SERIES 4, ISSUE 7 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2014

CULLMAN'S MONDAY NEWSPAPER

CULLMANSENSE

COMMUNITY MATTERS

$0.50 $0.50

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ADOPT A PET OF THE WEEK P2



A Quaint Little German Town

» Taking a look at Cullman's historically rich heritage

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

Most Cullman natives know that Cullman is a German town with a long German heritage. Some are eager to say "I'm German!" or "My great grandmother's grandma was from Germany!" when presented with the opportunity. But few know the story of how Johann Gottfried Cullmann founded this town on nothing but a dream.

Colonel Johann G. Cullmann fled to America from Germany in 1866. He traveled by boat and eventually settled in Ohio but he had dreams to settle a colony for other German immigrants. He began hearing promises of growth in the south, and a few years later, he decided to follow his dream all the way to Florence, Alabama.

He met with the governor and told him about his dream to settle a German town. And with the help of some people from Florence, Cullmann began to explore available lands in North Alabama, eager to find a place he could call home.

Although Cullmann struggled to find available land for his town, he began to find suc- p6

Valentine's Day Party Celebrates those with Special Needs in the Community p7



Nine local teams advance to Regional Round of AHSAA Basketball Playoffs

By: Johnny Thornton
Sports Reporter

CULLMAN - No one will forget the night of February 14, 2014 in it becoming an evening of history for Cullman County High School basketball.

Nine teams took to the floor for the Sub-Regional round of the hoops postseason. All nine teams from the county came out victorious with each not setting their sights on the regional round.

Seven will be bound for the Northwest Regional at Wallace State Community College. Two are making return trips to Jacksonville State University for the Northeast Regional.

Three schools are sending their girls and boys' teams to the round of 16. They are Cold Springs, Cullman and Holly Pond.

In looking back at Friday night, the evening began at 4 p.m. with the Cullman Lady Bearcats getting past Muscle Shoals 53-52 on the road in a 5A Northwest Sub-Regional.

At 5:30, the Cold Springs Lady Eagles powered past Vincent 78-20 while at Felton Easterwood Gymnasium, the No. 3 Holly Pond Lady Broncos escaped an upset bid by the No. 6 Pisgah Lady Eagles, winning 60-55.

The final game in the girls Sub-Region got under way at 6 p.m. as the Good Hope Lady Raiders took down Hamilton p4

RAW HIDE

Local Leatherworking Class Teaches the Value of Hand Crafted Items

Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

CULLMAN - In the age of mass production and mass consumption, a lot of the old trades of craftsmanship are dying out. People no longer feel the need to learn a skill or trade like leather working to get what they need. Why should they? Any number of department stores carry everything we need for day to day life and beyond.

Not to mention the time one has to spend to learn a trade, and who has time for that? Colette White, artist and master leather worker, believes that people should make time. She recently taught a leatherwork heritage skills class at the North Alabama Agriplex and several people showed up to learn this unique trade.

In this modern era, companies all over the world are in the business of production on a mass scale. Products are made at alarmingly fast rates and often it is we, the consumers that suffer for it. Quantity and efficiency has taken the place of quality.

There is an old saying that preaches you get what you pay for, and a lot of us can agree that this is true.

Is it worth it to buy something a few dollars cheaper only to have to replace it within months or a couple of years when paying a little extra could mean you have a product that lasts much longer? This is a concept Colette White wants people to recognize.

"A lot of what people buy in stores just isn't very well made," she said.

"It's made the quickest way possible and the cheapest way possible."

She hopes that what people p7

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PRINTED LOCALLY @ PRINTING Alabama Web Press

Annual Meeting & Gala Features Guest Speaker Sister Schubert; casino theme

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce held its 71st Annual Meeting & Gala with a casino theme last Thursday night, and Patricia Barnes of Sister Schubert's Rolls was the exciting guest speaker. She spoke of family and cooking and how she found her success in the food industry.

"I've loved to cook for as long as I can remember," Sister Schubert started her speech.

Her famous rolls come from a recipe handed down to her by her grandmother whom she lovingly called "Gommey."

"Gommey called them everlasting rolls," she remembered.

Sister Schubert began her small business almost by accident when her church asked her to donate some baked goods for a bake sale. She donated 20 pans to her church in Troy, Ala., and her rolls were such a hit, her church immediately ordered for the next year.

She donated 200 pans the next year, 300 the following year, and then Sister knew this was her calling.

Together, she and her family converted their sun porch to a small bakery, complete with a gas double oven from Sears.

With daughters Charlotte and Chrissie by her side helping, Sister traveled to bakeries and grocery stores all over the south passing out rolls and convincing people to sell her rolls at their stores.

As we can see today, she found success with the help of her family.

Soon after, Sister met George Barnes, a food broker. He helped Sister's business expand their distribution. They worked well together as business partners but quickly fell in love and married in 1995.

In 2000, Sister and George decided to sell their stock to Lancaster Colony Corporation.

Though it has been a change, it still allows them to function as a family owned business. Today, Sister Schubert's Rolls produces over 9 million rolls per day.

Sister isn't just passionate about food though. She is also deeply involved with helping and caring for others.

In fact, she and her husband have created the Barnes Family Foundation, an organization dedicated to helping the lives of the less fortunate and enhancing communities through education and compassion.

Through this non-profit organization, Sister had the opportunity to visit an orphanage in Ukraine where she met a little boy who desperately needed specialized medical treatment for his feet.

She and her husband decided to bring him to the U.S. to help him receive the medical treatment he needed, but Sister fell in love with the little boy and soon after, she and husband George adopted him, now Alex Barnes, into their caring family. The Barnes Family Foundation built an orphanage in Ukraine quickly after adopting their son. It is called Sasha's Home.



KATE MULLANEY/CULLMANSENSE

» Vegas was the theme at the Cullman Chamber of Commerce's 71st Annual Meeting & Gala.

Today, Sister lives in Andalusia, Ala. She has five children: Charlotte, Chrissie, Laura, Evan, and Alex, as well as five grandchildren. Sister Schubert is an inspiration not only because of her success, but what she has chosen to do with it.

She continues to use her skills and talents to help others and focus on what matters most to her: faith, family, and food.

Fill Your Cookie Jars: Girl Scouts in full force across Cullman for annual cookie drive

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

CULLMAN - Recently throughout the city you may have found the all too familiar sight of little girls outside of businesses selling cookies. It's time for the Girl Scouts' annual cookie drive to raise money for their troops and these delicious treats from tomorrow's businesswomen are offered at reasonable prices, so go ahead and grab a couple of boxes before they are all gone.

There are many troops in Cullman County and all of them are eager to raise money and connect with their community while doing so. A troop leader of the Vinemont chapter spoke about the Girl Scouts' cookies and what these young girls get out of the experience of being a part of the Scouts.

Danielle Latham currently leads the Daisies, grades K - 1, and the Brownies, grades 2 - 3. They are a part of troop 10288 out of Vinemont. She talked about the many ways in which the Girl Scouts help young girls learn valuable life skills.

"The Girl Scouts are all about learning to help others," she said. "They earn badges to celebrate their accomplishments, learning basic skills that will help them through life, such as first aid, managing money, camping skills, and fire safety. It's a program designed to build courage, confidence, and character in the girls." She also talked about her daughters Zoey and Amy and their favorite parts of the Girl Scouts as well.

"Zoey says it has helped her learn how to set goals and about helping others. Amy's favorite part of Scouts is being with the other girls in the troop and working together. We have girls from several different schools that meet at Vinemont."

There are several different kinds of cookies that are available for purchase. Samoas, Thin Mints, Do-si-dos, and Tagalongs are all top sellers. The money raised helps the girls pay for badges and registration fees. It also helps pay for activities that the girls want to do together. "This year our younger girls want to see Disney on Ice and our older girls would like to take camping trips," Latham said.

According to the Girl Scouts website, the next day you may see a local troop selling cookies will be on Saturday, Feb. 22. Sales will be held outside stores like Walmart, Lowes, and Piggly Wiggly. The cookies are $3.50 per box.

This has been a time honored tradition for the Girl Scouts. For over 90 years they have been selling cookies to support their troops. The earliest account of the Scouts selling cookies was the Mistletoe troop in Muskogee, Okla. in 1917. Then in 1936, the Girl Scouts licensed the first commercial baker, and now there are only two bakeries in the U.S. licensed to bake and distribute the cookies.

The Girls Scouts offer an amazing opportunity for girls and their mothers to come together, learn and grow. The main focus is on friendship and team work. Basic life skills and building confidence in young girls is at the core of their values. This organization is setting these girls up for a lifetime of achievement.

Girl Scouts®

Pets of the Week

Octane

Hi! My name is Octane and I am about 2 years old. I currently weigh 21.6 lbs and I am now up for adoption. I came in as a stray but no one claimed me so now I am looking for my new forever home. I would love to find a sweet family that wants a well-behaved pup to call their own.



Brewster

Hello! My name is Brewster and I am a stray here at the Cullman County Animal Shelter. I am about 8 months old and I currently weigh 26 lbs. If not claimed, I will be up for adoption on 02/13/14 at 1 p.m. Please help me find my future forever home.



ADOPT THESE PETS TODAY

Both of these dogs have an adoption fee of $90 that will include their general exam at the Vet, vaccines, wormer, rabies shot, microchip, spay/neuter, and free 45 days of pet health insurance. Pet Depot will give you a bag of food (you pay taxes) as their way of supporting adoption.

If you know the owner of either dog or if you are interested in adopting one of the dogs, please call 256-734-5448 or come by the Animal Shelter.

Mars Rover Heads Uphill After Solving 'Doughnut' Riddle

By: Dwayne Brown • NASA

WASHINGTON – Researchers have determined the now-infamous Martian rock resembling a jelly doughnut, dubbed Pinnacle Island, is a piece of a larger rock broken and moved by the wheel of NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Opportunity in early January.

Only about 1.5 inches wide (4 centimeters), the white-rimmed, red-centered rock caused a stir last month when it appeared in an image the rover took Jan. 8 at a location where it was not present four days earlier.

More recent images show the original piece of rock struck by the rover's wheel, slightly uphill from where Pinnacle Island came to rest.

"Once we moved Opportunity a short distance, after inspecting Pinnacle Island, we could see directly uphill an overturned rock that has the same unusual appearance," said Opportunity Deputy Principal Investigator Ray Arvidson of Washington University in St. Louis. "We drove over it. We can see the track. That's where Pinnacle Island came from."

Examination of Pinnacle Island revealed high levels of elements such as manganese and sulfur, suggesting these water-soluble ingredients were concentrated in the rock by the action of water.

"This may have happened just beneath the surface relatively recently," Arvidson said, "or it may have happened deeper below ground longer ago and then, by serendipity, erosion stripped away material above it and made it accessible to our wheels."

Now that the rover is finished inspecting this rock, the team plans to drive Opportunity south and uphill to investigate exposed rock layers on the slope.

Opportunity is approaching a boulder-studded ridge informally named the McClure-Beverlin Escarpment, in honor of engineers Jack Beverlin and Bill McClure.

Beverlin and McClure were the first recipients of the NASA Medal of Exceptional Bravery for their actions on Feb. 14, 1969 to save NASA's second successful Mars mission, Mariner 6, when the launch vehicle began to crumple on the launch pad from loss of pressure.

"Our team working on Opportunity's continuing mission of exploration and discovery realizes how indebted we are to the work of people who made the early missions to Mars possible, and in particular to the heroics of Bill McClure and Jack Beverlin," said rover team member James Rice of the Planetary Science Institute, Tucson, Ariz.

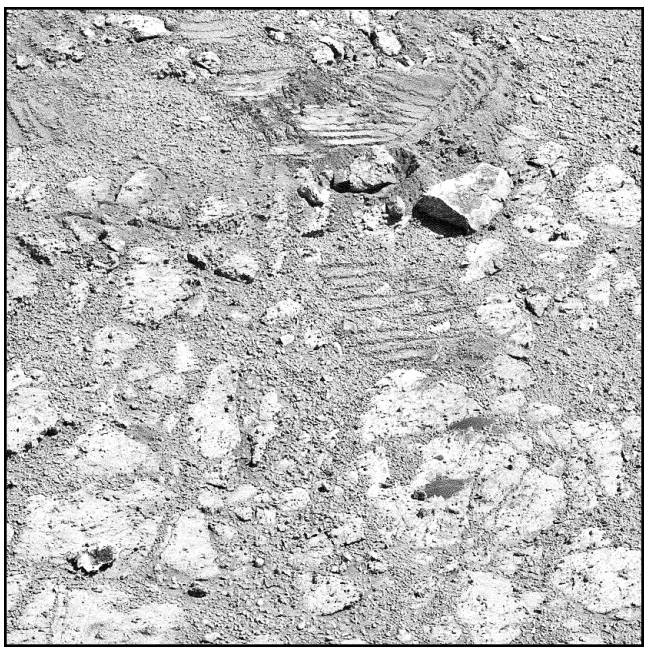
"We felt this was really a fitting tribute to these brave men, especially with the 45th anniversary of their actions coming today."

Opportunity's work on the north-facing slope below the escarpment will give the vehicle an energy advantage by tilting its solar panels toward the winter sun. Feb. 14 is the winter solstice in Mars' southern hemisphere, where Opportunity has been working since it landed in January 2004.

"We are now past the minimum solar-energy point of this Martian winter," said Opportunity Project Manager John Callas of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, Calif.

"We now can expect to have more energy available each week. What's more, recent winds removed some dust from the rover's solar array. So we have higher performance from the array than the previous two winters."

During Opportunity's decade on Mars, and the 2004-2010 career of its twin, Spirit, NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Project has yielded a range of findings proving wet environmental conditions on ancient Mars -- some very acidic, others milder and more conducive to supporting life.



NASA/JPL-CALTECH/CORNELL UNIV./ARIZONA STATE UNIV.

» Image from NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Opportunity shows where a rock called "Pinnacle Island" (lower left corner) had been before it appeared in front of the rover in early January 2014.

2014 Sales Tax Holiday for Severe Weather Preparedness Items Set for Feb. 21 - 23

Contributed by: Alabama Department of Revenue

MONTGOMERY – Beginning at 12:01 a.m. (CST) on Friday February 21, 2014, and ending at twelve midnight on Sunday February 23, 2014, Alabama will hold its annual sales tax holiday giving shoppers the opportunity to purchase certain severe-weather preparedness supplies free of state sales or use tax.

A provision in the Severe Weather Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday law allows counties and municipalities to join the state by removing their own local sales and use taxes from the same items during the same weekend (Reference: Rule 810-6-3-.66).

To provide guidance to both retailers and consumers, the ADOR has compiled a listing of all cities and counties participating in the 2014 Severe Weather Preparedness Tax Holiday.

The city and county listing is available at http://www.revenue.alabama.gov/salestax/WPSalesTaxHol.htm.

The following list contains examples of items covered under the Severe Weather Preparedness holiday.

Items below that have a sales price of $60 or less per item

- Batteries: AAA-cell batteries, AA-cell batteries, C-cell batteries, D-cell batteries, 6-volt batteries, 9-volt batteries. (NOTE: coin batteries, automobile batteries, and boat batteries are not exempt.)
- Cellular phone battery
- Cellular phone charger
- Portable self-powered or battery-powered radio, two-way radio, weather-band radio, or NOAA weather radio
- Portable self-powered light source, including battery-powered flashlights, lanterns, or emergency glow sticks
- Tarpaulin, plastic sheeting, plastic drop cloths, and other flexible, waterproof sheeting
- Ground anchor system, such as bungee cords or rope, or tie-down kits
- Duct tape
- Plywood, window film or other materials specifically designed to protect window coverings
- Non-electric food storage cooler or water storage container
- Non-electric can opener
- Artificial ice, blue ice, ice packs, reusable ice
- Self-contained first aid kit
- Fire extinguisher
- Smoke detector
- Carbon monoxide detector
- Gas or diesel fuel tank or container

Items below that have a sales price of $1,000 or less:

- Portable generators and power cords

For more information about Alabama's annual Sales Tax Holiday for Severe Weather Preparedness, visit ADOR's Website at www.revenue.alabama.gov.

ADECA receiving additional funds to aid low-income families with home heating, cooling costs

By: Mike Presley

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs recently received notice that an additional $5.4 million will be available to help low-income families with home energy bills this summer.

The funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is the final portion of ADECA's 2014 allocation for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

In December, Governor Robert Bentley awarded $39.3 in LIHEAP funds to 22 community action agencies throughout the state.

The agencies are now using that funding to provide temporary assistance with electric and gas bills with priority given to the elderly, people with disabilities, and families with young children.

"Colder-than-usual temperatures this winter underscore the need for emergency help with home energy bills for low-income elderly residents and others living on extremely limited budgets," Bentley said.

"I encourage anyone needing assistance to contact their local community action agency."

Community action agencies use the funds to provide one-time help for high heating bills in the winter and high cooling bills in the summer. Residents seeking LIHEAP assistance must apply to local community action agencies. Eligibility is based on income, family size and available resources.

If applications are approved, payments are made directly to the utility companies on behalf of residents.

A portion of the funds also supports the Weatherization Assistance Program, which reduces energy bills long term by improving the energy efficiency of houses that qualify for the program.

Below is the Cullman listing for community action agency, the counties served, and contact information.

• Community Action Partnership of North Alabama Inc. (Cullman, Lawrence, Morgan) Phone: 256-355-7843

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Lady Bearcats take down Muscle Shoals 53-52

By: Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

MUSCLE SHOALS – The Cullman Lady Bearcats, runner-up in Area 15, made the long trip down Hwy 157 to Muscle Shoals to clash with the Area 16 Champion Lady Trojans.

Muscle Shoals jumped on top of Cullman early, with Alex Vinson scoring the first five points for the Lady Trojans. However, the early game jitters soon left the Lady Bearcats and they started playing their style of basketball. Cullman was able to work the ball inside and get easy looks at the basket, and more importantly, they converted. After the Lady Cats settled down, they pulled even with Muscle Shoals and played the rest of the game dead even with the first quarter ending in a 17-17 tie.

After Muscle Shoals opened the second scoring four straight points, Cullman answered in a big way. They preceded to score the next eight. The quarter again played even, that is until the last 60 seconds of the quarter when Cullman took over. The Lady Bearcats closed out the half on a 6-0 run via transition baskets and the smooth shooting of Baylee Johnson. The run allowed Cullman a six point cushion that they took to the half.

The third was full of back and forth action. Cullman controlled the game for most of the quarter before a late run by Muscle Shoals, on the back of brilliant play by Shana Sherrod, cut the lead to three with 25 seconds left, but a second is all you need. Following a technical foul on Marinna Shearer, Cullman's Johnson took the ball at the right wing and buried a NBA rage three point basket to give a six point cushion, 46-40, back to the Lady Bearcats as they headed to the fourth quarter and a berth in the Regionals at Wallace State Community College on the line.

The fourth quarter was everything you would expect it to be in a sub-state, win or go home game. Muscle Shoals tried to utilize a full-court press and trap the ball and force Cullman turnovers but the Lady Cats were too well disciplined and broke the press with ease, but the defense did not stop there. Although Cullman had no trouble with the press, the Muscle Shoals defense was another matter. The blanket like D on the guards forced bad shots and the Lady Trojans took advantage, grabbing their first lead since the opening tip, at the 2:20 mark.

Christina Skinner gave the lead back to Cullman, on two huge free throws, with 1:56 left on the clock. Following a Muscle Shoals turnover, Cullman inbounded the ball and ran high low. This is a play that moves the ball around the perimeter and takes time off the clock. Cullman melted away 1:32 but turned the ball over and allowed Muscle Shoals a shot at the win. The Lady Trojans brought the ball down the court and looked for the open shot. With eight seconds left on the clock, Muscle Shoals threw up a prayer that missed but it was rebounded on the other side. The put back stuck between the rim and the backboard causing a jump ball with the possession arrow in Cullman's favor with two ticks left on the clock. The Lady Cats inbounded the ball and the last two seconds melted off the clock with Cullman earning their way to the Regionals at Wallace State Community College by a 53-52 score.

Wallace State's nationally-ranked basketball teams continue torrid paces by sweeping Southern Union

By: Russell Moore
WSCC Contributor

HANCEVILLE – Wallace State's nationally-ranked basketball teams remained red hot last Thursday night, sweeping Southern Union at Tom Drake Coliseum.

Wallace State's men, ranked 24th in the latest NJCAA poll, capped the night with a 68-63 victory over the Bison, extending the Lions' winning streak to 14 games. It's easily the longest streak during coach John Meeks' four plus years with the program, and it's only four wins shy of tying the 18-game streak set during the 2009-10 season.

Wallace State point guard Marcus Johnson torched Southern Union with a game-high 25 points. Lee Moore added 11 points and eight rebounds for the Lions, Jestin Lewis finished with eight points, and X-keem Jones contributed eight.

Wallace State (21-4, 7-0 Alabama Community College Conference) led 35-28 at the half. Friday marks exactly two months since the last Wallace State loss.

Jaron Davis led Southern Union with 21 points.

No. 23 Wallace State women 93, Southern Union 68

The No. 23 Wallace State Lady Lions dismantled Southern Union in last Thursday's opener, getting another strong performance from freshman Morgan Smith and solid contributions from the bench.

Smith neared a double-double, scoring 20 points and collecting nine rebounds for the Lady Lions (22-3, 5-0 ACCC), who have won eight games in a row and 18 of 19.

Wallace State's bench was also a huge factor, combining for 55 points. Morgan Pearson and Kaneisha Mixon each scored 10 off the bench, Haven Albright had eight, and Morgan Hardy, Ashley Rodgers, and Amber Carey scored seven apiece. BreAnna Thompson also added six points off the bench. Wallace State, which is also a perfect 12-0 at home, led 51-33 at the break. For Southern Union, Sadarian Beasley scored 18 points and Jackee Dodd finished with 16.

Both Wallace State teams play four of their final five conference games on the road. They'll both travel to Lawson State on Saturday. The final regular season home game for both clubs is Feb. 24.

For more information about Wallace State athletics, visit wallacestate.edu.

Playoffs (from Front)

46-32.

From the boys side, the Cold Springs Eagles needed overtime to defeat Holy Family 59-54 in the 2A Sub-Regional.

Not far from Jesse George Gymnasium, the Hanceville Bulldogs went toe to toe with the Winfield Pirates and came out on top 74-71.

North of Hanceville, the Holly Pond Broncos had the biggest score of the evening, ripping apart Pisgah 98-73.

At Cullman High School, the Bearcats claimed a 71-60 victory over the Muscle Shoals Trojans, getting to the Northwest Regional for the first time under current coach Bobby Meyer.

And the night of perfection was completed by the Vinemont Eagles when they traveled to Marion County and came back home with a 61-53 victory over the Hamilton Aggies.

Here's the schedule for the local teams in regional play next week:

NORTHWEST REGIONAL AT WALLACE STATE:
Wednesday
• Cullman vs. Parker 10:30 a.m.
• Cullman vs. Wenonah (G) 12:00 p.m.
• Cold Springs vs. Tanner (G) 3:00 p.m.
• Cold Springs vs. Tanner 4:30 p.m.

Thursday
• Vinemont vs. Madison Academy 10:30 a.m.
• Good Hope vs. Lauderdale County (G) 12:00 p.m.
• Hanceville vs. Colbert County 1:30 p.m.

NORTHEAST REGIONAL AT JACKSONVILLE STATE:
Thursday
• Holly Pond Lady Broncos play at 12:00 p.m.
• Holly Pond Broncos play at 1:30 p.m.

TEAM RECORDS:
• Cold Springs: Girls 27-6, Eagles 21-9
• Cullman: Girls 17-11, Bearcats 24-7
• Holly Pond: Girls 28-3, Broncos 22-9
• Good Hope: Girls 20-11
• Hanceville: Bulldogs 23-7
• Vinemont: Eagles 14-15

Sub-State Scores

GIRLS

2A
• Cold Springs (Area 14 Champion) 78 vs. Vincent (Area 13 Runner-Up) 20

3A
• Good Hope (Area 13 Champion) 46 vs. Hamilton (Area 14 Runner-Up) 32
• Holly Pond (Area 12 Champion) 60 vs. Pisgah (Area 11 Runner-Up) 55

5A
• Muscle Shoals (Area 16 Champion) 52 vs. Cullman (Area 15 Runner-Up) 53

BOYS

2A
• Cold Springs (Area 14 Champion) 59 vs. Holy Family Catholic (Area 13 Runner-Up) 54 OT

3A
• Hamilton (Area 14 Champion) 53 vs. Vinemont (Area 13 Runner-Up) 61
• Hanceville (Area 13 Champion) 74 vs. Winfield (Area 14 Runner-Up) 71
• Holly Pond (Area 12 Champion) 98 vs. Pisgah (Area 11 Runner-Up) 73

5A
• Cullman (Area 15 Champion) 71 vs. Muscle Shoals (Area 16 Runner-Up) 60

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Cold Springs pulls off a thriller in OT; advance to Northwest Regional

By: Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

COLD SPRINGS - Layne Rice didn't want his last game at Cold Springs' Jesse George Gymnasium to end with a defeat. The senior was able to rescue the Eagles in overtime of a 59-54 victory Friday night over Holy Family in the 2A Northwest Sub-Regional playoff.

Rice snapped a tie with a three-pointer with 32 seconds left in the extra period that sent the Eagles ahead to stay. It was Rice's first field goal in the fourth period and overtime frame with it coming at a critical point as Cold Springs escaped a hard fought battle with a 13-13 squad from Birmingham.

Holy Family was not intimidated by the large gathering of Cold Springs fans. The Tornadoes shot well in the first period with four shots coming from three-point land that sent them to a 21-16 lead at the end of the stanza.

Cold Springs was able to slow down the outside attack of Holy Family in the second and get back into the game. After getting down by eight in the period, the Eagles managed to get some field goals against a quick defense and narrowed the deficit to 29-27 at the half.

The game became tighter after the third ended. Holy Family was up 38-37 when Cold Springs went on an 8-5 run in the fourth and led 45-43. Then it was time for the Tornadoes to answer as Montell Jackson scored two straight baskets and the visitors were in front by the score of 50-45 with crunch time approaching. Down by three in the final 14 seconds, Triston Chambers got a good look on the left wing and landed a trey to tie the score at 52-52. The Eagles then defended the Tornadoes well on the final possession as they missed, sending this battle into overtime.

Cold Springs got a shot in the paint by Josh Freeman and was ahead 54-52 with 2:14 to play in OT. The Tornadoes managed to tie the score with 44 seconds left on a drive to the basket by Ishmael Dukes.

The next possession for the Eagles resulted in success. Rice was open on the right wing and let a trey fly. It was nothing but net with the Eagles on top 57-54 and 32 seconds to go in the extra period.

Cold Springs again showed good defense, forcing the Tornadoes to miss a shot. Chambers was fouled with nine seconds to play and iced the 10th consecutive victory for Tim Willoughby by scoring twice from the line.

Chambers wound up with 26 points, scoring 13 in the final period and overtime. Freeman fired in 20 in one of his best games of the season. Rice had nine in his last game at Jesse George Gym, Adam Carney scored three, and Tyler Rice netted two. The Eagles are now 21-9 on the season.

For the Tornadoes, Jackson ripped the cords for 14, Ryan Sanders had nine, and Dukes delivered eight.

The Eagles now deal with the Tanner Rattlers in the Northwest Regional Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. at Wallace State's Tom Drake Coliseum.

Cold Springs Lady Eagles to return to the Northwest Regional

By: Johnny Thornton
Sports Reporter

COLD SPRINGS - It was business as usual for the Cold Springs Lady Eagles Friday night. Playing at Jesse George Gymnasium, the No. 3 team from Class 2A displayed their dominating style of basketball, sending the Vincent Yellow Jackets back to Shelby County with a 78-20 romp.

Cold Springs enjoyed a 23-3 lead by the time the first period came to a close. At that time, the Lady Eagles kept the Yellow Jackets scoreless for over seven minutes with the offense hitting nine field goals.

Sophomore Bailey West began the scoring for coach Tammy West with a trey to put them ahead 3-2 and nailed a long ranger by the time the quarter ended and Cold Springs was up by 20 with the rout to continue.

With Keegan Johnson landing twice from downtown and two baskets off the bench by McKinley Davis, the Lady Eagles were in cruise control, leading 41-10 at halftime.

Caitlyn Hall made her presence in the third period. After failing to score in the second, Hall was open in the paint five times during the third. Her point production keyed a 20-2 run and the Lady Eagles were ready to clear the bench in the fourth, ahead by the score of 61-12.

Rilee White shined in the fourth in a reserve role, scoring six points while Camryn Crider and Hannah Watson added to the scoring column as the Lady Eagles extended their winning streak to six games and head to the Northwest Regional next week with a 27-6 record.

West's 15 anchored a balanced attack for the Lady Eagles with Hall scoring 14, Haley Freeman hitting 13 in her final game at Cold Springs. Chloe Harbison closed out her home career with eight, Davis and Emme Willoughby fired in five.

The Lady Eagles get to face a regular opponent once more in the regional.

It will be the Tanner Lady Rattlers. They will come to Tom Drake Coliseum for a 3 p.m. matchup Wednesday with the winner to move on to the regional championship game.

WSCC Anglers get ready for Bass Master College Classic

By: Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

With the weather FINALLY looking like we are headed for spring, anglers of all ages are hitting rivers, lakes, ponds, and streams across the state in preparation of a great day of fishing. But for some, this is not just recreation but a way of life.

That could not hold truer for 19 year old Ethan Flack, a Cullman High School graduate and current Wallace State student. Flack is the co-founder of the fishing club at Wallace State and is currently gearing up for the Bass Master College Classic taking place on Lay Lake in Birmingham on February 23rd. Flack will join fellow Wallace State student and angler JR Sapp in representing WSCC in the tournament.

"I have fished ever since I could hold a rod and reel," Flack told CullmanSense in an interview. "I started fishing tournaments with my dad when I was six or seven."

Flack cites his dad as a big reason he is the angler he is today. "I have fished my whole life and it is something I love to do. My dad is definitely the reason for me to get started fishing and he has taught me everything I know about (fishing)."

Flack, like many others, has dreams of going pro. But Flack's dream is within reach.

"B.A.S.S. has a college fishing trail and it is becoming a really big deal," Flack said. "The trail allows one collegiate angler each year a spot in the Bass Master Classic."

This is a huge opportunity for Flack to show what he is made of and earn his way on stage with some of the best fishermen in the country. CullmanSense wishes Flack and his partner Sapp good luck as they look for the lunkers in Lay Lake.

For more information on the tournament, visit bassmaster.com.

CULLMANSENSE
Community Matters

Publisher
Noah Chandler

Editor
Dustin Isom

Address
412 1st Ave. SE, Ste. 103, Cullman, AL 35055

Back Issues
issues@cullmansense.com

Sports
Josh McBrayer
Johnny Thornton

Newsroom Editor
Natalie Bonner

Local Contributors
Chelsea Sparks
Phillip Pryor
Allison Robertson
Summer Crook
Grace Russell
Allison Boyd
Sage Overton

Entertainment
Dillon Lee
Kate Mullaney

Tips
news@cullmansense.com or 256-297-1847

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Cartoonist
Anthony Saint



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Website: www.N2College.com
Phone: 256-736-5969

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,
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Our locally owned & nationally known company that is featured on the Dave Ramsey Radio Show's 'Kids & Money segment' and recommended by certified Dave Ramsey coaches & Financial Peace University coordinators across the country since 2005, invites your family to give our results-oriented college funding team a call today to let us help you 'make college cost less'!

Ms. Senior Cullman County 2014 Winner Crowned

» Pageant Celebrates Poise, Grace, and Beauty

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

HANCEVILLE - The Ms. Senior Cullman County Pageant was held last Saturday afternoon at Wallace State in the Betty Leeth-Haynes Theatre. Though this was a beauty pageant, the event was about more than just looks. It was about charm, poise, character, and love. There were seven beautiful contestants in this pageant all competing for the illustrious title of Ms. Senior Cullman County.

The event began with the national anthem sung by Barbara Marsh, followed by an opening number to "You're a Grand Old Flag" featuring the 2014 Ms. Senior Cullman County contestants. A brief welcoming was given before the judges were introduced and then the program was ready to begin.

The pageant began with a talent portion where each of these beautiful ladies were given the opportunity to display her skills and passions. Contestant #1 was Barbara Davidson. She chose to do a skit to "These Boots Are Made For Walking" as her talent. Contestant #2 was Mary Ann Bolinger and she chose to play the guitar and sing "One of These Days."

Contestant number #3 was Joan Burleson. Her talent was a hilarious stand-up comedy routine. Contestant #4 was Faye Harris. Faye's talent was a recitation of "Memories." Contestant #5 was Judy Moon and she chose to sing "There's a Miracle in the Making" as her talent.

Contestant #6 was Linda Bailey. Linda did a humorous dialogue with her puppet Tallulah as her talent. Finally, contestant #7 was Jan Junkins, and she chose to recite an original poem she wrote about her mother.

After the talent portion of the competition, Ally Knight, a middle schooler at Good Hope Middle School, briefly entertained the audience by playing her guitar and singing.

Next was the philosophy of life portion of the competition. During this segment, contestants took about one minute to explain a philosophy or a way of life that is important to her.

Topics included ways of raising children, being kind to others, setting a good example, and following Christ. After this was the evening gown portion where contestants displayed their beautiful dresses as they did a typical style pageant walk across the stage.

This segment was followed by a fond farewell to the reigning 2013 Ms. Senior Cullman County Dianne White. Dianne sang a song and then gave a brief goodbye, thanking the people who helped her during her time as Ms. Senior Cullman County.

Then there was a presentation of former Ms. Senior Cullman County winners and directors before the winners of this year's pageant were announced.

The title of "Miss Congeniality" was awarded to contestant #4 Faye Harris. The runner ups were 2nd Alternate awarded to contestant #2 Mary Ann Bolinger, and 1st Alternate was awarded to contestant #5 Judy Moon. Finally, contestant #3 Joan Burleson was crowned Ms. Senior Cullman County 2014.

Norman Bales sang "Pretty Woman" in celebration as the winner was crowned. After the program, the audience was invited to join the contestants in the lobby for refreshments. This wonderful program was a display of true poise, beauty, and compassion. Congratulations to Ms. Senior Cullman County 2014 Joan Burleson.



KATE MULLANEY/CULLMANSENSE

» Joan Burleson is elated to win Ms. Senior Cullman County 2014 after a multipart competition.

Alabama Talent Hunt is Searching for the Next Superstar

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

The third annual Alabama Talent Hunt is underway and this competition is determined to show off Alabama's best vocalists. This event was created three years ago to discover, develop and promote the best under-discovered talent in Alabama. With five rounds of some of the state's most talented artists, the Alabama Talent Hunt will surely find some of our most gifted singers.

The five elimination rounds of this exciting competition run from Feb. through May each year. Auditions are considered round one and are held right in your own home. That's right, auditioning for this vocal competition is as simple as making a recording of yourself singing and then emailing it to the folks at Alabama Talent Hunt.

After the audition, there are four live rounds. Rounds two and three are held regionally and contestants sing with light accompaniment such as a back-up track, guitar or keyboard. If a contestant makes it to round four, a live band will back them up.

Vocal competitions are fun and there are tons out there to choose from, but what makes the Alabama Talent Hunt so unique? The prizes. At the end of round five, winners are rewarded a recording contract and a development contract. Each winner will also each get one song on the CD "Alabama's Emerging Artists," which will be put on iTunes.

But the best part is that these excellent prizes won't just go to one person. There are 10 grand prize winners at the end of the competition. Ten talented artists will receive each of these prizes and Alabama will receive 10 new gifted singers.

It's almost too late to register this year, but if you are interested in auditioning for the Alabama Talent Hunt, call promotional manager Angie Calvert at 256-339-2978 to set up an audition. There are other ways to get involved as well. The Alabama Talent Hunt is looking for local event sponsors as well as volunteers.

Calvert encourages anyone who loves to sing to get involved with the talent hunt.

"It gives aspiring singers a stage to sing on and a chance to be heard," she said.

CEO of Alabama Talent Hunt Barry Hendrick is excited about this year's competition as well as the growth of the competition over the recent years.

"Our promotional managers have been very busy with making applications to various sources for grant funding for the musical arts in Alabama," he said.

"Throughout this process, Angie found that many schools all across the state did not have any music programs at all. This information drove us to work even harder to search for grants, not only to provide funding for the Alabama Talent Hunt, but also to share this information with others, especially aspiring vocalists."

Hendrick is confident that this year's competition will be bigger and better than ever since Angie Calvert, as well as the company's other promotional manager Tammy Baker, have been recruiting talent from all over the state of Alabama.

"It is certainly not surprising to see Tammy or Angie at Tony's Music Center or Berkeley Bob's in Cullman or Guitar Center or Madison Mall in Huntsville or the Princess Theater in Decatur scouting for talent to enter our competition," he said.

"Don't be alarmed if you hum or sing while you shop and you are approached by either of these girls. They know that Alabama is loaded with talent and are determined to help discover it!"

Many of the most talented competitors from this talent hunt have moved on to the national stage.

"We expect you will be hearing their names and buying their music in the coming years," Hendrick said proudly.

He also stated that one of the best parts of creating this competition is getting to meet other aspiring singers from across the state.

"Many life-long friendships have formed and a few good bands have formed as a result of this competition," he said. "Once you are in the Alabama Talent Family, we are happy to coach you to greater success."

German (from Front)

cess when he met Lewis Fink who was associated with the great North-South Railroad, which had recently built a line that ran from Decatur to Montgomery.

Cullmann toured this land and finally found the perfect spot for his colony. His next step was to find settlers.

Cullmann advertised his new land all over America and in Europe. He published a German newspaper with the help of his son, Otto, to help encourage other German families to move to this exciting new town. In April of 1873, the first five families arrived to live in Cullman.

Each family was given a section of land where they built log cabin homes. From here, Colonel Cullmann continued to travel to Germany and other parts of America where he would bring back settlers and sell land to them. In turn, he would use that money to travel to recruit more settlers.

He founded and grew the small town of Cullman on his ambition and his determination.

But, where are we now? How do we currently celebrate our German ancestry? And how can we improve on lacing this rich German culture throughout our town?

German natives Gerdi and Peter Voltz moved to Cullman from Bavaria in March of 2002. Having lived in both places, there is no better couple to note the similarities and differences in their hometown and ours. For both Gerdi and Peter, food is a big difference between the U.S. and Germany. It's not just what we're eating that makes the biggest difference though.

"The only thing I haven't completely adjusted to is the food," Gerdi stated. "We don't eat a lot of fast food or eat out a lot. Here you go after church or work, you go all the time to eat out. It's easy, but you don't do this in Germany."

Peter states that the biggest difference to him is the urgency to leave a restaurant after you eat. "When we go to a restaurant in Germany, we sit there for hours talking," he said. "We are not hurried out. Here you eat and before you even put your fork down, there's a waiter with your check. And because of the constant traffic in those restaurants, you don't even want to sit around and talk."

Another difference for Gerdi is the cleanliness of the roads. She stated that in Germany people feel a responsibility to keep the roads clean and she just doesn't see that here. She also stated that more people walk in Germany, and that here, everyone gets in their car even if they're going a short distance. Finally, she stated that the nature is another big difference and that she loves the nature here in the states.

"It's beautiful," she said. "The wild animals when you see them around are amazing. You don't have this in Germany."

Both Gerdi and Peter would like to see German culture in Cullman grow and they agreed that events like the Oktoberfest are a great start.

"Our Oktoberfest has grown so much in the past few years," said Gerdi. "And we can make more German culture by making more German parties. Maybe we can do these types of events more often."

Although they can both see some differences between German and American culture, they both believe that there are really no huge cultural differences.

"The biggest difference is the language," Peter said. "The living, the problems, the daily struggles are the same. How can you pick one over the other? You're defined by your family, what you do, what you choose, not where you live."

It's nice to be able to celebrate our German heritage, especially with the help of German natives living in Cullman. And it's even nicer to have such a beautiful town to call home.

"It doesn't matter where you live," Gerdi said. "What really matters is where you build your home."

Valentine's Day Party Celebrates those with Special Needs in the Community

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Valentine's Day was not over on February 14. This year, Cullman City Parks & Recreation held a Valentine's Day party for kids with special needs on February 15 at Stone Bridge Farms' new beautiful facility. This party was full of laughter, fun, food, and dancing as these kids and their families partied the night away.

Program Director Hollie Gutierrez explained that this event was held by an organization through Cullman City Parks & Recreation that focuses specifically on kids with special needs.

"It's a therapeutic recreation program through parks and recreation so that kids with special needs and their families can get together and be together and do things that typical kids get to do," she said.

But it's not just Valentine's Day they're celebrating. This organization does not stop finding reasons to celebrate and Director Gutierrez said that each of these parties is just as fun as the other.

"We have Prom in April, we have Easter egg hunts, we have a haunted house at Stone Bridge in October, we go to the Braves games, we do all sorts of things."

Music, delicious food, and festive lights filled Stone Bridge Farms' newest facility that night. This Valentine's Day party was the first event to be held in this new building and CEO Ron Foust and Event Coordinator Connie Moore couldn't be happier.

"It started out because we outgrew the other building," Moore said. "With 300 people and more at weddings, you can't fit them in a small space. We wanted somewhere where we could host larger events with it being less crowded and more convenient for everyone. That's how the dream started."

This beautiful building holds over 700 people. It is handicap accessible and is complete with a kitchen, bathrooms, ample parking, a full theatrical stage, and an outdoor area for outside events.

"We needed something Cullman doesn't have," said CEO Foust.

He is happy that Stone Bridge Farms is one of the Cullman City Parks & Recreation's therapeutic recreation program's biggest sponsors. He was pleased that this Valentine's Day celebration was the first event to be held at this new facility.

"It's a blessing to be able to help them," he said with a smile.



KATE MULLANEY/CULLMANSENSE

» Stone Bridge Farms' new facility played host to a CP&R Valentine's Day event of fun, food, and dancing.

Keeping Paris on their Toes

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

International Ballerina Teaches Young Dancers at Cullman Ballet Theatre School

Brooke Desnoes has come a long way in her career as a dancer and teacher. Starting at the Alabama Ballet School at just 10 years old and rising up through the ranks to become the woman and teacher she is today is truly a stunning tale. Her story is one of encouragement, empowerment, and staying true to who you are and where you come from.

Desnoes graduated from college in 1990 and shortly thereafter moved to Maine where she met her husband. She performed with Alexander Bennett's Scottish American Ballet in Chattanooga, Tenn. and soon decided to try her hand, or feet rather, in France.

Auditioning for the French Ballet, however, would prove to be more of a challenge than one might expect.

"In France the system is different. It's very political," Desnoes said. "You have to come from the system if you want the system to embrace you."

Paris, being one of the most famous cities in the world for dance, is also one of the hardest to break into as an outsider and one of the most critical. Everything from your neck to your toes must be, in their eyes, perfect for dance.

Desnoes, having been trained in the American form of Ballet, was given some advice upon her entry to Paris. Advice that she says was actually sound.

"I was told to lie about my age and to get into the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris so that I could graduate as one of them," she said. "But it was true; it is what I should have done, had I wanted to dance professionally because every time I went to auditions I was seen as an outsider."

After deciding that pursuing the French ballet was not all she had thought it would be, Desnoes and her husband moved back to Wash. D.C. where she danced in the Washington Ballet under Mary Day.

Finally, though, Desnoes and her husband journeyed back to Paris where she accepted a position at the Conservatoire.

"I walked in and it was just a different environment. Washington was all about nurturing children and having them love dance," she said. "I tell people that it was like leaving the tropical rainforest walking into the Antarctic."

The Conservatoire was not exactly what Desnoes had in mind when she thought of how she wanted to teach her students and what she wanted to teach them.

"I looked around and I thought that this is not who I am and this is not who I want to be."

That is when she decided to take matters into her own hands and opened the Académie Américaine de Danse de Paris (or AADP). The AADP is the first ballet academy in Europe that focuses specifically on an American methodology of dance.

The American philosophy of dance is all about the individual and nurturing their specific talents and strengths. This is in direct contrast of the French mindset that is often cold and highly superficial, focusing on every tiny flaw.

One of the most inspiring and humbling things these kids learn comes from performing every year for a children's hospital.

"We always do a question and answer with the kids, and in the 10 years I've been doing it there will always be a terminally ill child that asks, 'Do you know how lucky you are?'" she said, almost fighting back tears.

The image and message that Brooke Desnoes seems to be trying to convey to the students at her school, which has grown to approximately 850 students, is one of love and acceptance. In today's society, that seems to be a theme that is lost, especially among young girls.

The AADP is doing their small part to change that mindset in Paris and to show these girls that you do not have to be perfect, you just have to love dance.

Desnoes' teaching style, love for her students, and the artful method she employs was evident as she taught the girls at the Cullman Ballet Theatre School. A gentle, but determined guiding hand was used to help the girls fine-tune their skills.

Her tips and advice came just in time to help the girls prepare for their next big performance happening Saturday, May 17 at 7 p.m. at Wallace State Community College.



CHELSEA SPARKS/CULLMANSENSE

» Founder of Académie Américaine de Danse de Paris, Brooke Desnoes, gave instruction to Cullman Ballet Theatre students before their upcoming performance.

Raw (from Front)

take away from her class is that there is merit in learning this trade and in more ways than people might think.

Not only could you make something for yourself, but you could also use these skills to make things of quality for others and perhaps earn some money in the process.

Etsy, a website dedicated to those who want to make money with their craft, has become a huge success and has enabled others to make money doing what they love.

Collette has her own Etsy shop at www.Etsy.com/shop/maskcraft where you can find a few of her creations for sale.

This is just one of many examples that show there is still a need for people to take up these crafts as there is a thriving market for the trade.

Colette started the session off by speaking to the class about the many different types of leather there is, where it comes from, and how it is weighed and measured.

She explained that the leather they would use to make their belts was called a "vegetable tan" cow hide.

Vegetable tan means that the materials used to tan the leather were organic materials, such as bark.

She also showed other types of leather and explained their uses.

An interesting leather that is quite resilient is oil tanned, which is used to make outdoor gear. Rather than absorbing moisture, this leather's moisture will bead up and slide off with no damage to your product.

She then went on to tell about the steps they would take to make their very own leather belts.

Participants were first asked to pick the size belt they wanted to use.

A 1.5 inch standard belt is used in jeans everywhere, whereas a 1.4 inch belt could be used in dress slacks that tend to have thinner belt loops.

Once everyone had made their selection, each took a turn cutting the length of their belt out of the roll of leather. One brave little boy who was celebrating his birthday volunteered to go first and did an excellent job, making a nice straight cut.

They went on through many steps, and eventually everyone was left with a beautiful keepsake that they could use for many years to come.

Whether you are making a necklace, gun holster or wallet, there is something that everyone can get out of taking a class like the one that

Colette offered, and that is working with your hands to create something beautiful.

Let us hope that future generations will be inspired and take up this artful pastime and other lost arts before they fade away completely.

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

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.

Square Dancing lessons
The Friendship Square Dance Club of Cullman will be holding free lessons on square dancing from 6:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. Contact Rip Johnston at 256-347-7266 or Hulda Schaefers 256-734-3566

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

St. Monica's Group
St. Monica's Group for those addicted to alcohol or drugs meets every Wednesday night at 7 p.m. in the Rectory Basement of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church. All are welcome to attend who feel the need. For further information please contact Brian, 256-595-0515 or Rita, 256-507-0358.

Manna Meals at St. Andrew's United Methodist
Everyone is invited to attend the weekly Wednesday night 'Manna Meals' at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church from 5 p.m. until 6 p.m. Sack dinners will be available for carry outs. Please call the Church office for further information 256-735-0444.

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.

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.

Thursday Afternoon Overeaters Anonymous Meeting
Those interested are invited to attend the weekly Thursday afternoon meetings of Overeaters Anonymous which begin at 4:45 p.m. at Grace Episcopal Church's Carriage House. For additional information please call 734-376-2124 or 256-352-1143.

Military Order of the Purple Heart Meeting
Members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart will meet each third Thursday of the month at the residence of John Gissell with dinner at 6 p.m. followed by the business session. Please call 256-734-9637 for additional information. All Purple Heart recipients are welcome and urged to attend these meetings.

Friday

'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.

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!

Cullman Lions Club Annual Ham/Fish Dinner
Get ready to tuck into the annual Ham or Fish Dinner put on by the Cullman Lions Club today at Cullman Middle School cafeteria from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. The cost of $10.00 per plate allows for eating in or taking out plates. All funds raised go toward the Lions' community projects. So come get a great meal and help a wonderful cause as well.

Baldwin Cumberland Presbyterian Church 'Box Supper Night'
Everyone is invited to take part in a 'Box Supper Night' starting at 4 p.m. at Baldwin Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Take part in a contest for the best decorated box and bring your family's meal in it. Prizes will go to the judged top 3 entries. The event will include eating the meals, playing games and enjoying fellowship. Pies also will be sold and any money raised will go to the fellowship fund of the Church. Y'all come and enjoy.

Little Black Dress
The annual 'Little Black Dress' benefit sponsored by the Wallace State Community College Alumni Association is scheduled for at Top of the Town restaurant. There will be door prizes, raffles, fabulous food and celebrity waiters, live music and dancing and lots of fun for all. This event raises funds to support scholarships for women enrolled at WSCC. For additional information please contact LaDonna Allen, 256-352-8071. Don't miss this great event.

Next 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!

RESIDENTIAL RECIPES

Twisted Pecan Pie



By: Chelsea Sparks • Local Contributor

Pecan pie is a staple of the south. Everyone has had his or her grandma's version at one time or another, and everyone thinks theirs is the greatest.

The truth is they are all good, but after years of traditional pecan pie, it's time to take the recipe up a notch. How, you ask? With chocolate, of course! Adding chocolate chips to your already amazing recipe will take your taste buds to new heights. It's the pecan pie you love, with a twist.

Ingredients:
- Piecrust (You can use store bought refrigerated kind, but honestly they don't hold up as well as a homemade one.)
- 1 cup - light corn syrup
- 1 cup - packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon - salt
- 5 tablespoons - unsalted butter (melted)
- 1 teaspoon - vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs
- 2 cups - toasted pecan halves

Instructions:
- Preheat your oven to 375 degrees.
- Place your piecrust in your pan and allow any overhang to be folded under and crimped.
- Bake the crust until a light golden brown. Remove and allow to cool completely.
- Mix the corn syrup, brown sugar, salt, butter and vanilla together.
- Lightly beat eggs in a separate bowl. Then slowly mix in with the filling mix.
- Finely chop 1/2 cup of pecans and line the bottom of your piecrust.
- Add a cup of roughly chopped pecans and your semi-sweet chocolate chips.
- Take remaining pecan halves and arrange in a pattern of your choosing on top.
- Bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until you can insert a knife and it comes out clean.

Crockpot Buffalo Chicken Sandwiches

By: Chelsea Sparks • Local Contributor

This recipe is almost too easy. I made this for the first time about a year ago, and I could not believe that a recipe with so few ingredients could be so incredibly delicious. The other amazing thing about this recipe is that the leftovers last for days (depending on family size.)

Ingredients:
- 3 to 4 - boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 (12 ounce) bottle - hot sauce (any kind you like)
- 1 packet – ranch seasoning
- 2 tablespoons – butter
- 1 pack - barbecue sandwich bread
- 1 pack - deli sliced provolone cheese
- 1 bottle - ranch dressing

Instructions:
- Get out your crockpot and place your chicken breasts inside of it.
- In a separate bowl, mix your bottle of hot sauce and packet of ranch seasoning.
- Pour the mixture over your chicken and add two tablespoons of butter.
- Cook on low for six to eight hours or high for four hours.
- Once your chicken is cooked thoroughly, it's time to shred your chicken.
- Assemble your sandwiches. They taste best if toasted so as to melt the cheese. Pour ranch on top or on the side.

***Extra tip:** Learning this trick has changed my cooking life. To shred your chicken quickly and thoroughly, use a hand mixer on low. It sounds crazy, but I swear it works.

GET YOUR RECIPE PUBLISHED
E-mail submissions to recipes@cullmansense.com

OUTDOORS

Attracting Bluebirds

Make Your Backyard a Bird's Dreamhouse

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Henry David Thoreau's description of a bluebird makes it easy to understand why someone would want to attract these beautiful birds to their yard.

"The bluebird carries the sky on its back," he described quite accurately. A blue bird's beautiful brown and blue feathers easily make them one of the most sought after backyard birds.

Feb. 25 at the Agriplex
Organic Vegetable Garden Basics

This month's Living Landscapes program was held at the North Alabama Agriplex Heritage Center and Attracting Bluebirds was the topic. Rachel Dawsey and Dr. Bill Peinhardt explained how to invite these birds to liven your backyard.

Dawsey presented the first part of the evening with a slide show. She explained that there are three basic ways to get bluebirds to live in your backyard – provide food, water and a home.

Bluebirds eat a wide variety of insects that are already in your backyard. So avoid using insecticides if you're trying to attract bluebirds, because in doing so, you're just poisoning their food. Though they mainly eat insects, they also enjoy some berries and fruits.

Bluebirds will benefit if you plant shrubs and trees such as holly, blueberry, honeysuckle, elderberry and more.

Of course, you also need to buy birdseed from a store and either place it in a bird feeder or simply sprinkle it on the ground.

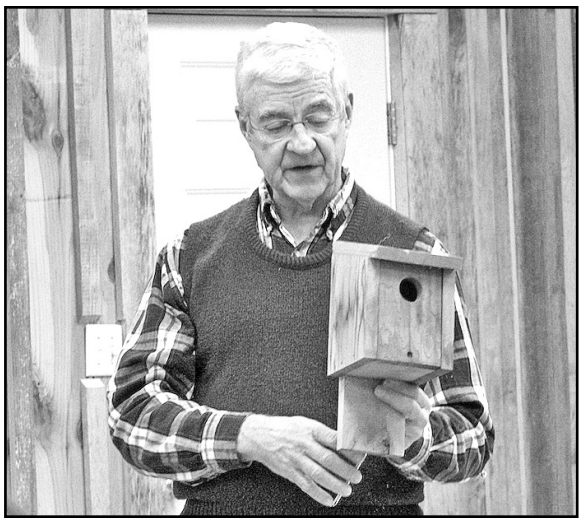
Bluebirds require fresh, clean water. One to two inches of water is ideal for a bluebird to drink and bathe, but make sure you have enough space for several birds. Fountains, birdbaths, misters and waterers are just a few ways to attract bluebirds, and they will surely appreciate you keeping their water clean.

Bluebirds are cavity-nesting birds, which means they make homes inside enclosed areas such as holes in trees or in man-made nesting boxes.

Building nesting boxes or birdhouses is an essential step in attracting bluebirds to your backyard.

When building your nesting box, make sure it is the correct size and that it will be easy to clean. The size of the hole in your nesting box should be about 1.5 inches.

This is important because while it is just big enough for a bluebird, it will keep out larger birds such as starlings and cowbirds. You should also build it where one panel opens so you can clean out old nests when the bluebirds are done with it.



KATE MULLANEY/CULLMANSENSE

» Nesting boxes are vital in attracting bluebirds

Place your nesting box about four to seven feet off the ground in an area not too dense with foliage.

Try to place the nesting boxes in areas near nesting materials such as dry grass, bark or pine needles.

This will encourage them to choose your nesting box so that they have material nearby to make a nest inside their new homes.

After Dawsey's slide show presentation, Dr. Peinhardt gave a brief presentation on building bluebird shelters. "I've built a lot of bluebird houses," he said, "and I have a lot of experience in it."

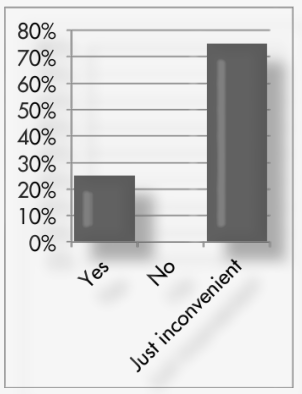
They gave each participant a handout with several bluebird house patterns on it, and Dr. Peinhardt showed them several birdhouses he has built.

The Living Landscapes program series at the Agriplex is a great way to learn how to make your yard and home a beautiful place to live.

The next program's topic is Organic Vegetable Garden Basics and it will be held on February 25th at 6 p.m. at the Agriplex.

Poll

Is the unusual winter weather making life a bit harder than normal?



This Week's Poll

Do you plan on getting a new job this year?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

ADVICE

The Community Therapists

Matters of the Hart

Relationship guru Susan Hart offers candid advice through an unfiltered, honest perspective. Susan is here to help you with the woes and troubles that may come to be in all relationships of your life.

DEAR MATTERS OF THE HART: My boyfriend keeps hiding his texts from me. He won't let me see them and it's making me paranoid. I'm afraid he's cheating on me. I don't know what to do. How do I handle this situation? --PARANOID IN PARADISE

DEAR PARANOID IN PARADISE: Trust is key and should be the foundation of your relationship. If you do not trust your boyfriend, why are you with him?

If it is not an issue of him being untrustworthy, you may want to ask yourself if it may be an insecurity issue within yourself. Only you are in control of your self-worth.

It is not his responsibility to cater to your insecurities and prove his loyalty as if it has been broken.

He deserves his privacy, as do you. A healthy relationship is free of jealousy and suspicion.

Some may say, "If he has nothing to hide, then there should be no issue with him showing you his texts."

To which I would say, "If he has done nothing to discredit his loyalty and respect for you, is it fair to suspect him of such things?"

Now, if he has given just cause to suspect him of keeping something from you and being untrustworthy, maybe the best course of action is to respect yourself enough to not be in a relationship that is void of trust and the reciprocation of love; just the feeling of constantly wanting to verify his loyalty has to be emotionally daunting and detrimental.

Saving Grace

Just as her name promises, Grace Russell has an abundance of grace to send your way. Grace is the refreshing voice to the chaotic mass of eruption in your mind and she is here to guide you in the right direction in the general throes of life.

DEAR SAVING GRACE: I'm 23 years old and I live with my mom. I'm tired of living here because she treats me like a child, even though I just finished college. What should I do? I don't make enough to live on my own and I'm not crazy about the idea of roommates. --YOUNG & BROKE

DEAR YOUNG & BROKE: Your situation is not unusual. In fact, 53 percent of 18 to 24 year olds are living at home with their parents and 85 percent of current college seniors are planning to return home after graduation according to a recent survey. In past generations, this was considered the norm by most cultures. Realizing these statistics may help you to not feel so alone. It sounds like your mother is happy to have you back home but she may be a little unsure herself of how to handle this "new" living arrangement. Talk about your feelings toward this with her. Discuss boundaries, privacy issues, chores, and expectations.

It would also be helpful for yo to cultivate a life apart from your family. Start to get more involved in your local community. Join a church group, take an art or music class, or become a member of your local fitness center. Surrounding yourself with other young adults will not only give you an outlet to feel more connected but will also help establish the freedom that you're looking for. This is a temporary, but special time in your life. Embrace this season of young-adulthood and the time you get to spend with your mother. Remember, nothing lasts forever.

cpr& cullman city parks & recreation

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

www.cullmanrecreation.org
256-734-9157

- **Youth Baseball & Softball Reg EXTENDED:** Spring youth league baseball and softball will be extended through Feb. 18 for ages 4-14. Games will start in March at Heritage Park and the Field of Miracles. Cost is $90 and includes a hat and jersey. Call 256-734-9157 for details. Registration is open online at active.com by searching "Cullman Parks" or at the Cullman Civic Center.
- **Senior Spirit Travel:** Senior Spirit will travel to "Magnificent Michigan" May 8-14 with stops at Windmill Island, Veldheer's Tulip Farm & Delft Factory, Nelis' Dutch Village, as well as several museums and parades. Cost with motor coach travel and 6 nights of lodging is $1,349 for dbl, $1649 for sngl. Deposit payment of $75 is due by March 1, and spaces are filling up fast! Call 256-734-4803 for more information.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Men's Open Spring League Softball Reg.:** Feb. 15-March 15 at Heritage Park . Cost is $425 for a team which includes 12 game season and a single elimination tournament. Ages 15 & up, call 256-739-9931 for details or to register.
- **Miracle League Spring Softball Registration:** Feb. 15-March 15 at the Cullman Civic Center; cost is $50 per player which includes a jersey and trophy at the end of season. Call the Civic Center at 256-734-9157 for additional info.
- **Walk in the Park Disc Golf Tourn:** PDGA C-Tier tournament to be held on Sunday, Feb. 23 at 9:00am. Walk-up registration will be held on the back side of the park (old Woodland Hospital side) at the first disc-golf hole from 7:30am-9am. Call for details at 256-739-9931.

What's Online

Handmade Furniture and Décor Find a Home in Garden City

If you appreciate handmade furniture and decor, you're in luck. Sawmill Furniture features only handmade furniture and decor, and this new shop held its exciting ribbon cutting recently.

qrne.ws/162



Terrapin Moo-Hoo Review: A Beer for Those Who Are Young at Heart

If you're a child at heart, you'll love the beer I reviewed this week. Moo-Hoo, brewed by Terrapin Beer Company out of Athens, Ga., is a chocolate milk stout and it's just like a Yoo-hoo for grown-ups. This after dinner beer is great for dessert and will leave you wanting more.

qrne.ws/163

Are you eligible for WIC?

Alabama families may qualify for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, better known as WIC. If you are a woman who is pregnant, just had a baby within the past six months, who is breastfeeding, or who is the parent or guardian of a child up to age 5, you are invited and encouraged to apply.

qrne.ws/164

Local Author Writes a Hit

"Jokers & Dandies" is a Throwback to Your Childhood

By: Natalie Bonner
natalie@cullmansense.com

Sharon Schuler Kreps always wanted to be a writer but never thought she could actually do it. Growing up, she didn't have the perfect English score and barely got through with passing grades. Yet, people all around her encouraged her to write a book because Kreps has a candid, campy sense to her writing that takes you straight down memory lane.

"Jokers & Dandies," Kreps' first published book, is a comedic collection of short stories that stemmed from events that occurred during her childhood. As she described, most stories are the same type of goofy childhood stories every kid is reminded of at family gatherings.

"Over the years, I've written all sorts of silly stories, mainly just to read as entertainment for my family, friends and co-workers. Each time I read my stories to people, I started noticing those listening would hang on my every word – in between bouts of laughter and excitement," Kreps said.

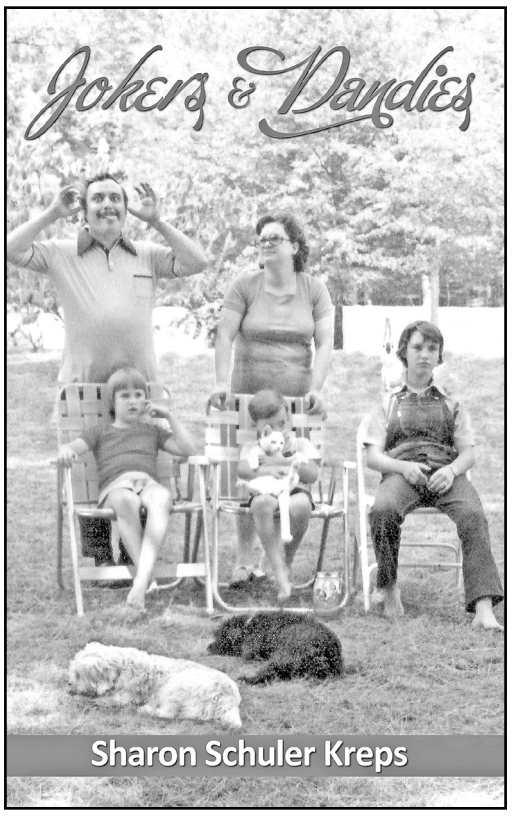
Upon completion of her reading a story she crafted from her experiences growing up, her delighted audience would insist that she write a book; to which Kreps responded with a shrug, assuming they were just being polite.

"I eventually began to take their compliments to heart and toyed with the idea of actually writing a book," she said.

And just like that – she decided to make a serious attempt at becoming an author. For Kreps, it was a simple and marvelous beginning that snowballed into quite an effect. People all over are raving about her book on Amazon.com and social media.

Kreps credits her great friend and distant cousin Reba Ponder Weiss (an author herself) as the driving force behind her efforts to write and the inspiration for her book. Together, the two began to work with one another, offering edits and suggestions.

"She read my work and gave me her honest, tough love feedback along the way. She managed to convince me that I was a natural writer and shouldn't let my high school and college English grades discourage me," Kreps said.



» "Jokers & Dandies" features a collection of comedic short stories.

Starting out, Kreps (who is a huge family history buff and genealogy freak) just wrote down her cute, fun stories so they could be passed down to her children and grandchildren. But she wasn't satisfied. She wanted to share her stories with the world.

"I knew I'd have to make lots of changes. So I put the 'true' version of the book aside and created a whole different version – one with lots of fluff and exaggeration! Once I changed everyone's name (except mine) and turned it into a work of fiction, I had a blast writing the book," she said.

The following paragraphs have been taken from the back book cover and explain the book in a great sense:

Everyone remembers the 1970's for their own reasons, but you'll never forget the 70's after you've seen them through the big brown eyes of a whimsical little southern girl. "Jokers & Dandies" takes you on a journey across the Deep South with a girl named Sharon, best known as Sharebear, and her lovable family. Daily life for her quickly turns into wild adventures and unexpected surprises.

Typical middle child, she's forever getting picked on by her evil older sister and mothering her two little brothers. She takes it all in stride and learns a few life lessons along the way.

Whether she's staring at her uncle's mass of bushy body hair, or watching her great grandmother, Nu-Nu spit snuff juice into a baby food jar, Sharebear will entertain you with her silly point of view and quirky sense of humor. Her oddball observations combined with an active imagination creates a coming of age story that will have you laughing, crying and begging for more.

Kreps' writing process is a standard pattern of getting "in the zone" and getting it all out on paper. Then she has several people look over and give her edits and suggestions. From there, she continues to revise and let them read it again. Only when she is completely satisfied does it go into print.

"I find that creating conversations and silly remarks throughout the story brings my characters to life and makes them 'real' and relatable to my readers. I want my readers to be able to identify with my characters, either loving them or hating them."

She chose to publish her book herself through Amazon.com and she is referred to as an "Indie Author," which means an independent author. Kreps said this was a free process and that she has total control of her books.

The only unfortunate side to being indie is that she has to do all the marketing for her book herself, but if you know this charismatic woman, that is no feat she can't handle.

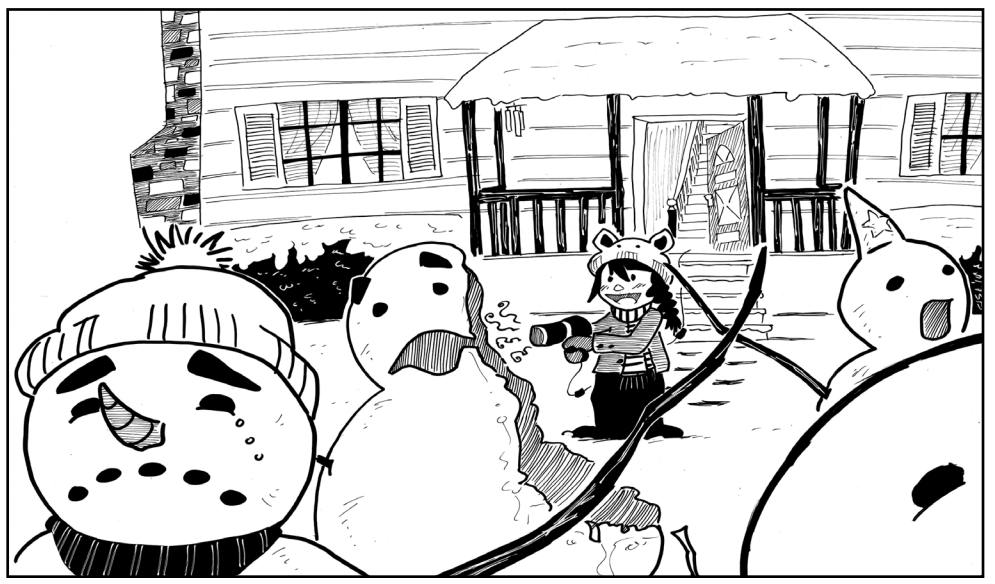
Considering she held her first official book signing late last month at Brown & Co Beverages and people have already taken to Facebook commenting on what a charming collection of stories she has, it's safe to say Sharon Schuler Kreps is a regional author who has found her niche.

"I was truly humbled and honored that all those folks came out to support me. There was lots of laughter, hugs and memories shared, and I loved every minute of it. It was the best feeling in the world! I plan to have more book signing events in the near future," she commented.

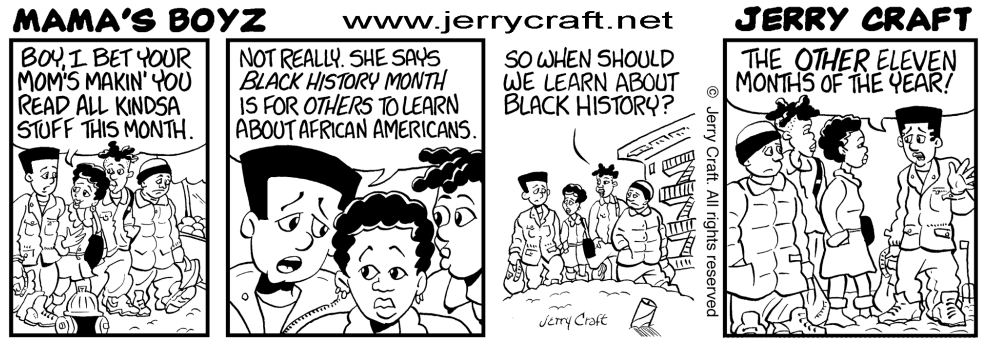
If you would like more information on Sharon Schuler Kreps and learn how to purchase "Jokers & Dandies," please visit her webpage at www.sharonschulerkreps.com. You can also follow her on Twitter and Facebook for updates and information on upcoming book signing events.

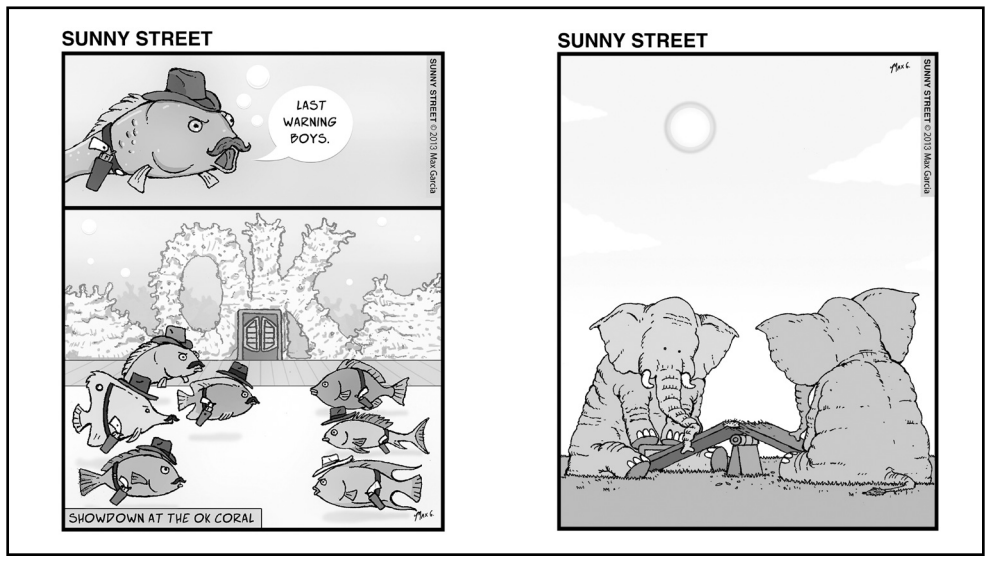
Comics

WHITE & BLACK • **"Z vs. The Snowman Platoon"** • st.edo@cullmansense.com



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





Thrill Hill Vanilla Porter Premieres at The Blue Moose

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

Refreshing Porter is a Smooth Brew for your Taste Buds

The Blue Moose premiered its latest brew last Friday night: Thrill Hill Vanilla Porter. If you haven't been by The Blue Moose yet, you're missing out on history in the making. This small cafe is Cullman's first and only brewpub since we went wet a few years ago.

Each time this pub releases a new beer, it's a party, and this time was no different. The Burks family band as well as Round 2 played at this exciting event.

As I explained a few weeks ago when I started reviewing dark beers, a porter is a beer that originated in London in the 18th century (remember?). They are typically roasty, malty, high in alcohol content and delicious.

Thrill Hill Vanilla Porter is brewed by Mike Mullaney and Gery Teichmiller at The Blue Moose (of course). It is 6.5 percent ABV and is made with Magnum and East Kent Golding hops.

Ok, step one: aroma. Imagine yourself sitting at the bar at The Blue Moose, Thrill Hill Vanilla Porter in hand. Better yet, actually go do that. Now you know what to do. Put your nose to the beer and smell. No one will judge you.

This beer has an aroma so delicious, I'm not sure which I like better, smelling it or tasting it (actually, I think we all know the answer to that). I smelled vanilla, coffee, chocolate, malts, cherries and even pipe tobacco.

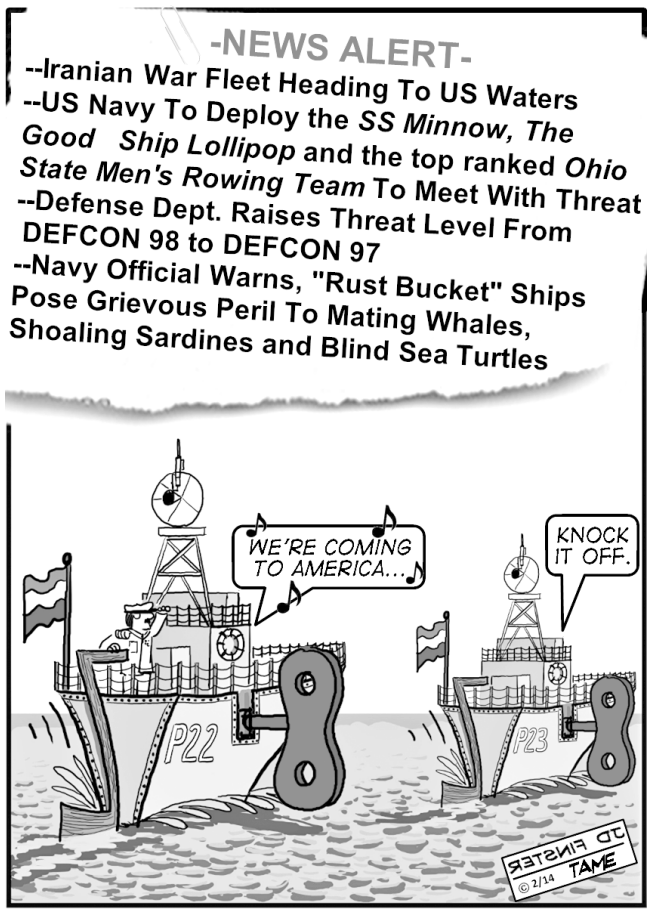
Next is appearance. Like most porters, Thrill Hill Vanilla Porter is very dark brown and you can't see through it. It had almost no head at all, but the little it did have was off-white and lingered a while before diminishing. It had very little to no lacing.

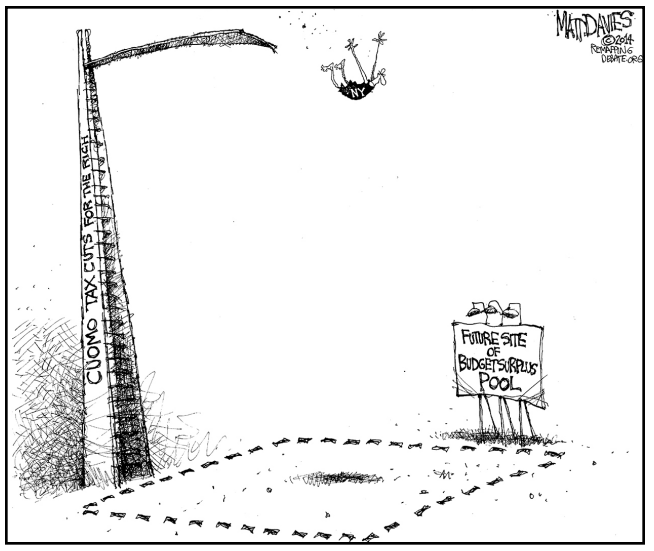
Finally, the flavor portion of review. Thrill Hill Vanilla Porter is, in a word, delicious. But to be more specific, it has a bitter flavor with hints of a roasty, malty chocolate flavor. It even has a slight bourbon flavor, which makes it even more delicious! There is a long duration on its roasted finish, which will definitely last you until your next sip.

And last is the palate. The body of this vanilla porter is basically light. It's not a bit creamy like I thought it would be but it is crisp, smooth and refreshingly carbonated.

The music, the people and the atmosphere, and of course, the beer perfected this exciting event, and I will definitely go back to The Blue Moose for another Thrill Hill Vanilla Porter.

Editorial Cartoons





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OPINION

Coke Super Bowl Ad Wrong, but Not Offensive

By: Sage Overton
Local Contributor

I'm one of those people who enjoy the Super Bowl every year not for the game itself (I'm a college football fan), but for the commercials. The once a year chance for every major company to put forth its best of the best for 30 to 60 seconds at the cost of millions and reach hundreds of thousands of households. But no matter how much you want to watch every second of the game or the ads in between the plays, once in a while, you have to step away. In my brief absence, I heard my already irritated roommate (he is a Broncos fan, more specifically a Peyton Manning fan) scream as if experiencing an aneurysm on adrenaline. I rushed back assuming that somehow, some way, the Seahawks had managed either another interception or (John Elway save us) another safety. To my surprise, the game wasn't even back on but an ad from Coca-Cola was finishing up. Then he got very quiet and told me to YouTube it. I did. A day later I googled it. If by now you have no idea what I'm talking about, YouTube it, then google it.

So what do I think? The ad is titled "It's Beautiful." The singing is. The video collage is. The people in it are. But something is wrong with it. Very, very wrong. It's not the homosexual couple skating with their daughter (did you miss that? A lot of people did). It's not the translations from English into Spanish, Tagalog, Mandarin, Hindi, Hebrew, Keres, Senegalese-French and Arabic. From everything I've found and read so far it is almost word for word perfect. So what about this ad made so many people angry?

Before I answer that, let's get a little perspective. The goal of the commercial was to portray the diversity of America and how all the walks of life come together as one in a single large melting pot. After all, it is the land of opportunity built by immigrants for generations. A nation founded on the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. What better way to express that than to show Americans from different backgrounds singing "America the Beautiful"?

Flashback to the 1968 World Series. Game Five at Tiger Stadium on October 7. Jose Feliciano, 23, steps up to sing "The Star Spangled Banner." His version puts his own Latin jazz spin on it. The stadium switchboard is flooded with over 2,000 angry callers. The promising young star's career comes to a very abrupt temporary halt overnight.

Jump ahead one year to the Woodstock music festival. At the end of a very early morning set, Jimi Hendrix creates what we now know as one of the most iconic versions of our national anthem. An all instrumental electric guitar piece full of distortion and heavy pedals. For him it was a protest of the Vietnam War. For many Americans, it was slander.

Just over a year ago Beyonce Knowles sings a powerful and note perfect version of America's anthem at the inauguration of President Obama. People are amazed and stunned. The only problem was what they heard was a previously recorded version she had sung. Her performance was lip synced. Many people took to social media, outraged someone would do such a thing. While those three performances used the national anthem and Coke used "America the Beautiful," therein lies a common thread. They are both revered songs. Songs that define us as a country and a people. They carry in their words a passion, power and ideal through which all Americans can get behind and feel. Which is why so many of us don't want to see any deviation, no matter the reason. Taking the song out of its original language, no matter the intention, is a deviation. We are the great melting pot. America is a country with over 350 languages spoken in it. Almost 60 million people here don't speak English as their primary language at home, which is fine. The United States legally has no official language. Many companies now hang sale signs in English and Spanish in an effort to reach more consumers. In fact, I can't think of the last time I called somewhere that had an automated answering service that didn't immediately offer me the chance to continue in Spanish.

So why was Coke wrong? Because someone forgot to look up the definition of unity. A song as powerful as "America the Beautiful" can be a force to turn a diverse country of over 300 million people into a single voice. Imagine strangers you've never met on either side of you. Different clothes, different skin, different walks of life. This song plays and you all three sing along. You each hit every note, every word. Turns out they can't speak any English other than the words to that song. But you now know something about them. You know they are, in their soul, as American as you are; that you are neighbors under the same flag with the same love and respect for our country. No matter your differences, you can share love and respect for one another in that. Now imagine the entire pot singing in one voice. All 300 million of us in English at the same time. The message is loud and clear.

That wasn't what I was able to take from the Super Bowl ad though. I heard words I didn't understand. They sounded beautiful and I believe they meant well, but I don't know. Someone else has to translate them for me. I was reminded of how my neighbors were different from me. These days I don't need to see more of that. The nightly news gives me enough of it and never in a good way. What I need when I watch football, especially the Super Bowl, is to know that I live in a diverse country of people who are as American as the sport. So next time Coke, please, follow the example of Sebastien De La Cruz. Dress and love your culture and sing the song how it was written. Let our eyes see how different we are and let our minds hear how our eyes may be playing tricks on us.

OPINION

Iranian Naval Power?

By: Tom Esposito

Somewhere, on the cold, blue-green waters of the Atlantic Ocean, a mighty armada of Iranian warships is wending its way towards the maritime waters of the United States. OK, the Atlantic is cold, it is blue-green, but a "mighty armada of warships", not so much.

In a move that smacks more of gall than that of striking terror in the hearts of Americans, the Iranian Navy has sent two creaking warships (warships being a term used lightly) on a three month tour of duty that will, according to Iranian officials, take them within close quarters of the American shoreline. The purpose of this venture is to supposedly show the world that if they feel threatened, Iran is capable of dealing with the imperialist Americans on the open seas or in US waters. The true reason behind this ploy is more reasonably to play to the sentiments of the home crowd and hope that the Iranian populace is naïve enough to believe that the two ships that they have sent towards our country serve any real strategic purpose.

Iranian naval chief Rear Adm. Habibollah Sayyari states in an IRNA news agency interview, "Like the arrogant powers that are present near our marine borders, we will also have a powerful presence close to American marine borders." The good Admiral might want to consider sending more than two aging "rust buckets" to back up his "powerful" claim. In fact, an American Naval official states that the two ships, manned by an estimated 30 Iranian naval cadets, could be effortlessly taken out of play by any single US Coast Guard cutter.

Notably, the last time one of the ships, the 310 foot Shabalan, met up with US forces, it was all but obliterated after it fired on a US A-6 Intruder in 1988. But for the grace of its bilge pumps, the Shabalan would now be serving as a cozy home for fish, crabs and anemones at the bottom of the Persian Ocean. Now, with a lot of duct tape, the ship is making its trek, along with the 679 foot Kharg, with a reported destination of Venezuela.

So, besides trying to sway the Iranian people into thinking this is a bold move to shake up the US, what other purpose or purposes are behind the bluster? No doubt, the Iranian leaders are counting on the rest of their Mid-East allies to think of Iran as the leaders in the opposition against the West; The same for their friends in our hemisphere, Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. They have demonstrated this desire to be the leaders of the pack by their fierce determination to obtain nuclear weapons.

Not even the most fanatic Iranian leader could believe that these two ships, or for that matter, any other combination of ships in their navy, could face down the might of the US Navy. It is much more likely that the Iranians are simply testing the resolve of the United States and to see just how far into American maritime waters they can venture before they meet resistance. Understandably, US foreign policy at this time strikes about as much fear in our enemies as these two ships strike in our armed forces so they may just be giving us a goose.

Still, no matter how seemingly humorous this Iranian excursion may appear, it is most certainly being viewed in more serious terms by the US Government. In a book by F. Michael Maloof, the author explains how a high altitude electromagnetic pulse (EMP) burst from a missile launched near the US by one of our enemies would cause terrible repercussions to America as the burst would shut down our electronics systems and our grid for years. This attack could be launched from a commercial vessel and not even necessarily from any heavily scrutinized warship that intruded US waters.

But again, what would be the end game here for the Iranians? This type of attack would not affect the bulk of the American strategic forces throughout the world and the retaliation against Iran would be in such volume and ferocity that it would leave the country a smoldering sand heap.

So maybe no EMP attack against the US, but what of the mere threat of this type of attack against Iran's enemies in the Mid-East? Israel and the Saudis watch every move and measure every undertaking by the Ayatollas and the thought of an EMP attack launched either from Iran or from one of its ships in the Persian Gulf certainly leaves all unsettled.

The mildest of Iranian ventures has to be observed and thought of as possible dry runs for future threats and or attacks, even if launched from a rust bucket navy and regardless of whether these dry runs affect the US or our allies.

During the Falklands War, the heavily outgunned Argentinian Navy was still able to sink the British Destroyer, the HMS Sheffield with an Exocet missile that killed 20 seamen and deeply affected the sentiment of the British public concerning the wisdom of the war, a war that was never actually declared. The sinking of the Sheffield showed that even the smallest dog in the fight has the capability of inflicting serious wounds if not watched carefully.



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