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CULLMAN'S MONDAY NEWSPAPER

CULLMANSENSE

COMMUNITY MATTERS

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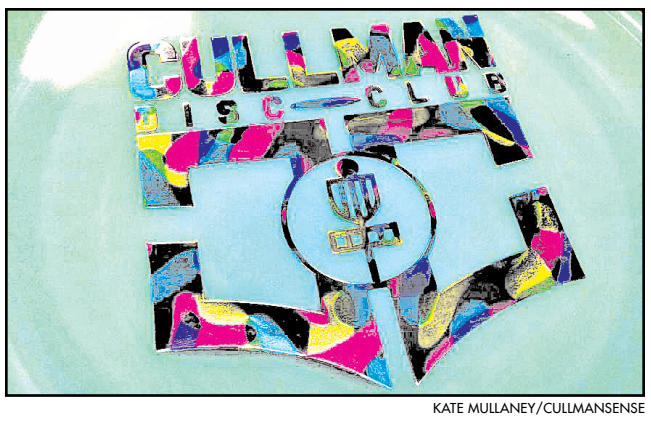
Cullman Disc Club knows where you should be on Sundays at 2 p.m.

» Upstart club stresses the love of the growing sport over strict competition

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Disc Golf is a sport rapidly growing in popularity and with the weather finally warming up, there's no better time to play. And thanks to the Cullman Disc Club, there's no better place to play than right here in Cullman.

Disc Golf is a sport quite similar to regular golf, however, it is played by throwing discs p6



KATE MULLANEY/CULLMANSENSE

» The first 50 entries to the Cullman Disc Club League Kickoff Tournament will receive a branded disc.

AGRICULTURE

Youth Rodeo Steers Crowds to Ag Center



CHELSEA SPARKS/CULLMANSENSE

» Young rodeo contestants showcase their skills at the Agriculture Center. p7

County Wide Yard Sale a County Wide Success

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

» Sportsman Lake Offers Great Deals in Annual Event

CULLMAN - Avid yard sale goers were absolutely drooling if they were at Sportsman Lake in Cullman this past weekend. On Saturday, a county wide yard sale was held and the number of participants on both the selling and buying side was tremendous. Close to 50 vendors or possibly more showed up to sell their goods, and hundreds upon hundreds of people were there to wade through the treasures and score amazing deals.

The weather was absolutely lovely and ideal for shoppers and their families to make a day out of the event. Warm weather, coupled with a refreshing breeze coming off of the lake, had everyone smiling and glad to be there.

As if the weather were not enough reason to make the trip to Sportsman Lake this past Saturday, the amount of incredible items for equally incredible prices was definitely worth getting up and getting out for.

One of the more popular vendors there was a huge lot filled with shoes, shorts and jeans that were practically new. Not only were they practically new but there were also name brands like American Eagle and the GAP; jeans that often cost $50-75 were going for just $10. Shorts of the same name and condition were being sold for $7 and they were selling fast.

One family's story and reason p6

The 2014 Cullman Area Tourism Awards

» Just Who Has Your Vote?

By: Natalie Bonner
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CULLMAN - Just where is your favorite place to shop, dine, visit, stay, and play? You better be thinking! The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center presents their new 2014 Cullman Area Tourism Awards. Your vote determines which places and individuals receive these first-time awards. Make your vote count.

To nominate your local favorites, go to www.cullmanchamber.org for a nomination form or stop by the Cullman Chamber to pick up a nomination form in person. The deadline for nominations is Friday, April 11, 2014.

The 2014 Cullman Area Tourism Awards includes 16 awards in two separate categories: The Business Awards and The Individual Service Awards. The awards ceremony celebrating excellence in tourism for the Cullman area will be on Tuesday, May 6, 2014. Doors open at 7:30 a.m., breakfast will be served from 8-8:30 a.m., and awards will be presented from 8:30-10 a.m. The event will take place at the Brown Stone Centre at Stone Bridge Farms located p6

One Step At a Time

» Annual Walk for Autism is just around the corner

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

HANCEVILLE - April is fast approaching and that can only mean one thing: Autism Awareness month. The next few weeks many people will be talking a lot about autism and what it means to them. They will probably tell you about why they personally have a stake in raising awareness and helping to raise money for research.

Puzzle piece items will be seen online and in town as a reminder of these courageous kids and their families. It is also a reminder that autism can affect any family, and we are still trying to fit all of the pieces together.

A really easy and fun way to show your support is to come out April 12 to the "Walk for Autism and 5K Race to Solve the Puzzle" at Wallace State track and field. This is part of a larger event that takes place in towns all across Alabama and it is the Autism Society of Alabama's biggest awareness event.

The 5K race check-in will begin at 7 a.m. and the race will begin at 7:30 a.m. While the walk check-in begins at 8:30 a.m. and the walk will start at 9:30 a.m. You can register online for the walk at walkforautismal.com or the day of the event. Pre-registration is $30 and guarantees a t-shirt, while paying the day of is $35, although there is no admission fee to attend. All proceeds go to the Autism Society of Alabama.

The ASA is a volunteer organization that provides vital services and resources essential to kids and their families. Knowledge is power and the mission of the ASA is to offer exactly that. This knowledge is essential to both the families caring for and living with Autism and also knowledge to the communities surrounding these individuals. Community involvement and awareness is especially important as too often parents of children with p6

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Medical examiner rules Cullman 1-year-old's death a homicide

CULLMAN (WBRC) – A state medical examiner has ruled the death of a Cullman one-year-old as a homicide.

The court affidavit also reveals that Hoss Wayne Benham, 1, had multiple injuries the night of his death, including new and old bruising and what appears to be burns on his feet.

Benham reportedly drowned in the bathtub at his home in Monk's Trailer Park on U.S. Highway 31 on Tuesday, March 11, according to Sheriff Mike Rainey. The child was taken to Cullman Regional Medical Center and was pronounced dead on Tuesday night, which was his first birthday.

Benham's mother, Crystial Ballenger, 23, and her boyfriend, Jeffery Hugh Brown, 37, have each been charged with aggravated child abuse in the boy's death. They are being held on a bond of $30,000 each.

According to the affidavit, Ballenger initially told investigators that she was giving Hoss a bath when he went under and sucked in some water. She says she pulled him out and water came out of his mouth. She says he appeared to be fine until Brown found Hoss not breathing. She says they then took Hoss to the hospital.

However, Brown initially told investigators that when he arrived home March 11, Ballenger was cooking while Hoss was in the tub and was fine. He says when he went to check on the baby again, Hoss was slumped under the water.



CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

» Jeffery Hugh Brown



CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

» Crystial Ballenger

Brown says he pulled Hoss out of the tub, "got water out of his stomach by pushing on him." Brown says Hoss was breathing fine until he threw up water. He says that's when he and Ballenger took Hoss to the hospital.

March 13, Ballenger told investigators that unrelated to the March 11 events, she had witnessed Brown giving Hoss Tabasco sauce as a punishment to make him stop crying. She then said that on the night Hoss died, it was Brown that was giving Hoss a bath. She says she witnessed Brown holding Hoss under water for 20 to 25 seconds.

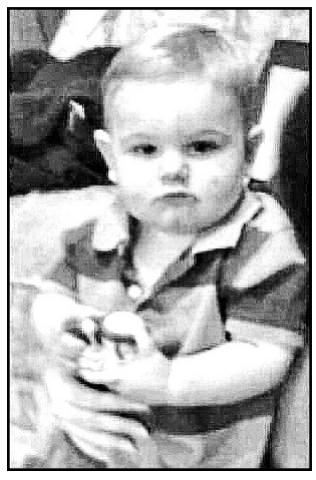
Ballenger said that Brown told her he was teaching Hoss how to float.

She said Brown then performed CPR on Hoss and that he seemed fine after water came out of his mouth. The pair put Hoss to bed and later found him not breathing normally.

FOX6 News spoke with Brown's niece, Brittney Thomas, about the allegations against her uncle.

"He's a good man and there's no way he was capable of killing a one-year-old baby on his birthday. He's not that kind of a man. He's not," Thomas said.

An autopsy revealed baby Hoss had bruising on the back of his head with skull fractures. He also had new and old bruising on other parts of his body and cuts in his mouth.



WBRC

» Hoss Benham

The baby may have had more injuries, which will be determined by further forensic testing.

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Mayor Proclaims April "Child Abuse Awareness Month" in Cullman

By: Leanne West
Contributor

CULLMAN – On March 17, 2014, Cullman Mayor Max A. Townson proclaimed the month of April 2014 "Child Abuse Awareness Month" in the City of Cullman. During the month of April, and throughout the year, the City of Cullman encourages all citizens and organizations to play a role in making Cullman a better place for families by helping to prevent child abuse.

Child abuse is a very real problem in our society. Every ten seconds, a child is abused. Every day in America, four children die from child abuse or neglect. Over 3 million children are reported abused or neglected each year, with over 1,000 dying from their injuries and many others carrying the burden of their maltreatment into adulthood.

Abused children are more likely to suffer from substance abuse, depression, learning disabilities, school failure, emotional and behavioral disorders, criminal activity, and an inability to foster healthy relationships. "The safety of all of our citizens, young and old, is of utmost importance to us," said Cullman Mayor Max A. Townson. "We urge people be aware that this problem exists and to not be unafraid to become involved."

In 1989 a Virginia grandmother was grieving the death of her grandson and the battery of her granddaughter at the hands of their abusive father. As a reminder of the bruises she had seen on her grandchildren's bodies, she attached a blue ribbon to the antenna of her van.

Since that time, the blue ribbon has come to symbolize child abuse awareness and prevention. Therefore, citizens and business are asked to display blue ribbons on their homes, businesses, or vehicles during the month of April.



CITY HALL

» Cullman Caring for Kids Director Javon Daniel and Assistant Director Nancy Bryant join Cullman Mayor Max A. Townson as he proclaims the month of April "National Child Abuse Awareness Month".

For more on "National Child Abuse Awareness Month," or to receive a blue ribbon to display contact Cullman Caring for Kids at 256-739-1111 or visit cullmancaringforkids.com. If you know a child who is being abused or neglected, call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD.

"A great community loss"

By: Noah Chandler
noah@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Shortly before 10 a.m. Friday morning, "community rock", local philanthropist, and businessman Mitch Smith was found in his home, with a single gunshot wound, which took his life.

Cullman City Police Assistant Chief Craig Green confirmed later Friday evening that Smith had passed away due to, "a single gunshot wound, which we have determined to be self-inflicted."

"We do not suspect foul play, as we've interviewed family, friends, and others who knew Mitch, and there were no red flags alerting to any sort of foul play," Green continued.

"It truly is a tragic day. Mitch was a huge supporter of this community and his presence will be greatly missed. He was a community rock, well respected, and loved."

Green said there was not a note or any clear motivation behind the incident.

He said the police department will respect the family's privacy during this tough time, saying "we are here for them in any capacity, but we do not want to cause any more suffering than they are already experiencing."

"He had a heart that we should all pray to have," Green said.

"The family will need our prayers and support, personally I will pray continually for his family and the community."

Pets of the Week

Julius

Hello, my name is Julius and I am a stray at the Cullman Animal Shelter. I will be up for adoption on 03/27/14 at 2 p.m. if my family doesn't come to claim me. I currently weigh 32 lbs. and I am about 10 months old. I am a sweet, little guy and just want to find my new forever home.



Vivian

Hello, my name is Vivian. I am about 6 months old and currently weigh 17.5 lbs. I originally came in as a stray so there isn't any background information on me but now I am up for adoption. I am a very sweet dog and believed to be a Bulldog or mix thereof. I get along well with the other dogs in my kennel.



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.

States Explore Free Community College

By: Adrienne Lu • Stateline

Several states are considering offering free tuition at community colleges, as the cost of a college education continues to climb and as high school diplomas no longer guarantee a living wage.

"Higher education for kids should not break families down" and result in a lifetime burden of debt, said Oregon state Sen. Mark Hass, a Democrat who sponsored legislation to study the viability of making tuition and fees at community colleges free to Oregon high school graduates.

In previous generations, Hass said, Oregonians could leave high school and easily find jobs in lumber mills, where they could earn a good living.

But those days are gone, and jobs in auto garages, manufacturers and the service sector all require some technical training.

Hass said his bill also would help middle-class families whose children might attend community college for two years and then transfer to four-year colleges to save money.

Democratic Gov. John Kitzhaber signed the bill with some reservations. While he testified for the bill last month, he questioned whether the money would be better spent on the state's need-based scholarships for two- and four-year schools.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, a Republican, is also pitching a plan to make tuition free at community colleges and colleges of applied technology.

"This is a bold promise," Haslam said in his State of the State address in February. "It is a promise that will speak volumes to current and prospective employers. It is a promise that will make a real difference for generations of Tennesseans."

The proposal is part of the governor's "Drive to 55" initiative to increase the percentage of state residents with college degrees or advanced certificates from the current 32 percent to 55 percent by 2025.

Haslam estimates the proposal would cost about $34 million a year, paid for by creating a new endowment from the state lottery's reserve fund.

However, in 2007 a similar proposal by former Democratic Gov. Phil Bredesen failed in the Tennessee legislature. Moreover, the efforts in both Oregon and Tennessee come after a decade during which both states cut funding for higher education, contributing to tuition hikes.

A study last year by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that states spent 28 percent less per student on higher education in fiscal year 2013 than they did in 2008, and that every state but North Dakota and Wyoming is investing less money in higher education now than before the recession.

Oregon cut its higher education funding during that period by 43.6 percent, and tuition rose at both two-year and four-year public colleges in the state.

Similarly, Tennessee reduced higher education spending by 30.1 percent, and tuition at its schools also went up.

Other Efforts

In Mississippi, a bill for free tuition at community colleges died in committee last week because of funding concerns, but advocates hope the bill can be revived and passed next year.

Six of the state's 15 community colleges already offer some form of tuition guarantee, meaning that after students have applied for financial aid from federal, state and other sources, county or private funding covers the remainder of the tuition cost, according to Kell Smith, a spokesman for the Mississippi Community College Board.

In Massachusetts, Democratic Gov. Deval Patrick in 2007 also proposed making community college free, although the measure failed.

California suspended tuition at its public colleges in 1960 with its Master Plan for Higher Education. But under fiscal pressures, the community colleges have charged enrollment fees since 1984-85. Tuition and fees at California's public colleges still remain the lowest in the country.

And in New York City, the City University of New York offered free tuition from 1970 to 1976, when the policy ended under the strain of the city's fiscal crisis. Even so, between federal and state tuition assistance, nearly half of CUNY's undergraduate students pay no tuition.

Possible Pitfalls

Advocates applaud the sentiment behind the idea of making tuition free at community colleges.

"I think these proposals come from a good place," said Debbie Cochrane, research director at The Institute for College Access and Success, a nonprofit based in Oakland, Calif. "They come from concerns about making sure that college is affordable, and they come from a place that recognizes that postsecondary education is increasingly critical for today's workforce."

Still, Cochrane and others question whether free tuition is the most effective means to help the students who need it most, since students who don't need financial assistance would also benefit from no-tuition policies.

Cochrane is concerned that such proposals don't cover the other costs of going to college, such as textbooks, transportation and living expenses.

Federal Pell grants already cover most, if not all, of the cost of tuition plus some living expenses for the neediest students.

In the current school year, Pell Grants, which students do not have to repay, provide up to $5,645 per year, typically for undergraduate degrees in two- or four-year colleges.

In-state tuition at two-year state colleges in 2013-14 averaged $3,264, according to The College Board's annual Trends in College Pricing report.

But tuition and fees make up only 20 percent of the cost of attending community college, on average, the report said.

Sara Goldrick-Rab, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who has studied the impact of the college-for-all movement, said free tuition could also have unintended consequences.

"I'm glad to see them moving in this direction, but I want to push them to think harder about how they're going to get students to complete and not just start (college)," Goldrick-Rab said.

While some postsecondary education might be better than none, Goldrick-Rab said that those who take on debt to attend college but never receive a degree are at high risk of defaulting on their debt.

Similarly, Paul Attewell, a professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center who studies the sociology of education, said state lawmakers should focus on where to spend state dollars to increase the number of students who actually graduate from college.

"It's not obvious that in all circumstances, using public dollars to reduce tuition to zero is the best use of (public) funds," Attewell said. "It may work out that if you reduce tuition, you're essentially saving the Pell system money."

Attewell said that in some cases, states might be better served by steering public dollars toward the cost of public transportation for students or increasing the number of counselors and advisors to help students make it through community college.

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

Russell and Dwyer Newest Appointees to AFC

By: Alabama Forestry Commission

MONTGOMERY – The two newest appointments by Governor Robert Bentley to the Alabama Forestry Commission recently began their five-year terms. Jane T. Russell of Lapine and Jerry M. Dwyer of Auburn attended their first Commission meeting on Tuesday, March 18. "We are pleased to welcome these two new individuals with the professional and personal forestry experience that Mrs. Russell and Mr. Dwyer bring to our agency as commissioners," said State Forester Greg Pate.

Russell and Dwyer replace Commissioners Don Heath of Hoover and Johnny McReynolds of Russellville. Other members of the Alabama Forestry Commission include Chairman, Dr. Salem Saloom of Brewton; Vice-Chairman, Tommy Thompson of Thomasville; C. Irvin Eatman, Jr. of Eutaw; Kenneth Real of Detroit; and Jerry M. Smith of Vernon. The board, appointed by the Governor and approved by the State Senate, is responsible for setting policy for the Forestry Commission, the state agency charged with protecting and sustaining Alabama's forest resources, which contribute not only to abundant timber and wildlife, but also clean air and water, as well as a healthy economy. For more about the AFC, visit forestry.alabama.gov.

Alabama's January Unemployment Rate 6.1%; Cullman 5.8%

By: Tara Hutchison
ADL Contributor

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Department of Labor Commissioner Tom Surtees announced today that Alabama's preliminary January unemployment rate is 6.1%, which is unchanged from the December 2013 rate, and below the January 2013 rate of 6.7%. January's rate represents 130,444 unemployed persons, compared to 129,633 in December 2013, and 144,410 in January 2013.

"Looking at the seasonally adjusted numbers, we saw growth in both the labor force and the number of people working in Alabama in January, and those are positive signs. Additionally, the number of job orders we received on JobLink have, once again, set a record for the highest number of job orders in the history of the site," said Surtees. "Although the number of jobs reported decreased, this is a common occurrence in January, and is due, in large part, to retailers laying off seasonal help."

The number of people working in Alabama in January increased to 1,990,637 from 1,984,264 in December 2013 (seasonally adjusted). The Civilian Labor Force, or people who are either working or actively seeking work, increased to 2,121,081 from 2,113,897 in December 2013 (seasonally adjusted).

In January, there were 21,315 active job orders on JobLink, Alabama's free online jobs database, the highest number recorded in the site's nine year history. Wage and salary employment, which is the measure of how many jobs Alabama's economy supports and is reported by employers, decreased 33,600 over the month. The losses were seen in the trade, transportation, and utilities sector, primarily in retail trade, the leisure and hospitality sector, and the professional and business services sector, among others.

Over the past 12 months (January 2013-January 2014), wage and salary employment increased 20,400. Gains were due to increases in the leisure and hospitality sector, the trade, transportation, and utilities sector, education and health services sector, and the manufacturing sector, among others.

Counties with lowest unemployment rates are: Shelby County at 4.6%, Lee County at 5.5%, and Limestone and Cullman Counties at 5.8%. Counties with the highest unemployment rates are: Wilcox County at 16.4%, Perry County at 13.2%, and Bullock County at 12.7%.

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Strong Showing at Cullman Classic

» Bearcats take a spring break after earning victories

By: Waid Harbison
Contributor

CULLMAN - The 2014 Cullman Classic marked another set of victories for the Cullman Bearcats with a day of personal bests, strong relay finishes, and trophies for both the girls and boys teams.

The Lady Bearcats who have had a strong season to date finished 1st in their home meet Saturday, trumping 5A sectional contenders Arab and Lawrence County to win the large schools division.

The girls were led by a host of point scorers, including meet MVP Olivia Kontogeorge of Cullman who won the girls triple jump, finished second in the shot put, and finished fourth in long jump as well as helping her 4x400 meter relay come to a 3rd place finish alongside team members Marissa Franklin, Tayla Sparg, and Megan Pendley.

Hurdlers Savanna Canter and Tayla Sparg racked up major points with Canter winning in the 100 m. hurdles with a new personal best of 16.89 and Sparg in fourth.

Sparg also won gold in the 300 hurdles, with Canter in a close second. Canter also joined Tayler Blalock, Kelsey Wren, and Allie Gipson to finish second in the 4x100 meter relay.

Wren also medaled with a third place finish in the long jump with a new personal record of 14' 10". Rounding out the girl's top three results were Ann Carol Braswell with a new best in the pole vault placing second, and Kristina Muller winning the discus competition.

The boy's Bearcat squad also had strong performances Saturday, placing second in the Classic amongst other competitive 5A programs. Cullman placed second by just 4 to Arab High School.

LJ Patterson led the day for the boys, winning 4 medals for his first place finish in the boys long jump, first place finish in the 300 hurdles, first place finish alongside teammates Tyler Davis, Michael Bentley, and Zach Kane in the 4x100 relay, and second alongside Davis, Walker Carreti, and Peyton Little in the 4x400 meter relay.

Kyle Norris topped the charts in the distance events, with wins in the mile and two mile as well as helping his team win the 4x800 relay with Carreti, Little, and JD Warner.

Carreti helped to add to the men's score with gold in the 800 m. run. Michael Bentley and Zach Rocca brought home bronze medals in the jumps, with Rocca placing third in triple with a new personal best of 38' 3", and Bentley placing third in pole vault with an impressive new personal record of 11' 6".

Tyler Davis rounded out the boy's point scorers with an impressive finish in a crowded competition to get a bronze in the 200 meter dash.

Cullman's Track & Field teams will take the week off for spring break before traveling to Scottsboro High School on April 5th for a competition at the site of the 5A Section 3 track meet.

Par for the course

» 18 year old Sylas Elliott separates himself from the rest of the field

By:Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - What do you get when you take a true passion for the sport of golf and the talent to play it? The answer is easy: Sylas Elliott.

The 18 year old senior from Cullman is a natural on the golf course and proved from an early age he could play with the big boys.

He has been playing with the varsity team at Cullman since middle school in the seventh grade and he has been a major contributor ever since.

Elliott took time out of his busy schedule of school and tournaments to conduct an interview with CullmanSense.

Josh McBrayer: When you were younger, you played other sports including baseball. What made you decide to just concentrate on golf?

Sylas Elliott: My dad (Mike Pitts) took me to the course one Saturday just to see what I thought about golf.

He called my mom (Karla Pitts) from the course and said "Karla I think he's gonna be a natural." She was like, "You haven't even been there very long," and he said, "No seriously, he's got a great swing."

From that day on I dropped everything to play. Hitting a golf ball solid is such a great feeling. It's like nothing else. That feeling kept me coming back.

JM: What is it about the game of golf that intrigues you so much?

SE: The mental aspect of the game. That part of the game can affect your physical game. So you have to fight your feelings constantly.

JM: As one of the younger members on the team coming up, and in the golfing area, how do you rise to the occasion and play your best golf against other area teams?

SE: One of the things I've realized lately, is the way you carry yourself onto the course, has a lot to do with your preparation before your round.

I like to separate myself physically and mentally from the rest of the field. You have to try to play with confidence but that also comes with time and maturity. Some of us have become close friends and really enjoy the competition.

JM: What do you expect out of yourself and your team as Cullman golf advances through the season?

SE: I just want to keep up my steady play and keep making progress. I hope my team continues to make progress also because I see a state championship in our future. We have the ability we just have to put it all together as a team.

Elliott is one of the best golfers in the area and is quickly rising up through the ranks in the state.

He is one of the local golfers to keep an eye on at the next level (college) and beyond.

Crimson Tide slides past Florida for SEC Gymnastics title

By: Johnny Thornton
Sports Reporter

BIRMINGHAM - With a large percentage of the crowd of 8,256 supporting them Saturday evening, the Alabama Crimson Tide stopped Florida's run at being the best in the sport of gymnastics in the Southeastern Conference.

By scoring a 49.650 in the uneven bars, it allowed the Tide to surge by the Gators and take home the championship, finishing with a team score of 197.825.

Florida wound up with a score of 197.700. A 49.350 on the floor exercise in the final rotation kept the Gators from making it three straight and four in the last five in conference championship events.

LSU was third with a strong finish in claiming a score of 197.325 with Georgia in fourth place at 197.150.

Auburn, the leader after the first session, settled for 5th place with a score of 195.550.

The rest of the field was rounded out by Kentucky with a 195.075, Arkansas, 194.900 and Missouri 194.650.

Alabama trailed after the first three rotations then got it going when the Tide needed to in the uneven bars with the Gators unable to gain a higher score in the round on the floor exercise.

Bridget Sloan of Florida took the all-around title with a score of 39.700, beating out her teammate Kytera Hunter who was second with a 39.650.

In the individual categories, Lauren Johnson and Diandra Milliner of Alabama tied for the top spot in the vault at 9.975.

The uneven bars was claimed by Hunter from Florida with a 9.975, beating out seven who were tied for second including her teammate Sloan with a 9.950.

Hunter was the top performer in the balance beam at 9.925, finishing ahead of five who were tied for second at 9.920.

The floor exercise was claimed by Llomonica Hall of LSU with a 9.950, tied for the title with Hunter from Florida and Milliner of Alabama.

Auburn's Jeff Graba was selected as the SEC coach of the year.

Arkansas' Katherine Grable was named the gymnast of the year, her teammate, Amanda Wellick, was the freshmen of the year, Alabama senior Kim Jacob the scholar athlete of the year and Lindsey Cheek of Georgia the event specialist of the year.

Alabama, Florida, LSU, Georgia and Auburn with possibly others will look to get a bid to the NCAA Regionals April 5.

The goal of each is to return to the BJCC Arena for the NCAA Championships April 18-20.

Prep Sports Weekly Scoring Recap

Monday, March 17th

Baseball
St. Bernard 10 vs Meek 9

Softball
Corner 0 vs Holly Pond 4
Brewer 2 vs Cullman 23

Tuesday, March 18th

Baseball
Meek 5 vs St. Bernard - Game 1
Meek 12 vs St. Bernard 7 - Game 2
Falkville 3 vs Vinemont 1
Holly Pond 10 vs Brindlee Mountain 0
West Point 0 vs Hartselle 7 - Game 1
West Point 0 vs Hartselle 1 - Game 2

Softball
Cold Springs 4 vs Vinemont 0
JB Pennington 0 vs Holly Pond 2
Cullman 9 vs West Point 3

Thursday, March 20th

Baseball
Holly Pond 15 vs Brindlee Mountain 4
Vinemont 7 vs Cold Springs 5
Southeastern School 9 vs St. Bernard 5
East Limestone 2 vs Cullman 11 - Game 1
East Limestone 4 vs Cullman 6 - Game 2
Hartselle 10 vs West Point 0 - Game 1
Hartselle 11 vs West Point 0 - Game 2

Softball
Gardendale 6 vs Cullman 0
Holly Pond 3 vs New Hope 2
Hartselle 4 vs West Point 0
Danville 5 vs Good Hope 3

Friday, March 21st

Softball
Oneonta 7 vs Fairview 0

Soccer (Girls)
Cullman 5 vs Donaho 0
Soccer (Boys)
Cullman 6 vs Donaho 1

Saturday, March 22nd

Baseball
Holly Pond 7 vs Susan Moore 4
Holly Pond 2 vs Brewer 12
Cullman 2 vs Guntersville 1 - Game 1
Cullman 9 vs Guntersville 7 - Game 2

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Joe Namath to be Grand Marshal at Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama

By: Jessica Sciacca
Contributor

BIRMINGHAM – Barber Motorsports Park and ZOOM Motorsports announced recently that former University of Alabama quarterback and Hall of Famer Joe Namath will be this year's Grand Marshal for the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama held April 25 – 27 in Birmingham, Ala.

Namath played college football under legendary coach Paul "Bear" Bryant at the University of Alabama from 1962 until 1964, where he led the team to a national championship in 1964.

He then went on to play for the New York Jets, leading the team to a win over the Baltimore Colts in Super Bowl III, among many other division championships.

He finished his career playing for the Los Angeles Rams. Nicknamed "Broadway Joe" and "Joe Willie," he was inducted into the Professional Football Hall of Fame in 1985.

"We are honored to have another well-respected athlete as our grand marshal," stated Gene Hallman, President of ZOOM Motorsports, the exclusive event promoter of the Barber Motorsports Park.

"His presence will add to the fun-filled weekend, and what a great opportunity for fans to get up-close with a true legend."

Namath's duties as grand marshal of the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama include announcing the widely recognized pre-race command, "Gentlemen, start your engines!" to kick-off Sunday's race. Broadcast live on NBC Sports Network, Namath will be waving the green flag to start the race for some of the biggest stars of INDYCAR including Will Power, Helio Castroneves, Marco Andretti, Juan Pablo Montoya and more.

"I am excited to be a part of this world-class event," stated Namath. "I'm really looking forward to meeting the fans at the race, and finally seeing this motorsports park that I have heard so much about."

Namath's participation in the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama will benefit the Arthritis Foundation of Alabama. Details of fundraising efforts surrounding the race weekend will be announced at a later date.

Tickets for the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama start at just $15 and kids 12 and under are admitted free with a ticketed adult, courtesy of Alabama Power. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.barbermotorsports.com.

2014 Cullman County School System Football Schedules

By:Johnny Thornton
Sports Reporter

(R) - Region game.

Cold Springs Eagles:
• Aug. 22 - Jamboree vs. Brilliant 7 p.m.
• Aug. 29 - @ Danville 7 p.m.
• Sept. 5 - Southeastern 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 12 - @ Tanner 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 19 - Falkville 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 26 - Vinemont 7 p.m.
• Oct. 3 - @ Addison 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 10 - TBA
• Oct. 17 - @ Sumiton Christian 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 24 - Tarrant 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 30 - @ Holly Pond 7 p.m.
Eagles will compete in Class 2A, Region 6

Fairview Aggies:
• May 16 - Spring Jamboree vs. West Point 7 p.m.
• Aug. 22 - Jamboree @ J.B. Pennington 7 p.m.
• Aug. 29 - Hanceville 7 p.m.
• Sept. 5 - @ Randolph 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 12 - Boaz 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 19 - Etowah 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 26 - Holly Pond 7 p.m.
• Oct. 3 - @ Madison County 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 10 - @ Guntersville 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 17 - @ Douglas 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 24 - Butler 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 31 - @ Vinemont 7 p.m.
Aggies will compete in Class 5A, Region 7

Good Hope Raiders:
• Aug. 21 - Jamboree @ Vinemont 7 p.m.
• Aug. 29 - Cordova 7 p.m.
• Sept. 5 - Westminster 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 12 - @ Oneonta 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 19 - J.B. Pennington 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 26 - @ Curry 7 p.m.
• Oct. 3 - @ Locust Fork 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 10 - @ Priceville 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 17 - DAR 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 24 - @ North Jackson 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 31 - Hanceville 7 p.m.
Raiders will compete in Class 4A, Region 7

Hanceville Bulldogs:
• Aug. 22 - Jamboree TBA
• Aug. 29 - @ Fairview 7 p.m.
• Sept. 5 - Winston County 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 12 - @ Vinemont 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 19 - Addison 7 p.m.
• Sept. 26 - West Point 7 p.m.
• Oct. 3 - Winfield 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 10 - @ Oakman 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 17 - Holly Pond 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 24 - @ Susan Moore 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 31 - @ Good Hope 7 p.m.
Bulldogs will compete in Class 3A, Region 5

Vinemont Eagles:
• May 16 - Spring Jamboree @ Falkville 7 p.m.
• Aug. 21 - Jamboree vs. Good Hope 7 p.m.
• Aug. 29 - @ Addison 7 p.m.
• Sept. 5 - Danville 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 12 - Hanceville 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 19 - @ Winfield 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 26 - @ Cold Springs 7 p.m.
• Oct. 3 - Oakman 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 10 - @ Holly Pond 7 p.m. (R)

Holly Pond Broncos:
• Aug. 29 - TBA
• Sept. 5 - @ Oakman 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 12 - Collinsville 7 p.m.
• Sept. 19 - Susan Moore 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 26 - @ Fairview 7 p.m.
• Oct. 3 - @ Winston County 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 10 - Vinemont 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 17 - @ Hanceville 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 24 - Winfield 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 30 - Cold Springs 7 p.m.
Broncos will compete in Class 3A, Region 5
• Oct. 17 - Susan Moore 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 24 - @ Winston County 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 31 - Fairview 7 p.m.
Eagles will compete in Class 3A, Region 5

West Point Warriors:
• May 16 - Spring jamboree @ Fairview 7 p.m.
• Aug. 21 - Jamboree @ Curry 7 p.m.
• Aug. 28 - @ Hayden 7 p.m.
• Sept. 5 - Columbia 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 12 - @ Ardmore 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 19 - Pope John Paul 7 p.m. (R)
• Sept. 26 - @ Hanceville 7 p.m.
• Oct. 3 - @ J.O. Johnson 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 10 - Russellville 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 17 - @ East Limestone 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 24 - Lawrence County 7 p.m. (R)
• Oct. 31 - Priceville 7 p.m.
Warriors will compete in Class 5A, Region 8

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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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FOOD ON SITE
Doors open at 4:30 p.m.
Silent auction 5 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Live auction begins at 6 p.m.

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Walk (from Front)

autism say that the only thing harder than raising an autistic child is raising one in a society that doesn't understand them.

Every 11 minutes someone's loved one is given this diagnosis. Many have said that this is an "epidemic" and that there are more cases than ever before, and while to some extent this is true, the sentiment is inaccurate. We have always lived among autistic individuals. They have lived amongst us for years, often misdiagnosed with another illness or not even seen by a doctor.

The reason there are more people with autism today than ever before is that there has been an increase in diagnoses. Now that we have the medical knowledge to notice the distinction and put a name to what is going on, people are finally able to get a more accurate diagnosis of their condition and the proper help. The number of people getting help and answers has gone up, not the number of cases.

The day promises to be filled with fun and rain or shine members of the community will offer their support. There will be a bubble creation station, bounce houses, kids' activity center, resource exhibits and prizes handed out to the kids.

Whether or not you are directly affected by this disorder, the likelihood of someone you know and love being affected is high. The more people that show their concern by getting involved, the more research will be done and answers will be found. It is only when we all work in unison for these kids that we will finally put the puzzle together.

Sale (from Front)

for selling that day was not one that was expected.

A sign outside their booth read "Team Powers, Hopping for a Cure".

The family that sat at this booth was there not for extra money to put in their own pockets but rather fighting for a cause.

Jim Powers was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia when he was 18 months old.

His family started the Team Powers Relay for Life team as a way to honor their son years ago, but due to circumstances beyond their control the team was forced to disband.

Now that Jim has grown up he has gotten the team back together and is determined to do good for other child survivors of cancer.

"Now that I'm out of school, I'm a survivor and I decided I'm tired of just going to Relay," he said. "So I picked it all up where they left off."

The team was pleased and impressed with the yard sale. Jim's mother, Tracie, was surprised by how well they did.

"We didn't expect for it to go as well as it did," she said. "We didn't think we had a lot, but once we got it out there it looked like we did and now it's really bare."

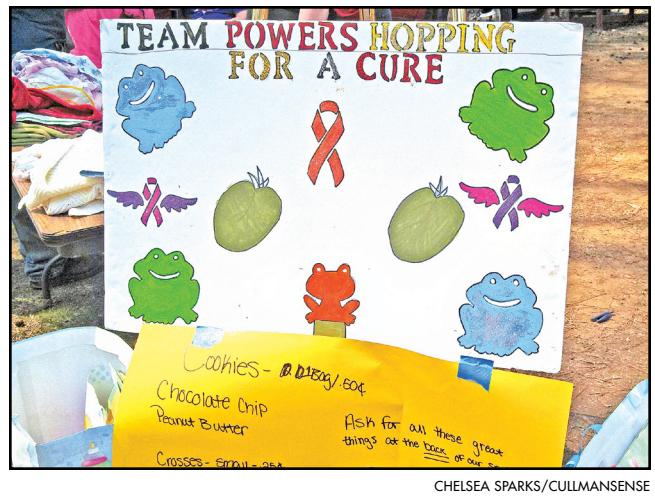
The group had raised more than $200 and was very pleased with the success. In addition to the yard sale, Team Powers will also be hosting a blood drive April 12 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Save-A-Lot parking lot.

If you happen to be in the area that weekend, stop in and donate the gift of life.

The Sportsman Lake County Wide Yard Sale appeared to be a tremendous success for everyone.

Hundreds upon hundreds of items were sold, and the vendors made hundreds if not thousands of dollars.

Kids and parents alike enjoyed the beautiful weather, and while the parents enjoyed the sales, the children enjoyed feeding the animals and train rides around the park. It was a splendid day for all who attended.



CHELSEA SPARKS/CULLMANSENSE

» Team Powers was created by a family to honor their son diagnosed with lymphocytic leukemia, now the son continues the cause to help similar children.

Disc (from Front)

similar to Frisbees at a target or basket.

The object of the game is to traverse a course from beginning to end, getting your disc into the basket with as few throws as possible.

The Cullman Disc Club exists to foster the growth of disc golf in Cullman County and beyond.

They do this by hosting events, holding tournaments, and frankly by loving and playing the sport. They practice at two courses: one at Heritage Park and the other at Fairview Park.

Cullman Disc Club President Jason Mauldin is eager to spread his love for this sport through the community and is passionate about growing the Cullman Disc Club, which started last summer.

"This year we're trying to be one of the best disc golf clubs in North Alabama," he said proudly, "and I believe with the help of all our members and Cullman City Parks & Recreation we are well on our way."

This organization is also host to a disc golf league, a weekly meeting of Cullman Disc Club members to play a round of their beloved sport.

"We meet on Sunday afternoons at 2 p.m.," said Mauldin. "Each week everyone puts a dollar in an ace pot we have and if anyone gets a hole-in-one, they get to keep the money."

At the end of the round each Sunday afternoon, scores are recorded into a database and points are given to each player based on his/her score.

"We also use a bag tag system," Mauldin said. "Bag tags are key chain type things that members hang on their disc golf bags. Each bag tag is individually numbered and what place you come in each round determines what number bag tag you get. The lower your number, the bigger your bragging rights."

At the end of the year, this group will have a playoff to determine the league champion, and even though there's a healthy sense of competition present, Mauldin insists that it's all about the love of the sport.

"The league is actually less about competition and more about the love of disc golf," he said.

So far this young group has hosted a few events. In February, the Cullman Disc Club hosted the Dynamic Disc RV. This is a major disc manufacturer who brought their RV into town to put on a small tournament in Cullman.

"The competitors could only use their brand of discs," said Mauldin. "They're a great company and we hope to do a lot more with them in the future."

The Cullman Disc Club also co-hosted a tournament this year along with Halo Disc Sports.

"The tournament had over 90 players and they were from all over the southeast."

And this is just the beginning for the not-even-one-year-old Cullman Disc Club. They have even bigger plans this year.

On Sunday March 30, they are hosting their official Cullman Disc Club League Kickoff Tournament.

It costs $20 to enter and the first 50 people to sign up will receive a Dynamic Discs brand disc with the Cullman Disc Club logo displayed proudly on its surface.

"Those who sign up after the first 50 will receive a bag tag," Mauldin added.

"The tournament is one round and prizes will be given to winners. It should be a great time."

On June 28, the Cullman Disc Club will be hosting the Trilogy Challenge at the Fairview Disc Golf Course along with the folks at Southern Flick.

This group of disc golf lovers hopes to grow the sport through this event. The cost is $30 dollars and participants will receive a driver, a mid-range putter, and a few other goodies.

The group also has plans to host a big tournament in June, but they are just in the beginning stages of planning this event so keep an eye out for this mid-summer tournament as well.

This sport is booming, and the Cullman Disc Club is happy to accept new members. If you are interested in joining, find them on Facebook at Cullman Disc Club or show up to any Sunday at 2 p.m. There is a $10 fee for joining.

Mauldin and the rest of the Cullman Disc Club crew encourage you to try this sport. They're sure you'll love it as much as they do. Time to throw a disc!

Tourism (from Front)

at 281 Co. Rd. 717 in Cullman. The guest speaker will be Lee Sentell, director of the Alabama Tourism Department. Single tickets are priced at $20 for chamber members and $25 for non-members. Table sponsorships are $250 and include reserved seating for eight in a prime location with table signage. The presenting sponsor for the event is The Community Shopper's Guide. Corporate sponsors include The Hampton Inn in Cullman, Premier Productions (Rock the South), and The Cullman Times.

If you would like to reserve tickets to the 2014 Cullman Area Tourism Awards, e-mail info@cullmanchamber.org or call 256-734-0454. There is a limited number of seats available and tickets are on a first come, first serve basis.

Cullman Ballet Society presents & NEW YORK theatre ballet

"Cinderella & Other Stories"

Sunday, April 6
4:00pm

BLH Theatre
Wallace State

$10 Students
$20 Adult

Call (256) 255-1515
www.cullmanballetsociety.org
to order tickets.

With a dancing clock, two wacky Stepsisters, and everyone's favorite rags to riches princess, NYTB's one-hour production of Cinderella is appropriate for boys and girls of all ages!

Featuring a Cullman Community Cast:
'Gone'
Choreographed by Ashlie Solomon Wells
Music by Craig Armstrong

Cullman Ballet Company
Artistic Director: Elaine Willingham
Lillimae Allen, Katherine Jackson, Clara Lanier, Brittany Lee, Mikalie Mooneyham, Brooke Noe, Breanna Smith, Gloria Smith, Sarah Smith, Caroline Sutton, Lauryn Tankersley & Lydia Waters

Community Cast
Choreographed and rehearsed by Marcia Blocher
Leah Bowden, Chloe Carter, Ava Cox, Ella Harris, Esther Lanier, Annalee Allen, Brittany Lee, Courtney Lee, Abigail Long, Amelia Tafazoli, Grace Ann Thomas & Marianna Willoughby
Also: Katherine Smith, Liberty Franks, Ava Ray, and Gracie Lee



Alabama State Council on the Arts · Wallace State Hanceville · South Arts
Cullman Savings Bank Foundation

Youth Rodeo Steers Crowds to Agriculture Center

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

CULLMAN - Rodeos have always been a place to take the family for an entertaining evening. Men and women bravely ride horses and sometimes bulls in what seems like death defying stunts. There is no shortage of excitement and fun to be had by the whole family. This was no exception Saturday night at the Cullman Agriculture Center when the Youth Rodeo took place.

The huge agriculture center was filled with spectators, riders and, of course, livestock. Contestants ranged in age from elementary to high school ages and all were eager to get out in that arena and show what they could do. Their prize at the end for the event winners was a beautiful new saddle for their horse, which is not a cheap prize as anyone who owns horses knows.

Long before the official rodeo competitions, a rodeo was only an informal way for cowboys and ranchers to test their working skills against one another. It wasn't until after the Civil War in 1872 in the town of Cheyenne, Wyoming that the first official rodeo took place for the public's entertainment. All the events we hear about in rodeos today are actually at least based off of everyday skills that ranchers and cowboys used to wrangle their livestock.

A number of events took place at the youth rodeo on Saturday including barrel racing, calf roping, goat tying, poles, and many more categories of competition. Barrel racing has long predominantly been a woman-dominated event with the object being to show speed and agility while racing around three barrels in a clover-like barrel without knocking any barrels over in the process.

Another popular event is roping. This is where most of us would think of a cowboy with his lasso, also called a lariat, looping the rope around the neck of a cow or calf.

Sydney McQueen and Grant Hodges, both 14, have been in the rodeo scene their whole life. The two riders were both competing this night and told about their experiences in the rodeo and their love for it.

McQueen had some up and downs in the competition having her horse shut down on her in the barrels event but got a win in the goat tying competition. "It was good for me because I tore the muscle in my knee last year doing it," she said of the goat tying event. "So it meant a lot more to me to win goats than barrels."

Hodges has been doing this since he was a mere three years old. He told about an event that many people may not be familiar with, chute dogging, which is an event that gives younger competitors a chance to work with "rough stock".

"It's complicated," he said with a laugh. "You get in the shoot and there's a white line about 10 feet away and you have a hold on the steer. You cannot touch the horn until you pass the white line. Once you pass that line with the steer, you grab the horn and literally just fall back on your back and lay down with them. Fastest time wins."

In addition to the overall exhilaration you get from participating in rodeos, the teens said that one of the best parts of it all is the friends you make and how you all become one big family.

That seemed to be the atmosphere all through the evening. Young riders showing out for one another, laughing and generally just having a wonderful time, while parents and families cheered for their rider and riders of other families.



CHELSEA SPARKS/CULLMANSENSE

» Event winners received a new saddle for their horse.

A great time was had by all and the season has only just started for these young folks. Plenty more friendly competition and chances to see friends are still ahead.

The next competition is set for April 25 and 26 according to their website. If you have a chance to watch, then stop in and give a cheer to these brave and talented kids, it is definitely a unique experience.

Six Surprising Ways to Beat Allergy Season this Year

(StatePoint) From watery, itchy eyes to unbearable congestion, allergies can certainly ruin one's day, or even the entire season. But, there's no reason to remain indoors in beautiful weather, say experts.

"One over-looked approach towards feeling well lies in prevention," says Lisa Metzger, PhD.

With that in mind, Metzger is offering six allergy-fighting tips:

• **Get exercise.** It may sound counterintuitive to go outside if you suffer from airborne allergies, but moderate exercise is known to strengthen the body's immune response.

Just be sure to watch the pollen count, and when it's low squeeze in a brisk walk. If pollen count is high, head to the gym instead.

• **Wash up.** Use baby shampoo to wash your face and eye area in the shower. During allergy season, sweat can trap the pollen and irritants in the creases of the face where they are the most irritating. Baby shampoo is a safe alternative to wash away the dirt, sweat, and symptoms of allergy season.

• **Consider natural supplements** shown in published research to help strengthen the immune system.

Allergies can be described as being caused by the immune system over-reacting to harmless particles (like pollen). It is smart to strengthen your immune system by getting proper sleep and managing your stress.

Sometimes that is easier said than done; so taking a natural supplement shown to strengthen the immune system can help.

• **Limit dairy.** Dairy causes the creation of phlegm, which can increase the intensity of allergy symptoms like runny nose, sore throat and cough.

• **Change your diet.** Incorporate natural antihistamines into your meals. Look for foods that contain flavonoids, such as tomatoes and blueberries, as well as Vitamin A found in green leafy vegetables and squash.

• **Use a saline spray for your nose.** This may not sound like much fun, but using an inexpensive saline spray or rinse is an effective way to flush pollen out of your nose.

Saline sprays can be purchased at any local pharmacy. As an alternative, use a neti pot salt-water rinse.





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.

CRMC Community Blood Drive
Cullman Regional Medical Center is hosting a Community Blood Drive from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Donations will be accepted on the LifeSouth Community Blood Center Blood Donor Bus located at the Main Entrance of the hospital, located at 1912 AL Highway 157, Cullman, AL 35058. Donors must be at least 17 years old (16 year-olds may donate with written parental consent), weigh at least 110 pounds and not have donated blood within the last 56 days. There is no upper age limit to donate blood.

Cullman Civitan Club Meeting
Members of the Cullman Civitan Club gather at 6 p.m. for their meeting. This event will be held at Organic Nutrition Plus. All interested in learning more about this local community support organization are welcome to attend.

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.

CRMC's State-of-the-Hospital Address: Lunch & Learn Seminar
The public is invited to attend CRMC's 'Lunch and Learn' program as Jim Weidner, President/CEO of the hospital, presents the annual update on the State-of-the-Medical Center here in Cullman. Learn more about patient safety and quality of care initiatives, changes with health reform, community health and much more. In addition, attendees will get an inside look at some of the new upgrades being made to the medical center courtesy of donations from the CRMC Foundation. Cost for this event is $5.00 for WomenFirst and SeniorChoice members and $8.00 for all others. Please PRE-REGISTER by calling 256-737-2600 or register online at www.crmchospital.com. Come enjoy a great lunch from the hospital food staff and learn more about the services offered by your local hospital.

'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.

Chamber of Commerce's Monthly 'Community Luncheon'
All are invited to attend the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's 'Community Luncheon' at the All Steak Restaurant Banquet Room. The event begins at 11:30 a.m. to provide for networking opportunities and the program and lunch start at 11:50 a.m. Cost for Chamber members is $15.00 and 'future members' is $20.00. RESERVATIONS required register online at www.cullmanchamber.org or RSVP by calling the Chamber at 256-734-0454. Nancy Hudson will be guest speaker. She serves as the Executive Director of Alabama Operation LifeSaver program. Open to all.

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!

Spring Football Training Camp
A spring football training camp takes place at Heritage Park from 9 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Students ages 7 to 13 are eligible to take part for $65.00 per player. This event is put on by All Sports Performance Training and additional information is available by calling 256-736-3997.

Next Monday

Cullman Kiwanis Club
The Cullman Kiwanis Club invites all local men and women who are interested in taking part in community service along with great fellowship, fun, networking, and learning to attend their weekly luncheon meeting at 12 noon each Monday 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!

RESIDENTIAL RECIPES

Beef Stroganoff Freezer Meal

By: Chelsea Sparks • Local Contributor

I love freezer meals. They are the perfect way to take some stress off yourself when you're scrambling for dinner.

This recipe worked out nicely. The minced garlic through me off with the smell, but was fine once it started cooking. Serve over some egg noodles, and you have a hearty and satisfying meal!

Ingredients:
- 2 lbs cubed stew meat
- 4 cans
- 1 onion
- 2 tablespoons - Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup - water
- 1 cup - sour cream
- 1 tablespoon - minced garlic
- 1 packet - onion soup mix
- Mushrooms (optional)
- Egg noodles (to be cooked the day you cook the mix)

Instructions:
- If not freezing, then mix all the ingredients (except noodles) together and cook in a crockpot on low for 6 to 8 hours or if meat is precooked, 4 to 6 hours.
- If you want to freeze for later use, mix all ingredients (except noodles) and put into a freezer safe zip lock bag. Freeze as flat as possible. When ready to eat, defrost over night in refrigerator and follow same instructions as above.

Buffalo Chicken Crescent Ring

By: Chelsea Sparks • Local Contributor

This is absolutely wonderful and a great dish to serve at those summer cookouts and gatherings.

Crescent rolls and buffalo chicken, what's not to love?

One piece of this dish and you will be the talk of the party for sure!

Ingredients:
- 12 ounces of cooked chicken (finely diced)
- 2 cans - crescent rolls
- 8 ounces - cream cheese
- 1 packet - ranch dressing
- 1/2 cup - celery (finely diced)
- 1/2 cup - diced onions
- 1/2 cup - buffalo sauce
- 1/4 cup - scallions, cilantro or fresh herbs
- Ranch sauce for dipping

Instructions:
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
- Mix cream cheese, ranch mix, celery, onions, buffalo sauce and chicken together.
- Separate each tube of rolls into four rectangles on a parchment lined or non-stick baking sheet to form a large circle.
- Spoon mixture into the center of the crescent ring and then fold the crescents over.
- Bake for 15 to 20 minutes.

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

This Week in Local Entertainment

Monday, March 24
- 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 25
- WSCC Baseball vs. Columbia State (DH) at 3 p.m.
- Trivia Night at Rodney G's at 7 p.m.
- Trivia Night at Grumpy's Italian Grill from 7-9 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26
- Story Time at the Hanceville Library at 10 a.m.
- Live Music with Derek Sellers at The All Steak from 6-9 p.m.
- Karaoke Night at Grumpy's Italian Grill from 7-10 p.m.

Thursday, March 27
- WSCC Baseball vs. Snead State (DH) at 3 p.m.
- Trivia Night at Rodney G's at 7 p.m.
- Bike Night at Grumpy's Italian Grill

Friday, March 28
- Ladies' Night at Rodney G's at 8 p.m.: Half off drinks for ladies

Saturday, March 29
- Ladies' Night at Rodney G's at 8 p.m.: Half off drinks for ladies

HISTORICAL TIDBITS

Do You Remember?

» Effie Estelle (Brock) Hendrix

By: Sharon Schuler Kreps
Local Contributor

Miss Effie Estelle Brock was born December 25, 1893 in Carroll County, Ga. She was one of 10 children born to James Robert (Bob) Brock and Drucilla Josephine (Mote) Brock.

The other children in the family were Charles Leon, Walter Lee, Emma Viola, Sarah Francis, Pearl M., William Wiley Clifton, Della Josephine, Hamilton Grady, and Elena Ruth. On April 6, 1911, at the tender age of 17, Miss Estelle married the love of her life, Herschell Merrill Hendrix.

It wasn't long before they were blessed with children. Unfortunately, their first little girl only lived seven months. Her name was Gladys Louise and she was born June 4, 1912 in Cullman County, Ala. She died January 3, 1913 while the young family was visiting relatives in Georgia. Despite this devastating tragedy, Estelle and Herschell went back home to Cullman and went on with their lives as best they could.

Later on in the year, there was a new baby in the family. His name was Robert Brock, and he was born in August of 1913. He was healthy and strong and a total joy to his parents. He wasn't alone for very long because in March of 1915, he got a surprise – a new baby sister. Her name was Mavis Ruby and what a sweetheart! She didn't get to be the baby for long though because the next year, in December of 1916, another child was born. Columbus Newton came along and added even more joy to this growing household.

Estelle and Herschell worked hard and loved life and in January of 1919, another little boy was born. His name was Luscious Franklin and he was affectionately nicknamed "Chicken" because he would strut around like a little "Banty Rooster". He brought joy to everyone he came to know. He was even proud to be the big brother of the youngest child in the family, William Wiley Clifton, who made his appearance in October of 1923.

As the children grew, Estelle was always there to keep her family together and strong, but on one sad day, the children had to be there to help keep their mother strong. Suddenly, at the young age of 51, Estelle's loving husband of 30 years passed away. She was heart broken and wondered how she would go on without him.

Thanks to her loving children and strong family and friends, she managed to go on and live for many years without him. She never remarried, nobody could replace her Herschell.

Estelle had the opportunity to live with her only daughter Mavis and son-in-law Glenn Reid. She was always there to help raise their children (her grandchildren): Mary Glenn, Benjamin Herschell, Nancy Ruth, and Glenn Jr. The days were spent with joy and there was never a dull moment watching these kids grow up and go on to lead their own lives.



CONTRIBUTED

» Effie Estelle Brock Hendrix as a young woman in the early 1900s.

Estelle lived to be 101 years old. She died on February 13, 1995. She was my great grandmother and she is dearly missed.

Mirroring History

By: Jessica Norrell
jessica@cullmansense.com

The History of St. Bernard

With the quickly approaching Bloomin' Festival held on the grounds of Saint Bernard, a short glance at the history of the school seems appropriate.

The groundbreaking for Saint Bernard was on October 20, 1891 by Father Benedict.

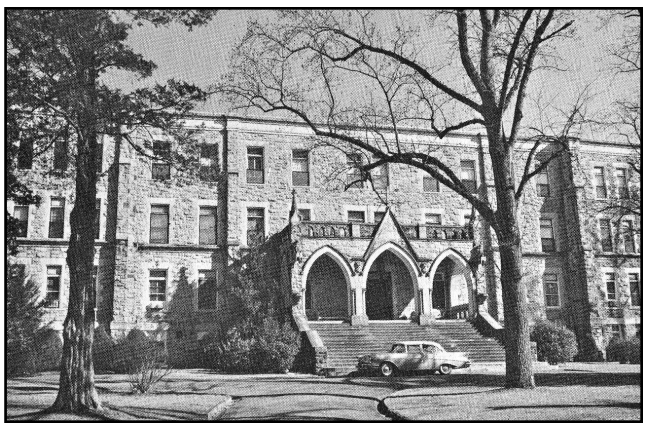
Its doors opened on September 15, 1892 primarily as a secondary college prep school but there were a few Bachelors degrees given from the beginning.

Not only did the monks on campus operate their own abbey sawmill, carpenter shop, tailor shop, shoe repair shop, blacksmith shop, bakery, electrical shop, and power plant, the monks also raised their own beef hogs and poultry and grew their own vegetables. The monk bread is still a popular fundraiser item today for the school.

Saint Bernard Prep School in Cullman, Alabama is a private co-educational boarding school for grades 9-12. Operated by Benedictine monks for more than 100 years, St. Bernard had served as a high school, junior college, seminary, and college until it closed in 1979.

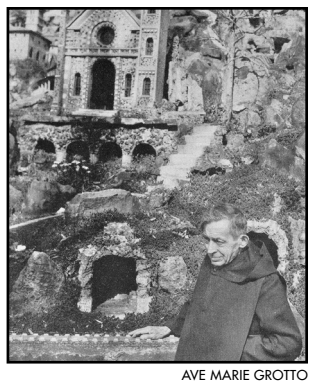
The Ave Marie Grotto is on the Saint Bernard campus and stands as a tourist attraction, one so popular that it has made the national registry of historic places. Brother Joseph Zoettl constructed the Ave Marie Grotto.

Past



AVE MARIE GROTTO

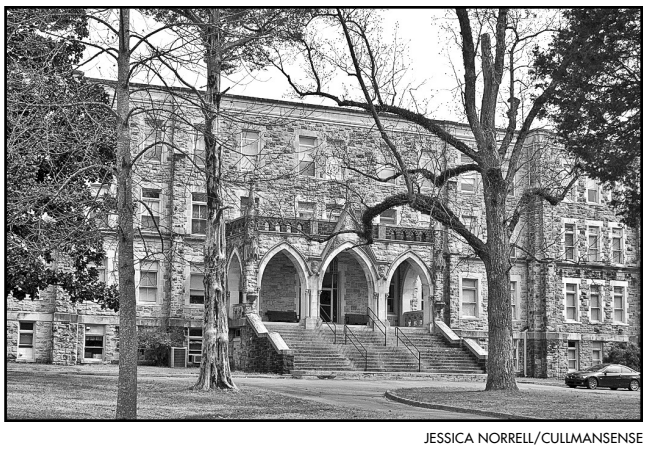
» St. Bernard Administration building.



AVE MARIE GROTTO

» Bro. Joseph, standing in front of his creation, the Ave Marie Grotto.

Present



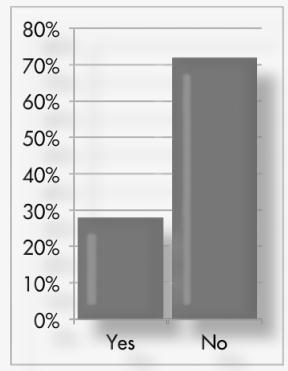
JESSICA NORRELL/CULLMANSENSE



JESSICA NORRELL/CULLMANSENSE

Poll

Are you opposed to medical marijuana?



This Week's Poll

Did you complete an NCAA tournament bracket?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

cullman city parks & recreation

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

www.cullmanrecreation.org
256-734-9157

- **Huge Community Yard Sale & Craft Fair:** A Community Yard Sale & Craft Fair will be held at Heritage Park on Saturday, March 22. Spaces are $15 for a 10x10 space. Lots of people will be at the park with softball tournaments and local traffic. Call now to sign up 256-739-9931, space is limited so call NOW!
- **ASPT Youth Football Camp:** Held at Heritage Park on Saturday, Match 29th from 9am-12:30pm. Former college football players will lead the camp along with Steve Johnson to include position specific drills, offensive and defensive drills, and more. Call now to register at 256-734-9157.
- **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.
- **Laughter Yoga:** Come be a part of this fun new way to relax and get a workout! Laughter Yoga will be held on Saturdays starting March 1 at the Civic Center from 9am-10am with instructor Sandy Seibert. Classes are $5 each or $25 for 6 classes. Call 256-734-9157 for details.
- **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.
- **CP&R Yoga:** Check out our new Yoga classes at the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center including Buti Yoga, But-tone, and Paddle Board Yoga in the pools! Call 775-SWIM or see front desk.

What's Online

Hundreds tour new building at Wallace State



Former students who toured the new School of Nursing and Center for Science at Wallace State Community College were somewhat jealous as they walked through the new facilities Tuesday during a ribbon cutting and open house of the facility. The impressive simulation center, larger classrooms, lecture halls...

qrne.ws/177

Community Voices Concerns on Common Core Standards

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...

qrne.ws/178

Spring Time Fashion: Refresh Your Wardrobe

It's finally that time of year. Once again it's time to rid your closet of those bulky sweaters, dark cardigans and depressing winter coats and replace them with your colorful spring wardrobe. While it's great to go shopping in last season's spring clothes, new trends are constant and this year you have a few new pieces...

qrne.ws/179

Opening the Video Game Vault

» New business focuses on social-retro aspects of gaming

By: Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – For years many gamers of Cullman have longed for an arcade-styled haven where they can sit around, play video games, and talk about their favorite classic role playing game or the new first person shooter that's about to drop.

"We want to create a gamer hangout," Dwayne Patterson, manager of Vault Games, told CullmanSense in a recent interview. "where kids can come in and hang out, enjoy the social life, and be around video games and things they enjoy."

The store, located next to The Foundry, caters to every kind of player ranging from those who love vintage arcade games to next-gen only players to diehard computer gamers. Vault Games has what a gamer wants and if their opening weekend was any indication to their continued success then they hold a bright future.

"We are wanting to build a timeline of video game history, from Atari to Xbox One," Patterson said as he recalled an earlier customer who knew nothing of the older systems. "I had a girl (in store) the other day, maybe seven years old and we were talking. I said something about Nintendo and she said, 'What's that?' So I brought her over to our showcase and showed her what a Nintendo was and she said, 'Does that take five guys to carry?' It kind of makes me feel old," he said with a laugh.

Despite the younger generation of kids who have no idea what an Atari, Nintendo, Sega, or Dreamcast is, vintage games are a niche that will serve Vault Games well as older gamers (like your's truly) are always looking for games from their childhood.

In a first for video game stores in Cullman, Vault Games will have a 'Pay and Play' station where gamers can pay a nominal fee and play as many games as they want for an hour. "It lets people try out games," Patterson said of the gaming console area. "I have bought games before where I have looked at the case, looked at the trailer, and said, 'Man this is going to be awesome!,' but I get home and I am 100% disappointed and I am stuck with the game."

The cool aspect about the 'Pay and Play' area is, once you have found the game you want to buy, Vault Games will knock a set amount off of the purchase price since you have already "rented" the game.

If you don't like any game you have tried, you are out the seven dollar 'Pay and Play' fee, but you have saved yourself a ton of money on a wasted video game purchase.

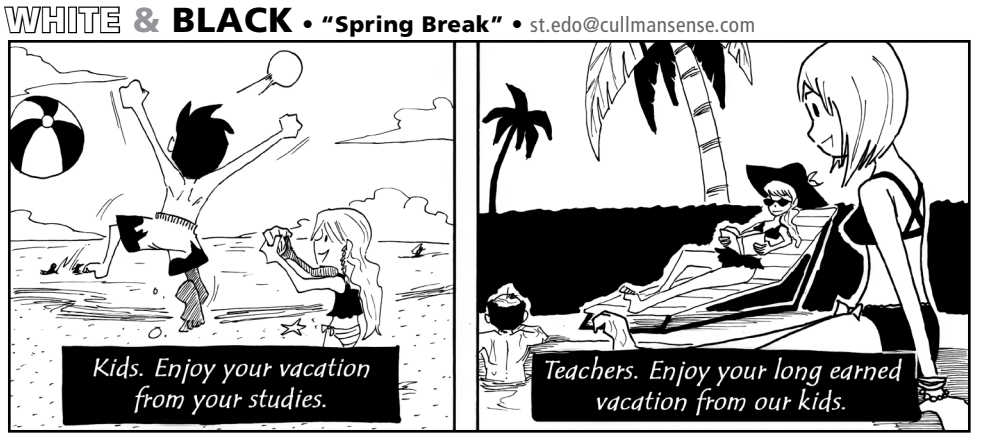
And to feed everyone's competitive spirit Vault Games will soon begin holding tournaments for gamers to test their skills in a social environment. Games can range from Madden and NCAA Football to Call of Duty and Halo but nothing is excluded because the games will be strictly customer driven.

"I have already had people tell me that they can't wait to dominate Cullman," spoke Patterson of the tournaments. "That is a pretty bold claim."

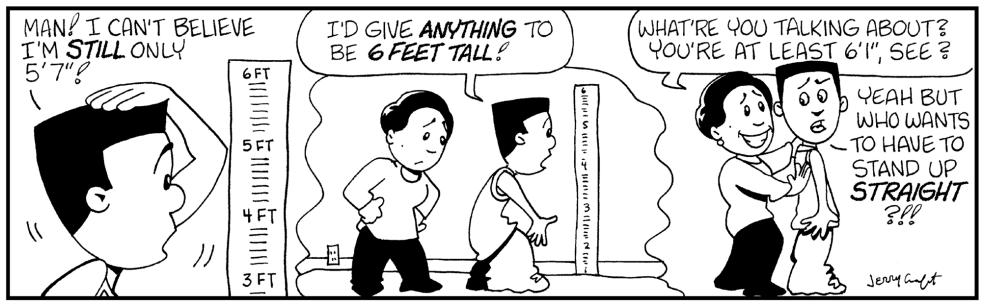
So if you are a gamer, casual or serious, you owe it to yourself to check out Vault Games. With its vast collection of vintage games and relaxed atmosphere Vault Games has cracked the code to fun.

Comics

WHITE & BLACK • "Spring Break" • st.edo@cullmansense.com



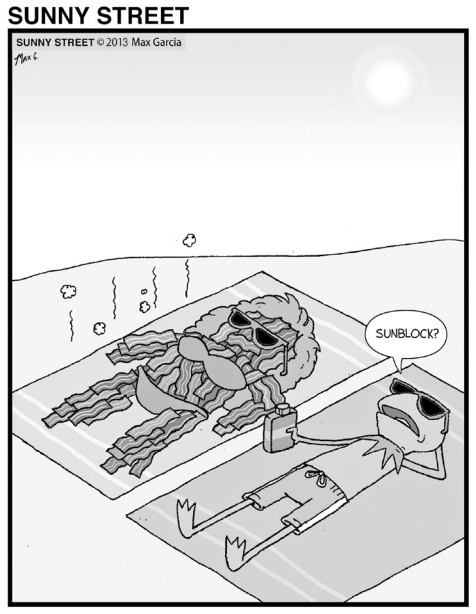
MAMA'S BOYZ www.jerrycraft.net **JERRY CRAFT**



SUNNY STREET



SUNNY STREET



New York author has roots in Cullman

By: Sharon Schuler Kreps
Local Contributor

Reba Ponder Weiss is the author of the books "this I know: Sarah's Confession" and its sequel "this I know: The Last Witness." She may live in Long Island, N.Y., but she's not your typical city slicker. As a matter of fact, she was born and raised right here in Cullman, Alabama.

"Growing up in Jones Chapel, country life was a lot of hard work," Weiss mused, "but there was plenty of time to roam the woods, visit neighbors, and barge in on relatives."

Weiss credits her huge extended family and close-knit community for providing her with more than 25 years of precious memories and writing inspiration.

Weiss published her second full-length novel, "this I know: The Last Witness" earlier this year, but she has been writing most of her life.

"I draw inspiration from my Southern roots and lifelong nightmares" she admits, growing somewhat serious at this point of the conversation. "Years of vivid dreams are kept in a personal journal, full of handwritten notes and sketches, detailing the hours in the night when my mind seems to take its own little road trip."

When Weiss was asked if therapy was ever required for her vivid dreams and nightmares, she shook her head and waved her hand as if to erase any concern people may have.

"Nawwwwhhh, I wrote a book instead. That's therapy enough for me, plus people like disturbing, don't they?" she winked and laughed a little nervously.

Once Weiss' first novel was completed, she thought long and hard over the different publishing options available. After carefully comparing traditional publishing to self publishing, she chose to publish the book herself.

"In a nut shell," Weiss explained, "I like making my own decisions about my work. I don't like someone telling me what to do with my own stuff. Maybe I am a control freak, but if you are going to tell me what to do, you better be my sweet husband or you better be ready to pay for the rights to tell me how I can do something."

"Yep, I have a little more Southern in me than the average bear," she proudly smiled and straightened up in her chair.

Most people say they want to write a book someday, yet many never actually do it. Weiss emphatically encourages people to write their story and fulfill their dreams.

"Just get it all out on paper," she explains, "that's the hardest part. If you don't think your grammar and punctuation are correct, just keep in mind – there are people out there that can fix it for you."

Weiss makes her way back to Cullman once or twice a year. You never know when you will spot her at the grocery store, Walmart or one of the local thrift stores with her mother. There's even a rumor around town that she plans to retire soon and move to the South. Let's hope that means full time writing and a lot of dreaming.

If you want to know more about Reba Ponder Weiss or keep up with her upcoming books, feel free to visit her website at www.rebaponderweiss.com.

Entries sought for Wallace State Arts in April exhibitions

By: Gail Crutchfield
WSCC Contributor

HANCEVILLE - Wallace State Community College is seeking entries for its annual Arts in April juried visual arts exhibition. Categories covering various artistic mediums and all age ranges are open for submission to the program, with ribbons awarded to the winners in each category.

"This is an exciting time for us at Wallace State," said Adrian Scott, director of the college's art and visual communications program. "Through our Arts in April juried visual arts exhibition, we get to see the work of so many talented artists from the area. We get to see their interpretation on our theme and it's wonderful to see the diversity of those ideas through their artwork."

The theme for this year's Arts in April exhibition is "HEART of a LION." The exhibit seeks to visually showcase the courage and committed nature associated with Wallace State's lion mascot.

Any imagery and subject matter which the participants feel creatively communicates this theme is welcome. Artworks, which do not relate to the "HEART of a LION" theme are also welcome.

In addition to the annual exhibit, entries are also sought for the "Big Cat on Campus" public art design challenge for showcase. This challenge is a design contest, which is seeking three winning creative design submissions for potential application to three large-scale lion sculptures on Wallace State's campus.

The Big Cat on Campus public art design challenge seeks to symbolically and visually showcase the courage committed nature associated with Wallace State's Lion Mascot, but additionally, any creative and thoughtful decorative imagery is encouraged and welcomed.

The winning designs must represent the Wallace State Community College family to our friends and to the communities we serve by upholding the college's tradition of excellence in all we do.

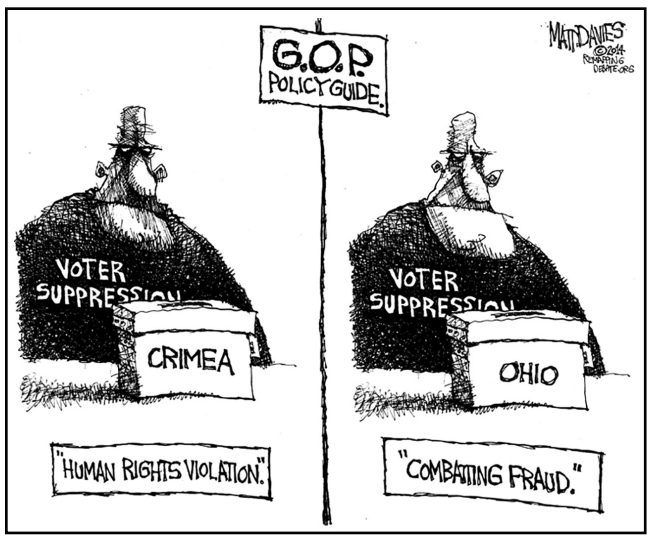
Entries for the juried visual art exhibition and the Big Cat on Campus challenge should be submitted by April 4.Entry forms and information regarding media categories, age divisions, eligibility, rules, and presentation can be found at http://www.wallacestate.edu/artsinapril or by contacting Scott at 256-352-8145 or adrian.scott@wallacestate.edu.

The exhibition is one of many events planned during Arts in April.

Many of the events are free and all are open to the public. A complete list of events is posted at www.wallacestate.edu/artscalendar. For more information, call 256-352-8277 or 866-350-9722.

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Editorial Cartoons





HOW ARE WE DOING?

Tell what we're doing right and how we can do better.

E-mail feedback@cullmansense.com
or Call 256-297-1847

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OPINION

How to Fix a Broken Congress

By: Sage Overton
Local Contributor

Almost 90 percent of Americans agree the 113th Congress has failed miserably at their jobs. Some blame Republicans. Others blame Democrats. Still others blame the President. A few blame everyone. No matter who is to blame, the root of the problem remains. Problems demand solutions. Occasionally they demand atypical approaches, even U.S. Constitution altering approaches.

Most of Congress' disapproval comes from its unwillingness or inability to tackle big issues. Almost nothing on the national deficit, immigration, healthcare, or tax reform is expected to pass before re-elections this year. Why? Because senators and representatives are far more focused on getting re-elected than actually fixing the issues and more worried about keeping their job than doing their job.

They should be.

Serving in Congress pays great, has amazing health benefits, and the retirement package can't be matched. A regular congressional member gets paid $174,000 a year. Party leaders get paid $193,400 per year. The Speaker of the House makes $223,500 annually. All paid with tax dollars, of course. Automatic pay raises based on the employment cost index are built in as yearly raises as well, unless they vote not to receive it. More money per year guaranteed, regardless of job performance. Even a 1 percent raise grants them almost an extra $2,000 per year. Again, totally paid for by the tax dollars.

Then comes the retirement package. After five years of service, members of Congress are guaranteed pensions. That's less than one senator's term and equal to two and a half representative's terms. At age 62, five years of service gets the full retirement package. Someone can retire at 50 after 20 years of service with a full pension. A congress member serving 25 years may retire at any age with the full pension.

Current congressional pension plans are based on the "high-three" system. The plan takes the average of their three highest paid consecutive years multiplied by their number of years served multiplied by 1.7 percent. That is maxed out at 20 years. Any years served beyond 20 years takes the same "high-three" multiplied by years served over 20 years. The worst pension any congressional member may receive then is just shy of $18,000. Again, out of tax dollars.

As of October 1, 2012, there were 527 retired members of Congress receiving an average of $58,860 per year. Keep in mind the federal poverty level for 2014 has been set at $11,670 for a single person and $23,850 for a family of four. Those 527 members receive a combined $31,019,664 a year. Add that with direct pay for currently serving members, and our Congress costs almost $125 million per year .The federal government retirement system is facing an over $670 billion shortfall. That kind of payout is certainly not helping it or any of the other financial problems facing the country.

So how do we as Americans put our $125 million back to work and achieve better than an 11 percent satisfaction rate?

First, get Congress back to the way it was intended to serve. The average number of years served by a senator prior to 1880 was five years. That has now increased to 13 years. For representatives, it has gone from four years (two terms) to ten years (five terms).

Some states attempted to pass laws limiting how long someone may serve in Congress but it was ruled (correctly) unconstitutional in U.S. Term Limits, Inc. v. Thornton. The Constitution establishes in Article I, Section II that representatives be elected by the people to serve for two year terms.

Each state is guaranteed at least one representative. Article I, Section III says for senators to be chosen by state legislations to serve for six-year terms.

Amendment XVII altered that in 1912 so that senators are now elected by general election as well. Neither section provides for term limits. The only way to legally fix it is to pass a constitutional amendment.

An amount of 27 amendments have been applied to the Constitution. Article V provides two methods by which the Constitution may be altered. Two-thirds of both houses of Congress may ratify an amendment, which must then be confirmed by three-fourths of the states' legislatures (38 of the 50 states). The other way is for two-thirds of the states' legislatures to call for a constitutional convention. All 27 amendments have been proposed by Congress and passed by the states. The states have never used the second method.

Here is the proposed solution. A constitutional amendment limiting senators and representatives to 12 years service in either house and a combined 20 years total in Congress. However, acknowledging the power of the voice of the people, a great person may arise chosen and loved by the people who should keep serving. Should a candidate win an election for what would be their final term by two-thirds of the vote, they would be eligible to run for another term at that term's conclusion.

They would continue to be eligible to run for more terms so long as they continue to win re-election by two-thirds of the vote.

Also, raise the minimum number of representatives from one per state to three. If each state gets a minimum of three electoral votes, then why not three representatives? To keep the original balance intended by the Constitution, return selection of senators to the state legislatures so that they are selected to represent state interests. The Constitution was amended because of state legislatures hanging when electing resulted in prolonged empty seats. If legislation is unable to select a senator in a set time limit, the choice would fall to that state's governor to select the replacement.

At the same time, pay needs to be drastically adjusted. There is no reason why a member of congress, a servant of the people, should make almost 15 times the federal poverty level. There is no reason their pension should be so easy to come by and almost double the federal poverty level for a family of four. Yes, these are elite positions in society and should reflect as such. Congress will need to pass a law capping their pay at $100,000 per year and pensions should be rolled back to match the federal poverty level. Pensions would be available after serving one term as senator and three terms as a representative. Any congressional member able to reach the max term limit would be eligible for a pension equal to the federal poverty level for a family of four ($23,850 as of this year).

Why do it like this? First, it helps shake up and break so much of the gridlock plaguing Congress. Second, it rebalances the states' and peoples' interests. Third, it more evenly redistributes congressional power across the country. Fourth, it frees up tax dollars to go where they are actually needed. Fifth, it helps make the job about the money and not about the perks. The pension actually pays out less than social security. Who would want only that for retirement?

It's an idea. A springboard. A hope. One that will never truly see the light of day. Almost 50 percent of Americans work with no retirement plan. Who would willingly vote themselves out of a job and a pay cut and back into that? Certainly not the people we elect from among us whom we believe best able to represent us.

Imagine them having to go back into the private sector and rejoin the average American in their middle class struggle to provide for their families and secure their future.

That would mean they would only serve their constituents for a short time and then have to go back and live normal lives amongst them. Unless they were just amazing servants of the people and overwhelmingly loved and supported time after time. A truly beloved politician. A Congress that's actually about being there to try and do what's best. What a dream.

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