SERIES 6 • ISSUE 2 • JANUARY 11, 2016
CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS


DAVE WARREN

DAVE WARREN PHOTOGRAPHY TAKES PICTURES TO NEW HEIGHTS P7

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EAST ELEMENTARY NAMED 2015 CLAS BANNER SCHOOL

Wendy Sack
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CULLMAN - East Elementary School (EES) on Monday was named a 2015 CLAS Banner School by the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS). Out of 178 nominations across the state, EES was one of only 14 winners.

"The thing I'm most tickled about," said Principal David Wiggins, "is that this award really goes to the heart of who we are at East Elementary, how we treat one another, care for one another. It's the core of who we are and what we do."

The school was nominated for P6



WENDY SACK/CULLMANSENSE

Principal David Wiggins, Student Council Treasurer Faith Guest and Haley Robinson and Owen Moore, both past winners of the Principal's Award for Character.


CONTRIBUTED

CHECKING IN WITH DR. SUSAN PATTERSON, CULLMAN CITY SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT P2

CANDIDATES FOR CHAIRMAN OF THE CULLMAN COUNTY COMMISSION TO ADDRESS THE PUBLIC TUESDAY NIGHT P3

CHRISTMAS DAY FLOODING CAUSES ESTIMATED $2.5M IN DAMAGES AT WWTP

COUNCIL APPROVES FIVE EMERGENCY REQUESTS FOR CULLMAN WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT



Top: WWTP ultraviolet light unit on Christmas night, following what many are calling the 100-Year-Flood. Bottom: WWTP clarifier and sludge pump following the Christmas floods.

CONTRIBUTED

P12

COUNTY TO CONTINUE ISSUING MARRIAGE LICENSES TO SAME-SEX COUPLES, DESPITE CHIEF JUSTICE ROY MOORE'S ORDER

Wendy Sack
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CULLMAN COUNTY COURTS

Cullman County Judge of Probate Tammy Brown says her office will continue to issue same-sex marriage licenses.

CULLMAN - Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore on Wednesday said probate judges have a "ministerial duty" to comply with state bans on same-sex marriage, even after the U.S. Supreme Court's June ruling striking down these restrictions. The Cullman County Probate Office said today that it will not comply with Moore's order.

"The Cullman County Probate Office will issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples in the same manner and pursuant to the same requirements as applied to traditional couples," said Judge of Probate, Tammy Brown.

Brown said that her office P12


GARRET TAYLOR

PROFILES IN FAITH
GARRET TAYLOR OF CHRISTIANS LIVING PROOF MINISTRIES P7

WALLACE STATE STUDENTS EARN PRIZE MONEY AS WINNERS OF HAIKU POETRY CONTEST P10

JANUARY IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS MONTH

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN – This month is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and the Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force is planning several community events. The Task Force is a volunteer group of individuals who work diligently to see that the community is both aware of and educated about this horrific crime.

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. It is a crime that happens when a person uses force, fraud or coercion to control another person. The person being controlled is forced into commercial sex acts and/or soliciting work or services against his or her will. P12


SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Members of the Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force met at the courthouse to discuss upcoming events.

PRINTED LOCALLY @ PRINTING Alabama Web Press

CHECKING IN WITH DR. SUSAN PATTERSON, CULLMAN CITY SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT

Will Hogue
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CULLMAN - Back in June 2015, there was quite the shakeup in the local education community when Dr. Doreen Griffeth resigned her position as Cullman City Schools (CCS) superintendent and Dr. Susan Patterson, then director of federal programs and career tech for CCS, was named interim superintendent. On Oct. 9, 2015, Patterson, a lifetime resident of Cullman County, was officially appointed CCS superintendent.

Now, more than seven months later, and with a contract that stretches to June 2019, Patterson has her eyes set on the future of CCS.

Patterson has spent more than 25 years as a classroom teacher, technology coordinator, library media specialist, school administrator and district administrator. She has 12 years in administration and was an elementary and middle school principal before becoming a district-level administrator.

Patterson is a 2011 graduate of the University of Alabama's Alabama Superintendents Academy, earned her doctoral degree in Education Administration in 2004 from the University of Alabama and possesses an Educational Specialist degree in Librarianship.

Through Harvard University, Patterson is a trained facilitator of Instructional Rounds: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning.

She is also a nationally certified principal mentor through NAESP and served as the state coordinator for the Doing What Works Initiative from the U.S. Department of Education.

Patterson said that although all of her training and previous experience have helped her in her new position, her time spent in school administration has been the most beneficial.

"As a veteran principal, serving eight years, I learned both the necessary management skills along with how to lead quality instruction that raises student achievement," she said.

During her time in the interim superintendent position, she developed a five-year plan for CCS:

- Maintain rigorous instruction, expanding college and career opportunities and providing real world contextual based learning
- Maintain the efficient use of funds to support the high value offered to students as demonstrated by academic achievement and technology advancements
- Provide adequate facilities and services that address current and future student growth and needs
- Maintain highly qualified personnel who are equipped with best practice strategies and skills through continued professional development

The plan consists of four goals, three of which include the word "maintain," suggesting that Patterson hopes not to fix something that isn't broken. After all, the Cullman City school system is one of the best in the state. So good, in fact, that its effectiveness has limited the growth of private schools throughout Cullman's history.

Patterson said she has not had any major difficulties as superintendent.

"We have not had any major challenges thus far, but the school board members and myself have been working diligently to both maintain and strengthen the excellence of our school system."

As of right now, Patterson's main goal is to ensure that the school system can handle the flourishing growth of Cullman from an academic standpoint.

"Currently, through our strategic plan, we are working to address our enrollment in the elementary grades. Our city has seen tremendous growth and revitalization since the tornadoes of April 2011, and with that we want to ensure our facilities are well prepared to handle the current enrollment and successfully account for our future growth," she said.



CONTRIBUTED

Cullman City Schools Superintendent Dr. Susan Patterson was officially appointed on Oct. 9.

For more information on CCS, visit www.cullmancats.net.

U.S. REP. ROBERT ADERHOLT ISSUES STATEMENT ON PRESIDENT OBAMA'S PROPOSED GUN REGULATIONS

Office of Robert Aderholt
Contributor

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Ala., on Sunday released the following statement after learning from news reports that President Obama plans to use an Executive Order this week to implement new gun control measures.

"It is unbelievable and I'm at a loss of words at the news President Obama plans to sidestep the Constitution once again in order to circumvent Congress in his efforts to diminish gun owner's (sic) rights in America. This is just another example of President Obama's attempts to impose his failed agenda on the American people in the waning months of his presidency.

The representative of Alabama's 4th Congressional District says there is no proof that the new restrictions Obama is proposing would have prevented any of the recent cases of gun violence in our country.

"I'm also confident that these new proposed restrictions on the Second Amendment will not stop any future incidents. As we know our problem in America is not a gun problem. It is a cultural problem and a problem of the heart by these criminals. No new gun laws can change the attitude of someone who is so lost in this world that they are bent on killing others."

In Washington, Rep. Aderholt serves as Chairman of the subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies for the powerful House Appropriations committee.

He is also a member of the committee's Defense subcommittee, the committee's Commerce, Justice and Science subcommittee and the Helsinki Commission.

According to a report from Jeff Mason of Reuters news service, President Barack Obama said on Monday his new executive actions to tighten gun rules were 'well within' his legal authority and consistent with the U.S. right to bear arms, a warning to opponents who are likely to challenge them in court.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, Obama said his administration would unveil the new measures over the next several days.

For more information on U.S. Rep. Aderholt, visit www.aderholt.house.gov.

RELAY FOR LIFE OF CULLMAN COUNTY PLANS KICKOFF FOR JAN. 21

Gail Crutchfield
WSCC

CULLMAN - The American Cancer Society's Relay For Life of Cullman County will kick off the 2016 fundraising season on Thursday, Jan. 21, in the Fellowship Hall of First Baptist Church of Cullman. The Kickoff Celebration will be held at 5:30 p.m., and will include award presentations for 2015 teams and sponsors, information about the upcoming year and a special message from an ACS Hero of Hope.

"We just completed our holiday celebrations and many of us celebrated without a loved who was taken from us too soon by cancer," said Helen Allen, a 22-year volunteer with Relay For Life of Cullman County.

"But we were also blessed to have with us many who have survived thanks to the efforts of the American Cancer Society in research, prevention, education and early detection.

"That is why support of Relay For Life of Cullman County is so important," she added.

"The American Cancer Society has made great strides for more than 65 years in cancer research. Through research we know we can prevent some types of cancer. We know we can reduce our risks by making healthy choices. We know how important early detection is to increase survival rates and to reduce or in some cases eliminate the need for treatment.

"But more research is still needed to find cures and improve treatments," Allen said.

"Without that research, more people will be in need for not only medical treatments, but social services since cancer affects more than their body. It affects their home, their jobs, their finances, everything.

"I don't know if I'll live to see the day that cancer is cured, but I have hope that my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will," Allen said.

The volunteer Relay For Life of Cullman County committee is hoping to have at least 50 teams collect more than $150,000 for the American Cancer Society in 2016.

More than 20 teams have signed up so far and more than $13,000 has been raised to date.

Sponsors who have already committed funds for the year include Apel Steel, Alabama Air Solutions and Signature Smiles of Cullman.

Teams can be organized by anyone and are often made up of family members, co-workers, churches, schools and other groups and organizations.

Teams are asked to raise at least $100 for each person registered on their team.

Though groups are encouraged to celebrate their achievements by setting up a tent site at the May 6 event at the Cullman County Fairgrounds, but they are not required to do so.

Relay For Life has several options for fundraisers that require no upfront cost by team members, including the sale of luminaria, torches of hope and Relay For Life quilt tickets.

More Relay-wide events will be announced at a later date.

Relay For Life of Cullman County is the only organization in Cullman County that raises funds specifically for the American Cancer Society to help find a cure for cancer and provide support for cancer patients and their families through numerous programs and services.

For more information about Relay For Life of Cullman County or to register a team, visit http://www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal or contact Helen Allen at 256-709-4019 or helen@weltimail.com or Haley Marecle at 256-531-4010 or haley.marecle@cancer.org.

Follow Relay For Life of Cullman County on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/RFLCullmanAL or on Twitter at @RelayCullman.

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ALEA INVESTIGATES 25 TRAFFIC FATALITIES DURING CHRISTMAS-NEW YEAR'S SAFETY INITIATIVE ACROSS STATE

ALEA
Contributor

MONTGOMERY – During its latest holiday enforcement period, which ran from 12:01 a.m. Dec. 18 to midnight Jan. 1, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) investigated 25 traffic deaths across the state.

The deadly crashes from this 15-day safety initiative occurred in Butler, Chambers, Chilton, Cleburne, Cullman, Elmore, Greene, Jackson, Jefferson, Limestone, Mobile, Morgan, Perry, Pike, Talladega and Tuscaloosa counties.

That total consists of 15 drivers, four passengers, five pedestrians and one motorcyclist. Nineteen of the individuals were in vehicles equipped with seat belts, but only four of them were restrained.

Secretary of Law Enforcement Spencer Collier said, "One fatal crash is bad, but to have 20 fatal crashes resulting in 25 deaths is disturbing, particularly when seat belts were available to 19 of the individuals killed, but only four of them were buckled up."

Col. John E. Richardson of ALEA's Department of Public Safety agreed and said the motoring public must do better to ensure everyone in vehicles is using seat belts or child restraints.

"It doesn't matter whether you are traveling hundreds of miles or just running down to the corner gas station. Seat belts save lives," said Col. Richardson.

A year ago, Troopers investigated 19 traffic fatalities during the 15-day holiday safety initiative, from 12:01 a.m. Dec. 19 to midnight Jan. 2. Of the 19 individuals killed a year ago, vehicles were equipped with seat belts for 16 of them, but only four were using them.

Collier said with fewer Troopers patrolling Alabama roadways due to budget shortfalls, State Troopers are spending the majority of their time being reactive rather than proactive – ALEA is relying heavily on the motoring public to take the initiative to buckle up and obey traffic laws.

"As the new year progresses," the Secretary added, "Troopers encourage everyone to make highway safety a priority -- particularly when temperatures dip below freezing and ice may be present on roadways."

Nothing further is available concerning this year's travel period as ALEA State Troopers continue to investigate the crashes.

U.S. SEN. RICHARD SHELBY VISITS CULLMAN, GIVES WASHINGTON UPDATE

EVENT HOSTED BY CULLMAN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Sharon Schuler Kreps
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CULLMAN – The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a special breakfast for members of the community Tuesday morning, with special guest U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala. The senator gave an update on what's going on in Washington D.C.

Sen. Shelby spoke highly of Cullman County. He praised the town, saying, "Cullman is a clean city and you keep it that way. It says a lot about you. You work hard and you have a good work force. It is a good place to live and a good place to do business."

The senator did not shy away from the controversial topic of gun control and his belief in the Second Amendment.

"I'm a Second Amendment kind of guy," he chuckled and told the crowd a joke. Then he got serious and continued, "I believe we have a constitutional right (to own guns). It's in the Constitution, Second Amendment. Most gun owners in America don't commit a crime. Do you believe for one second that terrorists are criminals that own registered guns? Look at Chicago, Illinois. It is one of the most restrictive gun areas in the world and it is also the murder capital of the United States. Seems like some correlation there. That's what we are fighting in Washington, among other things."

The Syrian refugee crisis also came up, and the senator was clear in his stance against Syrian refugees coming to the United States.

"We don't know anything about these people," he said.

"You know that out of so many, there is bound to be a terrorist, terrorist sympathizer or would-be terrorist in there. Even the F.B.I. Director says it would be very hard to evaluate, or vet these people, yet they plow on in. What is going on in America," he asked. "Do you ever ask that question? We do too."

He went on to talk about France and its reactions to the bombing attacks of late last year.

"The president of France, who is a socialist, the ultimate socialist, when they had the bombings in Paris, what does he do," he asked the audience. "A socialist, he locked down the borders. He sent the police, their alpha team out. What does Obama do? He basically said it was all caused by global warming. What planet is he on? What's going on? Don't you ask those questions?"

The senator could not have been clearer in his disdain of President Obama.

"Americans have witnessed time and time again a president who completely disregards the rule of law, the Constitution and separation of powers," he stated. "From amnesty to gun control, I will continue to say no to the president's out-of-control executive fiats."



Sen. Richard Shelby updated Cullman citizens on what is happening in Washington, D.C. during breakfast Tuesday morning at the All Steak. SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Sen. Shelby concluded his talk by taking a few questions from the audience, thanking everyone for the opportunity and asking for support in his upcoming election.

"Because of your help I have been placed in a position of power which I want to use for the good of the nation, you are certainly a part of that," he smiled.

CANDIDATES FOR CHAIRMAN OF THE CULLMAN COUNTY COMMISSION TO ADDRESS THE PUBLIC TUESDAY NIGHT

CULLMAN – The Cullman Chapter of the Alabama Federation of Republican Women is hosting a candidate forum at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 12 at Cullman's VFW Post 112. Republican candidates for Chairman of the Cullman County Commission will speak.

Incumbent Commission Chairman Kenneth Walker will be there, along with challengers Darrell Hicks and Eric Parker. The three will face off in the Republican primary on March 1.

The public is invited to attend and pizza will be served. The event is free.

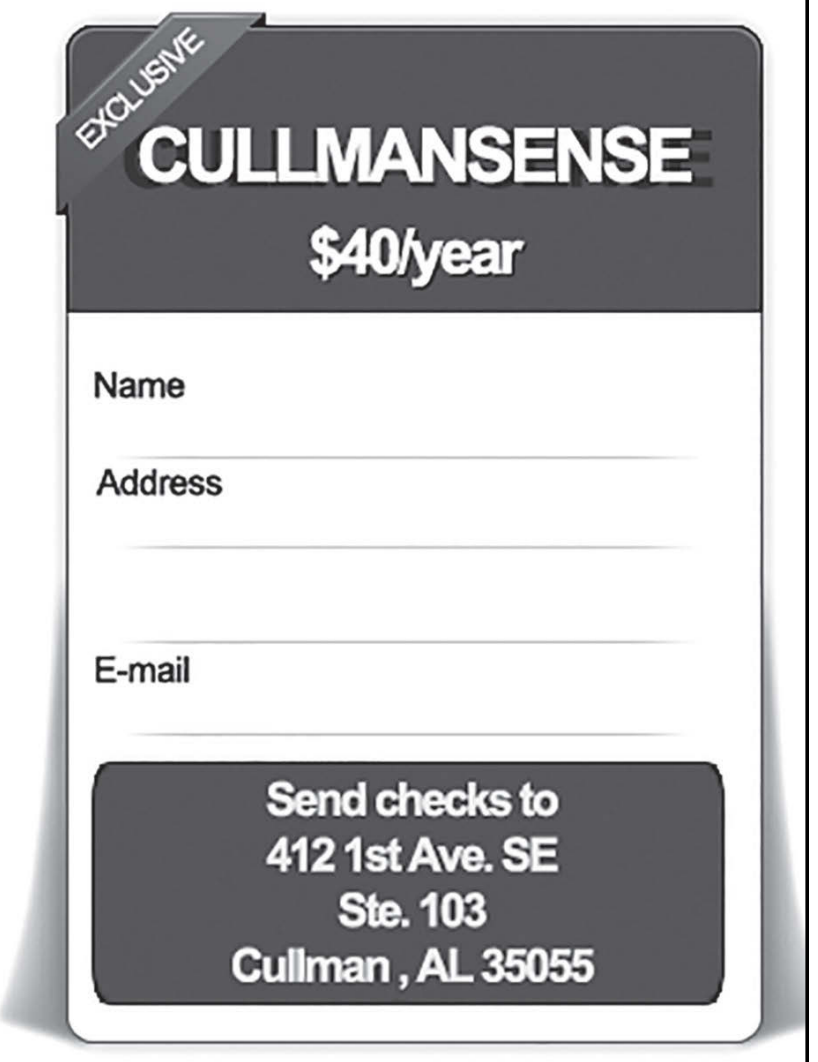
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GOOD SCORING IN THE FOURTH KEYS LADY AGGIES

Johnny Thornton
Sports Correspondent

WEST POINT – Fairview's Lady Aggies finally got control of the game in the fourth quarter with West Point Friday night, scoring 15 consecutive points to turn a tight contest into a 47-29 victory at Jim Boyd Gymnasium.

The Lady Aggies led 32-26 early in the final period and would be able to finish strong, scoring from the field, three-point circle and foul line. A 15-0 run sent the advantage to 47-26 with the Lady Aggies now 16-4 and 4-1 in Class 5A, Area 14 action.

Fairview will need a victory Tuesday at Lawrence County to force a coin flip between the two schools. The Lady Red Devils are undefeated in the area and have a 59-38 win over Fairview last month at Joe Shults Gymnasium.

The Lady Aggies overcame a nightmare shooting from the line in the first half when they were 0-7.

They managed to produce 16 points in the second period and jump ahead 23-14 after trailing 9-7 following the opening quarter.

Lizzie Garrison, Mckinna Yearwood and Abbi Taylor each hit two field goals in the second to spark a 16-5 surge to the lead. Garrison's shots were three-pointers.

West Point wouldn't go away. In the third, the Lady Warriors' defense kept Fairview under wraps as Jada Golden was the only Lady Aggie to score from the field. She tossed in a pair of short-range jumpers.

Three-pointers by Jeri Beasley and Olivia Ball and a Beasley drive to the basket had West Point in striking distance at 28-22 with a quarter remaining.

Both teams scored twice early in the period to keep the game at a two-score possession in 32-26 Fairview.

The Lady Aggies then used field goals by Dalys Mullican and Taylor on putbacks plus two to go in by Taylor Yeager and Garrison to get another three from the wing area.

That allowed Mary Lauren Hartline's ball club to go on a string of 15 straight points and extend the margin to 47-26 with less than a minute remaining. Lillie Burdette knocked down a three as time ran out for West Point to reduce the final margin of victory to 18 points (47-29).

Garrison had nine for the winners with Taylor, Yeager, Golden scoring eight, Yearwood six and Mullican four.

For West Point, Jeri Beasley knocked down 11 on three treys and a field goal, Burdette added nine, Olivia Ball five and Tess Hembree four.

West Point 60, Fairview 35

Behind a 16-point second period outburst from Tanner Rusk, the Warriors had control of this area game and pulled away from the Aggies. A 13-7 lead eight minutes in was now 33-17 at the half by a 20-10 West Point blitz on the basket in the second quarter.

Rusk had 21 at halftime and would finish with 26 once the game finished the third period. His night was done. Rusk was 12 of 13 from the line, hitting his final 10 attempts. He added six shots from the floor with two coming from three-point range.

The Warriors led 52-24 going into the last quarter and played their reserves the rest of the way. West Point evened its record to 9-9 and stayed on top of the standings in 5A, Area 14 at 4-0.

West Point gets Russellville to visit Jim Boyd Gymnasium next Friday for its next area assignment.

Alex Hernandez scored seven for the Warriors while Seth Parker had six, Brandon Farley and Cameron Moore five each.

Leading Fairview who lost its 11th straight and fell to 2-16, 0-5 in the area, Sam Elrod delivered nine on three treys, Caleb Chambers eight, Austin Fletcher seven.

SAINTS STREAK NETS 10

Johnny Thornton
Sports Correspondent

ATHENS - Returning to a comfortable setting in the Fazi-Richard Athletic Center Thursday evening, the St. Bernard Saints kept their record on the home floor undefeated by turning back Athens Bible School 55-41.

This was the first time the Saints had played on campus since the St. Bernard Christmas Tournament December 19 in which they defeated Vinemont and Sumiton Christian in one day.

St. Bernard earned its eighth win at home this season, 14th overall and sent the winning streak to 10 games. That is the longest of any local basketball team so far in 2015-16. As the second half got started, the Saints seemed to be in control. They turned a 27-13 halftime cushion into a 35-14 spread as Dean Smith scored twice from long range and Christian Peterson took the ball over half the length of the floor and laid it in for two points and the largest advantage of the contest.

All of a sudden, Athens Bible woke up and made a game of it. The Trojans finished with eight FGs in the third period, four from 3-point range and cut the 21-point deficit down to a field goal at 38-35 with time running out in the third. St. Bernard got a huge three from Evan Aldridge before the time finished and the Saints took some momentum into the fourth period with a 41-35 edge. The final 8:00 saw seven Saints points by Peterson, five from Gavin Harris and a field goal by Dean Smith to outscore the Trojans 14-6 and move to 14-1 on the season.

Peterson led a very balanced St. Bernard attack with 19, Smith had 17 in his first home game of 2016 with Aldridge 10 and nine by Harris.

The backcourt of Peterson, a sophomore, and Smith, a senior, accounted for 12 field goals, six from long range and six free throws in 10 attempts.

The Saints will have to recover in a hurry for they get on the bus Friday night at travel to Marion County to face the Brilliant Tigers in a regular season affair.

St. Bernard 28, Athens Bible 20 (Girls)

Two consecutive losses were broken by the Lady Saints as they managed to shoot better from the floor in the second half than in the first 16 minutes of play. St. Bernard managed three FGs at halftime and clung to a 7-3 lead on Athens Bible. The Lady Saints kept the Lady Trojans from scoring from the field, but they made it close with some points from the foul line. Balanced offense was shown by the Lady Saints during the third with Zana Wilson scoring from the line and two field goals by Jaden Edge plus one from Avy Whaley sent them to a 17-14 advantage at the end of the period.

The production in points during the fourth was from the line with seven made, led by Wilson and Anna Meyers three each. That made a dent on the board and a win by the final margin of eight points.

Wilson led the Lady Saints to their seventh victory with 12, Edge had seven, Alli Messick had four, three for Meyers and two by Whaley.

PREP BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

JANUARY 4 - 8

All games to start at 6 p.m. for girls and 7:30 p.m. for boys

MONDAY
Holly Pond @ Danville
St. Bernard vs Meek

TUESDAY
Cold Springs @ Addison
Cullman vs Austin
Fairview @ Lawrence County
Good Hope vs West Point
Hanceville vs Oakman
Holly Pond @ Arab
Vinemont vs Susan Moore

THURSDAY
Fairview @ Holly Pond
Vinemont vs Winston County

FRIDAY
Cold Springs @ Tanner
Cullman vs Hartselle
Good Hole vs Locust Fork
Hanceville vs Susan Moore
St. Bernard @ Lynn
West Point vs Russellville

PREP BASKETBALL SCORING WRAP-UP

MONDAY
BOYS
Holly Pond 90, West Point 76

GIRLS
Holly Pond 55, West Point 35

TUESDAY
BOYS
Cullman 58, Decatur 48
West Point 57, Hanceville 45
Fairview 53, Russellville 63
Holly Pond 70, Vinemont 34
Good Hope 51, Oneonta 75

GIRLS
Cullman 51, Decatur 56
West Point 57, Hanceville 36
Fairview 53, Russellville 23
Good Hope 60, Oneonta 30

THURSDAY
BOYS
St. Bernard 55, Athens Bible 41
Vinemont 44, West End 61

GIRLS
St. Bernard 28, Athens Bible 20

FRIDAY
BOYS
West Point 60, Fairview 35
Cold Springs 78, Tanner 65
Cullman 65, Gardendale 55
Holly Pond 70, Susan Moore 35
Hanceville 69, Vinemont 35
Good Hope 52, JB Pennington 59

GIRLS
West Point 29, Fairview 47
Cold Springs 40, Tanner 55
Cullman 40, Gardendale 43
Holly Pond 48, Susan Moore 38
Hanceville 51, Vinemont 19
Good Hope 57, JB Pennington 64

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LOCAL HISTORY

A LETTER FROM PRIVATE GLENN R. REID AT BOOT CAMP

FUTURE CAREER MILITARY MAN GETS ROUGH START

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

Reporter Sharon Schuler Kreps shares a private family letter.

CULLMAN - The following letter was written by my grandfather, Glenn Ray Reid, on July 2, 1941. He had just joined the Army and left for parts unknown to begin his boot camp training. The letter was written to his longtime sweetheart and future bride, Mavis Hendrix of Good Hope.

While most young men and women begin their military training right away, young Reid had to wait a little while to start his. Because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, his training was postponed and he spent a couple weeks in quarantine!

Even though Grandpa's military career got off to a rough start, he kept his head up and was able to laugh during this hectic time.

Not once did he let a little minor setback keep him from serving his country to the best of his ability. As a matter of fact, he served in both World War II and the Korean War. He turned his years of Army service into a fulfilling career.

Private Glenn R. Reid
5th Training Battalion
Company B
Camp Wheeler, GA

Hello Mavis,

Yes, I'm in now. We left Miss. Sunday night and got here last night. Say, I had breakfast in Birmingham yesterday morning, supper in Mississippi, breakfast in Alabama and dinner in Georgia! Some going, eh?

Darling how is (yes you can write me now) Mr. Hendrix by now? I hope he is better and that everybody else is o.k. Tell him that Doctors is just about all I've seen so far so I should know how he feels in some ways. Ha!

We have taken a few shots already and "Drilled" this morning for a while. All that are in my Company are just like myself- Greenhorns, so if they make soldiers I believe I can. But Gosh! It's hot!

Darling, Guess what? I'm in the "Guard House". No really, I'm not kidding - I'm in for a week. Didn't I promise to be a good boy and do what they told me to do? Well maybe I was too smart and knew too much - Ha! - Because I'm in the guard house now! Maybe I'd better explain. I'm really in the Guard House, but not for what I've done. On the train over here a fellow in the car next to ours had the mumps and from some reason - by mistake – we, instead of the ones in the same car, were put under quarantine and also in the guard house so we wouldn't have a chance to be with the other boys. Yes, we will have to drill & train right on.

Now aren't you proud of me? Ha! It really is a joke among us boys- being in the guard house. Most of us are from Alabama but only 3 are from Cullman. I saw a Brown boy from Fairview this morning that has been in the Army for about a year and is now a Sergeant. Maybe I can at best make a First Class Private – Ha!

Darling I like it alright but it lacks a whole lots being anyway near what I've been use to. (The bugle is now blowing for supper- I will write more later)

Hello, it's me again. As I told you before we are under quarantine we have to eat out of our mess kits and use our canteens, which is very disagreeable - It all goes with the Army.

Mavis if I but wanted to I could find more d___ things wrong than a few but I have made up my mind to like it, someway or other. So that is just what I'm gonna do, it's ok. I'm sure it is just me; however some of the boys don't want to like it. Darling, keep your fingers crossed and wish me luck.

I am writing to Cit. and asking for a rewrite on my contract with them. How is the ole auto by now?

Keep it in good shape because the first weekend I get off I want you to come see me. Ha! That would be just dandy wouldn't it Darling?

Sweetheart I'm gonna stop and get someone to mail this for me. Be sure to write as soon and as often as possible and remember I love you.

All my Love,
Glenn

P.S. I can't even go to the post office I might take the mumps - Ha!

GRR



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Private Glenn Ray Reid made up his mind to like boot camp, as well as the Army, back in 1941.

Major Glenn Ray Reid eventually retired from the Army. Later, he was a devoted member of the American Legion and VFW. He died on Oct. 23, 1985 at his home in Cullman at the age of 72.

TAX SEASON IS UPON US – THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN FILING YOUR TAX RETURNS

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Now that the holidays are over and a new year has begun, it is time to start thinking about filing 2015 tax returns. From now until the end of January, people everywhere are anxiously awaiting their W-2s, as well as all the other tax forms needed to get the filing process started.

Important to note is that this year's tax deadline is Monday, April 18. That's right, citizens get three extra days this year because Emancipation Day (the day President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill ending slavery), a federal holiday, will be observed on Friday, April 15, so the IRS will be closed.

But while it may seem like April 18 is far away, local CPA Connie Phillips has the following advice to consider before starting the tax preparation process.

"Beware of the little boxed tax software you buy at the store. It's not always what you need," she said.

"I have a client right now that is being audited because the software didn't handle everything properly. He answered the questions to the best of his ability and he thought he had answered them correctly. As it turns out, the software allowed him to deduct something he wasn't able to deduct. He had also got another deduction for something that wasn't explained correctly, and then it miscalculated some credits. The software didn't catch it like it should have. If he had been with a tax professional this wouldn't have happened.

Phillips went on to say that it's easy to be lured by the low cost of the various tax-filing software out there or the advertising that claims that, "it's so easy a dummy can do it."

"It is not a substitute for interaction with somebody that really knows about taxes and what they are doing," she said.

"If you misinterpret what the question means or you don't answer it completely correct, you are going to get a wrong answer, and there's really nobody you can ask. You can't ask the box and expect it to answer you," she chuckled.

For those that do have trouble filing their taxes, it can be hard figuring out what to do.

"If you do your own taxes and have problems, there is no service at the IRS anymore," Phillips added.

"It is no longer the Internal Revenue Service; it's now the Internal Revenue Non-Service. They are working on a budget dollar-wise they had back in 2009 or 2010. It is 2016 now, and as you know, costs have gone up. They do not have the money to fund what they already had, much less anything extra. As a result, they have cut back on phone service. Plus, you can't really communicate with them online because that information could be breached like it was last year. They just don't do that," she said.

"You basically have to communicate with them the old-fashioned way - via mail, fax or phone call."

Phillips says the way to avoid ending up in a tough situation is to see a tax professional for advice beforehand or have a professional do your taxes for you.

"It could save you a lot of time and money in the future," she said.

The IRS offers Free File, a no-cost service. For those with income below $62,000, there's Free File software; for those with income over $62,000, there're Free File Fillable Forms. Visit http://qrne.ws/reeile.

The Affordable Care Act will also impact tax filing this year. According to the IRS, "The law requires you and your dependents to have health care coverage, an exemption, or make a payment with your return. If you purchased coverage from the Health Insurance Marketplace, you may be eligible for the premium tax credit." To learn more, see www.irs.gov/Affordable-Care-Act.

For state tax forms and filing information, visit the Alabama Department of Revenue's website at www.revenue.alabama.gov.

Whether filing early or waiting until the last minute, doing it yourself or with a professional, the most important thing is to make sure taxes are filed on-time and correctly.

Remember, this year's filing deadline is Monday, April 18.





CULLMANSENSE.COM
January 11, 2016

PATRICK RILEY- JUST A JANITOR?

BELOVED CHS MAINTENANCE WORKER PART OF THE FABRIC OF STUDENTS' LIVES

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

"My mother always says, 'You got to get out there and work. Be independent and take care of yourself.' And I do."

Patrick Riley, CHS janitor

CULLMAN - Patrick Riley is someone special. The janitor at Cullman High School (CHS), he seriously loves his job and takes his job very seriously. While some might consider maintenance work mundane, Riley smiles happily as he cleans and mops up the lunchroom, along with his many other responsibilities. But it is so much more than that-- Riley is a beloved member of the CHS family. He goes above and beyond his regular duties to make sure the school is spotless and the students, his students, are happy.

"Patrick pays very close attention to detail," said Mark Stephens, vice principal.

"He is really in touch with his job. For example, on Wednesdays he normally gets a truck with supplies that he unloads and puts away. But due to the holiday break, we were already stocked so the truck didn't come. Because he had some extra time, Patrick cleaned all the windows without even being asked. They are spotless," he grinned. "Don't get between Patrick and his work," he chuckled.

Born and raised in Newburg, New York, Riley took special education classes and graduated high school. Later, he moved to Cullman with his parents and nephew in 1994. He is one of four children and considers his nephew more of a little brother with whom he shares a special bond.

Riley started his janitorial career back in 1995 when Principal Charlie Montgomery hired him to work part-time at Cullman Middle School. After 12 years at the middle school, Riley was promoted and took the janitor position at CHS. He has been there ever since, racking up more than 20 years with Cullman City Schools.

"My mother always says, 'You got to get out there and work. Be independent and take care of yourself.' And I do," Patrick smiled happily.

"I've been working hard all these years and I have a house of my own just up the street," he grinned.

"I live by myself and take good care of my home. I've been living there for 15 years now. I fixed it up beautiful and decorated it by myself, just the way I wanted it. It's really a fancy bachelor's home," he said shyly.

What do the students at CHS think about Riley?

"The kids love him," said John Anderson, school resource officer.

"He makes them handmade cards and passes them out. At Christmas every year the school has an Angel Tree with names of children whose families cannot afford to buy presents. Patrick always takes four children from the tree and buys their Christmas. He is pretty special. His favorite saying is, 'I'll break my back for you' and he really would," he laughed.

A man of faith, Riley strives to do all things pleasing to the Lord, and it shows. His outlook on life and his love for others are like a breath of fresh air. He is a wonderful example to the students in so many different ways.

"I try to be honest with all the kids and respect them," he explained. "I try to make them feel special. I always tell them, 'If you're not having a good day, you can always have my good days because your days matter, my days don't'. That's being honest and respectful," he said quite matter-of-factly.

"I try to make it easy for the kids in the lunchroom. I work very hard and try to make things nice for them. I am also doing it for the good Lord above," he smiled warmly.

Local parent Joni Johnson shared a story about Riley with CullmanSense:

He was waving and smiling at my 8-month-old baby son. So I asked him, "I see you by the schools each afternoon, why are you always walking there?" He said very proudly, "I am the janitor at the high school ". He told me he has been there for 20 years and that the kids call him 'the No. 1 janitor.' In the course of our wonderful conversation he told me that people didn't always talk to him and weren't always nice to him because of his brain. I told him it was their loss and gave him a long hug and said those people missed out on getting to know a very nice person. He said he wasn't from Cullman, but he liked it here because he moved here and that's when people started being nice to him, and I agreed with him and said the Lord had led us both here to Cullman. He also told me he helps out less fortunate families with children and this year so far he had already helped out four children. As we said our goodbyes he said, "if you were poor I'd help out your children too". God bless.

Riley is a man of many talents. When he is not working at the school, he spends his time as an artist and a musician.

"Back when I was in high school in New York, I was one of the popular artists in school," he smiled. "When I have the summertime off from school, one of my hobbies is doing artwork. I make Christmas cards once a year and try to give them out to a lot of kids. They always keep their cards," he chuckled. "I always tell them that if they don't like them all that much, they can throw them away, but they never do."

Riley is a songwriter and has written a few songs he recorded in Nashville. Those songs, originally placed on a cassette tape, were later transferred to a CD so he can listen to it and play it for his friends and neighbors.

He has tinkered with the guitar some in the past and now enjoys singing the oldies at local karaoke events.

Sometimes, on really good days, he sings while he's mopping the lunchroom, to the delight of all the students within earshot.

Riley is not just the janitor at CHS, he is an inspiration. Humble and hard-working, he has taken his job and perfected it.

He never complains and always has a smile on his face. He loves and respects the students and faculty at CHS, and they love and respect him right back.

Most everyone who knows him agrees- the world sure could use a lot more people like Patrick Riley in it.



Patrick Riley poses with his favorite mop in the lunchroom. SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

CLAS (from Front)

the award by Cullman City Schools Superintendent Dr. Susan Patterson.

"East Elementary being named a CLAS Banner School is a great compliment to the outstanding jobs the teachers, support staff and administration do on a daily basis to provide the very best learning opportunities for our students." said Patterson. "It is also a reflection of our students' and parents' commitment to learning. This is a great honor for East Elementary and Cullman City Schools."

Wiggins said that as a part of the nomination process, he had to write an essay about one school program that makes EES special. He said it was hard for him to choose just one, but all he had to do was remember a narrative written by a fourth-grade teacher, Kristin Nunn, to nominate a student for a character award.

"The first sentence was, 'Character is the most important thing that we teach.' And that is so true!"

Wiggins decided to put forth the school's Character Education program for the award nomination.

The program focuses on a different theme each month, and each week there is a word/phrase of the week that the whole school focuses on- this week's word/phrase is 'Respect for Others.'

The unique part about the EES Character Education curriculum is the GOTCHA program, started by Wiggins. It involves bright yellow GOTCHA cards that are given to students who are 'caught' showing good character.

"We give all of the teachers and staff, including janitors and lunchroom staff, every adult, a stack of GOTCHA cards. Any time they see a student showing good character, whether it be picking up a piece of trash off of the ground, helping another student or being polite, they say 'Gotcha!' and present the student with a card," said Wiggins.

When a student receives one, he or she fills out a portion and drops it into the appropriate bucket located on the GOTCHA table outside the main office.

Each week, one ticket is drawn from each grade's bucket. The winners get rewards such as a certificate for a free meal at a local restaurant.

At the end-of-the-year Honors Assembly, during the character awards, there's a GOTCHA Drawing, where, using all of the tickets from the year, one student from each grade wins a $50 Visa gift card from Premier Bank.

"The kids always do a big drumroll," laughed Wiggins. "We draw one per grade, and it's a big deal!"

Each trimester, EES also recognizes students who have been nominated by teachers to the receive the Principal's Award for Character.

All of the rewards are donated by area businesses.

"What I love the most is that we've brought the community into what we do," Wiggins smiled. "We want our kids to know that our community supports them."

Another part of the Character Education program that Wiggins is proud of involves the school's Guidance Office and Guidance Counselor, Crystal Feldner. Every other week, individual classes spend time in the Guidance classroom, learning about topics such as how to deal with bullying and conflicts with other students.

Wiggins credits that, along with the GOTCHA program, for the dramatic improvement in the number of students referred to the office for disciplinary reasons.

"There were more than 200 referrals recorded the year prior to my arrival and the implementation of the GOTCHA program. Last year, 2014-2015, we recorded less than 30 referrals," he said, beaming.

Wiggins takes enormous pride in everything EES has accomplished, but he shies away from taking any of the credit. To him, it's all about his students and faculty.

"I am so proud of this award," said Wiggins, "but it's not about me. It's about all of us at East."

This is the second time that EES has been named a CLAS Banner School. The first time was in 2009. The school will be recognized at a luncheon in Montgomery on March 9.

PROFILES IN FAITH

GARRET TAYLOR OF CHRISTIANS LIVING PROOF MINISTRIES

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Christians Living Proof Ministries is a group of people seeking God's own heart, in order to serve mankind just as Jesus did. Their goal is to revitalize the city of Cullman. They want to see the Gospel preached to the poor and depicted in action as a demonstration of the power of God's love. Garret Taylor has been working with this ministry since it was founded on May 19, 2009.

Taylor has been married to his lovely wife Stephanie for 13 years. The two met while attending school together at West Point. Right after graduation, Taylor studied the bail surety business at the University of Alabama.

He's the first one to admit, he wasn't always a preacher.

"As a little boy I knew about God and I believed he was calling me to do something, but I wasn't sure what," he began.

"At the age of 13 I started getting into drugs at school and hanging out with the older crowd. In seventh grade I was getting into lots of trouble, getting kicked out of multiple schools. I was a really troubled child and my mother couldn't handle me so I had to move in with my dad. Everything seemed to quiet down for awhile, that is until I got my driver's license. That's when I started doing drugs and selling them again."

> "The most rewarding moments in my ministry is (sic) when I see people who have lost everything to addiction receiving salvation through reconciliation. Jesus restores everything, like it never happened."
>
> Garret Taylor, pastor

Taylor was candid about his history of drug abuse.

"I was hooked," he shrugged. "I loved the party scene and all the worldly extras that came with it. Friends introduced me to cocaine, ecstasy, pills and crack. I started smoking weed just as if it was cigarettes. I was also addicted to sex and the partying atmosphere, which led to a lack of sleep. I overdosed on GHB and cocaine three different times. The last time, as I lay dying on the floor of a friend's house, God spoke to me and said,

'This is your last time. Get in or get out. I'm tired of messing with you!' This had happened before and GOD would always get me out of it, but this time I knew this was it. It felt as though I would never wake up. I was a dead man, but I chose God."

Taylor says that when we awoke the next morning, he realized that the night before he'd made a commitment to God.

"I told him, 'If you get me out of this, I will do whatever you want,' and that's how it began."

Taylor gave his life to Christ that day and says he was completely delivered. Now, 14 years later, God continues to play a major part in his life. Garret uses his experiences to speak at various rehabilitation centers and churches. He has been a part of many mission trips across the world including Haiti, Aruba, Brazil, Curacao and Africa. He is the leader and co-founder of four different ministries - Christians Living Proof Ministries, Bread of Life Storehouse, Proverbs 24:11 Rescue Ministry and Wrekd & Awakend Youth Ministries.



Pastor Garret Taylor tells of God's love and forgiveness for those struggling with addiction.

GARRET TAYLOR

"The most rewarding moments in my ministry is (sic) when I see people who have lost everything to addiction receiving salvation through reconciliation," he beamed. "Jesus restores everything, like it never happened. Oh yeah, that's good!" he said, chuckling a little.

Christians Living Proof Ministries is located at 2030 Main Ave. SW in Cullman. For more information, call 256-924-4663 or visit them online at http://wrekd.me.

DAVE WARREN PHOTOGRAPHY TAKES PICTURES TO NEW HEIGHTS

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Users of Facebook or readers of news online or in print in Cullman County no doubt know Dave Warren's work. His photographs and videos, particularly the aerial ones, have been bringing the area to life in a new way for the past two years.

So who is this master of breathtaking landscapes? Dave Warren, a transplant to Cullman County from Bessemer, began taking photos in 2014.

Since then, Warren acquired a drone and with it shows the public a new perspective on Cullman County and the events that take place here.

In fact, Warren has been able to shoot some of the most extreme events in Cullman's history.

"I've been fortunate enough to be able to video some pretty cool things. My top three in no order would be Rock the South, the Winter Storm of 2015 (early 2015) and the Christmas Flood of 2015," Warren said.

Warren said that, while there is not a specific process he uses when engaging in photographing an event, he does take a certain approach.

"I just try to visualize what will make a great shot and just go after it," he said.

Warren has a website, cullmanaerialphotography.com, and multiple social media accounts to which he uploads his work, including jaw-dropping footage of the Christmas Day Flood.

"When people look at my pictures, I want them to have no doubt that there is a God and that he created everything for his glory," Warren said.

"This area is unique in its own way. The thing about drone photography is that it's new and it brings a new perspective on everything. I think that's why my photography is so popular."



Larkwood Falls in Cullman After Christmas Flood.

DAVE WARREN

For more information, visit Warren on Instagram: instagram.com/dave_warren80, Twitter: twitter.com/dave_warren80, YouTube: youtube.com/user/dmdw4 or Facebook: facebook.com/davewarrenphotography. Give him a call at 205-616-8009 or email him at dave_warren80@yahoo.com.

Monday

Cullman Caring for Kids- United Way Food Bank
The food bank is open every Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 9 a.m. - noon and 1 - 3 p.m. for eligible families. Located at 402 Arnold St. N.E. Ste. W-1. For more information, or to make a donation, call 256-739-1111. www.cullmancaringforkids.com.

Cullman Senior Center Bingo
Play Bingo at the Cullman Senior Center every Monday and Wednesday. Activities from 8 a.m. - noon. 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.

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

Cullman Caring for Kids- United Way Food Bank
The food bank is open every Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 9 a.m. - noon and 1 - 3 p.m. for eligible families. Located at 402 Arnold St. N.E. Ste. W-1. For more information, or to make a donation, call 256-739-1111. www.cullmancaringforkids.com.

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.

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.

The Cullman Chapter of the Alabama Federation of Republican Women
Hosting a candidate forum at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan 12 at the Cullman VFW Post. Pizza will be served and Republican candidates for Chairman of the Cullman County Commission will speak. The public is invited to attend. For more information, call 256-507-1120.

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, every Tuesday from 6-8 p.m. at the Cullman Bowling Center. Please RSVP before 12 noon the days of the events. The charge is $3 per person. For more information, contact Rhonda at 256-962-2208.

Wednesday

Cullman Senior Center Bingo
Play Bingo at the Cullman Senior Center every Monday and Wednesday. Activities from 8 a.m. - noon. 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.

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.

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.

Thursday

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.

2016 State of the Community Meeting
The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's Governmental Affairs Committee will hold a panel presentation on the State of the Community on Jan. 14 from 5 - 8 p.m. at the TP Country Club, 700 Pine Hill Drive in Cullman. The purpose of this forum is to provide the County and each of the municipalities in Cullman County the opportunity to share information from their communities with Chamber members and the business community. Reservations are required. Cost is $15 for members and $20 for future members. Call 256-734-0454 for more information.

Friday

CP&R Youth Baseball, Softball and T-Ball
Registration starts Jan. 15 at the Cullman Civic Center and ends on Feb. 15. Open to boys and girls ages 4-14. The cost is $90 and includes a hat, jersey and trophy at the end of the season. Volunteer coaches are also needed. Those interested are asked to register at the Civic Center from Jan. 15 – Feb.15 as well. Visit www.cullmanrecreation.org. Call 256-734-9157 for more information.

Cullman Caring for Kids- United Way Food Bank
The food bank is open every Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 9 a.m. - noon and 1 - 3 p.m. for eligible families. Located at 402 Arnold St. N.E. Ste. W-1. For more information, or to make a donation, call 256-739-1111. www.cullmancaringforkids.com.

Dulcimer Lessons
Senior Spirit Program now offering lessons at the Donald E. Green Senior Center on Fridays at 1 p.m. Lessons given by Craig Mann. The cost is $10. Call Angie or Catherine at 256-734-4803 for more information. The center is located at Ingle Park at 1621 Cleveland Ave. S.W.

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

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.

Cullman Senior Center Creating Cookbook
Cookbook will be created this summer. The center is asking for seniors age 60 and older to submit their favorite recipes. You can also submit a recipe in memory of a loved one. Mail recipes to: Cullman Senior Center, 1539 Sportsman Lake Road N.W., Cullman, AL 35055. Please include your name and phone number.

Clothes Closet
Open as needed at Blair Congregational Methodist Church. Contact Myrl Wynn at 256-747-2483 for an appointment.

Food Assistance
Every second Saturday at Harmony Word of Life Church. NEW HOURS: 1 - 3 p.m. Take Highway 157 to Battleground, turn right onto County Road 1212, go half mile to County Road 1204, turn left and drive a half mile. 256-739-2956.

Cullman County Republican Breakfast
Everyone is invited to attend on the first Saturday of each month. Elk's Lodge at 7:30 a.m.

Cullman Senior Center Weekly Programs
Activities, fellowship and a nutritious meal every Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - noon for ages 60 and over. Local homebound meals offered to seniors who qualify. Bingo on Mondays and Wednesdays, live band or karaoke on Thursdays, gospel singing or devotion on Fridays at 9:30 a.m. Exercise, computer rooms and library. Center located at 1539 Sportsman Lake Road N.W., Cullman, AL 35055. Call 256-734-0145 for more information.

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

Commission on Aging- Volunteers Needed
Volunteers are needed for community service meal deliveries. Call 256-734-1241 for more information.

Cullman Caring for Kids- United Way Food Bank
The food bank is open every Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 9 a.m. - noon and 1 - 3 p.m. for eligible families. Located at 402 Arnold St. N.E. Ste. W-1. For more information, or to make a donation, call 256-739-1111. www.cullmancaringforkids.com.

Cullman Parks & Rec Community Classes at the Cullman Civic Center
Yoga- Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.; Ballroom, Latin and Swing Dancing - Thursdays, $10 per class; Oil Painting and Acrylics - Mondays from 6:30 - 9 p.m.; Nia Dance Fitness / Ageless Grace - Tuesdays at 9 a.m.; Rock Climbing (at Hurricane Creek Park) - Saturdays at 10 a.m., $25, call to register at 256-734-2125; Wilderness Survival Course - Sundays with reservation, call to register at 256-734-2125. For more information, contact Waid Harbison at 256-734-9157.

FREE Health Screening at CRMC
Do you Know Your Numbers? CRMC will be hosting a FREE health screening on Thursday, Jan. 21 from 8:00 a.m. – noon in the Colonel Cullmann Room in POB 2. Come by at your convenience – no appointment needed - and have a FREE health screening. We will be checking your cholesterol, glucose, bone density, blood pressure and body mass index. You will get your results same day. What a great way to start off the New Year...Knowing Your Numbers!

Pumpkin & Watermelon Meeting for Commercial and Hobby Growers
Saturday, Feb. 20, from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Whether you are interested in growing pumpkins & watermelons to sell or want to try your hand at growing giant varieties for fun, everyone is invited to attend. There is no cost to attend this meeting. It will be held at the North Alabama Agriplex Heritage Center, 1714 Tally Ho St., in Cullman. https://www.smore.com/efrc5-pumpkin-watermelon-meeting

Human Trafficking Awareness and Investigation Presentation
This presentation, open to the public, is sponsored by the Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force, District Attorney Wilson Blaylock, Judge Kim Chaney and Cullman Savings Bank. Guest presenter will be Scott Santoro, senior training advisor for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign. The event will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 26 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. at Daystar Church, 200 Daystar Drive in Cullman.

Little Black Dress Charity Bash 2016
Benefitting the WSCC Alumni Association Outstanding Women Scholarship. Will take place at the Cullman Civic Center on Saturday, Feb. 27 from 6 - 11:30 p.m. Dinner, dancing to The Flashbacks, door prizes and much more. Tickets on sale now! Visit http://www.wsccalumni.org/lbd2016 for more information.

CP&R Youth Baseball, Softball and T-Ball
Registration starts Jan. 15 at the Cullman Civic Center and ends on Feb. 15. Open to boys and girls ages 4-14. The cost is $90 and includes a hat, jersey and trophy at the end of the season. Volunteer coaches are also needed. Those interested are asked to register at the Civic Center from Jan. 15 – Feb.15 as well. Visit www.cullmanrecreation.org. Call 256-734-9157 for more information.

NARCOG's Happy Medicare Birthday Celebration
On Thursday, Jan. 21, NARCOG's State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) will host a Happy Medicare Birthday celebration from 1-2:30 p.m. at the Cullman Commission on Aging at 1539 Sportsman Lake Road NW. There will be treats, games and lots of great information to help you understand Medicare. Call 256-724-1241 to make reservations to attend. Find out more about NARCOG at www.narcog.org.

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VETERANS HELPING VETERANS- THE BIRTH OF A NONPROFIT

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com



KAYLA STRINGER

The Stringer family will be launching their nonprofit this year.

CULLMAN - When veterans transition back into the civilian world, sometimes they need help adjusting to life back home in their communities. Getting back to work can restore confidence and individual identity. Local couple Kayla and Joey Stringer, both Army veterans, believe our veterans deserve more than an unemployment check or a part-time job that has no career potential. The Stringers are working hard to help their fellow brothers and sisters in arms during this very important time in their lives.

According the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), as of August 2015, the number of unemployed veterans was about 450,000.

That translates to about 4.2 percent and is actually the lowest number since the BLS started tracking veterans in 2008. But those numbers do not include veterans in part-time jobs or those who have stopped looking for work.

The Stringers believe that the government should do more for veterans.

"Things have changed since 9/11," Kayla Stringer began. "Our government has failed our veterans in so many ways. They like to say that things have fallen through the crack, but this is healthcare; it should not have fallen through the crack. This is someone's son, daughter, husband or wife. You cannot use that as an excuse."

The Stringers are in the process of setting up a nonprofit organization that will help veterans, especially those who are homeless.

Although they haven't settled on a name for it, they already know what its mission statement will be: to provide comprehensive care and assistance to American veterans to restore their hope, one life at a time.

"It is going to be veteran-run, veteran-owned and veteran-oriented," Kayla Stringer explained. "There will be civilians helping, but (it will be) mainly run by veterans because we relate better with one another.

"Our goal is to provide emergency assistance and support for veterans and their immediate families, including, but not limited to, housing, food, healthcare services, job training, placement assistance, legal aid, case management support and counseling and rehab services, if needed," she said. "We also hope to help them with resume building, interview preparation and clothing."

The organization will need a lot of volunteer help from the community. Thankfully, the Stringers already have lots of interest from people, churches and organizations all over north Alabama.

"We have plenty of churches who have already said they will be happy to donate gently used clothing so the veterans can dress nicely," she smiled.

"You can't expect someone coming off the streets to have something nice to wear to an interview.

"We will need volunteers who have administrative experience. They can help with VA paperwork or VFW placement. We have a couple lawyers and law students (who) say they would be happy to help," she said.

"I have some ties with some Judge Advocate General (JAG) officers at Redstone (Arsenal) that (sic) have made it clear they would take some time out of their busy schedules and offer us their services to help with any legal issues, which includes applying for military records and checking to see if they (veterans) have gotten any awards or anything they may be entitled to."

This is just a small portion of all the help the Stringers hope to be able to provide local veterans.

In the meantime, they have been busy with all the legal details that go along with setting up a nonprofit agency.

"We hope to be up running at least partially by the spring," Kayla Stringer stated.

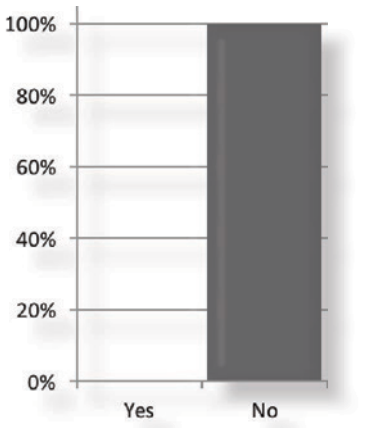
"We want to purchase some land and ask that someone, maybe a church or Habitat for Humanity, could build a building with some kind of barracks-style rooms we could use to house veterans while they are getting the help they need. They may actually be homeless or in transition. Maybe their VA checks haven't kicked in yet and they have no money or nowhere to go; we want to help by giving them some of the things they need."

An agency like this could really make a difference in lives of many local veterans. Those interested in volunteering or getting more information can call Kayla Stringer directly at 256-615-3404 or email her at kstringer210@gmail.com.

"Things have changed since 9/11. Our government has failed our veterans in so many ways. They like to say that things have fallen through the crack, but this is healthcare; it should not have fallen through the crack. This is someone's son, daughter, husband or wife. You cannot use that as an excuse."
Kayla Stringer, veteran

Poll

Does cheaper gas cause you to drive more?



This Week's Poll

Have you purchased a firearm in the past 30 days?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

ON INSTAGRAM







AREA CHILDREN PREPARING FOR THEIR CHANCE ON STAGE

MISSOULA CHILDREN'S THEATER RETURNS TO CULLMAN

Noah Chandler
noah@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Imagination. It's a simple notion but not everyone comes equipped with one. Children ages 5 -18 from around Cullman County will have their opportunity to show off their imaginative skills during tryouts for the Missoula Children's Theater in just a couple of weeks.

"Tryouts will be held on Monday, Jan. 18 at the Cullman Civic Center at 3:30 p.m.," Waid Harbison, Cullman Parks & Recreation marketing, programs & events coordinator said.

"There are no signups to audition; interested participants can just show up for the auditioning process."

While there is no charge for those auditioning, Harbison said, "Selected actors will pay a $25 fee which will include parent tickets to the performances."

Since coming to Cullman over 20 years ago, Missoula Children's Theater has always drawn a large number of area children during auditions.

"We have had anywhere from 75 to 130 kids audition each year, and that number keeps growing because there are more and more kids getting interested in the arts and performing," he said.

Harbison said the response is always great from the community, both for auditions and showtimes, and he expects nothing less this year.

Compared to other programs offered to youth by CP&R, Harbison said this is one of the unique, once-a-year events.

"I do think Missoula is one of the more powerful draws for children in the community because it is very different from every other program CP&R is offering. Many children will go on to perform in high school, college and even beyond, whether it be singing, acting or a combination of both," he said.

"This program gives children the ability to perform on stage for the first time and get experience in the arts at a young age to help them see if this is something they would like to do in the future."

Auditions will be held on Jan. 18 at the Cullman Civic Center.

This year's show will be "Little Red Riding Hood." Showtimes will be Saturday, Jan. 23, with the first show at 2 p.m. and a second performance at 6 p.m. Admission will be $5.

WSCC STUDENTS EARN PRIZE MONEY AS WINNERS OF HAIKU POETRY CONTEST

Gail Crutchfield
WSCC

HANCEVILLE - A few Wallace State students celebrated Christmas as winners in the haiku poetry contest sponsored by the WSCC English Department, the Sigma Kappa Delta English honor society and The Lion's Den Writing Club. The contest, featuring the Japanese style of literature, was held in conjunction with the exhibit "Fleeting Pleasures: Japanese Woodblock Prints from the Georgia Museum of Art" at The Evelyn Burrow Museum, which closed on Dec. 10.

The winners of the contest were sophomore accounting major Stephen Franks of Hanceville in first place, freshman computer science major Jamie Garner of Cullman in second place and sophomore visual communications major Natalie Murphree of Oneonta in third place.

Franks earned $150 for his winning entry, with Garner and Murphree earning $100 and $50, respectively.

Haiku is a descriptive form or poetry originating in Japan. While the subject of a haiku can be about any matter, it typically discusses subjects from the natural world, such as seasons, months, animals, insects or any other element of nature.

The structure of a haiku includes three lines and 17 syllables, with a first line of five syllables, a second line of seven syllables and a third line of five syllables.

Franks, who prefers working with numbers to words, said he didn't think he had much of a chance to win. "I never thought of myself as a very good English person," he said. "It was a little difficult to come up with the rhyme and the correct number of syllables." He said it took him about two days to come up with the haiku, which was an assignment for his American Literature II class.

The contest generated 250 entries from students and the general public. Entrants were limited to three entries each, with each work required to be an original piece not previously published.

Members of Sigma Kappa Delta and the Lion's Den Writing Club picked the winners in an anonymous selection process.

The winning haiku were:
First Place
"Untitled haiku" by Stephen Franks
Winter. Oh so cold
To face her wrath. You are bold
persevere, I'm told.

Second Place
"Night's Day" by Jamie Garner
Night's perfect answer
Is day's perfect alibi
Never to be known

Third Place
"Butts" by Natalie Murphree
So perfect and round
They are the backwards bosom
Pants hide their beauty

English Instructor Sally Warren said they were pleased with number of entries they received, even though that made their job a little harder when it came time for judging them.

"There were so many noteworthy, impressive entries on a variety of subjects," Warren said. "They were impressive in different ways: witty, moving, well-worded; good for a variety of different reasons."

The first place entry was one of many dealing with nature and the seasons, Warren said, but the writer's word choice helped in marking it as the top finisher. Word choice was also a factor in the second-place haiku. "It was exceptional, thought-provoking and intriguing," Warren said.

"It made you think." The third place poem won for its whimsy. "It was witty, with alliteration and diction and a different topic choice," Warren said.

Mary Barnes, Chair of the WSCC English Department added the contest was a simple and easy way to introduce students to a different culture. She took her English 102 class to see the "Fleeting Pleasures" exhibit.

"The students were excited about it and were able to see how sometimes people express themselves simply and that poetry reflects that.

"It taught them that poetry can be simple and profound at the same time," she said.

Because of the participation and the fun everyone had with the contest, Warren said the English department would consider holding another haiku contest again next year.

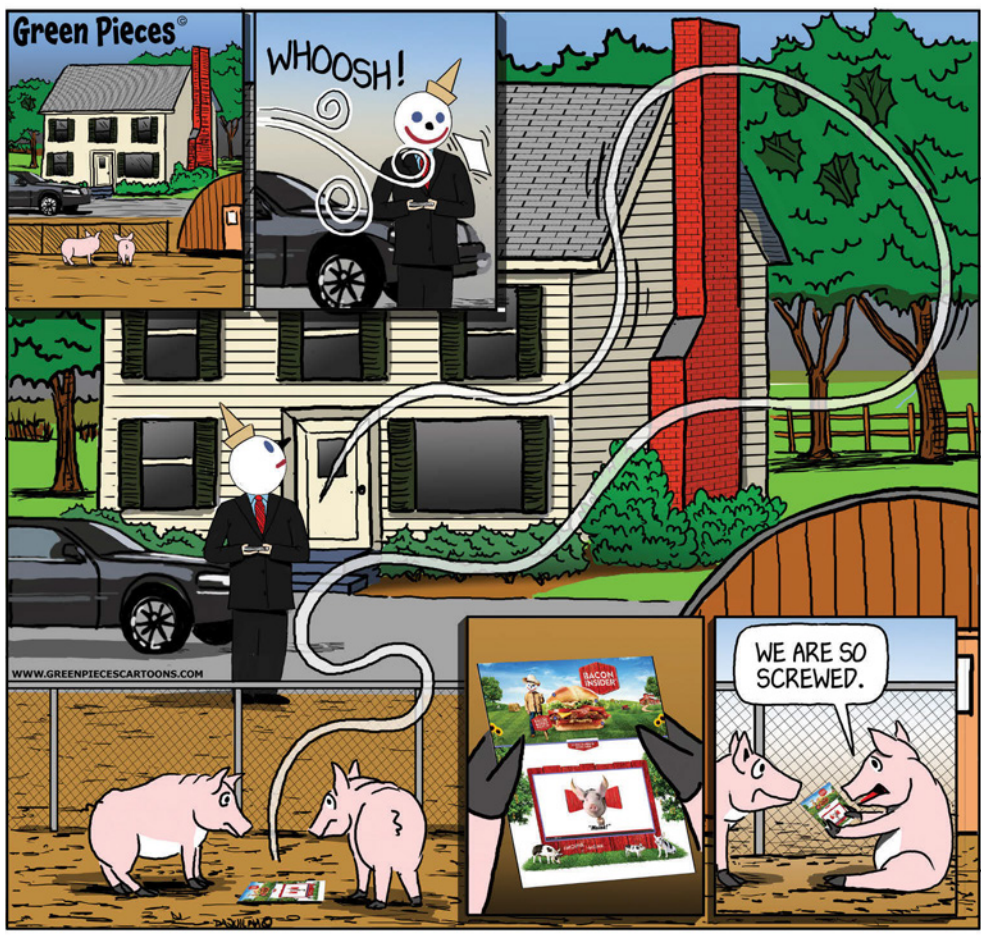
For more information about Wallace State Community College, visit http://www.wallacestate.edu or call 256-352-8000.

COMICS

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Timothy Neal Caldwell
Velvie Talley Farley
Larry Joe Willingham
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Joshua Todd Goodwin
Juanita Faye Geiser
Sister Margaret Mary
Fisher O.S.B
Marlon Tony Walker
Pamela Darlene Fultz
James Elliott Scott
Lucy "Dean" Ashley

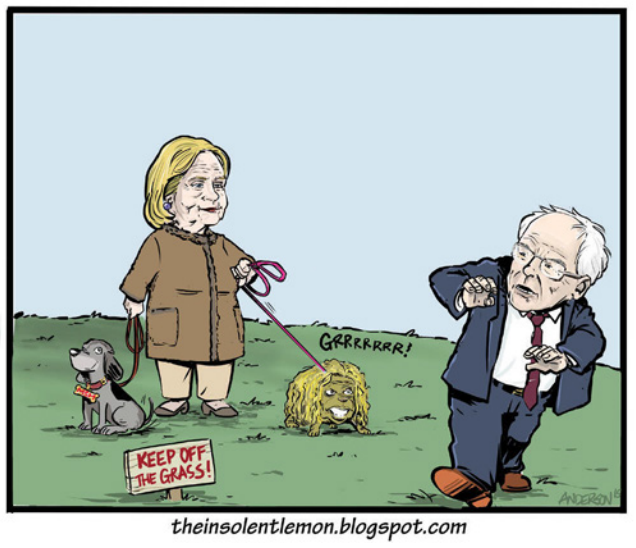
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OPINION

NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR AMBITION AND THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Robert Dodge, MD
PeaceVoice

With the news of North Korea testing another nuclear weapon its leadership continues the fallacy of nuclear deterrence promoted by the nuclear powers of the world. This action by North Korea must be condemned just as the continued possession of nuclear weapons by all of the nuclear states. This action is against the growing international consensus for a universal treaty banning all nuclear weapons and making their possession illegal just as chemical and biological weapons have been prohibited.

In a year of U.S. presidential elections, where is the voice of reason? Who among the candidates or media has spoken to the legal obligations of the United States and all nuclear powers to work in good faith for the elimination of nuclear weapons? Particularly in view of the current climate science confirming that a small regional limited nuclear war using only one-half of one percent of the global nuclear arsenals has the potential to cause the deaths of more than two billion people from the ensuing climate change following such a war. Who has the courage to speak the truth and put forth a plan to eliminate these weapons?

Where is the media in its investigative obligation and engagement of dialogue on this issue in the campaign? Outlets like PBS continue to cover the arms race and modernization of our Trident submarines, each with the potential for the above scenario many times over, as though it is an acceptable outcome of global doomsday if they are activated. This is accepted without question as a fait accompli. We must ask the candidates if they are actually aware of this science and if so under what circumstance they are ready to end life as we know it—an act of ultimate state terrorism as they become de facto suicide bombers. For it would be only a matter of time before the global climatic effects of such a use would result in our own deaths. There can be no doublespeak in this response. You are either in favor of the status quo with existing arsenals that drive the arms race and push nations like North Korea to develop their own capabilities or you work in earnest to eliminate these weapons.

Time is not on our side. The chance of accidental or intentional nuclear war is placed by probability theorists at one percent per year or more. A child born today is not likely to reach her 30th birthday without some nuclear event occurring in their world. Is this the world we want for our children and grandchildren?

The candidates and the media must overcome their cowardice in addressing this issue at this critical time.

We must demand answers to these questions about the greatest imminent existential threat to our world. We cannot rely on the hope that someone else will take care of this or the notion that I cannot make a difference. In our democracy each of us has a duty and responsibility to be informed and to take action.

OPINION

NORTH KOREA: HOW MANY WAKE-UP CALLS WILL IT TAKE?

David Krieger
PeaceVoice

North Korea has been sounding alarms since it withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003. Its latest wake-up call in early 2016 was its fourth nuclear test. This time it claimed to have tested a far more powerful thermonuclear weapon, although seismic reports do not seem to bear this out.

North Korea has been roundly condemned for its nuclear tests, including this one. To put this in perspective, however, the US has conducted more than 1,000 nuclear tests, continues to conduct subcritical nuclear tests, has not ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, regularly tests nuclear-capable missiles, and plans to spend $1 trillion modernizing its nuclear arsenal. The US and the other eight nuclear-armed countries are quick to point fingers at North Korea, but slow to recognize their own role in fanning the flames of nuclear catastrophe.

What does an awakened world actually mean?

As the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have repeatedly warned, "We must abolish nuclear weapons before they abolish us." This will require good faith negotiations to end the nuclear arms race and achieve nuclear zero. And these negotiations must be convened and led by the US and Russia, the two most powerful nuclear-armed countries in the world.

If we are not awakened by North Korea's latest test, what will it take? What other, louder alarm is necessary for the world to come together and work toward achieving nuclear zero before nuclear weapons are used again and we all become victims of a war from which humanity will never awaken?

OPINION

MAKING 2016 MORE PEACEFUL

Laura Finley
PeacVoice

It's a new year and already we're off to the same old tricks. Donald Trump released his first televised advertisement in which he doubled down on his threat to prohibit Muslims from entering the country if he becomes president, while also vowing to "chop the head off of ISIS." When he was informed that terrorists were using video footage of his comments, Trump proclaimed that he didn't care.

Although President Obama is announcing expanded background checks for gun purchases, many states are moving in the opposite direction. Texas started the year with new legislation allowing people to openly carry their guns, and Florida looks poised to pass open carry as well as campus carry laws. This despite the fact that 27 Americans were shot and killed on Christmas Day alone, a number equal to the annual gun homicide rates in Austria, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Estonia, Bermuda, Hong Kong and Iceland. Combined.

Just before the end of 2015, a grand jury in Ohio refused to indict the two white officers who shot 12-year-old African-American. This does not bode well for better police-community relationships.

While Bill Cosby will finally stand trial for sexual assault, his defenders are still babbling incessantly about "his side of the story," a not-so-subtle code for "we don't believe the victims." Even less subtle are those who call the women "gold-diggers." Harvard University and Florida State University, both of which were critiqued for their poor response to sexual assault victims in The Hunting Ground, have launched public campaigns to discredit survivors.

Despite being on the decline nationally, and its system being reviewed by the Supreme Court this year, Florida Governor Rick Scott is set to resume his execution binge on January 7.

Not only did an armed militia group occupy a federal wildlife sanctuary, but media has in many cases referred to it as a "peaceful protest." I must be missing the peace part of their actions. The response by many on the left has been to mock the group, referring to them as "'Y'all Qaeda," "VanillaIsis," "Yeehawdist," and "YokeHaram." How it is helpful to use the same demeaning language we decry when used to describe progressive activism escapes me.

A Florida woman admitted to killing her toddler and stuffing him into a suitcase because she believed the world is about to end in a great biblical flood. Meanwhile, close to 500 children died in a six-year period, all while child welfare officials were either investigating or had investigated their homes for abuse and neglect.

While so many of us make New Year's resolutions for personal betterment, I think addressing these things and so many more should be our collective resolution for 2016. In addition to exercising more, spending more time with family and all the other things we vow to do annually, perhaps we can vow to take more seriously the call to reduce violence in all its forms. We should commit to being more careful with our language, to demanding better of our politicians and candidates, to supporting victims and families, to holding accountable those who perpetrate violence, and to promoting peace in our homes, schools, and communities

BATTER UP! CP&R YOUTH BASEBALL, SOFTBALL & T-BALL REGISTRATION BEGINS JAN. 15

Waid Harbison
CP&R

CULLMAN – It's time to get the bats cracking and the gloves loosened up for the season. Registration for Cullman Parks and Recreation (CP&R) youth baseball, softball and t-ball leagues starts Jan. 15 at the Cullman Civic Center. Registration ends on Feb. 15.

Registration is open to boys and girls ages 4-14. The cost is $90 and includes a hat, jersey and trophy at the end of the season.

Evaluations will take place after signups conclude, and teams will be decided.

Volunteer coaches are also needed. Those interested are asked to register at the Civic Center from Jan. 15 – Feb.15 as well.

The CP&R league will play at Heritage Park, the Field of Miracles and other CP&R community parks, with practices and games on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday nights.

More details on youth baseball, softball, and t-ball, along with other programs, can be found online at www.cullmanrecreation.org. Call 256-734-9157 for more information.

WWTP (from Front)

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – The Christmas Day flood of 2015 won't soon be forgotten by those who were impacted by the damage the torrents caused during the 24-hour deluge that stopped the city and county in its tracks.

While many have focused on the damage to roadways, street signs and homes, one of Cullman's more important departments was caught up in the quick-spreading flood.

City of Cullman Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) Superintendent Jeff Adams said the sheer amount of water produced by the storm was enough to overtake several important elements of the plant; however, despite the immense amount of rain, Adams said WWTP employees have worked tirelessly to ensure the system is running smoothly.

"First I would like to say that the Wastewater Treatment Plant is up and running and we are in compliance with all ADEM regulations. We have worked relentlessly to clean up the mess left by the floodwaters," Adams said.

"The creek that receives our effluent water is 8 Mile Creek, which is usually around 10 yards wide at the highest point of the flood, was around 200 yards wide."

Adams said the massive floodwaters led to overflowing into several of the more important areas of the treatment plant, which is located at the base of a hill on Welti Road.

The WWTP is a 4.75 mgd (million gallon per day) rated plant.

"The ultraviolet light disinfection, two clarifier basins, along with the screen and grit removal basin were flooded," Adams said. "Estimated damage at this time is $2.5 million."

Adams put in emergency requests, which the Cullman City Council approved Friday afternoon during a special session.

The following items were approved:

I. Purchase of a rebuilt 150 HP pump for the north pump station from Jim House & Associates, Inc. in the amount of $14,000.00.

Adams said, "This pump is vital to our north pump station. If we have a heavy rain event, there's only one other 150 horsepower pump."

II. Purchase of a screen motor for the WWTP from Vulcan Industries, Inc. in the amount of $15,668.00.

Adams stated that the motor screens solids bigger than 1 inch from water before it goes into the pump station. It also helps keep the pumps from clogging.

III. Purchase of a chlorine system for the WWTP from Aqua Products, Inc. in the amount of $14,000.00.

The chlorine system is set in place to disinfect the water before it enters 8 Mile Creek.

IV. Purchase of an open channel flow meter for the WWTP from Aqua Products, Inc. in the amount of $3,743.00.

Adams said, "This device measures our effluent water and tells us how many millions of gallons per day that we are discharging."

V. Purchase of an HVAC unit for the north pump station from Christian and Sons, LLC in the amount of $5,600.00.

"This is just a heat pump, but it is vital to keep some of our equipment cool; the pumps run off of VFD starters get very hot if not cooled down," he said. "Those VFDs are about $100,000 to replace."

Multiple vendors have been contacted and several of the items requested have already been shipped off for repairs.

"The chlorine system is already in place. It will take about four to six weeks on the 150 HP pump to be rebuilt, but it is at the shop now," he said.

"I have talked to the rest of the vendors and they are already working on things and are ready to go. The flow meter was put in today (Thursday)."

Trafficking (from Front)

The average age of entry into the U.S. sex trade is 12 - 14. It is happening all over the world and right here in the United States. Sadly, it is going on right here in Cullman County.

The Task Force met on Wednesday, Jan. 6 to discuss this month's events, namely the upcoming training session for the public.

"There will be a public training on Human Trafficking Awareness and Investigation on Tuesday, Jan. 26 from 6 – 7:30 p.m. at Daystar Church," said Kathy Wilson, Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force chair. "This is where any concerned citizens, the public – anybody can attend. We want everyone to spread the word about this public training, it is very important."

Presenting at the event will be Scott Santoro, who provides training for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. He is the senior training advisor for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign. A former attorney, he currently trains state and federal law enforcement on human trafficking.

The event is being sponsored by the Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force, District Attorney Wilson Blaylock, Judge Kim Chaney and Cullman Savings Bank.

Because a lot of the victims of human trafficking are teenagers, the Task Force plans to offer the public a class on Internet safety in the very near future.

"That's how young teenagers get into all this," said Attorney Andrea Richter. "They may put something online and the traffickers start talking to them. That's how it happens, how they get them."

"We all know that Internet safety is an issue for young people," said Judge Kim Chaney. "Sexting is an issue and it all starts with that. They get them on the hook and then into exploitation."

Javon Daniel, executive director of Cullman Caring for Kids, spoke to the group about an upcoming addition to his local show, "Kids Matter."

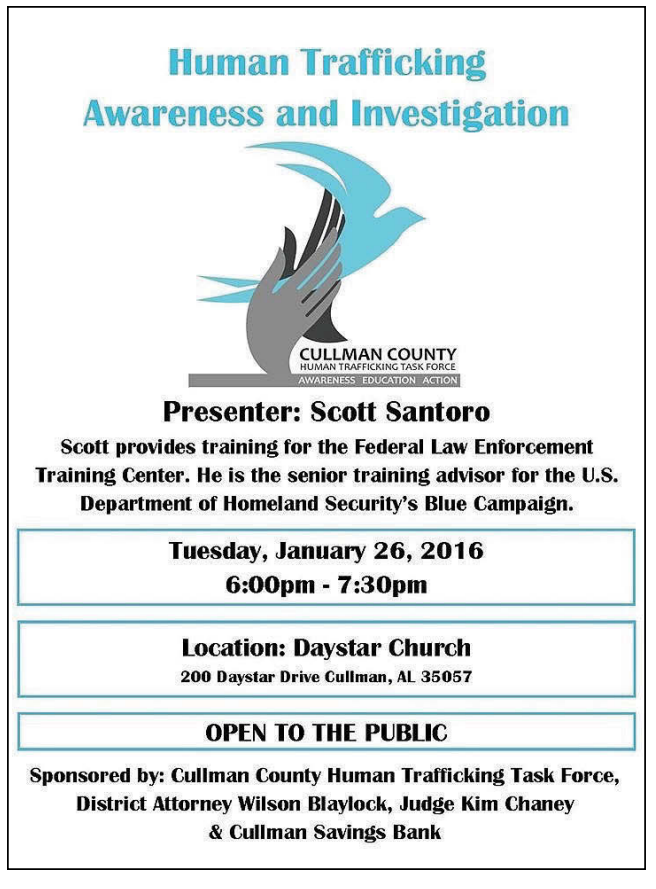
"'Kids Matter' is a public service radio program that Nancy (Bryant) and I host every Friday and Sunday afternoon on two different local stations," he explained. "One show streams on the Internet so it is worldwide. We talk about children and family issues.

"Kathy Wilson is going to be on our show Friday talking about human trafficking," he continued. "We already decided to add a section to our show each week where we talk about sex trafficking."

Daniel also announced there will be a public prayer vigil on Wednesday, Jan. 20 at Baldwin Heights Baptist Church. The vigil will last from 6 - 7 p.m. He said that he plans to have all the churches in the county pray in unison for the end to human trafficking during their Wednesday night services as well.

The Task Force says it needs all the help it can get to prevent both children and adults in our area from becoming victims. Everyone is encouraged to get involved. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 2, at noon in Judge Kim Chaney's courtroom on the second floor of the Cullman County Courthouse.

For more information, email endtrafficking25@gmail.com or visit http://qrne.ws/taskforce.



Marriage (from Front)

received the order yesterday, and she communicated with legal counsel. After careful review, today's decision was reached.

"I would like the public to know that this has been a very complex and complicated legal matter. This has placed all probate judges in the state of Alabama in the middle of a legal issue that should be decided by the court having the proper jurisdiction."

Brown says that she has gone back and forth and has been very careful in making decisions on this matter, in order to avoid costly and complex litigation for Cullman County.

"The U.S. Supreme Court issued an order that all states were to issue marriage licenses to same sex couples. I, as your probate judge, will do the best to follow the law," she said.

When asked if she knows how many same-sex marriage licenses have been issued in Cullman, Brown said she has no exact numbers.

"Marriage licenses sold by the Probate Office are all recorded in Marriage Record Books, therefore, I do not know for certain the number of same sex marriage licenses issued this year (2016). The Probate Office did issue, then stopped, then issued..... same sex-marriage licenses in 2015," stated Brown.

She said that the process of starting and stopping the issuance of same sex-marriage licenses in 2015 was due to the Courts not establishing a clear and precise answer on this matter.

"I would have to view the system to find the exact number issued for each year. I would not provide a number until that process has been completed to avoid a variation in the number actually issued."

Brown asks that the public be understanding.

"I would like to ask the citizens of Cullman County to keep the Probate Offices, the Probate Office employees and myself in your thoughts as we have dealt with the complexity of this matter that should be decided once and for all," she said.

The Cullman County Probate Office can be reached at 256-775-4803. For more information, visit http://qrne.ws/courts.