SERIES 5 • ISSUE 50 • DECEMBER 21, 2015
CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS


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RELIGIOUS SPOTLIGHT

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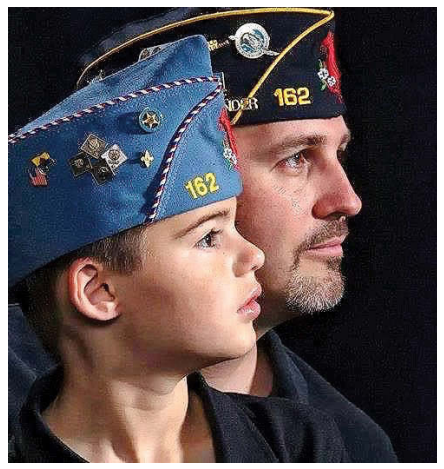
## HOLIDAY HOOPS: WEST POINT CHRISTMAS TOURNAMENT P4

REGISTER FOR SPRING SEMESTER NOW AT
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# SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION GROUP JOINING CULLMAN'S AMERICAN LEGION POST 4

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

**CULLMAN** – Founded in 1932, the Sons of the American Legion (S.A.L.) now have a squadron alongside Cullman's American Legion Post 4, which was chartered in Cullman in 1929. While the American Legion, whose members are known as Legionnaires, is an organization made up of veterans, the S.A.L. "exists to honor the service and sacrifices of Legionnaires, their fathers and grandfathers." P2


FACEBOOK.COM/AMERICANLEGIONSONS

**S.A.L. honors the service and sacrifices of Legionnaires, their fathers and grandfathers.**

# EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PROVIDER EXPANDS COVERAGE OF CULLMAN COUNTY



**Cullman Mayor Max Townson cuts the ribbon at the new RPS facility on Thursday.**

REGIONAL PARAMEDICAL SERVICES P3

# ALEA INCREASES PATROLS DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

ALEA
Contributor

**MONTGOMERY** – With the seasonal hustle and bustle between now and New Year's, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) expects the state's roadways to be much busier than usual and is increasing its patrols to help protect lives and promote highway safety.

Secretary of Law Enforcement Spencer Collier said, "Highway safety is key to ensuring motorists safely arrive at their destinations and enjoy this special time of year."

Col. John E. Richardson, director of ALEA's Department of Public Safety added, "The 2015 Christmas-New Year's holiday travel period begins at 12:01 a.m. Friday, Dec. 18, and ends at midnight Friday, Jan. 1, 2016, during which Alabama State Troopers will work with their law enforcement partners across the state to promote safety. Creating a highly visible enforcement presence, Troopers and their county and municipal counterparts will work to prevent crimes and violations on Alabama roadways and waterways that lead to deaths and injuries."

One of the easiest ways to ensure roadways and waterways are safe is to avoid driving while under the influence. In fact, alcohol was a factor in at least three of the 19 Trooper-investigated fatalities during the 2014 holiday season P4

# SCHEDULE YOUR CHILD'S PHONE CALL FROM SANTA

## CULLMAN PARKS AND RECREATION OFFERING FREE CALLS FOR AREA YOUTH

Waid Harbison
CP&R Contributor

**CULLMAN** – Is your child on the Naughty or Nice List this Christmas season? Santa will be making phone calls to Cullman's good boys and girls this year.

Get your child in the Christmas spirit with a free phone call from Santa this Tuesday, Dec. 22.

Space is limited, so don't delay.

Calls from Santa will be made from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. on Dec. 22. Slots are available any time between these hours, but Santa can only take the first 100 registrants.

To sign up, fill out a registration form by visiting the Cullman Civic Center or calling 256-734-9157 to register by phone.

For more information, contact the Cullman Civic Center at 256-734-9157 or email Waid Harbison, Cullman Parks and Recreation marketing & programs director at wharbison@cullmanrecreation.org.

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# CP&R ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY WELLNESS DAY

**Waid Harbison**
CP&R Contributor

**CULLMAN** – To kick off the community's health and wellness goals for 2016, Cullman Parks and Recreation (CP&R) will host Community Wellness Day, a completely free event, on Jan. 2 at the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center.

On Community Wellness Day, admission to the Wellness & Aquatic Center will be free, including use of the fitness center, indoor pools, basketball courts and other amenities. Guests who sign up for memberships on Jan. 2 will receive $50 off any package (Jan. 2 only). The day will also include a community health fair with close to a dozen booths to help attendees get a good start on New Year's goals.

The annual Polar Bear Plunge will be free to enter as part of the day's activities. Participants will jump into the outdoor pool for a chance to win a free one-year membership to the Wellness & Aquatic Center.

The Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center is located at 1636 Field of Miracles Drive.

For more information on Community Wellness Day, contact the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center at 256-775-7946 or email wharbison@cullmanrecreation.org.

# FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CELEBRATED AT ST. BERNARD PREP SCHOOL

**Joyce Nix**
St. Bernard Prep

**CULLMAN** – Students gathered in the St. Bernard Abbey Church at 8 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 11 to pray the rosary in Spanish in celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Xochilt Salas, a junior at St. Bernard Prep, told of the miracles of Juan Diego.

The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe began on the morning of December 9, 1531, when a native American, an Aztec, named Juan Diego witnessed an apparition of a maiden at the Hill of Tepeyac, in what would become the town of Villa de Guadalupe on the outskirts of Mexico City. Speaking to him in his native Nahuatl language, the maiden asked that a church be built at that site in her honor. Because of her words, Juan Diego recognized the maiden as the Virgin Mary.

Juan Diego recounted the events to the Archbishop of Mexico City, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, who instructed him to return to Tepeyac Hill and ask the "lady" for a miraculous sign to prove her identity. The first sign was the Virgin's healing Juan's uncle. Then the Virgin told Juan Diego to gather flowers from the top of Tepeyac Hill, where he found Castilian roses, not native to Mexico, blooming miraculously in December on the normally barren hilltop. So that he can explain the miracle to the bishop, Juan Diego picked the flowers and put them in his tilma, or cloak.

Juan Diego rushed into Mexico City and was taken to the bishop.

When Juan opened his cloak before Bishop Zumárraga, the roses fell to the floor, and on the fabric was the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Virgin of Guadalupe.

That day was December 12, 1531, just a few decades after Columbus discovered the New World; the image of Mary is still on the cloak of Juan Diego.

The Spanish conquerors of Mexico brought the Christian faith to the New World, but they also brought death and destruction, so the natives were resistant to that faith.

But now the very mother of Jesus appeared as one of them, speaking their language, and she appeared not to a Spaniard, but to an Aztec. Less than a decade after the miracle, more than 8 million native Mexicans converted to the Christian faith.

Following the rosary, students walked over to the dining hall where the Spanish III and IV classes displayed decorated artwork and banners in a Mexican theme.

Danza, a traditional form of Mexican dance, was performed by students, friends and family.

Faculty, students and staff were treated to a Mexican snack provided by the Hispanic parents which included authentic Mexican delicacies such as delicious hot tamales wrapped in corn shucks, a variety of homemade sweet breads and Mexican hot chocolate.

Headmaster Daniel Baillargeon, who speaks Spanish fluently, thanked the families and students for creating such a wonderful tribute to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

He further expressed his gratitude for everything they provided. In return, Martha Santiago, a mother of two St. Bernard Prep students, thanked Baillargeon for providing a welcoming community atmosphere for their family and allowing them to share their traditions with the students.

St. Bernard Prep is located at 1600 St. Bernard Drive S.E. in Cullman. For more information, visit www.stbernardprep.com.



**Greer Cauthen, Edson Silva, Isabel Santiago and Xochilt Salas help serve delicacies.** JOYCE NIX

# INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN ALABAMA REMAINS STABLE IN 2014

**Cathy Molchan**
Contributor

The Alabama Department of Public Health announced that the state's infant mortality rate of 8.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2014 remained stable. Infant mortality nationally was 5.8 in 2014.

A total of 517 infants born in Alabama died before reaching 1 year of age in 2014; there were 59,532 live births to state residents during the year.

For reasons not fully understood, perennial disparities in infant mortality between black and white infants continue.

The 2014 infant mortality rate for black infants was more than twice that of white infants--13.9 per 1,000 for blacks and 6.0 for whites. The disparity exists for both Alabama and the U.S.

Acting State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller said, "We must enhance strategies to reduce infant mortality. We hope to address modifiable risk factors that have been shown to contribute to poor birth outcomes."

Twenty-three percent of the births in 2014 were to mothers with an interval between births of less than two years.

Only 75 percent of births in 2014 were to women who had adequate prenatal care.

Teen births and teen smoking during pregnancy are risk factors that contribute to infant mortality, and both are trending in a positive direction.

The percentage of births to teens (8.5) and the percentage of teen mothers who smoked (9.7) are the lowest ever recorded in Alabama.

Another positive indicator in 2014 is that the percentage of elective early deliveries decreased slightly.

The percent of births at less than 37 weeks of pregnancy declined to 11.7 in 2014 from 11.8 in 2013.

**Alabama's infant mortality rates in recent years are as follows:**

- 2013, 8.6
- 2012, 8.9
- 2011, 8.1
- 2010, 8.7

*Graphs and detailed charts on infant mortality are available at the Alabama Department of Public Health website at www.adph.org/healthstats.*

# Legion (from Front)

S.A.L. is for men of all ages whose parents or grandparents served in the United States military and are eligible for American Legion membership. Although the S.A.L. has its own membership, it is not a separate entity; it is a program of The American Legion, with many Legionnaires holding dual membership in both the S.A.L. and Legion itself.

"We are so very proud of this and excited," said Dan Raley, commander of American Legion Post Four.

"Of course with all worthwhile endeavors it takes hard work and support of our Legion members. I am so very proud of our members and what we are getting accomplished. The American Legion is such a worthwhile organization and helps to support our vets. Cullman County is about to see an explosion of Legionnaires doing great work and showing the world what it means to support our men and women who have served our great nation."

The S.A.L. is organized into squadrons, and each squadron exists under its Legion post's charter. Squadrons meet separately and determine the extent of their services to the community, state and nation.

They plan programs and activities to meet their needs, within the S.A.L.'s mission, which is "to strengthen the four pillars of The American Legion."

S.A.L. squadrons place an emphasis on "preserving American traditions and values, improving the quality of life for our nation's children, caring for veterans and their families and teaching the fundamentals of good citizenship".

Members volunteer at veterans' hospitals and VA homes. They focus on the elements of patriotism, health, knowledge, training, honor, faith, helpfulness, courtesy, reverence, comradeship, citizenship, discipline, leadership and legionism.

To learn more about becoming a member of Cullman's new S.A.L squadron, contact Dan Raley at 256-347-4732.

The American Legion Post 4 is located at 112 Veterans Drive S.W.

# NINE MADE-IN-NORTH ALABAMA CHRISTMAS GIFTS

**Melea Hames**
Ala. Mtn. Lakes Tourist Association

**DECATUR** – North Alabama is home to many unique attractions, so when it comes to finding that perfect unique Christmas gift, look no further than North Alabama for one-of-a-kind gifts that are sure to bring a smile to loved ones' faces.

**Here are nine original gift ideas for this Christmas season:**

**1.** Beautiful, hand-made glass pieces from Orbix Hot Glass in Fort Payne (www.orbixhotglass.com)

**2.** Delicious, homemade candy from Morgan Price Candy Company in Decatur (www.morganpricecandy.com)

**3.** Yummy hand-crafted cheese from Belle Chevre in Elkmont (www.bellechevre.com)

**4.** Tasty wine or craft beer from one of North Alabama's wineries and microbreweries: Jules J. Berta Vineyards in Albertville (www.julesjbertavineyards.com); Maraella Winery in Hokes Bluff (www.maraella.com); Wills Creek Vineyards in Atalla (www.willscreekvineyards.com); Back Forty Beer Company in Gadsden (www.backfortybeer.com); and Blue Pants Brewery in Madison (www.bluepantsbrew.com)

**5.** Whimsical pottery from Jerry Brown Pottery in Hamilton (www.jerrybrownpottery.com) or Miracle Pottery in Valley Head (www.miraclepottery.com)

**6.** Organic art from Organic Vessels in Hamilton (www.missymiles.com/)

**7.** Famous white sauce from Big Bob Gibson's Barbecue in Decatur (www.bigbobgibson.com)

**8.** Natural, expertly-crafted furniture from Robin Wade in Florence (www.robinwadefurniture.com)

**9.** Fresh-baked Holiday Edition Monk's Bread or honey from Saint Bernard Abbey in Cullman (stbernardabbey.com)

**About Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (AMLA)**

*AMLA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion and development of the travel industry within the 16 northernmost counties of the state. It is supported by 500-plus members consisting of chambers of commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, attractions, campgrounds, festivals, communities, counties, golf courses, restaurants, tour operators, accommodations, vendors, financial institutions, and individuals. Counties included within the AMLA region are Blount, Cherokee, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Morgan, and Winston. Additional information on North Alabama destinations, accommodations and special events is available from the AMLA by calling 800-648-5381 or by visiting their website at www.NorthAlabama.org.*




**Holiday Edition Monk's Bread from Saint Bernard Abbey is a local favorite.** ALA. MTN. LAKES TOURIST ASSC.

# WAL-MART'S TWO-YEAR, $2.7B INVESTMENT IN U.S. WORKFORCE INCLUDES MORE THAN $60M FOR ADDITIONAL RAISES TO ALA. ASSOCIATES

**Eddie Lard**
Contributor

**BIRMINGHAM** – Wal-Mart is making a $2.7 billion investment over two years in its U.S. workforce to raise wages, provide better training and increase scheduling choice and flexibility. As part of this commitment, the company is investing nearly $60.8 million, resulting in 41,400 additional raises for associates in Alabama. By February, the new full-time average hourly wage in Alabama will be $13.12 an hour and $10.40 an hour for part-time associates.

Over the past year, Wal-Mart increased wages in three phases beginning in April by moving its starting rate to at least $9 an hour. In July, the company increased wages for more than 100,000 associates in specialized positions, like wireless or deli associate, and department managers. In February 2016, Wal-Mart will raise wages for associates hired before Jan. 1, 2016 to at least $10 an hour – $2.75 an hour above the federal minimum wage; hourly managers of the company's more complex and service-oriented departments will earn at least $15 an hour. Associates hired beginning Jan. 1, 2016 will start at $9 an hour and move to at least $10 an hour after successfully completing the company's new Pathways training program.

The company is starting to see a return on its investments. Since the first phase of pay raises went into effect, Wal-Mart's customer experience scores and associate engagement numbes have increased.

The company also announced during its third-quarter earnings that U.S. comp-store sales were positive for the fifth straight quarter and customer traffic was positive for the fourth straight quarter.

Wages are just one part of Wal-Mart's commitment to providing associates the tools they need to grow with the company and provide great customer service.

The company is also opening doors for existing and new associates by increasing scheduling flexibility and providing new training opportunities for continued advancement beyond entry-level jobs.

Also, the addition of more than 8,000 new department managers and rolling out of a new shelf-stocking program will make it easier for associates to get products on the shelves when customers are shopping.

## Coverage (from Front)

**Brent McDonald**
Regional Paramedical Services

**CULLMAN** – Alabama-based emergency medical services provider Regional Paramedical Services (RPS) is expanding its presence in Cullman County by adding more trucks and paramedics to cover the area.

The company opened its new, centralized location at the old Woodland Hospital building on Thursday, December 17.

The grand opening was sponsored by the Cullman Chamber of Commerce, with a ribbon cutting ceremony including Cullman Mayor Max Townson.

RPS is proud to be one of three ambulance services in Alabama and the only ambulance service in Cullman that is accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS).

Previously located in north Cullman, RPS stated that the reason for the relocation to the new building is "in order to be more centralized and accessible to the citizens of the community."

RPS was founded by Mr. John Wills in 1987 in Walker County. At the time, RPS had two ambulances and eight employees.

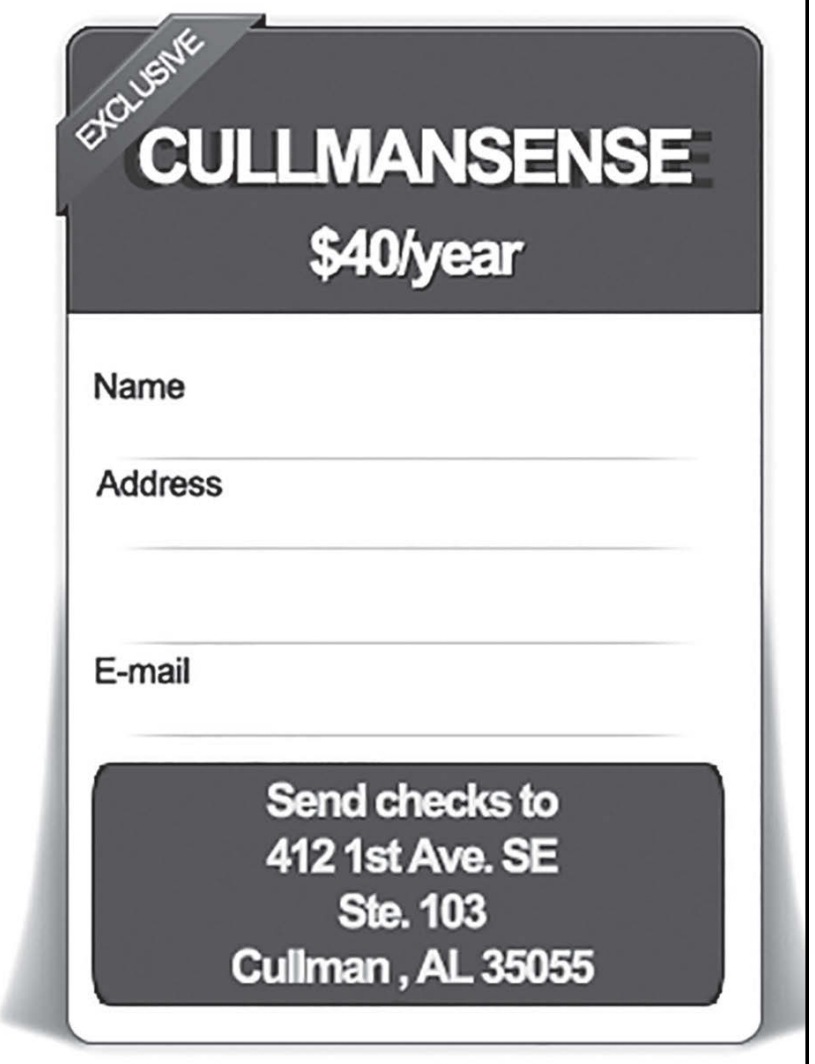
After more than 20 years, RPS has increased its fleet to more than 100 ambulances and has more than 600 employees.

Most of the staff are lifelong local residents who are familiar with and know the communities in which they work, which RPS says is in advantage to the communities it serves.

RPS serves the counties of Walker, Jefferson, Marion, Shelby, Chilton, Winston, St. Clair, Talladega and Cullman.

For more information about Regional Paramedical Services, visit www.rpsems.com or call 877-478-5830

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# HOLIDAY HOOPS: WEST POINT CHRISTMAS TOURNAMENT

**Josh McBrayer**
Sports Correspondent

**WEST POINT** – Once the gifts have been opened and holiday dinner has been had, sports fans in Cullman set their collective sights on one place: West Point for the annual West Point Christmas Tournament. Action tips off Saturday, Dec. 26 at 3:30 p.m. and continues Monday and Tuesday. A champion will be crowned for both the best in-county and out-of-county teams.

Three local teams will be competing this year, so let's take a look, shall we?

We will start with the host West Point Warriors. The Warriors are sitting at a solid 7-7 and playing some of their best basketball of the year.

With big wins over Russellville and a solid Cold Springs team, West Point is poised to make a claim to the championship trophy Tuesday night.

Although West Point is playing well, you can't count out the Fairview Aggies. It has been tough sledding for the Aggies this far, but as fans know, things can change in a blink of an eye on the hardwood. Fairview will have a little extra incentive after dropping a game to the Warriors Friday night.

Good Hope is the third and final county team in the tournament. The Raiders are a team with great heart and a never-quit attitude. Although it doesn't show in the win-loss column, Good Hope is a team to be reckoned with, and they are capable of taking the tournament by surprise.

It will be a fun-filled three days of hoops action, so come on out and support your favorite team.

CullmanSense will be there; will you?

West Point High School is located at 4314 County Road 1141 in Cullman.

## Patrols (from Front)

travel period, which ran from 12:01 a.m. Dec. 19 to midnight Jan. 2, 2015.

It is also important to buckle up every time – no matter how short the trip.

Of the individuals killed in traffic crashes during the 2014 holiday travel period, there were two pedestrians.

Sixteen of those killed were traveling in vehicles equipped with seat belts, but nine of them were not using them. In addition, an infant who died was unrestrained.

Collier said, "Using these two driving tips, avoiding alcohol or drugs and buckling up, could save a life – your life."

Troopers will work additional shifts during this heavily traveled period thanks to funding provided by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

During these shifts, Troopers will be looking for drunk drivers, enforcing speed limits and ensuring everyone is using seat belts or child restraints.

They also will be available to assist motorists and can be reached by dialing *HP (*47) on cell phones.

## PREP BASKETBALL SCORING WRAP-UP

**MONDAY**
**Girls**
Cold Springs 51 - Good Hope 47

**Boys**
Cullman 67 - Athens 64
Cold Springs 60 - Good Hope 25

**TUESDAY**
**Girls**
Holly Pond 64 - Vinemont 29
Fairview 59 - Cold Springs 49
Hanceville 59 - Susan Moore 40

**Boys**
Holly Pond 78 - Vinemont 40
Fairview 35 - Cold Springs 70
Hanceville 68 - Susan Moore 36

**THURSDAY**
**Girls**
Good Hope 54 - Vinemont 11

**Boys**
Good Hope 53 - Vinemont 42
Hanceville 71 - Tarrent 39

**FRIDAY**
**Girls**
Falkville 49 - Cold Springs 45
Hartselle 65 - Cullman 42
Fairview 60 - West Point 25

**Boys**
Falkville 26 - Cold Springs 60
Hartselle 58 - Cullman 85
Fairview 50 - West Point 60
Walker 53 - Hanceville 68

## 2015 West Point Christmas Tournament

**December 26, 2015**

**3:30** Fairview vs. Danville

**4:45** Good Hope vs Lawrence County

**6:00** West Point vs. Brewer

**7:15** RA Hubbard vs. Priceville

**December 28, 2015**

**3:30** Brewer vs. Lawrence County

**4:45** Priceville vs Fairview

**6:00** West Point vs. Danville

**7:15** RA Hubbard vs. Good Hope

**December 29, 2015**

**3:30** RA Hubbard vs. Fairview

**4:45** Lawrence County vs. Danville

**6:00** West Point vs. Priceville

**7:15** Good Hope vs. Brewer

*** Balls and water will be furnished.**
*** Teams listed first will be home team and will wear white.**
* We will present one 1st place trophy in the Freshman and JV Divisions.
* We will present two 1st place trophies in the Varsity Division.
* One 1st place trophy will go to the Cullman County School with the best record and one 1st place trophy to the non-county school with the best record.
* In the case of a tie, we will go by opponents record. If two teams are still tied, we will go with the least points allowed for the tournament.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM CULLMANSENSE!

# GOOD HOPE'S ROSEMARY BROWN BIDS FAREWELL

## LEGENDARY VOLLEYBALL COACH RETIRES

**Sharon Schuler Kreps**
sharon@cullmansense.com

**GOOD HOPE** – On Saturday, Dec. 12, a crowd gathered at the ball fields to recognize longtime Good Hope Volleyball Coach Rosemary Brown as she heads into retirement. Brown was given an honorary proclamation by both the City of Good Hope and Rep. Corey Harbison, R- Good Hope.

Brown is a local legend and will be sorely missed, especially by the girls on the varsity volleyball team. During Brown's 38 years at Good Hope High School, her volleyball team celebrated over 1,000 wins, 17 Cullman County championships, 21 area titles and13 state tournament appearances.

"Rosemary was a senior the year I started teaching in 1973, so you can see how old I am," Good Hope Mayor Jerry Bartlett joked. "We are so proud of Rosemary for all of her accomplishments. I want to present you with this proclamation from the City of Good Hope. Happy retirement Rosemary, we love you," he smiled warmly as he handed her a large framed plaque.

"Jerry bragged about being a teacher when she was a student, but Coach Brown was a teacher when I started kindergarten," State Rep. Corey Harbison, R-Good Hope, chuckled, causing the crowd to giggle. "I also have a plaque for you," he said, turning to Rosemary. "It's from the House of Representatives and it says," he began to read.

"By Representative Corey Harbison, commending Rosemary Brown for outstanding professional achievement whereas highest accommodations for her and proudly presented to Rosemary Brown for outstanding professional achievement on the occasion of her retirement as head volleyball coach at Good Hope High School and whereas over the course of her distinguished coaching career Rosemary Brown has accumulated over 1,000 career wins, 17 county titles, 21 area titles and 13 state tournament appearances. Whereas a 1974 alumni of Good Hope High School, she has coached volleyball at her alma mater since 1978. And whereas in addition Coach Brown contributed expert guidance and leadership as Good Hope's softball coach for 16 years. Whereas through the years, Coach Brown has positively impacted the lives of her students and colleagues. She has earned widespread respect for her tireless dedication and exceptional abilities and she is truly deserving of special recognition. Now therefore it is resolved that Rosemary Brown is highly honored and commended. This resolution is offered to her in deepest admiration and appreciation along with sincerest best wishes for her future."

Brown was happy with the recognition she received, but she will miss the volleyball games and the time spent with her students.

"I am really excited," Brown said, "but this is the first time in 38 years I haven't had a game plan," she giggled. "I'm kind of lost though. I'm sure I'll find plenty to do. I was blessed with a job for 38 years – I've actually been playing for all those years! I loved every minute of it, so I'm going to miss it."



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

**Johnny Harris, Rep. Corey Brown and Mayor Jerry Bartlett pose with Coach Rosemary Brown after presenting her with honorary proclamations.**

Brown's last day on the job was Friday, Dec. 18.

"Today's activities were a testimonial to Rosemary's enviable reputation and the respect she has earned for her high caliber of caring, professionalism and integrity, not only throughout Cullman County but statewide," said Bruce Brown, a family member. "Most everyone knows Rosemary as a go-getter, and she is. But those of us privileged to really know and love her, know she is even more so a go-giver," he beamed.

# A SNEAKERHEAD'S PARADISE: ROBIN CUMMINGS TO DEBUT UNPRECEDENTED SNEAKER COLLECTION

**Will Hogue**
will@cullmansense.com

**HANCEVILLE** – On Sunday, Jan. 17 at the Evelyn Burrows Museum on the campus of Wallace State Community College in Hanceville, sneakerhead Robin Cummings will debut his massive sneaker collection exhibition. A memorial to his late wife, Charlotte, Cummings' exhibition will feature 430 of his collection of 536 pairs of shoes.

"The completion and upcoming exhibition of this collection is a 'dream come true' of Charlotte Cummings, who collected Nike shoes from 1985 until her death in 2003. This exhibit should be the largest collection of Nike shoes and memorabilia in the eastern U.S.," Cummings said.

This collection is unique because it includes entire sets of specific Nike Air Jordan sneakers.

For example, according to Cummings, he has amassed "complete collections of all colorways of the (Jordan) 7s, 10s, 11s (except one), 15s (except one) and 29s."

Every year since 1985, Nike has released a new edition of the Air Jordan, Michael Jordan's signature shoe. Jordan's sneaker was the first to make signature shoes a massively successful product, and the Jumpman logo that is stamped on each pair of Jordans today is arguably one of the most recognizable logos in the world, along with Nike's swoosh.

Colorways are different color variations of a specific model of sneaker. Think of it as different versions of a car with the same make and model.

Along with the Jordan sneakers, Cummings' collection includes Kobe Bryant, Kevin Durant and LeBron James sneaker releases.

"I also have displays of Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, Bo Jackson, The Birmingham Barons and Andre Agassi," Cummings said.

The displays include game-worn and signed shoes, game-issued and signed jersey and pants by Jordan and a game-worn jersey by Barkley.

The exhibit will also include close to 50 original framed Nike posters, and, according to Cummings, "much more."

Cummings has garnered respect across the Internet for his collection among Sneakerheads, a subculture that has grown over the last half-decade into a multi-million dollar industry and has been featured in the New York Times, and because of Charlotte Cummings' forethought, her husband now has a sneaker collection that has Sneakerheads the internet-over salivating.

"I asked her, 'why are you keeping all these shoes, these Air Jordans?'" Cummings said he asked his wife back in 1985. "'Just watch,' she said, 'These things are going to be worth something someday because this Michael Jordan is special.' And she was right."

Cummings' collection is jaw-dropping, and could really only be acquired by someone who owned a sporting goods store before Nike became a world-famous brand.

In fact, Cummings said that he and his wife were in the sporting goods business before Nike was even Nike, and known as Blue Ribbon Sports.

The Cummings family owned and operated Cummings Sporting Goods in Cullman from 1976-2013.

The posters and game-worn apparel alone make Cummings' collection a must-see.

Throw in the fact that he is investing in high-tech, custom-made display cases for his extensive and coveted sneaker collection, and this is an event that cannot be missed.

The exhibit will run at Wallace State from Jan. 17 - March 15.

Wallace State is located at 801 Main St. N.W. in Hanceville. For more information, visit wallacestate.edu or call 256-352-8000.







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# HISTORIC ARKADELPHIA HOME DRESSED FOR CHRISTMAS

## HOMEOWNERS SAY BUYING LOCAL IS KEY TO HOME'S HOLIDAY CHARM

**Sharon Schuler Kreps**
sharon@cullmansense.com

**ARKADELPHIA** – The Drennen Home, or the House on the Hill, as some people call it, has been a part of Arkadelphia for many, many years. Built in 1874, the large two-story building has stood the test of time. Within its walls, there are many old secrets hidden away and forgotten. But some of the place's best-kept secrets can be told here today. The secrets about how the homeowners have brought the tired old home back to life.

The house was built by Mr. William A. Rollo to be used as both a home and a hospital for Dr. Charlie Drennen and his family.

The Drennen family closed the hospital in the early 1900s and moved to Birmingham.

Soon afterward, they got into the car dealership business where their descendents continue selling cars to this day.

It is said the hospital closed due to a lack of modern equipment and the fact that people just didn't believe in being operated on back in those days.

According to research, there were no operations performed in the old hospital, but many, many babies were born there. (Interesting note, Rollo's son, Alexander, was a two-term Cullman County sheriff and presided over the only legal hanging in Cullman.)

The home's current owners are Jonathan and Shannon Ary, who purchased the property in June 2015.

Growing up in the area, Shannon Ary has known of the home all of her life.

Never in a million years did she expect to actually own it.

Since she and her husband purchased the place, many people have stopped by and relayed their memories of the house over the years.

"Ms. Wanda Sullivan from Dora, Alabama stopped by to visit us after we moved in this summer," said Shannon Ary.

"She wanted to introduce herself to us. She was born in the home in the 1930s in what is now our living room area," she smiled.

"Her grandfather was Dr. White, and he delivered her. She also told me that as a child, she used to slide down the stair rails. She also showed us two large stones in the front yard, under the tall oak tree, that were once used as steps."

Shannon Ary said the original staircase still stands and is the grand centerpiece and most cherished part of the home.

"The house had 16 fireplaces originally, but when the previous owners updated the home, all of the fireplaces were removed. Thankfully, all the stones from those old fireplaces are now being used in the landscaping around the property," she smiled.

The Arys have worked diligently to breathe new life into the place.

The young family, including children Braxton Clifton and Katelyn, has really enjoyed turning the place into their dream home.

Shopping at area flea markets and thrift stores, Shannon Ary and her mother Launa Bobo have made the place look like something from the pages of a Southern Home magazine.

"I truly believe in buying local," said Shannon Ary.

"I've gotten most of my furniture from places like Hamby Mill and Highway Pickers flea markets. I have also gotten a lot of items from the Dream Center Thrift Store in Cullman. I do a lot of business with them because the money they make goes to support Daystar Church."



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

**Today the old Drennen Home, located in Arkadelphia, appears brand new with its arrangement of beautiful Christmas decorations.**

By shopping in Cullman, Shannon Ary said she is able to buy gently used décor at extremely reasonable prices.

Because she and her mother both have wonderful imaginations and are chock full of creative talent, they are able to turn what looks like outdated junk into impressive works of art.

Nearly the whole house is furnished with their masterpieces – at just a fraction of the cost.

The pair has worked hard to make the place look festive with the help of websites like Pinterest.

This is the first Christmas the Arys will spend in the home.

"We are very thankful and blessed to be adding just a little of our family history to the 141 years of history and memories that have already been made in this beautiful home," Shannon Ary smiled warmly.

**Christmas Wagon Rides**
Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament
**3222 County Road 548, Hanceville AL 35077**

Enjoy a horse wagon ride around the Shrine property with your family and friends! Rides begin at Castle San Miguel. While you are waiting, please enjoy complimentary coffee and hot chocolate in the downstairs dining area. **All rides are free!**

**Dates Available:**
*(Evening rides include viewing of our Christmas lights)*

**December 12th** 10:00AM-4:00PM
**December 14th-18th** 1:00-2:30 PM & 4:00-8:00 PM
**December 21st-23rd** 1:00-2:30 PM & 4:00-8:00 PM
**December 28th-30th** 1:00-2:30 PM & 4:00-8:00 PM



**RSVP at 205-795-5722 to reserve your seats. (Rides book fast!)**
***Rides are 20-25 minutes long. Wagon can seat 8 Adults per ride***
*(if there are children, we can seat more)*

If severe/rainy weather, we will have to cancel the rides, and you will be notified.
Since seating is limited, we **cannot guarentee that we will be able to reschedule your ride.**
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RELIGIOUS SPOTLIGHT

# DALE BANKS, PASTOR OF MOUNTAIN VIEW MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com



IMAGES BY MOUNTAIN VIEW MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

**The members of Mountain View Missionary Baptist Church love their pastor, Brother Dale Banks.**

**CULLMAN** – From the moment you open Mountain View Missionary Baptist Church's Facebook page, it is obvious the congregation loves its pastor, Dale Banks.

"We at Mountain View are so thankful for our pastor and his wife, Dale and Tammy Banks. God sent him and we chose him. We thank him for his spiritual leadership and guidance - our congregation is all the more blessed for it. We thank him for his selfless example -he gives of his time at a moment's notice to people from all walks of life and circumstances. Thank you for a myriad of wonderful qualities -your calm voice of reason and the courage of your faith and conviction steadfast and determined to see the best in everyone."

Banks was born in Cullman to Michael and Carol Banks. He graduated from Cold Springs High School in 1984 and married his beautiful wife Tammy in April 1985. The couple has two sons and three grandchildren, with another grandchild on the way. When he's not preaching, Banks works as the maintenance manager for American Tube Manufacturing in Pinson.

Banks has been the pastor at Mountain View for the past year and a half. Before that he was the pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church in the Cold Springs area for nearly thirteen years.

Banks said he was called by God to preach many years ago.

"I was saved on July 25, 1992, but I was raised in church as far back as I can remember," he smiled warmly. "Not long after I was saved, God started calling me to preach. So after running from it for a while, I finally accepted my call in October 1993.

"The greatest challenge for me as a pastor is keeping the harmony and focus on Christ," he continued.

"To make sure the small things that do not matter, are not more important than our goal, which is to be a gospel church that brings glory to Jesus and leads the lost to him."

He says the most rewarding part of being a pastor is watching the Lord working within his church family.

"I'm just a servant, but when someone is born again, the blessing of being in the presence of God's saving grace is the best moment I can think of," he beamed.

The members of Mountain View are dedicated to witnessing to the lost, helping those in need and encouraging the youth of the area to pursue positive actions and directions in their lives. The church has a special place in the hearts of those in the community around it.

"Mountain View Baptist has been a great blessing to me," Banks explained.

"From the beginning, my wife and I noticed how loving and caring the church is, and not just to the church family, but to anyone in need. The Lord has blessed this church for their love of his word and we have felt at home from day one."

The church is located at 1890 County Road 438 in Cullman. For more information, visit facebook.com/Missionary2012.



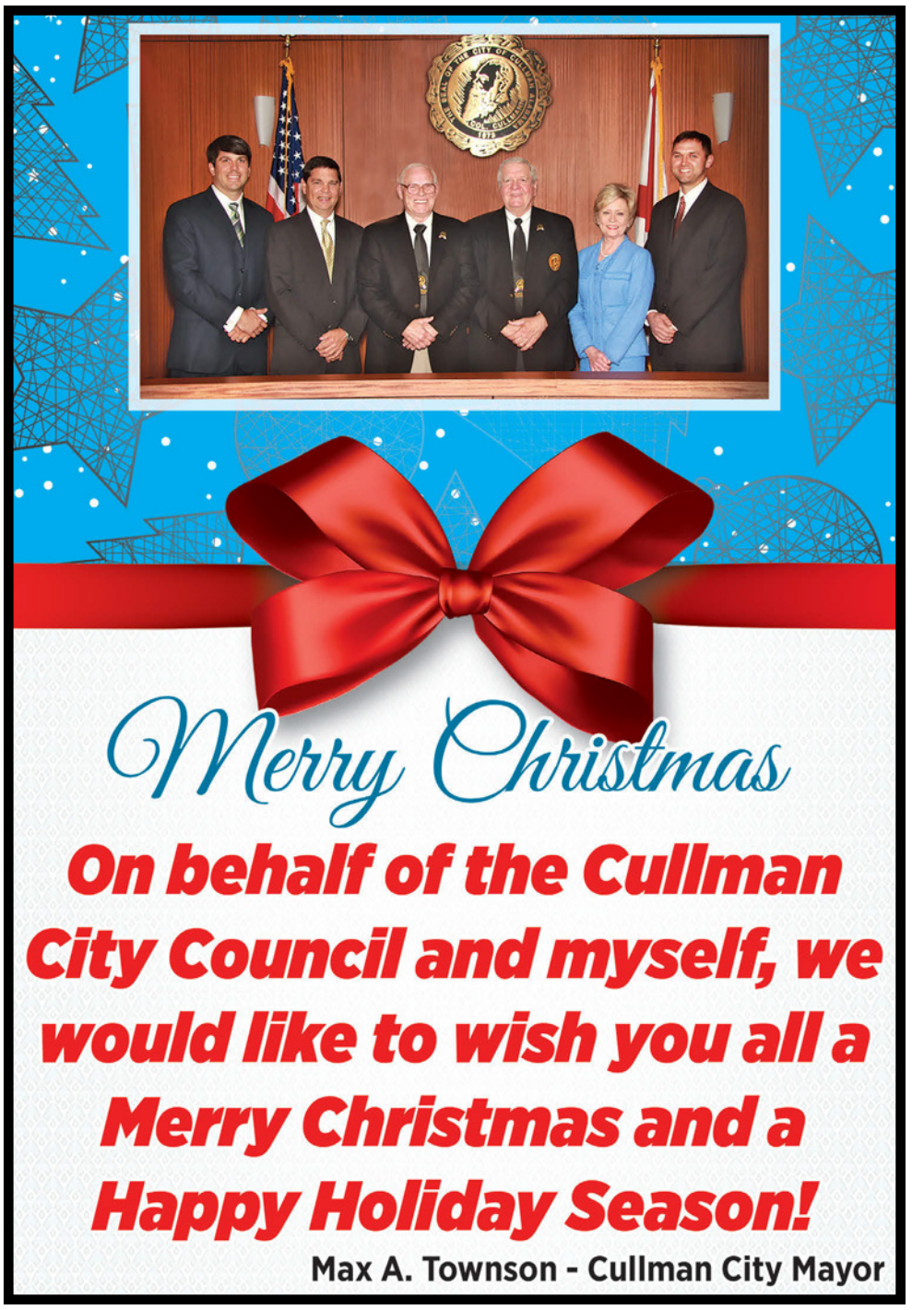
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## Monday

**Overeaters Anonymous**
Overeaters Anonymous will be meeting at 9:30 a.m. in the Carriage House, located behind Grace Episcopal Church. For more information, contact 724-376-2124 or 256-352-1143.

**Free Online Tutoring**
The Cullman County Library is offering students of all ages free one-one-one help live online from professional tutors. Sessions are offered from 3-10 p.m. For more information, visit homeworkalabama.org and click on the K-College Student Centers button. Online tutoring is available Sunday-Thursday. Visit the library's downtown branch at 200 Clark St. N.E. to learn more.

**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 meeting at noon each Monday at St. John's Church Christ Hall. Come see what Kiwanis is all about and enjoy a great luncheon meal as well.

**Domestic Violence Survivors' Support Group**
Victim Services of Cullman's Domestic Violence Survivors' Support Group meets every Monday from 5-7 p.m. at the old County Board of Education Building (310 Third Ave. S.E.) Childcare is available. Call 256-775-2600 for more information. Crisis Line: 256-734-6100.

## Tuesday

**CP&R Free Phone Calls from Santa**
Get your child in the Christmas spirit with a free phone call from Santa this Tuesday, Dec. 22. Space is limited, so don't delay! Calls will be made from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. on Dec. 22. Slots are available any time between these hours, but Santa can only take the first 100 registrants. To sign up, fill out a registration form by visiting the Cullman Civic Center or calling 256-734-9157 to register by phone. Email Waid Harbison, Cullman Parks and Recreation marketing & programs director at wharbison@cullmanrecreation.org.

**Board Games at the Library**
Each Tuesday the Cullman County Public Library will host a gaming program from 9 a.m. - 8 p.m. A variety of board games, cards and dominoes are available for play at the library for teens and adults.

**Karaoke - Cullman Senior Center**
The Cullman Senior Center will have a live band or karaoke from 8 a.m. - noon every Tuesday. A hot meal is served at 11:30 a.m. daily. For more information call 256-734-0145. Cullman Senior Center is located by Sportsman Lake Park.

**Free Online Tutoring**
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**Yoga Classes**
The Cullman City Parks and Recreation Senior Spirit Program will offer free yoga classes from 9:30 a.m. -10:30 a.m. for men and women 50 years and older. The classes will be held at the Donald E. Green Senior Center. Fabian Holland will conduct the classes. Participants may use a mat or chair. To register, contact Angie Jochum or Catherine Hasenbein at 256-734-4803. The center is located at Ingle Park at 1621 Cleveland Ave. S.W.

**Cullman Knifty Knitters**
Members of the Cullman Knifty Knitters group meet each Tuesday afternoon at 3 p.m. in the Cullman County Library. Everyone is invited to 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 are also invited to take part in these weekly meetings. Please call Lesia for more information at 256-734-2720 ext. 23.

**Ladies' Auxiliary VFW Dance at Post 2214**
The Ladies' Auxiliary of VFW Post 2214 invites the community to their weekly Tuesday night dances at the VFW Post building. The country line dance starts at 7:00 pm each Tuesday night, with admission of only $5 per person. Concessions are available, and all proceeds benefit the Auxiliary's local projects.

**Special Needs Bowling Night**
Individuals with special needs and their families are invited to the Cullman Area Special Needs bowling nights, from 6-8 p.m. at the Cullman Bowling Center. Please RSVP before 12 noon the day of the events, which are Dec. 8, 15, 22 and 29. The charge is $3 per person. For more information, contact Rhonda at 256-962-2208.

## Wednesday

**Free Online Tutoring**
The Cullman County Library is offering students of all ages free one-one-one help live online from professional tutors. Sessions are offered from 3-10 p.m. For more information, visit homeworkalabama.org and click on the K-College Student Centers button. Online tutoring is available Sunday-Thursday. Visit the library's downtown branch at 200 Clark St. N.E. to learn more.

**Kid Konnect**
Spirit Life Church of God offers a way for young people to meet at Kid Konnect. The group is for children 12 and younger and meets at 7 p.m. For more information, please call 256-739-3326.

**Saint Monica's Group**
Saint Monica's Group is for those who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. The meetings begin at 7 p.m. each week in the Rectory basement of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church. For more information, please contact either Brian at 256-595-5015 or Rita at 256-507-0358.

**Wii Bowling at the Donald E. Green Senior Center**
Wii Bowling at the Donald E. Green Senior Center starts at 1 p.m. and everyone is invited. Come enjoy some exercise (but not too physical) and fellowship with friends. Wii Bowling is every Wednesday and Friday afternoon at 1 p.m. The center is located at Ingle Park at 1621 Cleveland Ave. S.W. Call 256- 734-4803 for more information.

**Wednesday Lunch Buffet at TP Country Club**
Lunch Buffet at TP Country Club from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Call 256-739-0738 for more information.

## Thursday

*(Please call ahead to check holiday hours)*
**Free Online Tutoring**
The Cullman County Library is offering students of all ages free one-one-one help live online from professional tutors. Sessions are offered from 3-10 p.m. For more information, visit homeworkalabama.org and click on the K-College Student Centers button. Online tutoring is available Sunday-Thursday. Visit the library's downtown branch at 200 Clark St. N.E. to learn more.

**Overeaters Anonymous**
Overeaters Anonymous will be meeting at 1:30 p.m. in the Carriage House, located behind Grace Episcopal Church. For more information, contact 724-376-2124 or 256-352-1143.

**Cullman Senior Center Live Band and Karaoke**
The Cullman Senior Center will have a live band or karaoke every Thursday from 8 a.m. - noon. For more information, call 256-734-0145. The Cullman Senior Center is located at 1539 Sportsman Lake Road N.W.

## Friday

*(Please call ahead to check holiday hours)*
**Cullman Senior Center Gospel Singing**
The Cullman Senior Center will have a Gospel Singing beginning at 9:30 a.m. every Friday. Special guests share devotions at 10:30 a.m. A hot meal is served at 11:30 a.m. daily. For more information, call 256-734-0145. The Cullman Senior Center is located at 1539 Sportsman Lake Road N.W.

**Wii Bowling at the Donald E. Green Senior Center**
Wii Bowling at the Donald E. Green Senior Center starts at 1 p.m. and everyone is invited. Come enjoy some exercise (but not too physical) and fellowship with friends. Wii Bowling is every Wednesday and Friday afternoon at 1 p.m. The center is located at Ingle Park at 1621 Cleveland Ave. S.W. Call 256- 734-4803 for more information.

**Friday Night Dance at the VFW**
Cullman's VFW Post 2214 invites everyone to their weekly Friday night dances at the VFW Hall from 7-10 p.m. The cost is $5 per person and music by the Golden Oldies and Country with the Midnight Highway Band will be filling the air. Funds raised go toward the building rental. Get your dancing shoes on and come out for a great evening of fun and entertainment.

## Saturday

**Saturday Night Dance at the VFW**
Cullman's VFW Post 2214 invites everyone to their weekly Saturday night dances which begin at 7 p.m. and last until 10 p.m. The Boogie Night Band provides music on Saturday nights. Entrance fee is $5 for each individual. Come on out and bring your dancing shoes and enjoy an evening of great music, fun and fellowship!

## Sunday

**Free Online Tutoring**
The Cullman County Library is offering students of all ages free one-one-one help live online from professional tutors. Sessions are offered from 3-10 p.m. For more information, visit homeworkalabama.org and click on the K-College Student Centers button. Online tutoring is available Sunday-Thursday. Visit the library's downtown branch at 200 Clark St. N.E. to learn more.

**Sunday Brunch Buffet at TP Country Club**
Sunday Brunch Buffet at TP Country Club from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Call 256-739-0738 for more information.

## Announcements

**Special Needs Bowling Nights**
Individuals with special needs and their families are invited to the Cullman Area Special Needs bowling nights, from 6-8 p.m. at the Cullman Bowling Center. Please RSVP before 12 noon the day of the events, which are Dec. 8, 15, 22 and 29. The charge is $3 per person. For more information, contact Rhonda at 256-962-2208.

**Aluminum Can Donation Drive**
The Cullman County Animal Shelter is asking anyone with aluminum cans to please make a donation to their recycling bin, located at 935 Convent Road N.E. For more information, please call Candie at 256-734-5448.

**First Source for Women**
The First Source for Women Center provides free pregnancy tests, pregnancy and abortion and counseling Tuesday- Friday from 9:30 a.m. -2:30 p.m. If you need to speak with someone, but are unable to do so during normal hours, you can make an appointment. Please call 1-800-712-HELP.

**WSCC Alumni Foundation 2016 Trips**
The WSCC Alumni Foundation is planning a number of trips to popular tourist destinations throughout 2016. Please contact Gail at 256-352-8604 or gailcrutchfield@wallacestate.edu.

**Church's New Gathering Place**
East Battleground Baptist Church will now be hosting services in a mobile chapel on the home site. Members and visitors will be in this location until the new church is completed.

**Church's New Gathering Place**
Due to a fire in the Bread of Life Church in Holly Pond, members will now attend services in the old New Life Worship Center building, located at 721 Brooklyn Road in Holly Pond until further notice. Please contact Brenda at 256-507-2650.

**Bob's Grief Support Group**
On the last Thursday of each month, Bob's Grief Support Group meets at the Chapel at Smith Lake Park. For more information, please call 256-595-7331.

**Relay For Life of Cullman County: 2016 Calendar Announcements**
• Relay For Life Kickoff, 5:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 21, First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall; contact Helen Allen, 256-709-4019; www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal
• Relay For Life Team Spirit Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 4, First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall; contact Helen Allen, 256-709-4019; www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal
• Relay For Life Team Spirit Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Thursday, March 10, First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall; contact Helen Allen, 256-709-4019; www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal
• Relay For Life Team Spirit Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Thursday, April 7, First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall; contact Helen Allen, 256-709-4019; www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal
• Relay For Life Team Spirit Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Thursday, April 28, First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall; contact Helen Allen, 256-709-4019; www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal
• Relay For Life Survivors' Breakfast, 7 a.m., Wednesday, May 4, Cullman Church of Christ; contact Helen Allen, 256-709-4019; www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal
• Relay For Life of Cullman County, 6 p.m.-midnight, Friday, May 6, Cullman County Fairgrounds; contact Helen Allen, 256-709-4019; www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal

**Senior Trips**
Cullman Parks and Recreation is sponsoring two trips for seniors in 2016. Destinations are Orlando, Fla. in February and Santa Fe and Albuquerque, N.M. in May. Contact Angie at 256-734-4803 for details.

**Project Closet**
At Longview Church of God, on the second Wednesday of each month from noon - 6 p.m., the public is welcome to come and shop for clothes at no charge. Donations of clothing are accepted, and shoppers can swap donations for any clothing in the closet. Call 256-734-2566 for more information.

**Archery Classes**
4-H and J.O.A.D. (Junior Olympic Archery Development) classes are being offered in Hanceville. Call Barbara at 256-339-4787 for more information.

**Alabama Career Center**
The Alabama Career Center has moved back to its old location at 1201 Katherine St. N.W. behind the North Shopping Center. The new phone number is 256-734-5580.

**Free Online Tutoring**
The Cullman County Library is offering students of all ages free one-one-one help live online from professional tutors. Sessions are offered from 3-10 p.m. For more information, visit homeworkalabama.org and click on the K-College Student Centers button. Online tutoring is available Sunday-Thursday. Visit the library's downtown branch at 200 Clark St. N.E. to learn more.

**Upward Basketball and Cheerleading**
Registration is still open. Grades K5-7; Cost is $95; Register online at upward.org or at Cullman First Church of the Nazarene, 5414 AL Highway 157, next to the new Wal-Mart. Call 256-734-8937 for more details.

**Photography Exhibit at the Library**
From now until Dec. 31, an exhibit of aerial photos by David Warren of Cullman Aerial Photography will be on display at the Cullman County Public Library.

**Community Wellness Day Scheduled for Jan. 2 at CP&R**
Cullman Parks and Recreation will host Community Wellness Day, a completely free event, on Jan. 2 at the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center. Admission to the Wellness & Aquatic Center will be free, including use of the fitness center, indoor pools, basketball courts and other amenities. Guests who sign up for memberships on Jan. 2 will receive $50 off any package (Jan. 2 only). The day will also include a community health fair with close to a dozen booths to help attendees get a good start on New Year's goals. The annual Polar Bear Plunge will be free to enter as part of the day's activities. Participants will jump into the outdoor pool for a chance to win a free one-year membership to the Wellness & Aquatic Center.


# LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT
## Sponsored by Busy Bee Café

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

**TUESDAY**
• Tuesday Night Trivia at Augusta's Sports Grill beginning at 7 p.m. 1st place receives $50 gift card.
• 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.

**THURSDAY**
• Open Mic Night at Brothers from 8 p.m. to close
• Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-7 p.m.

**FRIDAY**
• Live Music at Brothers
• Live Music at Moe's
• Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-6 p.m.

**SATURDAY**
• Live Music at Brothers
• Live Music at Moe's
• Happy Hour at Moe's from 3-6 p.m.

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

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# CULLMAN CHAMBER HOSTS DECEMBER MORNING BLEND

**Sharon Schuler Kreps**
sharon@cullmansense.com



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

**Chamber members and visitors enjoyed Starbucks coffee while discussing the latest news from around town at the Chamber of Commerce's Morning Blend Wednesday morning.**

**CULLMAN** – Each month, Cullman's Chamber of Commerce welcomes members and visitors to the Chamber building for an informal meeting called the Morning Blend to discuss the hottest topics in business. The group also shares tips, ideas and viewpoints in an open discussion forum. The last Morning Blend of 2015 was held on Wednesday, Dec. 16.

"If you've never been to Morning Blend, it is so much fun," said Leah Bolin, Chamber president. "After we introduce ourselves and the company we are with, we can start the conversation. It's always a lot of fun!"

This month, the group was excited to hear that Panera Bread is coming to Cullman, along with a Ross Dress for Less store.

The fact that many businesses are now offering curbside service to their customers came up in conversation as well.

It was announced that the increasingly popular Uber service is coming to Birmingham, and several people in the group discussed their experiences with the company. Finally, the group had a healthy discussion about politics.

The conversation got a little heated at times, but was balanced with a good bit of laughter. All in all, it was a great meeting and lively discussion.

"This was so nice," said Sue Webb, who was new to the group. "Thank you so much for having us; I really enjoyed it!"

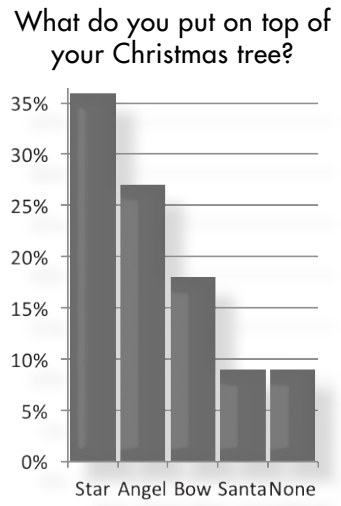
The Chamber's Morning Blend meetings are a wonderful way to bring citizens together for a casual get-together. They are a great opportunity for community members to be involved and have their voices heard.

Beginning in January 2016, the Morning Blend meetings will be held every third Wednesday at Karma's Coffee House, located next door to Rumor's Deli at 103 First Ave. N.E., Ste. 140.

For more information about Morning Blend or other Chamber of Commerce events, call 256-734-0454 or visit them at www.cullmanchamber.org.

The Chamber is located at 301 Second Ave. S.W.

## Poll



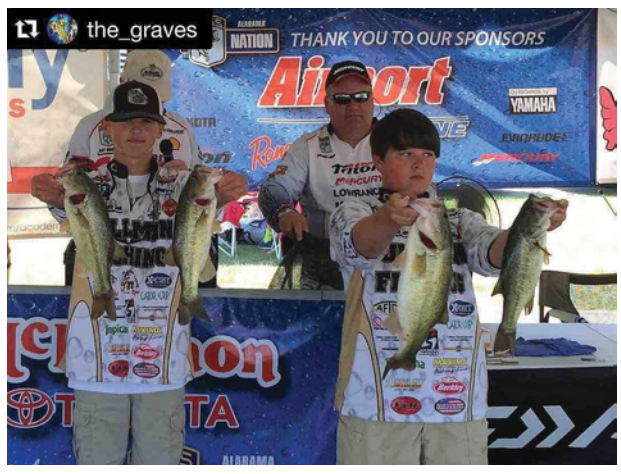

**This Week's Poll**

Did you see the new Star Wars movie?

**Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll**

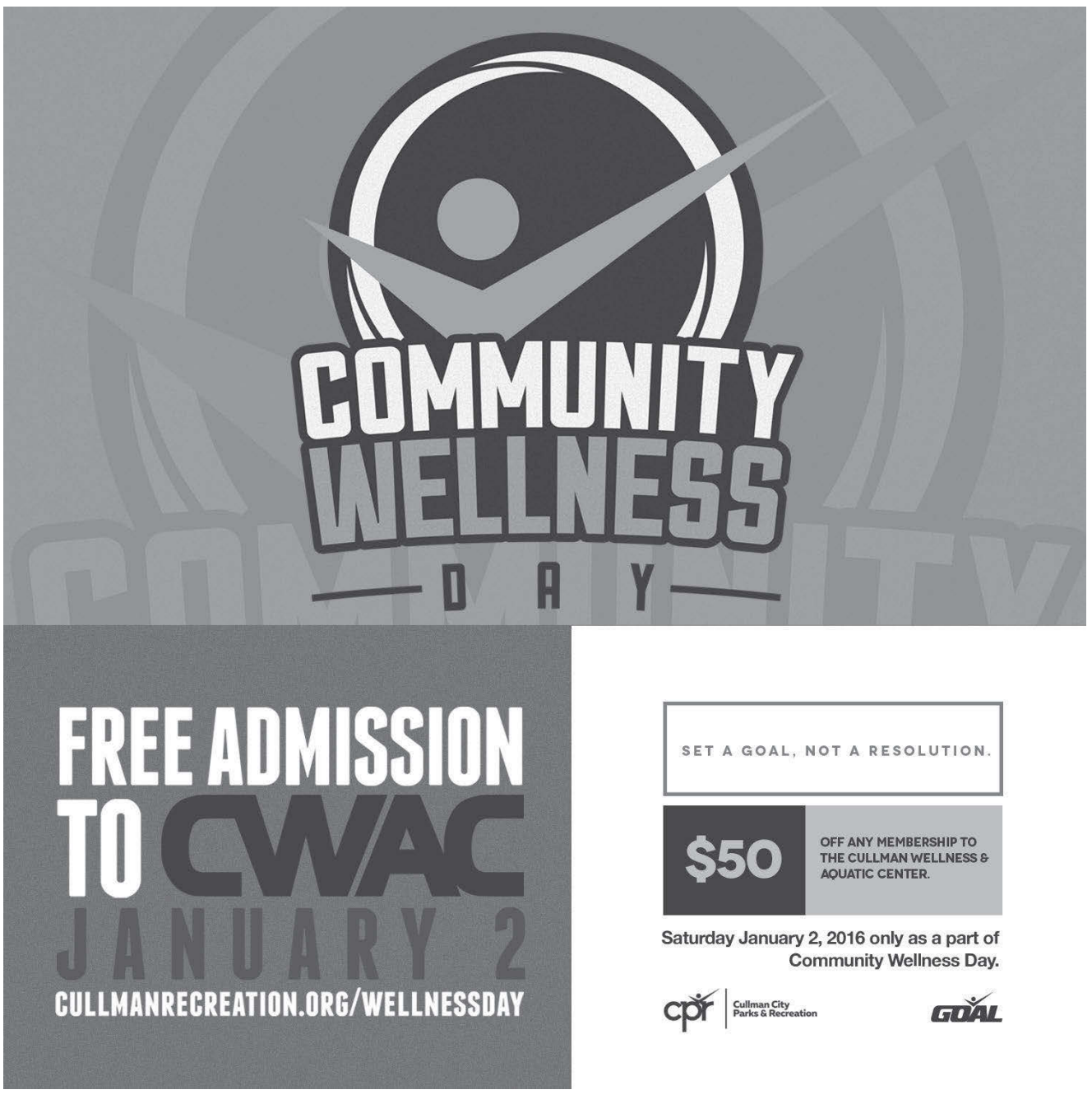
## ON INSTAGRAM









# COMMUNITY BAND WOWS AT THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS CONCERT

**Sharon Schuler Kreps, Wendy Sack**
sharon@cullmansense.com



WENDY SACK/CULLMANSENSE

**Jay Fuller, band member; Garry Taylor, band director; and Melanie Lambert, band member are all smiles after the annual concert.**

**CULLMAN** – Small woodwind and brass ensembles played as the Cullman High School auditorium filled up on Monday night, Dec. 14 for the Cullman Community Band Christmas concert. Starting promptly at 7 p.m., the event drew an impressive crowd and delivered on its promise to entertain.

One of the soloists, also the night's emcee, was St. Bernard Prep School's Director of Fine Arts Joshua Agnew, who greeted the crowd and introduced the band and its conductor, Mr. Garry Taylor.

After the "The Star Spangled Banner," the crowd was treated to a lively rendition of "Dashing through the Snow," followed quickly by "Faeries," the festive Manheim Steamroller arrangement of "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies," complete with plenty of cowbell.

Taylor, who was the band director at Cullman High School from 1984 - 2005, addressed the audience, setting up the next number and guest director Christopher Smith, director of bands at Cullman City Schools.

"Nothing makes a teacher, especially a former band director, prouder than having a former student go on to be successful in life. Especially as a band director," he said.

After Smith conducted "Invercargill," the band entertained with "A Yuletide Festival," a fun and frolicsome medley of familiar Christmas classics, and "Ukrainian Bell Carol."

Perhaps one of the best moments of the night was when the band launched into a collection of tunes from the band Chicago. With a real throwback feel and a couple of outstanding trumpet and trombone solos, the set was a groovy aside to the otherwise classic holiday concert.

Emcee Agnew agreed.

"That'll get your blood flowing! That was excellent!" he said to the crowd and the band members alike.

Next up was "Secret Agent Santa," another departure from the traditional, a "hilarious romp through the many secret agent clichés," featuring a beautiful alto saxophone solo.

Guest Conductor Steve McLenden, Fairview High School band director from 1977 - 1988, took the stage after a heartfelt introduction from Taylor and led the band in the Sousa classic "The Washington Post March."

The biggest applause of the night went to Agnew as he, accompanied by the band, performed a soaring rendition of "O Holy Night" that no doubt left everyone in the audience with chills as they gave a standing ovation.

Before closing out with the always fun "Sleigh Ride," Taylor thanked all of the band's supporters, including Smith, Cullman Middle School Band Director Linda Bean and city and school leaders. In particular, he singled out former Cullman Mayor Donald Green, who was in attendance.

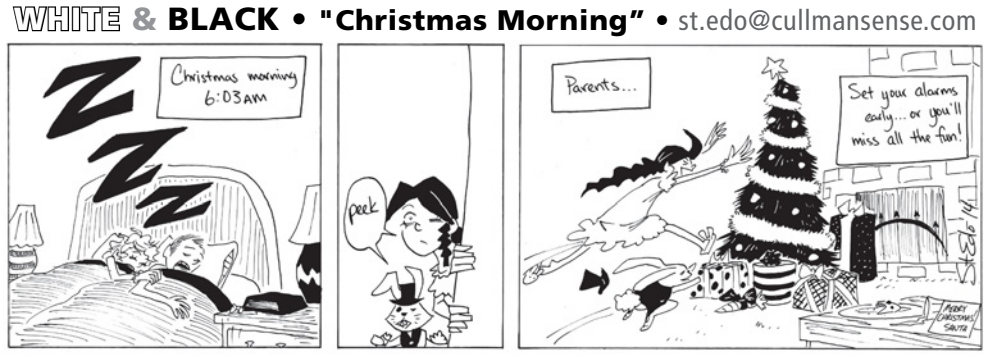
Taylor said that when he approached city leaders about starting the band 14 years ago, then-mayor Green was "all about having a community band. I don't think it would have happened without Dr. Green's support," he said warmly.

The Community Band is an all-volunteer group, whose ages range from 18 - 87. Its members are almost all alumni of high school bands from all around the Cullman area. The band's season begins after Labor Day and ends in early June. Rehearsals are held on Monday evenings from 6:30 - 8 p.m. in the Cullman Middle School band room. If you are interested in joining the band or want more information, contact conductor Garry Taylor at 256-636-2754 or garry54@bellsouth.net.

Visit www.facebook.com/CullmanCommunityBand to stay up-to-date on the band's schedule.

# COMICS

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# OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENTS

DECEMBER 14 - DECEMBER 20

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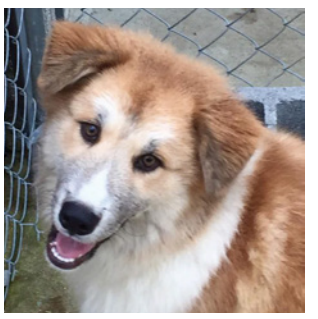
**Donna Freeman**
**Helen Renee Pitts**
**Herman Oscar Blalock**
**Michael Paul Pruitt, M.D.**
**Brenda Sue Hallmark**
**Hazel Marie Ponder**
**Arthur Lee Kenerley**
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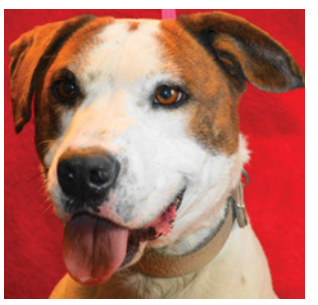
# PETS OF THE WEEK

## RIDDLE



Hello my name is Riddle and I am about 1 years old. I am a Collie mix and I currently weigh 42 lbs. I am a stray but if no one claims me by 11/10/15 at 9:30 a.m. I will be put up for adoption at that time. My adoption fee is $90 and that includes my spay/neuter, vaccines, wormer, and also covers my general exam at the Vet, the rabies vaccine, microchip, free 45-day health insurance policy and our local Pet Depot will give you a free bag of food (you pay the taxes) in support of adopting me.

## ROXIE



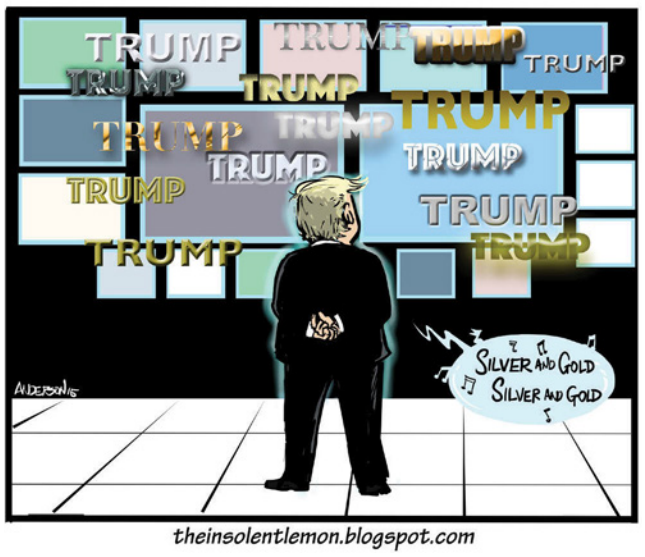
Hello my name is Roxie and I am about 5 years old. I am a Jack Russell Terrier Mix and I currently weigh 40 lbs. My adoption fee is $25 because I came to the Shelter already spayed. That also covers my microchip, free 45 day health insurance policy and our local Pet Depot will give you a free bag of food (you pay the taxes) in support of you adopting a Shelter animal. That is a great deal and I will give you a lifetime of love and loyalty.

## ADOPT THESE PETS TODAY

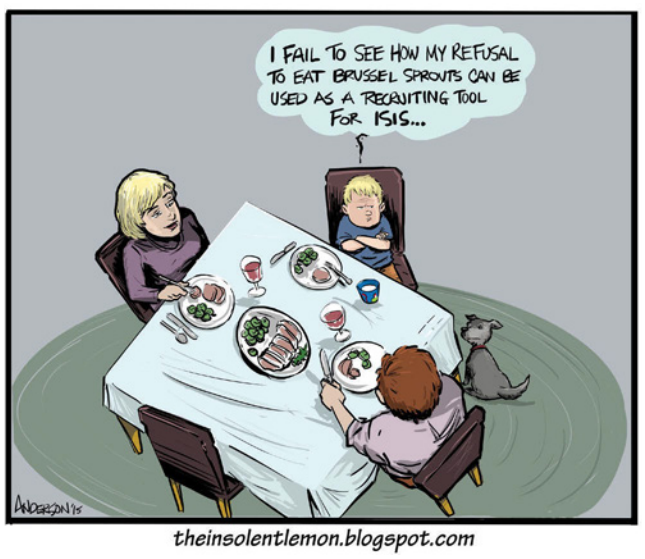
Both of these dogs have an adoption fee of $90 that will include their general exam at the Vet, vaccines, wormer, rabies shot, microchip, spay/neuter, and free 45 days of pet health insurance. Pet Depot will give you a bag of food (you pay taxes) as their way of supporting adoption.

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

# EDITORIAL CARTOONS




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**Contributors** Will Hogue

OPINION

# ADDING UP THE BROKEN SOULS

**Robert C. Koehler**
Contributor

"The question now is how to change our institutions so that they promote human values rather than destroy them."

Philip Zimbardo, who posed this question in the wake of the famous — or infamous — Stanford Prison Experiment 44 years ago, might have added: If we fail to do so, we guarantee our own social collapse.

The collapse is underway, one broken soul at a time.

"But the basic story the men told was the same: (Leonard) Strickland was pushed down a flight of stairs, and then beaten nearly to death by a large group of guards."

This is from a recent New York Times investigative piece about inmate abuse at Clinton Correctional Facility, in upstate New York — a particularly boiling caldron of racism in America's prison-industrial complex. Almost all of the nearly 1,000 guards who work at the rural prison are white; the inmates, mostly from New York City, are black. Not surprisingly, the prisoners say "they face a constant barrage of racial slurs."

And racial slurs have a way of escalating, especially under conditions in which one group of people has enormous, unchecked power over another group. Zimbardo called it the Lucifer Effect: the transformation of ordinary, decent people into monsters. His 1971 study, in which two dozen college-student volunteers were randomly designated either guards or prisoners in a make-shift "penitentiary" in the basement of Stanford's psych department, was meant to last two weeks but was called off after six days because the situation had gotten out of control.

Zimbardo said that he came to his senses after an outside observer, who was brought in to conduct interviews, reacted with utter shock "when she saw our prisoners being marched on a toilet run, bags over their heads, legs chained together, hands on each other's shoulders. Filled with outrage, she said, 'It's terrible what you are doing to these boys!'"

Compare this to the Times story about Clinton Correctional Facility. Though all the guards were officially cleared of wrongdoing in the 2010 death of Leonard Strickland, who was diagnosed mentally ill but had no history of violent behavior, six prisoners who had witnessed the event, interviewed separately at various facilities, told essentially the same story: that he was called a racial slur, pushed down a flight of stairs and beaten and repeatedly kicked by a group of guards at the bottom of the stairs.

As Strickland fell down the stairs, one prisoner told the Times, "his skull hit the concrete steps several times. At the bottom, he pulled himself into a tight fetal position, as about 10 officers took turns kicking him in the head and the ribs ... They 'beat this kid to zero,' he said."

Ah, Lucifer!

The broken souls add up. We live in a world where the prevailing belief is that control and dominance are necessary ... because of all the terrorism, y'know, and the crime and what have you. In so many American cities, armed police officers (white and otherwise), wield unchecked power in impoverished, minority communities. Not surprisingly, the Lucifer Effect continually makes the news.

Last month, the Associated Press released the results of a yearlong investigation of sexual misconduct by police, discovering records of about 1,000 officers who lost their badges in a six-year period for various sex crimes, including rape. The figure is "unquestionably an undercount," the AP story noted because many departments don't maintain such records.

"'It's happening probably in every law enforcement agency across the country,' said Chief Bernadette DiPino of the Sarasota Police Department in Florida, who helped study the problem for the International Association of Chiefs of Police. 'It's so underreported, and people are scared that if they call and complain about a police officer, they think every other police officer is going to be then out to get them.'"

What this otherwise excellent story fails to do is put the crimes into a larger context, dismissing the perps simply as "bad officers." When they can't resign quietly and disappear, they are turned into scapegoats: exceptions to the rule in otherwise good, solid institutions that serve the public. This is how it is in every institution that commands enormous power over a particular group of people, including the scandal-rocked U.S. military and the Catholic Church.

It's time for the media, which usually goes along with the "bad apple" explanation, to expand its consciousness. Lucifer haunts the corridors of power. Ordinary, decent people can turn into monsters — rapists, murderers — when given unlimited power over others. It happens with eerie frequency, especially when, in the era of the cellphone video, such crimes are not so easily covered up.

In Chicago, a police officer shot a teenager walking in the middle of the street 16 times, almost as though the gun took control of the officer's consciousness. Barbara Ransby, a professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago, interviewed recently by Democracy Now, pointed out that, because of budget cuts, only about 20 Chicago police officers have received crisis intervention training.

My God, budget cuts! In a country that's waging perpetual war and raking in billions from the global sale of weapons. Yeah, the boy had been acting erratically. But real public safety for the city of Chicago would have included safety for Laquan McDonald, the 17-year-old killed by police officer Jason Van Dyke.

I fear we're reversing the evolutionary process. We've surrendered to simplistic, impulsive, fear-based "safety" and we're reaping the consequences, one broken soul at a time.

*Robert Koehler, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is a Chicago award-winning journalist and editor.*

OPINION

# THE FORCE IS STRONG IN CULLMAN

**Josh McBrayer**
Contributor

**CULLMAN** – Ten years waiting for the announcement that there would be another movie. Waiting a month and a half after purchasing tickets for the day to arrive. Three hours waiting in line to grab a seat. Waiting through thirty minutes of previews. But when the timeless opening theme of "Star Wars" blasted through the Dolby surround sound speakers, I knew the wait was worth it.

Thursday night, I was one of the lucky Star Wars fans who got to witness the new generation of "Star Wars" on the big screen and in 3D.

I was in the crowd for the opening night of "Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace," but somehow, Thursday night felt different.

Maybe it was the thrill of seeing classic characters like Han Solo, Chewbacca and Leia Organa for the first time on the big screen since the re-release of "Return of the Jedi" in 1997.

Maybe it was the introduction of new characters such as Finn, BB-8 and Kylo Ren.

Maybe it was just the fanboy in me, but something felt different, and I was not alone.

Hundreds of Star Wars fans piled into the Carmike 10 cinema in Cullman for showing after showing of "Star Wars Episode 7: The Force Awakens," and they were not disappointed.

From the famous opening scrawl that laid out the plot



JOSH MCBRAYER/CULLMANSENSE

until the final credits rolled, the 3D theater I was seated in was alive with chatter.

Not rude talk that interrupts a movie, but cheers, claps and gasps at the things transpiring on the big screen.

"I think 'The Force Awakens' is great," said Andrew Tubbs, Star Wars fan and movie patron.

"It is compelling storytelling. It is on par with the original trilogy."

When asked if he would see the film again, Tubbs said, "I will go see it again on the big screen."

His comments mirror that of other fans both in Cullman and across the country, including this reporter. If you are a fanatic, fanboy or a casual fan of sci-fi, you owe it to yourself to go see "The Force Awakens." You will not be disappointed.

# EARLENE'S HEART BAGS: A MINISTRY FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

## LOCAL ORGANIZATION SHARES THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT WITH WOMEN IN NEED

**Sharon Schuler Kreps**
sharon@cullmansense.com

**CULLMAN** – On Tuesday, Dec. 15, a small group of women gathered together to assemble special Christmas gifts for single mothers in the Cullman area. Earlene's Heart Bags, a unique Christmas ministry, recognizes the selfless struggles single moms go through to ensure their children have a nice Christmas each year. Most go unnoticed and are happy just to watch their kids enjoy their gifts.

"We named the ministry after Mrs. Earlene Morgan, who passed away two years ago. She was an amazing prayer warrior and mama to many," Sharon Ellis, of Earlene's Heart Bags, said.

"We wanted to honor her memory by collecting gently used and new purses and filling them with things mamas need such as tissues, Chapstick, brushes, candy, gum, coins, wallets, lotions and so on."

Ellis said that the group gathers to fill the purses around the first of December, then distributes them to shelters, schools and churches for mamas who might otherwise be forgotten when their children receive presents.

"We have been involved in this ministry for about seven years now. God is so good! Tuesday night we were able to make 36 gift bags to give to some very deserving ladies this Christmas," Ellis said.

The purses, as well as all the wonderful items that go into them, are collected throughout the year. The group watches for local sales and buys most of the cosmetics, shampoos and paper goods at bargain prices. Sample sizes work really well and fit perfectly.

The ladies hope to expand the ministry and pray that other churches and civic organizations will adopt the idea and put together Heart Bags of their own to give away.

They say that, sadly, there are many, many women in Cullman County who could use a little Christmas cheer during the holidays that will still have to do without this year.

"Moms are sometimes forgotten," said volunteer Lea Heatherly as she packed a colorful purse with goodies.

"I've been a single mother before, and I know what it's like to work and try to do everything for your kids. You hope and pray they get the things they want and need. A lot of moms really sacrifice and most of the time they don't have anything nice for themselves, and would never ask for anything. This is our way of reaching out to them and recognizing them."



**Members of the Earlene's Heart Bags ministry work tirelessly to fill purses with goodies for single mothers in the area.** SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

To find out more about Earlene's Heart Bags, volunteering or donations, contact Sharon Ellis at 256-339-3833, Lea Heatherly at 256-590-6252, Shelia Blackwood at 256-590-2443, Mary Braswell at 256-338-4263, Tommie Sanders at 256-734-4688 ext. 141 or Carol Graveman at 256-339-0181.

Donations can be dropped off any time of the year during business hours at Brickyard Meats, located at 257 County Road 471 in Cullman.