SERIES 5 • ISSUE 51 • DECEMBER 28, 2015
CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS


ST. BERNARD PREP

ST. BERNARD GIRLS' CROSS-COUNTY BECOME STATE CHAMPIONS FOR SECOND YEAR STRAIGHT P6

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CULLMAN CHRISTMAS FLOOD

CONVENT ROAD, LARKWOOD DRIVE AMONG TWO SECTIONS OF ROADWAYS CLOSED TO TRAFFIC



PHOTOS BY NOAH CHANDLER/CULLMANSENSE

LOCAL MILITARY FAMILY AIMS TO MAKE HOLIDAYS SPECIAL FOR CULLMAN LAW ENFORCEMENT


KAYLA STRINGER

Savannah, Kayla and Joey Stringer baked homemade cookies and delivered them to civil service workers on Christmas Eve. P3

RING IN THE NEW YEAR SAFELY

TIPS FROM CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF MATT GENTRY

Hannah Ward
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CULLMAN – This time of year is generally full of joy and time spent with family. But it also can be quite dangerous. Multi-tasking, mixed with distracted driving and alcohol consumption can be a bad combination. This year, slow down and use caution especially when driving. Your loved ones would much rather you be late than in an accident.

Cullman County Sheriff Matt Gentry has some advice for area residents.

"We are just as vigilant during the holiday season as we are all throughout the year; however, we have added extra patrol deputies during Christmas week, and we are remaining highly vigilant," said Gentry.

"We ask that everyone keep their valuable items hidden inside of vehicles, do not leave them unlocked and shop with a partner if its late at night so you are not alone while traveling. Our main goal is for everyone to have a safe and Merry Christmas.

In 2008, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released an article discussing the rise in car accidents during the holidays. Secretary Mary E. Peters said, "from 2001-2005, an average of 36 fatalities occurred per day on America's roadways as a result of crashes involving an alcohol impaired driver. That number increases to 45 per day during the Christmas period and P3

CULLMAN COUNTY CANDIDATES

WAYNE MYREX ANNOUNCES RUN FOR CULLMAN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION SEAT

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

BREMEN – Wayne Myrex, a 1978 graduate of Cold Springs High School is running for a seat on the Cullman County Board of Education (CCBOE).

"We must have had only about 38 or 40 students then," Myrex said.

Myrex has worked in Birmingham all his life, running a construction company that has done work all over the Western Hemisphere.

"We've done work from Canada to Central America," Myrex said.

Now that Myrex's retirement is on the horizon, he said he is ready to give back and "ready to serve."

"[Cold Springs High School] has the oldest lunchroom, the oldest agricultural center and the oldest gymnasium in the county," Myrex said.

"Now, I know we're the smallest school (374 students, according to United States News & World Report), but I want to try to get some upgrades or at least just some updates to the facilities.

"I have always been a community and a service guy," Myrex said. "I decided now that I've sold my company now I can put forth the effort."

Myrex began working for a construction company right out of high school and was a project manager at the age of 30.

"I have sat at the negotiation table countless times; I know how to achieve a goal," Myrex said.

Myrex said that people have been asking him to run for a membership position on CCBOE since 2000, and now the time is finally right.

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TIPS LEAD TO FIVE DRUG ARRESTS

Bradley Williams
Cullman County Sheriff's Office

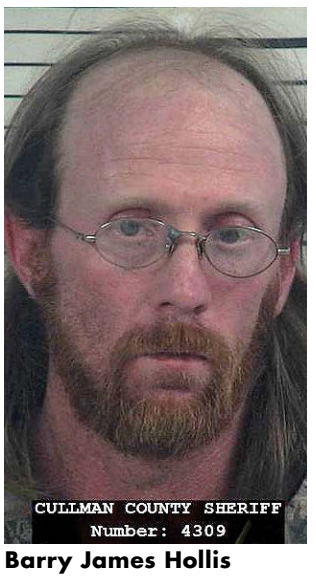
HANCEVILLE – On Monday, Dec. 21, agents with the Cullman Narcotics Enforcement Team (CNET) arrested Jamie James Quinn, 36, of Hanceville, James Allan Ford, 24, of Falkville and Steven Ray Moore, 30, of Cullman following a search of a home in the Stouts Mountain community of Hanceville.

After receiving complaints of drug activity from community members, Cullman County Sheriff's deputies and CNET executed a search warrant on the residence where the suspects had been residing. Confiscated during the search warrant was ICE, a purer form of meth, as well as over a gram of marijuana.

Shortly thereafter, the homeowner and another suspect, Brenda Joyce Waldrep, 60, of Hanceville and Barry James Hollis, 35, of Hanceville, were located by deputies and arrested as well.



James Allan Ford



Barry James Hollis



Steven Ray Moore



Jamie James Quinn



Joyce Waldrep CCSO

"I would also like to commend the community members who took a proactive approach to call in these tips and to help keep their community free from these drugs," said Cullman County Sheriff Matt Gentry. "The community is one of our biggest assets in fighting drugs and the drug dealers," he added.

- Jamie James Quinn is charged with unlawful possession of a controlled substance, unlawful possession of marijuana second-degree and unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia. He is currently being held in the Cullman County Detention Center on $8,000 bond.
- James Allan Ford is charged with unlawful possession of a controlled substance, unlawful possession of marijuana second-degree and unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia. He is currently being held in the Cullman County Detention Center on $8,000 bond.
- Steven Ray Moore is charged with unlawful possession of a controlled substance, unlawful possession of marijuana second-degree and unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia. He is currently being held in the Cullman County Detention Center on $8,000 bond.
- Barry James Hollis is charged with unlawful possession of a controlled substance and unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia. He is currently being held in the Cullman County Detention Center on $6,000 bond.
- Joyce Waldrep is charged with unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia. She made bond.

CELEBRATE 2016 WITH FREE BLACK-EYED PEAS AT LONGVIEW CHURCH OF GOD

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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VINEMONT – In the South, eating black-eyed peas on Jan. 1 is believed to bring prosperity in the New Year. Longview Church of God will be cooking them up and feeding them to the community free-of-charge. The event will take place on Friday, Jan. 1, beginning at 10 a.m.

"We invite you, your family and friends to enjoy FREE black-eyed peas, cornbread and a dessert to kick off 2016," said Kasie Collins, church member.

"Starting at 10 a.m., you can eat at our church or enjoy a to-go plate. Come spend the first part of 2016 with food and fellowship. Spread the word to everyone you know. Food will be available until we run out. Remember, it is free, so please share and spread the word!"

The day's menu will include black-eyed peas, cornbread and cookies, so make plans to stop by the church and start the New Year off right.

Longview Church of God is located at 2012 County Road 1269 in Vinemont. For more, call 256-734-2566.

CULLMAN CITY SANITATION OFFERS CURB-SIDE CHRISTMAS TREE PICKUP

Hannah Ward
hannah@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – This year you decided to go all out, ditching the fake for a real, live Christmas tree. You even took the whole family to a tree farm and cut it down yourself. A gorgeous Fraser fir, a classic Scotch pine or perhaps the fancier Blue Spruce. Your holiday spirit has been in full force all season, and it has been a Christmas the kids will remember for many years to come.

But as the merry holiday comes to a close, it's time to decide what to do with that special tree. Burn it? Let it rot in the backyard? Toss it in the lake to make your favorite fishing spot even better? While all of those are viable choices, they are not recommended for everyone, especially in the city limits.

Instead, the Cullman Sanitation and Recycling Department advises everyone who bought a real Christmas tree to simply place it on the curb.

Some things to remember for an easy pickup:

1. Remove all lights, decorations and other non-biodegradable items from the tree.
2. Take care where you place the tree. The tree should not be in the street or near mailboxes, cars or fences. Sanitation workers will be using a boom to pick up the trees and it will need room.

The trees will be picked up when the trucks get to them in their regular brush cycles. After being picked up, Christmas trees will be sent to an inert landfill.

Residents who live in apartments will need to find out from their landlords where their complexes' brush piles are and utilize them.

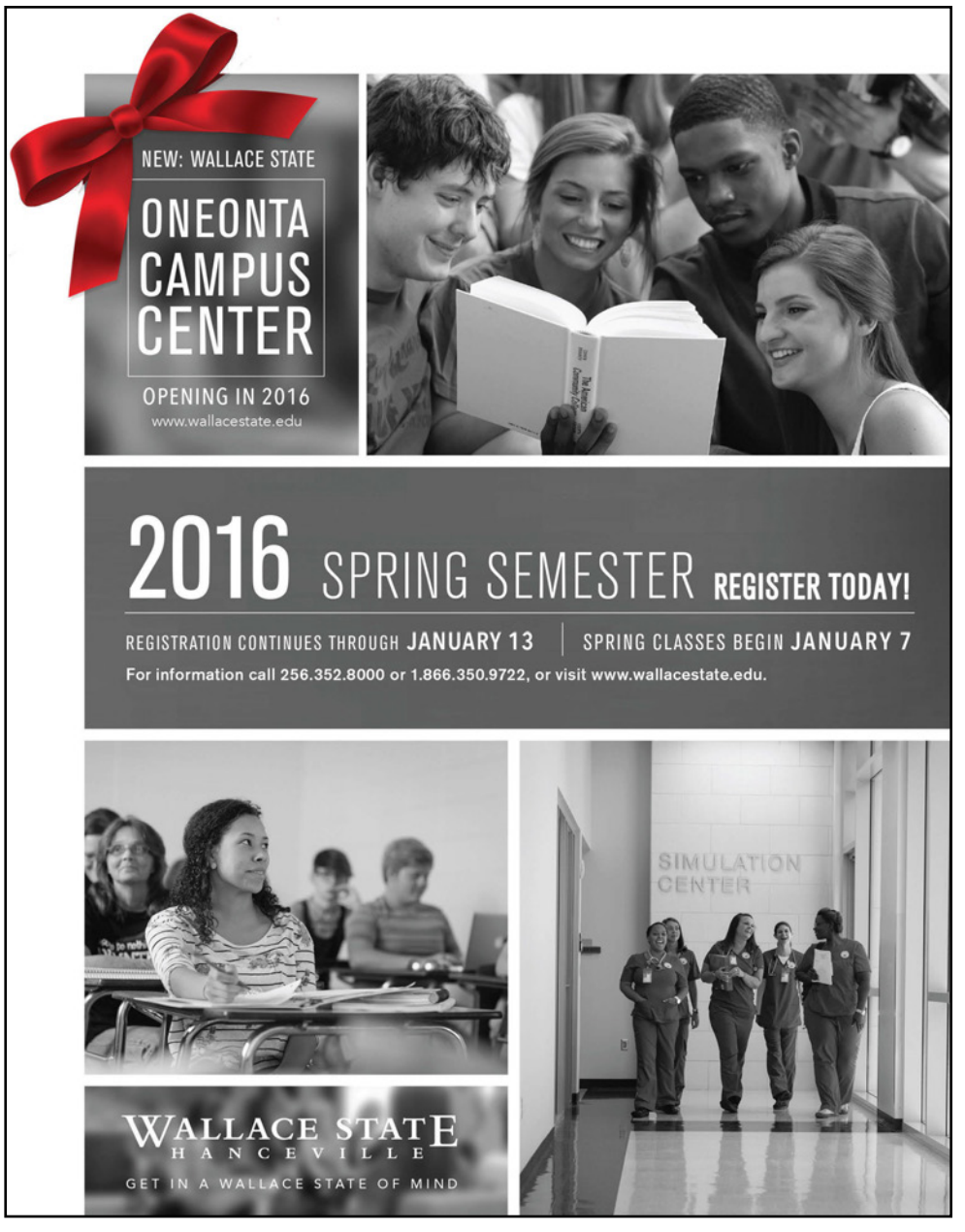
More disposal options to look into:

- Tree recycling / mulching programs, another great way to stay green and recycle! Here's a handy list of recycling locations in Alabama: www.pickyourownchristmastree.org/AlabamaTreeRecycling-Disposal.php
- Nonprofit organizations. For example, some Boy Scout troops will pick up trees in return for a small donation.

For more information on the brush pickup schedule for your area, contact the City of Cullman Sanitation and Recycling Department at 256-737-7560. Outside of city limits, contact the Cullman County Sanitation Department at 256-287-1142.

IF THIS CAUGHT YOUR EYE, WHY AREN'T YOU ADVERTISING HERE?

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VINEMONT HIGH SCHOOL'S INSPIRESS TEAMS WIN UAH STEM COMPETITION

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

VINEMONT – Two teams of Vinemont High School students took part in the InSPIRESS project in Huntsville in December. Both teams, Team M.A.R.E. and Team A.T.T.A.C.K., were named Overall Winners in their divisions on Dec. 11 at the University of Alabama at Huntsville (UAH) after presenting their designs to engineers at Marshall Space Flight Center.

InSPIRESS, the Innovative System Project for the Increased Recruitment of Emerging STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Students, is an outreach project that provides the opportunity for high school students to develop and design a scientific payload to be accommodated on a spacecraft which is designed by undergraduate students from UAH. InSPIRESS teams compete for selection by the undergraduate engineering teams.

Students are given a topic by representatives from UAH, which must be researched and designed. Students then present resolutions to NASA officials and receive practice and application experience while researching real-life problems and answers related to features in outer space.

This year's project was to design a payload that would travel to Titan, Saturn's largest moon. Teams had to design the payload to withstand Titan's harsh conditions. The payload had to deploy from the UAH spacecraft by a high altitude balloon, test the atmospheric conditions, travel from Lake Kraken Mare over Titan's surface and deploy a penetrator to measure surface conditions. Students had to research, complete all math calculations and design the payload. They built a prototype and also used the Solid Edge software to design their payload.

The project had four components. First, teams had to complete community service projects. At these events, participants are asked to complete surveys. Each team had to meet a 500 survey minimum. Second, the teams had to write a payload proposal detailing the mission and how they would solve the problems presented to them from UAH. Third, teams presented their community service and design accomplishments in an Open House Poster Session. The last component was the Final Review, where teams had to present their designs to engineers and attempt to convince them that their designs were the best.

The project taught students teamwork, engineering, technology, physics, chemistry, math and public speaking skills.

Team M.A.R.E received First Place Payload Proposal, First Place Open House Poster Session, and Overall Winner in their division.

M.A.R.E. Team Members

• Project Manager- Savanna Terry
• Chief Engineer- Kristian Miasek
• Design Lead- Jazzlynn Baker
• Design Team- Jonathan Brown
• CEA Lead- Brittany Arrington
• CEA Team- Cody Carter



SHANNON BRIDGES

Vinemont High School's Team M.A.R.E. (in navy) and Team A.T.T.A.C.K. (in gray), were named Overall Winners in their divisions in the InSPIRESS project on Dec. 11 at the University of Alabama at Huntsville.

Team A.T.T.A.C.K. received First Place Open House Poster Session, First Place Final Review and Overall Winner in their division.

A.T.T.A.C.K Team Members

• Project Manager- Hunter Green
• Chief Engineer- Kara Smith
• Design Lead- Katie Barsell
• Design Team- Chance Taylor
• CEA Lead- Anna Marie Harrison
• CEA Team- Lauren Persall

Two members from each team and their sponsor, Shannon Bridges, will travel to Washington D.C. this summer to present their payload design at NASA headquarters.

Family (from Front)

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN – The Stringer family knows what it's like to spend the holidays away from family and friends. Kayla and Joey, both U.S.Army veterans, have spent their fair share of Christmas mornings on military bases scattered throughout the world. Now that they are home, they are able to be with their loved ones this time of year, but they will never forget the feeling of loneliness our military heroes feel around this time.

Each year at Christmastime, the Stringers use their time together doing something to help brighten the holidays for others. This year they have started a brand new tradition, one that they plan to continue for many years to come.

"One evening my daughter Savannah and I were sitting around the table talking about the fact that this will be the first year we did not have a personal connection to a service member deployed that we could send cookies to," Kayla Stringer explained. "So I began thinking about what we could do instead. We talked about possibly helping in a soup kitchen or maybe volunteering at a children's hospital."

Then Savannah asked her mom, "do cops and firemen have to work holidays just like you, mom?"

"Well, I am a nurse, so I told her yes," she smiled. "She looked a little quizzical for a moment but then said, 'I know what to do Mom! We can make cookies and take them to the firemen, the police and the paramedics. I'm sure they miss their families and good food, just like soldiers and like you and your friends do at work.'"

Before long the mother/daughter duo was excitedly planning their newest family tradition – baking cookies for our hometown civil service workers. "I thought it was a great idea and told her I would shop for the ingredients after she decided what kind of cookies she wanted to make," Kayla Stringer giggled happily. "Savannah wanted to make sugar cookies with colored sprinkles to match the various uniforms they wear. She also wanted to make her all-time favorite, peanut butter cookies with Hershey's kisses in the middle."

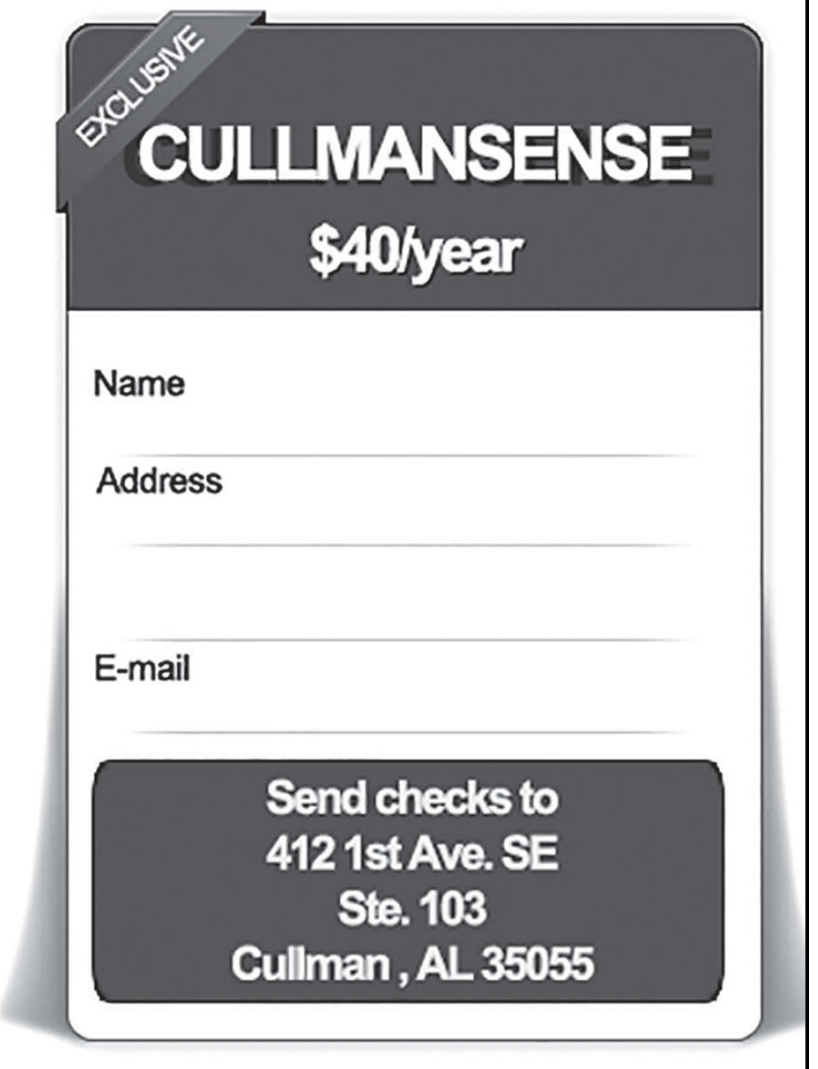
After a trip to the grocery store, the two got busy baking. Lots and lots of delicious cookies were made, and on Christmas Eve, they were delivered to the Cullman City Police Department followed by Cullman Fire and Rescue and finally the Cullman Emergency Medical Services building on Second Avenue.

"I would like to let the police, firefighters, paramedics, doctors, nurses and soldiers know that I am so thankful they work every day to keep up safe so that we can enjoy our families without any worries," 9-year-old Savannah grinned. "I also plan to help my parents with their nonprofit veterans program beginning in 2016."

"To see her so happy about giving back definitely has me doing whatever it takes to make this a new family tradition," Kayla Stringer said proudly.

"I would like to let the police, firefighters, paramedics, doctors, nurses and soldiers know that I am so thankful they work every day to keep us safe so that we can enjoy our families without any worries."
– 9-year-old Savannah Stringer

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ST. BERNARD PREP'S BOYS' CROSS-COUNTRY TAKES NO. 2 IN STATE MEET

Joyce Nix
St. Bernard Prep

CULLMAN – For the second time in four years, St. Bernard Prep's Boys' cross-country team finished No. 2 in class 1A-2A. From the four sections of the state, 12 teams qualified for the state meet. The top three teams were Cold Springs (33), St. Bernard (69) and Hatton (97). The Saints' Casey Guthery finished as individual runner-up.

Individual results were: Casey Guthery (junior) 2nd place (16:41) All-State; Steven Mami (junior) 13th place All-State; Will Sciaroni (senior) 16th place (missed All-State by 1.5 seconds); Marco Tona (junior) 25th place; Andrew Sweeney (sophomore) 26th Place; Marshall Rosenhoover (sophomore) 29th place; Caleb Guthery (eighth-grade) 33rd place; Isaias Robles (junior) 37th place; Nathan Giffin, 48th place and Jalen Lee, 94th place.

There were 132 runners in the race.

"This group of boys were (sic) extremely dedicated throughout summer camp and the season to do the things it takes to be winners," said Coach William Calvert.

"It paid off for them. They had a great season – Cullman City-County champions, Section 3 champions and State runner–up. They fell a little short of their ultimate goal at state; nevertheless, I am very proud of their work ethic and character. They gained great respect across the state for their competitiveness and sportsmanship. They certainly are a class act."



ST. BERNARD PREP

Front row: Caleb Guthery, Marshall Rosenhoover, Josh Chiodo, Blake Burman, Isais Robles and Andrew Sweeney. Back row: Coach William Calvert, Will Sciaroni, Casey Guthery, Jalen Lee, Nate Giffin, Samuel George, Marco Tona, Steven Mami and Coach Stephen Calvert.

ST. BERNARD STRIKES IN FIRST AHSAA BOWLING MATCHES

Joyce Nix
St. Bernard Prep

CULLMAN – When the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) announced in June the addition of Class 1A Division bowling as a championship sport, St. Bernard Prep was among three schools in Cullman County to form teams and compete in the first season.

On Nov. 3, with Coach Regina Willoughby at the helm, the Saints bowled in their first official AHSAA match at the Cullman Bowling Center, with the boys' team securing a win over Lee-Huntsville High School.

With nine team members per team, the top five bowlers bowl one traditional 10-pin game and then each team bowls two baker format games, where one bowler only bowls two out of 10 frames.

"I usually sub during the baker format so all nine players get to bowl for our team," said Willoughby.

The girls' team, 3-5 for the season, has claimed three victories, including Bob Jones and Cullman. Currently the boys hold a record of 4-6, besting Lee-Huntsville, Bob Jones and Cullman.

"Our players are working hard and continue to improve," said Willoughby. "So far in our season, different bowlers have had really good games. We just need to all have a great game on the same day."

The teams will be back in action in January as they host two home matches at the Cullman Bowling Center.



ST. BERNARD PREP

Front row: Isabella Cline and Katelyn Cowie. Second row: Steven Mami, Alli Messick, Leahrose Mami, Morgan Matz, Josh Chiodo and Coach Regina Willoughby. Third row: Sam Chiodo, Geonwoo Kim, Nate Giffin, Arnel Calinao, Dominic Paulter, Jalen Lee and Graham Sanders.

GOOD HOPE GAINS A BERTH TO HAYDEN GIRLS CHRISTMAS TOURNAMENT SEMIFINAL

Johnny Thornton
Sports Correspondent

HAYDEN – Good Hope's Lady Raiders have been a regular participant to the Hayden High School Christmas Tournament.

They made their presence felt as a championship contender in defeating Cordova 73-49 during the quarterfinal round Saturday afternoon.

Good Hope adjusted at halftime in which the Lady Raiders trailed 32-31 by going to work on offense with 17 second half field goals that led to 42 points. The defense also stood out by allowing Cordova just 17 points on four second half field goals.

A 23-10 advantage in the third period by the Lady Raiders with 17 coming from the talented duo of forward Kaylee Maddox and center Kate Kent enabled Good Hope to move in front and pull away by a final margin of 24 points.

They would finish with a 19-7 edge in the fourth quarter and move on to the semifinal round against Cleveland. Cleveland went on a 8-0 run in the final minute to defeat Mortimer Jordan 68-63 in the first game on Saturday's agenda.

Maddox got her offense rhythm late in the third after she was unable to score in the first half for Mike Oldacre's ball club. It created a problem for Cordova who couldn't contain Kent.

The sophomore in the post had four short range field goals in the third and closed out a 20-point outing with two in the final period. Kent would pound her way for nine field goals and dropped in two from the line to help Good Hope even its record to 8-8.

Maddox was joined by Skylar Hembree with 12 while Micah Oldacre delivered 11 and Miriam Oldcare chipped in with 10. Kelly Pickett just missed double figures and she tallied nine.

Hueytown 68, West Point 58

Trailing 38-20 at halftime, the Lady Warriors never stopped playing. They were able to utilize Baliee Yearwood's three-point stroke as she hit five in the third to get the team within three points at 51-48 as the quarter concluded.

Producing 28 points in an eight-minute span was pleasing for West Pointcoach John Welborn. His concern was would they have enough energy left in their attack during the final period.

Jeri Beasley evened the score at 51-51 on a three, just seconds into the stanza. Then Hueytown went back on top, only to see the Lady Warriors close to 58-56 with under 2:00 to go on a three-pointer from Olivia Ball.

But Hueytown held on by ending the game with a 10-2 run and preventing the Lady Warriors from an entrée into the semifinal round.

Hueytown faces Hayden in the second semifinal round Monday at 8:30. The tournament host ran away from Hamilton 72-44.

Yearwood delivered 24 with all eight shots from downtown including the five she made in the third. Beasley pumped in 11 with Lillie Burdette scoring eight.

The schedule for Monday at the Hayden Christmas Tournament:

- Mortimer Jordan vs. Cordova 4 p.m.
- West Point vs. Hamilton 5:30 p.m.
- Good Hope vs. Cleveland 7 p.m.
- Hayden vs. Hueytown 8:30 p.m.

The tournament is in its eighth year of existence.



WHY DO WE EAT CANDY CANES AT CHRISTMAS?

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN - Now that Christmas has come and gone, there is one thing most every house has lying around waiting to be eaten – candy canes. Stuffed into red and green stockings, hanging on Christmas trees or scattered throughout your children's rooms, the delicious candy will linger around until the last one is eaten. Ever wonder where candy canes came from and why they are so popular at Christmastime?

The sticky, sweet candy cane originated in Germany about 250 years ago, but you may be surprised to know they weren't always red and white with the top curved over to look like a cane. They actually started out as a plain old straight, white sugary stick!

According to folklore, in 1670, in Cologne, Germany, the choirmaster at Cologne Cathedral was worried about the children sitting quietly all through the long Christmas nativity service. After fretting over the situation a while, he asked a local candy maker to make some sweet sticks for them to munch on during the service. To justify giving candy to the children during the church services, he asked the candy maker to add a crook to the top of each stick, which would help children remember the shepherds who visited the infant Jesus in the manger.

Over time, there have been other Christian meanings given to the different parts of the candy cane. For example, the 'J' can also mean Jesus, the white part of the cane can represent the purity of Jesus Christ and the red stripes can be for the blood he shed when he died on the cross. The peppermint flavor can represent the hyssop plant that was used for purifying in the Bible.

It wasn't until the year 1900, or thereabout, that the red stripes were added to the candy canes. It was also then they were flavored with peppermint or wintergreen to add the familiar taste we know and love today.

Around 1920, Georgia candy cane lover, Bob McCormack, began making his own candy canes and treated his family and friends with them. They were so good, more and more people wanted them. Bob's candy canes became extremely popular and before long he started his own business called Bob's Candies.

Keeping the candy cane business in the family, Bob McCormack's brother-in-law, Gregory Harding Keller, a Catholic priest, invented the Keller Machine which turned straight candy sticks into curved candy canes automatically.

In 2005, Bob's Candies was bought by Farley and Sathers. Thankfully they have continued making the yummy candy canes Bob and Father Gregory loved so much.

Not only are they great to eat, but candy canes also work wonders on sore throats during cold and flu season. Wouldn't it be wonderful if candy canes were as popular year round as they are during the holiday season?

Random candy cane trivia: candy canes arrived in the U.S. in 1847, when a German immigrant in Ohio used them to decorate his Christmas tree.

Information gathered from various online resources.

TWO NEW YEAR'S EVE EVENTS TO ENJOY

Hannah Ward
hannah@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – New Year's Eve is coming soon, and area residents looking for something to do have at least two fun options.

For a night out on the town with friends, check out Augusta's Sports Grill. They will be open until 2 a.m., with live music starting at 10:30 p.m.

Local favorite Robert Abernathy will perform until close.

Augusta's Owner Deborah Veres said, "It's (Augusta's) a wonderful place with excellent food. Plus we have twenty flat screen tvs, so it's a great place to watch the game, and it's just (a) local atmosphere. We will be playing the Bama vs. Michigan State game at 7 p.m. After the game we'll have live one-man acoustic entertainment from probably around 10:30 p.m. - 2 a.m."

Vere said that Augusta's will be doing half-price specials on select appetizers during the entertainment portion of the evening.

Augusta's is located at 609 Graham St. in Cullman. Contact them at 256-775-9445.

Families looking to ring in the New Year together can check out Life Church in Hartselle.

The church is hosting its fourth annual New Year's Eve Ball Drop.

They will be dropping the ball in their parking lot, and the event will begin at 6:30 p.m.

This is the first time Life Church is dropping the ball in Hartselle; in previous years, it's been in Cullman and Dodge City.

The Alabama game will be playing on a big screen. Brand new band, Lost and Found, will be playing live, including some classic rock favorites, as well as songs from praise and worship bands such as Third Day and Hillsong.

Additional activities will include inflatables, miniature golf and much more.

Life Church is located at 300 Main St. W. in Hartselle. Call 256-778-1450 for more details.

Enjoy drinks and live music at Augusta's Sports Grill.



AUGUSTA'S SPORTS GRILL

Tips (from Front)

jumps to 54 per day over the New Year's holiday."

Ringing in the New Year calls for lots of celebration. But this year, make sure to not begin 2016 on a bad foot.

Sheriff Gentry wishes everyone a happy and fun New Year's, but he also wants everyone to be safe.

Common sense advice is not to drink and drive. Have a designated driver or call a friend for a ride. Residents do not want to start the year with a DUI, and most certainly do not want to be the driver that causes an accident while under the influence. Make New Year's Eve 2015 unforgettable, not unfortunate.

New Year's Eve partygoers who do not have designated drivers should call a cab.

Taxis servicing Cullman County are:

• Perfect Choice Taxi Service LLC 256-590-4905 (http://www.perfectchoicetaxi.com)

• Airport Ambassador Cab Service 205-835-5195

Source: *http://www.nhtsa.gov/About+NHTSA/Press+Releases/2007/Daily+Death+Toll+from+Drunk+Driving+Crashes+Highest+During+Holiday+Season,+New+Data+Shows.*

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ST. BERNARD GIRLS' CROSS-COUNTY BECOME STATE CHAMPIONS FOR SECOND YEAR STRAIGHT



1A State Cross-Country Champions: Morgan Matz, Anna Faulk, Claire Sanders, Adrian Smith, Ivy Edge, Leahrose Mami, Jaden Edge, Lizbeth Medina, Katelyn Cowie and Eva Barck. Coaches are William Calvert and Stephen Calvert.

Joyce Nix
St. Bernard Contributor

CULLMAN – It was a close race, but St. Bernard Prep's Girls' cross-country team came out on top to win the Alabama 1A-2A State Championship for the second year in a row. The Saints were led by freshman Ivy Edge, who took the No. 1 individual prize for the second straight year.

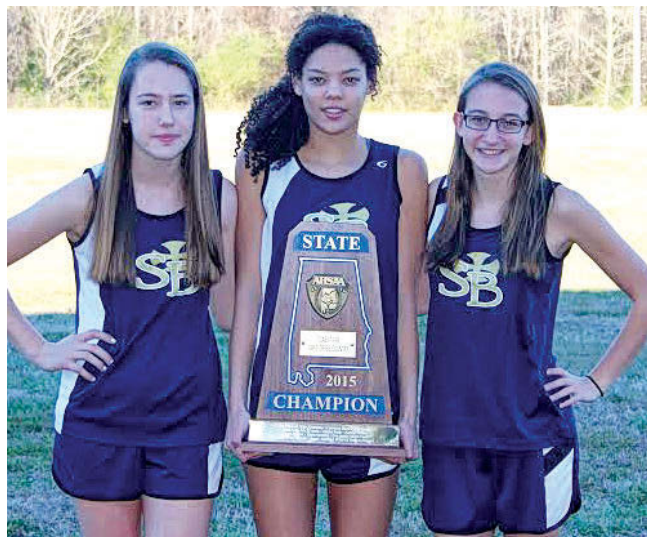
After competing in four sectional meets across the state, 12 teams qualified for the state meet. The top three teams were St. Bernard Prep (48), Westminster Oak Mountain (49) and Hatton (98).

Individual place finishes were as follows: Ivy Edge (freshman) first place (19:30); Leahrose Mami (sophomore) second place All-State; Jaden Edge (junior) sixth place All-State; Adrian Smith (freshman) 18th place; Lizbeth Medina (eighth grade) 26th place; Claire Sanders (eighth grade) 27th place; Katelyn Cowie (junior) 41st place; Eva Barck (sophomore) 51st place; Anna Faulk (sophomore) 55th place and Morgan Matz (junior) 74th place. There were 123 runners in the state meet.

In the last four years, under the mentorship of coaches William Calvert and Stephen Calvert, the St. Bernard Girls' cross-country team finished No. 2 in the state in 2012 and 2013 and won the state championship in 2014 and 2015.

"It's very difficult to repeat as state champs in any sport, but these ladies were determined to do just that," said Coach William Calvert.

"From summer camp to fall practice and throughout the season, they trained and raced with one goal in mind – repeat! They ran with poise and confidence at the state meet and narrowly defeated a very good team. They proved they were the best in state. I am so proud of them and feel blessed to be their coach. "



All-State Cross-Country Girls – Individual State Champion Ivy Edge, Jaden Edge and Leahrose Mami.

PHOTOS COURTESY ST. BERNARD PREP

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

MALCOLM CARTER II, PASTOR OF TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH



MALCOLM CARTER II

Pastor Malcolm Carter has been at Temple Baptist Church for 16 years.

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – There is never a dull moment at Temple Baptist Church. Their worship services are exciting, energetic and inspiring. The messages are practical, biblical and challenging. The congregation is filled with people who have been wounded or broken in the past, but through the power of Christ, say they have been made whole. They have a strong desire for others to find that same healing. The church's pastor, Malcolm Carter II, has led them in their quest to help others find Jesus for almost two decades.

Carter and his wife Tammy, married for 22 years, have four daughters: Jordan, who recently got married; Rebecca, who is in college; Brandie, who is in high school and Mackenzie, who is in middle school. Carter has been preaching for the bigger part of his life and says that his family has always been there to support him in his ministry.

"I sensed the call to preach when I was 14, and I surrendered to that call when I was 17-years-old and still in high school," he smiled.

"I've been preaching ever since. I currently pastor Temple Baptist Church where I have been for 16 years. Before coming to Temple, I pastored Long Branch Baptist Church for three years in Barnwell, South Carolina."

He says that one of his biggest issues is keeping everything in balance between God, family and church.

"Sometimes, there is a fine line between God and church, and the family gets neglected. Trying to keep the things in the right order and place can be challenging at times."

Some of his most rewarding moments, he says, are when he sees lives change for the better.

"Whether it's a young person or senior, I never get over seeing someone's life change for the better. Jesus didn't come to establish a religion of rules or regulations; he came to change lives. Everyone that came into contact with him had lives that changed dramatically. It never gets old seeing the hopeless find hope," he said happily. "I will never get over seeing broken people put their life back together."

> **"In America, the Christian Church is losing ground; we need to be working together to win souls in these last days."**
> Malcolm Carter, pastor

Pastoring can be a challenge, and usually requires help, whether it is from members of the congregation or other churches. Carter is quick to thank those who have helped him in the past.

"I would like to say thank you to Pastor Jerry Lawson and Daystar Church for their love, support and encouragement," he smiled warmly.

"They have always been a great blessing to this ministry. There has never been a spirit of competition. In America, the Christian Church is losing ground; we need to be working together to win souls in these last days."

For those looking for a church home, Carter encourages them to visit Temple Baptist Church, located at 30 County Road 1184 in Cullman.

Service times are Sundays at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Wednesday night's children and youth ministries start at 6:30 p.m. and Bible study begins at 7 p.m.

For more information, call 256-737-0112, visit the church's website at http://templebaptistcullman.com/ or find them on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/pages/Temple-Baptist-Church/329224293925.

Flood (from Front)

Noah Chandler
noah@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – The Cullman Police Department, Cullman Fire and Rescue, Cullman Power Board, Cullman Street Department, along with Cullman Mayor Max A. Townson are all asking the public to stay away from affected areas from the flooding which occurred on Christmas Day.

"These areas are still not secure at this time and we don't want anyone to be injured trying to get close to the falls at Larkwood," said Mayor Townson.

Cullman Police Department has reinforced the mayor's comments by adding, "we aren't trying to be rude, but these areas are not safe for residents. If you see a barricade or police tape, please turn around."

Mayor Townson said it will take some time before the roadways are back to driving conditions. Until then he is asking the public to be patient.

"It takes time for our street department to inspect all the affected areas, and this may cause delays for some, but we are just trying to get everything cleaned up and assess the situation," he said. "Please just be patient. We've dealt with tragedy in 2011 and we will handle it now."

Cullman City streets that remain closed are: Convent Rd at CR 770, Convent Rd at Oak Dr, Convent Rd at Morning Dr, and Larkwood Dr on the Larkwood side of the bridge.

The Cullman County Commission declared a state of emergency for Cullman County Saturday morning once the true magnitude of the damage from the massive flooding event set in. According to the National Weather Service, Cullman County received over 4 inches of rain on Christmas Day, making the two-day rain soaked event push the downpour to over 8 inches in some areas of the county.

According to a post made by the Cullman County Engineering Office concerning the 13 roadways currently closed, "This list may not be exhaustive and increased care should be taken when traveling throughout the county and flood damaged areas. The existing problems are mostly from bridge approach washouts and eroded roadways," the release read.

The statement issued on the Cullman County EMA Facebook page stated the County Engineering Office will be working throughout the week to correct any roadway hazards.

"Many roadway repairs are temporary in nature and will require more attention at a later date. We are doing our best to maintain safe roadways and we will follow up on the existing repairs when our resources permit us to do so. So we will be monitoring the roads during the rain event tomorrow (Monday)."

For more information on the road closures you may reach the Cullman County Engineering Office at 256-796-2266.

Cullman County Roads that remain closed are: CR 1488, 1508, 1668, 1568, 1684, 820, 1606, 1682, 35, 5, 1756, 1748, and 1823.

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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

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
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.

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

(Call ahead to check holiday hours)

Hartselle Ball Drop
Families looking to ring in the New Year together can check out Life Church in Hartselle. The church is hosting its fourth annual New Year's Eve Ball Drop. They will be dropping the ball in their parking lot, and the event will begin at 6:30 p.m. The Alabama game will be playing on a big screen. Brand new band, Lost and Found, will be playing live, including some classic rock favorites, as well as songs from praise and worship bands such as Third Day and Hillsong. Additional activities will include inflatables, miniature golf and much more. Life Church is located at 300 Main St. W. in Hartselle. Call 256-778-1450 for more details.

New Year's Eve at Augusta's Sports Grill
For a night out on the town with friends, check out Augusta's Sports Grill. They will be open until 2 a.m., with live music starting at 10:30 p.m. Local favorite Robert Abernathy will perform until close. Half-price specials on select appetizers during the entertainment portion of the evening. The Bama game will be playing. Augusta's is located at 609 Graham St. in Cullman. Contact them at 256-775-9445.

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

(Call ahead to check holiday hours)

FREE Black-Eyed Pea Lunch
Longview Church of God will be cooking them up peas and feeding them to the community free-of-charge beginning at 10 a.m. The day's menu will include black-eyed peas, cornbread and cookies, so make plans to stop by the church and start the New Year off right. The church is located at 2012 County Road 1269 in Vinemont, AL 35179. For more information, call 256-734-2566.

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

Community Wellness Day 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.

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.

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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VINEMONT HIGH INDUCTS 19 INTO NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

VINEMONT – Vinemont High School (VHS) inducted 19 students into the National Honor Society on Dec. 2.

In order to be considered for induction, Vinemont requires that a student be enrolled for at least one full semester, be in 10th-12th grade, have at least a 3.5 GPA or 90 overall average and must actively seek admission as a candidate.

The school's National Honor Society faculty council rates each applicant on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest) in each of the following areas: service, leadership, character and scholarship.

Selected applicants must have a total of 15 points from each evaluator.

The faculty sponsor for the Vinemont High School Honor Society is Mrs. Shannon Bridges, additionally the faculty council includes Mr. Jeremy Bolzle, Mrs. Connie Hilton, Miss Brandy Jett, Mr. Lance Lay and Mrs. Tammy Whittle.

Find more information about the National Honor Society at www.nhs.us.



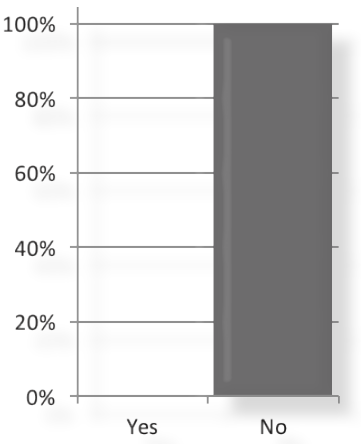
SHANNON BRIDGES

Vinemont High's newest Honor Society members: Front row - Dezarae Rogers, Addie Smithson, Sarah Hughes, Alesia Cupp, Hillary Holcomb, Erin Handley, Sydney Hughes, Kylie Williams, Baylee Jennings, Marissa Kent, Mykenzie Lamb, Savanna Terry and Taylor McDonald. Back row - Kelsey Rogers, Hunter Green, Thomas Baker, William Clay and Nicholas Mann.



Poll

Did you see the new Star Wars movie?



This Week's Poll

Do you think people should be required to register drones?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

ON INSTAGRAM









STRANGE NEW YEAR'S TRADITIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

New Year's Day is just around the corner, and before you know it, people from all over the world will celebrate its arrival by doing some pretty strange things. While people here in Alabama might chow down on black-eyed peas, collard greens and ham hocks, others will be doing their own thing, depending on where they live.

Nearly every country has its own special tradition for celebrating the first day of the year, but no matter what those rituals are, everyone does them for the same reasons. They do them in hopes of having a happy, healthy and wealthy New Year.

Some of the traditions can be very simple, like eating a specific meal, but others can be rather, well, weird.

Here are just a few of the customs from different parts of the world.

People in the Philippines like round things. To them, the custom is all about the money. They believe everything should be round on New Year's Day to represent coins, which bring wealth. They will eat round food, wear round clothes and use round objects. The sky's the limit - as long as it's round.

In Japan they ring all of their bells 108 times because of the Buddhist belief that doing so brings cleanness.

The Japanese are also all smiles as they go into the New Year because they believe smiling will bring them good luck.

In Romania they throw their spare coins into the river for good luck. (This reporter has to wonder if divers go to the river later to scavenge all the coins. It would be pretty good luck to find all that loot!)

Belgium, like Cullman County, takes its livestock seriously.

The only difference is, they take their seriousness to a whole new level; farmers in Belgium actually wish their cows a Happy New Year! Does anyone around here that do that?

The French like to keep things simple and delicious. Every New Year they eat stacks and stacks of pancakes. How about a pancake pig-out over here?!

People in Colombia must love to travel. On New Year's Day they carry their suitcases around with them all day in hopes of having a travel-filled year. That seems like a lot of work, huh?

Denmark's tradition is pretty interesting. People climb on top of chairs and literally "jump" into the New Year to bring good luck.

Besides throwing buckets of water on each other, folks in Thailand also smear each other with gray talc. Maybe they use the buckets of water to wash the talc off after they have been smeared?

How about a sleepover in the cemetery? In Chile, families get together and actually spend the night in the company of their long gone loved ones by sleeping in cemeteries.

Just like the farmers in Belgium, Romanian farmers try to communicate with their cows. The twist is, if they succeed it means bad luck for the year. Who wants to eavesdrop on one of those conversations!

This is a good one! In Ireland, they actually hit the walls with bread to get rid of evil spirits. Bread!

In some parts of South Africa people throw furniture out their windows. Now that's an expensive tradition!

Frozen tree trunks are a hot item this time of year in Siberia. People there jump into frozen lakes carrying them!

In Panama, statues are made of anyone and everyone famous. Then they are burned as a way to start the New Year off with good luck.

Why famous people and not just the average guy down the street?

The Scottish people are rather competitive. Scotland's New Year tradition consists of people racing through their houses, headed for the door.

They believe the first person to cross the threshold of the home in the New Year should carry a gift for good luck. No word on what that gift is.

Most of us have never heard of such oddball New Year's activities, but eating black-eyed peas surely sounds weird to those in other parts of the world. To each his own!

Happy New Year, and pass the peas please.

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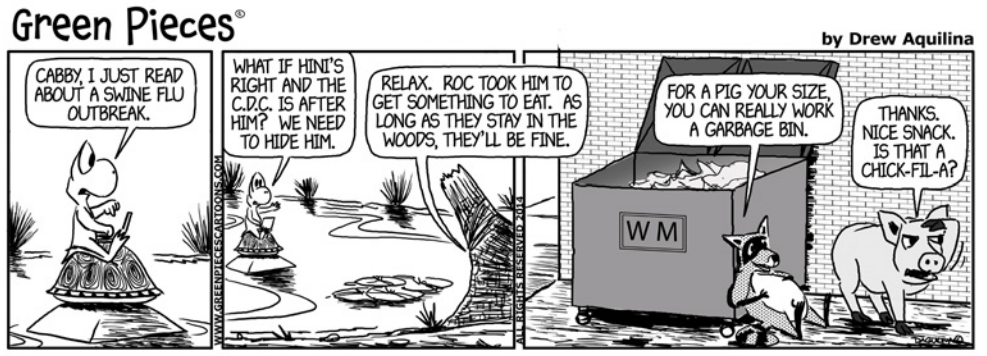
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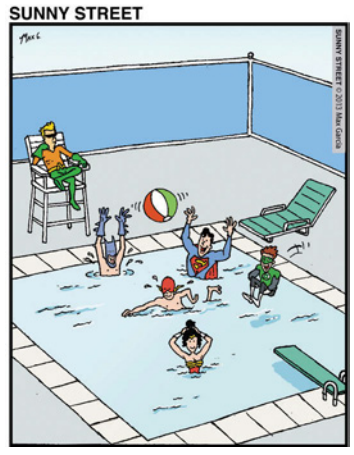
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Judith Ann Quick
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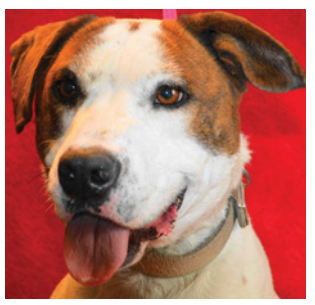
PETS OF THE WEEK

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



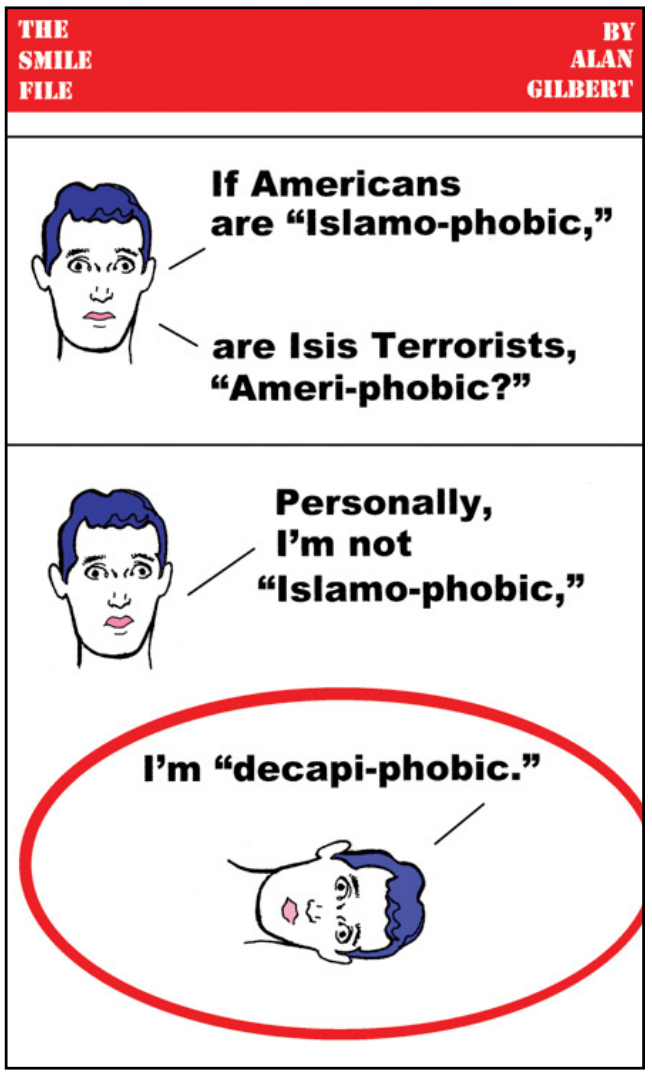
Hello my name is Roxie and I am about 5 years old. I am a Jack Russell Terrier Mix and I currently weigh 40 lbs. My adoption fee is $25 because I came to the Shelter already spayed. That also covers my microchip, free 45 day health insurance policy and our local Pet Depot will give you a free bag of 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.

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OPINION

US IMPERIAL WAR PRESIDENCY?

Mel Gurtov
PeaceVoice

The death of six US soldiers in Afghanistan on December 21 at the hands of a Taliban suicide bomber brings to 21 the number of US combat deaths there in 2015. Once again we must confront the question of national purpose in waging war without debate or declaration. Like all other battlefield deaths in the Middle East, the Obama administration rationalizes these latest as being part of "training, advising, and assisting," not combat. But those are merely code words for direct interventions that Congress has not authorized since 2002, in clear violation of restrictions the War Powers Resolution of 1973 places on presidential power.

There will be plenty more casualties in the Middle East for years to come, and not just because of the seemingly permanent US military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consider two recent news items. According to a plan not yet formally approved, the Pentagon wants to create a worldwide string of "hubs" as staging areas for Special Operations forces to strike quickly against terrorists. Second, most members of Congress are unwilling to introduce and debate a bill authorizing the Obama administration's use of force in the Middle East and beyond. Thus, there is no end in sight to the US at war, both because the Pentagon has found the perfect enemy and because no one in Congress is willing to stand up to it.

The Pentagon's plan is to have a forward presence that, in the words of Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, "will enable unilateral crisis response, counterterror operations, or strikes on high-value targets." Not long ago the Pentagon's mantra was "places, not bases," so as to avoid all the political problems, as well as the monetary costs, associated with a permanent military presence on foreign soil. Now "places" evidently have been modified to "hubs" and "spokes," Pentagon-speak for small-scale leased bases of the sort already in place all over Africa. Northern Iraq and southern Europe are being considered as additional hub sites.

Beltway Resistance

Not everyone is reportedly on board with the Pentagon's plan. The State Department correctly sees it as a power grab that may actually harm US foreign policy. The plan works at cross-purposes with diplomacy, substituting the deployment and use of force for potential opportunities to engage governments and rival groups. More US military facilities, no matter their size, invite criticism in the host countries, may become targets of terror groups, and feed the hostile propaganda of militants. In our terrorism era, however, State has no chance to win this battle.

The last time anyone in Congress got serious about its war powers was last May, when Representative Adam Schiff (D-CA) introduced legislation to authorize military force against the Islamic State, a step he believed would force debate on what an authorization for war should actually entail. "There is no doubt that our current offensive amounts to war," said Schiff, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee. "Congress should take action both to authorize its prosecution and to set limits on that authorization so it may not be used by any future administration in a manner contrary to our intent."

Schiff's proposed Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) would have limited military action against the Islamic State (ISIS or IS) to three years, prohibited the use of US ground troops, and immediately terminated both the 2001 and 2002 congressional authorizations tied to the 9/11 attacks and the Iraq War, removing two pillars of presidential authority claimed by President Obama as sufficient to go after IS. Neither Schiff's resolution nor a similar one proposed in June by Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee ever got to the floor of Congress.

Now, however, there is a twist from the previous story: the executive branch wants a new authorization, and it is Congress that is balking. Democrats fear being seen as weak on terrorism if they try to constrain the president while IS is around, and Republicans fear giving him control over what they regard as a weak-kneed strategy.

The president is thus left free to do as he pleases in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, totally ignoring the War Powers Resolution and, as a lame duck, ignoring Congress too.

Bypassing Congress

The War Powers Resolution establishes the circumstances under which the president must consult with Congress and obtain an authorizing resolution to sustain a military operation beyond 60 days. Here are the relevant sections of the act:

SEC. 3. The President in every possible instance shall consult with Congress before introducing United States Armed Forces into hostilities or into situation where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, and after every such introduction shall consult regularly with the Congress until United States Armed Forces are no longer engaged in hostilities or have been removed from such situations.

SEC. 4. (a) In the absence of a declaration of war, in any case in which United States Armed Forces are introduced–

(1) into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances;

(2) into the territory, airspace or waters of a foreign nation, while equipped for combat, except for deployments which relate solely to supply, replacement, repair, or training of such forces; or

(3) in numbers which substantially enlarge United States Armed Forces equipped for combat already located in a foreign nation . . .

There is little doubt that President Obama violated the WPR by introducing and reintroducing US forces into "hostilities," not only in Afghanistan and Iraq but also in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Pakistan. In Iraq and Afghanistan, nearly 2,000 U.S. service personnel have died since Obama took office in January 2009.

Unfortunately, the academic notion of shared powers is something of a myth. Only in rare instances will Congress attempt to tie the president's hands in a war situation—for instance, when the Boland Amendment prohibited intelligence agencies from supporting the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government in the 1980s and when Congress placed a six-month limit on President Reagan's troop commitment in Lebanon in 1983. But those attempts mattered little.

The Boland Amendment failed to prevent President Reagan's National Security Council from secretly funneling money to the Nicaraguan contras. And Reagan pulled US troops from Lebanon after the disastrous attack on their barracks in Beirut.

In general, Congress simply defers to the president. Even the president's most hostile critics will bend to his leadership when national security is believed (or said) to be at stake.

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to support presidential war making. Today, some of them—for example Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL)—are saying the president should have the authority to use "all means necessary" to defeat IS. In other words, they want to go beyond what Obama is asking under the authorization resolution. That's the same mistake Congress made in 1964, in the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, when it gave Lyndon Johnson a virtual blank check in Southeast Asia ("to take all necessary steps . . . to promote international peace and security").

The WPR, in fact, has never been effective. No president has ever regarded it as a legitimate exercise of congressional authority in war. No president has been forced to abide by its key provision: obtain congressional approval of a troop deployment within 60 days or withdraw the troops. Only a few presidents (including Obama) have even acknowledged the resolution when planning military action abroad.

All presidents have insisted that as commander-in-chief they have all the constitutional authority they need to make war. Thus, when Congress votes to authorize military action abroad, what it is really doing is legitimizing what the President has already decided to do—and would do even in the absence of Congressional authorization.

So the only difference between then and now is that Congress won't bother to vote, or even debate, presidential war powers. Senator Kaine is apparently going to try again with his resolution.

But even if his or Representative Schiff's proposal were to pass, the president would not be prohibited from many forms of military intervention, all of which he is employing today: using "advisers," CIA operatives, and special forces; transferring arms to friendly forces; conducting drone strikes; directing air strikes by non-US air forces; training other militaries; and supporting third countries or groups whose ground forces substitute for US forces that Congress would prohibit. Congress will thus be bypassed once again. And only a few members of Congress will likely speak out against the potential human and monetary costs associated with the Pentagon's latest basing plan.

Indeed, most members of Congress, not to mention most of the presidential candidates, will push for increased use of force abroad. Endless war, both undeclared and undebated, will thus remain a central feature of the next presidency.

WALLACE STATE GIVES BIG THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

LOCAL COLLEGE SERVES AS STATE'S ONLY DROP-OFF POINT FOR A MILLION THANKS PROGRAM

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

HANCEVILLE – 'Tis the season to be jolly, but it is also a time to do for others. Wallace State Community College (WSCC) took that to heart. This year, for the first time, the college acted as a drop-off point for the A Million Thanks program, which sends letters, notes and cards to active-duty military. WSCC was the only drop-off site in the state. During the drive, more than 2,600 pieces of correspondence were collected.

"We had a good turnout," said Lisa Smith, director of special populations at WSCC. "As word gets out about the program, I think that number will be even greater next year."

Not only did the faculty, staff and students provide cards and letters, but the college also received some from the community as well as schools from the Cullman County area and beyond.

"We got some from an elementary school in Fort Payne, a company in Georgia and a senior citizen center in Bessemer," Smith said.

"The out-of-town contributors found Wallace State on the A Million Thanks website as their closest location to drop off their cards and letters to soldiers."

Smith said the college would act as a drop-off site again next year.

The collection process usually ends around Nov. 20 to allow time for the cards to be delivered overseas.

In addition to A Million Thanks, WSCC collected goods for local charities.

"The college also participated in the Dec. 1 Day of Giving by collecting toys, books, food and other supplies for a few local charities.

> "The machine shop and drafting groups launched a competition between themselves to see who could bring in the most donations. We had to borrow the cargo van from the college for one delivery, and the next day we had a Tahoe full!"
>
> Lisa Smith, Wallace State

Two large deliveries of food were distributed to the Cullman Caring for Kids Food Bank, as well as toy and book donations to Operation Christmas Child," Smith said.

"The machine shop and drafting groups launched a competition between themselves to see who could bring in the most donations," Smith added.

"We had to borrow the cargo van from the college for one delivery, and the next day we had a Tahoe full!"

The Academic Department gathered items for the animal shelter and the Health Science and Student Services divisions collected toiletry items for Hope House in Blount County.

The college was able to deliver seven cases of toiletries to Hope House, where Brother Bud Jones accepted them.

Hope House operates a homeless shelter, thrift store and also provides substance abuse rehabilitation programs.

Jones told the college representatives Hope House was in need of toothpaste, so tubes of toothpaste made up more than a case of the college's donations.

"God had answered the prayers for Blount County children," Jones told them.

"We are very thankful and appreciative of all of the donations and support," Smith said of everyone who donated to the college's charitable projects this holiday season.

For more information about WSCC, visit www.wallacestate.edu or call 256-352-8000 or 866-350-9722. For more on the A Million Thanks program visit www.amillionthanks.org.



Boxes of canned goods fill the back of a Wallace State Community College cargo van with one of two deliveries made to Cullman Caring for Kids food bank in Cullman.

PHOTOS COURTESY WSCC



Bro. Bud Jones, right, of Hope House in Blount County, accepts donations from Wallace State Community College Administrators Jimmy Hodges, left, dean of applied technologies; Tomesa Smith, executive vice president and Lisa German, dean of health sciences.

