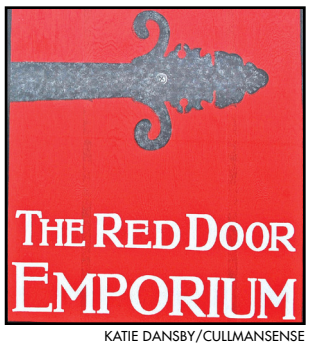
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CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS



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LOOKING AHEAD TO 2015

NEW YEAR TO INTRODUCE DUCK RIVER DAM, 222 INTERCHANGE, AND MORE RETAILERS

Chelsea Sparks
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CULLMAN - Cullman has seen many changes in only a year's time. 2014 has been a year for growth in both economy infrastructure. As many have noticed, business is getting bigger and better at almost every end of town, and according to officials, 2015 should be even better. New businesses and more job growth are both on the horizon.

One of the bigger projects that has been in the works for quite some time and is projected to be finished in the spring is the Duck River Dam project.

"We have a lot of things going that is going to affect a lot of people," said County Commissioner Garry Marchman. "As the Duck River project progresses, the more funds will go into it, and so water rates will increase. The price that we purchase the water for will go up, and so rates will follow. I can say that it will be as limited as we can and still operate."

Cullman City Mayor Max Townson also weighed in on the Duck River project, and how it is more than necessary for the future of the city and county. While rates might increase a small amount, it is ensuring water for future generations.

"What people need to realize is that in 2007, we were within months of being without water," said Townson. "But with this new Duck River project, we can alternate the supply and it should take care of this county for the next 100 years. We don't have access to the Tennessee River like a lot of other areas. This will ensure that future generations have sufficient water for farming, retail, industrial development, and home use."

Many have noticed the increase in the city and county's retail and industrial development, Mayor Townson spoke of his excitement for what is to come in those areas as well.

"If you notice Cullman is really in a boom state," he said. "Our unemployment is probably one of the lowest in the state. We have expansions going on at Rehau and Cash Acme coming in the next year, as well as research and development centers coming that is really rare to have in a town our size. That will produce higher end jobs in our area. Also, with new

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A HEART OF JEWELS

LOCAL RESIDENT'S BATTLE WITH BREAST CANCER INSPIRATION FOR HANDMADE JEWELRY P5


KATIE DANSBY/CULLMANSENSE

Marilyn Dodge has been making jewelry at USA Healthcare in Cullman for the past three to four years.

CWAC TO OFFER FREE ADMISSION DURING COMMUNITY WELLNESS DAY

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CULLMAN - The Cullman Wellness and Aquatics Center has had great success in the last five years: from hosting state-wide swim meets, to meeting its five-year goal in its first five months of being open.

However, in the past five years, the CWAC has never had a day like the one set to occur on January 3, 2015. There will be no charge to make use of the facility's amenities from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

CWAC, or The Duck, as some around the community have dubbed it – because of the pronunciation of its acronym – will not only offer free admission, but also a health fair featuring local organizations and businesses.

Along with the health fair, CWAC has organized an array of speakers who will talk about nutrition, building a workout program, wellness, and other topics, according to Waid Harbison.

Harbison also wrote that the whole point of the event is to further motivate and educate the community on how to become healthier and stronger. Along with the health fair and the speakers, there will also be free Zumba, spin, aerobics, and water aerobics classes.

Furthermore, there will be a Polar Bear Plunge on the day of the Community Wellness Day. The winner of the Polar Bear Plunge will receive a free one year membership to CWAC.

Also, if you sign up for your CWAC membership on January 3, there will be no registration fee. If you have any further questions or wish to know more about the CWAC's Community Wellness Day, visit the Cullman Parks and Recreation website at cullmanrecreation.org or call 256-775-7946.

LAW ENFORCEMENT STRESSES NEW YEAR'S EVE SAFETY

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN - New Year's Eve is this week and folks all over Cullman County are making their plans to celebrate. Whether you are spending New Year's Eve at home in front of the television waiting for the big ball to drop, laying in bed sound asleep or partying it up with all your family and friends, one thing you need to keep in mind is this – be careful!

Law enforcement throughout the county are stepping up their game for this week's New Year's Eve celebrations. Cullman City Police will keep a close eye on the city of Cullman, while the Cullman County

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A YEAR IN REVIEW

A LOOK AT THE GOOD, BAD, AND UGLY OF 2014

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CULLMAN - A national look back at the year of 2014 is hard to do considering the slew of events in science, pop culture, and politics that have occurred. A lot has happened in one year, and the year of 2015 promises to bring just as many changes. We have seen amazing triumphs, bitter defeats, and gut wrenching losses in this year, so let's explore some of the highlights.

In the world of pop culture and entertainment, we suffered some terrible losses of unforgettable actors. James Avery, who played the father on the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, passed away at the beginning of the year, leaving the children of the 90s in a wreck. Brilliant actor Phillip Seymour Hoffman also passed

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"TRAGIC SITUATION" LEADS OFFICER TO USE DEADLY FORCE AT HOLLY POND RESIDENCE

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HOLLY POND - Shortly after 2:40 p.m. on Saturday December 27, emergency responders along with volunteer fire personnel and deputies with the Cullman Sheriff's Office arrived at the residence located on Meadow Drive in Holly Pond on a medical call.

"At 2:46 this evening an officer responded to assist EMS on a medical call at 94 Meadow Drive in Holly Pond. When officers arrived the person that had been slated for treatment ran back into the house and came back outside brandishing an edge weapon, running towards our officers," said Chief Deputy Max Bartlett.

Bartlett said the "Two sheriff's deputies were on the scene and one attempted to deploy a Taser. We don't know if it missed or had a partial deployment, but the assailant continued to advance on our officers and one of the officers was forced to use deadly force. It's a tragic situation."

The 51-year-old white male subject, whose name is being withheld at this time, was shot four times, according to Chief Deputy Bartlett.

"At this time we believe there had been four shots fired. We are still early in the investigation but we believe there were four shots," he said. "The body has been sent for a full autopsy so we will know more once it is concluded."

The State Bureau of Investigation has been notified of the incident and will be conducting an investigation into the shooting.

"We feel that at this time, all indicators are that the officer did nothing other than what he had to do to protect his life. It is an unfortunate situation but one officers all over the nation fear every day," he said. "We are in the process right now of processing the evidence at this time with the SBI."

Bartlett said both deputies were wearing body cameras at the time of the incident.

"We believe both officers had their body cameras fully activated, so as the investigation continues it will be analyzed and should help us in the investigation to determine exactly what took place. But right now we believe the shooting was very much justified and there were a number of witnesses on the scene which observed the scene," he said.

Chief Deputy Bartlett said the deputy responsible for firing the deadly shots has been placed on administrative paid leave, which is normal when dealing with an officer involved shooting.

"The officer is visibly upset for having to take this sort of action," he said.

CS will bring more details as they are made available.

PROPERTY TAXES FOR 2014 ARE DUE NOW

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CULLMAN - For those of you who have not paid your property tax for 2014, it's not too late to pay your 2014 property taxes. But you must act fast; the deadline is just around the corner!

"The taxes are due by December 31, 2014 with no penalties or interest," said Darla West, Chief Clerk for the Revenue Commission. "The taxes will be considered delinquent on January 2, 2015."

In celebration of the Christmas holiday, the Cullman County Courthouse will be closed Wednesday through Friday, December 24-26. It will also be closed on January 1 in observance of New Year's Day.

This includes the Revenue Commission office, as well as the satellite payment locations.

"The office at the Courthouse is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and we don't close for lunch," West continued. "We do have satellite offices in Baileyton, Hanceville, and Dodge City. They close for lunch depending on the local Town Hall hours."

If you or someone you know still needs to pay your taxes or if you would like more information about paying them before December 31, feel free to call the Revenue Commission at the Cullman County Courthouse at 256-739-3530. You can also stop by and visit them in person by going to 500 2nd Avenue SW, Cullman, AL 35055.

The satellite office in Baileyton is located at 12080 AL Highway 69 North, Baileyton, AL 35019. Their phone number is 256-796-3300.

The satellite office in Hanceville is located at 112 Main Street SE, Hanceville, AL 35077. Their phone number is 256-352-6036.

The satellite office in Dodge City is located at 130 Howard Circle, Hanceville, AL 35077 (Located in Dodge City). Their phone number is 256-287-3200.

NEW YEAR'S EVE/DAY CITY AND COUNTY CLOSINGS

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City of Cullman Offices
All offices will be closed New Year's Day and will reopen at normal times on Friday, January 2.

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."

Cullman County Revenue Office
The Cullman County Revenue Office will be closing at 1 p.m. on New Year's Eve, as the U.S. Postal Service is closing at that time.

The office will be closed on New Year's Day, and will reopen on Friday, January 2 at 8 a.m.

County Sanitation
Cullman County Sanitation pickup will not be delayed or hindered due to New Year's Eve/Day.

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

CRMC AND CULLMAN INTERNAL MEDICINE PAIR FOR RECORD FOOD DRIVE

Meredith Easterwood
CRMC Contributor

CULLMAN - Each year, the CRMC Nurse Navigation Team provides indigent oncology patients and their families with food throughout the holiday season. This year, thanks to some healthy office competition, Cullman Internal Medicine physicians and staff, donated more than 2,000 pounds of food to help feed these patients and their families.

"We have been able to bless so many families during the holidays this year thanks to their generosity," Neal said.

"Being able to take the burden of worrying about buying food for these families, who are already going through so much with their cancer treatment, really means more than you can imagine. All of them have been so grateful for this wonderful donation."

For more information visit www.crmchospital.com and www.cullmaninternalmedicine.com.

Ahead (from Front)

retailers like PetSmart, Publix, and the new Walmart on 157 we are looking at a lot of new growth and business."

The new interchange on County Road 222 near Good Hope is another change coming within the year of 2015. The interchange will make shipments coming to and from some of our biggest industries like Topre America easier, and will also allow for more retail and other industries to grow and thrive.

"I was not here for the start of the new interchange on 222," said Cullman Commissioner Garry Marchman. "I fully support it though and it is exciting because it will bring a lot of business and support to the area."

Marchman also spoke about new roadwork projects that are set to take place in the coming year. "We have some funding from the Alabama Department of Transportation," said Marchman. "And one of the roads that we will be working on is County Road 1114. We can look at that one and four or five others being paved this summer like County Roads 565, 1435, 1223, and 1101."

In addition to road work, another form of transportation will be improved upon in the next year and that is our local airport.

According to Mayor Townson, maintaining and improving the airport is vital to keeping Cullman ahead of the game.

"We are working toward improving the airport in 2015," he said. "The airport is essential for industrial development. We have people who fly in from Australia, Japan, Europe and other places. The county and city industrial development boards realize that as well so we will be working together on that."

Constantly growing and improving, this humble town has transformed into a thriving area that others want to move to and live in.

There is always work to be done, but as Mayor Townson points out, it is an exciting time to be in Cullman.

"This will be a very exciting year," said Townson. "Not only for the city council and the mayor, but I believe the citizens are going to be very happy with what transpires in 2015."

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LOCAL PASTOR TEACHES TO LIVE LIFE WITH A REAL PURPOSE

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CULLMAN - Joey Coots, pastor for 12 years at Journey Church spreads the word of how to live a real life with purpose. At Journey Church there is always a place to get plugged in, whether it be working in the nursery, helping on the youth team, volunteering in the parking lot, or assisting with children's ministry.

Pastor Joey thinks it is important that folks find something to do within a church besides just attending and being a spectator. "We want you to be a participant," he said.

He emphasized that it is vital that Christians attend church regularly.

"There is an importance on being faithful in church attendance," he said. He even wrote a book on it called, "The Church", where he writes about how to join a church, how to stay in church, and how to leave a church.

He said, "Sometimes a church may not have what you are looking for, but that may mean that you are there to help grow that area."

Pastor Joey said that as a part of the basic roots of a Christian, you should enjoy and desire to be among God's people. To emphasize this point, he spoke on the motto of Journey Church: Real. Life. Purpose.

To explain the 'Real' part, he said, "When you come here, we want you to be real. We don't want superficial Sunday Christians. If you've got problems, bring them to church with you, let's pray, let's let you leave without them. And you're going to get real from us. I don't try to put on a facade on Sunday that I'm not on Monday. God can only deal with real. We're real people living a real life."

He then went on to explain what 'Life' means within their church motto, "We believe our church should be with the Word, and everything we do should be relevant to where we're living at today, that the issues we're facing, social issues, anything like that should be relevant, yet without straying from the Word of God and without compromising the word of God."

He said that all of the messages are designed with the Old Testament, the New Testament and the current year of which we are living in mind, in order to be able to apply the message your life.

To describe the 'Purpose' portion, he said, "Ministry is everybody doing their part, and so we really stress for people to minister wherever they're at. We find that when people find their purpose in Christ, that's when they start having the 'Real Life' they were designed to have."

"The greatest journey you're ever going to be on is being a Christian. God loves us too much to leave us where we're at. There's always more with Him."

Journey Church is located at 3683 Eva Road, Eva, AL 35621 and can be reached at 256-796-1112. You can visit their website at www.journeylife.us.

TIPS FOR SAFELY STARTING THE NEW YEAR WITH A BANG

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CULLMAN - Many of us will be celebrating the New Year this week, and everyone is excited to welcome it in their own way. Some will sing Auld Lang Syne and pop some champagne, others will be snuggled up on the couch with the kids watching the ball drop, and there will also be those who love to shoot fireworks at the stroke of midnight. For those that want to start the year with a bang, let's discuss some safety tips.

Shooting fireworks is prohibited entirely in the city of Cullman without a permit.

"There is an ordinance inside the city limits of Cullman," said Assistant Police Chief Craig Green.

"Unless you have a fireworks permit issued by the mayor and council, you cannot shoot fireworks. Most cities are going to have this type of ordinance because houses and businesses are so close together, so it is a fire hazard and a noise issue. A ticket will be given to anyone caught shooting them."

For those in the county that can shoot fireworks on their property, Green warns to use extreme caution as people often underestimate the power that modern fireworks have.

"Fireworks are not what they were when I was a kid," he said.

"They are much bigger and more powerful. We see a lot of parents allowing their teenage kids to shoot them, and we discourage that a lot because someone could easily be hurt. I would encourage everyone who wants to see fireworks to go see them at show by professionals."

For those that will choose to shoot fireworks however, there are a few things you can do to decrease the chance of injury or accidents.

First, make sure you are shooting on a non-combustible surface. Anything made of wood, paper or cardboard materials are not good surfaces and are easily flammable.

Secondly, make sure you are in an open space away from homes, businesses and power lines.

Thirdly, make sure you have a source of water or a fire extinguisher available in case of emergency.

It is important to use common sense and good judgment when dealing with explosives. We often take for granted how quickly an innocent good time can turn into a night at the ER.

It takes only one mortar tube falling over, or one badly aimed Roman candle to turn a celebration into a disaster.

For more information on Cullman City laws please call 256-734-1434. For County laws, call- 256-734-0342.

Review (from Front)

this year leaving us with some magnificent performances in the newest Hunger Games movie.

The entire country also mourned the loss of one of the biggest comedic stars of our time, Robin Williams.

The Internet and TV were awash with tribute pictures and videos honoring the actor. This event also shed light on the widespread issue of mental illness and mental healthcare in the country.

In other television news, some changes took place in the late night talk show scene as well. Jimmy Fallon took the spot of legendary late night talk show host Jay Leno on the Tonight Show, and has brought a fresh new life to the show.

David Letterman also announced his retirement on the Late Show, and in a surprising twist announced that his replacement would be none other than the Colbert Report's Stephen Colbert. A change that is sure to have fans eagerly watching.

In the more political spectrum, the new healthcare system got off to a rocky start with website problems.

Nonetheless, over 7 million Americans are now insured under Obamacare and more continue to sign up.

Grim news happened across the country as media attention turned to several incidents of police violence emerging.

Michael Brown, an unarmed teenager, was killed in Missouri, and Eric Garner, another young adult, was choked to death in New York City, both cases which have caused unrest and protests across the country.

These instances have led to many debates and division on the issue of racial profiling and police brutality.

An outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in West Africa led to some panic here in the States.

Workers from the CDC and other health organizations were flown to the region to help contain the spreading outbreak.

A Liberian man in Dallas died of the disease, setting off a panic throughout the country.

This in turn, was used as a topic of discussion in the 2014 midterms.

Lastly on our journey is the new threat in the Middle East known as ISIS.

This group has taken control of large portions of both Syria and Iraq, and brought big questions as to how the current administration should respond.

Eventually, after seeing the unyielding brutality of the group, the U.S. began strategic airstrikes and enlisted more countries to help.

While it will probably be years before the group is dismantled, top leaders within the group have been killed, and forces have been pushed back, thanks to airstrikes.

The year of 2014 has seemed to be one of division. Great progress was made in some areas, while others have fallen behind.

With a country so vast and full of hundreds of different races, religions and ideas, it seems to take some time for any big changes to happen, but change and progress comes all the same.

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LOCAL RESTAURANTS SERVE UP FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

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CULLMAN - For those who want to spend a New Year's Eve night on the town, but do not feel like traveling to celebrate the ball drop, there are several local establishments that are also celebrating the event.

Local restaurants will be jamming and eating until midnight, and they want you to come celebrate with them. See below for just a few of these local options.

Busy Bee Café, located at 101 5th Street SE, will be entertaining guests until the big moment. Busy Bee Café is a staple here in Cullman and has been serving breakfast and lunch to residents for years. They now are open for dinner on weekend nights and will be open New Year 's Eve serving their delicious food later than ever for the occasion.

"We will be open until midnight," said Kyle Spears. "We will have live music from Tres Locos. They will play blues and southern rock. Music will start at 9 p.m. and go until midnight with the bar and kitchen open late."

Another great restaurant that is always a great time is Grumpy's Italian Grill, located at 402 5th Street SW. You can find delicious traditional Italian food and a group of friendly servers ready with a smile. You can also come listen to great music and eat scrumptious food while you await 2015.

"We will be having a band play live called the Overtones," said owner Tyler Jacobs.

"They will be playing from around 7:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. We will be serving food until 9 p.m., and after that it will be appetizers only. There is no age limit. We're excited to celebrate with our customers."

Lastly, but certainly not least on our list of New Year's Eve celebrations will be at Moe's Original BBQ. Moe's is a wonderful spot to have amazing food, and kick back and have some drinks with friends. Their knowledgeable staff and bartenders will be ready to make you any New Year cocktail you want.

"We will be featuring the band Horizon on New Year's Eve," said owner Tyler Schuman. "They will be playing a little bit of everything like rock, country and blues. They will play from 8 p.m. to midnight."

No matter which restaurant you decide to celebrate with, you are sure to have a night to remember.

All three restaurants are eager to countdown to midnight and beyond with the citizens of Cullman.

RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH YOUR CHILDREN USING THESE FESTIVE IDEAS

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CULLMAN - While most couples will be having a fun night out on the town and celebrating New Year's with friends, some Cullmanites may choose to stay home with their little ones. Maybe you can't find a babysitter, or perhaps you are over the out-all-night routine and are looking for quality family time. If you are planning on having a night in with the munchkins, then the following ideas will help you make this a memorable occasion with your children.

One way you can get some work done and start a new tradition is by making a memory tree.

Enlist the kids in helping with putting the ornaments away, and then get out some note cards and pencils. Have your children write a few of their favorite memories of the year and why.

When everyone is done, you can read them aloud and place them on the tree to use in one last holiday.

For kids old enough to stay up until midnight, try having a slumber party style New Year's Eve with sleeping bags in the living room, lots of pillows, delicious treats and, of course, your favorite family films of the year. The kids are sure to enjoy a night at home with this twist.

No new year is complete without all the accessories, so spend the earlier part of the day making some crafts.

You can make funny hats, streamers, and a 2015 banner for them to spend time coloring.

If you don't have the time to make crafts, then you can always make a quick family trip to the store and let them pick out their own hats and decorations.

Lastly, if you want to go the extra mile for the ball drop, then you and your little ones can make one together at home.

Get a Styrofoam ball, sequins, glitter, glue, and anything else you like and then start gluing on your decorations.

Put a pipe cleaner stem into the center of the ball. Tie a long piece of ribbon to the stem and attach the ball to the ceiling. Cut the ribbon at the stroke of 12 a.m.

No matter how you choose to celebrate, make sure you thank your family for another year and tell them how much they mean to you.

Every year with our families are precious, and we all need to be reminded that we are loved. Happy New Year to all!

NEW YEAR'S TRADITIONS: WHY DO WE DO WHAT WE DO?

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN - January 1, 2015 marks the beginning of a new year. On that day, people around the world perform specific actions or traditions religiously in hopes of being happy, healthy, wealthy, and wise throughout the year. Some of the traditions can be simple while others can be quite complicated. There are also some rather strange traditions.

In Denmark all unused dishes and plates are saved up until December 31st. On that day, folks take the dishes and hurl them against the doors of friends and family, where they shatter on impact.

Believe it or not, it is considered a very warm-hearted act, a show of love and affection.

People in Spain eat grapes like they are going out of style. Those who can stuff 12 grapes in their mouths at midnight have achieved good luck for the next year. Can you put that many grapes in your mouth?

In some South American countries, people wear brightly colored underwear. The color determines their fate for the new year.

For example, red underwear means they will find love. Gold underwear means wealth, and regular, white drawers signify peace. I wonder where I can find a pair of gold undies.

At the end of the year, people in a small Peruvian village fist fight to settle their differences.

By doing this, they can then start the year off on a clean slate. I like to think of myself as a lover, not a fighter.

In Bolivia, coins are baked into cakes, cookies and pies. Whoever finds the coins will have good luck for the next year – and possibly a couple of broken teeth!

People in Finland try to predict the coming year by casting molten tin into a bucket of water. The resulting shape is then interpreted. Interpreted how? I don't know.

In Scotland the first person to cross the threshold of a home in the new year should carry a gift for good luck. What kind of gift? I have no idea.

I would like to do the following one. The people of Estonia eat seven different times on New Year's Day to ensure abundance in the new year.

In Ecuador they burn paper filled scarecrows at midnight in celebration of the new year. Along with the scarecrows, they also take photographs from the previous year and throw them in the fire too. This is all done in the name of good fortune.

The Swiss have fun with this one. On New Year's Day, they celebrate by dropping ice cream on the floor. I'm not sure why they do this, but it sounds like a lot of fun – and very messy!

In various locations in Puerto Rico, pails of water are thrown out of windows to drive away evil spirits. I wonder if this works.

Most of us here in Cullman have never heard of such weird New Year's traditions, but I can almost guarantee we'll all be munching out of a dish of Hoppin' John—black eyed peas and ham hocks Thursday. We do this because of the old saying, "Eat peas on New Year's day to have plenty of everything the rest of the year."

LOOKING BACK AT CULLMANSENSE IN 2014

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CULLMAN - It has been an exciting year at our paper. We have covered so many amazing stories and events that it is hard to pin down which are our favorites. Cullman has had a lot to cover this year on every front. In this article we will take a look back at a few stories covered over 2014.

We have covered big events in Cullman such as the ever-growing Rock the South music festival.

"Concertgoers from all over the state of Alabama, and even the nation, gathered Saturday in Cullman's Heritage Park for the third annual Rock the South. The concert that developed from the April 27th tornadoes only three years ago has made its mark on country music here in the South,"wrote Katy Jones.

Our sports correspondents were with the community through every triumph and defeat, and brought the latest updates on our Facebook every Friday night.

One of these moments was when the Wallace State volleyball brought home another tournament championship with coverage by Russell Moore, "Top-seeded Wallace State cruised to three convincing victories and earned its sixth consecutive ACCC tournament championship on Sunday, capping off another title with a 25-14, 25-13, 25-15 win over rival Gadsden State in the finals at Tom Drake Coliseum.

Tournament MVP BreAnna Thompson finished with 44 kills overall as the Lions (35-8) continued the volleyball dynasty it has established under coach Randy Daniel."

When storms like the ones we experienced this past October were brewing, or emergencies were taking place, our very own publisher and founder Noah Chandler is on the frontlines gathering information. This particular group of storms caused widespread damage to homes and businesses like Hobby Lobby.

We have honored Cullman's history this year with Sharon Kreps' wonderful Mirroring History articles. Sharon delves into the rich history of Cullman and how far we have come as a city and county such as in this article where she speaks of the old train depot in its early days, "This beautiful Mission Style train depot was built by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company. It was completed in 1913 and was used for both passenger and freight service. Passenger service was discontinued in 1968, and the building was then used by CSX section crews until it was purchased by the City of Cullman on March 23, 1990."

Perhaps most importantly, we have told the stories of the citizens of Cullman such as this piece written by Katie Dansby about Inez Macon, who makes adorable dolls for children who visit their grandparents in the nursing home. "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."

We have been blessed to tell the stories of Cullman. From artists to businesses, and every event we cover, we are happy to be a part of this great community. We hope to grow with this amazing town and its people for years to come. Thank you for reading!

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CULLMANSENSE

LOCAL HISTORY: SENATOR JOHN SPARKMAN TOURS CULLMAN COUNTY

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Senator John Sparkman was born December 20, 1899 in Hartselle, AL. He was the seventh of 11 children of Joseph Whitten and Julia Mitchell Kent Sparkman. He represented Alabama for 42 years in the U. S. Congress, first in the House of Representatives from 1937 to 1946, and then in the Senate from 1946 to 1979. Over time, he became known as one of the nation's most skilled legislators, and in 1952 won the Democratic nomination for vice president.

Even though Sparkman consistently opposed civil rights legislation, he was viewed as a liberal during his years in the House and his first three Senate terms because of his strong support for unions, public housing, aid to education, hospital and health-care funding, increased public-works spending, higher minimum wages, veterans programs and small businesses.

Intimidated by the popularity of Governor George Wallace in 1962, Alabama's senators moved sharply to the right and began voting more and more with a conservative congressional coalition of southern Democrats and Republicans. Republicans tried mightily to defeat Sparkman, despite his growth in conservatism. But in 1966 and again in 1972, he won each election by a landslide vote.

In 1967, Senator Sparkman became chairman of the Committee on Banking and Currency, but in 1975 he gave up that position to head the more prestigious Committee on Foreign Relations. Unfortunately, age had reduced the skills and acuity of the once vital senator, and he was criticized repeatedly for his poor leadership of the committee. As a result, Sparkman announced he would not seek re-election in 1978. He retired from politics the following year. He spent his final years in Huntsville and died there on November 16, 1985.



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Senator John Sparkman stands with a crowd in Fairview during his tour of Cullman County in 1966.

Senator John Sparkman toured Cullman County in late October 1966. A large motorcade accompanied him across the county. The picture by Mr. Grover Smith was taken at this time in Fairview. The following people appear in the picture. Do you see anyone you know?

Senator H.G. Allen, B.C. Eddins, Horace Culpepper, Russell Plunkett, Mrs. Jack Moore, Judge Tankersley, Robert Schaefer, Jim Folsom, Jim D. Moody, Herman Plunkett, Roy Drinkard, Mr. and Mrs. Luther Morris, G.W. Pinkard, Jim Reese, Harold H. Keeton, Troy Reese, L.T. Dunkin, G.W. Bledsoe, Glenn Reid, Hubert Dunkin, Homer Cornett, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Bailey, Doctor Moore, Robert A. Sapp, Marvin Barrington, Monroe Brock, Lelston Mullins, Robin Cummings, Hilary Warren, Mrs. Tom Drake, Mrs. Fred Folsom, Mrs. John Starnes and Mrs. Sid McDonald.

MIRRORING HISTORY: FROM REID REALTY CO. TO CASHMASTER CASH ADVANCE CENTER

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Reid Realty Co. occupied this corner, located at 301 4th Street W, Cullman, AL 35055. Mr. Glenn Ray Reid and his lovely wife, Mavis, both sold homes, as well as land to many of Cullman's citizens.

Today, the same building is home to Cashmaster Cash Advance Center.

Curiously, the exact same building that had once been Reid Realty Co. now has a different address.

Cashmaster is located at 313 3rd Avenue SW, Cullman, AL 35055. It is the same building, yet has a different address - even though the door still faces the same direction.



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

The building is now home to Cashmaster Cash Advance Center.



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Glenn Ray Reid stands outside his real estate business.

Jewelry (from Front)

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Marilyn Dodge has been a resident at USA Healthcare in Cullman for about seven years and has been making jewelry there for the last three to four years. She got started one day when one of the RNs suggested that she do something with her time. The RN gave Marilyn some beads and told her to see what she could do with them.

"That inspired me to make the jewelry," Marilyn said. So far she has made earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and rings and is interested in making Indian jewelry. "I'm trying to get into Indian jewelry because that seems to be picking back up," she said.

Marilyn is a breast cancer survivor of 19 years and said that this event in her life contributes to her inspiration to make jewelry.

She enjoys making jewelry with the pink breast cancer ribbon and said, "I like my pink cancer ribbon. That's my favorite."

She said it is also a favorite among other breast cancer survivors that see her jewelry.

If someone sees something they like or has an idea for something they would like to have, Marilyn will take requests and gladly make whatever they wish.

One request she has taken came from one of the employees at the nursing home. The employee brought in a necklace and asked Marilyn to make earrings to match it.

Marilyn is proud of how it turned out and says that the earrings are an almost exact match to the necklace. She said, "If somebody brings me something, I will try to make something out of it."

Marilyn works on making jewelry whenever she has free time and ultimately gives a lot of it away.

"A lot of times people come in and see what I'm doing and they see something they like," she said.

If family members are visiting any of the residents and they happen to see and like Marilyn's handmade jewelry, she does not hesitate to give it away.

Currently she has several pairs of earrings hanging next to her bed ready for wearing. She also has many necklaces hanging up and countless bracelets to give away. "I've got two boxes of bracelets," she said.

Sometimes Marilyn sells her jewelry and uses the money she makes to go buy more beads and supplies.

She gets her beads from all over town and then comes up with appealing patterns based on what she buys.

"Everybody that comes in the room thinks it's gorgeous," she said.

The employees at the nursing home especially love what she is doing.

"They think it's wonderful," Marilyn said. She is thankful to have such a support system where she lives and appreciates the encouragement she gets from the staff and her friends at the nursing home.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Program Facilitator needed for local domestic violence intervention program.
Full time, BS degree required. Send resume to: vsoced@vsoccullman.org

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POLAR BEAR PLUNGE PART OF FREE COMMUNITY WELLNESS DAY

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com



FILE

The winner of this year's Polar Bear Plunge will win a 12 month family membership to CWAC.

CULLMAN - On Saturday, January 3, 2015, the Cullman Wellness and Aquatics Center will offer folks a full day of health and fun. Community Wellness Day will feature free access to CWAC for both members and non-members alike. They will be able to come participate in their featured fitness classes, go through their community health fair, and tour the facility and see what a great place it is for them.

CWAC has never offered free access to the center before, so this will be a great opportunity for everyone in the community to come out and enjoy the center's pools, fitness center, and other facilities with no out-of-pocket expense. Wellness Day will be geared toward helping people reach the number one New Year's resolution in the world, which is living healthier in the coming year by losing weight, eating healthier, or getting into shape.

CWAC will host speakers on how to start a workout program, losing weight, and other health related topics, in addition to hosting multiple businesses and organizations in the community who offer products and services to achieve a healthier new year.

At 11 a.m. that day there will be a Polar Bear Plunge in the outdoor pool. It will offer one participant the chance to win a 12 month family membership which is an $850 value for free! The Plunge requires participants to jump into the outdoor pool and get fully submerged in the water. They then draw one of the participant's name to win the membership.

"The Polar Bear Plunge is something we came up with during our first year at CWAC to offer members and non-members alike to have a chance to win a free year's membership to the center," Waid Harbison, Marketing and Programs Director at Cullman City Parks and Recreation, explained.

"In the past, we have charged to participate in the plunge with proceeds benefiting the free programs of Parks and Rec. like the recent phone calls from Santa and our therapeutic programs; however, this year we are doing the plunge with our community wellness day on Jan 3 and it will be free to compete in."

Cullman Wellness and Aquatic Center will also offer free enrollment on any membership on January 3, a $50 savings.

The Community Wellness Day will last from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. If you or someone you know would like to get fit in 2015, or are just interested in a free visit to the Wellness Center, make sure to stop by and see them that day.

The Wellness Center is located at 1636 Field Of Miracles Dr SW, Cullman, AL 35055. For more information, feel free to give them a call at 256-775-7946.

DEEP SOUTH TATTOOS HOSTS EVENING OF MUSIC

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Last Saturday, Deep South Tattoos presented music by Shallow Side, a regionally touring band, along with local artist Daniel Harbison and Stephanie Ann.

Stephanie Ann started off the evening by fronting for Shallow Side. She played for just under an hour.

Sitting behind her electric piano, and then picking up a guitar for a few songs before returning to the piano. Stephanie Ann played a few covers of everything from classic country music to a Lady Gaga song.

Stephanie Ann also performed some original tunes, which, she said, were the products of "talking on the phone with a friend about a guy after a few drinks."

Daniel Harbison came next. He played the guitar with a bassist accompanying him.

Although Harbison was playing the acoustic guitar and the bass guitar was barely audible, each of his performances were powerful.

He belted out songs by artists from Incubus to Justin Timberlake.

The headlining act came next. Shallow Side took the stage and, although the set was acoustic, the band still found a way to make each song shake the tattoo parlor which housed the event.

Shallow Side is led by Eric Boatright on vocals, along with Cody Hampton playing the bass guitar, Seth Trimble playing the guitar and keyboard, and finally Heath Fields playing the drums.

The band will start off a tour in January. Shallow Side will play a show in Madison, Alabama on January 3, 2015 and will not return to Alabama until January 24, 2015 when they play a show in Montgomery.

For more information on Shallow Side, visit their website at www.ShallowSide.net.

FANTASTIC FINISH FOR CULLMAN CAPS SECOND DAY OF YULE TIDE CLASSIC

Johnny Thornton
Sports Correspondent

HANCEVILLE - A 10-point deficit in the final 4:00 of the game was erased by the Cullman Bearcats Saturday in dramatic fashion at the Mitch Smith Chevrolet Yule Tide Classic. Cullman was finally able to overtake Muscle Shoals in a grueling, yet entertaining semifinal, posting an 80-76 victory. The Bearcats finished on a 16-2 run, making critical stops when the Trojans had the ball and going to their main cogs in the offense, point guard Lawson Schaffer and shooting guard Brontae Harris.

This effort has set up a highly anticipated championship game for Monday night. The Bearcats and the Holly Pond Broncos in the third edition of this post-Christmas hoops classic will be worth watching. Holly Pond fought off Hartselle 60-46 at Tom Drake Coliseum a couple of hours earlier before the Bearcats got into a shootout with an athletic bunch from Muscle Shoals.

Holly Pond is currently 2nd in the Alabama Sportswriters' 3A state rankings, coming into the title game with a 14-2 record while Cullman is 11-5 with a 4-2 mark in games played since December 19 when the Bearcats began their holiday tournament tour in the Steel City Invitational.

Cullman patiently made plays when it was needed as Muscle Shoals led 74-64 when the game was nearing the 4:00 mark. A couple of 3-pointers by Schaffer in a matter of seconds, erased a six-point deficit with 1:25 to go and the game was tied at 76-76. The Bearcats got a defensive stop, came down the floor and with less than a minute to play, went ahead when Harris drove inside and scored.

Schaffer padded the lead to four with a couple from the line. The two combined for 22 of the 25 fourth quarter points with Schaffer scoring 14 and Harris accounting for eight. Schaffer finished with 25, Harris 23, Seth Swalve 12 and Jason McAfee seven to lead the Bearcats. For the Trojans, Braxton Winston netted 21 and Jackson Wolgamott added 15.

In the Holly Pond-Hartselle game, the Broncos trailed the pesky Tigers 26-25 at the break.

What won the game for Holly Pond was the third period, a 22-12 advantage as they grabbed a 47-38 lead and added it to enroute of a berth to championship Monday. Austin Smith has been on fire this week. The 6'4" post player who can score from the outside, fired in 28 points. He had support from Drew Jones with 12 and Matt Cahoon coming off the bench to produce a dozen. The Holly Pond defense slowed down the Tigers in the final 16:00, allowing the just 20 points, eight in the fourth quarter.

Girls Division:

Cullman punched its ticket to the title game for the second consecutive year by a 73-56 win against Winfield in the semifinal thanks to a stellar performance by senior guard Baylee Johnson. One night after she became Cullman's all-time leading scorer, Johnson added to her legacy. The UAH signee ripped the cords for 36 points, the most in the tournament with 15 coming during the second period as Cullman wiped out a nine-point deficit and went into the locker room with a 40-33 advantage.

Between the second and third period, the Lady Bearcats broke loose on the scoreboard with 50 points, their best two quarters of the year. They were able to match the explosive Winfield offense that entered the classic No. 6 in the current 3A rankings.

While Johnson had 36, teammate Christina Skinner was explosive off the bench with 19 points and starter Oakleigh White scored 14. Winfield's Katelyn Kostelc scored 16, but was shut out during the second half. Leading the Lady Pirates was Allie Gilmer with 22.

Cullman now gets Athens in the championship Monday night at 6:30. Athens powered its way past Hartselle 56-46 behind 18 points in the paint from center Alexis Woods with 14 coming in the second half, six on shots right near the basket. Two other county teams tangled to begin Saturday's schedule. The Fairview Lady Aggies trimmed the Hanceville Lady Bulldogs 45-37 in the consolation bracket with starters Abbi Taylor, Jada Golden, Lizzie Garrison and Dalys Mullican combining for 35 points.

Taylor, a freshman center, scored 10 with Golden hitting nine while Garrison and Mullican added eight. An 18-7 spurt in the third period sent Fairview into the lead for good when the Lady Aggies trailed 17-16 at the break. Hanceville got 15 points from Taylor Hollingsworth and nine by Niya Evans.

Monday schedule of the Mitch Smith Chevrolet Yule Tide Classic at Wallace State:

- Hanceville vs. Brooks (Girls) 9:30 a.m.
- Dora vs. Calera 11:00 a.m.
- Fairview vs. Calera (Girls) 12:30 p.m.
- Winfield vs. Athens 2:00 p.m.
- Hartselle vs. Winfield (Girls) 3:30 p.m. (3rd place)
- Hartselle vs. Muscle Shoals 5:00 p.m. (3rd place)
- Athens vs. Cullman (Girls) 6:30 p.m. (Championship)
- Holly Pond vs. Cullman 8:00 p.m. (Championship)

LOCAL NURSING HOME RESIDENT WRITES POETRY ABOUT LIFE

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Clara Jepson started writing poetry in 1974. She has written countless poems about relationships, loved ones, friends, family and even nature; however, before she moved to USA Healthcare four years ago, she had not written any poetry in 24 years. The ladies that take care of her and the friends she has made at USA Healthcare have helped to inspire her poetry writing. "Once I got in here, just all of a sudden I could write. I started writing about my life here and this nursing home."

Her most recent poem is untitled, but is written with a sense of gratitude regarding her time at USA Healthcare. She loves her home, the friends she has there, and the ladies that take care of her, and she expresses her thanks within the poem. A portion of it reads:

"We become attached
to some of the girls
They care for us,
and comb our grey curls
Now these girls,
With our lives we do trust
For the rest of our days,
They'll take care of us"

After Clara showed the poem to the ladies that take care of her, several of them wanted signed copies. She has also given copies of this particular poem to some of the residents who have asked for it after reading it. Clara said, "I need too much care. This [poem] means that the girls take care of us, that we put our trust in them. It's from my heart." Clara went on to say, "If you want to come to a good nursing home, this is the place to come."

Clara's favorite thing to write about is what is going through her mind at the time. When something means a lot to her, it becomes important for her to write about. When people read the poems she has written about them, it is her way of telling them how she feels about them and that she is thankful for them.

She expresses this thankfulness in her poem titled, "Friend." In this poem she writes about her friend, Ben, that she made at USA Healthcare. Clara knew Ben for three months and said that during that time he cared for her and checked on her daily. "He was such a wonderful man," she said. Clara gave Ben a copy of the poem and later wrote another poem called, "Memories", when he passed away. "I appreciated him. I didn't know how good of a friend he was until he was gone." A part of the poem reads:

"But the memories we made,
I'll hold close to my heart
He made me happy,
From the very start."

Clara also wrote a poem after her parents died. Her Dad died in 1985 at 62 years old and her mom died in 2000 at 68 years old. Clara's parents meant a lot to her and she expresses her love for them in this part of her poem that reads:

"They made me so happy,
And filled my life with love
Now they're in heaven,
With the good Lord above."

When something comes to Clara's mind, she jots it down. "I can write a poem in 15 minutes. When it comes to me, I write it," she said.

Clara likes to write in her room and said that she has a lot of poems that need some work. She also wants to write about her children.

"I want to write about each one of my children because I love them all, but I love them different." Clara has three children, including a daughter and two sons. She wants to write about what they mean to her. She has already written a poem in 1992 about her son, Michael. The poem tells such a story and ultimately thanks the Lord for her son's safety and survival after an accident he was in.

Clara sees her poetry as a way to move on after a significant event in her life has happened. She will continue to write poetry as she experiences important things in her life worth writing down and enjoys being able to make people happy with her gift.



KATIE DANSBY/CULLMANSENSE

Although she hadn't written any poetry in 24 years, Clara Jepson was inspired to write after moving to USA Healthcare.

Safety (from Front)

Sheriff's Department will man the roads out in the county. The city of Hanceville will face added challenges this year due to the fact Hanceville now sells alcohol.

"As far as New Year's Eve parties go, it's fine as long as people stay inside on private property," said Jeremy Laney, reserve officer and dispatch worker at Hanceville Police Department. "Don't get into any fights and don't drive away drunk."

While Laney gave some sound advice, another Hanceville police officer had the following to add.

"Basic rule of thumb, always have a designated driver and do not drink and drive, of course," he said. "Law enforcement all across the state will have extra patrols working this year, including Hanceville, so there will be some sobriety check points around." He continued, "Be responsible – adults need to keep alcohol away from children and be sure there's not underage drinking going on. Also, adults need to be careful about hosting what we call open house parties where they allow minors to drink. That's actually a crime and they could be jailed for that, so they need to be aware of it."

Even though the city of Cullman has sold alcohol for a few years now, the city police will be watching the streets closely New Year's Eve. Hoping there will be no trouble; they are planning to keep everyone safe and secure to the best of their ability that night.

"People just need to use common sense," explained Police Chief Kenny Culpepper. "Be sure that they don't put themselves in a position where they can be injured, whether it is themselves or somebody else or get in trouble with the law. The best thing to do when going to a party where there will be alcohol is to have a designated driver."

Drinking and driving is very dangerous and is to be avoided at all cost. If a person decides to drive their car after having a few drinks, they will be caught and prosecuted. But what happens once a drunk driver has been pulled over?

"If a person is drunk and gets pulled over, they will be arrested for D.U.I. or Driving Under the Influence. They will stay in jail until there is no longer alcohol in their system. In other words, it would vary. For example, if someone's blood alcohol level was .26 and somebody else's was .08, the .08 might get out the next morning whereas the .26 may be there until that afternoon."

In closing, Chief Culpepper had one last thing to say.

"Just make it a safe holiday. You can use common sense and not have problems and not make it unsafe for someone else." Just like the Hanceville and Cullman law enforcement, the Cullman County Sherriff's department offers the same advice. There will be plenty of extra sheriffs on call New Year's Eve and all will have your safety as their top priority. Even way far out in the remote areas of the county, their patrol cars will be strolling by and keeping watch. Please help them by being responsible and use extreme caution while out and about.

If you have any questions about the law in connection with your New Year's Eve plans, feel free to contact your local law enforcement agency at the following phone numbers.

Cullman City Police Department: 256- 734-1434

Cullman County Sheriff's Office: 256-734-0342

Hanceville Police Department: 256-352-9811



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

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!

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.

'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

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
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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!

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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.
• Live Music at Cadillac Ron's from 8 p.m. to close

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DIVINE RED DOOR DISCUSSION GROUP HELPS ANSWER LIFE QUESTIONS

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Bill Blackerby, interim pastor at Grace Episcopal Church, led the Divine Red Door Discussion Group last Thursday at the Red Door Emporium. He posed some serious questions that Christians should ask themselves. What is our role and responsibility as Christians in the world? Once you walk out the front door of your home on Monday, what do you do? These questions definitely emphasize the importance of being a Christian at all times, not just at church.

Blackerby served as the Episcopal Campus Chaplain for three college campuses in Birmingham for 21 years before coming to Cullman. The campuses included UAB, Birmingham Southern and Samford.

He said that college students are at an age where they are trying to figure out what they should be doing with their lives.

This question can also be associated with the role of Christians in the world as mentioned earlier.

If your life's purpose is to walk with God, then there is a strong possibility that you have asked yourself, "What am I supposed to be doing?" or "What does God want me to do?" Blackerby shared three questions that you should ask yourself when thinking about what you should do as a profession with the life you have been given.

Question number 1: What gives you joy? Number 2: What are you good at? And number 3: Does anybody need you to do it? When you answer these questions based on a career, but also live your life as a Christian, you can be rest assured that whatever you are doing as a profession will be acceptable as long as you are serving the Lord in everything you do.

Let's start with question number 1. What gives you joy? Most people can answer that question without needing anyone else's help. It is a great question to start on and explore. "Only you know what gives you joy," Blackerby said.

He said that perhaps you may need some guidance because sometimes people can recognize things in you that you may not see in yourself, but ultimately you know what makes you happy and what you do and do not enjoy doing.

It may take exploring various opportunities to find out what you like and dislike regarding a profession.

Sometimes it takes actually pursuing and doing something to find out you do not want to do it for the rest of your life.

Question number 2 asks, What are you good at? Sometimes we need help on this question. Blackerby said, "Sometimes you can be good at something and take it for granted. We don't think we're good at things or we think that others can do it just as good. Sometimes we can be dismissive."

We should always appreciate our gifts and talents and use them to the best of our ability.

This can be considered as a professional standpoint as well as a Christianity standpoint.

Next, ask yourself question number 3. Does anybody need you to do it? Once you have figured out what you enjoy doing and then realize that you are in fact good at it, you have to ask yourself if it is something that someone needs you to do.

A humorous example that Blackerby used would be if you lived in New York and you are a great sheep herder and you love being able to do it, but no one needs you to do that in New York.

If you want to turn your gift into a profession, then you must think realistically about its vitality based on where you live.

Now, we can get back to the initial question. What is our role and responsibility as Christians in the world? Our role as Christians should be to spread the gospel to the world. There are a lot of ways you can do it.

It takes all kinds of people and personalities to do it or else the world would be boring, uninteresting and robotic. God created the world, us and our uniqueness. He has put something specific in all of us that makes us all do things differently.

We have to remember that the gospel is a process, just like our lives. Your life does not have to be figured out all at once.

Blackerby said, "It can be a continual discovery about yourself. Sometimes you will find things out about yourself that you never knew. You discover things about yourself as you live and learn."

He added that we should not think of things as notches in our belts as if crossing things off and moving on.

Instead we should think of things as a part of a journey. "Everything can be a graduation into something else," he said.

The Divine Red Door Discussion Group is a weekly discussion group, lead by clergy from various churches in town. It is designed to learn more about God from each other. The group began meeting on Thursday, November 6, 2014 and meets every Thursday from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

MAKE 2015 THE YEAR TO QUIT SMOKING

Bret Stanfield
ADPH Contributor

MONTGOMERY - Quitting smoking is hard, but you don't have to do it by yourself. The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) offers state residents free help to quit, including coaching and two weeks of nicotine patches, if eligible.

The Alabama Tobacco Quitline – 1-800-QUIT-NOW – is available every day from 6 a.m. to midnight. Calls placed after these hours or on holidays will be returned the next business day. For those who prefer electronic help, the same Quitline services are available online at QuitNowAlabama.com.

Almost one in five adults in Alabama use tobacco. According to the 2013 Adult Tobacco Survey, more than 54 percent of Alabamians who smoke said they tried to quit at least once during the past year. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data shows that there are now more people who have quit smoking than there are current smokers.

"The benefits of quitting smoking are almost immediate," said Bret Stanfield, communication coordinator for the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program at ADPH. "Your heart rate and blood pressure drop within an hour and your circulation improves in a matter of weeks. Longterm, smokers who quit enjoy several major health benefits such as reduced risk of suffering from lung cancer and coronary heart disease. Also, by quitting smoking you could potentially save hundreds, if not thousands of dollars a year."

Since 2005, the Quitline has helped thousands of Alabamians quit smoking. Callers are required to participate in coaching sessions to receive the free nicotine replacement therapy patches. "Many studies have shown that you are twice as likely to quit if you receive coaching along with patches," Stanfield said.

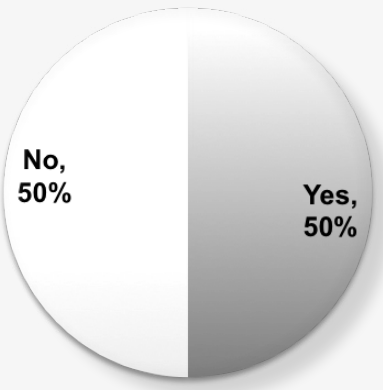
Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States. Each year, 7,500 Alabamians die from smoking-related causes. According to the CDC, for every person that dies, 20 people are suffering from at least one serious tobacco-related illness.

Since the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health was published in 1964, more than 20 million Americans have died because of smoking. The new report issued this year said active smoking is now causally associated with age-related macular degeneration, diabetes, colorectal cancer, liver cancer, adverse health outcomes in cancer patients and survivors, erectile dysfunction, ectopic pregnancy, rheumatoid arthritis, and impaired immune function. In addition, exposure to secondhand smoke has now been causally associated with an increased risk for stroke.

For more on quitting, contact the Quitline at 1-800-784-8669.

Poll

Have you finished your Christmas shopping?



This Week's Poll
Have you returned any of your Christmas gifts?
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WHAT'S ON DECK AT PARKS AND REC....

www.cullmanrecreation.org
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- **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

H.O.P.E. Therapeutic Horsemanship Program Brings In the New Year with a Party

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...



qrne.ws/297

She Reaps What She 'Sews'

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...

qrne.ws/298

Winter is Here, Let's Trim the Trees

With the cold months of winter upon us, it is time once again to prune and trim some trees and bushes. While some like to take control of their own landscaping and trimming, others may be hesitant to do this work on their own. Not to worry, in this article we will discuss when to trim if you are doing it yourself, and...

qrne.ws/299

AN ARTIST AMONG US

Katie Dansby
katie@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Shirley Roy at USA Healthcare is quite the artist. She passes the time by drawing and coloring pictures of the workers on the second floor where she lives as well as other drawings including landscapes, animals and cartoon characters.

"I started about 10 years ago drawing for the public. I've always drawn something and thrown it away because I thought is wasn't any good. When I went in the nursing home people saw my drawings and they really liked them."

Sometimes Shirley looks at pictures that have already been drawn and then draws them herself. Other times, she looks at the nurses and CNAs that work on her floor and draws them from memory. She has drawn every employee on the second floor at USA Healthcare.

"If somebody wants their picture drawn, I just look at them, and as long as I have the color of their hair and the color of their eyes I can draw them." When she is finished, the drawings get hung up in the hallways on the second floor. Typically when someone asks her to draw a picture, they give Shirley what she will need to complete it.

"Most people that want my art have just gone and got me some art material. Then I give them the picture when I'm done." She has also put a few drawings upstairs on the third floor.

Shirley likes drawing because it helps pass the time. When she is looking for something new to draw, she picks something pretty and then just goes for it.

Among her current collections of drawings are Tinkerbell, Batman, and some festive pictures like Rudolph and Christmas stockings. She said that if she were to draw a famous person she would choose Elvis Presley.



KATIE DANSBY/CULLMANSENSE

Shirley Roy began drawing for the public about 10 years ago.



KATIE DANSBY/CULLMANSENSE

It takes Shirley about 20 minutes to draw and color her illustrations.

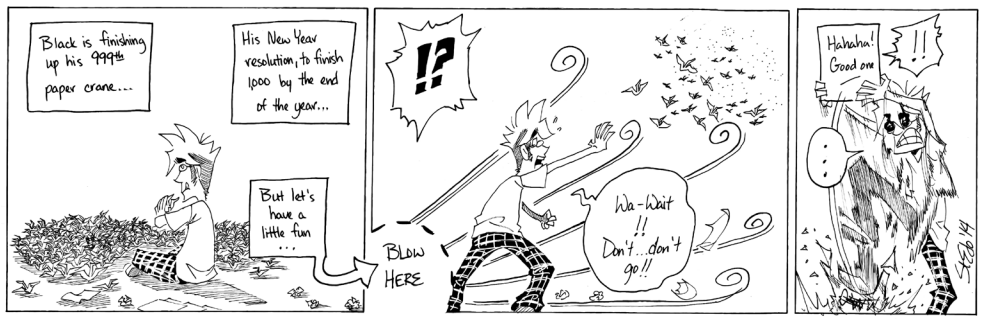
Shirley likes taking requests as well, but her favorite things to draw are butterflies, flowers, trees, ponds, lakes, and people.

"It takes about 20 minutes for me to sit down and draw a whole picture and color it." Shirley is present in other activities at the nursing home and enjoys participating with other residents in games in the afternoons.

"I like to go to activities. I can draw in the activity room at the tables." She said there is usually something planned to do in the afternoons in the activity room and there she can visit with everyone and draw if she pleases. Shirley loves to talk about her art and is thankful to have a hobby to keep her busy.

COMICS

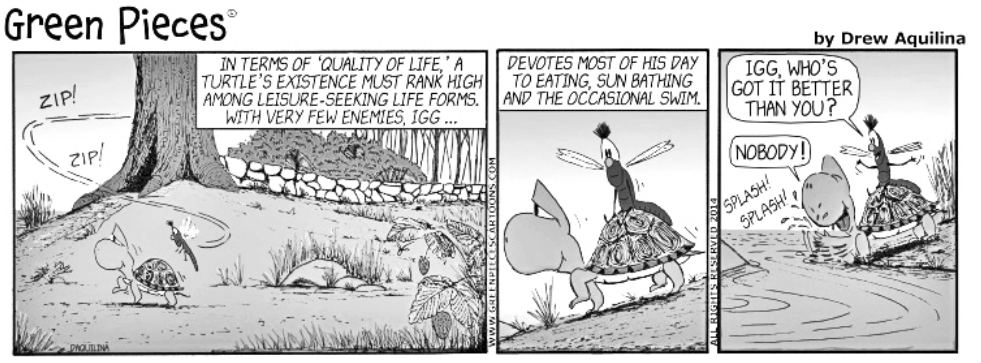
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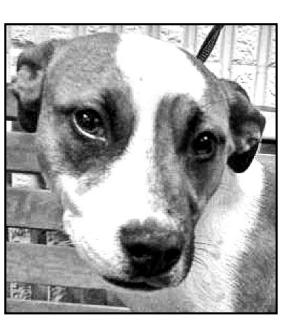
PETS OF THE WEEK

Dandy



Hello my name is Dandy and I am about 9 months old. I am a Catahoula Leopard Dog and I currently weigh 47 lbs. I am full of life and I love to play. Come visit me today, and I will win you over with my sweet and loving nature!

Lexi



Hello my name is Lexi and I am about 1.5 year old. I am believed to be a Jack Russell Terrier mix and I currently weigh 28 lbs. I am full of life and I love to play. Come visit me today, and I will win you over with my sweet spirit!

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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.

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OPINION

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS AND WHY YOU SHOULDN'T MAKE THEM

Chelsea Sparks
chelsea@cullmansense.com

New Year's is always an exciting time for everyone. It is a time of new beginnings, starting over and perhaps kicking some old habits from the previous year. All over the world, people will be talking about their New Year's resolutions and what they look forward to accomplishing. The idea of a resolution is innocent enough, but could you be doing more harm than good?

Perhaps you want to quit smoking or lose weight. Those are two of the most common resolutions made around this time of year, and both are great things to accomplish. However there are a few problems with making those resolutions.

First, the problem is that when you make a resolution at New Year's, chances are you have told everyone about your resolution.

You have made promises out loud to yourself or family, "Starting January 1, I will not touch another cigarette," you might say. This sets yourself up for failure from the start because you are dealing in absolutes.

Goals like quitting smoking require a lot of work to keep up, and will not be easy without added pressure. Chances are you will slip up, causing you to become ashamed or embarrassed, leading to you giving up completely.

Another reason most resolutions are doomed to fail is that we expect that once we say we are going to do something, things will just magically happen to allow for it.

Life is messy and the stars will not align to make it happen. In fact, everything in the world will probably happen to keep you from your goal it will seem.

This will frustrate and discourage you from keeping it up, and being proud of what you did actually accomplish. Instead of being proud that you made it to the gym twice that week, you will be focused on the fact that you didn't make it three days like you said you would.

Lastly, a lot of resolutions are made on a whim. It's 11 p.m. and you are sitting at a party with friends. You say a resolution in the moment and become really excited about accomplishing it.

Having really high ambitions and big dreams is not an inherently bad thing, but making a resolution in one night with no thought of how to get there worked out, you are setting yourself up to fail. Remember if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Resolutions are fun and always well intended, but often they only lead to you berating yourself and feeling worse come February. If you must make a resolution this year there are a few things you can do to make your goal attainable. Setting small goals is a great way to start. Instead of saying that you'll lose 50 pounds by summer, say that you will lose 5 pounds by the end of January.

The biggest advantage you can give is to cut yourself a break and realize that if you do not achieve the resolution, you are not a failure. If you were resolved to get to the gym four times a week and only made it two, stop badgering yourself. You made a change for the better regardless, and that is an accomplishment in and of itself. Small and manageable goals win the race!

OPINION

NOW IT'S TIME TO FOCUS ON GROWING THE ECONOMY

Lee H. Hamilton
Contributor

Recent economic news has been broadly reassuring. Retail sales are strong, November saw the best job gains in three years, the federal deficit is shrinking, the stock market is robust, and the Fed is expressing enough faith in the economy that an interest rate bump next year is considered a certainty.

Yet the public remains unconvinced. This is partly because perceptions haven't caught up to reality. For many middle- and lower-class families, economic circumstances have not changed very much. Average wages, adjusted for inflation, have not risen in keeping with the good economic news.

The median net worth of households is actually a bit less than it was in 2010, just after the official end of the recession — and the gap between the wealthy and the rest of us is wider than ever.

Strong numbers do, however, offer one unambiguous piece of good news: The pressure on policy makers to focus on near-term or immediate problems has eased, which means they can now focus on the fundamental question of economic growth. That's where their attention should turn.

A strong economy that is growing for everyone, not just the people at the top, offers many benefits.

The quality of people's lives improves. Political problems become more manageable. More people have greater economic opportunity. There's more social mobility and more tolerance of diversity.

Because the economy is always at or near the top of voters' concerns, the temptation for the policy-maker is to support another tax cut or the next move to stimulate the economy in the short term.

Now is the time for policy-makers to resist this and try to understand the large forces – technology, automation, globalization – that drive our economy.

As Princeton economist Alan Blinder, political strategist Al From and others have pointed out, the key is to concentrate on creating the environment in the country for sustained, non-inflationary economic growth.

To begin with, we have a chance to get our fiscal house in order and pursue long-term deficit reduction. This is a crucial early step for government to take in creating a sound environment for economic growth.

This means modernizing entitlement spending and shaping a tax-reform package that focuses on investments to boost productivity and help the economy to grow for everyone, through research and development, job training, upgrading skills as well as technology, and reducing outsourcing.

At the same time, it means eliminating public subsidies to individual enterprises. That money can be spent on boosting the economic skills of ordinary Americans through education and training.

Policies aimed at strengthening our education system from pre-kindergarten to graduate school, and at promoting lifelong learning and a workforce capable of upgrading its skills to meet changing needs, will have a far more salutary effect on our economy than singling out politically connected enterprises for tax and other benefits.

There are other steps government policy-makers can take to improve broad economic growth.

We need to expand trade through open markets and simplify the regulatory structure so that it protects Americans without burdening companies beyond reason.

And we must address our nation's deferred infrastructure needs, which hinder the smooth functioning of every business that relies on transporting its goods.

The same applies to reforming government itself. A government that does not work well — that wastes money, fails its regulatory responsibilities, and cannot make timely decisions — undermines economic growth.

You can see this, for instance, in our current inability to pass comprehensive immigration reform: We cannot increase economic growth without the people our labor force needs, from mathematicians and engineers to migrant farm workers.

Finally, policy-makers need to remember that economic growth means providing a ladder out of poverty for the truly needy.

Providing opportunity for low-income Americans through the Earned Income Tax Credit and programs to upgrade their skills is vital. No one who works full time should be poor in this country.

Free, competitive markets are the best way to deliver goods and services to Americans. Government must not get in the way of that system. Nor should it stand idle.

The right response by government to our economic challenges is not to focus on the immediate economic problems of the day, but to invest in economic growth for all.

Lee Hamilton is Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

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