bergquist served as a Board Member for two years as CRMC Medical Staff President. Board Chairman Todd McLeroy thanked Dr. Bergquist for leadership, vision, and dedication to the community during his term and presented him with a service award in recognition of his efforts.



» Board Chairman Todd McLeroy recently recognized and honored outgoing board member, Dr. Vince Bergquist, for his leadership and dedication to the Health Care Authority of Cullman County, Inc. and Hospital Board of Directors.

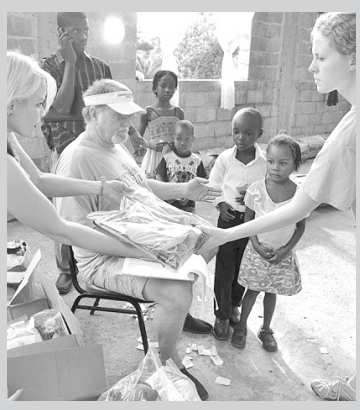
For more information about Cullman Regional Medical Center, visit online at www.crmchospital.com.

What's Online

A Sincere Sense of Giving

Four missionaries from West Point Baptist Church made the over 1,000 mile journey to Limbe, Haiti on Friday to visit the church's newest edition at Haiti's Eden. However, the group brought a bit more than themselves, as more than 700 gift bags, shirts, sunglasses and more, were given...

qrne.ws/140



Deep South Classics Finds a New Home

Deep South Classics is known for their fine selection of upscale items for brides and babies, but they also have luxury items of all kinds for every taste and season. In addition to their specialty items, they offer a variety of furniture, gift accessories, jewelry, gourmet foods and coffee.

qrne.ws/141

A Taste of Palomino

Crowds of people poured into the doors of The Blue Moose last Friday, all thirsty for the same thing: beer. The Blue Moose is Cullman's first and only brewpub. It has a small lunch and dinner menu offering home cooked entrees and delectable desserts..

qrne.ws/142

States Crack Down on 'Cramming' Phone Scams

By: Pamela M. Prah • Stateline

States are stepping up efforts to help consumers who find mysterious, and usually bogus, charges on their phone bills.

Some 12,500 Vermont households and businesses are receiving refund checks this month totaling more than $900,000 for illegitimate charges that appeared on their landline phone bills.

These victims of "cramming" got their money back as part of a $1.6 million settlement between the state and 25 sellers of voicemail, e-mail, and other services. But in many cramming cases, people don't get refunds—and might not even know they were swindled at all.

As many as 20 million people are crammed each year, but only about 1 in 20 realizes it, the Federal Communications Commission estimates. Cellphone and landline cramming could cost consumers up to $2 billion a year.

Vermont and Illinois are the only states that ban third-party charges on landline phone bills.

But state attorneys general from 43 other states are joining an effort to tackle the growing problem of cramming on cellphones.

More than one-third of American homes (35.8 percent) had only wireless phones in 2012, up from less than 5 percent in 2003, government data show.

Cramming Charges Easy to Overlook

Cellphone cramming often begins when a consumer receives a text message with an offer to enter a contest. By replying, the consumer unknowingly signs up for a monthly, weekly, or daily service that provides the latest weather, traffic, news, sports, or celebrity gossip. The charge for this "service" ends up on the consumer's cellphone bill, often labeled as a "premium text message."

Some cramming charges can be as small as $2 or $3 per month and easy to overlook, but others can total as much as $24.95. Even consumers who do not text have been crammed. Often, these consumers are elderly.

The elimination of cellphone cramming should be "a consumer protection priority," attorneys general from 40 states said in a letter they sent earlier this summer to the Federal Trade Commission.

The effort was led by Vermont Attorney General William H. Sorrell, a Democrat, and Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller, a Republican.

Texas Case Gets Noticed

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott, a Republican, last month filed a lawsuit against four "content providers" who were behind a cramming scam. But Abbott also sued a company, Mobile Messenger U.S. Inc., that handled billing for cellphone carriers. Abbott's expanded focus has attracted the attention of wireless carriers, the cellphone industry, and other states.

"Rather than acting as a gatekeeper to keep the bad content providers out as expected by the carriers, Mobile Messenger continues to facilitate the deceptive conduct by allowing the defendant content providers to continue to deceptively bill consumers," Texas said in its lawsuit.

Wireless carriers do not usually interact directly with content providers, but they do enter into contracts with companies such as Mobile Messenger.

Two weeks after Texas filed its lawsuit, three major wireless carriers — AT&T Mobility, Sprint, and T-Mobile — said they would no longer charge their customers for commercial "premium text messages," which account for the overwhelming majority of cramming complaints.

The announcement also came amid ongoing talks between the wireless carriers and attorneys general from 45 states, led by Vermont, with Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Oregon, Texas, and Washington.

The AGs consider the development a major breakthrough in the fight against mobile cramming. "This is a victory for cellphone users" across the nation, Sorrell said.

"We are pleased that AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile have decided to stop the flow of money from the pockets of ordinary people to the bank accounts of scam artists."

Verizon Wireless said that while it didn't agree with all of the allegations levied by the attorneys general, it is sympathetic to anti-cramming efforts.

The company said it was already in the process of winding down its premium messaging business, in part, because of "recent allegations that third parties have engaged in improper conduct in providing premium messaging services to our customers."

T-Mobile said that despite protections and processes put in place, not all vendors have acted responsibly.

As a result, the company is ending all billing for premium text message except for charitable and political giving. T-Mobile made clear in its fact sheet that consumers could still text to vote for "American Idol" and participate in text message campaigns, such as Text to Give for the Red Cross or another cause.

The attorney generals said they would work with other carriers to encourage them to take the same steps that AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile have agreed to take.

"Carriers have allowed third parties to use mobile billing to charge for their services– services most consumers did not want and may not have even noticed," Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster, a Republican, said. "It is time for this practice to stop."

Stateline is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news service of the Pew Charitable Trusts that provides daily reporting and analysis on trends in state policy.

Celebrate the New Year in Alabama With 10 Free Flowering Trees from the Arbor Day Foundation

By: Anthony Marek • Arbor Day Foundation

Residents of Alabama can ring in the New Year with 10 free flowering trees by joining the Arbor Day Foundation any time during January 2014.

By becoming a part of the nonprofit Arbor Day Foundation, new members will receive two Sargent crabapple, three American redbuds, two Washington hawthorns, three white flowering dogwoods.



» White dogwood tree

"These beautiful trees will give your home in Alabama lovely flowers with pink, yellow and white colors," said John Rosenow, founder and chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation.

"These trees are perfect for large and small spaces, and they will provide food and habitat for songbirds."

The free trees are part of the Foundation's Trees for America campaign.

The trees will be shipped postpaid at the right time for planting, between February 1 and May 31, with enclosed planting instructions.

The 6- to 12-inch tall trees are guaranteed to grow or they will be replaced free of charge.

Members will also receive a subscription to the Foundation's bimonthly publication, Arbor Day, and The Tree Book, which includes information about tree planting and care.

To become a member of the Foundation and to receive the free trees, send a $10 contribution to TEN FREE FLOWERING TREES, Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Avenue, Nebraska City, NE 68410, by January 31, 2014.

Alabama residents can also join online at arborday.org/january.

Six States Win Federal Grants for Early Education

By: Adrienne Lu • Stateline

Six states – Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont – will receive $280 million in federal grants in the third round of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, according to an announcement by federal officials recently.

The six states join 14 others that were awarded Early Learning Challenge grants in the first two rounds of the competition, which supports the education of children from birth to five years old.

Sixteen states and the District of Columbia competed in the third round of the competition.

The grants range from $36.9 million to $51.7 million. The Obama administration has awarded over $1 billion in Early Learning Challenge grants and is proposing to spend an additional $75 billion over the next 10 years to fund universal prekindergarten for low-income and moderate-income families.

"By investing in high-quality early learning through programs like Race to the Top – Early Leaning Challenge, we are able to close achievement gaps, provide life-transforming opportunities for children, and strengthen and build a thriving middle class," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

New Jersey, which will receive $44.3 million, will use the funds to establish a coordinated system of early education and child care, including a statewide quality rating improvement system that will help parents choose between child care options and help programs improve.

New Jersey's plan also includes a training academy to coordinate professional development for programs serving high-needs children, a kindergarten entry assessment, and early learning standards for children from birth to age three.

Georgia, which will receive $51.7 million, will use the money to increase access to high-quality child care for low-income families and to develop a kindergarten entry assessment, among other initiatives.

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Commissioner Bobby Cagle said the state will create financial incentives for early education programs to improve their overall quality and to serve more children who are low-income or who are developmentally delayed.

Vermont will use $36.9 million to create apprenticeships and scholarships for early childhood educators and expand home visiting programs for new parents, among other programs.

Kentucky was awarded $44.3 million for its plan to expand the state's quality rating system for early learning programs, promote family engagement, and improve professional development for early childhood educators.

"This $44 million grant represents one of the largest single investments in Kentucky's students – and it's targeted specifically to our youngest students, who will carry the positive impact of these programs throughout their school careers," said Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear, a Democrat.

Pennsylvania will use its $51.7 million to establish 50 "innovation zones," with the goal of involving parents more in their children's education, building stronger relationships between early childhood education programs and school districts, and strengthening the network of community organizations serving families with young children.

The grant also will help pay for better professional development for early childhood educators.

Michigan expects about 182,000 children to benefit from its $51.7 million grant, according to State Superintendent Mike Flanagan.

Michigan's plan includes increasing access to high-quality early childhood programs, increasing opportunities for home care providers to improve the quality of their programs, and expanding training for home care providers.

"Michigan's Race to the Top Award – the first ever for our state – aligns perfectly with our ambitious early childhood investments," said Republican Gov. Rick Snyder.

"This is not a replacement for our current and future investments, but rather a very significant addition to our efforts to give children in Michigan a great start."

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Holly Pond Lady Broncos capture Yule Tide Championship

By: Johnny Thornton
Sports Reporter

HANCEVILLE – Defense wins championships. That's the tone the Holly Pond Lady Broncos took in winning the Yule Tide Classic Saturday evening at Tom Drake Coliseum.

Holly Pond ended Cullman's 5-game winning streak with a victory and extended is string of wins to 11 in a row.

The No. 4 team from Class 3A heads into 2014 with 16 wins in 18 games with plenty of more to come.

The Lady Broncos shut out Cullman 10-0 in the first period and made it difficult the entire night for the Lady Bearcats to find a pattern on the offensive side.

In three games of this classic, the Lady Broncos held the opposition to single digits in eight of 12 quarters.

Keeping Cullman's Baylee Johnson scoreless in the first served well for the Lady Broncos.

The shooting guard was able to score twice from downtown in the second but Cullman couldn't contain Natasha Holcomb.

Holcomb had 10 points by halftime with a wide open layup in the closing seconds to increase the margin to 22-13.

A three by the senior late in the third extended the Holly Pond lead to 31-15 as she was leading the team in scoring with 18 by the time the period ended.

Holly Pond went into the fourth with a comfortable 39-21 lead as Rachel Finley landed a three-pointer and Kaitlyn Stephens hit a layup in the final minute to give the squad plenty of momentum.

Finley scored twice from the line with 3:30 to play as Holly Pond was up 50-26.

That allowed coach Scott Adams to get his reserves in to finish up the championship game.

Holcombe's 20 points led the way to the title with Finley scoring 17 and Meg Gambrill having 11.

She led the team with 51 points in three games.

Stephens wound up with four while Adair Gillian had two. Ruth Horton knocked down a free throw.

For Cullman, now 7-6, Johnson and Oakleigh White scored eight, Skinner flipped in four with Short, Kaitlyn Brannon, and Carrie Evans two each.

In other games on Saturday in the girls division, Gardendale got past Brooks 52-42 to avoid an 0-3 visit to Wallace State. Tanner crushed Northridge 52-27 in the fifth place game while a surprise took place in the third place battle between Hartselle and Athens.

Hartselle fought back from a 21-13 halftime deficit in crushing Athens 54-35.

The Lady Tigers outscored the Golden Eagles 24-8 in the third period and finished with a 17-6 run while not having guard Allie Roden for much of the contest.

Roden had sustained an ankle injury in Friday's semifinal loss to Cullman.

The Lady Tigers overcame her absence with Riley Terry leading the attack in the upset with 15 points while Melissa Paul Hill tossed in 11.

CullmanSense Yule Tide Classic All-Performance Team

- Meg Gambrill - Holly Pond (MVP)
- Rachel Finley - Holly Pond
- Natasha Holcombe - Holly Pond
- Baylee Johnson - Cullman
- Christina Skinner - Cullman
- Allie Roden - Hartselle
- Melissa Paul Hill - Hartselle
- Tionna Moore - Athens
- Tariona Adams - Athens

Schaffer keys Cullman comeback victory in Yule Tide Classic

By: Johnny Thornton
Sports Reporter

HANCEVILLE - Cullman point guard Lawson Schaffer is fun to watch. The six-foot junior has tremendous ability and is very valuable to the success of the Bearcats.

Schaffer came through in the clutch during the second half with 21 of his 26 points as Cullman overcame a 14-point deficit in the final half to defeat Arab 67-61 and claim third place in the 2nd annual Yule Tide Classic Saturday evening at Wallace State's Tom Drake Coliseum.

Schaffer was the lone Bearcat to record double figures in his final game of this event.

But he also set up his teammates as Cullman went on an 18-6 run in the final 8:00 after falling behind by double digits during the third period.

The shooting was not solid to begin the game.

It took Cullman over three minutes to knock down its first field goal.

Arab was not much better, but did have an early lead until the Bearcats relied on bench scoring from Auston Neal, Jason McAffee, and Chase Slocomb to take a 14-13 lead by the time the first period ended.

Starters Lawson Schaffer and Lane Donaldson didn't get on the scoreboard until the second period.

Schaffer's trey extended the Cullman lead to 19-16 with Arab hanging around by the shooting from guard Joe Crowder.

The score was Cullman 24, Arab 20 with 5:00 to play in the half.

Ridge Watson was the spark for Arab with 10 points by the 5:00 mark of the half as Arab trailed 24-23.

Arab regained the lead at 27-25 on a drive to the basket by Crowder with 4:00 to play until halftime.

Cullman closed out the half with a 6-3 spurt as Slocomb, Schaffer and Seth Swalve scored during transition plays with the Bearcats hanging on to a 31-30 lead as both teams departed for the locker room.

It was Arab having better results to start the third period. The Knights went on a 13-4 run and led 43-35 with 4:00 to go after Jason Landman had his third field goal in the frame. The talented Landman was scoreless in the first half.

Landman upped the Arab advantage to 47-37 at the 3:00 mark on his fourth field goal that enabled Cullman coach Bobby Meyer to use a time out in trying to slow down the Knights with 17 points in just over five minutes.

A follow up by Landman after Crowder missed a layup resulted in a slam and Arab was ahead 49-37 with 2:17 still to play in the third.

The deficit became 51-37 as Schaffer did what he could to inspire a Cullman comeback.

Schaffer wound up with 14 in the period following a 5-point performance in the first half to get the Bearcats within striking distance at 55-49.

A three-point play by Schaffer closed the gap to 57-55 with 6:00 to play but Cullman still had trouble keeping Landman from scoring.

Keaton Dean scored with 3:00 to play to push Cullman to a 65-61 lead with the Bearcats on a 10-4 run at that moment.

Schaffer sealed the victory with 0:08 left by making two at the line.

He finished with eight field goals, three treys and was seven of 11 at the line. He made five of six from the stripe in the fourth period.

Swalve scored nine, Slocomb and Neal had seven, McAffee and Dean scored six, while Austin Beck, Donaldson, and Lee Mattox tallied two apiece. The Bearcats are now 10-6 on the season.

Arab fell to 11-5 and suffered its second loss to Cullman at a neutral site.

The Bearcats beat the Knights 73-67 in the semifinal round of the Holly Pond Thanksgiving Tournament in November.

The Knights pay a visit to Cullman on Jan. 13.

Landman scored 19 to lead a balanced attack for coach Faron Key.

Crowder had 14 with Ridge Watson scoring 10 and Kyle Cavendar seven.

In games from the consolation bracket earlier in the day, Boaz got past Tanner 48-44 in the seventh place game with Dora winning a close one over Muscle Shoals 41-39 for 5th place in the tournament.

Tanner entered the event No. 1 in the 2A rankings, but went winless in three days visiting Wallace State Community College and is likely to drop out of the Top 10 when the next poll is released.

CullmanSense Yule Tide Classic All-Performance Team

- Nathaniel Potts - Athens (MVP)
- William Potts - Athens
- Lawson Schaffer - Cullman
- Seth Swalve - Cullman
- Austin Hicks - Gardendale
- Juan Jackson - Gardendale
- Jason Landman - Arab
- Joe Crowder - Arab

Hands in the Sugar Bowl

By: Josh McBrayer
joshmcbrayer@cullmansense.com

NEW ORLEANS, La. – Everything is sweet in New Orleans as football fans await the arrival of the Alabama Crimson Tide and the Oklahoma Sooners for and epic clash in the 80th annual Allstate Sugar Bowl.

The Crimson Tide reached the classic game thanks to the Auburn Tigers winning the SEC Championship and playing for the BCS National Title. It is customary for the SEC champion to play in the Sugar Bowl unless the winner plays for the National Title. In this case, the duty falls to the second highest ranked SEC team and that is the #3 ranked Alabama Crimson Tide.

The 11th ranked Oklahoma Sooners reached the game for the Big 12 on the back of their 10-2 season performance to earn a BCS bowl invitation.

The Breakdown

In the sports world when you call a quarterback a game manager it is usually an insult, but this is not the case with Crimson Tide QB AJ McCarron. He fits the run first Alabama offense like a glove and is the heart and soul of the Alabama squad. A Heisman Trophy finalist, McCarron looks to lead the rough and tough Crimson Tide to their fourth straight BCS bowl win. To do this he will have to rely on his sticky handed receivers. Receivers like Kevin Norwood who averaged close to 15 yards a catch with 17 touchdowns to his credit in 2013. Amari Cooper will be on the opposite side of the field as Norwood and will provide McCarron with another solid aerial threat. Cooper averaged 17 yards a grab this season.

As if Alabama needed any more motivation for January 2nd, I don't think that Alabama has gotten the comments of Oklahoma's head coach Bob Stoops at the beginning of the year. Stoops was quoted as saying the SEC has the best team every year as far as the national championship but that doesn't mean that everything else is the best. Alabama head coach Nick Saban responded by saying anyone who doesn't play in the SEC does not know how hard the competition is.

With Alabama still reeling from an improbable Iron Bowl loss and missing the SEC title game and a chance to play for the national title, you can bet they are looking for someone to take their frustrations out on. No one fits that bill better than the Oklahoma Sooners.

Tune in January 2, 2014 for the 80th annual Allstate Sugar Bowl, live from New Orleans, La.

Find us on Facebook
facebook.com/CullmanSense



West Point 2013 Christmas Tournament wrap up

By: Josh McBrayer
joshmcbrayer@cullmansense.com

WEST POINT – For over 20 years the West Point Christmas tournament has been a staple in Cullman County and has provided some of the best action in the basketball season.

Just as it has been in years past, the tournament did not disappoint.

The host West Point Warriors played hard to defend their home court, defeating Danville on Thursday and Priceville on Friday before falling to non-county champion, the Lawrence County Red Devils during the 6:30 game on Saturday.

Fairview went 1-2 in the tournament losing a nail biter, 60-57 to Priceville on day one.

Day Two saw the Aggies take care of business against the Brewer Patriots but fall to Danville on Day Three.

Like Fairview, Good Hope had a single win, against Brewer, but it was a meaningful one.

Raider star Andrew Cofer buried a three point basket at the 1:37 mark of the second quarter giving him 1,000 career points; a remarkable feat for a player whom is legally blind in one eye.

Cold Springs was the lone team to traverse the tournament undefeated with wins over #5 Lawrence County, Danville, and Brewer.

The Eagles took home the trophy for the Cullman County Team Eight, their best record.

For our full coverage of the 2013 West Point Christmas Tournament, visit our website at CullmanSense.com where the news is always free.

California Dreamin': Will Auburn win the BCS title?

By: Josh McBrayer
joshmcbrayer@cullmansense.com

PASADENA Ca. – "California dreamin, on such a winter's day!", is a famous line from a Mamas and Papas song. This line could not fit any other team better than the Auburn Tigers.

Coming off an abysmal 2012 season that saw the Tigers go winless in the SEC, no one, not even head coach Gus Malzahn could have foreseen the Tigers in Pasadena awaiting the Florida State Seminoles and a chance to bring home the last BCS title in history.

The last time Auburn was in this position was 2010 when they had an undefeated season and faced the high-powered Oregon Ducks offense.

The similarities of that season and this season are remarkable. No one expected the Tigers offense to be so strong. After all, their quarterback was a transfer from a junior college.

He was then a little-known quarterback named Cameron Newton who later went on to win the Heisman Trophy.

On the defensive side of the ball you had guys like Nick Fairley on the defensive line, who stayed in the back field for most of the season terrorizing quarterbacks.

You also had receivers like Emory Blake who would catch anything that was thrown in the vicinity of him.

Now fast forward to 2013. Auburn has another junior college transfer, a quarterback named Nick Marshall who is just as fast on his feet as Cam Newton but has a slightly better arm.

On the end of Marshall's passes are receivers like Ricardo Louis who caught the 73 yard tipped pass from Marshall to win the Georgia game. CJ Uzomah was at the tight end position and was crucial in the Mississippi State win.

Of course you cannot forget Chris Davis on special teams who is responsible for the Iron Bowl win when he took a missed field goal back 100 plus yards for the score.

When coupling these offensive threats with running back Tre' Mason, who gashed Missouri for 300 plus yards in the SEC title game, it makes the Tigers offense formidable indeed.

Like Fairley from 2010, the Tigers biggest offensive threat of 2013 is defensive end Dee Ford who has made a living crushing quarterbacks this year.

But the biggest constant between 2010 and 2013 is one man, Gus Malzahn.

The new Auburn Tigers head coach was a defensive coordinator in 2010 for the Tigers and helped lead them to their first national title since 1953.

He now has a chance to come back to the school that made him the coach he is today and bring home Auburn's second national title in three years.

But to do this he will have to find out a way to shut down Heisman Trophy winner Jameis Winston and the high-powered Florida State offense, but if anyone can do it, it's the Tigers and Malzahn.

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Did you know that traditionally the most important deadline for 12th grade college funding is Dec. 1 nationally for them to receive priority, merit-based funding consideration for all (4) years of undergraduate work?

Did you know that seniors who want to transfer from a 2-year program to a 4-year need to go ahead and prepare for transfer scholaship eligibility now?

While there are many variables that affect a student being selected for a merit-based award over another similarly academically qualified student, typically, the student's gpa & test score are the standards by which the student is entered into his/her highest "eligibility selection window":

- Seniors with higher scores, let us show you how to maximize your auto-offers!
- Seniors with mid-range scores, let us show you how to maximize your remaining merit-based funding opportunities!
- Seniors with no/low scores, let us show you what you still can do to get as much funding as possible!
- Seniors with exceptional circumstances, let us show you how to help ensure that all of your additional opportunities are utilized!



Jill Gudger Howell, M.A. Ed.
President/ Developer,
PreK-12th Grade
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Berkeley Bob's Coffee House
Berlin Plaza Quick Stop
Brandin Iron Steakhouse
Busy Bee Cafe
Calley's Jet-Pep - Hwy. 278
Catoma Mart
Cullman Civic Center
Cullman County Courthouse
Cullman Wellness & Aquatics Center
Deb's Bookstore
Fairview Superette
Good Hope Grocery
Graves' BP 157
Hanceville Chevron
High Quality Fuels - Dodge City
Holly Pond Cafe
Holly Pond Supermarket
Jet Pep - Hwy 157
Joe's Freeway Exxon
Johnny's Bar-B-Q
Lowry's Discount Mart - Hwy. 157
Piggly Wiggly - Hwy. 157
Rumors Deli
S&S Foods
Southmart Chevron - Hwy. 278
The Hutch
Vinemont Super Saver
Wendy's / Texaco
West Point Superette

Big Hobby, Small Town Love (from Front)

By:Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – In a small town, Anthony Vincent has a big hobby. He has a vast collection of historical Cullman items that stretches across the back of his furniture store called Vincent's Furniture. Cullman High School annuals from 1915, saddle bags from the civil war, and unused world series baseball tickets from 1940 are just a few of the hundreds of priceless items in his collection.

"I've got marbles from the civil war era," he stated, "and boxes of country gentlemen tobacco that have never been opened." He scanned his collection, proudly displaying his most interesting pieces. The walls were lined with old signs and advertisements, and the cabinets were overflowing with history. No one else in Cullman has a larger collection of this town's past. Even the cabinet itself is a piece of history.

"It was made in Cullman," Anthony stated. "It's got an old sticker on it that says 'Buettner's'."

Anthony says several people just give him old or valuable items, knowing it will be taken care of, and sometimes he goes looking to add to his collection.

"If I'm driving through the country and I find a barn that's been grown up with weeds, I'll stop and ask if I can go in and look for stuff, and usually they don't mind if I browse around."

Other times, though, he just finds interesting things. In the attic of one of his warehouses, Anthony found an old journal belonging to William Fredrick Richter, an early citizen of Cullman. In the journal was an old family photograph, as well as a recipe for beer written in German.

Such an interesting hobby is rare. But this isn't just a hobby for Anthony; it's more of a passion, and it started in his childhood. Due to a medical issue, Anthony's father had trouble finding work. As a result, he started finding items, repairing them, and selling them, and Anthony grew fond of his father's job. After that, he started collecting pocket watches.

"My mother bought me my first pocket watch, and then I started collecting them. I just grew to love old things. I like to do things the old way. I work on clocks, I re-cain chairs. If it's old, I like it. It's just a challenge to find something that no one else has."

From cups from Cullman's Globe Theater to seats from Cullman's first chair factory, his collection has grown almost to the size of a museum. Most of his items are a piece of Cullman history, and he loves everything that he owns. His favorite item, though, is an old bottle from Cullman's first bottling company.

"This is probably my most prized possession because it's so rare. There are only four of these that I know of. I like things that no one has ever seen. M.H. Bogue was the soda bottler in Cullman, and then Coca-Cola bought him out. This is one of the first soda bottles in Cullman. I was offered $500 for this bottle, but I wouldn't sell it for any amount."

Another of his favorite pieces is even more unusual. It's a pair of underwear made from a flour sack. In the 30s and 40s, it was very common to make clothes out of sacks of flour, because it was resourceful and inexpensive.

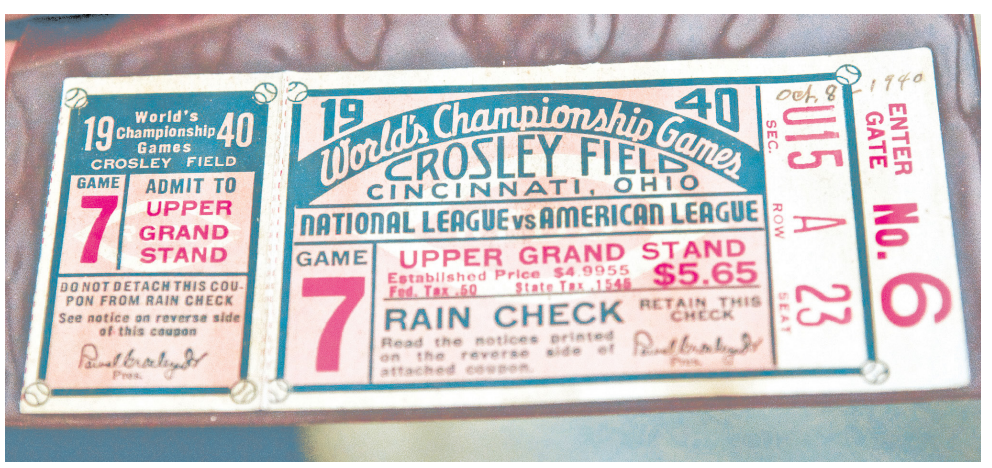
In fact, the flour companies would even make their sacks in bright colors or patterns, because they knew people were making clothes out of them.

"A lot of people used to make shirts and other things out of flour sacks," he said with a smile, "but this is homemade underwear,".

Anthony invites anyone who is interested to come look at his collection.

"It excites me when people want to see my collection, because I just love it. I love old stuff," he says. It is located in Vincent's Furniture on Highway 278 East passed Larkwood. Anthony will greet you with a smile and treat you like family as you browse his collection. Go enjoy Anthony's passion at Vincent's Furniture. You will definitely see a part of Cullman's history, and you just might discover a piece of your own past.





Marijuana (from Front)

come inside the home for a closer inspection.

"They (Sgt. Smith and Deputy Lewis) asked for permission to enter the residence but they were told they could not enter. At this time the deputies detained all four adults inside the residence," Sheriff Rainey said.

Christopher Butts, 42, Sonja Franks, 46, Stephen Franks, 22, and Amber Nixon, 22, were detained until a search warrant could be issued by a Cullman County judge. The home is not registered to any of the suspects, according to Rainey, but it was concluded that the four lived together.

"After obtaining a search warrant agents with CNET entered the home where they discovered several glass jars with marijuana buds," he said.

"An outbuilding was also searched and inside agents discovered a three room system for growing marijuana."

Rainey said the search warrant issued included the outbuilding in its description.

"When our K-9 deputy Kevin Lewis was walking the area, his K-9 partner indicated the presence of narcotics inside the outbuilding, so CNET added it to the list," he said.

"Once inside, approximately 30 marijuana plants were discovered in the somewhat elaborate setup."

Each of the suspects, Butts, Sonja and Stephen Franks, and Nixon were each charged with trafficking marijuana and were sent to Cullman County Detention Center, each on a $1 million bond.

Nixon was also charged with unlawful possession of controlled substance after deputies found a small amount of heroin in her possession. She is being held on a $1.5 million bond.

"I just want to say what a good job both Sgt. Terry Smith and K-9 deputy Kevin Lewis did handling this situation," he said.

"They arrived on scene to investigate a child in need and because of their alertness, we were able to make four trafficking arrests."

Stephen Franks bonded out Sunday, while the other three are currently being held at the Cullman County Detention Center.

Rainey said DHR was notified of the situation. He said the child was released to a family member.

Christopher Butts serves as the Executive Director of the Alabama Medical Marijuana Coalition.

According to the group's website, the Alabama Medical Marijuana Coalition "is an organization dedicated to the rights of patients. Its primary focus is organizing individuals and groups in the common goal of changing the laws concerning medical marijuana for patients in Alabama. It is the position of the Alabama Medical Marijuana Coalition that excessive government regulations infringe on the physician's ability and the patient's right to properly treat their ailment. It is our goal, through aggressive legislation, community involvement and education to end these infringements and protect the rights and liberties of all Alabama patients."

For more on the coalition visit, http://www.ammjc.org/

Additional charges may still be pressed against each of the four residents arrested on Saturday.

2013 (from Front)

The inevitable crazy celebrity of this year ends in a tie: Miley Cyrus and Amanda Bynes.

Miley for every insane performance she gave that ended in her signature tongue-wagging style. She shed the Hannah Montana image overnight.

Poor Amanda Bynes seems to have literally lost it as she has had plastic surgery, blown tons of money, been arrested several times, and had to have her parents take guardianship of her and be placed in an involuntary psychiatric ward.

Of course, we've lost several celebrities this year, too.

The untimely deaths of Glee star Cory Monteith and superstar actor Paul Walker of The Fast and Furious franchise are some of the first that come to mind.

Along with James Gandolfini, Mindy McCready, Lee Thompson Young and Roger Ebert.

More important news from this year, Alabama won the BCS National Championship, Pope Francis was selected as Pope Benedict XVI's successor, the royal family welcomed baby Prince George, and ObamaCare (a.k.a. the Affordable Care Act) was enacted.

Other disheartening news from this year includes: the Boston bombing that happened at the 117th Boston Marathon, the NSA spying scandal, and the Oklahoma tornadoes, just to name a few.

Also, our government briefly shutdown for a short period of time. Scary.

Wrapping up the year, we have 18 states that have legalized same sex marriage, with 32 states banning the act. Equality and tolerance are still important practices that seem to be garnering more support than ever.

The teens still love One Direction.

And somehow, American Idol is still on the air.

The adoration of glistening vampires (Twilight) has given way to The Hunger Games trilogy.

And Duck Dynasty is still popular.

Conclusively, 2013 has brought several surprises, both good and bad.

Everyone has an opinion about everything, and we still live in the greatest nation in the world. Goodbye, 2013.

It's been real. 2014, please bring on the success and smiles. We've been waiting all year for you.

What's your New Year's Resolution?

By: Kate Mullaney



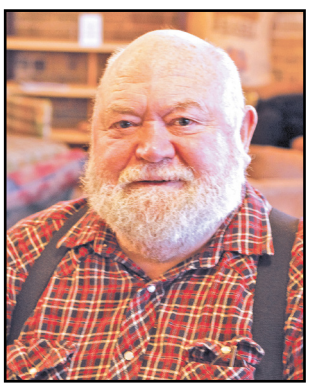
Nathaniel Kornegay
Age: 20
Cullman

"I want to graduate on the Dean's List."



Dustin Wren
Age: 25
Huntsville

"I want to clock in another 30 minutes in the gym every week."



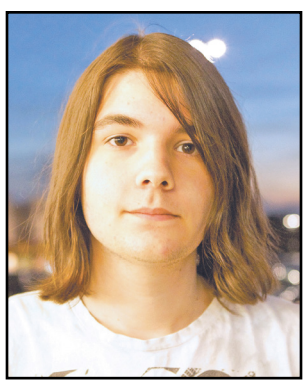
Dick Hopkins
Age: 75
Cullman

"I'm going to find a good gym to go to."



Ben Pagan
Age: 22
Cullman

"My New Years resolution is to eat healthier."



Arturo Vega
Age: 17
Cullman

"I'm hoping to get out more and to walk and jog a bit more."



Kelly Wilson
Age: 17
Cullman

"To get accepted to the nursing program at Wallace."



Jacob Fine
Age: 26
Auburn

"I'm giving up ginger ale because I drink an inappropriate amount of ginger ale."



Amy Odell
Age: 23
Auburn

"As a yoga instructor, I hope to increase my class size. As a yogi I hope to keep learning and sharing what I know."

Tips for Hosting a Memorable Dinner Party

(StatePoint) Want to be the host with the most? Entertaining can be tricky, especially when you're preparing a dinner party of several courses. But you don't have to let it stress you out, say experts.

"From setting the table, to creating a scrumptious dessert station, you can better impress your guests if you are prepared," says Jessica Joyce, spokeswoman for Bed Bath & Beyond.

As you make your plans, consider these helpful tips from Joyce:

Remove the Guess Work
The key to reducing stress around entertaining is to plan. Start putting together a guest list and menu ahead of time. Determine the hors d'ourves, drinks, main course, side dishes, coffee bar, and desserts.

Menu Talk
Once the menu is selected, make sure you have the right kitchenware to prepare and serve the meal -- from roasting pans to serving plates. Get familiar with the recipes you're working with so there are no last minute surprises.

Mix and Match Dinnerware
When it comes to serving guests, it's helpful to get assorted dinnerware in both white and clear so you can mix and match as needed. Have a water and wine glass on the table for each guest to use during the meal.

Presentation
Consider how you'd like to present your meal to your guests. Whether it's a sit-down dinner or buffet style, your food will be the main focus.

Create a 'Tablescape'
You can make a great impression before your guests even sit down to eat by crafting a beautiful setting. Create ambience by adorning the dinner table and buffet area with décor and infusing pops of color with the setting.

WEATHERING THE WINTER SEASON

A guide to advisories, watches and warnings

Contributed by NOAA

The word winter brings many things to mind. For some, it's bundling up to brave the cold temperatures, school snow closings, and fun-filled days of sledding. For others, it invokes treacherous commutes punctuated by blizzard conditions, slippery roads, and fender benders.

This winter, understanding the differences behind National Weather Service's advisories, watches and warnings could save your life or someone you love by knowing the appropriate action to take.

Know the signs of winter weather

• **Outlook** – An outlook is used to indicate that a hazardous winter weather event may develop. It is intended to provide information to those who need considerable lead time to prepare for the event.

• **Watch** – A watch is used when the risk of a hazardous winter weather event has increased, but its occurrence, location, and/or timing is still uncertain. It is intended to provide enough lead time so those who need to set their plans in motion can do so. When a watch is issued, it's prudent to listen to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards and check the forecast frequently at NOAA's National Weather Service Web site.

• **Warning/Advisory** – These products are issued when a hazardous winter weather event is occurring, is imminent, or has a very high probability of occurrence.

A warning is used for conditions posing a threat to life or property. An advisory is for less serious conditions that cause significant inconvenience and, if caution is not exercised, could lead to situations that may threaten life and/or property.

Before, during and after a storm, pay close attention to your local National Weather Service forecast for detailed information on the type of weather conditions expected, accumulations, possible impacts, as well as advisories, watches and warnings like these:

• **Winter Weather Advisory** – Any combination of snow, blowing snow, freezing rain, and sleet that meets or exceeds a locally defined 12 and/or 24 hour advisory criteria, but remaining below warning criteria.

• **Winter Storm Watch** – Conditions are favorable for a winter storm event (any combination of heavy snow, heavy sleet, ice storm, and blowing snow) to meet or exceed local criteria.

• **Winter Storm Warning** – Winter weather event that includes: snow, ice, or sleet meeting or exceeding locally defined 12 and/or 24 hour warning criteria; or a combination of snow, ice, or sleet and blowing snow with at least one of the precipitation elements meeting or exceeding locally defined criteria.

• **Blizzard Warning** – Sustained wind or frequent gusts greater than or equal to 35 mph accompanied by falling and/or blowing snow, frequently reducing visibility to less than 1/4 mile for three hours or more.

Drive safer this winter
"Thousands of people die every year in weather-related traffic accidents," says John Koch, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. "The best way to avoid a tragedy is to be aware of weather conditions and limit travel when hazardous weather conditions exist."

To keep safe, consider doing the following before driving in winter weather conditions, especially if the National Weather Service has issued warnings or watches in your area:

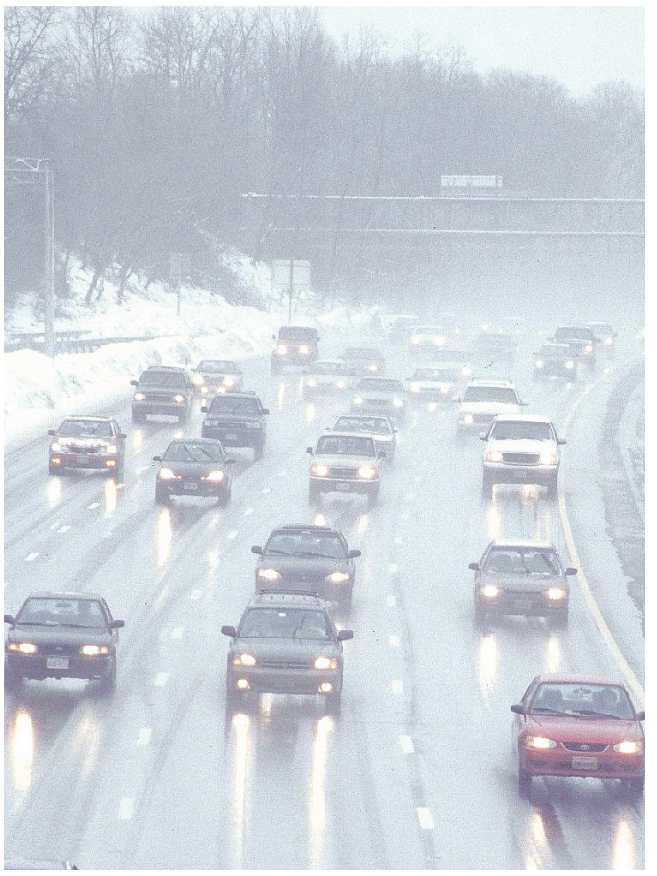
• Keep the gas tank full to keep the fuel line from freezing.

• Let someone know your destination, route, and when you expect to arrive.

• Keep a cell phone or other emergency communication device with you.

• Pack your car with thermal blankets, extra winter clothes, basic tool kit, (including a good knife and jumper cables), an ice scraper and shovel, flashlights or battery-powered lanterns with extra batteries, and high calorie, nonperishable food, and water.

• Use sand or kitty litter under your tires for extra traction, especially if you find yourself stuck in a slippery spot.



– Calendar –

Submit your event to calendar@cullmansense.com

Monday

Cullman Kiwanis Club
The Cullman Kiwanis Club invites all local men and women who are interested in taking part in community service along with great fellowship, fun, networking, and learning to attend their weekly luncheon meeting at 12 noon each Monday in the All Steak's third floor banquet room. Come see what Kiwanis is all about and enjoy a great luncheon meal as well.

Domestic Violence Survivor Support Group
Victim Services of Cullman sponsors a Domestic Violence Survivor Support Group meeting every Monday evening from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. in the old County Board of Education Building with childcare available. For additional information please call 256-775-2600. CRISIS HOTLINE - 256-734-6100.

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.

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.

Cornerstone Revival Ladies Prayer Meeting
A Ladies Prayer meeting is conducted each Monday night at 7 p.m. at Cornerstone Revival Center. For additional information 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 that 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!

Tuesday

Beginner Line Dance Lessons
Beginner Line Dance Lessons for 6 weeks each Tuesday night starting October 15 at 6:30 p.m. These lessons will take place in the basement of the Col. Cullmann Museum. $5.00 per lesson per person, with Patricia Quick as instructor. Open for all.

Pilot Club Members Priester Pecans Fundraiser
Members of the Cullman Pilot Club are selling Alabama Priester Pecans to raise funds for their special projects brain related disorders, Project Lifesaver program, brain minder puppet shows, Alzheimer's Support Group, Margaret Jean Jones Center, Field of Miracles and the Pilot Light Home. This year's crop of pecans include pecan halves, pecan pieces, chocolate covered pecan halves, honey glazed pecan halves, praline sugar halves and cinnamon sugar pecan halves. Bags are $12.00 for one pound of these delicious pecans. To obtain pecans please contact any Pilot club member you know or call Peggy Harris at 256-734-2831 or Ann Fox at 256-962-0910. Order some delicious goodies for the holidays while helping club members with their special projects. Win both ways!

Cullman Caring for Kids in Need of Donations
If you are able to contribute to Cullman County's Community Food Band, the 'Caring for Kids' organization, they would be grateful. Non-perishable food items are needed, and of course cash enables them to purchase needed products to fill their empty shelves. Please call 256-739-1111 to see how to help or mail checks or money orders to Cullman Caring for Kids, P. O. Box 698, Cullman, Alabama 35056-0698. Thanks in advance for anything you can do.

Knifty Knitters Weekly Meeting
Members of the Cullman Knifty Knitters group meet each Tuesday afternoon at 3 p.m. in the Cullman County Library. Everyone is invited to come learn how to knit yarn and needles are free. This group is open to all ages, both accomplished knitters and those wishing to learn the art form. Crocheters also are invited to take part in these weekly meetings. Please call Lesia for more info 256-734-2720, ext. 23.

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.

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.

Wednesday

NEW YEAR'S DAY

'Wii Bowling' at the Donald E. Green Senior Center
The entertainment for senior citizens is 'Wii Bowling' at the Donald E. Green Senior Center starting at 1 p.m. Everyone is invited. Come enjoy some exercise (but not too physical!) and fellowship with friends. They bowl every Wednesday and Friday afternoons at 1 p.m.

Latter Day Saints Genealogy Library
The Genealogy Library at the Latter Day Saints (L.D.S.) Church is open to the public each Wednesday night from 7 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. Don Jones is available to open the Library at other times, if needed, so please contact him at 256-784-5098.

Christ Lutheran Church's Advent Services
Everyone is invited to attend Christ Lutheran Church's Advent Service at the newly reconstructed Church which was destroyed in the 2011 tornado. Tonight's musical guests will be the Huntsville Lutheran Men's Quartet of Madison. A potluck dinner will begin at 6 p.m. followed by services from 7 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. All are invited.

Girls & Boys Club at Spirit Life
Spirit Life Church will host a Girls & Boys Club meeting for those 12 and under every Wednesday beginning at 7 p.m. at the church. All are welcome. Please call the church for further info 256-739-3326.

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!

Thursday

New Vision Support Group
There is a New Vision Support Group which will meet at 10 a.m. and everyone interested in this subject is welcome to attend. The program is at Hilltop Community Center. Additional information is available by calling Linda Estes, 256-739-4653.

Friday

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Friday Night Dance at the VFW
Cullman's VFW Post 2214 invites everyone to come to their weekly Friday night dances at the VFW Hall from 7 p.m. until 10 p.m. The cost is $5.00 per person and music by the Golden Oldies and Country with the Midnight Highway Band will be filling the air. Funds raised go toward the building rental. Get your dancing shoes on and come out for a great evening of fun and entertainment tonight.

Saturday

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. The Boogie Night Band provides music on Saturday nights. 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!

Next Monday

Cullman Kiwanis Club
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Everyone is invited to take part in the Aqua Zumba classes that 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!

Happy New Year from CullmanSense!

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New Year's Resolutions

That you will actually want to do

By: Natalie Bonner

Okay, we've all been there before, sitting in our sweatpants and overgrown shirt, wondering where those last eight pounds came from. Trying to determine if you should blame the lemon supreme cake, chocolate candies, the banana pudding, or maybe just the lethal combination of the aforementioned and other sugary-packed goodness.

Either way, welcome to the end of another year. If you do one thing this year, don't make the same resolution you have in years past. Why? It's very simple.

If you wanted to follow through on said resolution, you simply would have by now.

That's not to bash the avid gym resolutionists or the financially decrepit enthusiasts among us. You will get your 6-pack and 401k in due time, dears. We know this.

This year, I want to challenge you to make a different kind of resolution for yourself. The kind that gives you a shudder deep inside because you know in your heart if you truly tried, you could accomplish this very goal and in some warped, scary way you somehow fear achieving this success for whatever reason.

I challenge you to make that one your goal. I'll even share with you a few great resolutions that you will want to do! Now, these aren't your run-of-the-mill ideas and they certainly aren't rocket science material, but they just might get you thinking in a way you haven't in quite some time.

1. Challenge yourself to do something that scares you. The only way to grow is to do something outside of your comfort zone. After trying to do this activity you may find that you had nothing to be scared of all along. If you find your fear too gripping when you try to overcome it, see how you feel in a couple of months. Your first attempt may just fuel you with more desire and willpower than you thought possible and finally finish your fear off for good.

2. Take time out for yourself. I know you're busy. Like Superman busy, but if you don't start taking just a little bit of time out for yourself while you can, you may pay for it later in terms of health and sanity. If you'll take 15-30 minutes daily to give your brain a break from the endless stress of life, your body will thank you. Taking an adult time-out is perfectly okay. You deserve it.

3. Give back. New Year's Resolutions always seem to be about ways to self-improve, which is wonderful, but one goal you can have is to help others. This selfless act of charity or goodwill is something that you can do any day of the week and can be achieved through a monetary donation or a donation of your time and energy. Check with your local non-profits and causes, there are a million different charities and organizations in need.

These may seem like three standard resolutions, but when you compare with your friends and find out that they (once again) decided to quit drinking and smoking, to join a gym, and to start that new Paleo diet, you can just shrug and say yours are a little different this year.

Residential Recipes: Sneaky Pancakes

By: Chelsea Sparks

If your children are anything like mine, then you too know the woes of trying to get a child to eat healthy. Anything short of greasy French fries or cookies is just not acceptable to them.

That was until I decided to start playing dirty, by sneaking the fruits and veggies in "under the radar", so to speak. One of my son's favorite breakfast entrees is pancakes, and in the spirit of nutrition, I slipped in sweet potatoes.

Between it being low in sodium, and packed with Vitamins B6, A, and C, I could think of no better vegetable that would give him the nutrients he needs.

These are wonderful to make in big batches because you can toss the extras in the freezer and then heat them up anytime, like before school for the kids!

Ingredients:

- 1/2 to 1 cup - of sweet potato puree.
- 2 cups - pancake batter
- 1 1/2 to 2 cup - water (depending on desired thickness)
- 1 Teaspoon - Cinnamon
- 2 Tablespoons - Brown sugar

Instructions:

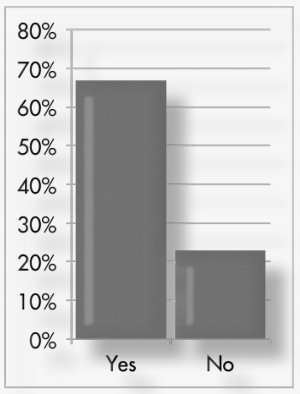
- You will first need to make your puree. Bake two sweet potatoes for 45 minutes at 400°. Once they are tender, peel and place the contents into a blender or food processor (a hand mixer will also work), and blend until smooth. Add in your cinnamon and brown sugar.
- After your puree is complete, mix it in with your normal pancake batter. Whisk until smooth. Heat up your skillet and pour the batter. These may take a couple of extra minutes to cook thoroughly because of the added sweet potatoes.
- Once they're cooked, lay them out to cool, and serve! Toss any extras in the freezer for a quick breakfast later! That's it!

Re-heating instructions:

- Put a stack in the microwave for 1- 1 1/2 minutes, or bake for 10-15 minutes at 350° covered with foil.

Poll

Has nonstop commercialization caused Christmas to lose its purpose?



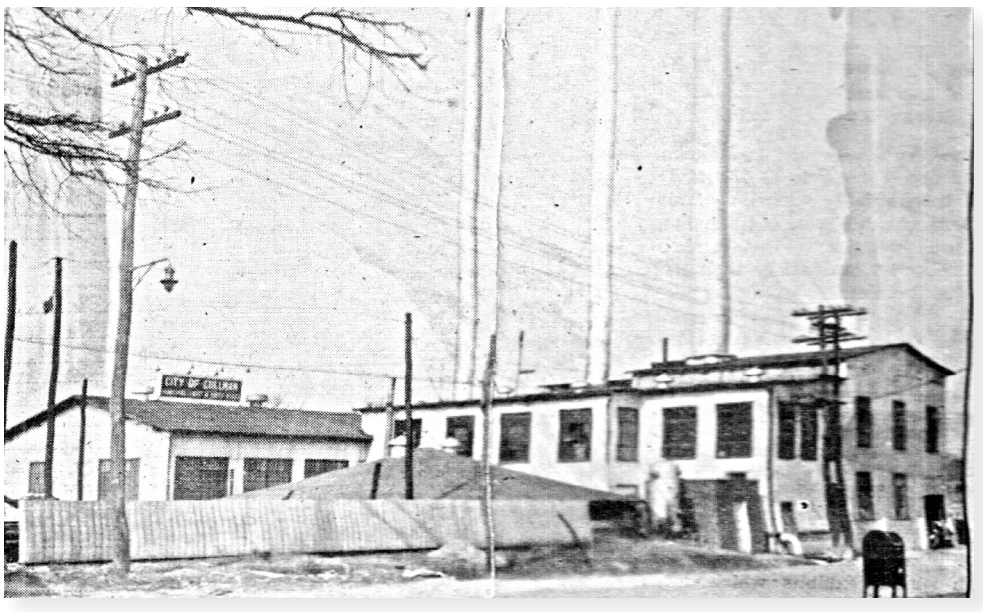
This Week's Poll

Have you made a New Year's resolution?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

Reflections of History

Share your historic photos with us!
E-mail history@cullmansense.com



Municipal Light and Water Plant

Contrib. by Cullman County Museum

This Week in History

December 30th

- 1970 – Paul McCartney sues his bandmates to dissolve the Beatles

December 31st

- 1951 – First battery to convert radioactive energy to electrical announced

January 1st

- 1776 – General George Washington hoists Continental Union Flag

January 2nd

- 1893 – First U.S. commemoratives and first U.S. stamp to picture a woman issued

January 3rd

- 1431 – Joan of Arc handed over to the bishop

January 4th

- 1862 – Battle of Helena, Alaska

January 5th

- 1836 – Davy Crockett arrives in Texas, just in time for the Alamo

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WHAT'S ON DECK AT PARKS AND REC....

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- **FREE Phone Calls from Santa Program:** Sign your child up to receive their FREE phone call from Santa. Sign-ups begin on Dec. 2nd on a limited, first come-first serve basis. Your child will receive their phone call from Santa on Monday, Dec. 23 at your requested time. Be sure you are at home and do not miss out on your call! Call the Civic Center at 256-734-9157 for details.
- **Cullman Savings Bank Frosty 5K & Polar Bear Plunge:** Registration is now open for this event to be held on Jan. 11, 2014 at the Wellness & Aquatic Center. Cost to register is $25 for the race, $30 for the plunge and race, or $10 for the plunge. Register now at active.com, the Cullman Civic Center, or CWAC. Great door prizes and cash prizes to winners of to $200 plus a chance to win a FREE one year membership to CWAC. Call for details at 256-734-9157.
- **CWAC Holiday Hours:** The Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center will be closed on Wed. Dec. 25 for Christmas, as well as open from 4:45am-12pm on Tues. Dec. 24 for Christmas Eve. The facility will be closed on Wed. Jan. 1 for New Year's.
- **Dog Obedience Classes:** Dog Obedience classes will begin on Tues. Jan 14, 2014 at the Cullman Civic Center. The class will be 7 sessions and go through March 11. Registration is open now at the Civic Center for puppy and adult classes, call the Civic Center for details at 256-734-9157.
- **Ballroom Dance Classes:** Ballroom dance classes will be held weekly at the Cullman Civic Center on Thursday nights with beginners at 6:30pm and advanced class at 7:30pm under instructor Mack Wilson. Cost is $10 per person per class. Call the Cullman Civic Center for details at 256-734-9157.
- **Zumba Classes:** Held at the Civic Center Mon., Wed., and Thurs. 5:30-6:30pm. $40 for 10 classes or $6 per class with instructor Monica Kugler.
- **Nia Dance & Ageless Grace Fitness Classes:** Includes yoga stretching, anti-aging tips, and more with instructor Ann Caretti. Nia class is held Tuesdays at 10:00am at the civic center, and Ageless Grace is held on Thursdays at 5:30pm.
- **Yoga Classes**: Stay fit and relax with yoga held at the Civic Center every Tuesday night at 6:00pm with Fabian Holland. Six classes for $40 or $30 for seniors.





Clear Skies Clouded with Smaug:
A Review of The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug

By: Dillon Lee
dillon@cullmansense.com

Most modern trilogies, be they film or literature, have a "dark middle chapter." In this chapter, the heroes face they worst peril. Their bonds are shaken. The stakes of their conflict are raised. And the ending is a gripping cliffhanger. *The Empire Strikes Back* is perhaps the best example, but *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* is a harrowing chapter in the original trilogy by director, co-writer, and producer Peter Jackson. So in *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, do not expect a satisfying conclusion and do not expect our heroes to overcome all villainy by the film's final reel.

This is not a problem related to the film's quality; it is a reality of the series' structure. There is no fault in leaving your audience wanting more. There is no critique in testing a character's resolve. There are however many other valid critiques with *The Desolation of Smaug*.

Like its predecessor, the first *Hobbit* film, *An Unexpected Journey*, the movie is caught between two worlds- the harsh and gritty tone of the original *Lord of the Rings* films and the lighter, kid-oriented subject matter of Tolkien's book The *Hobbit*. This results in an unsettling identity crisis which disconnects the audience from the film.

The often comical dwarven party of Thorin Oakenshield continues to survive potentially deadly and terrifying encounters with ease. Part of that is the convenient interference of Bilbo Baggins which is true to the spirit of the book. However, the other factor in their unflappable luck is the cartoon like roller coaster rides in which the Dwarves eventually find themselves.

The CGI-ridden goblin mines of the first film are replaced with the spider dens and river barrel ride of Mirkwood. None of these are necessarily out of step with the events of the book, certainly not the famous barrel ride, but they are seemingly endless. And while Thorin, Bilbo and company are relatively unscathed swaths of goblins and orcs are brutalized and killed. Cartoon escapades are uncomfortably mixed with the most beheadings ever seen (or suggested) in a PG-13 film.

Legolas, played by Orlando Bloom, makes a return appearance in this *Hobbit* film. His presence is supposed to connect the two trilogies, but the ring and Gandalf seem perfectly suited for that purpose. Regardless, Legolas is here and used flimsily as a throw away subplot and as a ridiculous killing machine.

Fans will remember the thrill of seeing Legolas in action in the *LotR* films, particularly his acrobatics during the Battle for Minas Tirith in *The Return of the King*. Those moments were breathtaking, and rare. That is what made them breathtaking.

Here Legolas and another elven warrior, Tauriel, played by Lost star Evangeline Lily, pull a series of impossible arrow shots, leaps, kicks, and generally death defiance.

It is an example of "too much of a good thing." Again, the environments and enemies are shamelessly CGI. While competent, the characters, particularly the over-the-top, unnecessary Goblin general, are not as subtle or as expertly crafted as Gollum.

The fight scenes continue to be dizzyingly unsatisfying as the camera need not move in any real way. The actors are not on a real set with CGI elements and costumed actors, as they were on the first trilogy.

Instead, they are in almost entirely in a computer generated reality where the camera can constantly swing, tilt, and move in any way imaginable. Sometimes filmmakers need limits to fully activate their creativity. Gone are the expertly choreographed fights brimming with trained stunt men from the *Lord of the Rings* films. Instead, they are replaced with rubbery digital enemies with little substance that the heroes mercilessly abuse.

To the credit of the filmmakers, the scenes featuring the dragon Smaug and Bilbo are the most interesting of the film. Much like the intimacy of the Gollum and Bilbo exchanges from *An Unexpected Journey*, those smaller story beats allow the film to break from its epic, sweeping pastiche.

The scenes Smaug are also a testament to the ability for real actors and CGI creatures to interact in an impactful way. The enormous dragon, Smaug, surrounded by his hoarded gold, makes the diminutive Bilbo seem even tinier and more powerless. If only the rest of film had the same attention to scope and detail.

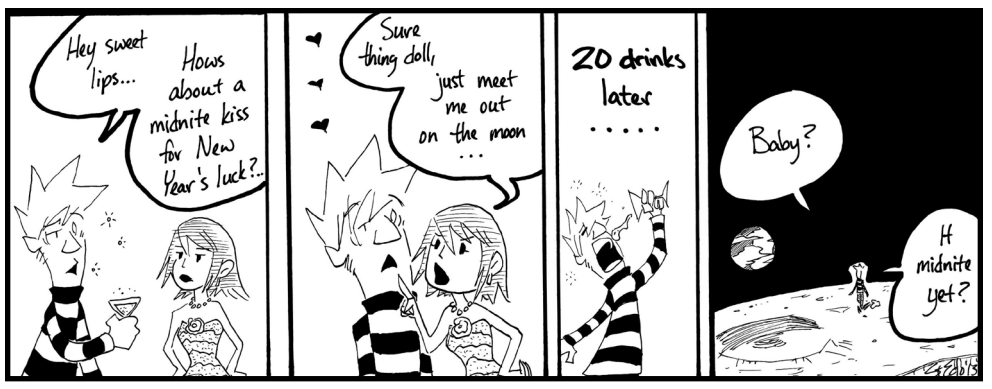
All told, *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* is not a bad film, but it does feel bloated. It is too entertained by its own technical prowess. It's story is too decompressed and poorly paced. It's side stories, like those of Gandalf and Legolas, seem out of place.

Obviously, the film has a reputation to live up to given its pedigree. One could argue those expectations are unrealistic or impossible.

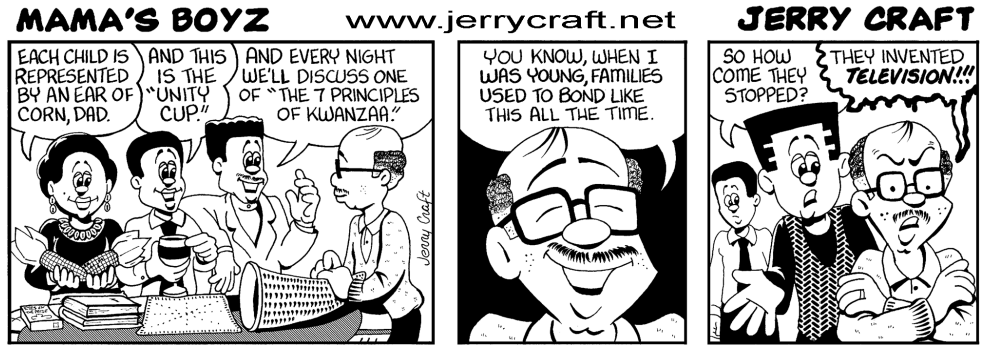
The fact is that *The Hobbit*, at its core, is about a simple creature surrounded by a strange world he barely fathoms; while the film seems like it is about a simple creature surrounded by an oversized, fake world with very little actual danger.

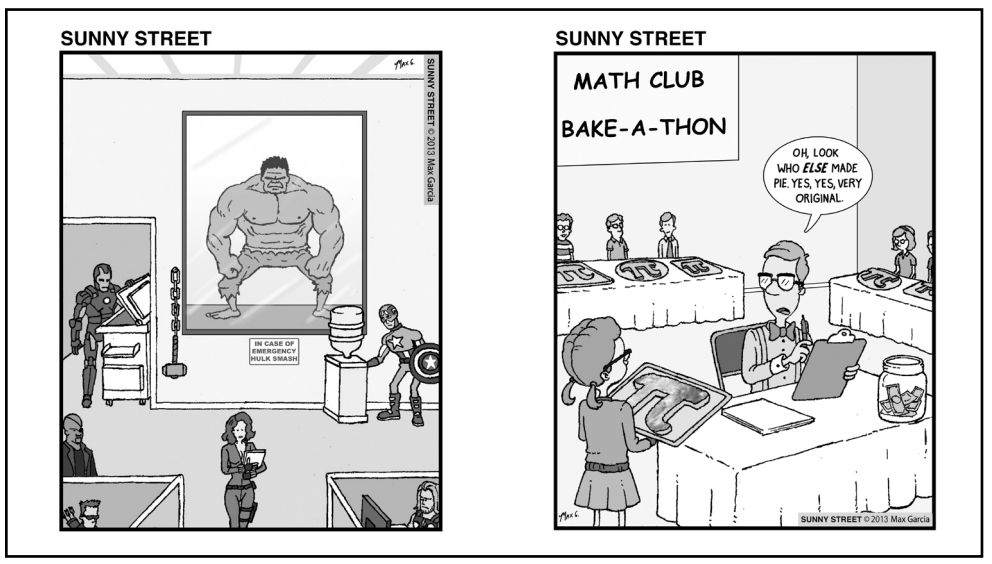
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MAMA'S BOYZ www.jerrycraft.net **JERRY CRAFT**





USHERING IN THE NEW YEAR
Area bars to offer New Year's celebration opportunities

By: Kate Mullaney

CULLMAN – 2013 is almost over, and with New Year's Eve approaching, we're all looking for somewhere to celebrate.

This year you don't have to leave town to ring in the New Year.

Several of Cullman's bars are excited to celebrate this New Year's Eve.

Grumpy's Italian Grill will be hosting karaoke night from 7-10 p.m. They will also have several drink specials. Celebrate 2014 by showcasing your talents!

Moe's will have the Chris Bushey Band for New Year's Eve.

If you love dancing and singing along to live music, go to Moe's to ring in the New Year.

If you prefer a peaceful atmosphere, The All Steak is the place for you.

Enjoy your night out with live music and drinks at The All Steak's beautiful bar area.

The Local Standard will have their house band, Dark before Dawn, as well as Spone Floor Theory this New Year's Eve.

Enjoy these two bands while taking advantage of the drink and food specials.

Have a happy new year, and don't forget to celebrate responsibly!

HOW DO SNOWFLAKES FORM?
The science behind snow

Contributed by: NOAA

Q: How are snowflakes formed?

A: A snowflake begins to form when an extremely cold water droplet freezes onto a pollen or dust particle in the sky.

This creates an ice crystal. As the ice crystal falls to the ground, water vapor freezes onto the primary crystal, building new crystals – the six arms of the snowflake.

That's the short answer.

The more complex explanation is this:
These ice crystals that make up snowflakes are symmetrical (or patterned) because they reflect the internal order of the crystal's water molecules as they arrange themselves in predetermined spaces (known as "crystallization") to form a six-sided snowflake.

Ultimately, it is the temperature at which a crystal forms — and to a lesser extent the humidity of the air — that determines the basic shape of the ice crystal.

Thus, we see long needle-like crystals at 23 degrees F and very flat plate-like crystals at 5 degrees F.

The intricate shape of a single arm of the snowflake is determined by the atmospheric conditions experienced by entire ice crystal as it falls. A crystal might begin to grow arms in one manner, and then minutes or even seconds later, slight changes in the surrounding temperature or humidity causes the crystal to grow in another way.

Although the six-sided shape is always maintained, the ice crystal (and its six arms) may branch off in new directions.

Because each arm experiences the same atmospheric conditions, the arms look identical.

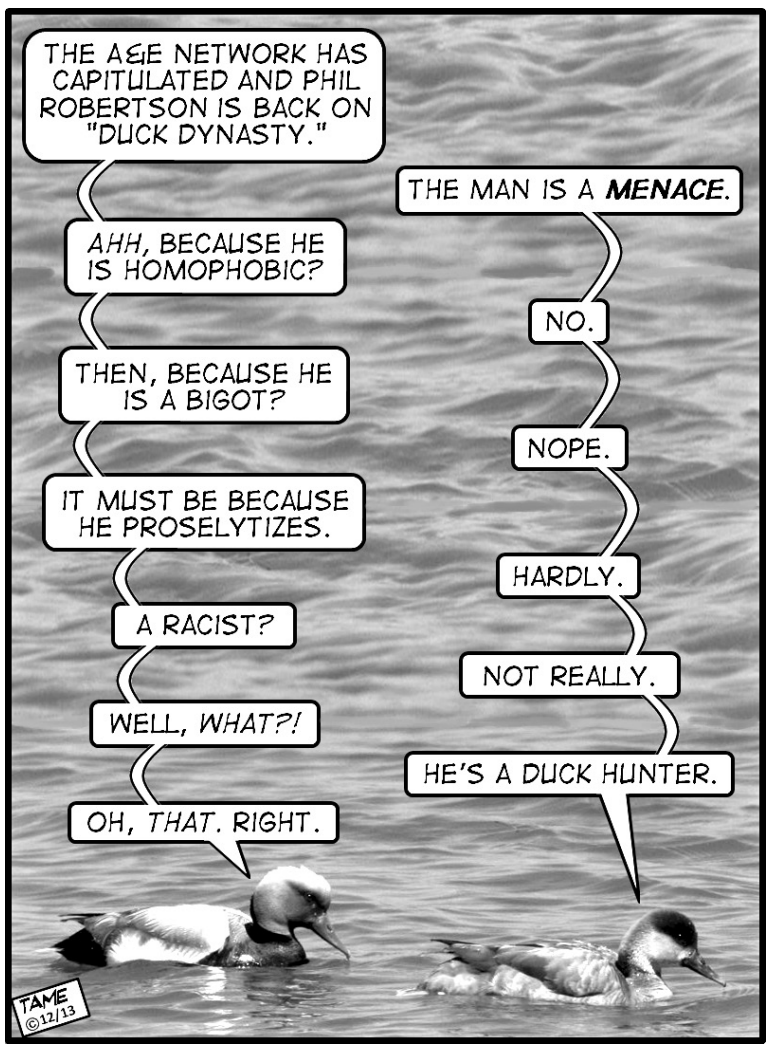
Q: So, why are no two snowflakes exactly alike?

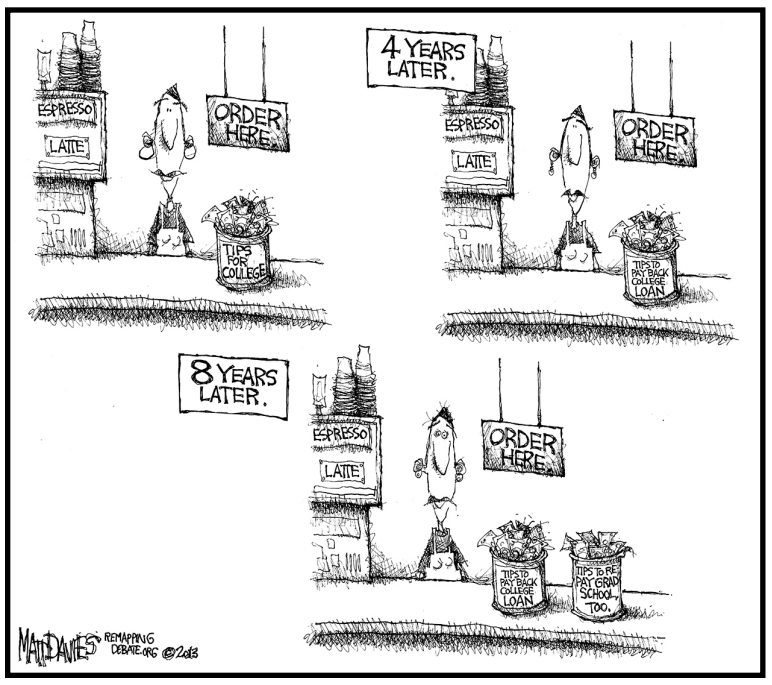
A: Well, that's because individual snowflakes all follow slightly different paths from the sky to the ground —and thus encounter slightly different atmospheric conditions along the way.

Therefore, they all tend to look unique, resembling everything from prisms and needles to the familiar lacy pattern.

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Editorial Cartoons





Yes Virginia There is a Police State

By: Lynn Fitz-Hugh

Lynn Fitz-Hugh, Seattle, is a lifelong peace activist, a mother, therapist, and writes for PeaceVoice.

Hyperbole? You decide if this is how you believe the police should behave when citizens are exercising their constitutional right to free speech.

On Monday, December 16, 16 people were arrested at two different locations on Hwy 26 outside John Day, OR. They were there in response to Omega Morgan Company moving a heat condenser from the port of Umatilla to the Tar Sands site of the XL pipeline in Canada.

This mega-load is so wide that it takes up two lanes of traffic, is 18 feet high, 376 feet long and weighs 450 tons. A similar load was unstable enough to tip over the next day and snarl up traffic on I-205 for hours.

Four of the protesters put disabled vehicles on the highway to block the mega-load and bravely locked themselves to the cars. Their action is to protest the devastation of the Athabascan First Nations lands and waters in Alberta that have been destroyed by the mining of the dirty Tar Sands.

Additionally, they protest the fact that if all the oil is mined and burned, it will release more carbon than scientists say the planet can tolerate without baking. The protesters were acting to protect all of us.

The police responded by arresting not only the four, but also 12 support people (including one minor) who were standing off on the side of the road. Officers issued no warning.

Various items were taken from the protesters leaving them exposed to sub-freezing temperatures for 45 minutes.

Some of the activists who were locked down to the vehicles were dragged across the asphalt while still locked to the vehicles, literally a risk to limbs if not lives.

They were taken to waiting ambulances and inside these vehicles, which are intended to provide medical care to people, officers used pain compliance to force protesters to comply with various demands.

In some countries this is called torture.

Earlier this month some of these same protesters were on hand across the street from the $32,000 per couple fundraiser that President Obama held in Seattle.

They were again peacefully trying to reach the President through banners asking him to cancel the XL pipeline.

Secret Service ran jamming devices so that all cell phones in the area went straight to voice mail but could not connect, again interfering with protesters' (and uninvolved neighbors') ability to communicate with each other and the press, and thus with their right to free speech.

An intimidating armored vehicle was also parked on the street and swat team members in bullet-proof vests, carrying assault weapons, paraded around.

Well, we need to protect the President you say?

Agreed, but this over-the-top show of force is just a waste of taxpayers money and also violates civil liberties.

During Occupy, in city after city the "riot control" squads came out to control crowds of completely non-violent protesters.

Swat teams were clad in all black "Darth Vader outfits" with smoked visor helmets that render them faceless.

They do not have their names listed on their jackets like regular police, and act anonymously, with impunity.

We learned at that time that squads in every major city had been given special military training, which includes the tactics of disorientation, "pain compliance" techniques used last Monday in John Day, and tear gas sprayed directly into people's face (which can be life threatening if someone has asthma).

Why would we militarize police who deal with American civilians?

Is this how we want our citizenry treated? Is this what we want done with our tax dollars?

So maybe climate change is not your cause.

But whatever your favorite cause, is this how you would like to be treated if you came out to simply demonstrate your thoughts?

I think there was wisdom in the founding father's desire to protect dissent, regardless of the cause, which they saw as critical to true democracy.

A Battlefield in our Backyard

By: Ken Brown, Resident

I recently visited the Crooked Creek Civil War Museum near West Point.

Holy History Batman! How many Americans have a real civil war battlefield right in their own home county? We do.

Mr. Fred Wise owns the place and has he got a story to tell!

The battle between Union Troops and Confederate Cavalry, led by the famous Nathan Bedford Forrest, happened on his property.

He tells you about it in front of a roaring fireplace in the mid-1800 Vinemont Stagecoach Way Station Cabin he had moved there.

A second 1830s cabin, next to it, was moved there from Somerville, Ala., hometown of Confederate General James Longstreet, who lived there in the 1830s.

The museum contains a photo and article on a local Crane Hill boy who fought in the battle, an actual uniform of the time from West Point (military academy), civil war rifles, pistols, canons, canon balls, and bullets and equipment, some of which were recovered on the property.

Fred has an amazing collection of Civil War saddles and will tell you about all the flags of the confederacy, including a battle flag from Mississippi.

A table display allows you to see how the battle took place and then you can walk to it and see the actual gun pits and bullet holes in the rocks.

I am a military history fan and have been to many museums.

I can tell you that Cullman County has a very good one right here at home.

If you are a history teacher in the city or county, a visit here with your students should be a must!

Our kids need to hear about and see their history and heritage.

All of us do. Fred makes it both easy and fun.

Google the Crooked Creek Civil War Museum near West Point High School or call Fred at 256-739-2741.

Have you lived here all your life and missed seeing this? Wow. Seriously? Go check it out!

For more on the Crooked Creek Civil War Museum check out the May 14, 2012 edition of CullmanSense at http://qrne.ws/05142012.

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