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CULLMAN'S MONDAY NEWSPAPER

CULLMANSENSE

COMMUNITY MATTERS

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St. Paul's Annual Rummage Sale Equals Big Success

» Proceeds raised will help fund tuition assistance program; purchase school supplies

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

CULLMAN - For some, the thrill of getting a good deal is reason enough to get out of bed early and hunt for the deals of the day. Every weekend, lots of early birds are up and ready to buy hidden treasures, often seeing the potential that the previous owner might not have. For those people, the annual rummage sale at St. Paul's Lutheran Church was surely a delight.

The sale took place this past Friday and Saturday p6



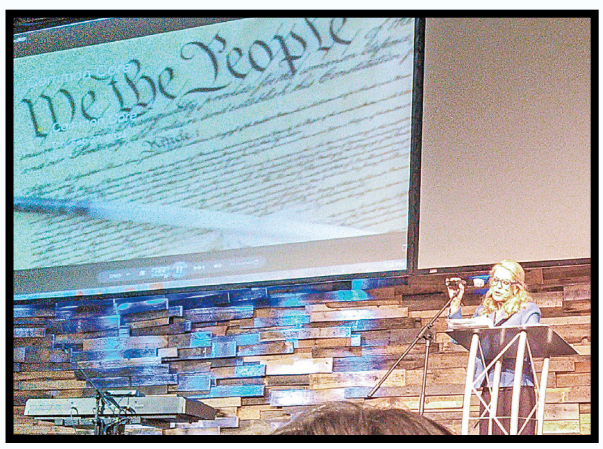
CHELSEA SPARKS/CULLMANSENSE

» Shoppers browse through tables of bargains in the St. Paul's Lutheran Church gymnasium.

EDUCATION

COMMON CONCERN

» Community Voices Concerns on Common Core Standards p7



Cullman County Health Department's Angel Cook selected Public Health Social Worker of the Year for 2014

By: Renae Carpenter

CULLMAN – Angel Cook of the Cullman County Health Department was selected as Public Health Social Worker of the Year for 2014. She was recognized March 7 at the Public Health Social Work Seminar held in Montgomery.

A Public Health Area 2 employee for the past six years and an Alabama Department of Public Health employee for 14 years, Ms. Cook provides social work coverage in multiple counties and programs.

Supporters describe Ms. Cook as "a shining star, who goes above and beyond in every aspect of her work, from paper work to meeting the needs of the patients." Co-workers said she is "loyal, dependable, trustworthy and always positive" and serves as a role model for those considering social work as a career.

Letters of support stated she is "full of energy and gets a sparkle in her eye when she talks about 'her patients' and is 'a real team player.'" The fight against Alzheimer's Disease is the main cause to which she is devoted.

Public health social workers provide intervention services to help clients discover ways of meeting their needs and preventing future problems. Clients they serve may be children, families, elderly persons, and physically and p6

Bentley awards grant to better serve sexual assault victims

By: Josh Carples

MONTGOMERY – Gov. Robert Bentley has awarded a $128,250 grant to help local personnel across Alabama respond appropriately to the needs of sexual assault victims.

The Alabama Coalition Against Sexual Violence will spend the funds to provide training and assistance to law enforcement agencies, advocacy groups, government agencies and medical professionals who help victims after a sexual assault. The coalition also provides training and technical assistance to prosecutors who handle sexual assault cases. The goal of the program is to improve services for victims and strengthen the investigation and prosecution of rape and sexual assault cases.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is administering the grant from funds made available to the state by the U.S. Department of Justice. ADECA administers a wide range of programs that support law enforcement, economic development, energy conservation, workforce development, water resource management p6

Goodbye, Winter. We Won't Miss You

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

We've finally gotten a glimpse of spring this week and it will soon be here to stay. March 20 is the first official day of spring this year, and there are tons of cheerful ways to say "See ya later" to the cold!

1. Spring clean. Normally, cleaning is a boring chore. But with the right attitude, you can make it an adventure. Use this opportunity to unclutter your living space while adventuring into your past and creating new beginnings.

Who knows what you'll find in that box that's been sitting under your bed for a few years. Take your time going through it, throw away what you won't ever use again (or give it away if you can), and find a place for anything you want to keep. You could find old notes from high school and be encouraged to rekindle an old friendship. You may be reminded of an old relationship and gain newfound pride for overcoming past difficulties.

You might even find a homemade card from your child or grandchild, reminding you of the innocent joy of a child all over again. Getting decluttered can be overwhelming, though, especially if you have a lot to clean. So, clean at a steady pace and focus on one thing at a time. You'll be amazed at the progress you make.

2. Get outside. The great outdoors present tons of opportunities for us during the spring. Make a whole weekend out of hiking, grilling and camping. Round up some friends, grab supplies for food and s'mores and head to the woods. Go ahead, bring your cell phone if you need to, but there's nothing like ringing in the spring by stepping away from the TV and breathing some fresh springtime air. If camping's not your style, don't fret.

There are several more outdoor options for the not-so-outdoorsy. For example, have a picnic. It doesn't matter what you're eating as long as you're eating outside. And, while you're p6

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Cullman High School Class of 1947 Reunites

» Bearcats of all ages share in kinship

By: Sharon Schuler Kreps
Community Contributor

CULLMAN - It wasn't long after I walked into the gift shop of Cracker Barrel that I met Ms. Doris (Clemons) Davis and her daughter, Missy Griffin. "You two go on and sit at the table," Ms. Davis quickly instructed, shooing us toward the dining room. "I'm going to stay here and wait on everyone," she beamed, holding on to her walker as she stood just inside the door.

The excitement in this small woman's voice was that of a child on Christmas morning. After all, it had been several years since the group of lifelong friends had seen each other. Mrs. Davis and her daughter had driven all the way from Longview, Texas just for the occasion.

Missy and I sat at the table and waited for the rest of the gang to arrive, and before long, I was introducing myself to everyone and telling them I was from CullmanSense. Unbeknownst to them, Elsie Bass' daughter, Donna Baird, had notified the paper about the event.

"What? The newspaper is here?" most of them said with big smiles as they each introduced themselves to me.

Their names are: Doris (Clemons) Davis, Virginia (Glascock) Richter, Elsie Jean (West) Bass, and married couple, Edgar and Lucille (Cordes) Looney. Mr. Looney had returned to Cullman High School to graduate after his return from the service. That is where he met and later married the lovely Lucille.

Before long, I found myself sitting amongst the group of old friends who were happily chatting away with a breakfast menu in hand. Then to everyone's surprise, including myself, two teenagers from Cullman High School arrived.

"My name is Kara Jackson and this is Cole Lay," the girl announced to the group. "We are from Cullman High School's Hilight staff and have come to interview you for our school newspaper."

Then, just like me, they too were sitting at the table with menus in their hands.

Once the meals were ordered, I turned my voice recorder on and placed it in the center of the table. I let the two teens ask questions while I took my own notes.

To be honest, I had no idea what I was doing and the kids looked like professionals with their name badges hanging from black lanyards around their necks.

Clearly, I felt defeated. That is, until I stopped thinking and began watching.

Suddenly, I knew exactly why I was there.

Being a Cullman High School graduate myself, I realized that the morning had become something more than just a reunion for the class of '47; it had turned into a gathering of Cullman Bearcats of all ages.

Proms were discussed, sports were mentioned, and school lunches talked about.

I watched the high school reporters listen with true interest as the older folks explained their school days of so long ago.

I saw the glow on the old Bearcats' faces, happy to recall their memories with lots of giggles to the kids.

Best of all, I realized that everyone at the table that day shared a common bond; something each of us holds dear to our hearts and hasn't changed a bit over the years – our Alma Mater.



CONTRIBUTED

» The Cullman High School class of 1947 shares a common bond with all other Bearcats, the Alma Mater.

By Old Cullman's northern border
Reared against the sky
Proudly stands our Alma Mater
As the years go by
Forward ever be our watchword
Conquer and prevail
Hail to thee our Alma Mater
Cullman High all hail

CRMC Foundation Donates Harmonic-Tilt Patient Chairs To Improve Surgical Patients' Experience

By: Lindsey Dossey
CRMC Contributor

CULLMAN - The CRMC Foundation recently provided grant funding in the amount of $12,800 to Cullman Regional Medical Center's Surgical Services Center for the purchase of eight Harmonic-Tilt Patient Chairs.

"These chairs provide improved care and support for our elderly surgical patients, particularly our cataract patients who must be prepped for surgery in a chair rather than in a bed," CRMC Surgical Services Division Director Dewight Davis, RN said.

"Previously, cataract patients had to sit in chairs similar to a waiting room chair which provided little to no support. These chairs not only make it more comfortable but also aid in transitioning a patient from the chair to a wheelchair."

The Harmonic-Tilt Chairs feature fold-away arms to make access easier in the event a wheelchair transfer is needed.

The new chairs also offer increased comfort not only for cataract patients but also for any family members that might accompany patients who are having other types of surgery at Cullman Regional Medical Center.

"The CRMC Foundation is proud to offer funding grants for equipment that aids in improving the quality of care and experience of patients at Cullman Regional Medical Center," Maria Stanford, CRMC Foundation Executive Director said.

The CRMC Foundation supports the hospital's mission to provide excellent healthcare services and provides grant funding for items that exceeds the annual hospital budget.

Annually, the CRMC Foundation awards more than $100,000 in grants to various departments around the medical center.

These grants are in addition to the large capital campaigns for projects such as the Emergency Department Expansion and the current Refresh-A-Room Campaign.

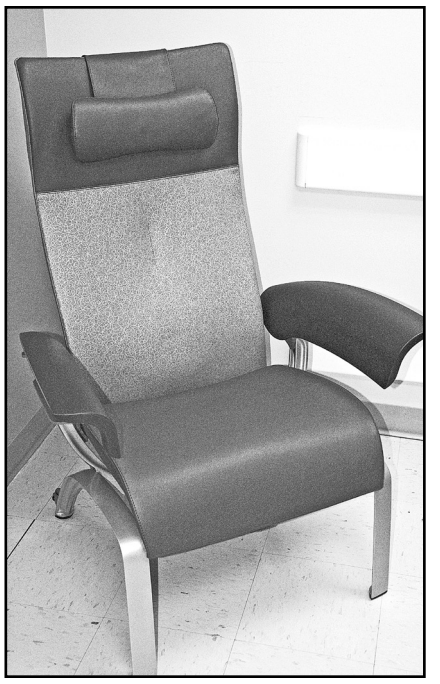
"CRMC appreciates the Foundation for their continued efforts to support our hospital," CRMC President/CEO Jim Weidner said. "Our community consistently shows their support for our hospital through their financial support of the Foundation, and for that, we are truly grateful."

For more information on CRMC Foundation call, 256-737-2565 or visit online at www.crmchospital.com/foundation.

For more information on services provided by CRMC, visit online at www.crmchospital.com or call 256-737-2600.

» Eight new Harmonic Tilt Chairs were recently donated by the CRMC Foundation to the CRMC One Day Surgery Patient Rooms.

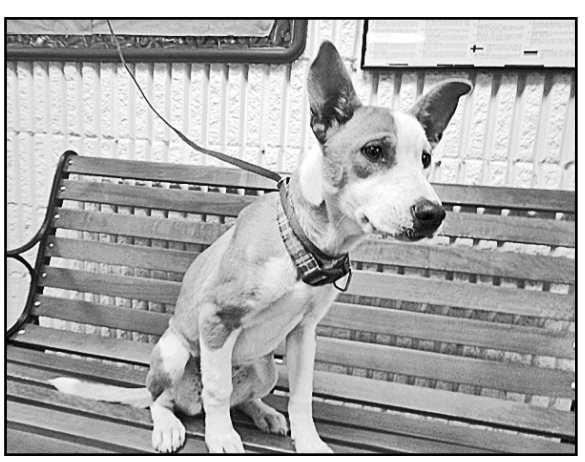
CRMC



Pets of the Week

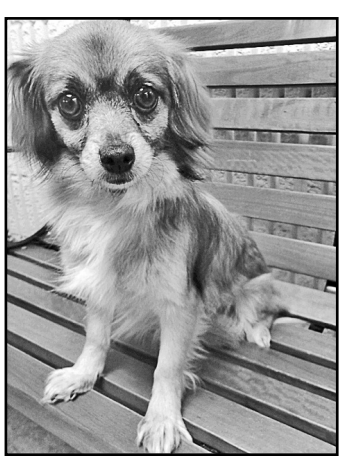
Granita

Hello, my name is Granita. I am about 8 months old and weigh 21 lbs. I came into the shelter as a stray. I am a very sweet dog and believed to be a Basenji or mix thereof. I get along well with the other dogs in my kennel, I have a great personality, and can't wait to find my new companion.



Lacota

Hello, my name is Lacota, and I am a stray at the Cullman Animal Shelter. I will be up for adoption on 03/20/14 at 1 p.m. if my family doesn't come to claim me. I currently weigh 8.2 lbs and I am about 4 years old. I'm a great companion and can't wait to find my new 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.

Many States Weigh GMO Labels

By: Pamela M. Prah • Stateline

This year, at least half the states may consider requiring special labels on food that has been genetically modified to grow better.

The question of whether to require labels on food with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) pits activists and consumers who favor the labels against big agribusinesses and farmers who generally don't. An estimated 80 percent of food eaten in the U.S. contains GMOs.

The fight has some state attorneys general worried about whether labeling laws would survive court challenges mounted by food producers. Win or lose, it might cost millions of dollars to defend them.

Some consumer and environmental groups disparage GMOs as "Frankenfood." They contend GMO crops, which include corn, cotton and soybeans, pose unknown health and environmental risks. About half of the 169 million acres of U.S. crop land grew genetically engineered crops in 2013, the U.S Department of Agriculture said in a new report. GMOs are in most cereals, frozen foods, meat, milk, canned soup and even baby formula.

The first genetically engineered plant was a tomato plant developed in 1982, but commercial use of GMO crops didn't begin in the U.S. until 1996. Large agribusinesses, including Monsanto and DuPont, argue the newest GMO technology is safe, and allows them to produce more food while using less water and pesticides. Labeling could increase the costs to consumers, they say.

The cost of labeling itself would be "a tiny fraction of the costs" of complying with a labeling law, according to a 2013 report by the Washington Academy of Sciences. The real costs would come from having to separate genetically engineered ingredients from other foods, although the report didn't give a precise dollar figure.

The European Union has required GMO labeling since April 2004, although critics say producers are using loopholes in the law to avoid using the labels. Americans overwhelmingly support labeling GMO foods, according to a 2013 poll by The New York Times, which found that 93 percent of respondents favored the labels.

Action in States

Maine this year became the second state (Connecticut was the first, in 2003) to approve legislation requiring labels on food with GMOs. But both the Maine and Connecticut laws are on hold until several other states enact similar legislation. The Maine law goes into effect when at least five contiguous states (including Maine) adopt similar legislation. The Connecticut law will take effect once a combination of Northeastern states with at least 20 million residents endorses similar legislation. In both cases, the trigger clauses are designed to protect the state from becoming the lone target in any lawsuit challenging the legislation.

Earlier this year, the New Hampshire House rejected a GMO labeling bill 185 to 162.

So far this year, 67 GMO labeling bills have been introduced in 25 states. In a dozen states, at least one legislative committee has approved a GMO bill. They include Colorado, Illinois, New York, Utah and Vermont, according to Scott Hendrick, who tracks GMO legislation for the National Conference of State Legislatures. Last year, 110 GMO bills were introduced in 32 states, Hendrick said.

Costly for States to Defend

The labeling measures could come with a big price tag for states that have to defend them in court. Before Maine acted, state Attorney General Janet Mills said she warned lawmakers in a 10-page memo that the GMO bill would certainly face significant legal challenges if enacted and that defending it would be costly. "Without even reading my memo, they went into the back room, caucused 10 minutes and came back out and unanimously passed it. That is how effective I am in my legislature," she said.

Connecticut Attorney General George Jepsen cautioned that he had to be careful what he said because he might be defending his state's labeling law enacted last year. "I will defend its constitutionality with every effort. But let me put it this way: The year before (it was passed) there was very, very healthy, strong opposition to the bill," he said.

Referring to last year's effort that pushed the labeling measure through, Jepsen said, "In all my years in politics seldom have I seen a grassroots movement that was so thorough and so effective in changing the status quo." Jepsen served 16 years in the statehouse, including six years as Senate majority leader.

Congressional Action Sought

Critics and proponents of GMO labeling are asking Congress to act, but they are pressing for very different legislation.

A campaign spearheaded by the Grocery Manufacturers Association and the Coalition for Safe Affordable Food, which is comprised of that group and other food producers, supports a federal labeling requirement, but only if the U.S. Food and Drug Administration determines there is a health or safety risk to GMOs.

"That approach will eliminate consumer confusion, avoid an unnecessary and confusing 50-state patchwork of GMO labeling laws and provide consumers with confidence in the safety of the food supply," said Brian Kennedy, a spokesman for the Grocery Manufacturers Association.

But consumer and advocacy groups deride what they say is the industry's effort to undermine state and federal legislation meant to grant consumers the right to know and avoid GMO foods.

"Attacking state labeling laws does nothing to address the increasing call from consumers for transparent (genetically engineered) food labeling," the Center for Food Safety said in a statement. The center and other food safety advocates support legislation that would require nationwide, mandatory labeling of GMO products.

The U.S. House added a provision to the federal farm bill that would have overridden state GMO labeling efforts, but the measure was dropped from the final version of the legislation.

Meanwhile, some companies are addressing the GMO issue on their own. Whole Foods Market has announced that by 2018, all products sold in its stores in the U.S. and Canada would have to disclose whether they contain genetically modified ingredients. Cheerios touts that its cereal is without GMOs. And two of the largest supermarket chains in the U.S., Kroger and Safeway, have made commitments not to sell GMO salmon.

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

Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey Demands Balance Now

By: Katy Sulhoff

MONTGOMERY – Lt. Governor Kay Ivey on Thursday joined a national effort to amplify calls for a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution through a state-led, limited Article V Convention. This historic initiative is being led by state houses across the nation and is spearheaded nationally by the State Government Leadership Foundation (SGLF).

Alabamians from all walks of life are encouraged to join Lt. Governor Ivey and call for Washington to balance its budget. Visit www.DemandBalanceNow.com to sign the pledge.

"There's no question that spending in Washington D.C. is out of control and our more than $17 trillion national debt is an immediate threat to our country. Alabama abides by a balanced budget requirement and Alabama families exist on the principle that you don't spend more than you have. It's time the federal government followed our lead," said Lt. Governor Ivey. "I encourage everyone to sign the pledge and stand with me, for the security of our country and for the sake of our children's future."

Elected officials and community leaders from across the nation have signed the pledge that states: We the undersigned have long observed the federal government accumulate a debt, now totaling over 17 trillion dollars, which is an immediate threat to our children's future and is crippling our nation's fiscal trajectory. We the undersigned have lost faith in the federal government's ability to responsibly manage and control its own budget and spending. Therefore, for the sake of our children and our country's future, we the undersigned pledge our support and hereby call for a state-led Article V Constitutional Convention convened for the limited purpose of passing a Balanced Budget Amendment to the United States Constitution.

To learn more go to www.DemandBalanceNow.com

Bentley awards funding to combat prescription drug abuse

By: Larry Childers

MONTGOMERY - Gov. Robert Bentley has awarded a $125,000 grant to combat the illegal use of prescription drugs, which account for about 15,000 deaths annually in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Bentley has been a strong advocate of measures to curb the illegal distribution and use of prescription drugs in Alabama for several years and he joined with Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper in 2012 to lead a nationwide initiative to increase awareness of the problem and curtail abuse. Bentley signed into law a package of three bills aimed at decreasing prescription drug abuse in Alabama last year.

"Prescription drugs are not generally believed to be as dangerous as illegal drugs, but their abuse can be every bit as lethal as the most potent street drug," Bentley said.

"By taking some safeguards, we can ensure that prescription drugs are available for those who truly need them, at the dosage and for period of time prescribed by the doctor."

According to Bentley, abuse of prescription drugs, particularly painkiller medication, affects all income and education levels and career fields.

In addition to death by accidental overdose, prescription drug abuse is a factor in suicides and accidental deaths involving vehicles and machinery.

The grant funding will support programs to reduce the amount of controlled prescription medications dispensed. Education programs will alert the public as well as medical professionals, pharmacists and law enforcement agencies about the extent of prescription drug misuse.

Programs geared toward law enforcement officers and the public will address the ways prescription drugs are obtained and describe the signs of abuse and how to identify an abuser.

Alabama has one of the highest rates in the nation of prescription painkillers sold per 1,000 people, and the state ranks high in the number of fatal overdoses of prescription painkillers, according to the CDC, a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Bentley notified Randall Hillman, executive director of Alabama Office of Prosecution Services, that the grant had been approved.

The Office of Prosecution Services will work in cooperation with the Alabama Drug Abuse Task Force, the state departments of Public Health and Education and local district attorneys to implement and enforce prescription drug policy.

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Cullman High School basketball coach Bobby Meyer named 5A coach of the year

By: Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - What do you get when your team scores 100+ three times in a season? How about winning 24 games? How about winning your area?

If you are Cullman head basketball coach Bobby Meyer, you earn 5A Coach of the Year honors.

Meyer and his Bearcats may have not completed thier goal of making it to the BJCC to play for a state title, coming out of what proved to be the toughest region in the state, but the Bearcats, who finished at #10 in Class 5A had nothing to be ashamed of in the 2013-14 season.

"We had nine players on the team, including five seniors," Meyer told CullmanSense in a phone interview Sunday night.

"These (seniors) guys have been with me the entire four years I have been at Cullman. I pulled a few of them up as freshman so they have played varsity my entire time at Cullman."

Along with his seniors, Meyer also talked highly of his three juniors and one sophomore who will be back on the floor for him next year.

Meyer has made a career out of winning everywhere he has been.

From taking a fledgling Vinemont team to multiple county titles and deep runs in the 3A state tournament to the amazing résumé he still continues to forge ahead at Cullman.

Meyer piloted his team to an impressive 24-7 record over the course of the season, including some huge regional wins and some other non-region, confidence building wins.

The Bearcats season came to an end at the Northwest Regionals at Wallace State but Meyer could not have been prouder of his squad.

"I attribute it to a team effort," Meyer said on winning the prestigious coach of the year award.

Coach Meyer also spoke of the respect he has for his friend and mentor Lane Horton.

"He was my coach in high school. He got me to play JV basketball in 10th grade then I moved up to varsity my 11th grade year. Everything I know about basketball came from him."

Kicking it into high gear

» Bearcat soccer sets eyes on playoffs and beyond

By:Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - "I believe we have the most difficult section in 5A," Cullman soccer coach Casey Harbison told CullmanSense Sunday night. "Every game in the section is going to be difficult."

While this may be the case, his squad has had no problem navigating the treacherous waters thus far. The Bearcats have impressed this year with a rapidly developing team who have already notched a tough section win over the Athens Golden Eagles and a thrilling golden goal overtime win versus the East Limestone Indians.

"Both teams are very talented and well coached. They played us very tight games that could have gone either way. They will be tougher in the second half of the year and are definitely capable of handing us our first section loss if we do not play our best," said Harbin of the big wins.

The best is not a problem for the Bearcats as they field a talent laden team each night then step on the pitch.

The offense is most impressive for the Cullman Bearcats as it does not require one specific player or play to work.

"It is a combination of skilled and experienced players and they check each other nicely depending on what kind of attack is required in a specific game. Certain players step up in certain situations. I would like to say that our inside midfielders have performed well beyond expectations so far and typically provide consistency for the offense and the entire team," Harbin said when describing his offense.

Despite having a young defense, the Cullman Bearcats have put other teams on lockdown.

This is possible, thanks in part, to the "veterans" on the defense, Ross Parker and keeper KJ Potter.

"Our defense is young with one exception and the exception is the leader in Ross Walker. He has stepped up his play tremendously in his senior year and has been a source of stability for the younger players to rely on. Our goalkeeper, KJ Potter, has made some enormous saves this year and has been a cornerstone of this team's success," spoke the head coach.

The success of the Bearcats has been impressive thus far but Harbin knows there is still a long way to go, including a looming showdown with Hartselle.

"The Cullman-Hartselle rivalry isn't as fierce in soccer as it is in other sports but Hartselle always fields a skilled team that is not afraid to use physicality to disrupt our game. They are the only section team we have not played so we will have two tough games in the future that we must play well in or suffer the consequences."

In closing Harbin had this to say about his team, "We are a very young team but we are learning and improving with each game. If we continue to play well and keep evolving our game, we believe we can accomplish our season goal of making the playoffs and possibly more. If you make the playoffs, you never know what can happen."

CullmanSense
Community Matters

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Cartoonist Anthony Saint

Prep Sports Weekly Scoring Recap

Monday, March 10th

Baseball
St Bernard 1 vs Decatur Heritage 26
Brindlee Mountain 0 vs Cold Spring 4 - Game One
Brindlee Mountain 2 vs Cold Springs 10 - Game Two
Hanceville 5 vs Holly Pond 8
Hayden 2 vs Fairview 4
West Point 3 vs Priceville 8

Softball
Vinemont 4 vs Addison 3
Hanceville 1 vs Danville 8
Fairview 2 vs Locust Fork 11
Arab 2 vs Holly Pond 10
West Point 4 vs Cold Springs 2

Tuesday, March 11th

Baseball
Holly Pond 8 vs Vinemont 0
Good Hope 9 vs Cold Springs 6 - Game One
Good Hope 3 vs Cold Springs 0 - Game Two
Fairview 11 vs Pennington 1
Walker 6 vs West Point 1 - Game One
Walker 6 vs West Point 0 - Game Two
Cullman 4 vs Grissom 2 - Game One
Cullman 11 vs Grissom 1 - Game Two

Softball
Oakman 0 vs Cold Springs 1
Vinemont 6 vs Good Hope 9
West Point 3 vs East Limestone 4

Wednesday, March 12th

Softball
Priceville 11 vs Good Hope 3

Thursday, March 13th

Baseball
St Bernard 11 vs Southern School 3
Meek 9 vs Cold Springs 3
Good Hope 4 vs Falkville 11
Danville 5 vs West Point 0 - Game One
Danville 1 vs West Point 13 - Game Two

Softball
St Bernard 0 vs Southeastern School 20
Meek 6 vs Good Hope 3
West Point 10 vs Good Hope 1

Soccer (Boys)
Danville 2 vs St Bernard 4

Soccer (Girls)
Danville 1 vs St Bernard 4

Friday, March 14th

Baseball
Gardendale 1 vs Cullman 11 - Game One
Gardendale 2 vs Cullman 3 - Game Two

Softball
Lamar County 8 vs Cold Springs 7
Leeds 1 vs Holly Pond 3
Leeds 1 vs Cullman 3
Holly Pond 3 vs Springville 1
Oneonta 0 vs Cullman 2
Cullman 22 vs Pinson Valley 0
Cullman 6 vs Springville 1
Cullman 6 vs Southside Gadsen 2

Saturday, March 15th

Baseball
Holly Pond 1 vs Falkville 2 - Game One
Holly Pond 7 vs Good Hope 5 - Game Two

Softball
Vinemont 0 vs Susan Moore 10
Fairview 1 vs Susan Moore 4
Cullman 9 vs West End 1
West Point 5 vs Susan Moore 4

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WSCC men's basketball team looking for a bigger prize at national tournament

By: Russell Moore
WSCC Contributor

HANCEVILLE – When Wallace State men's basketball coach John Meeks inherited the post in the July 2010, the program was less than four months removed from its first ever national tournament appearance.

On Monday night, Meeks, who recently turned 31, and the Lions will be making the program's third National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division I national tournament appearance in five seasons, including the second under Meeks.

"It's definitely says a lot about our program and our athletics program as a whole that we're in this spot to compete for a national championship. Wallace State men's basketball has created a name for itself. We have worked on becoming the hunted within the state and have earned a lot of credibility," Meeks said. "Allen Sharpe was able to send the team to its first national tournament before he left, and we've been able to continue that success."

Wallace State (27-6) wants five more wins in order to put a national-championship cap on an incredible season. The Lions open the tournament Monday against Westchester (N.Y.) Community College at 6:30 p.m., at the Sports Arena in Hutchinson, Kansas. The Lions are seeded 15th among a 24-team field. The winner of Monday's game will advance to play second-seeded Vincennes (Ind.) on Wednesday.

"I really like our draw. I think this first game is a good matchup for us. If we play loose and free like we did during our conference tournament, we'll be fine," Meeks said. "Our guys are ready to step up the plate and embrace the challenge that's in front of them. We aren't going to be awfully satisfied with being there. Our mindset is to go there to win it. We don't want anything less than a national championship. We have earned two prizes this season and we want a third.

Wallace State's journey to Hutch has been an entertaining one. Wallace State sent a quick message to the league by reeling off 14 wins in a row from Dec. 19 to Feb. 13. The Lions earned the ACCC's North Division regular-season championship, dropping only two conference games, but, down the stretch, had to overcome injuries to key starters and schedule changes because of inclement weather.

Wallace State continued to soar during the conference tournament. The Lions beat Bishop State by 24 points in a quarterfinal game, Lawson State by 10 in the semifinals and captured their second title under Meeks with a 77-67 triumph over rival Shelton State in the title game.

"It's not easy to win both championships, but winning both showed the strong will and focus of this team. Our guys rose to the challenge in every situation and understood that all the hard work we've put in wasn't going to go unnoticed," said Meeks, who will be making his 8th national tournament appearance as either an assistant or head coach. "We were challenged with injuries and all sorts of things in the regular season and it made us stronger the rest of the way, including the three grueling days during the tournament."



WSCC

» Wallace State's basketball team celebrates on the bench before receiving the state tournament championship trophy.

A trio of guards has paced Wallace State all season, each averaging double digits. Sophomore Jestin Lewis, a Mercer commit, averages a team-high 18.6 points per game, Lee Moore averages 17.8 points and a team-high 7.4 rebounds and sophomore point guard Marcus Johnson contributes 14.1 points. Lewis and Moore were both named to the All-Region 22 first team for their stellar regular-season work. Moore was named the conference tournament MVP after pouring in 53 points over three games. Lewis was also an all-tournament selection after posting a career-high 31 points vs. Shelton State in the title game. Johnson and Marcus Burwell were also all-tournament selections.

The NJCAA Division I national tournament is entering only its second year as a single-elimination tournament. The previous times Wallace State has advanced to Hutchinson it's been a double-elimination event. The Lions finished fifth in the country in 2010 and tallied one victory in 2012 after losing their first-round game.

Meeks, the 2014 ACCC Coach of the Year, is carrying a more talented and deeper Wallace State team to Hutchinson than he did in 2012. The Lions barely snuck into the state tournament that season as a No. 6 seed, winning four games in four days at the state tournament in order to advance to nationals. The 2012 team also rotated only seven players by postseason time. "We definitely belong there this season. It's going to be a great atmosphere for our guys, and most of them were used to playing on this type of stage in high school. I really think our guys are going to relish the spotlight," Meeks said. "There is a lot of nostalgia at this tournament. Some legendary coaches have stood on the sidelines and some great players have hit the court. I feel we have a chance to add to that. I think we can go out there and make some noise and put Wallace State basketball even more on the map."

All tournament games will be streamed live on Njcaa.org through NJCAA TV.

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

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

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

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

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



Jill Gudger Howell, M.A. Ed.
President/ Developer,
PreK-12th Grade
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CULLMANSENSE
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PRESENTS

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Winter (from Front)

at it, throw some beer in your picnic basket. Nothing quite says, "Welcome, spring time" like day drinking.

Some other options are reading outside, playing outside, eating outside, talking on the phone outside, sitting outside and standing outside... (Do you get my point?)

Whatever you do, get outside. The weather is beautiful and the sun's rays will boost your mood. Embrace the crisp spring air! Oh, and don't forget your sunscreen (seriously).

3. Bust out your spring clothes. Ahh, the joy of making the winter-to-spring closet transformation. On this day, you'll rediscover your bright skinny jeans, your flowy floral tops and all your strappy sandals.

That box of spring clothes that's been lying dormant all winter will shine with a glorious light as you pull it from the depths of underneath your bed, and you'll hear the most beautiful hallelujah chorus as you open it. Tank tops will come out of the wood works and short shorts will sing songs of glee.

This also ties in with spring cleaning. This is your chance to go through your clothes. As you unpack those magnificent spring clothes, make a pile of things you don't want anymore.

And as you pack those boring sweaters into the winter box, put whatever you didn't wear this winter into that same pile. Now, you have a nice stack of clothes to give away to the less fortunate. See, charity can be fun!

No matter what you do, be sure to celebrate the first day of spring. From cleaning to playing to changing your closet, embrace this new season with a smile. Good riddance, winter!

1-year-old's Drowning Death leads to Aggravated Child Abuse Arrest

By: Noah Chandler
noah@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Jeffrey Brown, 37, has been arrested and charged with aggravated child abuse in connection with the drowning death of 1-year-old Hoss Wayne Benham that occurred around 11 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11, following an event that investigators are calling suspicious in nature.

"The Cullman County Sheriff's Office was notified by Cullman Regional Medical Center of a reported bathtub drowning of a 1-year-old child, Hoss Wayne Benham. The initial medical review indicated that the child's body had several external injuries that were suspicious in nature," Cullman County Sheriff Mike Rainey stated in a release on Friday.

According to the release, Deputy Jed Thomas was dispatched to the hospital, however Benham had passed away before his arrival. Rainey stated that upon conducting an initial assessment from the medical staff and viewing the child 's injuries Deputy Thomas notified dispatch of the situation and a team of investigators responded to the hospital and to 17750 US Hwy 31 N. at Monk's Trailer Park where the drowning was alleged to have occurred.

"Cullman Co. District Attorney, Wilson Blaylock, was notified of the situation. He then gave authorization for an autopsy to be conducted at the Huntsville Department of Forensic Science on Thursday, March 13," the release stated. A preliminary report of the cause of death has not been released at this time.

According to the report, Lead investigators, Bethany Shaddrix and Capt. Jon Montgomery conducted initial interviews with the child's mother; Crystal Ballenger, age 23, and her boyfriend, Jeffery Brown, age 37. Based upon those interviews and other physical evidence uncovered by investigators during the course of this investigation, Jeffrey Brown has been charged with Aggravated Child Abuse, a Class B felony. His bond has been set at $30,000.00 cash.

"This case is still very active and ongoing at this time and we are not at liberty to discuss details or specifics that could jeopardize our investigation. I want to commend all the officers and investigators for their hard work and dedication in uncovering the facts surrounding this investigation," Rainey stated.

"The Cullman Co. Sheriff's Office is working closely with the District Attorney's Office and the Dept. of Human Resources. We anticipate making further progress in this investigation in the near future. Child Abuse cases are difficult to work and especially those of which result in the death of a child. As Sheriff, I am saddened by the death of this little boy and I want the community to know that we are praying for this child and those who loved him."



CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

» Jeffery Hugh Brown

EES Students make Treasures out of Trash

» Upcycled artwork on display across city

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

CULLMAN - There has been a new sensation sweeping across America. Economic necessity, coupled with the help of the website Pinterest has given birth to a new generation of thrifty moms and families. Lots of families have said goodbye to retail and waste and hello to recycling, upcycling, and DIY projects. Lindsey Howard, a second grade teacher at East Elementary, wanted to instill this idea into the PALS program she leads at the school.

PALS (People Against a Littered State) is an Alabama program whose goal is to clean up the state, reduce litter, and encourage citizens to volunteer their time to keep Alabama beautiful.

"When I started teaching, my principal asked me to lead the PALS program for our school," she said. "I wanted to find ways to teach reducing, reusing, and recycling that was something other than going outside to pick up litter or reading a book about it."

It would seem that Howard has done just that. Her efforts have produced a fun, unique way of teaching kids about litter and recycling.

"Today trends seem to be remodeling or recreating to make decor, furniture, etc. so I wanted to do a Recycled Art Gallery that gave children the opportunity to be creative and make a replica, sculpture, or model of anything they wanted out of recycled items."

All of the past few years have been a success for the project. Anyone can enter a project into their gallery, and they have had as many as 30 projects in their gallery at a time. This year the projects have been distributed among varying businesses in the town to be put on display.

You can view the artwork at the following establishments: the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce, Cullman Public Library, City Hall, Cullman City Board of Education, Temple Baptist Church, AJ's Steakhouse, What A Girl Wants, and East Elementary.

"I am so appreciative of the support from each business and person and the kids love having them out in the community for everyone to see," Howard said of the kids involved with the artwork.

Not only does this approach teach children about the damage that litter does and why recycling is important, it also gives a creative outlet for the kids as well.

The arts have been under fire across the country as budget cuts continue, and officials are looking for any way to reduce spending. Mrs. Howard, however, understands the importance of art in school.

"I think art is important in a child's education because it inspires creativity, and in education today, children are encouraged to be creative in their thinking whether it is finding different ways to solve a math problem, thinking deeper and outside the box while reading, or experimenting in science to learn, observe, or create a hypothesis or theory." Over the past few years, many different creative projects, robots, and city replicas were among some of the more memorable projects undertaken.

"Some of my most memorable would be the first gallery we had after the April 2011 tornado. We had a couple of very creative tornadoes complied by rubble and debris," Howard said.

The next big project, a book swap, will come this spring. Children will swap books with each other making a "used book" a "new read" for them. Another great way to get children thinking and away from the television set.

Lindsey Howard and many others like her are very passionate and dedicated to the kids they teach.

It is through efforts like these that children are learning and enjoying the entire process which is no easy feat for any teacher these days, but Howard seems more than up for the task.





CHELSEA SPARKS/CULLMANSENSE

» Mrs. Howard's second graders learned about reducing, reusing, and recycling while showing off their creativity by creating a Recycled Art Gallery.

Worker (from Front)

mentally handicapped adults who have needs.

March is National Social Work Month. Ms. Cook was chosen from an outstanding pool of nominees from across the state.

Grant (from Front)

and recreation.

Bentley notified Meg McGlamery, the organization's president, that the grant had been approved.

Rummage (from Front)

and was host to a ton of various items. Tables were filled with knick-knacks, clothes, electronics, books, and much more.

One of the best deals seemed to be filling a bag with as many clothes as you can fill for the flat price of $5. One customer commented that she has never seen a deal that good on clothes, even at a yard sale.

All the proceeds from the rummage sale go back to the Lutheran School Fund. The fund is used for things that you might expect like supplies, grounds upkeep, and textbooks, but another cause that may not be as obvious is tuition assistance.

Families that want to send their child to a private Christian academy, but may not have the means to do so can apply for tuition assistance. Events like the rummage sale help to ensure that the school can continue that assistance.

The school has been in operation since 1954 and is available for students from pre-k to sixth grade.

Children not only receive a great academic education, but parents who prefer a more religious environment will appreciate the Christian teaching in their every day schooling. Tuition is reasonably priced for a private school setting, and the teachers and parents are warm and welcoming to all who are interested.

The school holds many fundraisers like this one to help with the ever-increasing costs of keeping a school up and running at the highest standards.

On April 4, the school will be holding an Auction that will include beautiful handmade quilts that were crafted by the students in each grade level.

The event will begin at 5 p.m. with the silent auction and the live auction will begin at 6 p.m. Pictures of the quilts can be found on the school's website: www.stpaulscullman.com.

The rummage sale was a huge success, bringing in crowds of people Friday morning alone. A lot of the items were already sold by midday with more people coming that afternoon.

Everyone had a smile on their face as they sifted through the clothes and items and were delighted when they saw the final price. Parents and school officials worked hand in hand to ensure the sale was a success.

This is just another great aspect to the school, a community of parents and teachers working together for the benefit of the children attending. Cullman is lucky to have so many wonderful options in education for our children.

Community Voices Concerns on Common Core Standards

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

Common Core is a term that some of you might be familiar with or have heard in passing over the past few weeks, but for a lot of people this term is brand new. Common Core refers to a set of educational standards that has been integrated into Alabama school systems since 2010. A lot of controversy surrounds this issue, and people on both sides of the aisle have very strong opinions.

Conservative groups like the Tea Party have been organizing for some time now to have common core repealed, saying that the standards make it impossible for teachers to instruct their kids effectively and also makes it difficult for children to learn in such a high pressure environment. Although that is not to say that all Republicans in Alabama are against the move to common core.

The Conservative party seems to be divided on this issue with some saying that there is a federal takeover of the education system, and others saying that it is an improvement to the education system and sets higher standards for both teachers and students.

One of the main issues seems to be the standardized testing that will determine the performance of teachers and students. The concern is that teachers will be limited on what and how they are allowed to teach when their jobs and schools are at stake over a set of tests.

When the results of a test have such high stakes, teachers are more inclined to teach strictly what will be on the test, forcing them to put other subject matter aside that they feel is important for children to learn.

This past Thursday, a meeting was held at Daystar Church in Good Hope to offer those that oppose the standards and rouse support for repeal.

Among those at the meeting were retired teacher and State School Board hopeful, Patricia McGriff, and award winning educator Chasidy White from Tuscaloosa County. Chasidy spoke of how she came to hear of common core and what started her on the journey of researching more about the issue.

"In 2010, I received a call, and that call told me that there was going to be a meeting in some fancy building in Montgomery, and they were going to discuss some new educational program called 'Common Core Standards,'" she said.

"It was funded by the Gates Foundation and facilitated by the Council of State governments. So I called up the Council of State Governments, and I politely asked if any educators had been invited to this meeting to discuss education, and very quickly the next day I received an invitation."

She went on to speak of the people in attendance and how the atmosphere of the meeting felt to her.

"The first thing that stuck out in my mind was they started giving this sense of urgency that we have to adopt Common Core right now, it's absolutely necessary for us to compete with the rest of the world."

White went on from there to say that the moment she saw the rush they were putting on adopting these standards, she knew something was amiss. So began her journey of researching and later fighting Common Core standards.

The meeting went on to a Q&A session where many members of the community asked questions and voiced their own concerns. One gentleman who stood up in front of the group had a lot to say about the leadership in Cullman County.

"I'll be honest with you, I am disappointed in our representatives from this county because they have not stood up with those that have fought this and tried to fight this in the legislature," he said.

"It's disappointing that we have people that we elected to represent the interest in this county, and there is such strong opposition in this county, and we do not see the leadership out of our representatives that we deserve."

Both sides of this fight have strong words for the other and there is a lot of information out there that supports both sides, so it can be confusing for those that are new to the subject to know what to believe.

The most important thing to remember with this and any issue of importance is to research all sides of the argument and come to a well rounded and informed decision. It's most definitely not an issue to be taken lightly since the future of our education system shapes the future of our society and its leaders.

This Week in Local Entertainment

By: Kate Mullaney • kate@cullmansense.com

Monday, March 17

- Happy St. Patrick's Day!
- Open Mic Night at Berkeley Bob's from 7-9 p.m.
- 79 cent wings at Rodney G's Hickory Grill from 6-9 p.m.

Tuesday, March 18

- WSCC Baseball vs. Southeast Iowa from 1-3 p.m. at Wallace
- Trivia at Grumpy's Italian Grill from 7-9 p.m.

Wednesday, March 19

- Story Time at the Hanceville Library at 10 a.m.
- Karaoke Night at Grumpy's Italian Grill from 7-10 p.m.

Thursday, March 20

- Trivia Night at Rodney G's at 7 p.m.
- Bike Night at Grumpy's Italian Grill

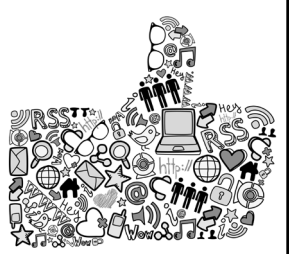
Friday, March 21

- NAYRA Youth Rodeo at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center at 12 p.m.
- Ladies' Night at Rodney G's at 8 p.m. Half off drinks for ladies
- Songwriter's Evening at Berkeley Bob's at 7 p.m.

Saturday, March 22

- NAYRA Youth Rodeo at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center at 12 p.m.
- Ladies' Night at Rodney G's at 8 p.m. Half off drinks for ladies
- Night Ride at Stony Lonesome OHV Park from 6-11 p.m.

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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 at the All Steak. 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.

'Root Ministry' at Abundant Grace Church
There is a weekly meeting each Thursday night starting at 6 pm at Abundant Grace Church. 'Root Ministry' has the aim of radically overcoming obstacles together for anyone with any types of hurts, hang-ups or habits in their lives. Please call 256-739-7091 for additional information. All welcome!! **

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.

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.

Nimble Thimble Quilt Guild of Cullman
Members of the Nimble Thimble Quilt Guild of Cullman will gather at the Colonel Cullman Museum starting at 9:30 a.m. All interested quilters are invited to attend this meeting.

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

Saturday

VFW Saturday Night Dance
The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2214 invites everyone to their weekly Saturday night dances which begin at 7 p.m. and last until 10 p.m. The Boogie Night Band provides music on Saturday nights. Entrance fee is $5.00 for each individual. Come on out and bring your dancing shoes and enjoy an evening of great music, fun, and fellowship!

Next Monday

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RESIDENTIAL RECIPES

Loaded Potato and Buffalo Chicken Casserole

By: Chelsea Sparks • Local Contributor

I participate in a freezer meal swap with some friends every month. It is always a worthwhile endeavor because not only do I not have to worry about cooking two meals a week, but I am also introduced to incredible recipes. A dear friend of mine made this recipe, and I am absolutely in love with it. If you like chicken, potatoes, cheese, and buffalo sauce then you are going to be in heaven.

Ingredients:
- 2 lbs - boneless chicken breasts, cubed 1-inch
- 8 to 10 - medium potatoes, cubed 1/2 inch
- 1/3 cup - olive oil
- 1 and 1/2 teaspoon - salt
- 1 tablespoon - black pepper
- 1 tablespoon - paprika
- 2 tablespoons - garlic powder
- 6 tablespoons - hot sauce

Topping:
- 2 cups - fiesta blend cheese
- 1 cup - crumbled bacon
- 1 cup - diced green onion

Instructions:
- Preheat oven to 500 degrees.
- Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
- In a large bowl, mix together the olive oil, salt, pepper, paprika, garlic powder, and hot sauce. Add the cubed potatoes and stir to coat.
- Carefully scoop the potatoes into the prepared baking dish, leaving behind as much of the olive oil/hot sauce mixture as possible.
- Bake the potatoes for 45 to 50 minutes, stirring every 10 to 15 minutes, until cooked through and crispy and browned on the outside.
- While the potatoes are cooking, add the cubed chicken to the bowl with the leftover olive oil/hot sauce mixture and stir to coat.
- Once the potatoes are fully cooked, remove from the oven and lower the oven temperature to 400 degrees.
- Top the cooked potatoes with the raw marinated chicken. In a bowl, mix together the cheese, bacon, and green onion and top the raw chicken with the cheese mixture.
- Return the casserole to the oven and bake for 15 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and the topping is melted and delicious. (Serve with extra hot sauce and/or ranch dressing.)

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

AGRIPLEX

Cultivating Mushrooms

The Fantastic Fungus Next Door

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Last Tuesday at the North Alabama Agriplex was another exciting program in the Living Landscapes series. This week's program was on cultivating shitake mushrooms and several members of the community were present to learn how to grow this fantastic fungus.

Mushroom expert Rhonda Britton of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System gave this hands-on presentation. Individuals even inoculated small pieces of logs to take home and grow their own mushrooms.

The process of growing your own mushrooms is fairly simple. First, find a small log and drill holes all around it. Then pack the holes with mycelia, which is the vegetative part of a fungus made of a mass of tubes. You can find mycelia online in whichever mushroom strain you desire.

After packing the log with mycelia, cover the packed holes, as well as the ends of the logs, with wax. This seals in moisture and protects the log from insects. The next step is to wait until the mycelia turn white, which takes several weeks. Then, you are ready to soak your log for 24 to 48 hours.

Finally, place your log in a shaded area, mist lightly with water once a week and your mushrooms will soon start to grow. Once you have harvested your mushrooms, you may soak the log again and repeat. Your log could produce mushrooms for up to two years.

This class was taught as participants prepared their logs to take home and soak. The Agriplex is constantly providing the community with skills and education about agriculture, and this week was no different. Visit the North Alabama Agriplex on Facebook to learn what's coming up next.

PRECIOUS MOMENTS

Finding the Right Newborn Photographer

» Hiring a professional doesn't have to be stressful

By: Summer Crook
Local Contributor

Newborn photography has become a growing trend and is now more popular than ever. With this rapidly expanding market, how does one determine which photographer and what style is right for them?

First, it is important to decide what exactly you want and what budget you have.

Once you have that figured out, you can now begin to search for photographers that fit your criteria. There is no shortage of photographers out there, so this may take a while.

Things to look for, initially, are images on the photographer's website that fit the style you like. You should see a commonality among their portfolio so that you know what look you are getting.

If the images seem to be all over the place – meaning that some are highly processed and some are very simple and not consistent – then that is an indication of an inexperienced photographer.

Look for a well-balanced portfolio with a clear style that stays constant throughout each image.

Now that you have a list of photographers with whom your style matches, you can start to narrow that list down by your budget.

One very important thing to keep in mind when considering budget is professionalism.

Professional photographers have a lot of overhead, and a true professional photographer will spend much of their time post-processing images for hours after you leave.

As the old adage goes, "You get what you pay for." If the photographer you are interested in doesn't have prices listed on their website, it shouldn't be difficult to get a price quote if you inquire.

Professionalism isn't just about licenses, insurance, etc.

While those things are extremely important and required, safety is by far the most important thing to consider when hiring a professional newborn photographer.

Safety should always be of the utmost importance for any professional photographer, but it is paramount in the newborn field.

A newborn photographer must know how to do things such as: pose properly for safety, composite their images with safe posing techniques, and know the right conditions needed for the session space, etc.

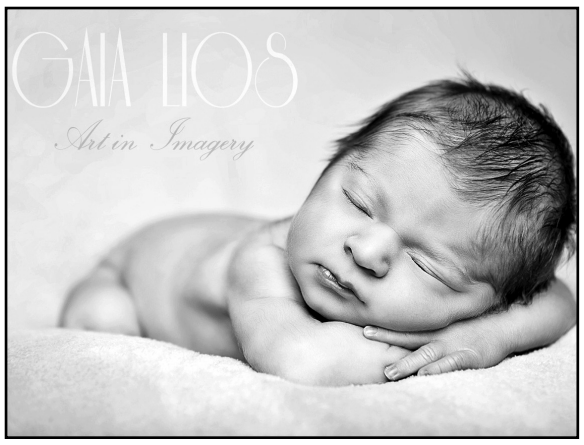
Those cute images you see of the baby holding up his head in his hands or the pictures of the newborn suspended in the knitted fabric, if done properly and safely, are composite images taken from many different stills.

Composites are the only safe way to shoot images like these. If a newborn photographer offers these types of images without composite work, then they are not providing a safe session.

When contacting a newborn photographer, he or she should be able to walk you through exactly what to expect before, during, and after your baby's session.

The photographer will go over the 'window' or how many days old the newborn should be for the best images.

If you are looking for those dreamy images of the baby sleeping, posed in curled up positions, with hand under their chin, etc., then you will want to stay within the first couple of weeks following the birth.



CONTRIBUTED

» Conducting sessions in different time 'windows' will render varying photographic styles.

After this window of time, the baby will likely be more finicky and not want to sleep through posing.

They can also begin to develop baby 'acne' around this time, so it is always nice to get those images with the baby-soft skin.

It is noteworthy to inquire about where the session will be located, for instance, whether it will take place in a commercial studio space, in a home studio, or at your chosen location.

Keep in mind, there may be extra fees involved for traveling to you for the session.

You should also ask them whether or not they provide props, clothing, a sound machine, heaters, etc.

Having the room temperature at about 80 degrees is also important to keep the baby comfortable while shooting, considering they are usually photographed with little-to-no clothing.

Another consideration is a sound machine or white noise. This helps calm the baby during their session.

These are all things that the photographer should go over with you, and you should leave your conversation having every question answered and feeling at ease. When it comes to your baby's very first images, be safe and don't settle.

Family Organization Goes Mobile

» Two Happy Homes Makes Managing Schedules Much Simpler

By: Nicole Helms
Local Contributor

Who can keep up with when all the bills are due? And which day was the play opening on – Tuesday, or wait, was it Wednesday?

There should be an app for this, but with so many different kinds of apps for parenting organization out these days, and so many different kinds of parenting going on, how can you find the right one?

Perhaps you are divorced and struggling to organize between two houses and two sets of rules.

Trying to communicate through e-mails and text messages can get quite confusing.

It's time for Two Happy Homes; a user-friendly app for organizing co-parenting situations.

One of the top features, Shared Calendar, has color coded days for Mom's house, Dad's house, or even Grandmother's house.

It allows you to track events in either house, such as play dates or practices.

Another worry saver is the Finance Tab where you can see a ledger of expenses and payments, a total of what each co-parent owes, and even pay payments online, or mark them as being paid in a different method. You can also export your finances to a CSV file for Excel.

The app also allows you to store and share contacts and medical information such as prescriptions, dosages, and schedules.

You can leave notes for each co-parent, along with pictures of events or just family fun, and organize parenting plans.

You can also get advice from other parents by clicking the Community Tab.

The Family Dashboard gives you a glimpse of each child's daily schedule and allows you to see if a co-parent has responded to a note and request expert advice.

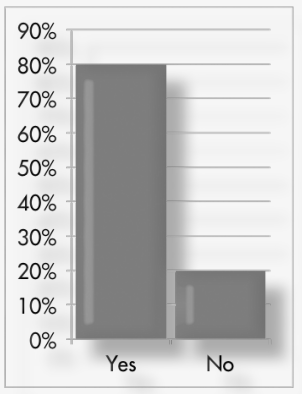
Although Two Happy homes was designed for stepparents or joint custody environments, it is still a vital asset for a single parent by allowing the parent to add a nanny, grandparent or dependable friends to a daily roster of shared information.

If the babysitter can't pick up a child, then a grandparent or aunt that has been added can easily see the change in events and note that he or she will pick the child up.

Splitting up isn't always easy, but helping each other stay on the same page with their children just became a lot simpler. Two Happy Homes equals a balanced approach to co-parenting.

Poll

Do you fear an impending economic crash?



This Week's Poll

Are you opposed to medical marijuana?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

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

St. Patty's Day Brew: Guinness Comes Through In a Pinch

Guinness is a quite popular Irish dry stout. The brewery originated in St. James' Gate, Dublin and was started by Arthur Guinness. Today, it is brewed in 60 countries and sold in over 100. Guinness produces beer in a great number of variants and strengths, but we're going to...

qrne.ws/174



Little Paws Arts & Crafts Show Benefits Local Teachers

This past weekend at the Recreation Center in Hanceville, people came out to support local teachers and students at the Little Paws Arts and Crafts Show. This event was the first of its kind in the area raising money to help Hanceville teachers overcome the problem that is hitting hard in...

qrne.ws/175

Cullman Civitan Club Holds Annual Spaghetti Dinner

Last Friday night, the Cullman Civitan Club held their Annual Spaghetti Dinner at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church.
This year they added a silent auction. Several prizes from local businesses were available. The cost of this event was $7 and all proceeds went to the Civitan Club to help with their community...

qrne.ws/176

SMITH SQUARED PHOTOGRAPHY: A Couple of Great Talent

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Growing Cullman business Shelly Smith Photography is in the process of changing names. Its fresh new title will be Smith Squared Photography, and although its name will change, its excellence will not. This husband and wife photography business specializes in wedding photography, but owners Josh and Shelly Smith state that they also schedule family, baby, maternity, senior, and couple sessions.

Shelly started this business as Shelly Smith photography. She states that she started this business for several reasons and that it is ultimately due to her childhood passion for photography.

"As a small child, I remember being fascinated with our old family photographs in a cigar box at my grandmother's house," Shelly recalls. "Looking at these photos time and time again developed into a huge desire to create captivating and emotional images of my own.

Shelly entered her school's 4-H photography contest when she was just 12 years old. She entered landscape photos she captured with her mother's Kodak point and shoot.

"To my surprise I won first place," she smiled. "From there my love for photography grew. When my children were small, I purchased my first Canon DSLR camera so I could photograph them."

And that's how it all began for Shelly. After purchasing her first camera to take pictures of her children, she was motivated to pursue photography professionally.

"The creativity and art of photography became such a driving force for me that I began a part-time photography business," she stated. And this would eventually turn into a thriving full-time career.

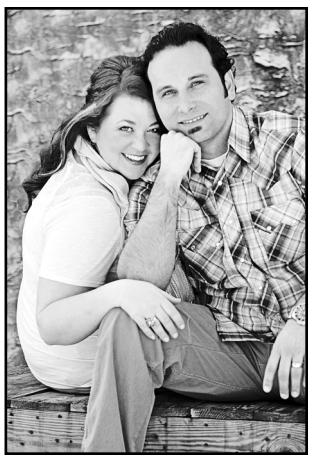
By 2005, Shelly had a steady part time photography business. "By 2010, it had turned into a full-time business and in 2012 it became an 80-hour a week whirlwind," she stated. "I was in desperate need of help to efficiently run the business, and in 2013, my husband Josh was able to come on board full-time and help me turn Shelly Smith Photography into Smith Squared Photography."

The couple have been using both names for the past year and are just a few weeks away from changing their business' name exclusively to Smith Squared Photography.

And although their name is going through a transformation, their timeless style will stay the same. Shelly stated that every photographer's style is unique in its own way just as people are.

"We like to say that our style of photography is clean and timeless with a bit of a vintage feel," she said. "If you look at one of our photos and it reflects the emotions of the person and setting, then we have accomplished what we desired to do. We do not over Photoshop our images but choose to keep them as natural as possible which lends to our creative style."

Shelly and Josh encourage you to try their business for your photography needs, as they feel they can offer quality photos by tailoring each photography session to the personality of each client.



SMITH SQUARED PHOTOGRAPHY

» Shelly and Josh Smith make every session personal for clients.

"We strive to make every session personal for every client," said Shelly. "This helps them relax and be comfortable in front of the camera. The personal aspect of our business is critical in helping our client's comfort level which, in return, makes for relaxed images."

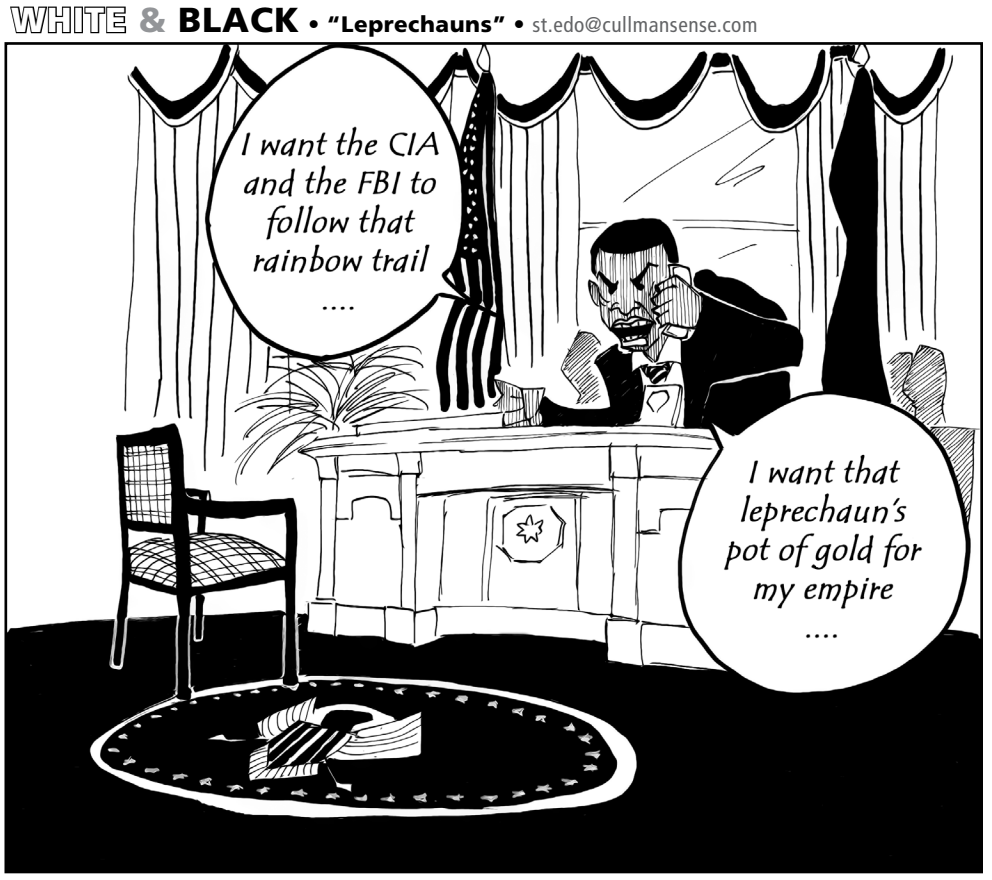
Shelly and Josh build lasting relationships with their clients. In fact, they have several clients who have chosen them for engagement, wedding, maternity, baby and family photography. "We get to watch their lives progress through our lens, and that is the biggest reward of all!"

Smith Squared Photography continues to grow. Shelly and Josh have plans for adding additional staff as well as studio space.

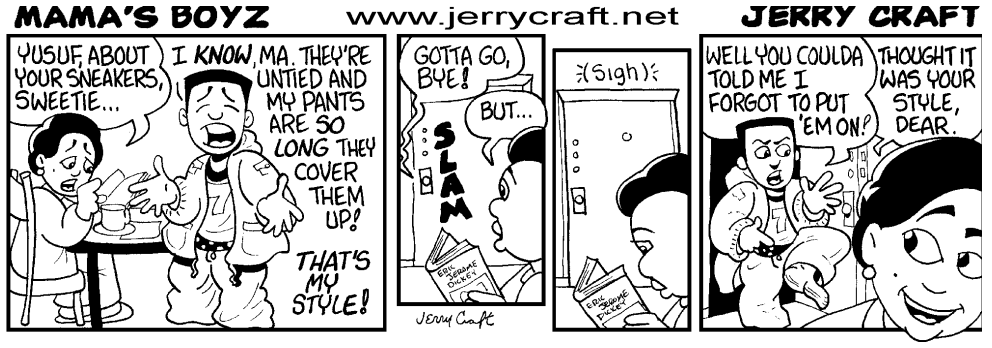
Shelly is grateful that Cullman has allowed for the success of her business. "We are so fortunate to live in such a great community," she stated with a smile. "No one knows what the future holds, but with so much growth here in Cullman, we know there are endless possibilities."

Comics

WHITE & BLACK • **"Leprechauns"** • st.edo@cullmansense.com



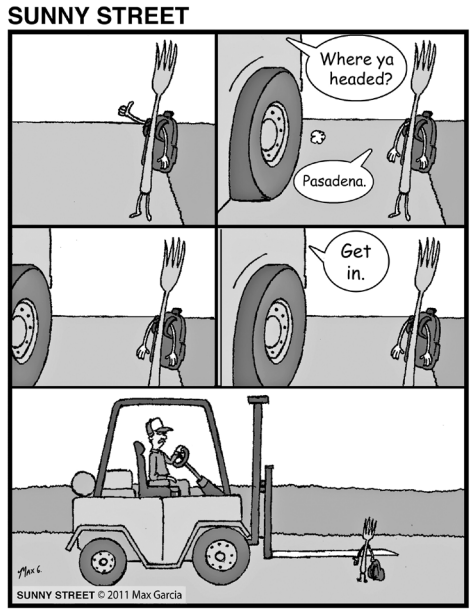
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SUNNY STREET



SUNNY STREET



L.A. Diaries: A Peek Inside the Life of a Struggling Actress from Alabama

By: Allison Boyd
Contributor

» An Anecdote for the Starving Artists Out There

They said to go to L.A. "That's where you really have to be."

"Alright," I told myself. "I'll go."

Flash forward to one year later and I'm sitting in my Los Angeles apartment, struggling to find work, and listening to the second straight hour of my roommate singing nonstop scales and infusing my already heralded day with yet another headache. It doesn't help that I found her on Craigslist. I should have known better.

Is this really what I had wanted for myself?

As I sat there questioning my decision, it was hard for me to come to a conclusion. I worked painfully hard to save up enough money to get myself out here, and all for what, an unceasing struggle?

I perused the pages of IMDb, looking at successful actors' bios asking myself: "How old were they when they got their start? How long have they been in the industry?" But after a while of scanning over all of their neatly written bios, it started to feel as if I would have had to been born into acting to make it to the top. Gosh, they landed their breakout role when they were 18? I'm already 24. Things started to seem bleak.

"Everyone's road is different," were words a very astute friend, proclaimed over a coffee lunch one day.

I began to picture myself as a successful actor and it kept a glimmer of optimism in my heart. "Just stick it out and keep going. You never know what could be around the next corner," I thought to myself.

I know that it would only take that one little job to catapult me into a whole different category.

I reminded myself how hard I had worked to get here and all the small successes I had had thus far. It made me feel hopeful.

I remember people telling me how depressing my journey was going to be but not to give up. And, oh how depressing it really is. Sure, L.A. is fun, as there is so much to do, but not when you are a struggling actor.

You can forget those trips out on the town because you won't be able to afford the $20 cab ride to your club of choice or the $12 vodka sodas. So, your night boils down to eating ramen noodles and spending time with your best friend, Netflix.

Since Los Angeles is so spread out and most all of your friends are trying to do the same thing you are, scheduling time together is difficult. It's not like other cities where you can meet up around the corner in 10 minutes and catch up; the lack of human interaction can be extremely oppressive.

I can conclusively say that Los Angeles is not the city for me, but I try to keep my spirits lively.

I now sit here brainstorming about different ways to obtain my career and happiness. Is the road to success worth doleful days and years?

Another thing that has to be addressed is that success is not guaranteed in this field. You could be pouring money out of your pocket left and right to have the best headshots and the best acting coaches, but there is no promise that this will amount to anything.

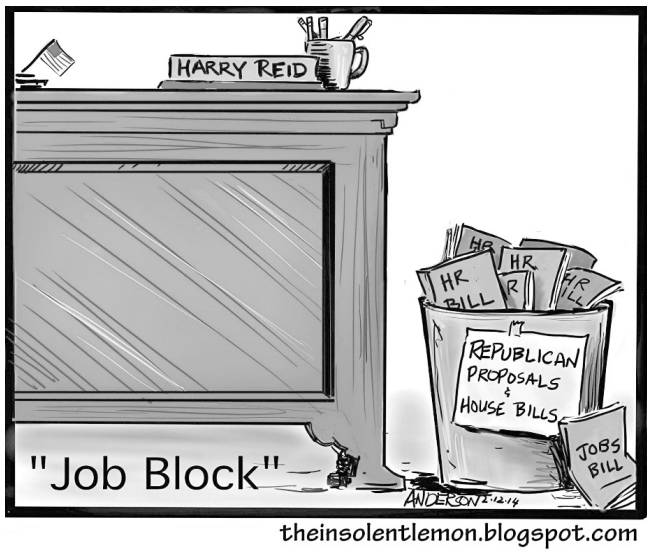
This is very different from the "climbing the ladder" method that is common in other work fields.

But we do it all for that one chance, that little possibility that if you land the right role you will be saved from the fiery trenches of tribulation.

This is the truth of an actor trying to make it, just fighting for the chance to be cast on that TV show or feature film. There are truly no words more heavenly than, "You've booked the part." Those four darling words are the reason you put yourself through such unmitigated hell.

Editorial Cartoons





theinsolentlemon.blogspot.com

OPINION

Reid Goes Nuclear

By: Tom Esposito

We are all familiar with the axiom, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Democratic Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid seems to have his own take on the phrase. It seems he prefers, "If it ain't broke, break it." Reid aptly demonstrated this by his leadership role in implementing the so-called "Nuclear Option" in the Senate. By doing so, he conveniently eliminated a decades-old procedure that required 60 votes from the 100 sitting senators to override a rule or precedent that is normally set by majority rule. Now, Reid has insured that his Democratic majority in the Senate can shoot down any such issues that may be considered constitutional questions. It also eliminates the need for 67 votes to amend a Senate rule. In short, the Nuclear Option, also known as the Constitutional Option, now only requires 51 votes to end any filibuster that offers debate and threatens the defeat or passage of proposed legislation.

At least for now, the passage of the Nuclear Option makes one thing clear. The President will have no roadblocks during the rest of his term in insuring that any nominee that he wants to fill any government position is all but assured of gaining the nomination. Reid feels that antiquated parliamentary procedures should not hinder the ability of the Senate to move the country forward. He wants to eliminate partisan voting that has rebuked several of the President's previous nominations. Of course, it did not stop him from using partisanship to get his way and put an end to any voice that the minority has previously had concerning legislative actions.

Change, in itself, particularly in government is not new nor necessarily a bad thing. However, what it may mean in this case is the possibility of deep regret should the Democrats lose the Senate majority this year, should Congress maintain its majority going into the elections in 2016 and if a Republican candidate captures the White House. This would give the Republicans rule in the legislative and executive branches of government. You can bet that the Republicans will remember and have bitter feelings towards Reid's questionable actions.

OPINION

The Rise of American Political Parties

By: Sage Overton
Local Contributor

Political parties are nothing new to America. They existed before the Constitution was ever finalized. For over 200 years, American political parties have mobilized voters, centralized ideals and pushed their agendas.

Typically, the country is dominated by two parties vehemently opposed to one another, with very minor third parties having slight interjection.

Whichever party can manage to hammer out the most control of both houses in Congress and win the presidency through general elections gains the upper edge in passing legislation reflecting their party's interests.

The American political war first began during the writing of the Constitution. One party, the Federalists, wanted a document to establish a strong federal government to rule over the states. Led by James Madison and John Hamilton, they favored a government with checks and balances but empowered to handle large domestic issues.

The other party, the Anti-Federalists, opposed such a document believing such a government would trample individual's and states' rights. Led by Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams and George Mason, they championed strong state governments and a strong executive branch.

In the end they compromised. A constitution including mostly federalist positions was adopted but with 10 amendments guaranteeing personal liberties. These first 10 amendments are collectively known as "The Bill of Rights."

They prevent any government, local, state or federal from passing laws which may infringe upon these rights.

Shortly after the passing of the Constitution, the second major shift in the political parties occurred. The Federalist Party endured, championed by Alexander Hamilton. They believed in establishing a central American bank and keeping close political and economic ties to England. They also believed the government needed to preserve close links to individuals of wealth and power.

The Anti-Federalist party evolved into the Democratic-Republican party. Led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, the Democratic-Republicans believed a central bank gave the government too much power and was unconstitutional, as no such power was given to the Federal government in the Constitution.

They also believed America needed separation from Great Britain and should seek furthering its interest through strengthening ties to other European powers.

After the War of 1812, both parties largely disappeared and a brief period of cooperation existed known as the "Era of Good Feelings." It largely coincided with the presidency of James Monroe.

However, shortly after the Supreme Court ruling in McColluch v. Maryland, political parties were reignited, this time centering on states' rights versus federal rights and loose constitutional interpretation against strict interpretation.

The Jacksonian Democrats emerged, pushing the power of the presidency over Congress and aggressive expansion west and a strict constitutional view.

They also pushed for the removal of requiring land in order to vote. On the other side was the Whig Party led by Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams.

The Whig Party believed in modernizing American industry and infrastructure through high tariffs and loans from a central bank.

This would begin a traditional North against South split, eventually escalating into the Civil War.

The decade before the Civil War saw the establishment of the Republican Party.

It adopted many of the Whig ideals such as high tariffs, national railroads and central banks but added an anti-slavery movement.

The Republican Party rise saw the demise of the Whig Party as it absorbed many of its former members.

Following the Civil War, it would expand to include newly freed African Americans.

Until the 1930s, both parties would continue to exist with Republican power based out of the North and from a coalition of minority groups.

Democratic power would be based out of the South and from those wishing to keep the status quo. Between the 1930s and 1960s though, views would shift. Republicans would become more conservative with Democrats becoming more sociably liberal.

By the mid-1960s, current political alignment and voter base was largely established.

Democrats became known as champions of social liberalism, a bigger federal government with more regulation and for promoting the interest of minorities.

Republicans would be socially and fiscally conservative with very limited roles for government.

In 2009, a subgroup was created within the Republican Party known as the Tea Party. Originally formed from public outrage opposed to the Affordable Health Care Act, the Tea Party is not an official party. It has no central platform or controlling leadership.

Its members are unified by shared beliefs in a strict interpretation of the Constitution, reforming the tax code, limiting federal government and a general dislike for established political parties.

While not everyone shares the beliefs of the Tea Party, more and more Americans seem to be agreeing the current political parties are failing.

Congressional approval is near an all-time low. Registered members of the Democratic Party have declined by almost 30 million since 2004.

The Republican Party has seen membership decline in 21 of the 28 states where voter affiliation is tracked. Independent voter registration has risen by more than 400,000 since 2008.

It's easy to speculate on why such a shift from both parties has occurred. Some blame lack of progress on major issues.

Others blame the perpetual re-election of party candidates. Each party blames the failed policies of the other as to why they are losing members.

More realistically, it is probably a combination of the above mixed with the speed and complexity at which new issues arise in today's world.

Issues such as economic and tax reform, immigration, national security, foreign policy, abortion, gun control, marijuana use and LGBT rights are simply too vast and complex to be narrowed down to either being for or against.

It's too much for only two parties to contain. The result is what we see today.

A general distaste for either party, in which election after election, more voters choose to vote independently and simply try to choose what they believe to be the lesser of two evils.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

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