SERIES 4 • ISSUE 49 • DECEMBER 22, 2014
CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS



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WHAT'S THE DILL? P6



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H.O.P.E. THERAPEUTIC HORSEMANSHIP PROGRAM TO HOST NEW YEAR'S PARTY

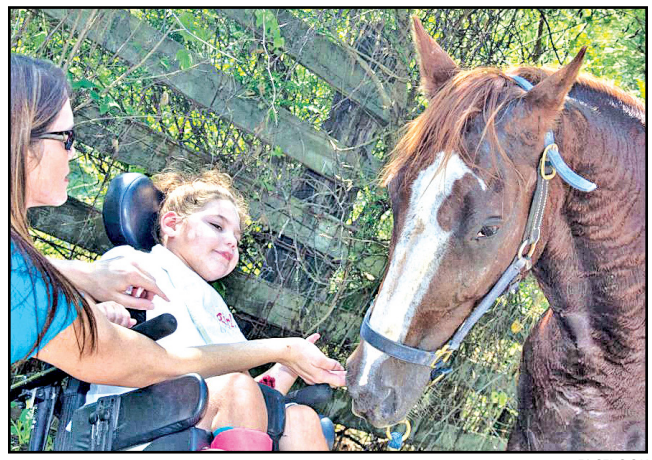
Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - H.O.P.E. (Horses Offering People Encouragement) is a therapeutic horsemanship program for people with special needs. On December 31, 2014 they will host a New Year's Eve party at The Top of The Town. Tickets for the event are $100 per couple, $75 for individuals. H.O.P.E. is a 501(c)3 charitable organization.

"We served 21 children this year and it has been amazing to see what this activity means to their development," explained Missy Blaylock, H.O.P.E. board member, committee member and volunteer.

The event will begin at 7:30 p.m. and will feature a variety of fun, food, and music. Those interested in attending must RSVP by submitting their contribution to H.O.P.E. at P. O. Box 625, Cullman, AL 35056, e-mailing Hope@HopeHorses.org, or calling 256-708-4068. If you are interested in attending the celebration, the good folks at H.O.P.E. request that you respond as soon as possible

p6



FACEBOOK

The funds raised from the party will help families pay for H.O.P.E. lessons via a scholarship program and will also provide care for the horses.

FAMILY HISTORY AND CULLMAN'S PAST

ONCE CULLMAN'S LARGEST EMPLOYER, KING PHARR CANNING COMPANY HONORED WITH HISTORIC MARKER P7



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

King Pharr Canning Company was located on the property between Depot Park and the Cullman Police Station.

CHAMPIONS OF THE COURT

Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

COLD SPRINGS - In the middle school girl's county basketball championship, defense was the name of the game as the Lady Aggies of Fairview took on the undefeated Lady Raiders of Good Hope. Both teams had active hands on the de-

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JIM STINSON

The Lady Raiders took home the 2014 Cullman County Middle School Girl's Championship.

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE FOR COUNTY AND CITY SERVICES

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - With Christmas falling on a Thursday this year, city and county services will be on a slightly altered schedule. Below are the details on Cullman city and county schedules for sanitation and courthouse.

The Cullman County Courthouse Schedule
"We will be closed December the 24, 25, and 26," said courthouse employee Gail Hooper. "We will be open Monday and Tuesday the 22 and 23. We will also be closed on New Year's Day."

Cullman County Sanitation
"They will not run on Christmas Day," said Stephanie Pace, customer service representative

p7

ALABAMA SEES SECOND LARGEST DROP OF PSEUDO-EPHEDRINE SALES

Stephanie Petelos
NADDI Contributor

CULLMAN - Data from the National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators (NADDI) shows in 2014 Alabama has seen the second highest reduction of sales of pseudoephedrine (PSE) in the country. PSE sales are declining as Alabama rounds out its third year in a row of meth lab reductions.

PSE is a primary ingredient used to manufacture methamphetamine (meth). The sale of PSE began being monitored in Alabama in 2012 with the NPLEx system. The most recent NPLEx data shows in Alabama, the technology has blocked the sale of 56,050 boxes

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HWY 157 CHRISTMAS TREE DEALER SEES FIRST YEAR SUCCESS

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Jesse Mickle from Cullman is selling Christmas trees on Highway 157, but you better not wait too long because he only has a couple dozen of 6-7 foot trees left. He started selling the trees the day after Thanksgiving and has had success so far. "For the first year, it has been very successful," he said.

After doing a lot of research and talking to other folks that have sold Christmas trees before, Jesse picked up 160 wrapped and ready to go trees from North Carolina.

"These are the best quality that you can buy," he said. Jesse started out with several 6-7 foot trees at $50 each, some 7-8 foot trees at $60 each, a few 8-9 foot trees at $80 each, and two 9-10 foot trees at $100 each.

Jesse said that people have been really nice in helping him out with his first year of tree selling.

To get started, he had to find a place to sell the trees. He looked at many locations in town to set up and sell, but they all turned out to be expensive.

He was fortunate enough to find the land he is using for free, thanks to the landowner's kindness.

The money Jesse makes off the Christmas tree sales is his income for part of the winter.

He said, "I have a lawn service and it gets pretty slow in the winter."

He went on to say, "I love Christmas and everything about it, so I figured I'd sell Christmas trees." As of now, he plans on selling Christmas trees again next year.

Jesse's Christmas Trees is open Monday through Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sundays from around noon until 8 p.m.

If you are traveling at night, just look out for the Christmas lights on Highway 157.

He is located on the right just after the intersection of Highway 31 and Highway 157. If you pass Warehouse Discount Grocery, you have gone too far. Merry Christmas and don't forget the tree!



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Jesse began selling Christmas trees the day after Thanksgiving.

SHOPPING SAFETY TIPS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - In order to keep Christmas the most wonderful time of the year, we must be safe and wise while shopping. The fact is that a lot of last minute shoppers will be out and about grabbing gifts to wrap and put under the tree in the next couple of days. To make sure these gifts make it under the tree, some tips have been provided by local law enforcement and security division employees in Cullman to ensure that we stay safe while looking for just the right gifts.

Cullman City Police Chief Kenny Culpepper provided excellent advice that shoppers can take to protect themselves while perusing for the best deals and to be safe when going to the car with a shopping cart full of those great gifts. Culpepper said that Cullman does not typically have assaults, but instead has thefts.

He said that in order to avoid being a victim of theft, we have to lock our car doors. Cindy Barker, an Asset Protection Manager at one of the largest department stores in Cullman, has over 12 years of experience in the security division.

She also emphasized to lock your car doors because it makes a thief have to work harder. The chances are less likely that they will mess with a locked car.

Both agreed that ladies need to keep their purses in sight while inside the store in order to protect themselves from pick pockets. Barker advised putting your purse in the bottom of the shopping cart which means it will be under all of your merchandise while you walk through the store.

"You won't need it until the end [of your shopping] anyway," she said. Barker said that it is much easier to try to prevent incidences from happening than to recover after they have already happened. She educates the associates of her store on deterrence measures to prevent average customers from being victims.

Not only do we need to be aware of our personal belongings while inside the store, but we also need to be aware of our purchases once we have left the store while on our way to our vehicles. Culpepper said that the biggest thing that the police department would recommend is to purpose not to leave purchases in the back seat of vehicles where it is visible. "Don't leave things in obvious view," he stated.

Barker agreed with Culpepper and said, "I think the biggest thing is not leaving things exposed in vehicles." She said that at her place of employment, one of the most common issues is stealing merchandise from cars.

"If they can see your merchandise, it makes you a prime target." She also mentioned not to leave your cell phone and any prescriptions in the seat of your car because it makes you even more of a target. "Put anything personal in the trunk," she said.

Another point to remember is to pay attention to your surroundings, whether inside or outside. Culpepper emphasized that personal safety is important no matter what time of the year it is and that situational awareness should always be on our minds. He suggested looking around and observing your surroundings at all times, especially if you are alone. As a result, you will look alert and aware.

It is also important to consider where you park when it is dark outside. Obviously lit areas are better to park in than dark areas and shopping with a group of people is safer even though it is not always convenient. Even after you have safely arrived at your vehicle, you must still be aware of your surroundings. Unfortunately if someone sees the purchases you made, they could decide to follow you. "If you feel you're being followed, don't just go home, go someplace where there are people," Culpepper said.

He referred to routine checks the police department does this time of the year. He said they even put a bait vehicle out with visible presents inside for observation purposes. He added, "If you see something suspicious, call us, we do it [check-ups] all the time."

Enjoy your last minute deals and get ready for your tasty Christmas meals. Just remember to shop safe!

SELECT BUSINESSES OPEN ON CHRISTMAS

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - It's Christmas Day and you have a last minute purchase you need to make, or maybe Mom burnt supper and you need a place to eat. No matter the reason, a few stores will still be working for you on Christmas Day so you will still be able to get food, medicine ,or gas if the need arrives including:

FOOD

- Wendy's in Good Hope will be open 24 hours a day.
- Denny's on Highway 157 will be open 24 hours a day.
- Mt. Fuji in the Town Square Shopping Center will be open regular hours 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- The Iron Skillet will be open 24/7 in Dodge City.
- Rice and Soy will be open from 10:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

GAS

- Dodge City Petro will be open 24/7.
- Chevron on Highway 278 will be open 24/7.
- Conoco on Highway 157 will be open 24/7.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Walgreens will be open regular business hours 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

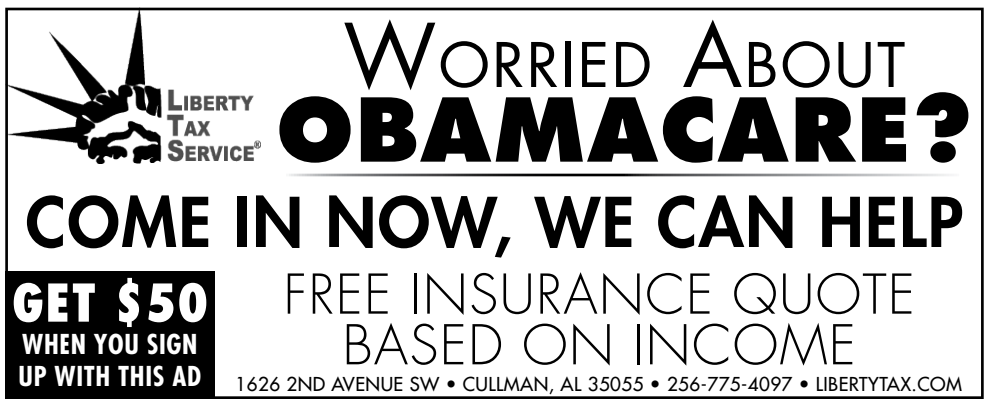
ENTERTAINMENT

While there aren't a lot of options for entertainment in Cullman, one great place you can visit as a family is the Carmike 10 located on Olive Street SW next to Walmart.

Showtimes

- Annie (PG): 1:15-4:05 p.m.; 6:55-9:45 p.m.
- Big Hero 6 in 2D (PG): 1:45-4:25 p.m.; 7:05-9:45 p.m.
- Exodus: Gods and Kings 2D (PG-13): 1:00-3:45 p.m.; 4:15-7:30 p.m.; 10:15.
- Exodus: Gods and Kings 3D (PG-13): 7:00 p.m.
- Hobbit: Battle Of Five Armies 2D (PG-13): 10:00 p.m.
- Hobbit: Battle of Five Armies 3D (PG-13): 3:30-4:00 p.m.; 6:45-7:15 p.m.; 10:20 p.m.
- Hunger Games Mockingjay Pt. 1 (PG-13): 1:10-4:10 p.m.; 7:10- 9:25 p.m.; 10:10 p.m.
- Night at the Museum (PG): 1:30-2:00 p.m.; 4:00-4:30 p.m.; 6:30-7:00 p.m.; 9:00-9:30 p.m.
- The Penguins of Madagascar 2D (PG): 2:00-4:30 p.m.; 7:00 p.m.







SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

In under a year Inez has created over 800 dolls by hand.

SHE REAPS WHAT SHE 'SEWS'

LOCAL RESIDENT PUTS SEWING SKILLS TO GOOD USE

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - We all have hobbies that we enjoy from photography to quilting to hunting. Inez Macon, a resident of USA Healthcare, spends her days sewing and hand making dolls during her free time. Inez has been making the dolls for about a year and really enjoys giving them away to children that visit their grandparents in the nursing home as well as many other causes within the community.

It will soon be a year that she has been hand-making the dolls. "I started about a year ago," Inez said. She gives them all away and has not gotten a penny out of it. She said some people call her crazy for doing it for free and tell her they would never do such a thing. "I just enjoy doing it. It's my hobby." Inez has hand made over 800 dolls. She said she has never asked anybody to help her. "I just do it on my own and give them to who I please."

Inez got started when she was given a doll one day by one of the residents. She looked at it and thought, "Well I could do that. I've sewn all my life and quilted." She just started cutting out pieces of material that different people had brought her. Inez said she has made 100 quilts if not more and now sews all the dolls by hand. "I've just always been used to work. I've worked all my life."

She currently has four bags of 25 dolls, two bags of 50 dolls, and a box of dolls that has not been counted yet.

Within a week, she has given away 250 dolls to children in the community including Childhaven who received 60 dolls and the Special Needs Rodeo coming up that will receive 100 dolls.

Inez said that she gives away two to three dolls every day to grandchildren that come to visit their grandparents in the nursing home. The nursing home has also packed shoeboxes to send to foreign missions and included the handmade dolls that Inez has made.

Inez said, "Every day I'm out here. I get out here by daylight. If anybody's hunting me, they say, 'Go where she's sewing at.'" The staff at the nursing home always knows where to look for Inez because she starts sewing in the activity room at about 8:30 in the morning and stays until 11:30 before lunch is served. She comes back after lunch at about 12:30 and stays until about 4 in the afternoon. "I don't get too tired. I've gotten used to it and I just do it all the time."

When different people come in, she gives them dolls and word gets out that she needs material to make more. Inez said that a lot of different people have brought her material to make the dolls.

"Different ones have been wonderful to help. They bring it [material] to me." A lady from Hartselle gave her a lot of material; at least 3 to 4 bolts of fabric all at once. "When people give me stuff, I'm just pleased. People give me pieces of cloth and I just sit down and sew it up."

Inez is thankful for the people that appreciate what she does and want to contribute. "I've been blessed by everybody helping me. They have really been good about getting me stuff. Some of the girls that work here are mighty good to help me with it."

Sometimes Inez thinks it is time to quit making dolls when she runs out of supplies. "When I run out, I think it's time to quit, but it seems like the good Lord just brings it to me. That's just the way it's been." People bring her cotton, fabric and spools of thread when they learn of her doll making.

There is definitely a doll for everyone. The fabric she uses varies from tractor print, to floral print to even some with fish on them. Inez said that boys and girls both like them and can pick out their favorite.

Christmastime creates more of a need for buying presents. So far, Inez has been able to meet the needs of hundreds of children in the community by gifting them with a handmade doll. If you would like to donate cotton, fabric, or thread, feel free to drop it by the USA Healthcare facility for Inez Macon. USA Healthcare is located at 401 Arnold Street NE Cullman, AL 35055.

Drop (from Front)

of medicine containing PSE since the start of 2014, a 31 percent reduction from the number of blocked sales in 2013. So far in 2014 the NPLEx system has been responsible for keeping 138,225 grams out of the hands of potential meth criminals.

According to NPLEx data, in Cullman County, in 2013, over 4,200 boxes of PSE sales were blocked. This kept 10,598 grams of PSE from potentially being used in meth production in Cullman County.

Alabama had the second largest reduction of PSE boxes and grams sold in the country, with 15 and 14 percent respectively, compared to the same period in 2013. The number of individual purchasers was reduced by 12.46 percent, also the second highest reduction in the country next to West Virginia.

"Alabama is stepping up efforts to take the fight directly to meth criminals, and NPLEx is proving to be an integral part of that," said Charles F. Cichon, executive director of NADDI. "With a strong foundation provided by tough anti-meth laws, the state has already made some great gains in this battle. These NPLEx numbers show meth cooks and their associates are taking notice. "

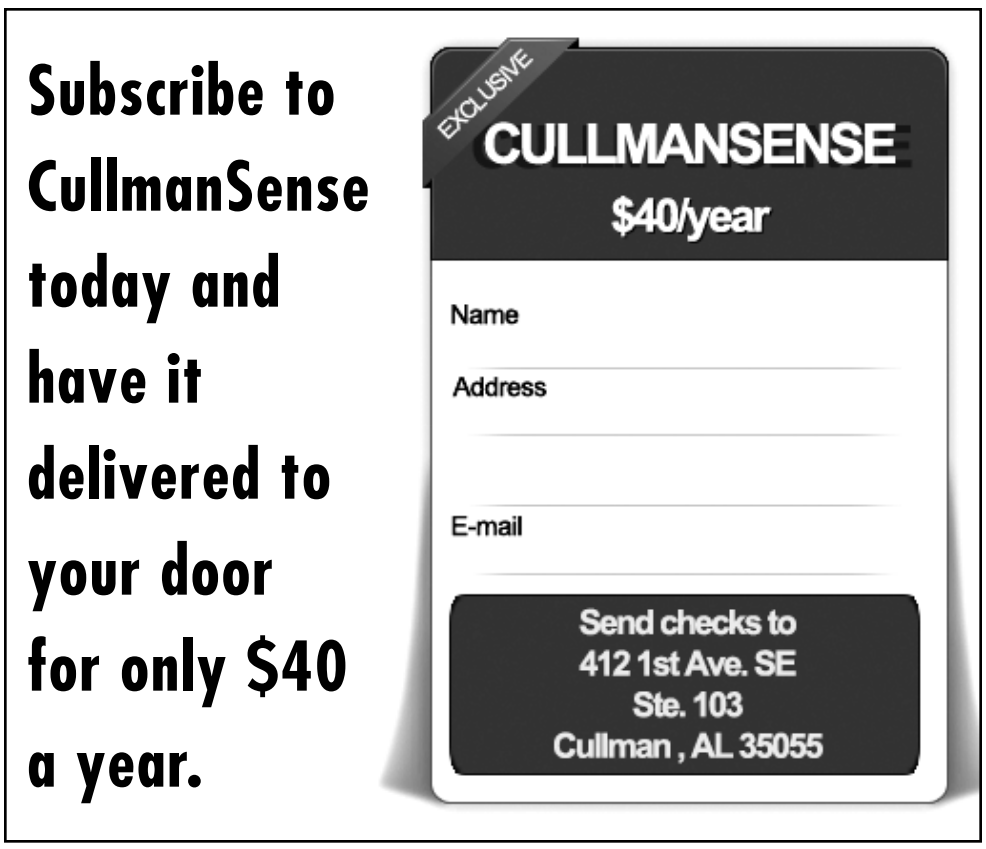
As the sales of meth decline in Alabama so have the number of meth labs. Since passing some of the nations toughest anti-meth laws in 2012 there has been a steady decline of meth labs found in the state. According to a report by the Alabama Drug Task Force meth, lab seizures in the state dropped over 78 percent from 720 in 2010 to 154 in 2013.

While Alabama's 2012 legislation was some of the toughest ever passed, it has kept PSE readily available to law-abiding citizens. In Mississippi PSE is only available by a doctor's prescription, and citizens of Mississippi cannot purchase PSE across state lines in Alabama without a prescription.

The 2012 legislation has greatly reduced the production of meth in Alabama; it has not eliminated the demand. Upwards of 80 percent of meth seized is Mexican made meth called "Ice."

"As NPLEx helps Alabama law enforcement officials curb domestic methamphetamine production, they will be able to focus further on the even greater threat of imported meth from Mexico" says Cichon.





CHRISTMAS CHURCH SERVICES VARIED ACROSS COMMUNITY

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Christmas Eve falls on a Wednesday this year and it gives everyone an opportunity to have a special time with family and friends at a Wednesday evening church service. Several local churches are giving the opportunity to attend a service on Christmas Eve and some churches are having services on Christmas Day. Some will have special candlelight or communion services while others will have a regular Wednesday evening service including:

South Cullman Church of Christ will resume with their standard Bible study on Wednesday evening, at 7 p.m. South Cullman Church of Christ is located at 2044 Main Avenue Southwest Cullman, AL 35055. For more information, call 256-734-0249.

Cornerstone Church of the Nazarene will host a come and go candlelight communion from 6-7 p.m. on December 24. Cornerstone Church of the Nazarene is located at 321 3rd Street SE Cullman, AL 35055. For more information, call 256-775-2756.

Desperation Church will have a candlelight service on December 24 at 5 p.m. They will also sing carols from 5-5:30 p.m. There will be no childcare this evening, as the service is intended for the whole family. Desperation Church is located at 202 Elizabeth Street Cullman, AL 35055. For more information, call 256-255-5979.

Destiny Church will have a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 6:50 p.m. on December 24. Destiny Church is located at 566 Co Rd 1339 Cullman Al 35056. For more information, call 256-737-9254 or e-mail them at destinychurch@edestiny.org.

Eva United Methodist Church will host a Christmas Eve come and go communion on December 24 from 6:15-7:15 p.m.

First United Methodist Church of Cullman will have a contemporary service at 1 p.m. and a traditional candlelight service at 6 p.m. on December 24. First United Methodist Church is located at 320 3rd St SE Cullman, AL 35055. For more information, call 256-734-6690.

Hamby will have a Christmas Eve come and go communion on December 24 from 5-6 p.m.

St. Andrew's United Methodist Church will have a Christmas Eve service with communion on December 24 at 5 p.m. St. Andrew's United Methodist Church is located at 615 Main Avenue SW Cullman, AL 35055. For more information, call 256-734-0340.

St John's Evangelical Protestant Church will have a communion service at 12:30 p.m. on December 24 and a candlelight communion at 6 p.m. In addition, they will have a 6 a.m. service on Christmas Day, December 25. St John's Evangelical Protestant Church is located at 512 2nd Avenue SE Cullman, AL 35055. For more information, call 256-734-0344.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church will have a regular Christmas Eve service on December 24 at 6 p.m. They will also have a service on Christmas Day at 10 a.m. and a candlelight service at 11 p.m. St. Paul's Lutheran Church is located at 513 4th Avenue SE Cullman, AL 35055. For more information, call 256-734-3575.

WINTER PREPAREDNESS

LOCAL TREE TRIMMING SERVICES REMOVE DANGEROUS LIMBS

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - With the cold months of winter upon us, it is time once again to prune and trim our trees and bushes. While some like to take control of their own landscaping and trimming, others may be hesitant to do this on their own.

There is more that goes into pruning and trimming than one might think. First, you must decide which season to trim your plants in.

While some plants are best to prune and trim in winter during the dormant months, others are better suited to a spring pruning. A lot also depends on what you want to accomplish with your trimming.

If you choose to prune and trim during the winter months, then you can expect fresh new growth to burst forth once spring arrives.

If your goal is not to promote new growth, then doing this might not be the right call.

"Pruning during dormancy is the most common practice," according to the Arbor Day Foundation's website.

"It results in a vigorous burst of new growth in the spring and should be used if that is the desired effect. It is usually best to wait until the coldest part of winter has passed. Some species, such as maple, walnuts and birches, may 'bleed'– when the sap begins to flow. This is not harmful and will cease when the tree leafs out."

If you feel that this is too big of a project to do yourself, or if you have a potentially dangerous situation that is better left to the professionals, then try one of these local businesses.

Michael's Tree Trimming Service in Cullman is ready to handle any needs you might have.

"We provide tree removal, trimming, lot clearing, bush hogging, and landscaping," said owner Michael Keller.

"We price on a case by case basis. All of our estimates are free, however, and the amount just depends on the difficulty of the job and how long it takes."

Another tree trimming business is Marshall's Tree Service. The owner, Marshall McDonald, is happy to help his customers with any of their tree needs.

"I've been doing this for around 30 years," said Marshall.

"We provide stump grinding, tree removal when there are storms and stuff, trimming, and we are the only company that transplants trees as well."

If you have some pesky branches you are worried about this winter, or if you want fuller and healthier trees this spring, be sure to get your trimming done.

To contact Michael's Tree Service, call them at 256-507-3017. To contact Marshall's Tree Service, call them at 256-734-8337.

SHRINE OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - As Christmas Day nears, churches begin preparing for one of the biggest days of the year. Along with churches preparing, the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament will have a special schedule for December 24 and 25.

If you plan on visiting the Shrine, you will have to plan your trip around the location being closed from 6-10 p.m. on December 24, 2014. At 10 p.m., the Shrine will re-open.

The Liturgy of the Hours will begin at 10:30 p.m., with Christmas Carols starting at 11:25 p.m.

Following the carols, the midnight mass will begin at 12 a.m. After the midnight mass, the Shrine will close until 7 a.m. on Christmas morning.

At 7:05 a.m. the Liturgy of the Hours will begin. At 8 a.m., mass will be held in the main church, followed by a second mass at 10 a.m.

The gift shop, along with the St. Paul II Eucharistic Center will be closed on December 24 and 25, and there will be no guided tours of the Shrine during those two days. It will all re-open on Friday, December 26, 2014 as usual.

FREE CHRISTMAS MEAL TO THOSE IN NEED

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Rachel Bryant with Karma in Cullman is offering a free Christmas meal on Christmas Day, December 25 at 2 p.m. She had never heard of a free meal opportunity on Christmas Day so she decided to do one herself.

She and her family will be hosting a meal at their home on Christmas Day at 2 p.m. for low-income families and those without families.

"We would like to share that day with others that may not have that opportunity. We wanted them to be a part of our family day," she said. Enough food for 50 people has been donated, and they will need volunteers who will assist in cooking.

Rachel appreciates the efforts of volunteers and the time they give when helping out.

"Sometimes the best thing is their time," she said. If you would like to volunteer some of your time during the holidays, give Rachel a call at 256-735-3942 to help out Karma in Cullman this Christmas.

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"Serving Cullman Families for over 50 Years!"
SUSAN SKINNER ADKISON, R.P.H.
Living Well natural store
Health Mart PHARMACY

NATIVITY SCENES SHOWN ACROSS COUNTY

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - In order to remind us of the true meaning of Christmas, Christians all over the world display some sort of nativity scene in their homes, yards, and places of business. The word, nativity, refers to the birth of Jesus based on the two accounts in the gospels of Luke and Matthew in the Bible.

According to the Bible, Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, traveled from their home in Nazareth to the town of Bethlehem to be counted in the census.

Mary, heavy with child, rode upon a donkey, as her husband tried to find a place to stay for the night. There was no room for them anywhere. Eventually they were allowed to stay in a common stable along with the farm animals, which is where Jesus was then born.

He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger, which is another word for the feeding trough for livestock. According to Christians, Jesus' birth fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies.

Wise men from far off lands and local shepherds found their way to the baby Jesus by following a miraculous star that hung beautifully over the area.

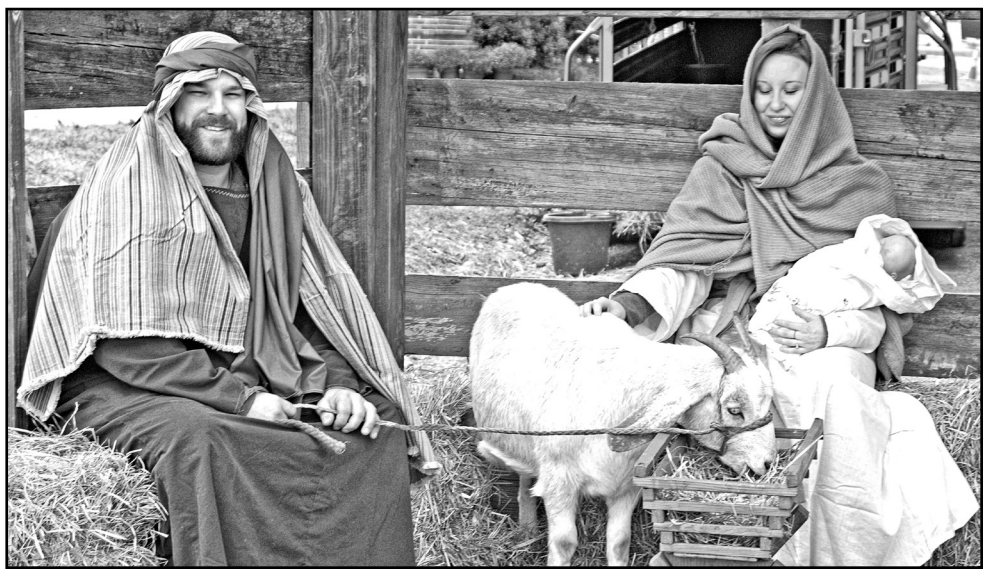
St. Francis of Assisi created the first-ever nativity scene recorded in history in 1223. Like many today, St. Francis became concerned that the meaning of Christmas was becoming lost as most people were more focused with the ritual of gift giving. Sound familiar?

Just like most pastors and religious people these days, St. Francis was determined to remind people what Christmas is really about.

Before long, he set about creating the world's first known nativity scene to help tell his people of The Nativity Story.

He gathered together local people and animals and then placed them in a cave near Greccio, Italy, properly portraying the biblical characters, Mary and Joseph. As for the infant Jesus, he used a figure made of wax.

The nativity portrayal quickly caught on, and both live and sculpted nativity scenes spread all over Europe. Today, nearly 800 years later, St. Francis's beautiful rendition of the birth of Jesus continues.



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Nativity scenes portray the birth of Jesus.

On Christmas Eve, churches reenact the blessed event with young children playing the parts of the Holy Family, the three Wise Men, humble Shepherds, white sparkly angels, and wooly animals.

This Christmas, over all the hustle and bustle, try to remember the message of St. Francis of Assisi. Take a moment to look at one of the nearby nativity sets and think of Jesus and His birth, if you're a Christian, and remember the sacred reason for the season.

WHY DO PEOPLE KISS UNDER MISTLETOE?

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - "I saw Mommy kissing Santa Claus, underneath the mistletoe last night..." Mistletoe – what the heck is it and why on Earth do people smooch each other while standing underneath it? Movies show young couples embraced in a long kiss while a clump of mistletoe dangles not far above their heads. Young girls can be seen chasing the boys all over the place with mistletoe in hand ready for love. Why do people get so silly over this green-leafed plant and its small white berries?

Mistletoe is actually a parasitic plant. It's an evergreen and grows on the branches of trees and forms pendent-like bushes 2 to 5 feet in diameter. Mistletoe is usually spread on trees through bird droppings and attaches itself to the tree (the host) and grows out from the tree's branches. Mistletoe can be found in willow trees and apple trees, but the imitation stuff can be found at your local craft store such as Hobby Lobby or Michael's.

The word mistletoe actually comes from two Anglo Saxon words. The first word is 'mistel', which means dung, and 'tan', which means twig or stick. So if you want to be all technical, you could translate Mistletoe as... well... nevermind. Yuck! Still want to kiss under it now?

The tradition of hanging mistletoe indoors goes all the way back to the ancient Druids. They considered the plant to possess mystical powers, which brought good luck to the household. It was also believed to ward off evil spirits.

The actual custom of kissing under mistletoe came from England. Unlike today's practice, the original custom was similar, yet very different. In the beginning, a berry must be picked from the batch of mistletoe before a person could be kissed. Lots of berries meant lots of kisses, but when all the berries had gone, that was it – no more kissing!

Whether you use a sprig of mistletoe to steal a kiss this Christmas time or not, please keep in mind that the plant is very poisonous, especially for pets. Kiss responsibly and be careful with your mistletoe. Keep it out of reach of children and animals. You may also want to keep it away from the weirdo at work as well. Merry Christmas, and we wish you lots of love in the year to come!

MIRRORING HISTORY: CHILDHAVEN

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Today Childhaven houses nine residential cottages.

CULLMAN - Childhaven's main building, the original white, four story building was dedicated on April 15th, 1910 as The Alabama Odd Fellows Home. By 1923, the Home had grown to house 97 children and was cultivating 200 acres of farmland.

When the Great Depression struck, severe financial problems forced the closing of the home in 1937. In the fall of 1938, all the furnishings and equipment were sold at public auction. The remaining children were placed back with their families and the property was abandoned.

In 1948, a group of interested Christians purchased the property, and Childhaven was born. Today, the Childhaven Campus includes nine large residential cottages (group homes), a full size gymnasium, a maintenance facility/shop, a pool, a Campus Minister's residence, as well as the original building that remains the centerpiece of the property.

Childhaven, Inc. is located at 1816 Childhaven Road, Cullman, AL 35055. Their phone number is 256-734-6720. Find out more information about them at www.childhaven.com.

Their Mission Statement is as follows: "Childhaven exists to bring every child into a lifelong relationship with God through His Son, Jesus the Christ, by meeting that child's every need."



CULLMAN COUNTY MUSEUM

After closing during the Great Depression, Childhaven was reopened in 1948 by a group of Christians.

WINTER FLAVORS

CROCKPOT CINNAMON ROLLS

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

Christmas morning will never taste so sweet with this delicious recipe that is a breeze to make. It may take a little time to cook, but the results will be well worth the wait when you take that first bite. Just follow these simple instructions and kick Christmas off to a sweet start.

Ingredients:

- 2 12-oz tubes - cinnamon rolls, cut into quarters and divided
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 cup - whipping cream
- 3 tablespoons - maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons - vanilla
- 1 teaspoon - cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon - nutmeg

Instructions:

- Spray your crock with cooking spray.
- Place a layer of cinnamon roll pieces to cover the bottom of your slow cooker. (Reserve icing packets).
- Beat eggs, cream, maple syrup, vanilla, and spices until blended well.
- Pour evenly over the rolls in the slow cooker.
- Place remaining roll pieces on top and spoon one packet of icing evenly over rolls.
- Cover and cook on low for 2.5 to 3 hours, or until sides are golden and rolls are set.
- Drizzle remaining icing over top and serve warm.

SNOWBALL COOKIES

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

Santa's coming, and that means we all need to perfect our cookies for jolly old Saint Nick! The kids will have a blast making these simple and fun snowball cookies for Santa.

Ingredients:

- 1 box white cake mix
- 1/3 cup oil
- 3 egg whites
- 4 oz cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar (optional)
- 1/2 cup of crushed pecans (optional)

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 350°.
- Mix all ingredients, except powdered sugar, on medium until well combined. Chill for 30 minutes.
- Take about 2 tablespoons of dough and roll into a ball. Roll dough in powdered sugar (optional) and place on a parchment lined cookie sheet. Bake in preheated oven for 9-11 minutes, or until the tops start to crack. (Don't let them get brown - it will ruin the "snowball" effect.
- Let cool on the cookie for a few minutes before transferring to a cooling rack. Dust with sifted powdered sugar.

WE WANT TO PUBLISH YOUR RECIPE! • SEND SUBMISSIONS TO RECIPES@CULLMANSENSE.COM

THE CHRISTMAS PICKLE: WHAT'S THE DILL?

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Christmas is full of traditions whether it's hanging mistletoe out for unsuspecting guests, leaving cookies and milk for Santa Claus, or simply going Christmas caroling with the folks from church. Everyone has specific things they do each year to make the holidays extra special.

The Christmas Pickle is one such tradition. It is considered a rather odd one, and quite honestly, nobody knows why it even exists!

Here's how the tradition goes: In the United States, a Christmas ornament in the form of a green pickle is strategically hidden on the family Christmas tree. Then on Christmas morning, the first child to locate the pickle on the tree either receives an extra present from Santa Claus or will have a whole year of good fortune.

Many believe the Christmas Pickle to be an old German tradition, but in actuality not many Germans have heard of it.

One theory suggests the Pickle's origin may have been made up for marketing purposes in the 1890s to coincide with the arrival of glass Christmas tree decorations that came to the United States from Germany. As a matter of fact, Woolworths was the first company to import these types of decorations into the United States during that time.

Another possible theory states that the tradition came from Camp Sumter during the Civil War. Bavarian-born Private John C. Lower had enlisted in the 103rd Pennsylvania Infantry, but was captured in April 1864 and taken to a prison camp.

According to the story that has been passed down from generation to generation, Lower begged a guard for a pickle while starving on Christmas Eve.

The guard, taking pity on the painfully thin Private, provided him a pickle.

The young man did not starve to death and later credited the silly pickle for saving his life.

After his release from prison, Private Lower returned to his family and began the tradition of hiding a pickle on their Christmas tree each year.

The third Christmas Pickle theory comes from Berrien Springs, Michigan, which is known for cucumber production.

It is a Victorian era tale of St. Nicholas saving two Spanish children who were trapped in a barrel of pickles by an innkeeper.

Today Berrien Springs is known as the Christmas Pickle capital of the world. The town holds a pickle festival each year in early December and has hosted a pickle parade since 1992.

Whether you are a fan of the pickle or not, Christmas trees all over the United States have a pickle ornament hidden somewhere on them - look closely and you just might find it.

If you would like to start the tradition in your home, you can usually find a pickle ornament wherever Christmas decorations are sold.



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

There are many tales that describe the origin of the Christmas Pickle.

HERE COMES SANTA CLAUS: LAST MINUTE INSPIRATION FOR BUYING CHILDREN'S PRESENTS

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - We are moving ever closer to the big day, and as always there are going to be some last minute shoppers. If you are in need of some tips on the most popular items in Cullman for your little ones then this article is for you.

While some of these items can be hard to find so close to Christmas, do not despair as most big box stores like Walmart or Kmart will be receiving daily shipments until Christmas. Keep checking to see if their newest stock brings in what you are looking for.

Local shops like Monograms Plus carry many items that are perfect gifts for your little one, or even teenager this holiday season.

Monogrammed shirts, jackets, and gifts are an ever growing trend these days, and this store can get you everything you need and more.

"We carry a lot of great items for the age ranges of 8 to 18," said Margaret Hamm, owner of Monograms Plus. "We are doing a ton of monogrammed rain jackets for kids. That has been a huge seller for us. Those and the monogrammed sweatshirts are probably our biggest sellers for all ages."

Another line of products that are taking off in a big way at Monograms Plus is the Pandora jewelry line.

"Pandora is really big right now with our teenage crowd," said Hamm.

"But people are now even starting them for the young children. They are the number one line in our store. They're unique in that they are similar to the traditional charm bracelet, but traditional charm bracelets are attached by links, and the Pandora charms just slide right on. There is also a wide selection of what you can put on them, and they are interchangeable."

Books-A-Million also carries a variety of holiday finds for your little guy or gal no matter their interest.

"Anything and everything with Frozen on it is a huge seller," said General Manager Kevin Petty.

"If it has Frozen on it, then it is flying out of that door for both girls and boys. We also have a lot of people looking to buy the Elf on a Shelf."

Of course, Books-A-Million also has you covered for anyone with a bookworm to buy for.

"From a book standpoint, the new Wimpy Kid book has been bought a lot this Christmas," he said.

"Blood of Olympus by Rick Riordan has been flying off the shelves as well for our young adult readers."

You can also check out Books-A-Million for merchandise from a wide selection of genres such as Mine Craft, Dr. Who, and The Hunger Games that is sure to put a smile on your child's face.

Whether you are going to a larger chain store, or shopping small this holiday season, the merchants of Cullman want to help make your last minute shopping experience a breeze.

Champions (from Front)

fensive half of the court, causing turnovers and forcing poor passes. However each team started to get open looks at the bucket in the last minute and a half of the quarter. Good Hope got the better of the exchange, outscoring Fairview 6-3 in the last minute to take a 10-7 after one.

The Lady Raiders opened the second quarter on a 6-0 run and looked as though they had the game firmly in hand but Fairview would not give up so easily. The Lady Aggies stepped up the defense in the last eight four minutes of the quarter, forcing Good Hope into mistakes. Taking advantage of the turnovers late, Katie Ball drilled a three from the right wing in the final seconds of the quarter to cut into the Good Hope lead. After a half of play, Good Hope held a 17-10 lead in the 2014 Cullman County Middle School Girl's Championship game.

Good Hope started to pull away in the third thanks in part to an 8-1 run that lasted most of the quarter. The Lady Raiders finished the quarter scoring the last four points to extend their lead to 17 with six minutes separating them and the championship title.

The Lady Raiders finished out their perfect season by holding Fairview to just points that were scored in the last second to take home the trophy by a score of 39-15.

"We had high expectations this year," said Lady Raider head coach Scotty Cofer. "We had a couple of girls move in and join what we had. We have a lot of talent on the team but it is hard to go 19-0. Having to beat teams more than once. It is tough no matter what. It is a school record. The girls are proud of it and I am proud of them."

All-County Team

- Kyler Hembree – Good Hope
- Micha Oldacre – Good Hope
- Miriam Oldacre – Good Hope
- Kelly Pickett – Good Hope
- Peyton Golden – Fairview
- Katie Ball – Fairview
- Olivia Ball – West Point
- Tess Duke – Holly Pond
- Elizabeth Miller – Holly Pond
- Kylon Hamby – Cold Springs
- Des Moore – Cold Springs
- Kierra Merriweather – Hanceville
- Alexis Helton – Vinemont

West Point Warriors vs. Parkside Panthers

In the first quarter of the championship game between the West Point Warriors and the Parkside Panthers was a feeling out process where both squads were just looking to get a feel for the floor and baskets that resulted in a slow first quarter with Parkside grabbing a 7-6 lead.

Parkside found the range early in the second, outscoring the Warriors 9-4 to take a six point lead. After settling down and playing their game, West Point responded with a flurry. Landon Ray and Noah Allison combined for four straight three's on their next four possessions to kick start the Warrior offense leading to 28-21 lead at the half.

The Panthers came out roaring in the third, scoring the first seven points of the second half to knot the game at 28. The scoring went back and forth for the rest of the quarter with West Point's Kolton Sapp hitting a pair of free throws at the end of the frame to give the Warriors a 32-30 advantage in the thrilling contest.

In the fourth Parkside had numerous chances at the free throw line but had trouble scoring from the floor when their leading scorer, Luke Yarbrough, fouled out with 39.6 seconds left in the third. West Point took full advantage of Yarbrough's absence, controlling the paint and getting easy put backs on the offensive glass. The Warriors went on to win the championship by a score of 47-39.

All-County Team

- Peyton Hill – Good Hope
- Kallen Sharpton – Good Hope
- Dawson Smith – Fairview
- Hunter Persall – West Point
- Kolton Sapp – West Point
- Devin Tankersely – Holly Pond
- Kyler Chaney – Holly Pond
- Luke Yarbrough – Parkside
- Connor Tipton – Parkside
- Gabe Fortner – Parkside
- RJ Evans – Hanceville
- Raiden Morgan – Hanceville

H.O.P.E. (from Front)

in order to help with planning for food.

The proceeds from the party will go to help establish scholarships for those individuals in need of financial assistance in paying for their lessons, as well as for the care of H.O.P.E.'s specially selected horses. The lessons are $25 and are given in eight-week sessions. For more information about H.O.P.E., visit the website at www.hopehorses.org.

"Many of our participants are on scholarship and need financial assistance. This party is one way people can help provide scholarships and also enjoy an evening of fun and fellowship as we close out the year," explained Liz St. John, board member and party committee member who also volunteers during lessons.

CHILDREN LEARN TO MAKE ONE OF A KIND CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - On Wednesday, Deep South Classics held a special class for boys only. During this class, the little guys made beautiful Christmas platters to give to their mothers or grandmothers. The room was filled with excitement and snacks. Globs of paint were dotted on paper plates and scattered along the long wooden table in the middle of the room.

First, each boy was given a large white china plate. Then, with tongues stuck out in fierce concentration, each boy painted one of their hands with green paint, and then carefully placed the hand onto their plate. As instructed, they patiently held their hands perfectly still for just a few seconds, then slowly lifted them from the plate and washed up.

Once the little artists were cleaned up, they took a paper plate with different colored paint and began to decorate their green handprints. Once the multicolored dots were strategically placed, the handprint became a Christmas tree.

Lastly the plates were signed by the proud, young men. The children wrote "Merry Christmas" and the date and then the artwork was allowed to dry. Snacks were eaten and the boys were allowed to play outside for a bit as they waited. Once finished, they proudly displayed their work before wrapping them up and taking them home.

"We've set up three Dolly and Me's [a tea party for little girls] already, where we got a few of the little girls to bring their dolls in, and we made the Christmas trees, and using the little doll's fingers to make the ornaments," said Bonita Hutchinson, owner. "We began to hear, 'What about the boys?' and believe it or not, we're getting more participation out of our boys!"

After the holidays, Hutchinson promises to have a lot more fun lined up for the kids around town.

"We're beginning to do Dolly and Me Tea Parties where we bring in young girls and try to teach them basic etiquette, table etiquette, manners and whatever," she explained. "We will really get that going after the first of the year. I also plan to host birthday parties where the parents can bring in their own food and have a small tea party or craft party."

Each party lasts for an hour and the cost is $25, which covers their snacks and all the supplies.

"Each child takes home either a banded china plate, which costs around $38 retail," Hutchinson continued, "or a ceramic piece, which costs $28 retail. The plates are things I have that I really can't sell anymore."

There are a lot of neat things going on at Deep South Classics, both for the young and the not so old. If you or someone you know is interested in having a party for your child at Deep South Classics, give them a call at 256-739-1266 or e-mail them at bonita@deepsouthclassics.net. You can also stop by and browse their selection of merchandise. They are located at 118 Fifth Street, Cullman, AL 35055.



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

When completed, the plate's handprint design becomes a Christmas tree.

History (from Front)

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - On Friday, December 19, 2014, the City of Cullman received a brand new historic marker. Members of the McPhillips family came from near and far to celebrate, as well as fondly remember the King Pharr Canning Company, which was located on the property between Depot Park and the Cullman Police Station.

"We gather here together today to commemorate, with this historic marker, King Pharr Canning Company from 1946-1976," said Julian L. McPhillips Jr. "We honor and thank the founders, namely my grandparents Julian and Lilybel McPhillips, and my father Julian L. McPhillips."

According to Mr. McPhillips, the King Pharr Canning Company was purchased by the McPhillips family in 1946. It was a major vegetable canning operation in Cullman. Led by chairman Julian B. McPhillips and W. Warren McPhillips, the local plant became Cullman's biggest employer, ultimately employing up to over 400 people locally, many hundreds more indirectly in harvesting crops and over 1,000 employees in all its plants.

King Pharr Canning Company was headquartered here in Cullman, not far from where the Cullman Police Department now stands. It canned and shipped 33 kinds of vegetables nationally, including peas, green beans, Irish potatoes, okra, tomatoes, pimentos, sweet potatoes, and blackberries. At its peak in 1959, King Pharr had over 2,000 individual growers on contract and produced 30,000 cans annually. The company's impact on the local economy was enormous. As mentioned earlier, King Pharr's headquarters were in Cullman, but they also had plants located in Selma, Uniontown, Georgia and Louisiana. The business closed its doors in 1976 due to the expanding fast food industry, leaving behind nothing but fond memories.

"We rejoice that this vegetable canning plant, which operated at this site for 30 years, helped to feed not only a nation full of vegetable eaters, it also fed the families of the many employees of Cullman and the farmers in the surrounding countryside," McPhillips said with a warm smile. "We hope that today's ceremony of this historic marker will help to preserve some of Cullman's history that otherwise might be forgotten by future generations."

The historic marker was approved by Mayor Max Townson and the Cullman City Council earlier in the year. Mayor Townson plans to add a concrete platform around the marker and a light to highlight its beauty in the near future. Townon was at the ceremony and fondly recalled his memories of the plant from his childhood.

Cullman is lucky to have such a rich history, and folks who truly enjoy making that history known. Many thanks to Mayor Townson and the McPhillips family for helping to keep the memory of the King Pharr Canning Company alive for generations to come. Again, the marker is located on the site of the former King Pharr Canning Company Plant between Depot Park and the Cullman Police Department.

Schedule (from Front)

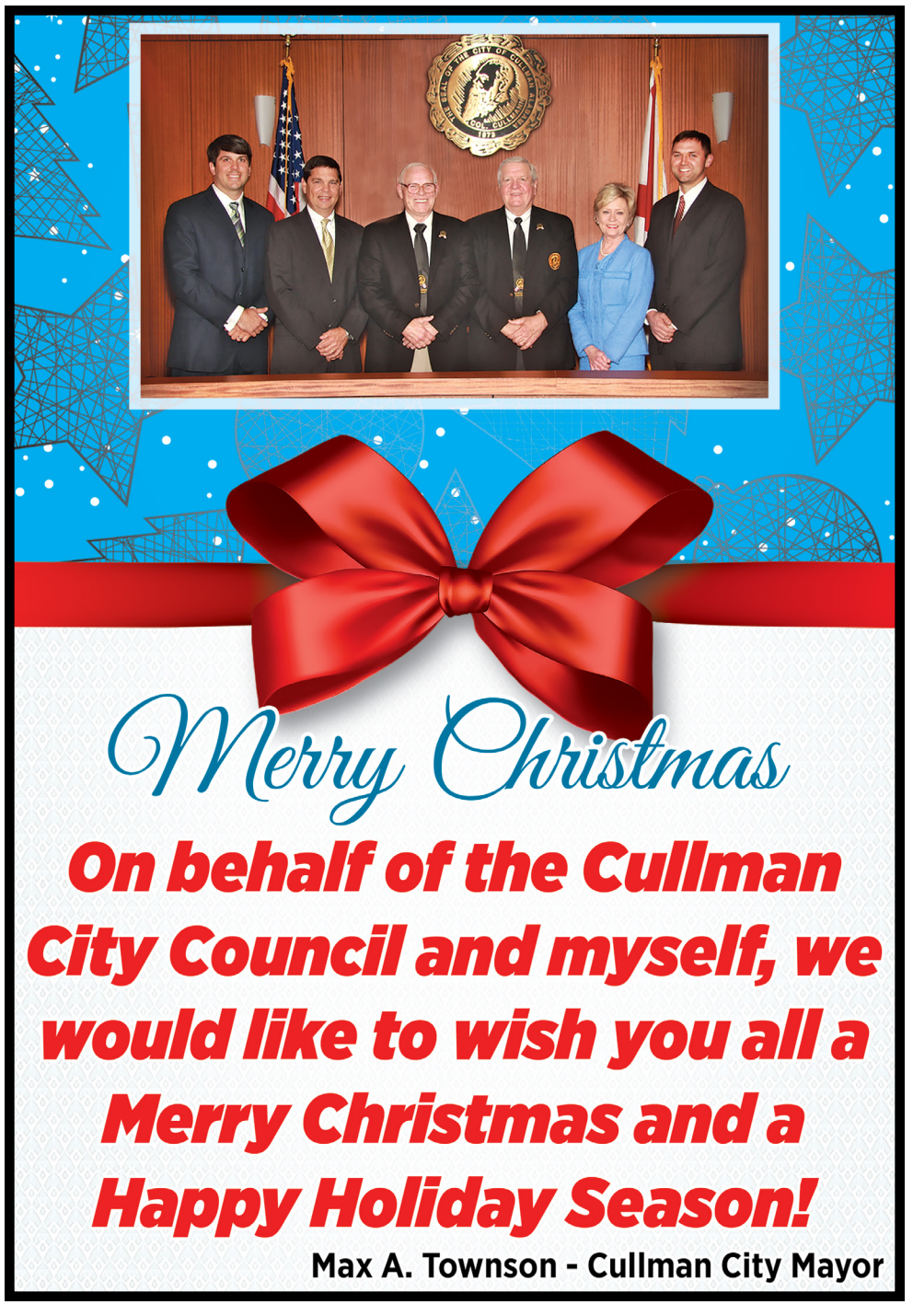
for the department. "What we will do is pick up Thursday's garbage on Friday, and Friday's trash on Saturday. All the businesses will be picked up either a day early or a day late."

Cullman City Sanitation

"We're coming in Wednesday to run the regular routes," said Superintendent of Sanitation Larry Jones. "The resident, commercial and recycle, and then we will be off Thursday. Thursday's route will be picked up Friday. Our commercial will be run as scheduled."

For more information call:

- Cullman County Sanitation at 256-287-1142
- Cullman City Sanitation at 256-737-7532
- Cullman County Courthouse at 256-775-4654



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!

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.

'Women's Community Prayer' Group Meeting
All interested women of all faiths and churches are invited to attend the newly formed 'Womens' Community Prayer' Group meeting which meets at 10 a.m. at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in their Chapel. This prayer ministry is open to women of all churches and faiths who wish to pray for our families, our city and our country. For additional information please contact Nancy Spurgeon, 256-737-0580. This prayer group also is open to those who would like to participate but cannot attend. They are welcome to join as 'Partners in Prayer'. Please call and get connected.

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
MERRY CHRISTMAS

Friday

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

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.

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5 CHRISTMAS MOVIES YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - What is better to do on Christmas Eve night than have a movie marathon with your family or friends? You can make cocoa, eat popcorn, and have an all around great night before Christmas. Below are a few of the most highly regarded Christmas movies of all time. If any of these are new to you, then they are a must watch for sure.

The Grinch (2000) Rated - PG
A retelling of the classic, "Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas", this movie is a hilarious movie that is safe for the whole family. Jim Carrey brings a humor to the character as only he can. Hilarious and heartwarming, this movie is #5 on our list of holiday movie classics.

A Christmas Story (1983) Rated - PG
This movie has been the Christmas movie to watch for years now. It is such a classic that the network TBS has shown the movie for years, for 24 hours straight every Christmas. The movie is based off of the writings of Jean Shepherd. It follows the story of a young boy named Ralphie and his crazy family through their holiday misadventures. It is an absolutely timeless movie that has had people laughing for decades and will continue to do so for years to come.

A Muppet Christmas Carol (1992) Rated - G
Do you enjoy a good musical Muppet style? Then this movie is for you. With the beloved Muppet cast, and legendary actor Michael Caine starring as Scrooge, it is a remarkably great movie. The right combination of humor and drama, you will not be able to hide your love for this movie.

The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993) Rated - PG
For those with a taste for the darker side of Christmas, Tim Burton's cult classic "The Nightmare Before Christmas" is a combination of two holidays. Jack Skellington becomes tired of the grind of preparing for Halloween and longs for more. He finds himself in the North Pole and decides he will take over Santa's job. A movie of brilliant musical scores, talented voices and dark humor are all to be had in this cult classic holiday movie.

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989) Rated - PG-13
On the more adult side of the holiday movie list is Christmas Vacation starring comedy legend Chevy Chase as Clark Griswold. As the head of his household, Clark Griswold feels it his duty to deliver the perfect Christmas for his family. However, things never go according to his plans. It is arguably one of the most hilarious movies of all time. So put the kids to bed and get ready to laugh!

LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT
Sponsored by Busy Bee Café

MONDAY
• 79 cent wings at Rodney G's Hickory Grill from 6-9 p.m.

TUESDAY
• Pickin' Under the Pavilion at the Senior Center at 6:30 p.m.
• Square Dancing Lessons at East Point Community Center from 6:30-8:30 p.m.
• Kayaking lessons at the Cullman Wellness and Aquatics Center at 6 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.
• Trivia Night at Rodney G's at 7 p.m.
• Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY
• Karaoke Night at Grumpy's 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.

FRIDAY
• 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
• Live Music at Brothers
• Live Music at Moe's
• Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-6 p.m.
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CHRISTMAS AT BENNETT'S: A FAMILY TRADITION

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - As children, most all of us have been excited and fascinated by Santa, elves, holiday décor, and beautiful lights. Many years ago, department stores in larger towns delighted their customers with beautiful window displays and customers were eager to view these displays as a sign of the beginning of the holiday retail shopping seasons.

Bennett Home Supply in Cullman has long prepared their store with Christmas window displays and decorations. Store owner Carol Bennett said, "Our most favorite window in our store is our nativity scene." She emphasized that this display rarely changes and ultimately represents the true meaning of Christmas. "We found our nativity set in the early 1990s and have displayed it yearly."

Their other windows are decorated for the children with animated manikins, animals, toys, and Santa. These are themed a bit different each year. Carol said that to a small child, the Christmas windows with the moving figures can be magical and exciting. "We are constantly searching for new ideas and displays."

Carol described the history of some of the decorations they have. "Over the past few years we have personally collected many antique manikins and figures for our holiday displays. One set from the 40s we purchased in Kentucky and were told at that time that they were originally purchased by an auction from Macy's of New York." Many of the other displays and backdrops have been made by their son, Shawn, his friends, and their employees. To completely decorate the store interior and windows, Shawn starts early in October and into the holidays. Carol said that many hours are spent in hopes that the end result of the displays is as pleasing to their customers as they are to them.

In addition to displaying the decorations at Bennett's, Carol said that they have many Christmas items for sale. All the ornaments and floral on the trees including the garlands are for sale. For the holidays, they stock unusual ornaments, [originals by Christopher Radko], ribbon, and specialty holiday décor for the trees and homes. Carol said, "We carry a large selection of holiday floral, garlands, wreaths, greenery, and trees." In addition, Shawn offers in-home design, tree installation and home décor for customers.

For your Christmas gift needs, Bennett's is sure to have an item for everyone. Carol said, "We offer many items in Bennett's for your Christmas shopping experience. We have been known for some time as 'The Kitchen Store' in Cullman. Our store features over 100 jars of specialty coffees [over 40 in decaf], gourmet kitchen gadgets, bake ware, cookware, and small appliances."



KATIE DANSBY/CULLMANSENSE

Carol Bennett's son, Shawn, begins decorating the store for Christmas in October.

Their jewelry department is stocked with a large selection of jewelry, scarves, wraps, and bags. A specialty for the store is the Lionel Train Department. If you love wooden toys, then you will enjoy their selection of Melissa and Doug toys and trains for the children, along with Thomas the Train Sets and accessories. Carol said, "In our gift department, we offer accessories, seasonal floral, glassware, antiques, with some furniture and collectibles."

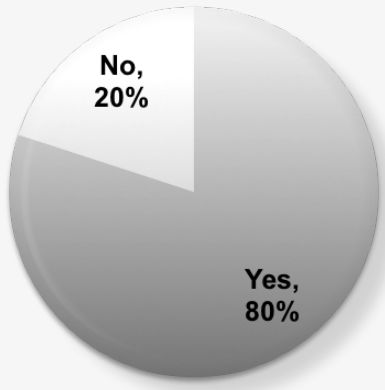
The holidays mean a lot to the Bennett family, and they enjoy pleasing their customers. Carol said, "The holidays are very special for us." She said that over the years, they have had customers from towns nearby, who have now become wonderful friends of the store and employees. "We are delighted that they return and continue to shop with us throughout the year. As the original store began in 1936, we are told many stories by customers, who as children, shopped with their families in the original store. We have experienced many smiles and heard many stories of bicycles, wagons, and toys given for Christmas and special birthdays that were purchased in the 40s and 50s. During that era, the 40s through the 70s, the store was known at Christmas as "The House of Santa Claus".

Carol said, "We feel very blessed to know so many wonderful memories were created behind these doors with Guy and Viola Bennett over the 52 years they were involved. As second and third generation, in the business since 1988, we hope to continue the tradition of family memories continuing to be made within these walls, watching children grow and again returning and creating more memories for their families. The smiles and laughter of our customers are our blessings for the Christmas season."

Stop by Bennett's to see what they have to offer. They are sure to amaze you with their tastes in decoration and multiple Christmas gift options. Bennett Home Supply is located at 410 2nd Ave SW, Cullman, AL 35055. You can reach them by phone at 256-734-2961.

Poll

Do you make charitable donations during the holiday season?



This Week's Poll
Have you finished your Christmas shopping?
Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

CRMC TO HOST $5 FUNDRAISER FOR INDIGENT PATIENTS

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Monday and Tuesday, December 22 and 23, from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Cullman Regional Medical Center will be hosting a fundraiser that allows people to come and purchase last minute Christmas gifts.

The fundraiser, held three times a year, raises funds for patients who have become indigent and can no longer afford payments.

CRMC collaborates with a company called Masquerade Fundraising that provides items such as jewelry, bags, watches, and scarves.

From the watches to the scarves, everything is $5. Masquerade then, on a percentage-based system, gives a portion of the profit to the hospital, which, this week happens to be CRMC.

A representative of CRMC explained that the funds that are raised from this event go straight to helping patients who cannot pay, not for new equipment or anything of that nature.

The event will be held in Professional Office Building 2 in the Colonel Cullmann Room.

The fundraiser will have a little bit of everything for sale and is free to attend, so stop by and see what might fit your Christmas shopping needs.

cullman city parks & recreation

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

www.cullmanrecreation.org
256-734-9157

- **Phone Calls from Santa:** Sign up to have your child receive a FREE call from Santa. Registration is on a first come, first serve basis, and spaces are limited. Sign-ups will open Dec. 1 at the Civic Center. Call 256-734-9157 for more info.
- **Community Wellness Day** will be held at the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center on Saturday, January 3 from 7am-1pm. The event will include free access to the Wellness & Aquatic Center to the public, a health fair, featured fitness classes and speakers, and free enrollment on any new memberships, a $50 value. The Polar Bear Plunge will also take place on January 3, where entrants will have a chance to win a free one year membership to the center. Registration for the event will be free. For more info, call 775-SWIM.
- **Ten Years Younger classes** held at the Cullman Civic Center every Tuesday at 10am with Ann Caretti. Classes are $45 for 6 weeks. Call 256-734-9157 for more information.
- **Latin, Swing, and Ballroom Dancing Classes** at the Cullman Civic Center, Thursdays at 6:30pm for beginners and 7:30pm for advanced classes. Register at the Civic Center or call 256-734-9157 for more information.
- **Rock Climb at Hurricane Creek Park!** Come join the 1st Time Rock Climbing program, Saturday mornings at Hurricane Creek Park. Group rates are available, and no experience is required! Call ahead at 256-734-2125.
- **Yoga Classes** are offered at the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center as well as a host of other fitness classes including Pilates, Zumba, spin, class, aerobics, water aerobics and more. Classes are offered 7 days a week. Check the front desk or call 256-775-SWIM for class schedule and times.
- **CP&R Archery Classes** are ongoing and take place each Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday afternoon for beginner, intermediate, and advanced archers. Cost is $40 for the month. Call 734-9157 for more information.
- CP&R is looking for an instructor for photography classes. Interested candidates can send their resume and any questions to Waid Harbison at wharbison@cullmanrecreation.org. Deadline to send in a resume is Monday, December 29.

What's Online

Kids Shop 'Til They Drop With Local Cops

The Cullman City Police Department has been working hard all year for this day. Saturday was a day to give back to local kids and families that may have needed a little extra help this Christmas. On Saturday their efforts paid off in a major way and brought smiles to the children they helped.

qrne.ws/294



Relay For Life Gets the Christmas Spirit

Last Saturday folks all about town had a wonderful opportunity to complete their Christmas shopping while supporting a great cause. Relay For Life of Cullman County hosted a Christmas festival and bake sale at the East Point Community Center, located on Alabama Highway 69, near the...

qrne.ws/295

Secret Meals Continues Strong

No child should go hungry. That is a statement everyone can agree upon, and here in Cullman, local businesses and individuals are participating in Alabama Credit Union's secret meals program to help. One of the largest supporters of the program is the Cullman Association of Realtors.

qrne.ws/296



DENISE THOMAS-MCCRARY

McCrary's works such as *Full Threat Number 7* have been displayed at the Magic City Art Connection in Birmingham and the Kentucky Festival of the Arts.

NOTHING KEEPS HER DOWN

AFTER BEING BED-RIDDEN FOR TWO YEARS, LOCAL ARTIST DENISE THOMAS-MCCRARY RETURNS TO THE CANVAS TO LIVE OUT HER CHILDHOOD PASSION

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Local artist Denise "Nicky" Thomas-McCrary has been diving into the world of art since she was a young child. She has been taking lessons and exploring her abilities since she was 13. Her art is contemporary, and definitely one of a kind. She was kind enough to share her story.

"The first Christmas present I remember getting was when I was 6-years-old and Santa brought me a huge round box of crayons that had shades of every color," said McCrary. "I always colored; I never played much with dolls. Then I started taking formal drawing lessons when I was 13. The first thing I drew was a group of willow trees with faces, their limbs like arms, swaying in the wind."

Eventually McCrary went to college where things took a turn for her, and her art.

"I received an art scholarship to Wallace, but soon transferred out to ATL via Santa Barbara California," she said. "In Atlanta I was soon told, by my engineer boyfriend at the time & everyone else, that art is a fine hobby, but not a viable career choice, so I ended up as a draftsman, drawing floor plans for the Marriott Marquis in Jakarta Indonesia. Art was dead to me then."

Luckily, McCrary did find her art again, and has since started working with materials that are unique for a painter.

"I use acrylics & some oil on mounted luan board with plaster, spackle, and other household or commercial stuff for texture. I started out painting on knotted plywood because my father and husband were doing woodworking projects that left scraps lying around, so I used wood out of necessity. Now it's what I prefer. I've also painted on canvas & Masonite, but one is too fragile, the other too heavy for my purposes."

The road has not always been easy, and McCrary has had to face hardships along the way. A debilitating medical condition forced a step back from her art, and life in general.

> **"Sometimes just existing takes precedence over actual living."**
> Denise Thomas-McCrary

"There have been many starts and stops along the way," she said. "Sometimes just existing takes precedence over actual living. I was diagnosed with an incurable muscle disease called Dermatomyositis that left me bed-ridden for two years and has involved intensive physical therapy to get myself back to a point where I can, once again, participate in the things that make life worth living. With help from my husband, John, and 80-year-old daddy, Dennis, I did get up, and here I am living life again."

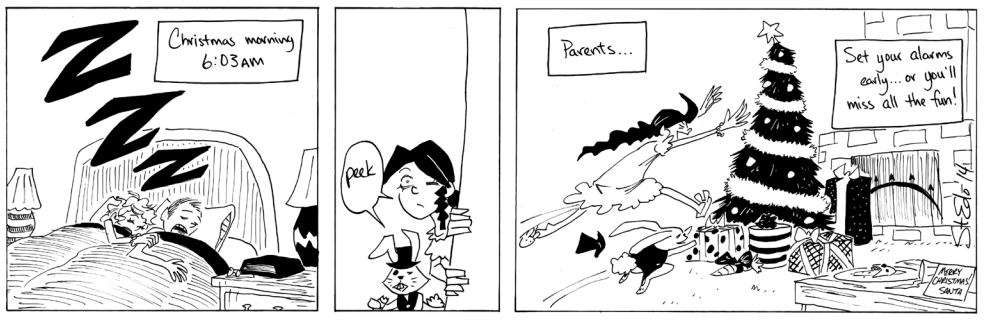
McCrary has two major collections so far: Her Dreams and CHAOS collection that symbolize a myriad of different social commentary as well as emotions. Her work is dramatic and at the same time subtle. Her use of color and texture make for absolutely amazing pieces that could hang in any home or gallery. Her works have been shown at many notable shows including the Magic City Art Connection in Birmingham, the Kentucky Festival of the Arts in Northport and Bluff Park to name only a few.

"I'm inspired by everything from the sky to animals and people," she said. "I'm, of course, inspired by current & past socio-political events as is seen in many of my CHAOS Series like Maneater. All things are seen through the filter of art to an artistically-bent person, in the way everything is numbers to an engineer. To me, life has been one long piece of performance art."

To learn more about McCrary, visit her Facebook page "Nicky McCrary" or e-mail her at nickymccrary@gmail.com.

COMICS

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

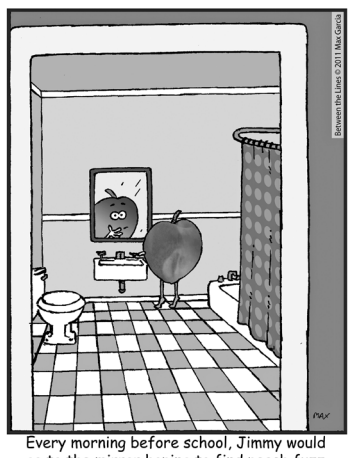


MAMA'S BOYZ www.jerrycraft.net **JERRY CRAFT**



Green Pieces© by Drew Aquilina





Every morning before school, Jimmy would go to the mirror hoping to find peach fuzz.



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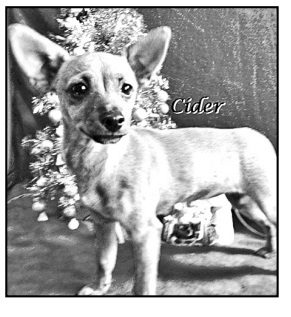
PETS OF THE WEEK

Jingle Jangle



Hello! My name is Jingle Jangle, and I am about 5 years old. I am a Schnauzer mix, and I currently weigh 21 lbs. I am a stray but if no one claims me, I will go up for adoption on 12/22 at 9:30 a.m. I am full of life and I love to play. I can't wait to meet my new best friend and forever companion! Come see me today and I will win you over with my lovable nature.

Cider



Hello! My name is Cider, and I am about 14 weeks old. I am believed to be a Chihuahua, and I currently weigh 6 lbs. I am spirited and enjoy company. I am a tiny little thing and can't wait to meet my new forever family and to have a forever home! Come visit me today, and I will win you over with my sweet spirit!

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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.

VAULT GAMES VAULT GAMES

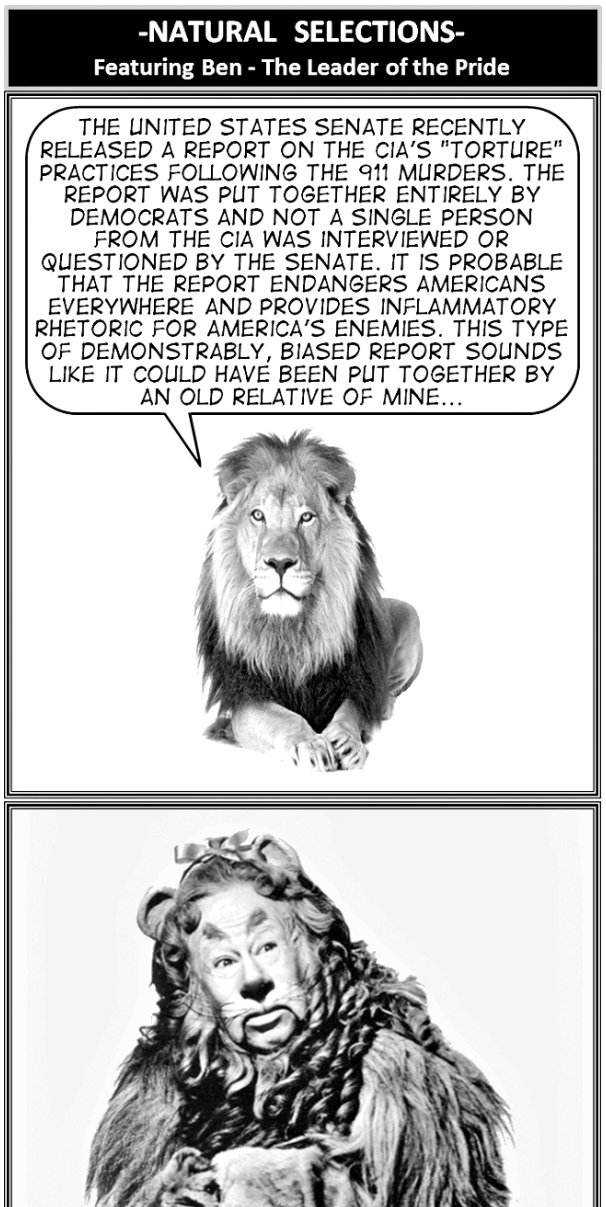
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EDITORIAL CARTOONS



OPINION

HOW ABOUT ANOTHER CHRISTMAS TRUCE?

Arnold J. Oliver
PeaceVoice

On the evening of December 24th a century ago, peace broke out in the most unlikely of places. In the blasted, putrid trenches of Belgium and France, soldiers fighting on the Western Front put aside their arms in what became known as the Christmas Truce. Although World War I was then only a few months old, there had already been a million combat deaths. Many soldiers were weary of the futility and horrific costs of the war, and thousands of them spontaneously stopped trying to kill each other.

The drama began on Christmas Eve, as German soldiers lit up their Tannenbaums (Christmas trees), put them on top of their trenches in view of the Allied troops, and began to sing carols. From there, full scale fraternization became widespread. Troops put down their weapons, climbed out of the trenches and met in no-mans-land to pray and sing and exchange greetings and gifts. The cease fire continued into Christmas Day during which the dead were buried, toasts were exchanged and soccer games played.

The break in hostilities was actually a mutiny, not a truce. It was initiated by the soldiers themselves against express orders from military commanders. In fact, the political and military leaders on both sides were horrified when the shooting stopped, and did everything they could to force a rapid resumption of hostilities. Dire threats of severe punishment were issued, and the news was suppressed. But in spite of this, it took weeks for the fighting to resume in some areas. Lance Corporal Adolph Hitler, serving with the Bavarian Army, did not think much of the cease fire either.

The Christmas Truce is often portrayed as a singular event, and it is true that in the later years of the war there were few holiday cease-fires. But as the war ground on in its destructive stupidity, very large mutinies took place.

In the East, the Russian army disintegrated, the soldiers voted with their feet, and went home to make revolution. There were also large-scale mutinies among German and French troops, weary of being fodder for cannons. Much of Europe, not just Russia, teetered on the brink of revolution.

In fact, military mutinies have been common throughout history. During the Napoleonic Wars entire British naval fleets rebelled over brutal treatment and sympathy with French republican ideals. Warships commanded by mutineers blockaded the port of London.

The United States armed forces have at times also rebelled, for a variety of reasons. During the Mexican American War of 1946 to 1948 an entire battalion of Irish immigrants went over to the Mexican side; and in the Civil War fraternization was widespread.

But it was during the Vietnam War that resistance from inside the US military was most consequential.

By 1971 the U.S. military was nearly unable to function due to active dissent among all branches of the armed forces. Aircraft carriers could not put to sea, airmen declined to fly, and ground units did not engage.

Disgruntled troops had as much or more to do with ending the war than the anti-war movement.

Upon reflection, it is incredible that crucial facts about our military adventures, such as GI resistance during the Vietnam War, are almost entirely absent from the news and history as it is taught. The topic is deemed inappropriate for young minds in our high schools and most universities, and has all but disappeared from the public consciousness. One cannot but wonder how free our free society actually is.

The citizens of the world can hope for another spontaneous truce from the trenches. Perhaps one day we can realize the dream of President Eisenhower, who observed, "I think people want peace so much that one of these days government had better get out of their way and let them have it." Fitting words in a season of hope.

Arnold "Skip" Oliver writes for PeaceVoice and is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio. A Vietnam veteran, he belongs to Veterans For Peace, and can be reached at soliver@heidelberg.edu.

UAB STARTING NEW CLINICAL TRIAL FOR TYPE I DIABETES

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

BIRMINGHAM - It would seem that right here in Alabama, big medical advancements are being made every day. At the University of Alabama in Birmingham, or UAB, a new clinical trial is set to begin at the first of the year after two years of research has shown to produce promising results by using an already common drug to treat or possibly even reverse Type I Diabetes.

Type I Diabetes is a chronic condition that is usually diagnosed early on in life. It is an insulin-dependent form of diabetes that requires constant and careful management.

The mechanism of the disease lies deep within the pancreas where specialized Beta cells produce insulin within the body to regulate blood sugar.

In Type 1 patients, these cells begin to die off over time due to the overproduction of a protein called TXNIP.

Scientists have shown over the past two years, that the common blood pressure medication Verapamil has been able to treat and in some cases reverse the effects of diabetes in mouse models.

"We have previously shown that verapamil can prevent diabetes and even reverse the disease in mouse models and reduce TXNIP in human islet beta cells, suggesting that it may have beneficial effects in humans as well," Dr. Anath Shalev, director of UAB's Comprehensive Diabetes Center and principal investigator of the verapamil clinical trial, stated in a press release.

Thanks to the help of a $2.1 million dollar grant from the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, a three-year study will be able to take place starting at the beginning of next year.

The study will take 52 patients within 3 months of receiving their diagnosis, and will then be separated into two groups.

One group will receive the drug Verapamil while the other half is given a placebo for one year. Subjects will continue insulin treatment during the study as well as regular monitoring.

While the trial is short, and researchers are staying realistic, it is an amazingly important step toward a cure.

Approximately 3 million people are living with Type 1 Diabetes in the US. It is also estimated that more than 15,000 children are diagnosed each year.

This research can help everyone diagnosed or all those that will be diagnosed. At long last, researchers are heading in the right direction.

HAVE AN OPINION ON ONE OF OUR STORIES?

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

E-mail your submission to opinion@cullmansense.com

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Community Matters

Publisher Noah Chandler
Editor Dustin Isom
Address 412 1st Ave. SE, Ste. 103, Cullman, AL 35055
issues@cullmansense.com
Sports Josh McBrayer, Johnny Thornton
Newsroom Editor Natalie Bonner
Local Contributors Chelsea Sparks, Sharon Schuler Kreps, Will Hogue, Grace Russell, Allison Boyd, Sage Overton
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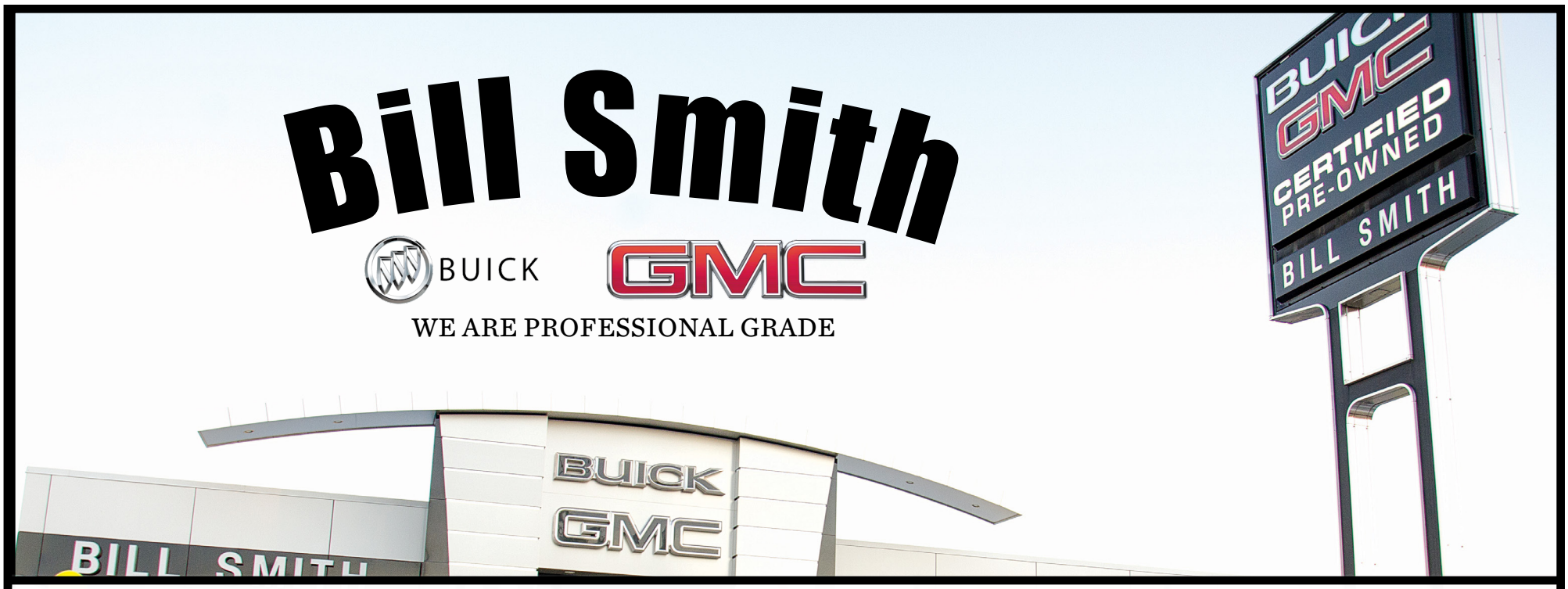


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