SERIES 4 • ISSUE 33 • AUGUST 25, 2014
CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS



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CONTRIBUTED

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COLD AS ICE

» NATIONAL ALS ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE MAKES LOCAL SPLASH - P4





KATE MULLANEY/CULLMANSENSE

» The cold water proved refreshing for Mayor Townson and councilmen on a hot Friday outside City Hall as they took the Ice Bucket Challenge to raise money and awareness for ALS.

FARMERS FEDERATION APPLAUDS GOVERNOR'S CREATION OF DRONE TASK FORCE

Jeff Helms
Contributor

MONTGOMERY - Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell praised Gov. Robert Bentley's leadership in creating the Alabama Drone Task Force.

"Unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, have the potential to help farmers better manage crops and livestock," Parnell said.

"We appreciate the governor's proactive efforts to explore how we can best use this technology while protecting private property rights."

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CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH TO BEGIN BEANS & RICE MINISTRY

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN - Grace Episcopal Church will be offering free "Beans & Rice" to all that come by the church beginning October 18 of this year. This ministry has its roots in First Presbyterian Church, Prairie Grove, Ark. over 30 years ago (1982). It was introduced to Alabama by the Rev. Bill King, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Clanton in October 2005. Since then, it has spread to 18 parishes, including now Grace Episcopal Church here in Cullman.

Simple and straightforward, 2 pounds of beans in one bag and 3 pounds of rice in another will be given to the families who come to the church on a given Saturday morning. No names, addresses, income levels, or any other personal information is gathered. Food will be freely shared to all who come until the food is gone. This is Christian hospitality as described in the Book of Acts.

"The Beans & Rice Ministry will be a new ministry for Grace Episcopal beginning in October of this year," explained Jerry Jacob, deacon. "It will be held once a month on the third Saturday. Once operational, it will be the 18th Episcopal Church in the Alabama Diocese to have a Beans & Rice ministry."

If you or someone you

p7



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

» Trinity Episcopal puts out a sign every month before their Beans and Rice Day.

Farm Y'all Celebrates Another Successful Year

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN - Cullman's amazing agriculture was celebrated at the 2014 Farm Y'all event, which was held all day Saturday at Depot Park and at the Festhalle. A product of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce, the day was filled with loads of fun for all ages. This year marks the second year for the event, and it is celebrated as a way of honoring our local farmers.

"This is a celebration for our farmers from the community to say thank you for everything they have done," said Cherrie Haney of

p2



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

» A child tests his mechanical bull riding skills at the second annual Farm Y'all.

CLUB SOCCER TO BEGIN IN CULLMAN

Will Hogue
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CULLMAN - Club soccer is starting up in Cullman thanks to the introduction of two girls' squads: a U10 squad and a U11 squad.

Shawn Woods, team manager for the new club, believes this could be the beginning of a new soccer era in Cullman.

"I believe there is a huge demand for more clubs in the near future," Woods said.

Because the two squads are relatively small and they're the first club teams in Cullman, the club will be under the umbrella of the Decatur Raptors in order to be eligible for state competitions and related events.

The first ever scrimmage was held recently, and the Cullman team defeated Decatur 8-3. That game, of course, was a friendly one and did not count toward either team's record.

The first game of that

p3

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FORMER ALABAMA FIRST LADY SPEAKS ON THE BENEFITS OF LOCAL BAMBOO AT COMMUNITY LUNCHEON

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN - The guest speaker at this month's Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce Community Luncheon was former First Lady of Alabama, Mrs. Marsha Folsom.

Not only is Folsom a former First Lady, but she is also a CCSF Distinguished Service Award recipient, and founder of Cullman City Schools Foundation back in 1996.

Folsom owns her own business development consulting firm and serves as the Chief Development Officer of Resource Fiber, a company that is dedicated to the growing and manufacturing of bamboo in the Black Belt Region of Alabama.

She is also founder and CEO of Alabamboo Partners, LLC, which is designed to promote the bamboo industry.

"There are over 200 products that we import into this country every year," Folsom explained.

"It was a shock to me to find out that we don't grow any of it and we don't manufacture any of it here in the U.S. Now being a good red-blooded American citizen, I just think that's horrible! That's one of the things that compelled me to create this industry here in the U.S. because we can do it."

The Alabama Black Belt region and surrounding area makes for an ideal environment for bamboo growth due to the rich soil, mild climate, amount of annual rainfall, and available farmland. All of these are conducive to abundant bamboo production.

Bamboo Facts:

- It's a grass. Moso can grow up to 2-feet per day reaching its maximum height of 80 feet in just two months.
- You can plant once. It may be annually harvested on a rotational basis for decades between three and six years depending on the species.
- Bamboo has greater compressive strength than concrete and about the same strength-to-weight ratio as steel in tension.
- Requires limited resources such as water, fertilizer and pesticides.
- Excellent for rejuvenating degraded lands and protecting against soil erosion.
- In addition to the culms, the remainder of the plant may be used in rural livelihoods – shoots for food, leaves for fodder, and branches for items such as brooms and firewood.
- Resistant to extreme weather.

Folsom has great plans to incorporate the bamboo industry into the daily lives of many Alabamians.

Whether by farming, manufacturing, or learning about it in school, Marcia Folsom and the folks at Resource Fiber will make it happen.

For more information about bamboo, as well as Resource Fiber, please visit their webpage at www.resource-fiber.com. You may also send Marsha Folsom a message by e-mail at mfolsom@resource-fiber.com.



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

» Former First Lady of Alabama, Mrs. Marsha Folsom is an advocate for Alabama grown bamboo.

CRMC's ONE Rehab & Sports Medicine Offers Friday Night Injury Clinic

Heather Roberts
CRMC Contributor

CULLMAN - ONE Rehab & Sports Medicine of Cullman Regional Medical Center (CRMC) opens the Friday Night Injury Clinic again this football season.

Starting at 9 p.m. until approximately midnight in CRMC's Medical Day Hospital, athletes can see the staff of Sports Medicine Specialists, Orthopedic Surgeons, and Athletic Trainers.

The clinic provides an assessment of and treatment for injuries sustained during games.

Appointments are not necessary and the wait time is minimal.

The clinic begins on Friday, August 29 and will run through the regular high school football season ending Friday, October 31.

ONE Sports Medicine Certified Athletic Trainers, Donna Chamblee, Scott Lochridge, and Lindsey Kent are proud to provide exclusive athletic healthcare to the following schools — Cullman, Fairview, and West Point; however the Friday Night Injury Clinic is open to athletes from all area schools.

Call Cullman Regional Medical Center 256-737-2000 for more information on the Friday Night Injury Clinic or visit us online at www.crmchospital.com to find out more about the services offered by ONE Sports Medicine.

CRMC AUXILIARY DONATES TO CEMS EQUIPMENT FUND

Amy Linton
CRMC Contributor

CULLMAN - The Cullman Regional Medical Center Auxiliary recently donated $5,000 to the Cullman Emergency Medical Services (CEMS Ambulance Service) Equipment Fund. The CEMS Fund was established by the CRMC Foundation after the CEMS building, equipment, and furnishings were destroyed during the April 27, 2011 tornado.

Susan Copeland, CRMC Vice President of Ambulatory Services said, "This donation will help with the expenses necessary for equipment and furnishings for the new CEMS Building". CEMS is also selling canvas bags to help raise funds for the building and all proceeds go towards this venture.

For more information on how you can donate to the CEMS Fund, please contact the CRMC Foundation at www.crmchospital.com/foundation or 256-737-2565.



CRMC

» Pictured are Jerry Sellers, Director of CEMS Ambulance Service; Sarah Hicks, President of CRMC Auxiliary; and Susan Copeland, CRMC Vice President of Ambulatory Services.

Farm (from Front)

the Cullman County Economic Development Agency.

Regionally and nationally celebrated chefs stood in front of crowds of people and prepared their own unique dishes featuring local Cullman County foods for people to sample. The chefs that participated in the demonstrations were Alan Martin of Dyron's Lowcountry, Chef Zack Redes of Highlands Bar & Grill, Chef Clifton Holt of Little Savannah, Chef Maurico Papapietro of Brick & Tin and last but not least, Chef Matt Heim from All Steak. Chef Frank Stitt was honored at 11 a.m. that morning.

Big fat pumpkins and watermelons were driven in by the truckload by farmers all morning. The drivers were clearly anxious to compete in The Great Pumpkin Weigh Off at 2 p.m. in the afternoon. As a result, Trent Boyd is the new state champion pumpkin grower with his pumpkin weighing in at 1,091.5 lbs. Mayor Max Townson dropped one of these massive pumpkins from a crane at the end of the day. Everyone who attended squealed in excitement as they watched the massive thing drop and splatter everywhere!

Children had plenty of things to do and everywhere you turned, there were red-cheeked little ones chattering up a storm as they went from one vendor to the next.

Sack races, corn hole games, horse shoe pitching, and petting zoos were just a few of the attractions kids got to do as they toddled through Depot Park.

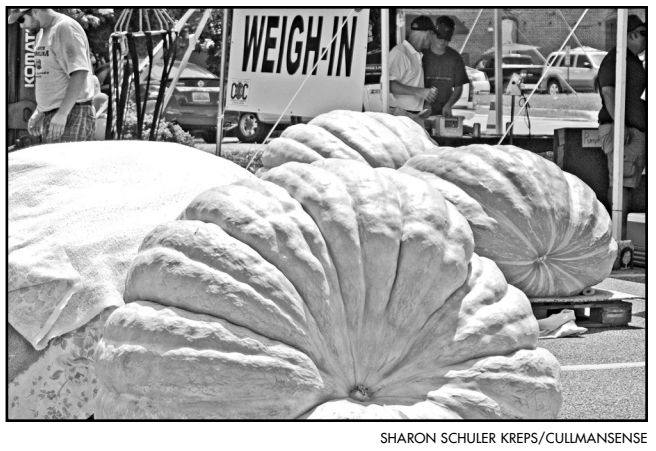
Among the different attractions were a mechanical bull riding booth and a cow milking exhibit, where a cow was hooked up to a milking machine that pumped fresh milk into a big glass container that hung from a hook.

Various exhibits were scattered throughout the park and valuable information was provided about local farmers and their products. Cullman Master Gardeners had an informative booth and their volunteers represented them well.

"I have been a master gardener in three different states," said Virginia Fisher Murdock. "I got my training in South Carolina. It's a comprehensive course in growing everything from the soil on up. People who are master gardeners, no matter where it is, they are the nicest people. People who get their hands in the dirt are grounded. They always share their plants. They beautify the world, and it's not just the plants, it's also their smile."

From the excellent vendors to the ripe, tasty home grown produce, Farm Y'all has proved to be a wonderful way to thank our hard working farmers for all they do to keep us fed and happy. After all, Cullman's agricultural community affects us all.

"We are the number one agricultural county in the state," explained Tony Glover, chairman of the Cullman Chamber Agriculture Committee. "There's a $2.4 billion dollar economic activity from our agriculture community and over 15,000 jobs."



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

» Great Pumpkin Weigh Off winner and new state champion pumpkin grower Trent Boyd's pumpkin weighed 1,091.5 lbs.

THE GIRLS OF DOOM: FEMALES PLAY A MEAN GAME OF PAINTBALL AT HISTORIC MT. DOOM PAINTBALL FIELD

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

HANCEVILLE - Did you know that our very own Mt. Doom paintball field is Alabama's oldest paintball field? It is also one of the 20 oldest fields in the world. Located on a highly wooded mountain top, Mt. Doom has been in operation since 1986.

"We had started playing paintball games in the timberlands owned by my father on Garden City Mountain," explained owner Doug Arnold. "With over 240 acres of woods, Dan [Ziegenbein] asked me if I would please keep allowing players to come out and play back in the woods here and I was happy to say yes. I started holding monthly games for anyone who wanted a place to play. In 1987, I named the field Mountain of Doom Paintball Field after the volcano in the Lord of the Rings book series. I shortened the name to Mt. Doom and we have operated under this name ever since, thus making my field one of the oldest operating paintball fields in the world."

The actual game of paintball had just been invented a few years before Doug and Dan discovered it. As a matter of fact, Charles Gaines and Bill Gurnsey, a couple of buddies from New Hampshire, invented the game of paintball in the late 70s using Nelson Paint Company's paint guns and pellets. Nelson Paint Company had just come out with a gas-powered gun and marking pellets for use in a variety of industries.

Both the guns and the pellets were used to mark trees for removal, cows to be plucked from the herd, and just about anything else that required putting a semi-permanent mark on an object from a distance. The game of paintball had humble beginnings, but it continues to grow and develop new strategies every day.

"The first groups of players came from the local churches followed by business outings," Arnold said. "Youth ministers discovered paintball to be a very cost friendly alternative to long drives to amusement parks and the kids begged for return visits all year long. Soon school athletic teams, college fraternities and sororities, and business associates began calling and booking games at Mt. Doom. To date many of the area churches have been visiting Mt. Doom for well over 25 years and thousands of kids and adults have played in my woods," he smiled proudly.

Mt. Doom is a family oriented paintball field. They do not allow bad language or abusive play. Their games were created to be fun for children and adults, both male and female. Most folks think of paintball as something a bunch of grubby ole boys get out and do, but I found something interesting as I researched Mt. Doom: girls are really good at it!

"Girls enjoy paintball just as much as boys do and are born with certain skills that give them a great advantage in this sport," Arnold grinned sheepishly. "Female multitasking skills are much better than males and they can keep up with several moving targets at once. Women can acquire a target and fire on it much faster than a male can, and ladies can be much more patient waiting for the right time to move on the field."



CONTRIBUTED

» According to Mt. Doom owner Doug Arnold, females can acquire a target and fire on it more quickly than a male.

Mt. Doom is open to the public every weekend for "walk-on" games. This is where players can go out and join a big group to play one another. Their hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and they often stay open longer when daylight allows. They also specialize in private games for groups of 10 or more players.

They can hold these games any day of the week during the time slot the group selects when scheduling their game. Mt. Doom has a very large lighted area that covers four of their most popular playing fields, so night games are very popular.

For more information or to reserve a private game, just call 256-339-1601 anytime and they will hook you up. They also have a monthly updated website at www.mtdoompaintball.com. To find them on Facebook, just type Mt. Doom Paintball Field into the search bar and "Like" their page for more updates.

Soccer (from Front)

magnitude came Saturday, August 16 against Huntsville's H.F.C. at 1 p.m. at the Cullman High School soccer field.

The aspiration of having these clubs at such young ages, under 10 and under 11, is to instill a higher competitive soccer ability than the one annually provided by AYSO.

Hopefully, within four to five years, Cullman will be a statewide power when it comes to soccer. And given 10 years to perfect the system and training, perhaps our North Alabama County can be a southeastern and, perhaps even, national competitor.

The U10 and U11 teams' seasons started Saturday before last and will be 10 games long for each of them.

Each squad will play eight games that count for the State Cup in May, and they also will play two games against interdivisional opponents, however, those two games will not count against their record, but will assist the players in getting extra practice and experience.

The odd quirk about soccer in Alabama is that the state tournament isn't played until May. However, there are tournaments to keep the teams in form and can keep the players from getting rusty.

There are three tournaments between now and May throughout the state for girls playing for U10 and U11 clubs: in Auburn at the end of August; in Decatur in September; and Huntsville during the month of October.

At the age that the girls competing for the clubs are, there are enough teams and clubs to be able to stay in-state, "But," says team manager Shawn Woods, "as the girls get older and progress into higher and higher competitive levels, the need to travel will arise, and interstate competition will happen."

The aspiration is that club soccer balloons into a massively successful endeavor in Cullman, and the city and county become vanguards for soccer in the southeast.

During the game held on Saturday, August 16, the Cullman U10 girls won 4-1 against their Huntsville counterparts.

However, the game wasn't really won until the second half, when striker Mercy Van Dyke and goalkeeper Gracie Barksdale were able to contribute, and Cullman pushed forward to a strong victory in their first state match.

Jacob Brown, coach of the girls teams, said, "This is one of the most athletic group of girls I have seen in a long time. If they work hard, they have a very bright future. I look forward to coaching them in high school."

Best of luck to these new teams and to the accomplishment of club soccer in Cullman!



K3 FOTOS

» The U10 and U11 girls soccer squads are the first club teams in Cullman.

CRMC WELCOMES MARTHA A. READ, MD TO THE COMMUNITY



Cullman Regional Medical Center is pleased to welcome Family Practitioner Martha A. Read, MD, PharmD, MLIS, to the community. Read graduated Cum Laude with a Doctor of Medicine degree from The University of Alabama School of Medicine in Birmingham. Prior to that, she obtained a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy in Birmingham, Ala. She also completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Molecular Biology, Summa Cum Laude, at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., and a Master of Library and Information Studies from The University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Read completed her Family Medicine residency at Montgomery Family Medicine in July 2014, and previously trained as a Pediatric Intern at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania and as a Pathology Resident at UAB Medical Center. She was formerly Director of Medical Informatics at The University of Alabama School of Medicine, College of Community Health Sciences in Tuscaloosa. Read has also worked as a clinical information librarian, pharmacist and an assistant professor at Samford University and at The University of Alabama.

Read enjoys reading, swimming, trail walking (especially in the mountains) and spending time with her family. She is married to Bill Read and has one daughter, Chelsey, who recently graduated from The University of Alabama with Honors.

"I'm very excited about coming to Cullman and becoming a part of the community. For me, Cullman offers the ideal balance between city amenities and natural beauty. I very much look forward to meeting the people of Cullman and the opportunity to contribute to improving their quality of life in any way that I can. I see myself staying here a long time."

Dr. Read is currently scheduling appointments for new patients.
To schedule an appointment, call (256) 736-2273 (CARE).

Martha A. Read, MD
Family Practice
Cullman Primary Care, PC
408 Clark Street
Cullman, AL 35055
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CULLMAN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
www.crmchospital.com

LOCAL BUSINESS

TABLESCAPES MORE THAN JUST DECORATION

Jessica Norrell
jessica@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - If you're looking to put the perfect finishing touches on your wedding or special event, look no further than TableScapes in Cullman. Owner Amanda Gillilan can add a touch of design to make your special day memorable and camera-ready.

Gillialan says, "I have always loved planning events. Even as a teen, I was always involved with planning, setting up, decorating, and even coming up with new ideas. But it wasn't until two years ago that I began pursuing it as a career."

Gillilan got a feel for designing for events working a freelance job for KG Designs. She recalls her experience that drove her to pursue designing as a career.

"KG Designs is a company in Birmingham specializing in weddings, parties, and corporate events. A good friend of mine had done freelance work for them for years and they needed extra help for a big weekend, so he called me. I was completely taken in by all of it. The beautiful venues, the gorgeous flowers, the people I met along the way, and the satisfaction I found in helping bring life to a well-designed event. Two weeks after that weekend, I was hired, too, as a freelance designer," she said.

Gillilan worked at KG Designs while gaining valuable experience for one year before her boss moved to Atlanta to pursue his dream job. She then went to Hothouse Design Studio where she was able to get another year of training and experience to add to her growing portfolio.

"Though I still work at Hothouse when they need me, I started to think maybe I could do it on my own and actually get to work in Cullman. I came up with the name TableScapes. I wanted a name to convey that I was all about any event, not just weddings," Gillilan stated.

"Originally, I intended to start building up my props and products by renting out containers, urns, birdcages, lanterns, and any other prop you could think of. But I really like to have my hand in just about every aspect of it," she says about developing her own business.

Gillilan has become a polished professional and offers her services here in Cullman. She started by actively pursuing a way to promote her business so it could take off.

"I ordered some business cards and started handing them out. Wasn't long till I got my first official call to plan and execute a wedding. For me, it's about making a bride's dream come true. Some girl's dream of that day their whole lives. I take my job very seriously to make it happen for them," she says about her business.

Gillilan offers a variety of services for any event. Not only does Gillilan work alone to make your event beautiful but she also calls on family and friends who compliment the business to create the perfect package. Her sister owns Mineral Way Makeup.

"As far as services offered, I will do anything from design to just renting out a vase. My first service is always to sit down personally with a bride or event coordinator to understand what they are trying to accomplish. Then it just depends on how much they are willing to let me do," she says excitedly. "I can design the entire event, hire labor to set up and take down, order linens, hire photographers and caterers, have tables and chairs delivered, arrange for lighting and draping. I do flowers some myself but usually I call in a very talented friend to help with that. I even have my mother available to make cakes. It's a family thing really. My sister does makeup for brides, my dad can build anything I need, and my husband and boys load and unload."

Whatever your event decorating needs, TableScapes can provide with overwhelming satisfaction that goes above and beyond expectations.

TableScapes is located at 207A 3rd Street SW in Cullman. If you need additional information, you can also e-mail Amanda at tablescapescullman@gmail.com or call at 256-775-2519.

ALS (from Front)

Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Have you dumped a bucket of ice water on your head lately? If you haven't, you've probably seen your friends doing it on social media. The ALS ice bucket challenge has swept across the nation amusing America while raising money for a good cause.

This quirky challenge raises money for the ALS Association, an organization established in 1985. It is the only national non-profit organization that fights Lou Gehrig's Disease. This association encourages and gives hope to those who have this disease by leading the way in research, care, and public education.

Headquartered in Washington D.C., the mission of the ALS Association is to "lead the fight to treat and cure ALS through the global research and nationwide advocacy, while also empowering people with Lou Gehrig's Disease and their families to live fuller lives by providing them with compassionate care and support."

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. It ended the career of baseball legend Lou Gehrig and is often associated with his name.

The challenge is simple: you are challenged to dump a bucket of ice water on your head. You have 24 hours to do so, or you must donate money to the ALS Association. Individuals, organizations, families, and celebrities have taken the challenge. Many choose to either donate money or get soaked, but even more choose to do both.

This challenge is excellent marketing for the ALS Association. The ice bucket challenge uses the internet to spread the word, and the spokespeople? You!

The challenge was started in July by a professional golfer in Sarasota, Florida. Since then, it has spread like wildfire raising awareness for this disease.

A reported $31.5 million has been raised for ALS since July. Compare that to the $1.9 million raised in 2012. As silly as the challenge is, it's raising money and awareness for this deadly disease.

Charlie Sheen wowed America with his bucket challenge. He stood indoors holding a bucket of ice water, but when he dumped it on his head, out fell $10,000. And he challenged Jon Cryer, Chuck Lorre, and Ashton Kutcher to do the same thing.

Another interesting celebrity bucket challenge is Pamela Anderson's. She turned down the challenge and instead challenged the ALS Association to stop animal testing.

Other celebrities who have participated include The Foo Fighters, Lady Gaga, Justin Beiber, James Franco, Anne Hathaway, and many more.

But this chilling dare isn't just for celebrities, and it's happening right here in our community. Mack McDaniel was recently challenged, and he loved participating.

"I did it because I was nominated and I like the idea of raising awareness for ALS," he said.

"I've been wanting to take the challenge. I was pretty nervous right before I did it but it felt pretty refreshing when it happened and it didn't hurt at all."

Rumors Deli owner Annette Harris is another who recently took the challenge.

"A friend challenged me to do the ALS ice bucket challenge," Harris said. "I had secretly hoped no one would, but it happened."

Harris immediately thought of Robert Hearin, a dear member of our community who was taken too soon by this horrible disease, when she learned what the ice bucket challenge was.

"We went to church with him," she said. "I never knew what it was until then, so I was very glad to do the bucket challenge."

Harris planned her challenge for the end of her workday and was worrying about it all day.

"I will admit I was dreading that ice and water coming down on my head all day," she said, "but by the end of the day, it was so hot outside, it actually felt good! It took me a few seconds to catch my breath, but I loved it!"

Harris also challenged a Rumors employee, Jordan Stricklin, to do it as well. But, Rumors Deli added their own twist to it as well.

"Jordan and I both decided if we were going to do it, we were going to do it big," stated Harris, "so we used a 32 gallon garbage can with water and 5 gallons of ice in it. Very cold!"

Finally, outside City Hall Friday afternoon, Mayor Townson accepted this daring ice bucket challenge along with Councilman John Cook, Councilman Clint Hollingsworth, and Councilman Andy Page.

"I would like to thank the Cullman Economic Development Agency for nominating me," said the Mayor.

"By the way, Councilwoman Jenny Folsom was nominated as well, and chose to only donate money so she could be a pourer."

Needless to say, the Mayor and these councilmen were soaked, but it was a hot day and the water was refreshing.

The ALS ice bucket challenge has swept the nation. Consider donating to this great cause. It's fun, productive and, of course, cold! If you haven't done it, one of your friends probably have. But don't feel left out, because you just might be the next one nominated to take the challenge.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Program Facilitator needed for local domestic violence intervention program.

Full time, BS degree required. Send resume to: vsoced@vsoccullman.org

CULLMAN COUNTY SCHOOLS ANNUAL TITLE I MEETINGS

Cullman County Schools
INTEGRITY | EXCELLENCE | DEDICATION

The following is a schedule of the required Annual Title I Parent Meetings for Cullman County Schools. All parents and interested community members are invited to attend. For more information, please contact the local school.

AUG. 25TH – MONDAY
- West Point Middle School – 3:15 p.m. in the lunchroom

AUG. 26TH – TUESDAY
- Good Hope Elementary and Middle School – 5:00 p.m. in the lunchroom

AUG. 27TH - WEDNESDAY
- Hanceville Elementary School – 4:30 p.m. in the elementary library

SEPT. 3RD – WEDNESDAY
- Holly Pond Elementary School – 3:00 p.m. in the school library
- Holly Pond Middle School - 3:30 p.m. in the Science lab

SEPT. 4TH – THURSDAY
- Harmony School – 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. in the school library

SEPT. 8TH – MONDAY
- Welti School – 6:00 p.m. in lunchroom

SEPT. 9TH – TUESDAY
- Fairview Elementary and Middle School – 3:15 p.m. in the high school auditorium
- Good Hope Primary School - 6:00 p.m. in the school library
- West Point Elementary School – 4:00 p.m. in the lunchroom

SEPT. 11TH – THURSDAY
- Parkside School – 3:15 p.m. in the lunchroom
- Vinemont Elementary School – 6:30 p.m. in the elementary library
- West Point Intermediate School – 3:30 p.m. in the middle school lunchroom

SEPT. 17TH – WEDNESDAY
- Cold Springs Elementary – 8:10 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. in the library
- Hanceville Middle School – 3:15 p.m. in the library

SEPT. 25TH – THURSDAY
- Vinemont Middle School - 3:30 p.m. in the upstairs resource room

50TH ANNIV. CELEBRATION OF WEST POINT'S FIRST FOOTBALL TEAM TO RECOGNIZE ORIGINAL PLAYERS AT HOME OPENER

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

WEST POINT - Imagine a handful of high school coaches hanging out in the old West Point field house, spitting sunflower seeds and talking about the good ole days. With big smiles and hearty laughs, they remember their 1973 team – the one which only lost one game. Before long, they get to talking about the 1994 team that went undefeated. Eventually, the conversation grows quiet, the men still sitting proudly with their chests puffed out, when suddenly Head Coach Don Farley realizes that the first team fielded by West Point was in 1964 and that this year marks their 50th year anniversary of high school football! Well, this isn't just something I made up – it really happened! Sparks of energy zapped through the air as the information sank in. The old boys began to scramble around in search of more information about this first football team.

"We have a framed picture of the program from that 1964 season where West Point played New Hope," Coach Farley explained. "It also has a roster so we got to looking at some of the names of those 'kids' and got to talking how we should do something to recognize them."

As a result of this amazing and timely discovery, the West Point Football Booster Club plans to recognize their first team members before the current team plays their home opener on September 19 against Pope John Paul II. It should be a fun night for everyone! And so the quest to locate and contact the 1964 football players has begun.

As with anything historical, there have been several surprises that have made this whole venture exciting and fun. Everything has roots, and the football team at West Point is no exception.

"I have found that we have at least three sets of Granddads and Grandsons on the team, and I hope to find out that we have more," said Farley with a smile. "I think it is pretty cool that they are part of the 1st year and 50th year teams. Also, in doing the research I found out that West Point's first ever victory took place on September 19, 1964, which coincidentally is the night we are planning on recognizing the 1964 Team," he said proudly. "I thought that was really neat. Hopefully our guys can match that team's success from that same night 50 years ago with an all important region victory."

I hope so too. I also hope there are as many original players at the game as possible. The West Point Quarterback Club has been getting the word out through Facebook and other social media outlets. Some members have been contacted and hopefully they are able to spread the word to their other team mates.

If you or someone you know played football for West Point High School in 1964, Coach Farley would like to hear from you.

"They can get in touch with our Booster Club through Facebook - West Point Quarterback Club or they can call the school at 256-734-5375 for more information," said Farley. "We definitely want to make sure we don't overlook any player from that team."

FESTIVAL KICKS OFF 8-WEEK TENNIS PROGRAM

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – On Sunday, August 17, an entirely untapped "gold mine" of tennis culture was discovered at the Tennis Festival at the Cullman City tennis courts just across from Cullman High School.

According to Cameron Everett, facility director at the Cullman Wellness and Aquatics Center, and someone who's majorly involved in sparking a tennis passion in Cullman, the attendance of the festival was a success.

"Considering the day of the week [Sunday] and the weather being iffy, we had a great turnout," Everett explained. "We had over 43 children sign up for our Junior Tennis League, which is an 8-week program that involves three weeks of practice and five weeks of competitive fun play," he continued.

Everett went on to reveal that the prizes were well received and that the free food being provided at the event was a hit.

The rain held back just as the festival was starting up, and the atmosphere at the courts was fun and family friendly, but not flippant.

There were groups of young ones rotating to each court, each group engaging in a different tennis drill to help improve their game.

The children were all young, but each one had a racket in hand, and they were all shuffling around the courts swiftly.

Don't be surprised if the winner of the 2025 Wimbledon proudly says, "I remember back 10 years ago when I first stepped on the court, back in Cullman, Alabama. I fell in love with tennis."

Okay, maybe that's a long shot. But, if the program that Everett and his colleagues have put together is able to inspire kids to be active and introduces them to a sport that they would probably not have played otherwise, then it's a success.

SHARE A COKE: COCA-COLA COMPANY CELEBRATES THEIR SUMMER CAMPAIGN

Kate Mullaney
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CULLMAN - From Aaron to Zach, Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign has the whole alphabet. At the beginning of this summer, Coke added 250 of the most popular names among American teens and Millennials to their bottles.

This campaign began in 2011 in Australia. Since then, it has hit 50 countries and has finally found its way to the States. Names are on Coke, Coke Zero, and Diet Coke Coca-Cola encourages you to find your name, as well as the names of your family and friends.

Coca-Cola has used tons of creative campaigns as part of their marketing plan, and they've come a long way since Coke was first created. The history of the Coke bottle is a long, but interesting one.

In 1894, a Mississippi man began bottling Coca-Cola at his shop due to the high sale of the product from glasses. Like most bottles at the time, his bottles had straight sides.

In 1916 Coca-Cola introduced the contoured bottle in order to distinguish itself from "copycat" colas. These bottles were designed after the shape of a cocoa bean and have become extremely popular since then.

During the 1920s, Coca-Cola began selling bottles by the six-pack, and the amount of Coke sold in bottles exceeded the amount sold from a soda fountain.

In 1957 Coke stopped embossing its trademark on their bottles and replaced it with a white Applied Color Label. By 1961 the Coke label fully wrapped around the bottle and included both white and red.

This label became more sophisticated and complex until the introduction of the plastic bottle in 1994. In 2007, the Coca-Cola Company introduced the futuristic looking aluminum contoured bottle, which was designed for specific markets.

Today, Coca-Cola has stayed true to its label while keeping up with the times. The "Share a Coke" campaign was created to support the company's mission and legacy of bringing people together.

On the Coca-Cola website, Senior Vice President of sparkling brands Coca-Cola North America Stuart Kronauge stated: "Summer is the perfect time to get together with others and share moments of happiness over an ice cold Coke at barbecues, sporting events, family reunions, amusement park outings, and other gatherings. Now, enjoying a Coke with your name on it and sharing the occasion with someone else makes these moments even more special."

The campaign is for everyone, but it is specifically targeted to reach out to young people by making them feel special.

On the company's website, Kronauge stated that, "For teens and Millennials, personalization is not a fad, it's a way of life. It's about self-expression, individual storytelling, and staying connected with friends. 'Share a Coke' taps into all of those passions."

This campaign is designed to get people talking about Coke on social media. When someone finds their name on a bottle, they are likely to take a photo and share it on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

If you're wondering whether or not you can find your name on a bottle of Coke, you can find out at www.shareacoke.com/#find.

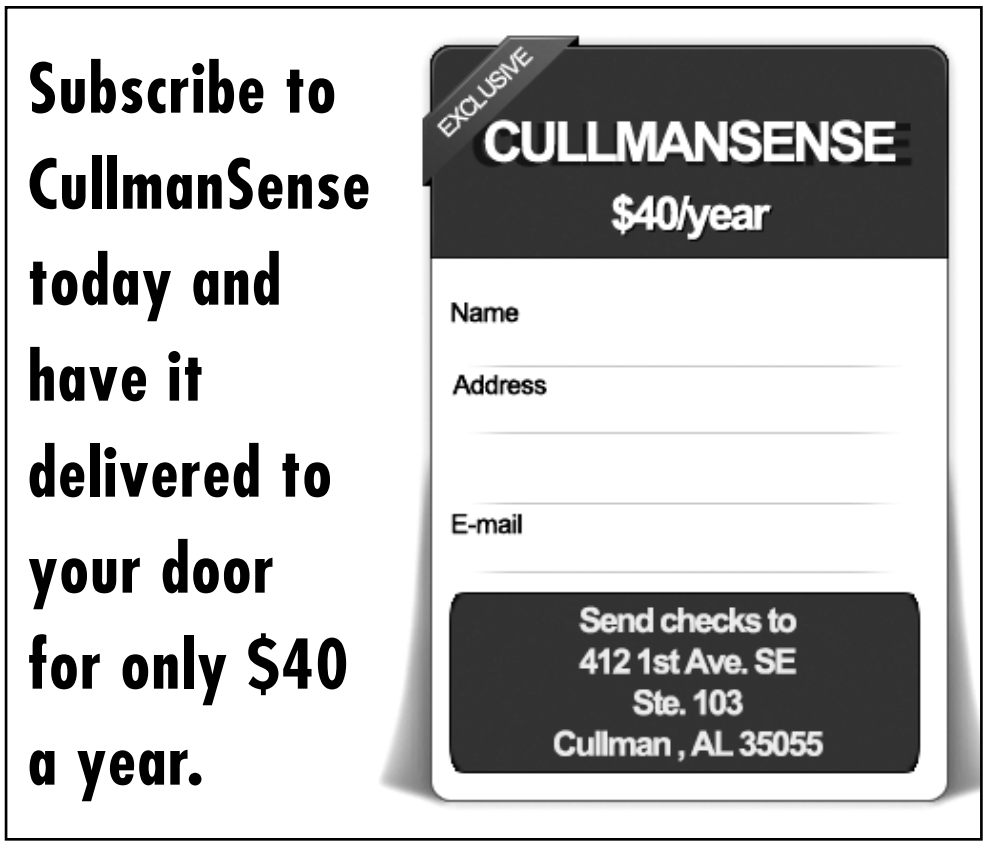
If you can't find your name, Coke also has bottles with friendly words such as "family", "friend", "star", and even "legend", so you'll definitely find your bottle.



CONTRIBUTED
» Coke makes 250 named bottles.

Be sure to find your name soon if you are interested because this campaign ends August 30th. Enjoy the rest of the summer and make sure to Share a Coke!





CULLMANITES LIGHT UP SPORTSMAN LAKE: COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION HOSTS ROCK & GLOW RUN

Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Cullmanites were running, rocking, and glowing at Saturday night's Rock & Glow 5K Run, hosted by Cullman County Parks and Recreation. This colorful event was held at Sportsman Lake Park.

The night began at 7 p.m. with a 5K and a 1.3-mile fun run. But this was no ordinary run. For this event, participants were instructed to glow.

"Everyone was supposed to be dressed up in their best glowing attire," said Sara Teichmiller, the marketing and events coordinator for Cullman County Parks and Recreation.

"Whether it was lit up tutus, fun glow batons, or even a glowing necklace. As long as you were glowing on course and able to be seen, you were doing your part."

The 1.3 mile fun run was perfect for children and adults alike, while the 5K was for the more practiced runner. Both courses featured music at multiple spots along the run, as well as a DJ motivating the runners by pumping the latest hits. Over 300 runners participated in this one of a kind event.

After the run was an after party where the DJ kept the party going.

This party featured bouncy houses, face painting, and a huge outdoor dance floor with crazy lights and lots of dancing.

"We had food for sale, glow items for sale, T-shirts, shaved ice, balloons, glow balloons... We had a little bit of everything," said Teichmiller smiling.

The after party also featured a glow costume contest as well as an adult and kid hula hoop contest.

"The winner of the costume contest had blinking sunglasses, a lit up tutu, bright glowing shoelaces, and more," said Teichmiller. "Everything was glowing."

Young participants had a blast at this event. 6-year-old Sipriss and her 4-year-old brother Zayne were glowing with happiness at the after party.

"The colors were my favorite part," giggled Sipriss.

"I dressed up and played all night," added Zayne.

The Rock & Glow Run was another glowing event by the Cullman County Parks and Recreation.

This group is constantly providing Cullman with exciting entertainment for all ages, and this one was no different.

Sportsman Lake lit up last weekend as Cullman rocked and glowed.



KATE MULLANEY/CULLMANSENSE

» Children and adults wore their favorite glowing attire to the Rock and Glow Run while a live DJ kept them motivated throughout the course.

CULLMAN'S SECRET WILDERNESS: HURRICANE CREEK PARK'S TRAILS LEAD TO FUN FOR EVERYONE

Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com

VINEMONT - From stress relief and exercise to beauty, hiking offers a world of benefits. Cullman's own Hurricane Creek Park offers a natural way to stay in shape and soak in the beauty. As nature's workout, hiking is the best way to relieve stress, stay in shape, and enjoy the great outdoors.

Located in Vinemont, Hurricane Creek Park is a 67+ acre forest, nestled in a 500-foot deep canyon. It was founded in 1961 and has aged with beauty since. Now, it has something to offer everyone, but the hiking trails steal the show. HCP has miles and miles of beautiful hiking trails that will whisk you away to a natural fairytale world.

Upon entering the park, you will immediately cross a bridge over a rain fed waterfall, which runs seasonally before coming to the Hi-trail/Low-trail intersection. The Low-trail features a steep descent and winding stairs which lead to the picnic area. The longer Hi-trail will bring you to the natural bridge, waterfalls, a more secluded picnic area, as well as the main picnic area.

Wife and assistant to manager of HCP, Denise Thomas-McCray describes the layout of this beautiful park.

"The HCP hiking trail consists of one 3-mile figure eight loop that switchbacks down the northern ridge, across the footbridge at the Kissing Rock, up to the famously fun Twilight Tunnel, then the trail continues up the southern ridge, and back down to the same footbridge, and up the steep Grandpa Trail to the park office," she says.

Mr. William "Buddy" Rodgers curated and loved HCP and later donated it to the state of Alabama.

"He had a good sense of humor in addition to being an architect, an engineer, and a tireless laborer," adds McCray. "Some of his original signs remain, like the Grandpa Trail, which is a very steep, but shorter way out. Other signs are missing and have a way of disappearing like Kissing Rock and Hi-Dive, which is a small overlook on the Lo-Trail."

The trails are steep and edgy with lots of twists and turns. It is physically challenging, but its beauty makes it worth the hike.

"HCP is Mother Nature's version of an adventure race," says McCray. "It is easy for some and more taxing for others, but beautiful for all. HCP is more enchanting and is harder than you might think. HCP is a challenge... all you have to do is say 'challenge accepted'."

This awesome bit of nature is also one of the official stops on the North Alabama Birding Trail, so you're likely to hear the calls of several song birds.

"If I'm quiet, I can hear a myriad of songbirds," McCray says, "the most distinctive being the call of the Pileated Woodpecker."

Your experience at Hurricane Creek Park will greatly depend on the season and its accompanying weather. Since it's summer, HCP is rather dry right now and the waterfalls are not flowing. This is typical during the hot season.

"The rain runs off quickly into the Hurricane Creek at the bottom of the canyon, then into the Flint and ultimately into the Tennessee River," says McCray. "Autumn is glorious and the winter is vastly underrated and very beautiful. HCP has a very pristine feel in the cold weather. Oh boy, when it snows!"

Though the park is beautiful and McCray encourages those who are able to come enjoy the nature, she does give a word of warning.

"We see all ages at HCP, but physical condition and determination are key factors in hiking the trails," she says. "It is not possible to navigate the rocky terrain with a stroller, but we do see parents who take babies in backpack style carriers. Also, the trails, by their very nature, are not appropriate for people who require aids such as walkers or wheelchairs. A walking or hiking stick is recommended for all."

Simply, these trails are hard to hike. If you're not in good shape but still want to enjoy the beauty of this patch of wilderness, McCray offers a solution:



CONTRIBUTED

» While its myriad of hiking trails are the main attraction, Hurricane Creek Park is also an excellent location to practice yoga and Tai Chi.

"Do what I do," she says. "Stop often to rest."

But hiking is demanding, even for those in tip top shape. So, if you exercise often, consider going to Hurricane to get some exercise in nature.

"HCP is like a stair stepper in a sauna in warm weather and like an elliptical in a refrigerator in winter," says McCray. "It is a fantastic place to trail run, practice Tai Chi or yoga. Rock climbing is also a fun group activity that really tests stamina and flexibility. We see a lot of people who are crossing over from martial arts and yoga into climbing and bouldering. They are like cousins in form and technique."

Hurricane Creek Park is a secret treasure; a scenic and enchanting place to visit. McCray recommends that visitors come and experience HCP at least four times a year to absorb each distinct season we have here in the Southeast.

"HCP is, after all, in the 'Toehills' of the 'Foothills of the Appalachian Mountains'," she says. "Everyone needs to get back to nature, whether it is at HCP or in their own backyard. Just get out!"

Go visit Hurricane Creek Park, and experience nature's beauty in Cullman's secret wilderness.

DANCING TO HER DREAMS: LOCAL DANCE TEACHER RETURNS FROM VISIT TO FAR EAST

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Melanie Mae Roberts, 21, has already accomplished a lot in her life. She is an accomplished dancer, a psychology student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), and an avid volunteer in the community. She also teaches dance at Cullman Dance Academy, and has brought from her recent travels to the east, new and exciting ideas for her students.

During the months of March, April, and May of this year, Roberts was in China for the experience of a lifetime.

"The main purpose of my trip was ultimately to broaden my dance career and follow my dreams," Roberts said. "I met a lady named Muriel Tarver who works with a talent agency in Southeastern China who blessed with me the opportunity, and they offered me a three month contract to perform in a Hip Hop Tour across the country."

The exhausting flight that lasted over half a day's time and the emersion into another culture so quickly was definitely a challenge for Roberts.

"My overall experience was incredible to say the least," said Roberts.

"The initial flight was 17 hours, and my first night at my new job in my new apartment was a major culture shock. My group and I got to perform several dances on stage each night as the main show and even as backup dancers for various Chinese singers who were also touring their own country."

The work was hard with constant rehearsals and new routines to learn weekly. In addition to the grueling performance schedule, Roberts said that the hardest part was being so far from home.

"The majority of the time felt so surreal, and I learned so much," Roberts said. "But also being away from home was very hard. Leaving my family, studio, and school to take this opportunity was extremely hard for me but it was definitely worth it."

For Roberts, the trip was a once in a lifetime opportunity. The chance to learn about and explore dance in a completely different culture was a dream come true.

Although there are some familiar things in the cities of China, like Starbucks and McDonald's, there are also major differences.

"Being a communist country there was no middle class. Everyone literally drove a Moped or a Ferrari," said Roberts. "Also they don't have houses, they all have high apartments regardless of income, and there were NO dryers. Lastly, they all listen to American Pop music and they especially love Britney Spears!"

When Roberts isn't touring the Eastern half of the globe, she is a teacher at the Cullman Dance Academy where she is entering her second year of teaching.

"I actually heard about CDA [Cullman Dance Academy] through my modern teacher at UA when I was a dance major. I called them and applied for the job. I came in to teach one class as they observed me and I stuck with them ever since. I absolutely fell in love with Cullman, the studio and all the girls!"

Roberts teaches several different styles of dance at the academy including jazz, ballet, contemporary and hip-hop. For her, the thrill of teaching is the joy of sharing her passion.

"My favorite part of teaching would have to be sharing my love of dance with these young dancers and being blessed with such great girls who share the same passion and love for dance as I do," Roberts said.

"These dancers are so inspiring and full of energy; they keep me on my feet! I thank God every day for blessing with the opportunity to teach and give back all the knowledge I have gained over the years through my experiences."

Roberts views dance as much more than simply a form of entertainment or an extracurricular activity, it is an emotional outlet.



CONTRIBUTED

» After her 17 hour flight, Melanie Mae Roberts participated in a three month Hip Hop Tour across China.

Her passion for dance and her students make her an invaluable member of Cullman Dance Academy and gives local dancers the opportunity to learn from the best.

"I would say dance should be a major interest in the community, not only because every child should take dance at least once in their lifetime, but ultimately because dance can take you far in life if you truly dedicate your time and energy! It teaches you discipline and a healthy lifestyle, and being a part of a studio is more like being a part of a family who will support you no matter what," she said.

Force (from Front)

Creation of the task force follows a June announcement by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) effectively grounding drones for commercial use.

The task force is chaired by Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries John McMillan and includes Alabama Department of Transportation Director John Cooper, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Director Gunter Guy, Alabama Law Enforcement Agency Secretary Spencer Collier and Montgomery Airport Authority Board Member Jimmy Reynolds.

In a release, Bentley said, "I believe drone use can benefit the state now and for generations to come, because drones offer many advantages to help our farmers and law enforcement agencies be successful."

"The governor's statement and choice of Commissioner McMillan to lead this group shows his interest in helping provide farmers the tools they need to be more successful," Parnell said.

Agricultural researchers have worked with Alabama farmers to demonstrate how drones can be paired with video cameras and sophisticated mapping software to provide producers better information about irrigation, soil conditions, plant health, animal care and pest management.

"The thing about a UAV is that it gives you a whole new perspective when we talk about agriculture," said John Fulton, former Alabama Farmers Federation professor in the Department of Biosystems Engineering at Auburn University. "There's a tremendous amount of opportunity to collect data or images, check cows or go out after a rain to see where water is standing."

The task force is scheduled to hold its first meeting Aug. 29 in Montgomery.

Ministry (from Front)

know is interested in working in this new ministry or would like to know more about Grace Episcopal Church, please stop by the church and pay them a visit.

They are located at 305 Arnold Street NE in Cullman. You can also give them a call at 256-734-6212. They also have a webpage at www.GraceCullman.dioala.org.



COUNTY WIDE YARD SALE
@ SPORTSMAN LAKE PARK
OCTOBER 25, 2014
We'll start taking reservations on September 3rd at 8:00 a.m.
The reservations will be on a first come first serve basis, and walk-ins will be taken first!
You may contact us at 256-734-3052



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2014
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Sweet Tater Festival

Continuous Entertainment
Door Prizes
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Food Venders
Kiddies Rides
Park Free
Become a Vender
Cullman County Sweet Taters



Smith Lake Park

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Pavilions
Cabins
Motor Home
Hook Ups
Boat Ramps
Swimming Pool
Face Book
Putt Putt Golf

FESTIVAL

$3.00 Admission
18 Annual
Free Park Admission

Sunday August 31 st -- 1 p.m. 'til 4 p.m.
Monday LABOR DAY September 1 st -- 8 a.m. 'til 3 p.m.



Street Rod
CAR SHOW
David Speegle 256-385-1401

Car Show
LABOR DAY 10 to 2
Sweet Tater's 2nd Car Show
Sweet Tater Money Sack
Money / Wall Mart Gift Cards
$10.00 Participate Fee

Become a Vender
Before Aug 1 $35.00 per Space
Vender Registration Form
www.sweettaterfestival.com

PEOPLES BANK of ALABAMA

Sweet Potatoes
Donated by
Cullman Country
Sweet Potato Growers

Tony Leonardi (256) 531-7916 days (256) 747-8635 evening

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.

Bosom Buddies Support Group
The Bosom Buddies Support Group offers support to individuals affected by Breast Cancer. The group will hold its next meeting on Monday, August 18 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in Cullman Regional Medical Centers Depot Room in the Community Education Center located in Professional Office Building 2 (1890 AL Highway 157, Cullman, AL 35058).

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.

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.

Rainwater Harvesting and Raingardens
Rainwater is a free, natural resource that can be harvested to use for irrigation. See different types of rainwater harvesting techniques at the Agriplex Heritage Center, beginning at 6 p.m., and learn the basics of rain gardens. The class is open to those aged 13 to adult.

Therapeutic Bowling for Those with Disabilities
All individuals with disabilities and their immediate family are invited to take part in the Cullman Parks & Recreation's Therapeutic Bowling program from 6 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. at the Cullman Bowling Center. Cost is $4.00 per bowler and lanes must be reserved by 4 pm on Tuesday. Please call Rhonda Davis, 256-962-2208 or Hollie Guiterrez at 256-734-9157.

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.

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.

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.

'Celebrate Recovery' at Hanceville First Baptist Church
There will be a 'Celebrate Recovery' meeting tonight starting at 7 p.m. at Hanceville First Baptist Church. Childcare will be available. Additional info Church office at 256-352-9150. Open to all!

'Snap' Benefit Program Meeting
NARCOG & CCCOA representatives will be on-site to screen individuals for SNAP (food assistance) and other public benefit programs including the Medicare Savings Program that can reduce Medicare costs. Information on other programs and services available through the Area Agency on Aging also will be shared. Please bring the following to facilitate screening Medicare Card, proof of income (letter from Social Security) and proof of medical expenses (premiums, co-pays). For additional information please contact NARCOG at 256-355-4515 or Cullman County Commission on Aging, 256-734-1241. Hours are from 10:45 a.m. until 12 noon at West Point Senior Center in the Town Hall. All seniors welcome to attend one of these sessions.

Ageless Grace Fitness Class
Come join in the Ageless Grace Fitness Class held each Thursday evening starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Cullman Civic Center. Leader Ann Caretti will show attendees the latest fitness tips available. The event is sponsored by Cullman Park and Recreation Department. Call 256-734-9157 for more information.

Good Hope Farmer's Market
Good Hope Farmers' Market is now open for local farmers to sell their produce from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. on Thursdays. This market is located in Good Hope's Hathcock Park. Everyone welcome to shop.

'Root Ministry' at Abundant Grace Church
There is a weekly meeting each Thursday night starting at 6 p.m. 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.

Dulcimer Classes
The Cullman City Parks & Recreation Senior Spirit Program is offering Dulcimer classes beginning July 11th. Classes will be held at the Donald E. Green Sr. Center on Fridays at 1 p.m. and taught by Craig Mann. Cost for the class is $10 for an hour. For more information or to register for the class contact Angie Jochum or Catherine Hasenbein at 256-734-4803.

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.

Saturday

Good Hope Farmer's Market
Good Hope Farmers' Market is now open for local farmers to sell their produce from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. on Saturdays. This market is located in Good Hope's Hathcock Park. Everyone welcome to shop.

Annual Cullman County Golf Championship
All golfers are invited to participate in the annual Cullman County Golf Championship which will take place this weekend, Saturday, August 30, and Sunday, August 31 at the Cullman Golf Course. This a two-day stroke play event and it will be flighted after the first round today. There is a $105.00 per player entry fee - this includes greens fees, cart fees, a practice round, prizes and a Saturday afternoon of college football on the big screen televisions in place and a cookout. This tournament championship is open to ALL golfers from other areas as well. For additional information and to preregister please call the Cullman Golf Course, 256-739-2386.

Laughter Yoga at the Cullman Civic Center
Everyone is invited to take part in 'Laughter Yoga' classes each Saturday morning starting at 10 a.m. Donations accepted but no set fee is charged. Come start your weekend out with some great 'laughs'! Please call 256-734-9157 for additional information.

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.

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!

This Week in Local Entertainment
Sponsored by Busy Bee Café

Monday, August 25
- 79 cent wings at Rodney G's Hickory Grill from 6-9 p.m.
- Open Mic Night at Berkeley Bob's from 7-9 p.m.
- Monday Fundays at the Aquatics Center from 6-11 p.m.

Tuesday, August 26
- Square Dancing Lessons at East Point Community Center from 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Pickin' Under the Pavilion at the Senior Center at 6:30 p.m.
- Trivia Night at Rodney G's at 7 p.m.
- Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-7 p.m.

Wednesday, August 27
- Story Time at the Hanceville Library at 10 a.m.
- Karaoke Night at Grumpy's at 7 p.m.
- Musician Craig Edwards at Brothers at 7 p.m.
- Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-7 p.m.
- Karaoke Night at Cadillac Ron's at 7 p.m.
- Ladies' Night at Cadillac Ron's from 5-8 p.m.

Thursday, August 28
- Open Mic Night at Brothers from 8 p.m. to close
- Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-7 p.m.
- Karaoke Night at Cadillac Ron's at 7 p.m.

Friday, August 29
- Live Music at Brothers
- Live Music at Moe's
- Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-6 p.m.
- Live Music at Cadillac Ron's from 8 p.m. to close

Saturday, August 30
- Live Music at Brothers
- Live Music at Moe's
- Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-6 p.m.
- Live Music at Cadillac Ron's from 8 p.m. to close

Sunday, August 31
- Annual Sweet Tater Festival at Smith Lake Park from 1-4 p.m.

Busy Bee Café
Try our German Food!

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For more information on our great advertising rates, please give me a call at 256-297-1408 or you can reach me through e-mail at shawn@cullmansense.com.

OPEN THE RED DOOR: UNCONVENTIONAL CLOTHING STORE SPECIALIZES IN CUSTOMER SERVICE



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

» Located inside a house, Red Door Clothing strives to find exactly the items its customers want and plays host to many private shopping parties.

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - There is a wonderful clothing store here in town that will have you all dressed up and looking good in no time! Cullman's Red Door Clothing is the place to go when creating your new wardrobe. Whether you are in the market for a spiffy new outfit, a classy pair of shoes with matching purse, or a vast array of bright and shiny jewelry, Red Door Clothing can hook you up with the latest styles and fashions.

"I sell misses and women's clothes and accessories," said Susan Ashley, owner.

"I specialize in customer service. If you are looking for something – let me know and I will find it, especially hard to find sizes in the latest styles."

The store is not like your average store, it's located at a residential home. The house had once belonged to Ashley's aunt who has since passed away.

"My shop is different because being out of the city in a house, you feel like you are at a friend's house borrowing an outfit – except you get to keep it," Ashley giggled.

"In the future, I am planning on growing the store by utilizing the internet and hiring another like-minded person to help me make Red Door Clothing better known."

One of the best parts about Red Door Clothing is its owner, Susan Ashley.

Hard working and lots of fun, she makes shopping just that – fun. After spending any amount of time with her in the shop, almost everyone will agree it is totally worth the trip out.

"I want to know what you want me to carry," Ashley continued. "E-mail me, call me, or send me a message on Facebook. Tell me your size, a brand you like, whatever it is you are leaving town to get or buying online. I'll do my best to find it."

Another thing that sets Red Door Clothing apart from the rest is that they heavily promote private shopping parties. This is where a group of friends can get together and shop. They have the whole store to themselves at a time that is convenient for everyone.

Make sure to stop by and visit Susan Ashley at Red Door Clothing. You will have plenty of merchandise to choose from and will save lots money as well.

They are always running a sale and you are sure to find something you just can't do without.

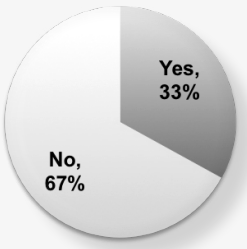
The store is located at 3141 County Road 1422 in Cullman. They can be phoned at 256-775-0093. They are currently open Monday & Thursday from 4:30-7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Be sure to check out Red Door Clothing on Facebook to see merchandise, pricing, and sizing.

They post specials and sales on Facebook every week, so be sure to "Like" the page so you will get notices and pictures of the new merchandise as it arrives.

You can also visit their website at www.RedDoorClothing.vpweb.com to see what's going on.

Poll

With the events in Ferguson Missouri, do you feel police use excessive or unneeded force when confronting individuals locally?



This Week's Poll

Should the United States continue air strikes against ISIS in both Iraq and Syria?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

Children from Cullman First United Methodist Church Serve Community

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Recently, children from grades 7-12 participating in Cullman First United Methodist Church's Discovery Weekend went out into the Cullman community hoping to make a positive difference in people's lives.

From prayer walks to all the Cullman city schools, to a group of young men going out to farms and being allowed to collect a small portion of those farmers' crops to donate to charity, Cullman FUMC seamlessly implemented the new concept of adding community outreach to their Discovery Weekend schedule.

Brian Lacy, a supervisor of one of the 10 groups of kids, says that this is the first time they've ever done anything like this during Discovery.

"I've been working with the youth here for about seven years and we have not done this," Lacy continued. "It's a great chance to expose the children to the fact that there are real needs in Cullman and to show them just how easy it is to serve."

"Before the groups disbursed out into the community," Lacy said, "one of the students actually led a service themed lesson. He talked about how, as Christians, we're called to serve others. We don't just serve because it feels good; we're told to."

At the end of the school year, the Head Youth Director at Cullman FUMC took a position somewhere else, leaving the spot vacant. Since then, a group of about six adults have been leading the group by committee, and began planning the community mission opportunities in the summer.

"You know, we really didn't have much time to work with because Discovery is so busy for the kids," Lacy shared.

"We ended up with about two hours, so we came up with the idea of doing things around Cullman, since we didn't really have the time window to go out of town," he said.

Lacy revealed that although only 60 kids attended Discovery Weekend at Cullman FUMC, they had plenty of chances for charity work lined up.

"If we would've had more, I had spoken with many businesses and things that would've loved to have volunteer help," Lacy finished.

Although the youth leadership position is still up in the air, one thing is sure, the children at Cullman FUMC are eager to serve the community.

Brian Lacy concluded by saying that the kids in the church have expressed great interest in community missions, and he hopes to implement a monthly community volunteer schedule.

cp&r cullman city parks & recreation

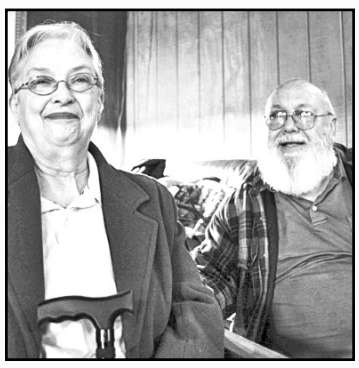
WHAT'S ON DECK AT PARKS AND REC....

www.cullmanrecreation.org
256-734-9157

- **EvaBank Midnight Run** registration is NOW OPEN at the Cullman Civic Center, all EvaBank locations, and online at active.com. Race will be held on August 15, 2014 at 11:59pm. T-shirts and goodie bags will be given to all runners as well as a chance to win great door prizes like a flat screen TV, an iPad, and more. Winners receive $250 cash, masters $200. Medals to top 3 in each age division. Proceeds benefit the programs of the parks and recreation department to better our community. Call 256-734-9157 for details.
- **Eat on the Street** will take place each Thursday in July at the Festhalle Farmer's Market from 11-1pm. Come eat, shop, and relax with us and support your local farmers with Johnny's BBQ as the featured food truck this week!
- **CP&R Jr. Tennis League** will be starting play on September 1. Program will be 8 weeks long with three weeks of practice and 5 weeks of matches. Registration is $75 for the 8 week session. and is now open at the Cullman Civic Center and Wellness & Aquatic Center. League will be played at the Cullman High School tennis courts against other CP&R teams. Call 256-734-9157 for info.
- **FREE CP&R Tennis Festival** will take place August 17. 2014 for interested participants in the Jr. Tennis program or adult tennis programs. Matches, free play, free food, music & more will all be a part of the event from 4-6pm.
- **Fall Baseball & Softball Registration** will be August 1-20 at the Cullman Civic Center for ages 7-8 and 9-12. $90 per individual or $400 per team. Call 256-734-9157 or 256-739-9931 for more info.
- **Coed Kickball League** registration will be August 1-20 at Heritage Park. Teams will be $200 to register. Season will include 12 games and a single elimination tournament. Call 739-9931 for details.
- **Fall Men's League & Coed Softball** registration will be August 1-20 at Heritage Park. Cost to register is $400 per team. 12 games with a single elimination tournament. Call 256-739-9931 for more details.
- **CP&R Youth Archery Classes**: Held at the Cullman Civic Center's indoor archery range; classes will start August 18. Cost is $40 per class. Beginner classes held Mondays, intermediate classes Tuesdays, and advanced classes Thursdays.

What's Online

50 Years Together: Harsh Beginnings Lead to an Amazing Life



August 22, 2014 is a very special day for my family. It marks the 50th Wedding Anniversary of my parents, John and Mary (Reid) Schuler. Times were really rough in the beginning, and have been hard over the years, but together they persevered, one obstacle after...

qrne.ws/243

Independent film series returning to Wallace State Community College

Wallace State Community College will once again host the Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers, presented by South Arts, supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. The six-film series will kick off in September and continue...

qrne.ws/244

Andrew Winfrey Receives Defining Honor as one of Alabama Public Television's Young Heroes

Cullman's own Andrew Winfrey has come a long way in the past couple of years. From being named "First-Team All State Safety" with the Cullman Bearcats football team, to being involved in a terrible car wreck where he sustained severe head injuries...

qrne.ws/245

LOCAL MUSICIAN SHOWS PROMISE AT ALA. TALENT HUNT

Kate Mullaney
kate@cullmansense.com



KATE MULLANEY/CULLMANSENSE

» Local musician Heath Bell was surprised to learn that he had the type of voice the judges at Alabama Talent Hunt wanted to hear.

CULLMAN - Local musician Heath Bell has found recent success with the Alabama Talent Hunt. He played at last month's Hops & Shops Cullman, and we should be seeing him playing around Cullman quite a bit in the future.

Bell stated that he was a bit surprised as he made it further and further into the Alabama Talent Hunt competition.

"Honestly, it was a bit of a surprise," said Bell. "I never thought I had the kind of voice the judges wanted to hear. After I did my original alternative rock song, 'Into My Arms', I thought I was going home, but the people at Alabama Talent Hunt gave me the confidence to play anything I wanted. In the process I earned fans."

Bell made it to the fifth and final round of the Alabama Talent Hunt competition. He stated that it taught him a number of things about performing, such as stage presence and eye contact with the audience.

"These are huge factors in live performances," he said. "Otherwise, the audience might as well be listening to a radio because there is no true emotional connection if your sight is off the audience. I also learned to be more creative with the guitar instead of keeping a boring steady strum. You need to make things pop and groove with the instrument to get the audience moving."

Bell learned these important lessons in performing from Barry Hendrick, president of Alabama Talent Hunt.

"These lessons will stick with me for the rest of my performing career," stated Bell.

In addition to working toward a career as a singer/songwriter, Bell is attending Calhoun Community College in Decatur to study audiovisual technology to become a record producer.

"I love playing my music," stated Bell, "but everyone has a story to tell, and I'd love to hear them all."

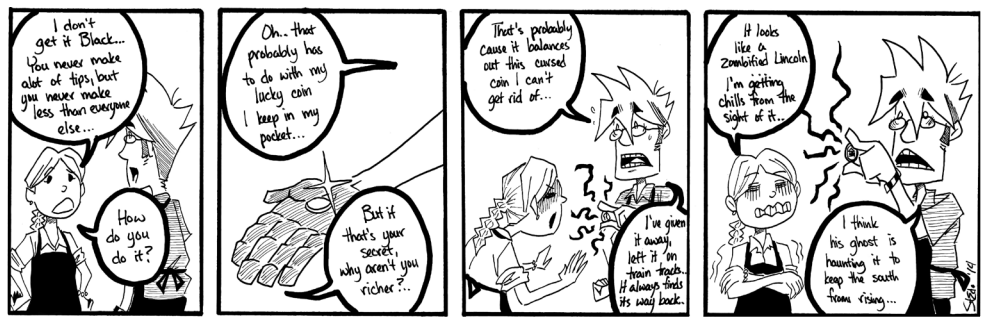
Bell has several upcoming performances. In addition to some private parties, he will be playing at Hops & Shops again in August. This is such a great addition to this already exciting event. He will also be playing for a fundraiser in Veteran's Park for the Priceville Fire Department in November.

If you would like to book Heath Bell as a musician for an event, he can be reached by e-mail at hbellmia@aol.com or by cell phone at 256-309-7262.

Be sure to catch Bell at his next event and support live music in the Cullman area.

Comics

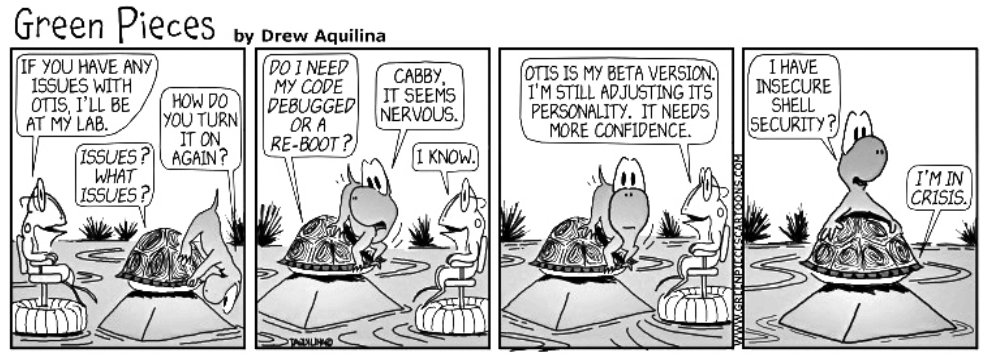
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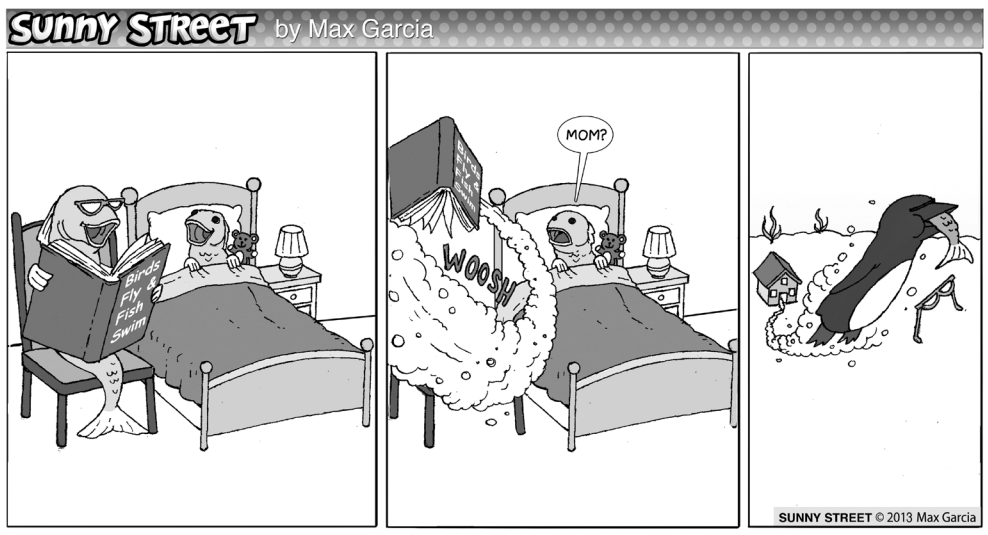
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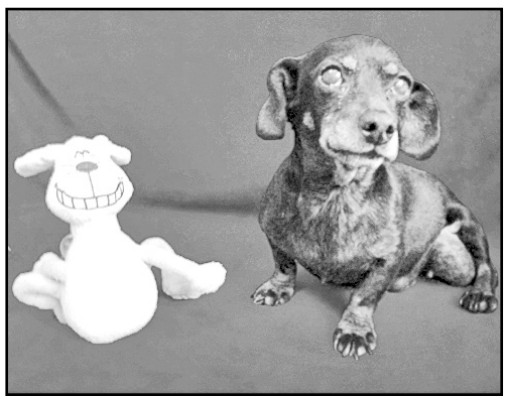
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Pets of the Week

Salina

Hello! My name is Salina, and I am about 10+ years old. I am believed to be a Dachshund mix, and I currently weigh 9 lbs. I am a stray but will be available for adoption on 08/26/14 at 2:30 p.m. I am full of life and I love to play. I can't wait to meet my new forever family!



Geppetto

Hello! My name is Geppetto, and I am about 3 years old. I am a Rottweiler and, I currently weigh 91 lbs. I am spirited and enjoy company. I am ready for my new forever companion to take me home!



ADOPT THESE PETS TODAY

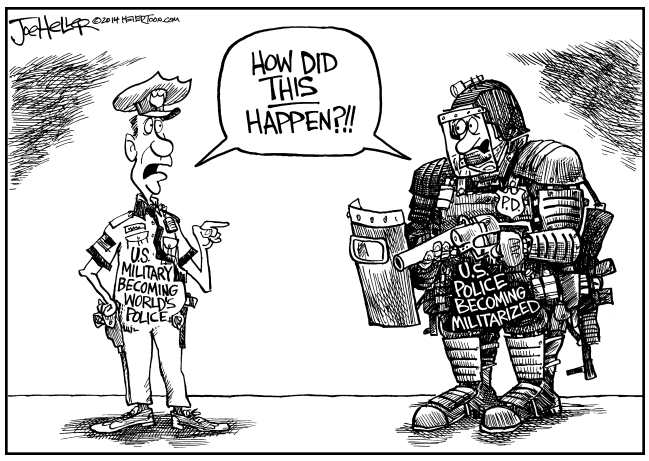
Both of these dogs have an adoption fee of $90 that will include their general exam at the Vet, vaccines, wormer, rabies shot, microchip, spay/neuter, and free 45 days of pet health insurance. Pet Depot will give you a bag of food (you pay taxes) as their way of supporting adoption.

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

Editorial Cartoons



theinsolentlemon.blogspot.com



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OPINION

WHY AND HOW THE U.S. SHOULD ENGAGE NORTH KOREA RIGHT NOW

Mel Gurtov
PeaceVoice

United States relations with North Korea have been pushed into the background by events in the Middle East. But the so-called "North Korea nuclear issue"—"so-called" because the larger issue, which involves the interests of several countries, is security and strategic stability on the Korean peninsula—remains unresolved and potentially dangerous.

I and many other specialists have urged the U.S. and other governments to genuinely engage North Korea. But engagement doesn't just mean contact or involvement; it means a process that includes reaching out to an adversary in efforts to catalyze new directions for policies on all sides. Genuine, effective engagement should: Create a political environment conducive to policy change, focus on joint actions that will move the parties from destructive conflict to collaborative transformation, involve incentives and mutual rewards in security and peace, and be undertaken in a spirit of mutual respect. Only genuine engagement with North Korea holds out hope of settling the nuclear issue and easing tensions that could again engulf the Korean peninsula in war.

In April 2014, David Sanger reported in the New York Times that President Obama's North Korea specialists feel "stuck" on where to go next with North Korea, having explored every option. However, what the Obama administration has offered during its six years in office is not engagement but sticks and carrots based on North Korean concessions: If North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons, the United States will then have dialogue with its leadership. But engaging North Korea should not be exclusively about North Korean denuclearization. It should above all be about enhancing security for parties with interests in the Korean peninsula, such that nuclear weapons become irrelevant for strategic or political purposes.

There are many strategic reasons why the U.S. should initiate win-win engagement with North Korea, but here are just three.

First, every time North Korean leaders feel threatened or ignored, they undertake a weapons test or other provocative action, such as the July 2014 threat of nuclear attack on the White House, provoked by U.S.-ROK (South Korea) military exercises.

Those exercises may seem like standard procedures to us, but to the North Koreans, they are a reminder of their vulnerability. In November 2002, Kim Jong-il sent a written personal message to President George W. Bush that said: "If the United States recognizes our sovereignty and assures nonaggression, it is our view that we should be able to find a way to resolve the nuclear issue in compliance with the demands of a new century. ... If the United States makes a bold decision, we will respond accordingly." That position has been restated a number of times since, and nonaggression assurances are best made through dialogue.

Second, by abandoning engagement, the U.S. strengthens the hand of those in North Korea's leadership who doubt the usefulness of negotiations, and prevents opportunities for dialogue with leaders who want to reduce tensions and gain concessions. According to Charles Pritchard, in an October 2003 Brookings editorial, Kim Jong-il told Madeleine Albright in October 2000 that, with U.S. security assurances, "he would be able to convince his military that the United States was no longer a threat and then be in a position to refocus his country's resources." There is no reason to think Kim Jong-un does not possess comparable authority and similar goals.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, engagement increases opportunities for direct contact with the North Korean people.

We have many examples of how appreciative Korean people have been when they receive meaningful help. Focusing on young people, as the Pyongyang Project does, may provide a framework of support for the critical projects that NGOs carry out and potential transformations within the country.

North Korea is just as tired of talk for talk's sake as the United States is. It too won't "buy the same horse twice." Fruitful negotiations can proceed only if Pyongyang sees engagement as strengthening regime and state survival.

North Korea would most likely be interested in proposals that:

- Provide some assurance against U.S.-designed regime change.
- Enhance North Korea's legitimacy as an independent socialist state.
- Provide international guarantees of North Korea's security and eventually end sanctions.
- Pave the way for long-term development assistance, increased trade and investment, and short-term food and fuel aid, thus also reducing dependence on China.
- Undermine arguments in South Korea and Japan for keeping open the nuclear-weapon option.

The United States and other nations should present a package to North Korea that, in return for verifiable steps to neutralize North Korea's nuclear arsenal, provides the North with security assurances, a proposal for ending the Korean War and signing a nonaggression pact with big-power guarantees (with China and Russia on board), and meaningful economic assistance from both NGOs and governments.

We have to accept the fact that the Kim regime is not going to just go away. Washington expectations that the regime will either self-destruct or wither away under outside pressure are mostly wishful thinking; by every indication Kim Jong-un remains firmly in command. If the U.S. and its allies continue to assume imminent regime change and a disengaged, zero-sum approach, they will embolden the most hawkish of North Korean leadership, providing them with "evidence" that more nukes provide the only real security against an untrustworthy America. To be sure, engagement of the North does not guarantee its good behavior or friction-free interaction. But we should seriously explore what North Korean officials have long insisted: that if the United States abandons its "hostile policy," the nuclear issue and much else can be resolved. We should test that view, one step—and one incentive—at a time.

Mel Gurtov, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Portland State University, Editor-in-Chief of Asian Perspective, an international affairs quarterly, and blogs at In the Human Interest.

OPINION

WHY GOVERNMENT OPENNESS MATTERS

Lee H. Hamilton
Contributor

One of the fundamental lessons of the 9/11 tragedy was that our government carried a share of blame for the failure to stop the attacks. Not because it was ignorant of the dangers that Al Qaeda posed, but because the agencies charged with our safety did not share what they knew. The attacks were preventable with shared information.

This insight was highlighted in the report of the 9/11 Commission — on which I served — and became a key driver of the reforms instituted by the U.S. intelligence community over the last dozen years. Within the government, there are plenty of people who now understand that sharing information and using it to inform planning and debate produces better policy.

So it's worrisome that today it seems harder than ever to know what our government is doing, and not just when it comes to national security. Secrecy and a widespread failure to share information both within government and with the American people remain major barriers to the effective operation of representative democracy.

Failing to share information makes us weaker.

It enfeebles congressional oversight, which is one of the cornerstones of representative democracy and which, when aggressively carried out by fully informed legislators, can strengthen policy-making. It makes it far more difficult to maintain our system of checks and balances.

It exacerbates mistrust between branches of government and between the government and the American people. And it chips away at the foundation of our system, which rests on a public that is well-informed about what government is doing and why.

Without that information, we are poorer in our ability to exercise discriminating judgment on the conduct of policy and of politicians, and we lose our advantage over authoritarian societies: the spread of knowledge to people searching for a solution to our society's challenges and problems.

Secrecy is legitimate and necessary on occasion, but representative government cannot function properly without openness and the presumption should always be in its favor. If officials want to keep information secret, they should bear the burden of explaining why.

Bill Smith

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