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CULLMAN'S MONDAY NEWSPAPER

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Local



Patricia McGriff of Holly Pond announces candidacy for Alabama State Board of Education, District 6 p2

Cullman Chamber's Community Luncheon Speaks On Railroad Safety p2

Cullman Kiwanis Club to Host 56th Annual Pancake Breakfast p2

State/National

Alabama receives top ranking in infection prevention p3

Sports

WSCC's defending national champion softball team to start conference play Tuesday p4

CULTURE

New York Theatre Ballet to Perform in Cullman p10

SOUTHERN HOLLYWOOD

Film incentives may bring big name studios out to your neck of the woods p10

OPINION

The Letdowns of a College Degree p11

CRMC's Cullman Emergency Medical Services Breaks Ground on Permanent Home

» Nearly three years after being damaged by the April 27 tornadoes ambulance facility will be renovated

By: Lindsey Dossey
CRMC Contributor

CULLMAN – "It's been 2 years and 11 months to the day and almost exactly to the hour since the tornado hit our community on April 27, 2011," said p6



CONTRIBUTED

» Artist rendering of Cullman Emergency Medical Services building.

SPRING

A Brief Bloomin' Festival History



JESSICA NORRELL/CULLMANSENSE

» Iconic festival and major fundraiser for St. Bernard set to begin Saturday. p7

There Can Only Be One Named Soup-erior!

By: Chelsea Sparks
Local Contributor

CULLMAN - The Cullman High School Band will be holding its annual event Dinner with the Drumline on Thursday, April 3 at 6:30 p.m. The theme for this year's dinner is "Soup-erior". Businesses all over the city have agreed to be a part of this fundraiser that will benefit the Cullman High indoor drum line.

Eight businesses have entered their soup of choice into the contest to see whose will be named the "Soup-erior" restaurant. Among these businesses are: Jim 'N Nick's, Busy Bee Café, All Steak, Top of the Town, Sweet Pepper's Deli, Logan's, Rumors Deli, and Carlton's.

Tickets are available for pre-sale at the Cullman High School office, through band directors Chris Smith and Adam McDowell, or from band parents.

For a mere $10, you will get one bowl of the soup, a drink and a dessert.

This a great price for a complete meal. One soup will be named Cullman's best soup of 2014.

In addition to the great food, participants can also look forward to great performances by the Cullman High School indoor drum line.

As well as an encore performance in the gym of the 2014 show "The Escape", and an additional performance by the Cullman Middle School percussion ensemble. Music is an important part of any educational system.

Although the past few years have been hard on all arts and p7

Another Round of Food Stamp Cuts in States

By: Jake Grovum • Stateline

A fresh round of food stamp cuts at the state level are underway, on top of federal food stamp reductions that hit millions of Americans twice since November. In some states, policymakers have imposed additional cuts that jeopardize benefits for hundreds of thousands.

The impact of the reductions is just beginning to take hold, or soon will.

"They're getting cut off and seeking help," said Debi Kreutzman of the Kansas Food Bank, which is dealing with changes that could affect 20,000 Kansans. "We're starting to see that come into play now, and I'm afraid it's only going to get worse."

The state cuts target a relatively small portion of the food stamp population: low-income able-bodied adults, without children, 18 to 50 years old -- estimated to be about 10 percent of the more than 47 million in the program. In some states, recipients are losing benefits because of reinstated work requirements as a condition of qualifying for food stamps.

These cuts come on top of an across-the-board 5 percent reduction of benefits to all food stamp recipients' benefits p3

Holly Pond holds steadfast, Cullman drops a spot in the newest ASWA softball polls

By: Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

It has been a crazy week for softball. Holly Pond and Cullman can attest to that fact. The Lady Broncos are hitting their stride in Class 3A and are owing everyone they face.

This is, thanks in part, to the brilliant performance that is turned in on a nightly basis from Montana Holcombe. She not only gets it done in the pitching circle but at the dish as well, leading the Lady Broncos in both categories.

The 18-4 start thus far for Holly Pond is the best in five years.

Debuting last week at #8, the Lady Bearcats of Cullman have slipped a slot to #9 in this week's Class 5A Top 10 rankings, but don't let the slip fool you.

The Lady Bearcats are just as strong as they ever were and are still mauling each and every competitor they come in contact.

Class 6A
1. Sparkman (29-1)
2. Hillcrest-Tuscaloosa (23-3-1)
3. Baker (32-1)
4. Pelham (17-5)
5. Spain Park (28-5)
6. Buckhorn (24-7-1)
7. Albertville (13-3)
8. Enterprise (25-3)
9. Oxford (17-8)
10. Theodore (10-6-1)

Others nominated: Florence (19-7), Hewitt-Trussville (20-6), Pell City (22-4), Prattville (20-6), Thompson (20-12-1), Wetumpka (21-12).

CLASS 5A
1. Curry (23-3)
2. Hayden (15-1)
3. Southside-Gadsden (15-4)
4. Hartselle (19-5)
5. Mortimer Jordan (13-7)
6. Valley (13-6-1)
7. Scottsboro (10-5)
8.Springville (23-8) p6

Sports - 4 Calendar - 8 Poll - 9 Comics - 10

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Patricia McGriff of Holly Pond announces candidacy for Alabama State Board of Education, District 6

By: Gary McGriff
Contributor

HOLLY POND - Patricia McGriff, a Republican from Holly Pond in Cullman County, announces her candidacy for the Alabama State Board of Education, District 6.

District 6 includes all or part of eight counties including Blount, Calhoun, Cherokee, Cullman, DeKalb, Marshall, Morgan and St. Clair.

McGriff was a public school teacher for 26 years before her retirement in 2007. She said her retirement status would benefit her as a board member. She graduated from Jacksonville State University in 1979.

"I've got all the time in the world to spend on this," McGriff said.

One issue that Patricia is passionate about is the adoption by the State of Alabama of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, renamed College and Career Ready Standards.

"I am worried about federal interference in our children's education under Obama's Common Core. I want to protect the ability of our parents to be involved in their children's education and for our classroom teachers to teach our children in the best way they see possible. There is no one size fit all," McGriff said.

Patricia is an active member of the Cullman County GOP Executive Committee and the Alabama Republican Party State Executive Member. She is the treasurer for the Alabama GOP's fourth Congressional district committee.

She was appointed by Governor Robert Bentley to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) for a nine year term in 2012. "Governor Bentley and I have been friends for a long time. He is a good Christian man. I was honored he asked me to be on ACHE."

She's equally proud of her conservative lean, even within the Republican Party. "In addition to the state GOP executive committee, I currently serve on the Cullman County Republican Executive Committee," she said. "I served on the committee to help elect our current chairman, Bill Armistead. I have worked at the state party's office in Birmingham, assisting in successful dinners with nationally known speakers. I have received the endorsement of the Conservative Christians of Alabama, and I am the only one running for this district who has received this endorsement."

Locally, Patricia serves on several civic organizations, including the Cullman Pilot Club, Holly Pond Civitans, Holly Pond Founders Day Committee and the Holly Pond Homemakers.

"I have always had a sense of civic duty — all the way back to being on the Junior Civitans as a young lady," she said. "Since retiring, I have missed working with people and want to bring my ability to treat everyone with compassion to the state board of education."

Patricia is married to Gary McGriff. They have four children and three grandchildren. Her parents are the late Herman and Louise Williams from the west of Cullman County; her in-laws are Feltus and Faye Nell McGriff of Holly Pond. She is a member of New Hope #2 Baptist Church.



CONTRIBUTED

» Patricia McGriff

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Cullman, R.O.C.K. Singers

By: Barbara Ragsdale
Community Contributor

CULLMAN - Several members of the R.O.C.K. Youth Organization of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Cullman recently led the congregation's singing during Sunday morning services.

They presented 'Oceans', a special musical selection which they had been practicing for several months prior to the Mass.

The R.O.C.K. group is open to all teens in the parish and while they serve the Church community in many ways they also take part in various unique and fun events throughout the year together.



BARBARA RAGSDALE

» R.O.C.K members (Back row) Daniel Payne, Vincent Sweeney, Debi Robson, Craig Mann; Second row: Anna Hilb, Rachel Hilb, Chris Robson; Front row: leader Jacqueline Hill, Celine Payne, AnnMarie Payne, and Morganne Richter.

Cullman Chamber's Community Luncheon Speaks On Railroad Safety

By: Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce held its monthly luncheon at the All Steak Restaurant last Friday afternoon. Tickets were $15 for current chamber members and $20 for future chamber members. The event was from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. in the banquet room at the All Steak. The guest speaker was Nancy Hudson, executive director of Alabama Operation LifeSaver.

The Chamber's Community Luncheons (formerly called Fourth Friday Luncheons) are presented by Mickey Parrish State Farm Insurance & Financial Services, with this month's luncheon sponsored by HH Technologies.

The luncheon began with fellowship at 11:30 a.m. and lunch was served at noon. After lunch, Todd Self with HH Technologies spoke about the recent growth and breakthroughs within the company.

Next, Nancy Hudson gave a brief presentation on railroad safety. Hudson spent 20 years in traffic engineering before becoming the executive director of Alabama Operation LifeSaver in 1999. She also sits on the National Operation LifeSaver Board of Directors.

Hudson presented the basic railroad safety guidelines such as coming to a complete stop at crossings, looking before you cross and staying away from railroad tracks in general. She also stated that Operation LifeSaver is launching a new program on April 8 called "See Tracks, Think Train". The purpose of this program will be to encourage people to expect a train when they see tracks instead of assuming that there is no train, and to come to a complete stop at railroad tracks instead of simply yielding.

Finally, new Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce members were recognized and door prizes were given out.

The next Community Luncheon will be held on April 25 from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the All Steak. The guest speaker will be Pam Dorr with HERO. To make a reservation to attend, call 256-734-0454.

Cullman Kiwanis Club to Host 56th Annual Pancake Breakfast

By: Chelsea Sparks
Contributor

CULLMAN - The Cullman Kiwanis Club will be holding their 56th annual Pancake Day. The Kiwanis Club of Cullman is the local chapter that is part of an organization that spans over 80 different nations.

The goal of the club is right in their motto "serving the children of the world". They accomplish this one community at a time.

The Kiwanis Club does many wonderful things for the youth of Cullman and the community at large. An excerpt from the Kiwanis website describes the scope and reach of the program.

"Kiwanis and its family of clubs – nearly 600,000 members strong – annually raise more than U.S. $100 million and dedicate more than 18 million volunteer hours to strengthen communities and serve children," the website states.

"Members of every age attend regular meetings, experience fellowship, raise funds for various causes and participate in service projects that help their communities."

One of their most popular and successful projects is the pancake breakfast. This will mark 56th year of this event, which is quite an accomplishment for any organization.

The breakfast will be held in the Cullman High School Cafeteria from 6 a.m. until noon.

Be sure to bring a hearty appetite, as this breakfast of pancakes, sausage, and coffee will be an all you can eat affair, and the best part is that it is only $6.

That's an incredible deal, especially when all your kids who are 6 and under can eat free if served in the cafeteria. There will also be a drive-thru option available to those on the go.

Any breakfast that good for that price is worth stopping in for, and when you know that your money is going to help children in the community, it's a literally and figuratively, sweet deal.

You can purchase a ticket from any Kiwanis member or simply pay the day of the breakfast.

For more information on this event or the Kiwanis Club, contact Bob or Melba Palys at 256-352-2793.

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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":

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- 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.
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Alabama receives top ranking in infection prevention

By: Nadine Crawford

MONTGOMERY – Alabama was one of only two states in the nation performing better than the national infection rate on three of four infection categories, according to a new report released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Alabama Department of Public Health commends Alabama's hospitals for their outstanding work to prevent healthcare-associated infections.

The report provided state-by-state analysis on four categories of infections reported to the CDC's infection database; using 2012 data, the state's infection rate was compared to the national baseline. Alabama and California were the only two states to perform better than the national baseline on three of the four categories. No state performed better on all four.

"The CDC's report underscores what we've already identified in our state, which is significant progress in infection prevention," said State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson. "Our department began providing a state level report on hospital infection rates in 2011, and while our report was slightly different than the federal report in terms of the units reported, we looked at the same infection categories."

According to the CDC report, Alabama performed better than the nation on catheter-associated urinary tract infections and two types of surgical site infections, one from colon surgery and one from abdominal hysterectomies. The state did not perform at the national baseline on central line-associated blood stream infections.

"Alabama's success is primarily due to collaboration," said L. Keith Granger, CEO of Trinity Medical Center in Birmingham and chairman of the Alabama Hospital Association's Quality Task Force. "For the past 10 years, we've worked with our state's largest insurer and an automated infection surveillance product to provide hospitals with real time data to help prevent the spread of infections. We've brought quality and infection practitioners to a common table to share best practices and lessons learned, and we've worked with our partners in public health to improve our infection reporting practices and to ensure transparency of the information. It's truly been a team effort." J. Michael Horsley, president of the Alabama Hospital Association, echoed Granger's comments noting that infection prevention has been an important focus of Alabama's hospitals for some time. "Our hospital leaders stepped up to the plate early on when they realized the tremendous impact infections were having on their patients and discovered that there were evidence-based practices that could almost totally eliminate some infections," said Horsley. "It's been a concerted effort on the part of our hospitals, and it's paid off in better care for patients."

All parties agreed that the fight against infections is far from over and that continued vigilance is needed. "With the growing resistance to certain antibiotics and the increase in community acquired infections, hospitals must constantly monitor patients and their environments to quickly detect infections, treat them and prevent their spread," added Dr. Williamson. "I believe the data we publicly report helps highlight the good work of hospital staff and identify where additional efforts are needed."

Hospital-specific infection rates can be found at www.adph.org or at www.jointhehealthjourney.com.

Cuts (from Front)

last November. As part of the farm bill earlier this year, Congress also closed a loophole and cut benefits for 850,000 households, although many states affected are moving to block the cuts for now.

The federal food stamp program (formally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) limits how long low-income childless, able-bodied adults can receive food stamps to three months in a three-year period, unless they are working or participating in a training or workfare program for at least 20 hours a week. Other food stamp recipients face less stringent work requirements, and there are exemptions for those with children or other caregivers.

The 2009 stimulus bill suspended these requirements through 2010, and after that states were allowed to waive them if they met certain conditions based on their economies and job markets. Most every state has waived the requirements since 2011.

Rethinking Waivers

In recent years, though, some states — many controlled by Republicans — began to rethink the waivers, which were part of the 1996 welfare reforms and designed to give states flexibility in times of high unemployment. With the start of the new federal fiscal year last October, eight went back to enforcing the requirements, and 10 waived them only in part of their state or for part of this year. The changes are just beginning to be felt in some of those states.

In Delaware, officials insist a waiver is unnecessary because the state's work-training and placement program has been able to manage the growing ranks of the jobless. But the Food Bank of Delaware said some recipients have hit the three-month cutoff unable to find work. The state might soon reconsider the requirements.

"The case load is growing pretty dramatically," said Elaine Archangelo, director of the Division of Social Services for Delaware. "So we have been considering if there are areas where we could, should request a waiver."

Of states without waivers, Iowa, Nebraska and Wyoming were no longer eligible, because their economies and job markets had improved, as measured by the eight factors considered by the federal government when determining waiver eligibility. Others, such as Delaware, Kansas, Oklahoma, Utah and Virginia, are going without them despite being eligible for at least partial waivers.

Ohio, Colorado, New York, Texas and Wisconsin are all waiving the work requirements for only part of the year or in certain areas, even though they were eligible for full coverage. Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota and Vermont were eligible only for partial waivers.

Job Training

Ohio chose to go without a waiver for most of the state. Only 16 out of 88 counties are exempt — mainly rural, Appalachian regions where the average unemployment rate was 10.2 percent or higher in 2011 through 2012. The situation left food banks and food stamp outreach workers in Ohio scrambling, facing a shortage of jobs and training opportunities.

"It's a lack of jobs, not a lack of willingness to work," said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt of the Ohio Association of Food Banks. "In an environment where we have college graduates that are now competing for low-wage jobs, for folks with multiple barriers to employment, it's going to be difficult for them to find work."

Exact figures on the effect in Ohio are hard to come by. Of the nearly 141,000 people in the affected category receiving food stamps before, 98,000 were still receiving them in January, but it's impossible to know exactly why people left the program. According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, in January more than 16,000 were suspended or kicked off the program due to the work requirements.

Ben Johnson of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services disagreed with Hamler-Fugitt's assertion that jobs aren't available. "Our only goal was to provide benefits and job training where appropriate," he said. "We've worked very hard, and our county partners have worked especially hard, to notify individuals and bring them in and find appropriate training and employment activities."

Passed by the Republican-controlled legislature, Wisconsin will re-impose the work requirements this year as part of a job-growth pitch from Republican Gov. Scott Walker. The changes — which were part of a jobs package that also included $35 million for job training — will phase in starting in July and cover the entire state by next January. About 63,000 could be affected.

Applying Pressure

In some states, the decision to reinstate work requirements was part of an effort to push people off food stamps and back to the workforce, as in Kansas, where officials said jobs, not public welfare, was the cure for poverty.

In Oklahoma, Republican House Speaker T.W. Shannon, who's now running for U.S. Senate, pushed the change as welfare reform. As many as 233,000 were put under review , according to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, many more than originally expected.

"Unfortunately, some believe compassion is measured by how many people you can keep on a government aid program," Shannon said in a statement when fellow Republican Gov. Mary Fallin signed his bill. "Through personal responsibility, hard work and a drive to better one's situation, people can establish their independence and begin down the road of prosperity."

Food banks and other advocates see things differently. They say the economy hasn't recovered enough to support reinstating the work requirements.

Many affected are very poor, often uneducated, sometimes homeless who would have difficulty meeting the requirements anyway.

"Certainly a lot of people max out with that three-month period," said Matt Talley, who works on outreach for the Food Bank of Delaware, which includes helping those who lack transportation or have other barriers to meeting requirements. "It's just a matter of trying to help them find work, or help them find an opportunity to participate in a job training program."

The changes in states are coming as part of a broader effort in Congress to trim food stamps, after spending hit a record high of $82 billion in fiscal year 2013.

The work requirements have been a popular subject in that debate. House Republicans in Congress proposed reinstating the requirements nationwide last year, citing a recovering economy and warning about the cost of suspending the requirements for too long. But Democrats rejected that, leaving states to enact the changes themselves.

"In general, having a work requirement is good policy," said Rachel Sheffield of the conservative Heritage Foundation. "It serves as a gatekeeper to ensure that those who need assistance are able to get it, but at the same time encourages those who might not necessarily need it to look for work first."

Safety net advocates say the average monthly benefit of about $275 is hardly enough to lull people into complacency and out of the workforce. And in many areas, it's possible the economy hasn't yet recovered enough for such strict requirements.

"What happens to an able-bodied adult without dependents that is actively looking and trying to get into the workforce but is unable to?" asked Helly Lee of the Center for Law and Social Policy, an advocacy group for low-income people. "It's a downward spiral if you're unable to find jobs. It's hard to climb out of it if there are constantly barriers along the way."

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

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Warriors protecting the Reservation

» West Point's future looks bright as new faces emerge among seasoned veterans

By: Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

WEST POINT – The Reservation is rocking at West Point. Head coach Trai Meadows and the West Point Warrior baseball program are turning over a new leaf on the diamond, with some fresh faces and some grizzled veterans.

"With losing Wesley Waters last year I was worried that we might not have a guy to step in and be the leader of the team that everybody counts on," Meadows said of his field general.

"But Jordan McKenzie, who is coming off ACL surgery back in the fall, has taken that role and has done an amazing job. JMac is the heart and soul of the team and the energy he plays with every game is setting an example to the younger guys."

McKenzie is not only a leader in the field and in the dugout, but leads by example at the plate as well.

"He goes up to plate with an aggressive approach and puts the bat on the ball. He has a lot of pop for a smaller guy," said Meadows of his go to guy.

Although McKenzie is clutch at the plate, Meadows has several other players that he can rely on when the game is on the line.

"I have a few guys who I would be confident with that was up to the plate when the game is on the line," Meadows said of his lineup.

"Riley Voce is another guy that we have counted on this year. He has hit the ball well all year and has been very consistent. Bryant Farley is another guy who I would want to the plate. He always puts the ball in play and takes a lot of pride in the fact that he doesn't strike out. A guy who started out slow this year but has really come on the past week is Ryder Jones and I would be very confident with him up to bat when game was on the line."

As well as the Warriors are represented at the plate, pitching wins games and Tanner Rusk knows this as the go to gunslinger when the Warriors are in need of a win.

"Tanner Rusk has been the workhorse so far this year and I do not see that changing for the next couple years," said Meadows of his ace in the hole. "If he keeps putting in the work he has a very good chance to be special in this game. Everybody kids around with Rusk because they say he is coach Steve Woodard's favorite player on the team but coach Woodard sees the potential he has and has taken him under his wing. Tanner has thrown 43 innings so far which is 10 more innings than the next guy with a sub 1.50 ERA."

Along with the arm of Rusk, Will Wrenn has also been an inning eater for West Point.

"Will Wrenn has stepped in and done a great job on the mound. He is a natural born athlete that can play anywhere on the field and will do a great job at all the different positions that we ask him to play."

The future is really looking bright for the West point Warriors and the expectations are high for the rest of the season.

"The expectations that I have for the rest of the season is for my guys to come to the ballpark everyday with a great attitude and ready to compete. The schedule gets tough. We have eight games this week and all eight will be tough. We have Decatur for two, Cullman four, and Russellville two so we have our work cut out for us. We will be counting on a lot of young guys especially on the mound to come in and compete every pitch. We still have 15 or so games left on the schedule so it's important for us to play hard and stay focus and everything will be just fine."

Two Champions to Meet

By:Josh McBrayer
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AUBURN – It is no secret that Gus Malzahn and the Auburn Tigers run a high adrenaline, fast paced offense that some around the football world refer to as NASCAR.

Well Malzhan's NASCAR-style offense will meet with NASCAR's six-time Sprint Cup champion as Jimmy Johnson, driver of the #48 Lowe's/Kobalt Tools Chevrolet, speeds his way to the Plains on Thursday, April 3rd to discuss winning with 2013's biggest sports success story.

Johnson, who is no stranger to winning, will share a motivational speech with the 2013 SEC Champion Auburn Tigers, on what it means to be a winner.

Johnson will then take a tour of the state-of-the-art athletic facilities on the Auburn campus, followed by a #RushTheInfiled Pep Rally directly outside the Auburn University Student Center (AU Student Center located at 255 Heisman Dr., Auburn University, Auburn, AL 36849).

Johnson will also be promoting a special $19 College ticket offer that is good for the Aaron's 499 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race at historic Talladega Superspeedyway on May 4th, 2013.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

• 10:10 A.M. Johnson addresses football team as practice wraps up (practice field)

• 10:50 A.M. Johnson tours Auburn athletic facilities

• 12 P.M. #RushTheInfield Pep Rally outside University Student Center

• 12:30 P.M. Media Q&A outside Student Center

Stay connected to cullmansense.com for information on how you can be part of this once in a lifetime event.

Bucking (Lady) Broncos

By: Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

HOLLY POND - The softball program at Holly Pond High School has been gaining momentum over the last several years and it seems that all of the hard work and dedication if the Lady Broncos, as well as the hard work of head coach Steve Miller, is finally starting to pay dividends. "We are 18-4 (as of March 26th)," said Miller, "And we are having our best start in five years."

The Lady Broncos lost six seniors from last year's loaded team but they are returning some familiar faces as well.

Seniors Montana Holcombe, Haleigh Lee, Peyton Walker, and Taylor Rowell are aiming to take the Lady Broncos to Montgomery for a shot at the 3A State Softball Championship.

Leading the way with her arm form the circle and her bat from the plate is Montana Holcombe. "Our leader in hitting and pitching so far has been Montana," Miller said of his ace in the hole.

The Lady Broncos are sitting at #3 in the state in Class 3A, an honor that is not taken lightly by the Lady Broncos staff.

"The early ranking is an honor and well deserved," said Miller. "Our girls have worked very hard and have some impressive wins.

But the ranking is not the only thing that drives the Miller and the Lady Broncos. "The real focus for us, outside the ranking, is getting a little bit better every day."

The Lady Broncos have notched some key wins this year but they are now heading into the heart of their schedule and coach Miller know that will be difficult but he thinks his girls are up to the task.

"So far I have liked what I have seen out of this group. They are unselfish with a toughness that makes them hard to beat. We have had really strong senior leadership and we are staying consistent in attitude and effort during games. To quote the famous song 'We Have High Hopes.'"

Only time will tell if the Lady Broncos have what it takes to bring home the coveted Class 3A Softball State Title, but I for one would not bet against the green and yellow.

WSCC's defending national champion softball team starts conference play Tuesday

By: Russell Moore
WSCC Contributor

HANCEVILLE – After playing a daunting non-conference schedule for nearly two months, Wallace State's defending national championship softball team begins league play Tuesday at Gadsden State.

Wallace State softball coach Jayne Clem feels the nationally-ranked counterparts her freshman-laden Lady Lions (23-17) have encountered will make them stronger during the conference rush.

"We're ready to get going with conference play. I feel we are headed in the right direction. Everyone has accepted their role on the team and is taking care of that. Our pitchers are getting better, and we're ready to see how we stack up against the North Division. As always, we know we will be the hunted," said Clem, whose team has won 8 of its last 10 games.

Wallace State softball always has a target on its back, and this season has been no different. However, unlike the last three or four years, Clem has needed the freshmen to fill as many valuable roles as possible, especially with Kori Benson and Madeline Lee serving as the only returning starters in the lineup.

"The freshmen aren't new anymore. Going back to the summer they have been with us for nine months now. The ones that are here have bought into our system and are doing what we need them to do," Clem said. "We can play with anyone in the country when we get our minds right. It's just a matter of us all being on the same page."

Wallace State wastes no time dipping into conference play next week. The Lady Lions travel to Gadsden State on Tuesday, Marion Military on Thursday, Snead State on Saturday and Shelton State on Sunday.

Freshmen Amanda Medders and Rachel Ragland have taken the reins as Wallace State's most reliable starters, a rotation made up completely of newcomers. Medders is 9-2 with a 2.68 ERA in 24 appearances, while Ragland is 6-6 with a 3.03 ERA in 20 games.

"Rachel Ragland's record doesn't show how effective she's been pitching. She's pitched against some good teams. We haven't backed her up on offense or defense like we should have," Clem said. "Amanda Medders has been doing a great job of getting groundballs."

Benson's powerful bat was absent midway through February because of back problems, but the 2013 NJCAA national tournament defensive MVP and NFCA All-American has returned as the team's designated player and is hitting .468 with a team-high eight homers and 30 RBIs.

Lee leads the team in average (.433) and RBIs (36) and is tied for first in doubles (11) with Sabrina Russell. Andrea McKenzie is hitting .355 with three homers and 26 RBIs, Mackenzie Hill has a .364 average with four homers and 22 RBIs and Isabella Campbell is hitting .306 with six homers and 18 RBIs.

Wallace State's home opener is April 8 against Motlow State beginning at 4 p.m., and the Lady Lions' conference opener is April 10 vs. Gadsden State.

Wallace State softball, which also won a national title in 2008, has won six of the last seven state championships, including the last two.

For more about Wallace State, visit wallacestate.edu.

Prep Sports Weekly Scoring Recap

By:Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

There were slim pickings on the docket for sports last week but Cullman area teams made the most of their games going 9-4 against out of town rivals. Here is a look at the scores from around Cullman this past week.

Monday, March 24th
Baseball
Cold Springs 0 vs Oakman 11

Tuesday, March 25th
Baseball
Oakman 11 vs Cold Springs 1
Vinemont 6 vs Hanceville 5 - Game 1
Vinemont 5 vs Hanceville 15 - Game 2
Ramsey 7 vs West Point 8
Vestavia 1 vs Cullman 11

Wednesday, March 26th
Baseball
West Point 26 vs GW Carver 2

Thursday, March 27th
Baseball
Good Hope 0 vs Danville 6
Fairview 9 vs Holly Pond 1
Cullman 10 vs Spain Park 4
Cullman 13 vs Vestavia 4
Hanceville 14 vs Vinemont 1

Softball
Good Hope 1 vs Cold Springs 13
Vinemont 1 vs West Point 9
Fairview 2 vs Holly Pond 4

Friday, March 28th
Baseball
Holly Pond 3 vs Appalachian 2 - Game 1
Holly Pond 6 vs Appalachian 2 - Game 2

Saturday, March 29th
Baseball
Vinemont 7 vs Brindlee Mountain 0

Softball
Dora 7 vs Good Hope 4

Presenting the Leadership of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce

CULLMAN AREA COC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & VISITOR CENTER

For 71 years, the Chamber has provided leadership promoting growth and progress for our Cullman area.

Here are Officers for the 2014-15 Executive Committee:



Jim Weidner
Chamber Chair
Cullman Regional Medical Center



Jason Grimmett
Chair-Elect
Drinkard Development, Inc.



Melissa Cartee
Immediate Past Chair
Cullman Electric Cooperative



Susan Guthrie
Vice Chair, Business Development
Royal Technologies, Inc.



Perry Shields
Vice Chair
Industry & Workforce Development
ATN-Cullman/Hanceville



Jason White
Vice Chair
Finance & Administration
The Final Touch



Gloria Williams
Vice Chair
Membership & Marketing
Freedom Insurance
The Gloria Williams Agency



Sammie Danford
Vice Chair
Tourism & Community Development
United Way of Cullman County

Here are our current leaders serving on the Board of Directors:



Jamie Speakman
Liberty National



Dr. Donna Bryant
St. Bernard Preparatory School



Billy Cooch, P.G.
Highland Technical Services



Frances Cooper
The Community Shopper's Guide, Inc.



Jeff Curtis
Cullman Area Career Center



Austin Hall
Nearen Construction Company, Inc.



Jimmy Cockrell
Peoples Bank of Alabama



Ben Harrison
Cullman Regional Airport



Kristen Holmes
Wallace State Community College



Bill St. John
St. John & Associates, Inc.



Tim Johnson
J2 Technologies, Inc.



Emily Niezer Johnston
Emily Niezer Johnston, LLC



Keith Lann
Guthrie's



Mike Manning
Cullman Power Board



T.J. Franey
Cullman Co. Commission on Education



Shawn Crider
HH Technologies, Inc.



Mike Donaldson
Quality Staffing Solution, Inc.



Albert Von Pelzer
REHAU Automotive, LLC



Jason Spann
American Proteins, Inc.



Samantha Way
DQ Grill & Chill - Cullman



Jeb Williamson
Jeb Williamson, CPA



Barry Willingham
County Revenue Commissioner

These individuals -- along with roughly 800 member businesses -- are committed to expanding the Chamber's program of work designed to make our Cullman area an even better place to live and do business.

The Chamber is an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organization. Membership is open to any business or individual.

For information on how you can join the Chamber please call 256-734-0454 or visit www.cullmanchamber.org

CRMC (from Front)

Jim Weidner, CRMC President/CEO. "None of us will ever forget that day, but what made me most proud was our EMS crew. Even though their home base took a hit, they continued to serve our community without missing a beat."

After nearly three years to the day, Cullman Regional Medical Center Board has officially broken ground on the new Cullman Emergency Medical Services Ambulance Facility. Weidner thanked the Hospital Board, specifically the Building and Grounds Committee of the Board for their efforts in making sure that the final home for the ambulance service was the best possible option. Weidner also thanked the CEMS Paramedics and EMTs who consistently continue to serve the community with the best prehospital care around.

"The CRMC Board Buildings and Grounds Committee considered every possible site and facility, but nothing seemed to compare to the former location after the renovations," CRMC Board Buildings and Ground Committee member Clint Frey said. "I'd like to thank all of my fellow committee members for their time, effort and dedication to this project. Each of them has dedicated countless hours to this project and we are all excited to see the end result."

Many factors were considered in determining the permanent site including location which allowed for the best response times, lowest cost and the best visibility and curb appeal for the ambulance service. The Hospital Board Building & Grounds Committee presented a couple of options for the permanent site, but recommended proceeding with renovation of the former facility. CEMS Medical Director Scott Warner, MD echoed Jim's comments on the EMS crews dedication to excellent care. He explained that the CEMS Agency was the first in the State of Alabama to implement a STEMI destination protocol relying on paramedic interpretation of EKGs which has become standard protocol throughout the state.

"CEMS consistently creates new emergency care protocols that improve the prehospital care of the patients we serve," said Warner. "We have the best team and prehospital care in the State; this facility will simply allow us to improve the technology in which we perform this service.

The new facility will meet all program certification requirements and will feature 10-ambulance bays, waiting room, office space, sleeping quarters, conference room, break room, restrooms, and storage area. The estimated construction time of the project is four to five months.

The Cullman Emergency Medical Services is currently located in the old Woodland Medical Center Emergency Department where they have been temporarily housed since November of 2011. For more information on Cullman Emergency Medical Services, call 256-734-1524 or visit crmchospital.com.



CONTRIBUTED

» CRMC Hospital Board and dignitaries officially break ground on new CEMS facility. Pictured are: Clint Frey, Hospital Board Member, Building & Grounds Committee; Austin Hall, President, Nearen Construction; Susan Copeland, RN, CRMC Vice President of Ambulatory Services; Bobby Morris, CRMC Director of Plant Operations; Jerry Sellers, EMT, CRMC Director of CEMS; Stanley Yarbrough, County Commissioner; G. Scott Warner, MD, CEMS Medical Director; Frank Fagg, F & O Architects; Beth Anderson, CRMC Hospital Board Member, Building & Grounds Committee; Todd McLeroy, CRMC Hospital Board Chair; Jim Weidner, CRMC President/CEO; and Max Townson, Mayor, City of Cullman.

ASWA (from Front)

9. Cullman (18-9)
10. Athens (15-8)

Others nominated: Citronelle (20-4), Faith Academy (8-6-2), Moody (12-5), Rehobeth (15-5), Saraland (11-11).

CLASS 4A
1. Alabama Christian (20-4-2)
2. Haleyville (17-10)
3. West Blocton (13-6)
4. Alexandria (12-7-1)
5. Clarke County (10-5-1)
6. Handley (16-6)
7. Ardmore (17-10-1)
8. Holtville (9-9)
9. Central-Florence (12-5)
10. Munford (13-4)

Others nominated: Beauregard (19-6), Corner (9-4-1), Elmore County (9-1), Locust Fork (9-5), Headland (11-8), Oneonta (10-7).

CLASS 3A
1. Pisgah (12-3)
2. White Plains (15-2)
3. Holly Pond (18-4)
4. Glencoe (12-0)
5. Winfield (12-7)
6. Cordova (15-8-1)
7. Susan Moore (16-6-1)
8. Brindlee Mountain (11-2-1)
9. Westminster Christian (13-4)
10. Opp (13-4)

Others nominated: Geneva (15-7), Holt (8-1), Leeds (14-12), Northside (15-9), Slocomb (21-7), T.R. Miller (9-4).

CLASS 2A
1. Ider (21-6-1)
2. Mobile Christian (16-11)
3. Hatton (18-12-2)
4. Colbert Heights (9-0)
5. Hale County (14-7)
6. Lexington (7-4)
7. G.W. Long (8-3)
8. Ariton (14-7)
9. Leroy (12-9)
10. Horseshoe Bend (11-6)

Others nominated: Elba (5-4), Walter Wellborn (11-3), Zion Chapel (6-8).

CLASS 1A
1. Sumiton Christian (16-5)
2. Lynn (22-3)
3. Kinston (13-4)
4. Ragland (13-5)
5. Brantley (14-5)
6. Athens Bible (16-8)
7. Decatur Heritage (9-7)
8. South Lamar (9-6)
9. Collinsville (11-9)
10. Berry (8-6)

Others nominated: Belgreen (9-3), Florala (6-1), Parrish (1-3), Spring Garden (6-4-1).



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

A Brief Bloomin' Festival History

By: Jessica Norrell
jessica@cullmansense.com

After the college at St. Bernard closed in 1979 and the new St. Bernard Preparatory School was organized in 1984 by a group of alumni, funding was low and the need for a way to raise money was urgent.

Joyce Nix, who spearheaded the idea of the festival and now serves as the Festival Director, stated, "We wanted to do something that would showcase our community and help our school. We already had Ave Maria Grotto, a folk art park within itself, so why not showcase that facility with the beautiful grounds as well as host an arts festival."

Once the idea was in place, a name for the festival was the next step. Jim Miller, the headmaster of the school at the time, said the event should be held in the spring and needed something that would be catchy so why not call it "Bloomin' Festival."

And so the Bloomin' Festival was born and continues its traditions today.

The St. Bernard grounds and stone-cut buildings dating back to the 1900s provide a unique atmosphere for festivalgoers.

The first Bloomin' Festival hosted around 60 vendors, including artists and craftsmen from a 50-mile radius of the campus.

The festival has now grown to around 140 vendors and spots have to be reserved in advance.

The festival is unique in that it's a juried arts and crafts fair of handmade goods.

When booking vendors, the selection process aims to provide diversity and quality among the artists accepted to the show, which is part of what makes Bloomin' Festival so appealing to visitors.

The festival has also been recognized by the Southeast Tourism Society as a Top Twenty Event in the Southeastern United States and is now one of the largest fundraisers supporting school functions, upkeep, and scholarship programs.

Vendors this year range from glass blowers, jewelry, children's clothing, art, photography, furniture, and much more.

For a complete list of vendors go to BloominFestival.com and check out the "2014 Exhibitors" section.

This year marks the 30th annual Bloomin' Festival and will feature new additions to the anticipated event including a crawfish boil, strawberry Belgian waffles with ice cream and more food tents.

The food selection has come a long way from the beginning years when the only choices for food were hamburgers and hotdogs.

Now there is a wide array to choose from including a few favorites of kettle corn and freshly squeezed lemonade.

After the first Bloomin' Festival, an event to draw a larger crowd was put in place, with the drawings of several great prizes including the grand prize of a new car.

The drawing definitely lived up to its intent and indeed drew larger crowds.

The festival still gives away a new car every year, with this year's prizes including: a 2014 Jeep Patriot, a Nikon Silver S3500, a Garmin Nuvi 40 4.3" Portable GPS, a LG BP135 Blue-ray Disc Player and an iPod Shuffle 2 GB.

The Bloomin' Festival 5K/10K Cross Country Race will get this year's Bloomin' Festival started on April 5, 2014 at 7:30 a.m.

Participants of all ages are encouraged to compete. Awards will be presented to the top overall male and female finishers, top male and female masters, and to the first and second place finishers in each age group.

Registration and packet pick-up will begin at 6:30 a.m. on the morning of the race at the race start.



JESSICA NORRELL/CULLMANSENSE

» The Bloomin' Festival features a wide assortment of arts and crafts suitable for all ages.

Entry fee is $25 to register in advance or $30 on race day. For more information, contact Race Director William Calvert at 256-255-0030 or 256-612-3028.

The Bloomin' Festival has a lot to offer not only the school but also the community.

Visitors come from miles away to participate in the festival and enjoy the beauty of the campus, Ave Marie Grotto, the restaurants, and the endless shopping and sights in Cullman.

The family-friendly, small town atmosphere keeps guests coming back every year.

Support not only local artisans but also a school with a rich history that has contributed much to the Cullman Community and its development to what it is today.

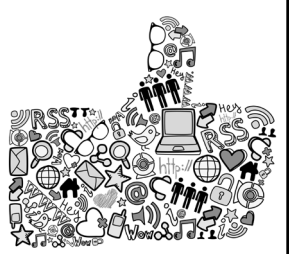
Volunteers including parents, students, faculty, alumni and friends of the community operate the festival. Proceeds benefit St. Bernard Prep School.

Soup-erior (from Front)

music programs in the country, the need for these programs is as important as ever, as is the need of the community's support.

So why not spend the same amount you could at any fast food restaurant and take your family out for a great meal for a great cause?

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK



facebook.com/CullmanSense





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.

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.

Osteoporosis: Prevention and the Importance of Utilizing Bone Mass Measurements
Join Benjamin Rogers, MD, with Cullman Internal Medicine as he discusses the risks with osteoporosis, prevention and the importance of utilizing bone mass measurements. This lunch and learn program will be held from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. in the Colonel Cullmann Room. Cost of the program is $5 for WomenFirst and SeniorChoice members and $8 for all others. To reserve your spot, register online at www.crmchospital.com or call 256-737-2600.

Relay For Life Team Meeting
For those participating or are interested in taking part in the 2014 American Cancer Society Relay for Life in Cullman County - there will be two meetings; the first at 12 noon and the second at 5:30 p.m. at First Baptist Church in Cullman in their Fellowhip Hall. All are welcome. There also will be another meeting on Thursday, April 24. Same times, same place. Come join in the fun and fellowship while taking part in a very worthwhile cause!

'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.

Cullman City Schools Foundation's 6th Annual Distinguished Alumni & Service Awards luncheon Cullman City Schools Foundation's 6th Annual Distinguished Alumni & Service Awards luncheon which will be held at St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church's Christ Hall, catered by Freddie Day. The menu consists of pork tenderloin, two sides, dessert and beverage. If you wish to have baked fish as the entree, please contact Dawn BEFORE March 31st. The event, which costs $25.00 each ticket, runs from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. and will recognize selected Distinguished Alumni, Distinguished Service, and Promising Alumni, as well as honoring five Cullman City School Teachers of the Year. Doors open at 11 a.m. For additional information please contact Dawn Klinger, 256-590-3159.

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

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

Saturday

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

58th Annual Cullman Kiwanis Pancake Day
Everyone is invited to come enjoy a delicious pancake breakfast from 6 a.m. until 12 noon at Cullman High School Cafeteria. The all-you-can-eat (endless refills of pancakes, Jimmy Dean sausage and coffee) in the dining room costs $7.00 and all funds raised help the local Kiwanis serve the children of Cullman Community. There also will be a bake sale with money raised to go toward Children's Hospital in Birmingham. 5 years old and under eat FREE with dine-in only. Drive-thru take out plates are available during the morning hours!! Tickets available from any Kiwayis member or on the day of the breakfast at the door.

First Community Awareness Day in Colony
Members of the Colony Volunteer Fire Department invite everyone to their first Community Awareness Day today at the Colony Education Complex. The event will run from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. and the day will include a coloring contest for children and 'goody' bags for all attending the day. Firemen also will pose for photos with children and ALL children must be accompanied by a parent at all times. Area residents also can sign up for a free smoke detector and fire extinguisher - these items will be installed in their homes by members of the fire department. Good protection to have in every home. Come have a great time and get to meet your local firefighters as well!

Next Monday

Cullman Kiwanis Club
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Looking Ahead

April 12th

CRMC Foundation Gala
The CRMC Foundation Gala XIII will be held at 6 p.m. Saturday, April 12, at Loft 212, with a silent/live auction. The annual gala is a volunteer-organized event led by the CRMC Service Guild. All proceeds will be earmarked for the CRMC Foundation Refresh-A-Room Campaign. This year's theme is "Tuscany Under the Moonlight" and the musical host for the event will be Kidd Blue. Tickets to the CRMC Foundation Gala XIII are limited and are now available for $150 each, with reservations now being accepted. To reserve your tickets, contact the CRMC Foundation at crmcfoundation@crmchospital.com; 256-737-2565; or purchase online at http://www.crmchospital.com/foundation/events/gala.aspx.

RESIDENTIAL RECIPES

Parmesan Chicken Bake

By: Chelsea Sparks • Local Contributor

As most of you know by now, my recipes are all about cooking on a budget on a tight time frame. This doesn't mean we sacrifice flavor or quality, but who says quality has to take three hours?

This recipe meets all my criteria for a busy mom seal of approval.

Nothing much to this recipe aside from mixing the ingredients together and throwing it in the oven. Enjoy!

Ingredients:
- 4 to 6 chicken breasts
- 1 cup - mayonnaise
- 1 1/2 cups - parmesan cheese (1/2 cup inside mixture, the rest to sprinkle on top)
- 1 1/2 teaspoon - seasoning salt
- 1/2 teaspoon - pepper
- 1 teaspoon - garlic powder

Instructions:
- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
- Spray the inside of a 9 x13 baking dish and lay your chicken in the pan.
- Mix together all other ingredients together in one bowl and spread evenly over chicken.
- Sprinkle the rest of the parmesan cheese over the chicken.
- Bake uncovered for 45 minutes.

Slow Cooker Sesame Chicken

By: Chelsea Sparks • Local Contributor

Sometimes you may want to have Chinese food without having to pay more or maybe you just don't feel like running to town.

Whatever the reason, making your own sesame chicken is a breeze. You can have supper ready on time with minimal effort, and I know that is something we all want!

Ingredients:
- 1 1/2 lb chicken breasts
- 1/2 cup - honey
- 1/4 cup - soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons - dried onion
- 2 tablespoons - ketchup
- 1 tablespoon - oil
- 1/2 teaspoon - garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons - cornstarch dissolved in 3 tablespoons of water
- Sesame seeds

Instructions:
- Combine chicken, honey, soy sauce, onion, ketchup, oil and garlic in a crockpot.
- Cook on low for 6 to 8 hours or high 3 to 4 hours
- When chicken is cooked through, remove chicken and leave the sauce.
- Dissolve 2 teaspoons of cornstarch in 3 tablespoons of water and pour into crock pot and stir.
- Cut chicken into bite size cubes.
- Return chicken to crockpot, replace the lid and cook on high for 10 minutes.
- Sprinkle sesame seeds over chicken.

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

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GENEALOGY

Researching Your Past

» Wallace State offers resource repository; Genealogy studies

By: Sharon Schuler Kreps
Local Contributor

Have you ever noticed that there seems to be at least one person in every family who is completely obsessed with their family tree?

Every time they are around, they babble nonstop about their most recent ancestor find, another country they've added to their lineage, or finding some long distant cousin who shares the same great, great, great, great grandparents.

While the rest of the family is clearly bored to tears, the said historian continues to talk as if they had just won the lottery. Every family has at least one of them.

For some reason, these people find it their calling in life to dig up their family roots and pass their finds on to the rest of their family.

Well, I just happen to be the family historian in my family.

I understand the calling and the excitement in finding the new ancient ancestors and bragging about the things they did or didn't do in their lifetimes.

By doing extensive research, I now know exactly why I do some of the things I do – it's in the genes!

It all started with a box of old photographs and letters that had belonged to my grandmother.

Less than half of the pictures had names written on the back and the rest were completely blank.

I took the box with the intent to identify and label the rest of the photographs.

But as I began the task of matching the correct names with the correct people, I found myself gazing into the faces that stared back at me from those old faded pictures and I wanted more, lots more.

I began hounding my parents, aunts, uncles, and whoever else I could find that were related to me, asking them to tell me about the people whose pictures I held.

I wanted to know everything I could about them. I took notes as I listened to the old family stories and flipped through the old photos daily.

Now this may sound crazy, but before long, I honestly began to "know" these people.

After all, they were still my family, even though they had passed away long before I was ever born.

Genealogy is more than just pictures and old family stories though. True Genealogy is backed up by lots and lots of documentation.

Examples of such documentation required include birth, marriage and death certificates, military records, and immigration records.

Luckily, the library at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville has this information and so much more.

The vast amount of information in the Genealogy section of the library is quite amazing.

The Wallace State Community College website states, "Wallace State's extensive and growing collection of research materials includes books, periodicals, microfilm, microfiche, CD-ROM disks, computer programs, family folders, and more. Some sources cover the entire United States. The collection is centered on Alabama, neighboring states, the Old South, Kentucky, the Civil War, and Cherokee Indians. The program has access to the 2.5 million microfilm reel collection of records from the Genealogical Society of Utah."

For the beginner Genealogist, the process of documenting your family's information sounds extremely intimidating and overwhelming.

Don't let that stop you from the amazing journey ahead of you. There's lots of help out there just waiting for you.

As a matter of fact, according to the Cullman Life website, Wallace offers free Genealogy studies every Tuesday from 2 - 4 p.m. in the basement of the library.

This is an excellent service for anyone interested in researching his or her family trees.

Wallace also offers courses for credit through the History Department.

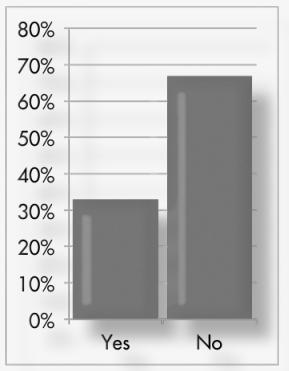
Non-credit classes may also be taken through the Wallace State Continuing Education Department.

For more information about the Genealogy collection or courses of study offered in Genealogy, feel free to contact the Wallace State Library at 256-352-8300.

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

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- **Kamp Cullman Registration Opening April 1:** Kamp Cullman Summer camp registration will on April 1 at the Cullman Civic Center. Camp will be held with base at the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center from June 2-27 and July 7—August 1. Camp will include swimming, recreational activities, field trips, and much more. Camp will be held Monday-Friday, 7:45am-5:15pm. Spaces are limited, so sign your child up NOW! Call 256-734-9157 for details.
- **Xtreme Allstars Cheer Squad Registration:** Want your child to learn the most XTREME cheer skills? Come join one of our Xtreme Allstar Cheer Squads! Evaluations clinics will be held May 6, May 8, May 13, May 15, and May 20 at the Gymnastics & Cheer Academy. Any athletes interested must attend the clinic. An informational meeting will be held on May 1 at 6pm in the CGCA birthday party room. Early bird registration for the clinics is now open through April 14. For more information, call 256-739-6762.
- **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.
- **CP&R Yoga:** Check out our new Yoga classes at the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center including Buti Yoga, Buti-tone, and Paddle Board Yoga in the pools! Call 775-SWIM or see front desk.
- **Archery Classes:** Archery classes are offered for ages 7 & up on Mondays for beginners, Tuesdays for intermediate shooters, and Thursdays for advanced archers. All classes held at the Civic Center's indoor archery range. 256-734-9157

What's Online

DIY Flower Vases for Spring

As spring approaches, I often think of country cottages filled with sun-kissed linens fresh off of the clotheslines hanging in the backyard. Lemonade and fresh iced tea sitting on the table in chilled glass pitchers. The sound of birds singing just outside the window as if to announce the season's commencement sets.



qrne.ws/180

Organic Gardening Made Easy

The North Alabama Agriplex recently held its monthly living landscapes seminar on the topic of organic gardening. Speakers from the Cullman County Extension Office presented basic organic gardening principles at this event.

qrne.ws/181

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

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%.

qrne.ws/182

SOUTHERN HOLLYWOOD

» Film incentives may bring big name studios out to your neck of the woods

By: Allison Boyd
Contributor

Many people living south of the Mason-Dixon line usually regard Hollywood as an elusive entity, far away and mystical. It's a different world, one not relevant to southern living. However, over the past few years, movie production has taken over the south.

In fact, it seems to be that more movies are made in the south than Hollywood itself. Many people in the industry are actually making the move to southern metropolises such as Atlanta and New Orleans because simply that's where the jobs are!

By now you might be thinking, "Why in the world would Hollywood come to the south to film their fancy movies?" Well, it has to do with money. Tax incentives from southern states are so great that it attracts production companies.

They save more money and make more profit. Here is the tax incentive law for Alabama as stated on www.alabamafilm.org:

On March 24, 2009 Former Governor Bob Riley signed into law the Entertainment Industry Incentive Act of 2009. A qualified production company shall be entitled to a 25 percent rebate of all state certified expenditures and 35 percent of all payroll paid to residents of Alabama for the state certified production. Production expenditures for a project must equal or exceed at least $500,000 but must not exceed $20,000,000.

Growing up in the south and being in the performing arts, I always thought I would need to move far away to get involved.

When I was little until my teenage years, the only thing I had at my disposal was summer theatre workshops, school plays and community theatre.

Don't get me wrong, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience in theatre, but film production just didn't exist in my area so I had no opportunity to break into the industry.

That all changed as I commenced my young adult years.

As I headed off to Birmingham-Southern College to earn a B.A. in musical theatre, I thought I might move to New York at the end of my four years. At the same time, tax incentives started bringing film production to the southeast.

I had always been in theatre and done that style of acting, although I always felt like I was never very good at the large-scale, grandiose style of acting that theatre demands.

Professors used to instruct me to go bigger and bolder, but I preferred a more realistic style of acting, smaller and more intimate.

I started to question my major and what I should really do with my life.

I felt as if I was having a quarter life crisis. "Shouldn't I just do something more practical, something that would guarantee security?" I thought to myself.

After graduation, I had made up my mind to give up performance and just pursue something more practical.

I started thinking of grad school and just living a traditional life, but that all changed when I started to get into local and regional film productions. I was asked to do a "mockumentary" for a non-profit called The Well House (thewellhouse.org).

This organization raises awareness of the sex slave trafficking issue, and I played a character named Anna, a recused victim. All of a sudden it clicked. Film acting was my niche. It was smaller and was not at all like theatre acting.

After that, I started looking for other ways to get involved with film.

The Sidewalk Film scramble just happened to be getting started up around that time. I got involved and made a short film that was in the scramble and was later accepted in the 2013 Sidewalk Film Festival.

It was a small opportunity, but it made me happy to be working towards something I really wanted to do.

A few weeks later, I saw a posting on the Alabama film website (Alabamafilm.org).

It was a casting call for stand-ins for a movie called Oculus. Again, I wanted to do everything that I could to get involved so I submitted my headshot and resume.

A few hours later I received a phone call from the production office. They asked me if I could come down to Fairhope, Ala. the next day for a fitting. Before I could even think, I told them yes.

As I hung up the phone, I wondered how in the world I would get out of work for the next day. I was so excited, I forgot about all the other responsibilities in my life. Thankfully, my manager understood and I was driving five hours south the next morning.

When I arrived, they started taking my measurements and photos.

They came back in and said you are right for the part of Beatrice O'Connor, one of the ghosts.

A stream of profound happiness flowed through me. I couldn't believe this was happening right here in little ole' Alabama.

I sat down to talk to the director, Mike Flanagan, and I couldn't help but to be excited.

I had my first named role in a feature film. It was a small role, but I called my parents to notify them of everything. Fairhope, Ala. is the last place I thought I would have gotten this opportunity.

However, because of the state's tax incentives, hiring residents saves the production money.

While on set, I got to meet a lot of great contacts and people whom I still call friends. I asked their opinions on Los Angeles, and despite the tax incentives, they all agreed that casting for actors was still done mostly in L.A. So, that was all I needed to hear.

I started saving up my money and a year later I packed up my car and headed west.

Even though people who work on the crew side of film production are making the move to the south, actors are still auditioning for casting directors located in Los Angeles.

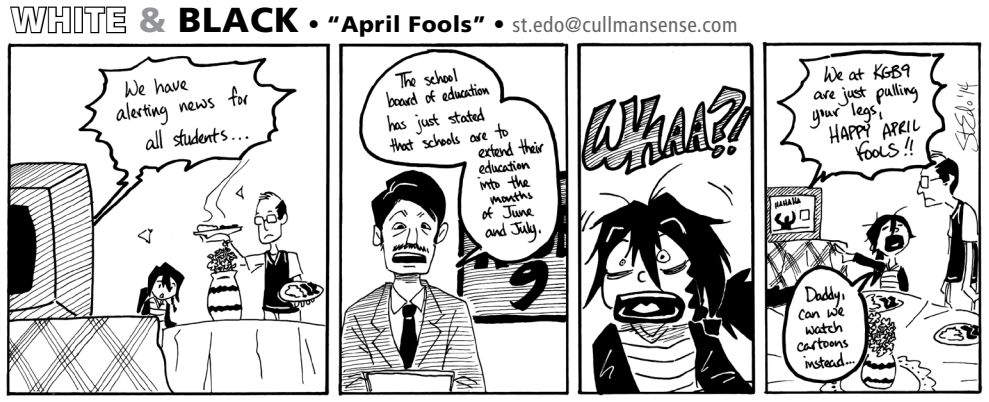
It's very paradoxical because they cast across the country for a production filming in the south.

However, it seems that that too might be changing soon. People in the Atlanta market are starting to audition more frequently and are booking jobs.

They have plans to start building studios in Atlanta, and it's also a lot cheaper to live there. So, who knows, I might be packing it all up and moving back to the south. Only time will tell.

Comics

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SUNNY STREET



SUNNY STREET



The New York Theatre Ballet to Perform in Cullman, Ala. on April 6, 2014

By: Steve Emahiser

» Cullman Ballet Society and Cullman Community Concert Association announce All-ages dance performance as part of their 2013 - 2014 Concert Season

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The New York Times called the New York Theatre Ballet "an invaluable company" for their compelling work onstage and their commitment as evangelists for Dance. The storied dance company will perform a program of scenes from classic works, including Cinderella (Prokofiev) and Sleeping Beauty (Tchaikovsky), at the Betty Leeth Haynes Theatre on the Wallace Stage Community College campus on Sunday, April 6, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

Single tickets will be available at the door for $20 (adults) and $10 (students). For more information please call 256-255-1515, or visit the association online at www.cullmancommunityconcertassociation.com

Cullman Ballet Society will also sponsor a student outreach performance by New York Theatre Ballet Monday, April 7th as part of their ongoing commitment to support arts education in the community.

Founded in 1978 by Diana Byer, the New York Theatre Ballet is one of the most widely seen companies in the United States. New York Theatre Ballet ("NYTB") is dedicated to inspiring a love of dance and enriching diverse audiences through its performances of contemporary and classic chamber ballet masterpieces for adults and innovative one-hour ballets for children. The troupe commonly performs in smaller towns and venues as part of their focus on new audiences and under-served children; they are often the first dance performance experience for many guests.

The Cullman Community Concert Association was established in 1949. The organization is committed to bring a wide variety of entertainment of the highest caliber to the community at a reasonable price.

Live On Stage, Inc. provides excellent, affordable, entertainment attractions and support services to an American community of concert presenters. For more information, visit www.LiveOnStage.biz.

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Editorial Cartoon



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OPINION

The Letdowns of a College Degree

By: Sage Overton
Local Contributor

A house. A white picket fence. Two cars. A pet. Maybe a couple of children. That's the American dream everyone is raised on. Everyone is also raised with the belief that great grades in high school and a four-year degree from a good college or university will make it happen. Sadly all these are quickly becoming more of a dream and less of a reality for most Americans.

The first hurdle is the price of attending college. The average cost for a year of college rises about 8.3 percent annually.

The last 10 years have seen the price of public university increase by 104 percent. In 2010, the average price of attending a public four-year school was $13,563.

One major factor in the rise of rates has been the decline in state assistance. State funds for higher education have decreased almost 20 percent since 2007.

Another factor has been changes in campus housings. Things once considered a luxury such as single dorm rooms, high speed internet access and cable are becoming an expected standard.

Large-scale community bathrooms to serve an entire floor are being replaced by ones shared by only a handful of roommates. The updating and retrofitting of dormitories enacting these changes are passed along in increased costs.

To afford these increased costs, students have been forced into borrowing more and more money, mostly through Federal Direct Loans. Of the 20 million students who attend college every year, almost 60 percent or 12 million of them borrow money.

The average graduate will leave school with around $25,000 in student loan debt. A third will take their diploma with more than $28,000 in loans to repay.

Ten percent will owe more than $50,000. Currently it's estimated there are more than 37 million Americans with student loans worth between $900 billion and one trillion dollars. Most of the debt is held by the federal government, around $850 billion.

The real problem is repaying these debts. Only 37 percent of borrowers repay perfectly. In the first five years of repayment, 14 percent of all borrowers will miss at least one payment.

Two out of every five of those borrowers will become seriously delinquent in the first five years. An estimated 10 percent of federal loans or $85 billion are past due or in default.

Graduates in default say they can't repay on time because they can't find work. Forty-eight percent of graduates between the ages of 25 and 34 report to be unemployed or under-employed. In 2009, shortly following the start of The Great Reception, only half of graduates were able to find work. Of that half, 43 percent say the work they did find didn't even require a degree.

By 2011, the number of graduates unable to find work had risen to 53 percent. Of the 10.8 million unemployed Americans, those in the age group between 18 to 34 make up 5.5 million of them, around half.

The reasons why indicate a large disconnect between what employers are seeking and what college graduates are offering them.

Three quarters of employers say most college grads are seriously lacking in work ethic. Simple tasks such as showing up on time and seeing projects through to completion are not coming with the degrees they earn.

Sixty percent of employers say they can't find candidates with enough "soft skills." Recent graduates can't navigate an office. Soft skills include things such as motivation, a professional appearance, flexibility and interpersonal skills. An estimated 3.1 million jobs exist in the U.S. right now that employers simply cannot fill.

A high percentage of these are technical jobs, such as electrical wiring or plumbing. These jobs require years of hands-on experience and training, something that many college degrees simply don't include or equip students with. Graduates claim many fields with entry-level jobs they've traditionally held in the past have fallen victim to outsourcing.

Regardless of the reasons, employers and would-be employees are failing to match up and the root of the situation remains.

Students unable to repay debt and those paying but strangled by it are slow in achieving life's milestones. They are putting off things like buying new cars or a home.

Many are also choosing to wait for marriage or having children. The result? Many of the things that fuel the economy and growth are simply not happening. A degree can no longer guarantee the dream. More and more are seeing the price of a higher education as a high cost gamble, one where life after graduation may not be worth it.

A Misunderstanding

Dear Editor,

The story that ran March 17th, "Cullman High School Class of 1947 Reunites", contained a misunderstanding. This was not an official class reunion. The newspaper had received some erroneous information. As stated in the article, I was surprised to find the newspaper and the high school students in attendance.

The accurate account is that I was in town to reunite five friends that were from the class of '47 and have stayed connected through the years. I regret any hard feelings that may have occurred because other classmates had not been invited to the gathering.

Sincerely,
Doris Ann Clemons Davis
Longview, TX

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