SERIES 6 • ISSUE 5 • FEBRUARY 1, 2016
CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS


NOAH GALILEE/CULLMANSENSE

SOUTH DOMINATES 2016 REESE'S SENIOR BOWL P12

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THE ANTIQUE MARKET OF CULLMAN CLOSES

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – After only one year in business, The Antique Market of Cullman closed its doors for good on Jan. 31.

When asked if she was surprised to make the decision to shut down her shop, owner Beth Veigl said no.

"This is a business decision. Retail is a very difficult business to be in, and (the shop) simply has not generated enough business to justify keeping it open. It is a tough time to be in a small business. It is also interesting that 95 to 98 percent of my buying/paying customers are from outside the Cullman area. We do have a nice little group of regular Cullman customers who we appreciate very much as well as all of our out of town clientele. We would encourage everybody to P5



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE


SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

THINK2CHANGE'S BRIAN EARLEY SPEAKS TO AREA STUDENTS ABOUT ABUSE, DEPRESSION, BULLYING AND TEEN SUICIDE P6

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CRMC ANNOUNCES 30-BED EXPANSION; DR. VINCENT F. BERGQUIST HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR P2


JUSTIN TRUETT

PROFILES IN FAITH

JUSTIN TRUETT, YOUTH PASTOR AT SIMCOE WORSHIP CENTER P7

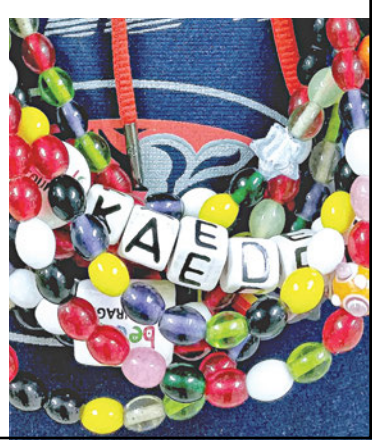


PHOTOS BY SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE
Leukemia warrior Kaeden Dawson wears his Beads of Courage with pride.

BATTLING LEUKEMIA

EES STUDENT KAEDEN DAWSON SHARES BEADS OF COURAGE

"Through it all, he has never lost his smile. When seeing his necklaces and hearing his journey, I am humbled."
- EES Principal David Wiggins



FEBRUARY IS LOVE MY LIBRARY MONTH AT CCPL

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Many people think of February as the month of valentines and pink hearts, but the Cullman County Public Library System thinks of it as something a little different. For CCPL, February is Love My Library Month, and from Feb 1-28, CCPL will be forgiving all overdue fines.

"Patrons have the whole month of February to 'feel the love' that the library has for the community," said Library Director Sharon Townson. "Patrons can eliminate overdue fines by simply asking for fine forgiveness. They can call or come by any one of the five library branches or even email the request to cullmanpubliclibrary@gmail.com. With a simple request, all overdue fines will be forgiven."

Fees for lost or damaged items will not be forgiven, only those for overdue items.

"It can be difficult to remember to return library materials; before you know it the fines have added up," she continued. "We want everyone in the community to have access to materials in the library. By giving patrons a one-time fine forgiveness, we are able to get them them back to the library where they can check out the materials they may want for personal reading or, as more often the case now, job searches and employment help. With this promotion we can eliminate that $7 overdue fine that may have kept P3

REPUBLICAN PARTY FEB. 6 BREAKFAST TO FEATURE SHELBY OPPONENT MCCONNELL

Waid Harbison
Cullman County Republican Party


JONATHAN MCCONNELL 2016
Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, Jonathan McConnell

CULLMAN – This month's Cullman County Republican Party (CCRP) breakfast meeting, on Saturday, Feb. 6, will include a buffet of area Republican candidates ahead of the much-anticipated March 1 primary. The featured speaker will be Jonathan McConnell, who is running against incumbent U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby. A forum for the P5

PRINTED LOCALLY @ PRINTING Alabama Web Press

THE BLUE CAMPAIGN: HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS AND INVESTIGATION TRAINING HELD

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – On Tuesday, Jan. 26, the Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force held a free public training at Daystar Church. The event, Human Trafficking Awareness and Investigation, was presented by Scott Santoro, the senior training advisor for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign. The event was sponsored by the Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force, District Attorney Wilson Blaylock, Judge Kim Chaney and Cullman Savings Bank.

To start the program, Judge Kim Chaney and District Attorney Wilson Blaylock addressed the audience and said a few words about human trafficking. Both agreed that unfortunately, it is something that is going on right here in Cullman County.

"I wish I could tell you that Cullman didn't have to deal with this, but we have to," said Chaney. "We have young girls being sold by their parents to strangers for money. One of the things I live in fear of, as do most parents, is that our sons and daughters find someone online and hook up with (them). They think they are gonna go for a romance or a beautiful Cinderella story only to be exploited later; and once they (human trafficker) get them, they isolate them and use them. It happens so quickly. That happens here. With all the drug issues here, we have ladies and women being exploited by their boyfriends with drug dealers to pay for drugs. We see that here in Cullman County. I wish I could tell you otherwise."

"When I first heard about human trafficking, I was a lot like Judge Chaney," Blaylock admitted. "I thought it probably happened out in California and Texas; maybe some foreigners they loaded up and took to Chicago or New York for labor, but it's much more than that. In talking with our child advocacy folks here and in talking with Victim Services here and the people they interview and the questions they ask now to get behind a little bit and dig further on why they are there, it's apparent to me human trafficking is going on here in Cullman. I'm proud to say we are trying to be ahead of the curve in educating ourselves and educating law enforcement and the teachers that see it and deal with it every day in the children that they teach; the signs they may see that maybe some of these students are victims of human trafficking and can report it and go farther. That part of the task force is very important."

Santoro's presentation was very informative. He focused on defining human trafficking and identifying it in daily situations.

"Human trafficking is modern-day slavery," he said. "It is compelling someone to work or to engage in a commercial sex act- when a person uses force, fraud or coercion to compel another to work for little or no wages or engage in acts of commercial sex (sex in exchange for something of value)."

Santoro shared several facts. Some were surprising, some were not.

• Fact 1- Slavery is NOT history. The number of human trafficking victims in the world today is 20.9 million, according to the International Labour Organization. The number was 44,000 according to the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. The annual worldwide profit from human trafficking is $150 billion, says the International Labour Organization.
• Fact 2 – Human trafficking happens to both foreigners and U.S. citizens.
• Fact 3 – Human trafficking is happening everywhere.
• Fact 4 – Movement (from one country to another) is not required.
• Fact 5 – Victims rarely self-identify.

There was an interactive part of the night's presentation. Several short videos were shown and the audience was asked questions about them afterwards. The exercise helped everyone understand some of the many ways human trafficking can happen. It was very eye-opening and roused lots of discussion afterwards.

"I hope to hear back from the Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force a year from now with some good numbers, with some new investigations, with some new victims and survivors that have actually been identified; that's what I'm really hoping," said Santoro.

"To get there, keep talking about this issue. You all came tonight through terrible weather; this is obviously an important issue with everyone in this room and I appreciate that. It's important to me, too. Be involved, talk about it. Download our materials, they are all downloadable, and share them with people. We have general awareness information and information about all we talked about tonight."

The Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force needs the community's help in order to protect both children and adults in our area from becoming victims. Everyone is encouraged to get involved.

The next Human Trafficking Task Force meeting will be Wednesday, March 2 at noon in Judge Kim Chaney's courtroom, on the second floor of the Cullman County Courthouse.



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Scott Santoro from the Department of Homeland Security talked to people from the community about human trafficking Tuesday night at Daystar Church.

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

To learn more about the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign, visit http://www.dhs.gov/topic/human-trafficking or email BlueCampaign@hq.dhs.gov.

CRMC ANNOUNCES 30-BED EXPANSION; DR. VINCENT F. BERGQUIST HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – On Wednesday, Jan. 27, Cullman Regional Medical Center (CRMC) hosted its annual State of the Hospital event, where CEO James Clements announced a 30-bed expansion and Dr. Vincent F. Bergquist was named Healthcare Professional of the Year by the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce.

Clements announced during the State of the Hospital report that the Alabama Department of Public Health granted approval for CRMC to develop and implement a three-year plan for the 30-bed expansion.

"It is a very exciting time at CRMC," said CRMC Board Chair Judy Butler-Patterson. "The hospital's growth in service area and increase in volume, particularly from inpatient visits, support the need for the expansion."

The board acquired the 30 additional beds when Woodland Medical Center was purchased in 2009; however, they had not been able to present a viable or immediate plan to put the 30 beds into service until now. The Health Care Authority Board is currently working with architects to help develop plans for the expansion.

"In 2015, we saw a 7 percent growth from inpatient admissions and 2 percent growth in outpatient visits," Clements said. "This growth not only justifies the need for the expansion, but also validates the quality of care delivered by our team of doctors and nurses."

The expansion will be approximately 35,950 square feet and will become the hospital's fifth level, located on the east wing.The expansion will create about 30 additional jobs to start with, and up to 100 more as volume growth continues. Construction is scheduled to begin in January 2017 and should be completed in the fall of 2018.

Hospital officials say the expansion will enhance patient experience in a number of ways. There will be more private rooms available and a decrease in wait times for beds upon hospital admission. It will also decrease ER wait times and improve patient safety during peak admission hours. The community will reap the benefits of the creation of additional jobs.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's Healthcare Professional of the Year award recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to healthcare in the community. This year Dr. Vincent F. Bergquist is that person.

"Throughout the years, Dr. Bergquist has introduced new procedures to Cullman, including the newest, computer-assisted total joint surgery," said Chamber Chair Jason Grimmett. "He takes pride in making sure the people of Cullman receive the highest level of care. This is likely why he has served on various hospital committees and accepted leadership roles, some of which include: Chief of Orthopedic Surgery from 1992-1999 and 2004-2007, Chairman of the Surgery Department from 2000-2003 and Medical Staff Executive Committee from 2008-2015, including two years as Medical Staff President in 2012 and 2013."

Humble and sincere, Bergquist accepted his award and said a few words.

"I am very honored to receive this award, and also very surprised," said Bergquist. "But I thank you very much for it." He spoke of all the great things the hospital has done over the years since he first began working there in 1977 and said he is looking forward to the expansion and continuing his work at CRMC.

In other news, in December 2015, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) ranked CRMC in the top 10 percent of hospitals in the nation in reducing hospital-acquired infections out of more than 3,000 hospitals surveyed as a part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

"At CRMC, our physicians and clinical staff strive daily to provide our patients with the highest level of quality care," CRMC Chief Quality Officer Charna Brown, RN, said. "We are proud to have these efforts recognized nationally."

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), hospitals nationwide experienced a 17 percent decline in many hospital-acquired infections from 2010 to 2014. This translates to 87,000 lives saved and nearly $20 billion in healthcare costs averted.

"We are deeply committed to keeping patients safe," said Clements. "We will continue to support programs that effectively promote patient safety improvements."


SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

Dr. Bergquist stands with CRMC CEO James Clements after being named Healthcare Professional of the Year.

For more, visit https://www.crmchospital.com/ or https://facebook.com/CullmanRegionalMedicalCenter.

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SPEAKER HUBBARD ANNOUNCES COMMITTEE CHANGES

Rachel Adams
Office of Speaker Mike Hubbard

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, on Friday announced changes to the standing committees of the Alabama House of Representatives.

"Committee assignments are chosen based upon the skills and talents each member possesses, and each of these members have distinguished themselves among their colleagues," said Hubbard.

"I look forward to serving alongside each member in their new roles as we continue to do what is right for Alabama."

Modifications were required after the passing of Reps. Dan Williams, R-Athens and Lesley Vance, R-Phenix City last year.

Highlights of the committee changes are as follows:

• State Rep. Ken Johnson, R-Moulton will serve as Chairman of the Financial Services Committee. Rep. Mack Butler, R-Rainbow City will be Vice Chair of the committee.

• State Rep. Donnie Chesteen, R-Geneva will serve as Chairman of the Technology and Research Committee.

• State Rep. Reed Ingram, R-Pike Road will serve as Vice Chair of the County and Municipal Government Committee.

• State Rep. Ed Henry, R-Hartselle will serve as Vice Chair of the Ethics and Campaign Finance Committee.

• State Rep. Jimmy Martin, R-Clanton will serve as Vice Chair of the Insurance Committee. Reps. Randy Davis, R-Daphne and Kyle South, R-Fayette will sit on the committee.

• State Rep. Jim Patterson, R-Meridianville will sit on the Ways and Means Education Committee as well as the Commerce and Small Business Committee.

• State Rep. Connie Rowe, R-Jasper will hold a seat on the Ways and Means General Fund Committee.

• State Rep. Mike Holmes, R-Wetumpka will sit on the Judiciary Committee.

• Newly-elected State Rep. Chris Blackshear, R-Phenix City will join the following committees: County and Municipal Government, Financial Services and Insurance. *(Editor's note: From our media partner, WBRC Fox 6 News: Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill announced on Friday that he's declared and certified Chris Blackshear as the newly-elected state representative for Alabama House District 80. Blackshear remained unopposed with democratic opposition after the special primary election earlier this month. Pursuant to Article IV, Section 46 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, the special general election set for April 12 will not be held.)*



WBRC FOX 6/FILE VIDEO

The appointments take effect for the 2016 regular legislative session, which convenes on Tuesday, Feb. 2.

13TH ANNUAL EMPTY BOWLS CHILI DINNER TO BENEFIT CULLMAN CARING FOR KIDS

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – The 13th Annual Empty Bowls Chili Dinner will be held on Monday, Feb. 15 from 4 - 6:30 p.m. at Cullman First United Methodist Church in Hearin Hall. The event will feature delicious chili served in handcrafted pottery bowls, a silent auction and southern gospel music by local entertainers. Tickets are $10 and are available at Cullman Caring for Kids and First United Methodist Church. All proceeds from the event will go to the Cullman Caring for Kids United Way Food Bank.

"Empty Bowls is a fundraiser for Cullman Caring for Kids," said Nancy Bryant, assistant director, Cullman Caring for Kids. "It is all about preventing and stopping hunger in our community. It's a wonderful evening; you get some chili and a handmade pottery bowl to take home. You get to help put a stop to child abuse and hunger. The tickets are $10, which is pretty good for a meal."

For more information, call Cullman Caring for Kids at 256-739-1111 or email them at cullmancaringforkids@msn.com. You can also follow Empty Bowls of Cullman County on Facebook at http://qrne.ws/bowls.

Cullman First United Methodist Church is located at 320 Third St. SE. Cullman Caring for Kids is at 402 Arnold St. NE.

"It is all about preventing and stopping hunger in our community."

Nancy Bryant, assistant director, Cullman Caring for Kids

Library (from Front)

someone from checking out that resume writing book or a small business startup book."

Now is the time to return those long overdue items and ask for fine forgiveness.

Also, for people who may have lost their library cards, the library will replace them for free in February.

"The Cullman County Commission and the City of Cullman make sure that the library has what it needs to help improve the quality of life for the citizens in our community, and we want to do what we can to get the right information into the hands of the people who need it," Townson added.

For more information, visit http://www.ccpls.com/ or your local CCPL branch:

Cullman County Public Library Main Branch
200 Clark St. NE
Cullman, AL 35055
256-734-1068

Garden City Public Library
501 First Avenue S
Garden City, AL 35070
256- 352-4552

Guy Hunt Library
60 Lions Park Road
Holly Pond, AL 35083
256-796-5226

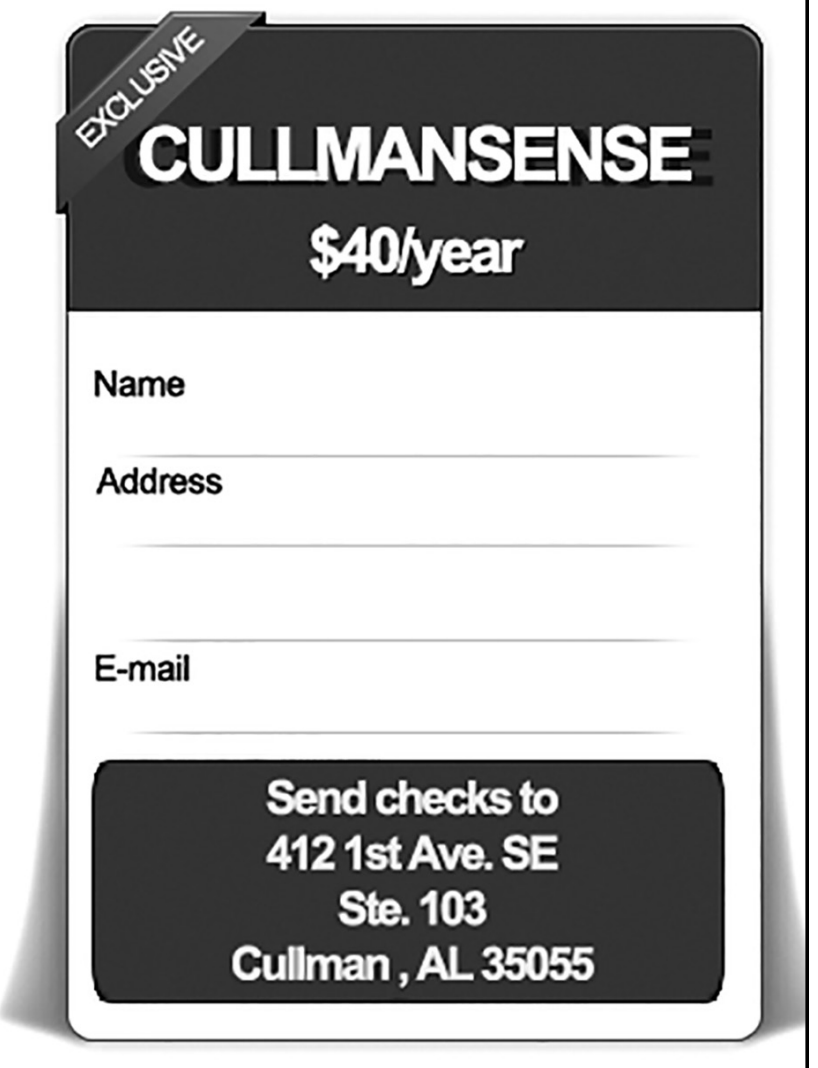
Hanceville Public Library
201 Commercial St.
Hanceville, AL 35077
256-352-0685

Tom Bevill Library
151 Byars Road
Hanceville, AL 35077
256-287-1573

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ALABAMA WFF'S COMMUNITY ARCHERY STRATEGY IN ACTION

Stuart R. Goldsby
Contributor

CULLMAN – Through a local grant from the Heritage Archery Club, a Cullman chapter of the Bowhunters of Alabama, National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) archery equipment was awarded to four area schools. This was a result of the local club working together with the city and state in support and promotion of the Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources' Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) Division's Community Archery Strategy.

West Point School, Fairview High School, East Elementary School and Welti Elementary School all applied for the grant and received the equipment, purchased with private funds. Heritage Archery Club offered $5,000 in grant funds to area schools and partnered with the WFF Division and Cullman City Parks and Recreation for distribution and promotion of the continued archery lifestyle here in Cullman and all of Cullman County. Equipment including Genesis bows, Easton arrows, Morrell targets and New Archery arrow rests was distributed to the schools.

For more information, contact Regional Hunter Education Coordinator for WFF Division, Stuart R. Goldsby at 256-737-8732 or visit WFF on Facebook at http://qrne.ws/wff. The local WFF Division office is located at 1000 23rd St. SW in Cullman.

West Point School-Anthony Parker, CP&R; Stuart Goldsby, WFF; Jeanmarie Yearwood, WP Intermediate Archery Coach; Jimmy Jenkins, Heritage Archery Club; Kevin Sullins, WPHS Assistant Principal; Josh Hines, WP Intermediate Archery Coach. Not pictured: Welti Elementary-Kristi Hooper, WE Archery Coach



SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

WSCC BASKETBALL SWEEPS SNEAD STATE AS COLLEGE INDUCTS HOF CLASS

Russell Moore
WSCC

HANCEVILLE – Wallace State's basketball teams capped a memorable Sunday at Tom Drake Coliseum with a sweep of Snead State.

Playing in front of one of the largest crowds in recent Wallace State basketball history, the Lady Lions earned an impressive 77-67 victory in the opener, and the Wallace State men outlasted Snead State 59-57 in the second game, registering their 20th win of the season.

In between victories, Wallace State inducted its second Sports Hall of Fame class in conjunction with the college's 50th anniversary. The 2016 inductees are former women's coach Larry Slater, former Wallace State golfer and PGA tour pro Brett Wetterich, former Wallace State golfer and current Florida State golf coach Trey Jones, former Wallace State softball player Cindy Mallard and contributor Johnny Thornton. Additionally, Slater and members of the 1990-91 Wallace State women's basketball team were recognized for earning the first conference championship in program history, and the college celebrated its annual homecoming.

"It felt like today really energized our players. We had a lot of former players here and a great crowd. I'm proud of the way we played," said Wallace State women's coach Ron Burdette, whose team has won two conference games in a row. "All in all, I thought it was our most complete effort of the season. We still have tons of work to do. I hope it's a step in the right direction."

Five Wallace State Lady Lions (10-14, 2-3 Alabama Community College Conference) finished with double figures. Freshman Kelsey Houston drained four 3-pointers and had a team-high 15 points, D'Andrea Smith scored a career-high 12 points, Janese Richardson finished with 11 and Alex Lowery and Hannah Vest each added 10 points.

Wallace State, which battled back from an early 9-3 deficit, led 18-15 after the first quarter. The Lady Lions extended their lead to 32-21 with 4:06 left in the first half, and a minute later, a nifty move by Lowery in the lane handed Wallace State a 34-21 advantage.

The Lady Lions maintained a 34-26 cushion at the break.

Wallace State pulled away considerably in the third quarter, outscoring the Lady Parsons 21-9. Houston closed the third quarter by nailing a trey, widening Wallace State's lead to 55-35 heading into the final period. Wallace State built as much as a 21-point lead in the fourth.

Jasmine Hollis added seven points for Wallace State, which continues conference play at Gadsden State on Thursday. "We are climbing the ladder up in the conference. It looked a little bleak a couple of weeks ago, but we all feel better now," Burdette said.

For Snead State (16-9, 1-4 ACCC), Jasmine Richardson paced the way with a game-high 24 points.

Men's Basketball

Wallace State 59, Snead State 57

Kylen Butler poured in all 15 of his points in the second half, Immanuel King had 14 and Derylton Hill chipped in with 11 points for the Lions, who have won 12 of their last 14 games.

Wallace State, which overcame a nine-point deficit 12:40 to go, also hit the 20-win plateau with six conference games remaining.

With Wallace State (20-4, 5-1 ACCC) clinging to a 56-53 lead with 1:13 remaining in the game, Butler and King, both sophomores, helped the Lions secure their third home win in seven days.

King tipped in missed shot for a 58-53 edge with a little more than a minute to go. Butler, one of Wallace State's top defenders, added a free throw with 1.1 seconds left and missed the second shot on purpose, making sure Snead State couldn't put up a final heave before time expired.

Since Monday night, Wallace State has collected three gritty victories against Shelton State, Lawson State and the Parsons.

"We said early in the season we might have to win ugly some games and we did today. We've got to focus on the notion that we are one of the hunted teams, and we have a big 'X' on our back right now. Teams are going to get overhyped to play us. We have to play with the same passion, intensity and execution every game. We can't afford letdowns," said Wallace State men's coach John Meeks.

Wallace State charged out to a 14-3 lead less than nine minutes into Sunday's conference tilt. Hill capped the opening surge with a 3-point play with 11:52 to go in the first half.

With seven minutes left, Wallace State's Jaylen McCoy hit a 3-pointer to push the Lions' lead to 23-12.

Snead State (7-16, 1-5 ACCC) countered with a 15-6 run to close the first half, trimming Wallace State's lead to 29-27 at intermission.

Snead State seized control early in the second half and led 42-34 with 12:40 remaining in the game.

Wallace State chipped away over the next six minutes, and a pair of Butler 3's helped the Lions regain momentum and a 49-47 lead with 6:18 to go.

Butler handed the Lions a 54-48 advantage with 4:53 remaining after a steal and a subsequent breakaway layup.

"Kylen Butler made some big plays for us in the second half. He knows what it takes to win in this league," Meeks said.

Xavier Mills scored six points for Wallace State and McCoy added five. Ryan Dupree led Snead State with 11 points. Cortland Davis added 10.

Wallace State closes its ACCC slate with five of its final six games on the road, including Thursday at Gadsden State.

For more information about Wallace State athletics, visit http://athletics.wallacestate.edu.

PREP BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

WEEK OF 02-01-16

All but two games previously scheduled for Tuesday evening have been rescheduled for Monday. The remaining games (Fairview @ Vinemont and Dora @ Hanceville) have not been rescheduled as of Sunday night.

MONDAY
Hayden @ Fairview (Fairview Senior Night) 6:30 p.m.
Whitesburg Christian @ St. Bernard 5 p.m.
Holly Pond @ Good Hope 4 p.m.
Cold Springs @ West Point 5:30 p.m.
Arab @ Cullman 6 p.m.
Scottsboro @ Holly Pond 6 p.m.
Walker @ Cold Springs 5 p.m.

THURSDAY

FRIDAY
St. Bernard @ Shades Mountain 5 p.m.
Vinemont @ Falkville 5 p.m.
Cullman @ West Point 4 p.m.
Good Hope @ Hanceville (Hanceville Senior Night) 6 p.m.

PREP BASKETBALL SCORING WRAP-UP

MONDAY
Girls
Holly Pond 55, Hanceville 45
West Point 38, Lawrence County 45

Boys
Holly Pond 59, Hanceville 51
West Point 79, Lawrence County

TUESDAY
Girls
West Point 78, Vinemont 34
St. Bernard 54, Southeastern 60
Cullman 45, Austin 55

Boys
West Point 72, Vinemont 22
St. Bernard 75, Southeastern 47
Cullman lost to Austin

WENDNESDAY (County Championship)

Girls
Cold Springs 48, Good Hope 44

Boys
Hanceville 55, Cold Springs 49

THURSDAY
Girls
Walker 58, Hanceville 42
Good Hope 57, Winston County 22

Boys
Walker 71, Hanceville 43
Good Hope 55, Winston County 21

SATURDAY
Girls
Holly Pond 62, Cullman 46

Boys
Cullman 71, Holly Pond 58

TOUR THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST WITH WSCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Gail Crutchfield
WSCC

HANCEVILLE – Anyone who wants to check off states on their list of those visited in the U.S., can mark off two with a group trip to the Pacific Northwest. The Wallace State Community College Alumni Association is now taking reservations for an eight-day, seven-night trip that begins June 17 in Portland, Oregon and ends in San Francisco, California on June 24.

The trip will begin with a chartered bus trip from the Wallace State campus to the Birmingham International Airport for the flight to Portland. A get-acquainted dinner with fellow tour members will be held that evening.

The next day is the first full day of the tour, with an itinerary that includes a visit to the famous Portland Rose Gardens, followed by an excursion into the Columbia River Gorge, visits to the Multnomah Falls and a scenic drive over the Coastal Mountain Range and Pacific Coast on the way to Newport, Oregon.

The third day includes a drive along the dramatic Oregon coast, with stops at the Yaquina Head Lighthouse, Cape Perpetua Lookout and the fishing port of Florence scheduled before heading to Eugene, Oregon for the evening.

From there, the tour will travel through the Upqua National Forest to view Crater Lake and get photos of the intense blue body of water from Rim Drive.

The tour will then head to Grant's Pass, Oregon to take an evening cruise on the scenic Rogue River.

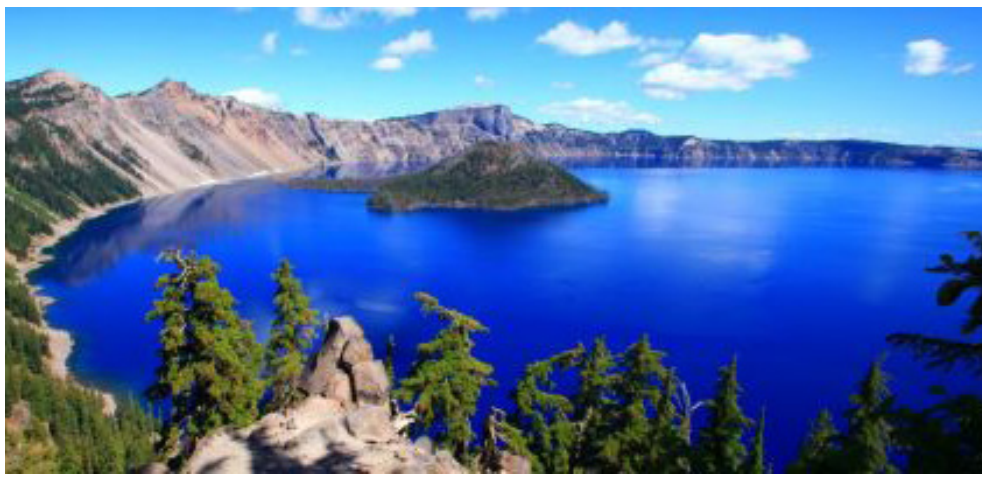
A morning drive along the Redwood Highway will take the tour toward the California coast, with a stop in Crescent City before continuing the drive along the coast.

The tour will stop in Eureka, California for the night, with a visit to the Samoa Cookhouse for a lumberjack-style meal.

The next day finds the tour in the "Avenue of the Giants" to stand in awe amid virgin redwood forests with trees that are thousands of years old. The day will conclude with a tour of wine country and lunch before heading to San Francisco for the night.

In San Francisco, a deluxe city tour will take travelers to see Twin Peaks, Golden Gate Park, The Presidio and Chinatown in the morning, with the afternoon free to explore before a farewell dinner party that evening.

The cost of the trip includes roundtrip airfare and roundtrip airport transfers, seven nights' quality accommodations, 16 meals (7 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 6 dinners), admission to all included attractions and activities and a professional tour manager.



WSCC

Costs start at $2,895, with final payment due Friday, April 15. A minimum deposit of $200 is required at the time of registration.

Those interested in the trip can contact LaDonna Allen at 256-352-8071 or ladonna.allen@wallacestate.edu.

Visit http://www.wsccalumni.org/pacific16 for more information about the trip and to download the reservation form.

The Alumni Association will hold an informational meeting about this and the other trips planned for 2016 on Tuesday, March 1, at 5:30 p.m., on the 2nd floor of the James C. Bailey Center. Anyone who registers for a trip during the meeting will be entered into a drawing to win $200 to go toward the deposit of a trip.

Each year, the Alumni Association puts together a number of trips to popular tourist destinations in the United States.

Group travel offers competitive rates and prospects for building lifelong friendships and memories.

Alumni Association members benefit from discounted fees for the trips. The general public is welcome to join in on the trips and can join the Alumni Association if they wish to take advantage of the discounts offered to members.

McConnell (from Front)

Cullman County Commission Chairman candidates will also take place, including incumbent Kenneth Walker and his two challengers Darrell Hicks and Eric L. Parker.

There will be a question and answer session where local residents will be able to speak and ask questions of all of the candidates.

The breakfast meeting is on Saturday, Feb. 6 at the Cullman Elks Lodge. Breakfast will begin at 7:30 a.m. and the program at 8 a.m. The cost of the breakfast $10; there will be no charge to attend the meeting at 8 a.m. The general public is encouraged to attend.

For more information on the CCRP or the monthly breakfast program, please visit www.cullmangop.com or contact CCRP Vice Chairman Waid Harbison at 256-708-1650.

The Cullman Elks Lodge is located at 1609 Brantley Ave. NW.

Closing (from Front)

shop the small shops in Cullman. They really need and appreciate your business."

The closing of The Antique Market of Cullman comes at a time when Cullman's burgeoning economic growth makes it hard to believe that a store would not be able to make it in the city. After all, the rejuvenation of the First Avenue shopping scene, or the advent of it, seemed like a match made in heaven for the antiques shop.

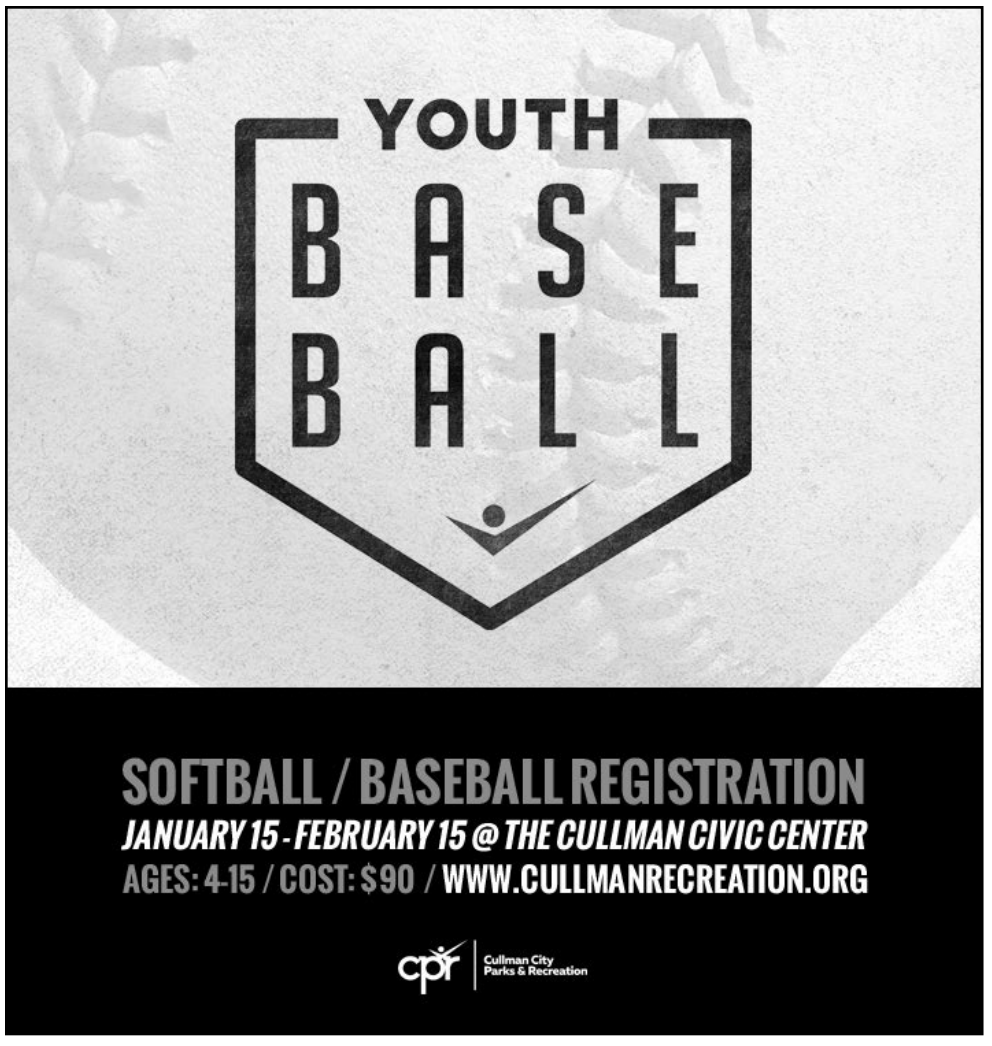
The closing of the Market is a cautionary tale to the citizens of Cullman, a reminder that the economic growth of the county is not inevitable and should not be taken for granted. Patronization of local shops is the foundation on which Cullman has built a growing city.

Veigl will continue to sell antiques at Highway Pickers on Highway 278, in booth 724. She will also continue her design business, b. VeigL designs. Check it out here: http://www.cabinetdesigns.org/.

"I have been designing kitchens, baths and anything needing cabinetry for years. I hold dealerships for various USA-made, cabinetry manufacturers as well as design software that allows me to create my designs," she said.



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THINK2CHANGE'S BRIAN EARLEY SPEAKS TO AREA STUDENTS ABOUT ABUSE, DEPRESSION, BULLYING AND TEEN SUICIDE

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

WEST POINT – On Tuesday, Jan. 26, Brian Earley, founder of Think2Change, talked to the students of West Point High School about his struggles with abuse, depression and suicide. A phenomenal speaker, Earley told of his tragic childhood and how one special person gave him a reason to live just by becoming his friend. He hopes to empower teenagers throughout the southeast to be the same 'power of one' in the lives of others.

"She dropped me and my brother off at a foster home," Earley said of his mother. She left when they were just kids. Sadly, Earley said he has no happy or loving memories of her because of the abuse she dealt him and his brother all their young lives – she even tried to kill them on more than one occasion.

Earley's father eventually regained custody of him, but he never saw his brother again. Though he was back with family, the peace was short-lived. He found himself living with an abusive half-brother and an alcoholic father. Before his 14th birthday, Earley endured both physical and sexual abuse. He also faced the death of his father. After his father died,

Earley was sent to live with his grandmother. To him it just meant going to a new school where there was a new group of bullies, but then something happened that took him by surprise. He met a girl named Brandy and her kind words changed his life forever. The two became best friends and Brandy's parents became the family Earley never had.

"Her family took me in... came to all my ball games," Earley said. "Though the chaos didn't immediately go away, it became easier to deal with. I had a friend. For the first time in my life, someone cared," he smiled.

After his grandmother passed away, Earley spent six years in the U.S. Navy. Afterwards, he got married and had a daughter before his past caught up to him.

"I started thinking about how the world would just be better off without me," he said, reflecting on the difficult times. After Earley survived a suicide attempt, a very special counselor entered his life. The counselor told him the scars from his past could provide hope for others who had been through similar trials. Earley took the counselor's advice and founded Think2Change in 2010. He now works to evoke change by making students aware of the power they have to change lives.

"Think2Change covers really four main topics; abuse, depression, bullying and teen suicide," he explained. "I usually tell a story called 'The Power of One,' which is the story of my life. In that, you will hear my part in all four of those issues."

Bringing social awareness about school bullying, depression, abuse and teen suicide means meeting with lots of teenagers, either by visiting schools, churches or both.

"I usually talk to schools and churches separately," he said.

"This is one of those rare events where I am doing both. I think I am going to eight schools and three churches this week," he chuckled. I'll be at Temple Baptist Church tonight and will visit Holly Pond High School tomorrow."

From the moment Earley begins to talk, the kids hang on his every word.

His humor and ability to relate to them is nothing short of amazing. He keeps their attention to the very end, and the students leave with the feeling they've just made a new friend.

"I'm an open book," he added. "I normally get a lot of emails from kids after I give a talk. I always promise them I will personally answer every single email they send. Every school I speak at I can count on between 100 to 150 emails," he grinned.

"I spoke at Florence last week and received 175 emails. I went to Cold Springs High School yesterday; it went really well. It's a small school; they only had about 200 kids come to hear me, so I figured I'd get about 30 emails. Turns out I got emails from all 200 kids!

"The emails are usually about things they are going through. We try to bridge the gap between the school and the students. Kids want to hide things and take them on themselves. They don't think an adult will listen. I try to be the speaker that doesn't just show up and then disappear, never to be seen again, so they follow me on Facebook and Twitter, so it's worked out great."

The students at West Point High School seemed to enjoy what Earley had to say. He made them laugh, but he also made them think.

"He was very inspiring," said 11th-grader Allison Benefield. "The way he told his story was neat, especially the way he included people from the audience."

"I like the way he tried to relate to us," ninth-grader Zeta Hood said. "He told us about his past and made sure everyone knew about it. He was a normal person and didn't act like, 'Oh, poor pitiful me' or anything."

Earley's life has been extremely traumatic, and he still cries as he tells his story. But his scars serve as a reminder to him that one person can make all the difference in the world to someone who just needs a friend. For more information about Earley and Think2Change, go to http://www.think2change.org/ or follow them on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/think2change.org.



Brian Earley poses with West Point High School students after speaking with them on Tuesday.

SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

CRMC TO HOST FREE HEART DISEASE COMMUNITY SCREENING

Meredith Easterwood
CRMC

CULLMAN – In recognition of National Heart Month, Cullman Regional Medical Center (CRMC) is hosting a FREE Heart Disease Community Screening on Thursday, Feb. 4, by appointment only.

Consider these heart attack risk factors:

- Are you over the age of 50?
- Do you have high cholesterol?
- Does heart disease run in your family?

If so, call to schedule your free appointment.

The screening will include six free tests: Lipid Panel/Glucose, Body Mass Index, EKG (Electrocardiogram), Blood Pressure, ABI Screening and Bone Density.

To schedule an appointment, call 256-735-5600.

For more information and a complete list of upcoming events at CRMC, visit www.crmchospital.com.



PROFILES IN FAITH

JUSTIN TRUETT, YOUTH PASTOR AT SIMCOE WORSHIP CENTER

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

SIMCOE – Even though Simcoe Worship Center was damaged in a huge fire in January, the spirit of the congregation remains strong, if not stronger, in the community. Because their motto is, 'CALL, CONNECT, CARE!' they believe in calling on God, connecting with God and caring for all people. By spreading the Word of God to those around them, there have been many people throughout the community who have been either touched, blessed or helped by them.

God calls very special people to tend his flock. Justin Truett, for example, is one such person. Truett is the church's youth pastor and he has a special knack with teenagers. He relates to them in a way that allows him to bring Jesus into their lives – and they love it!

Truett and his wife Chelsea both work with the youth. The two have been married for six and a half years and have two beautiful children, 4-year-old Kaylee and 2-year-old Judah. Truett was born in Montgomery, but grew up in Prattville where he graduated from Prattville High School in 2002. He moved to Arab eight years ago and currently works for a government contractor at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

"I knew at a young age, probably around 14-15, that God had a great calling on my life to preach his word," Truett began. "Thankfully, I grew up in a Christian home where my parents loved Jesus. My PawPaw, Reverend Donald N. Denmark, was an amazing man. He was actually the greatest man I've ever known. He was a dedicated, passionate and loving Church of God pastor for over 30 years. MawMaw, to this day, is the sincerest and Godliest women I have ever met," he smiled as he thought about his religious upbringing. "I'm just crazy in love with Jesus and the people that he created to love him and serve him. I just hope that the JOY that God has given me will rub off onto others.

"As a teen, I was given the opportunity to preach at my home church, Church at the Brook, in Millbrook, Alabama, under an amazing man, Bishop Randy Eubanks," he continued. "When we later moved to Guntersville, I became the junior high youth leader at the River Church of God. We were there for about seven years," he smiled warmly. "Those seven years were the greatest years of my life; it is where God TRULY changed my life. He gave me the grace to fall in love with the Word of God. It's where I truly started learning, growing and functioning in the call that God had on my life! It's where my wife and I got married and where our children were born. If the Lord had never led me to The River COG, my life would NOT be great like it is today."

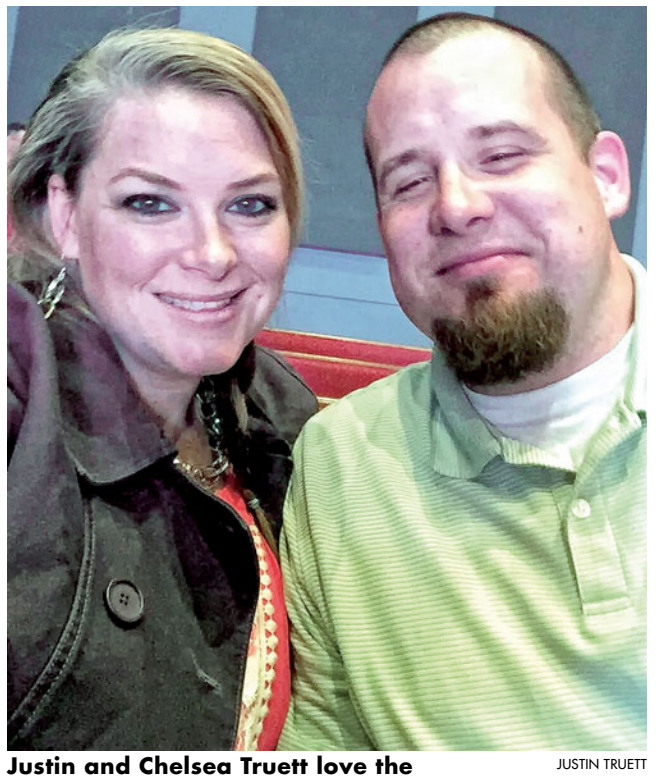
Truett is extremely passionate about his role in the church. He takes his responsibility very seriously and works hard to help the youth understand that God truly loves them.

"If God has a plan for someone's life, I believe that there needs to be people to encourage them along the way," he grinned. "Someone needs to tell them things like, 'If God is for you, it doesn't matter who or what is against you' and 'Nothing is impossible with God, and nothing is impossible for those who believe in Jesus!' In this evil and twisted world we live in, the people of God MUST be ENCOURAGED! That's my goal in life, and it's one of my biggest goals for the youth at Simcoe Worship Center. They can do anything if they simply trust in the Lord with all of their heart. As youth pastor I am there to help lead them, but I always want to encourage them."

Simcoe Worship Center holds a special place in Truett's heart and it shows when he speaks of it. He gets excited and beams when he thinks of what his church means to him.

"We are a spirit-filled, Holy Ghost- and fire-baptized group of people wanting to see lost people saved," he roared. "We want all people to be changed and set free by the power of God - that is the greatest thing I can say about Pastor Heath Tinker and the people of Simcoe Worship Center; they truly cry out and call on God, just as the Bible speaks of God's people doing! God's "will" be done at and through Simcoe Worship Center," he grinned. "My wife and I are excited about what God has in store for everyone at SWC, as well as for those lives that God is going to change around us!"

A fire may have damaged Simcoe Worship Center, but it's not done a thing to destroy God's Spirit within the church. The church needs your good thoughts and prayers in the coming months as they work to rebuild. To keep up to date on their progress, follow them on Facebook at http://qrne.ws/swc.



Justin and Chelsea Truett love the youth at Simcoe Worship Center. JUSTIN TRUETT

CPC Cullman Primary Care
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√ Joint Injections
√ Botox for migraines
√ Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial



CULLMAN PRIMARY CARE WELCOMES
BALJINDER BRAR, M.D., FAAPMR

Dr. Brar began her services at CPC Center for Pain Management in January 2016 after relocating to Cullman.
–
Dr. Brar completed her fellowship training in Interventional Pain Management at Alabama Orthopedic, Spine and Sports Medicine Associates in Birmingham, Al.
–
Dr. Brar received her Doctorate of Medicine in 2002 from Karol Marcinkowski University of Medical Sciences in Poznan, Poland.
–
Dr. Brar completed her residency training in the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. During her residency, she served as a department representative for both the Committee on Graduate Medical Education and the Committee of Interns and Residents. She interned in general surgery at Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons at Harlem Hospital in New York.
–
She is an advocate for continuing education, therefore Dr. Brar dedicates considerable time to learning about advanced pain management techniques and breakthrough therapies. She has also trained in using ultrasound guidance for multiple procedures.

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. and Thursdays from 9 a.m. - noon for eligible families. Located at 402 Arnold St. NE 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 NW.

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. NE 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. SE) Childcare is available. Call 256-775-2600 for more information. Crisis Line: 256-734-6100.

AA Meeting
The Cullman Downtown Alcoholics Anonymous will meet at 1519 St. Joseph St. NW. Every day at noon will be an open discussion meeting, Sunday at 7 p.m. is an open discussion and speaker meeting, Tuesday at 7 p.m. is an open discussion meeting (with meal at 6:30 p.m.), Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday at 10:30 a.m. is women's big book study; and Friday at 7 p.m. is a closed discussion meeting (no card signed). All meetings are non-smoking. The last Tuesday of each month is open speaker meeting/ birthday night. For more information, contact the AA coordinator at 256-736-6000.

Free English Classes
The Link of Cullman County hosts classes, 10 a.m. on Mondays and 6 p.m. on Tuesdays. Beginner and Advanced classes available. Call 256-775-0028 for information.

Tuesday

Berlin Community Meeting
7 p.m. at Berlin Community Center. Electing trustees and other community business.

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. and Thursdays from 9 a.m. - noon for eligible families. Located at 402 Arnold St. NE 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. NE 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. SW.

Cullman Knifty Knitters
Members of the Cullman Knifty Knitters group meet each Tuesday afternoon at 3 p.m. in the Cullman County Library. Everyone is invited to learn how to knit yarn, and needles are free. This group is open to all ages, both accomplished knitters and those wishing to learn the art form. Crocheters are also invited to take part in these weekly meetings. Please call Lesia for more information at 256-734-2720 ext. 23.

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

Special Needs Bowling Night
Individuals with special needs and their families are invited to the Cullman Area Special Needs Bowling Nights, 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.

AA Meeting
The Cullman Downtown Alcoholics Anonymous will meet at 1519 St. Joseph St. NW. Every day at noon will be an open discussion meeting, Sunday at 7 p.m. is an open discussion and speaker meeting, Tuesday at 7 p.m. is an open discussion meeting (with meal at 6:30 p.m.), Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday at 10:30 a.m. is women's big book study; and Friday at 7 p.m. is a closed discussion meeting (no card signed). All meetings are non-smoking. The last Tuesday of each month is open speaker meeting/ birthday night. For more information, contact the AA coordinator at 256-736-6000.

Celebrate Recovery
Meets at Holly Pond Methodist Church on Tuesday nights. Free meal at 6 p.m. Program starts at 6:30 p.m. Two court stamps available. Open to everyone with a Hurt, Habit or Hang-up. 37851 AL Highway 91 in Holly Pond.

Addiction Recovery
The Link of Cullman County hosting Christ-centered, 12-Step Addiction Recovery meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays at noon. 1101 Third Ave. SE in Cullman. Call 256-775-0028 for more information.

Free English Classes
The Link of Cullman County hosts classes, 10 a.m. on Mondays and 6 p.m. on Tuesdays. Beginner and Advanced classes available. Call 256-775-0028 for information.

Wednesday

Ask a Cardiologist Seminar at CRMC
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Don't become a statistic. Come meet the CRMC Cardiovascular Team — Dr. Silvio Papapietro, Dr. Edward Mahan, Dr. James Lee and Cardiovascular Services Director Carla Fewell, RN will be on hand to discuss the importance of heart health and to answer any questions you may have. Cost of this lunch & learn program is $5 for members of SeniorChoice and WomenFirst and $8 for others. Reservations are required. Call 256-735-5600 to register today.

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 NW.

Free Online Tutoring
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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.

AA Meeting
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Divorce Care Support Group
The Link of Cullman County, 6 p.m. Call Denise at 256-590-3719 for more information.

Thursday

FREE Heart Disease Screening at CRMC
In recognition of National Heart Month, Cullman Regional Medical Center is hosting a FREE Heart Disease Community Screening on Thursday, Feb. 4, by appointment only. Consider these heart attack risk factors: Are you over the age of 50? Do you have high cholesterol? Does heart disease run in your family? The screening will include six free tests: Lipid Panel/Glucose, Body Mass Index, EKG (Electrocardiogram), Blood Pressure, ABI Screening and Bone Density. To schedule an appointment, call 256-735-5600.

Relay For Life Team Spirit Meeting
5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 4, First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall; contact Helen Allen, 256-709-4019; www.relayforlife.org/cullmanal

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. and Thursdays from 9 a.m. - noon for eligible families. Located at 402 Arnold St. NE Ste. W-1. For more information, or to make a donation, call 256-739-1111. www.cullmancaringforkids.com

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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 NW

AA Meeting
The Cullman Downtown Alcoholics Anonymous will meet at 1519 St. Joseph St. NW. Every day at noon will be an open discussion meeting, Sunday at 7 p.m. is an open discussion and speaker meeting, Tuesday at 7 p.m. is an open discussion meeting (with meal at 6:30 p.m.), Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday at 10:30 a.m. is women's big book study; and Friday at 7 p.m. is a closed discussion meeting (no card signed). All meetings are non-smoking. The last Tuesday of each month is open speaker meeting/ birthday night. For more information, contact the AA coordinator at 256-736-6000.

Addiction Recovery
The Link of Cullman County hosting Christ-centered, 12-Step Addiction Recovery meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays at noon. 1101 Third Ave. SE in Cullman. Call 256-775-0028 for more information.

Friday

Agriplex FREE Movie Night: "Just Eat It"
Join the Agriplex and Society of St Andrews for this movie about food waste. After we will learn about Society of St Andrews and their work gleaning for those in need. We hope you'll learn something and might join us for our next gleaning. Free. Snacks and refreshments available. Starts at 7 p.m. North Alabama Agriplex, 256-297-1044

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. and Thursdays from 9 a.m. - noon for eligible families. Located at 402 Arnold St. NE Ste. W-1. For more information, or to make a donation, call 256-739-1111. www.cullmancaringforkids.com

Dulcimers 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. SW.

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 NW.

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. SW. 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.

AA Meeting
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Saturday

Cullman County Republican Party Breakfast Meeting with Candidates
Will include a buffet of area Republican candidates ahead of the much-anticipated March 1 primary. The featured speaker will be Jonathan McConnell, who is running against incumbent U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby. A forum for the Cullman County Commission Chairman candidates will also take place, including incumbent Kenneth Walker and his two challengers Darrell Hicks and Eric L. Parker. Cullman Elks Lodge. Breakfast will begin at 7:30 a.m. and the program at 8 a.m. The cost of the breakfast $10; there will be no charge to attend the meeting at 8 a.m. The general public is encouraged to attend. For more information on the CCRP or the monthly breakfast program, please visit www.cullmangop.com or contact CCRP Vice Chairman Waid Harbison at 256-708-1650. The Cullman Elks Lodge is located at 1609 Brantley Ave. NW.

West Point Youth Ball Signups
Park & Rec T-Ball, Baseball and Softball signups Feb. 6 and Feb. 13 at 10 a.m. at West Point Town Hall. $65 for one child, $60 for second child. Signups after Feb. 13 will go up to $75. Birth certificates are required.

Farm Kids Club: Wet Felted Geode Pincushion
9 - 10:30 A.M. - Join us for this fun and easy beginning felting activity. Using little more than wool, soap and water, we will create our own felt geodes. Registration required. $5 per child, maximum $10 per family. North Alabama Agriplex, 256-297-1044

Fairview Chili/Soup Supper
Fairview Town Hall, 4-6 p.m. Sponsored by Fairview Lions Club, $5, desserts $1 extra. Eat in or carry out, proceeds go to Fairview Lions Club. For more info, call William 256-385-5596.

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!

AA Meeting
The Cullman Downtown Alcoholics Anonymous will meet at 1519 St. Joseph St. NW. Every day at noon will be an open discussion meeting, Sunday at 7 p.m. is an open discussion and speaker meeting, Tuesday at 7 p.m. is an open discussion meeting (with meal at 6:30 p.m.), Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday at 10:30 a.m. is women's big book study; and Friday at 7 p.m. is a closed discussion meeting (no card signed). All meetings are non-smoking. The last Tuesday of each month is open speaker meeting/ birthday night. For more information, contact the AA coordinator at 256-736-6000.

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. NE 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.

AA Meeting
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Announcements

WSCC Alumni Foundation 2016 Trips
The WSCC Alumni Foundation is planning a number of trips to popular tourist destinations throughout 2016. Please contact LaDonna Allen at 256-352-8071 or ladonna.allen@wallacestate.edu.

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 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, Florida in February and Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico 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.

Alabama Career Center
The Alabama Career Center at Wallace State offers assistance if you are looking for a job, need help with your resume or are looking for assistance to go to college. Call 256-352-5538.

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 NW, 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. Elks Lodge at 7:30 a.m.

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

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.

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

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.

Ms. Senior Cullman County 2016 Pageant at WSCC
The new Ms. Senior Cullman County will be crowned on Saturday, Feb. 13 at Wallace State Community College. The annual pageant, sponsored by the Cullman County Commission on Aging (COA), will be at the Betty Leeth Haynes Theater from 2 - 4 p.m. The deadline to enter is Tuesday, Jan. 19. Contestants can register at the COA office at 1539 Sportsman Lake Road NW in Cullman. Contestants must be age 60 or older.

CRMC Surgical Symposium- 'Sewing' the Seeds of Knowledge
Cullman Regional Medical Center will host a Surgical Symposium, "'Sewing' the Seeds of Knowledge," on Saturday, Feb. 27 from 8 a.m. - noon in the Colonel Cullmann Room of Professional Office Building II. Breakfast will be provided; registration and breakfast will begin at 7:30 a.m. Cost for the symposium is $15 for students with a student ID, $20 for non-licensed CRMC employees, $25 for licensed CRMC employees, $40 for non-CRMC employees and $50 for registration at the door. Non-CRMC employees can register by calling 256-737-2383. For more information, contact Kim Rooks, OR Educator, at 256-737-2383 or Wendy Taylor at 256-737-2892.

Natural Disaster Awareness Training
On Tuesday, Feb. 23, from 8 a.m. - noon, the Cullman County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) will host Natural Disaster Awareness for Community Leaders at its facility at 2020 Beech Ave. SE in Cullman. While the four-hour course is free, registration is required. For more information, visit http://www.cullmanema.org or call 256-739-5410.

Red Door Coat Project
The Red Door Art Cafe's "Warm Coats for Neighbors" Project is to collect donations of new or like-new coats you may have outgrown, or are a wee bit out of style, for those in need. Drop them off at The Red Door Art Cafe, weekdays from 7:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Located at 324 Fourth Ave. SE in Cullman.

American Red Cross in Need of Volunteers
Disaster Action Team, call 256-734-0921 or visit redcross.org/Alabama for more information.

Free GED Classes
Sponsored by Wallace State Community College Adult Education Program. Call 256-352-8077 or 1-866-352-WSCC for more information.

Clothes Closet
Addington Chapel UMC in Bremen has clothes available free to those in need. No qualifications or paperwork needed. Call 256-287-1791 or 256-287-1828

North Alabama Agriplex Upcoming Activities
• Feb. 11, 6 p.m. - Living Landscapes: Tomato Growing - Learn from local farmer extraordinaire Trent Boyd all about tomatoes. This class is for everything from varieties to tips for growing the perfect tomatoes. $5 per person. 256-297-1044
• Feb. 16, 9 - 11 a.m. - Heritage Homeschool: Weather - One day it's sunny and 75 degrees while the next we have a lovely snowfall. At this Heritage Homeschool class we will discuss our weather and why it changes so often. Let's talk about hail, tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, and other possible weather phenomenon. $8 per child, maximum of $16 per family. Registration required. 256-297-1044
• Feb. 18, 6 p.m. - Book Club: Flower Confidential: The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful by Amy Stewart - Flower Confidential takes us on a round the world tour of the flower industry, including the good and bad and just plain weird. Free. Snacks and refreshments available. 256-297-1044
• Feb. 25, 6 p.m. - Heritage Skills: Sewing 101 - Jean Kessinger will teach this class on the basics of sewing. Learn the techniques to mend buttons and shirts. $5 Registration required. 256-297-1044

Renew Our Rivers Lake Cleanup
Friday, March 25, 8 a.m. - noon; Smith Lake, sites to be determined. Contact Eddie Hand at 256- 287-1545.

The 13th Annual Empty Bowls Chili Dinner
Monday, Feb. 15 from 4 - 6:30 p.m. at Cullman First United Methodist Church in Hearin Hall. The event will feature delicious chili served in handcrafted pottery bowls, a silent auction and southern gospel music by local entertainers. Tickets are $10 and are available at Cullman Caring for Kids and First United Methodist Church. All proceeds from the event will go to the Cullman Caring for Kids United Way Food Bank.

Real Men United
Feb. 19-20, Cullman Civic Center, Friday 6-9 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., registration $30, or $40 after Feb. 1 or at the door, includes t-shirt, notebook, breakfast, lunch, drinks and fellowship. Visit http://edestiny.org/RealMenUnitedCullman/ for more information.

Little Miss Fairala Pageant
Feb. 27 at 10 a.m. at the Fairview High School auditorium. Open to girls ages 0-5 from any community, not in kindergarten. Proceeds benefit FHS PTO. For more information, call Sherri at 256-339-1914.

Beads (from Front)

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – On Wednesday, Jan. 27, East Elementary student Kaeden Dawson brought something very special to school - hundreds of colorful glass beads that were strung into multiple necklaces and hung around his neck. But the beads aren't just any old beads; they are Beads of Courage, and Dawson earned every single one!

Dawson, a sixth-grader, continues his courageous fight against Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML), a malicious disease he was diagnosed with in June 2014. His bravery and strength have been rewarded throughout his battle with little colorful beads; and he wears his beads with pride, as do all members of the Beads of Courage program.

Beads of Courage is a resilience-based intervention designed to support and strengthen children and families who are coping with a serious illness. Through the program, children tell their story using colorful beads as meaningful symbols of courage that commemorate milestones they have achieved along their unique treatment paths.

When doctors first diagnosed Dawson with AML, his prognosis was grim at best. Instead of going to school with his friends, he has been fighting for the past year and a half, kicking his illness along the way with the attitude and goal of proving those doctors wrong. When he was finally able to return to school in January, he brought his necklaces with him, and plenty of stories to tell!

"The black beads signify each time I was stuck with a needle," he began. "The white beads stand for each time I received chemotherapy. I only have one of these magenta-colored beads; that one is for emergencies; I had to have an ambulance ride for that one," he grimaced. "I spent two weeks unconscious in the ICU.

"This one with the face on it stands for hair growth, and these are for physical therapy," he said as he pointed to rainbow-colored beads. "The red beads are for every blood product I ever had," he grinned. "I had over 136 blood products.

"These aqua ones here are for NG tubes and chest tubes," he continued. "NG tubes are not fun; neither are chest tubes. The doctors told me it wouldn't hurt when they took it out, but they lied to me," he chuckled.

"Yellow beads are for every night I spent in the hospital, and the orange ones are for the line removal/replacement; I can show you each spot where I've had one," he said as he pointed to each of his scars.



Teacher Beth Collins and Kaeden Dawson

When people see Dawson's beads and understand just exactly what each one represents, they are both impressed and saddened at the same time. But when Dawson looks down at his beads, he feels like a mighty warrior!

"Needles don't scare me anymore," he said triumphantly.

"Every one of those beads represents something this incredible kid has been through," said Dawson's teacher, Beth Collins. "He has come back to school and hasn't missed a beat. He's been just a delight to all of us."

"Through it all, he has never lost his smile. When seeing his necklaces and hearing his journey, I am humbled," said Principal David Wiggins.

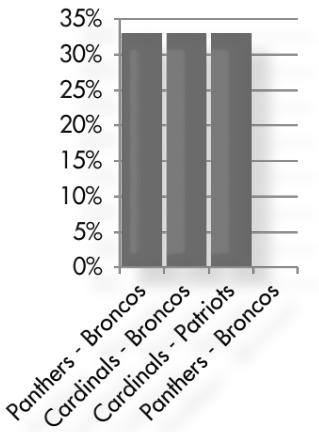
Even though he's back in school, Dawson still has battles yet to fight in his quest to conquer AML.

"I still have to go to the hospital every week to have infusions to kill my B-cells because they are still making antibodies and they aren't supposed to be," he explained. "Depending on how I react to the infusions, it could last another four to five weeks."

In times of trouble, most people ask, 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' or, 'Why do children have to get sick and suffer so?' In Kaeden's case, looking back, those answers are pretty clear; he is an inspiration to everyone he meets. He's a hero who has looked his illness in the eye and is working every day to make it go away. Through his suffering he has learned to be brave, and he takes that bravery and offers it to others who are facing similar struggles. Simply stated, he tells them, "Keep a positive attitude, anything is possible."

Poll

What teams do you think will advance to the Super Bowl?



This Week's Poll

What's your favorite kind of Girl Scout Cookie?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

PUBLIC NOTICE

The alcohol license application submitted by Kolby Lawrence (dba Bootlegger Beverages) to the City of Hanceville will be considered at their next regular council meeting on February 11, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers located at 112 Main Street SE, Hanceville, AL 35077.

A public hearing will be held on February 11, 2016 at 6:45 p.m. in the Council Chambers, all interested persons may appear at the public hearing and be heard for or against the application.

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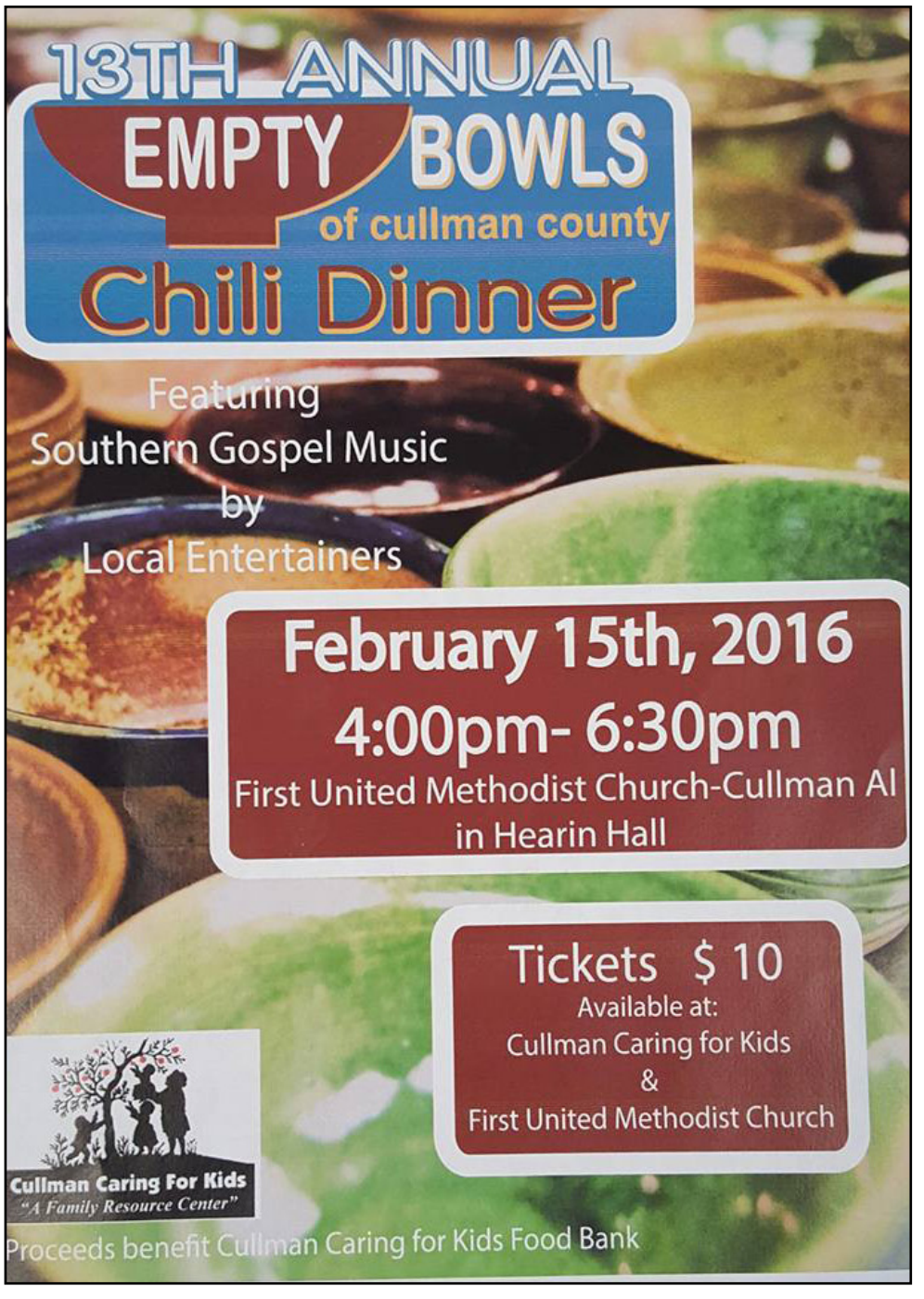


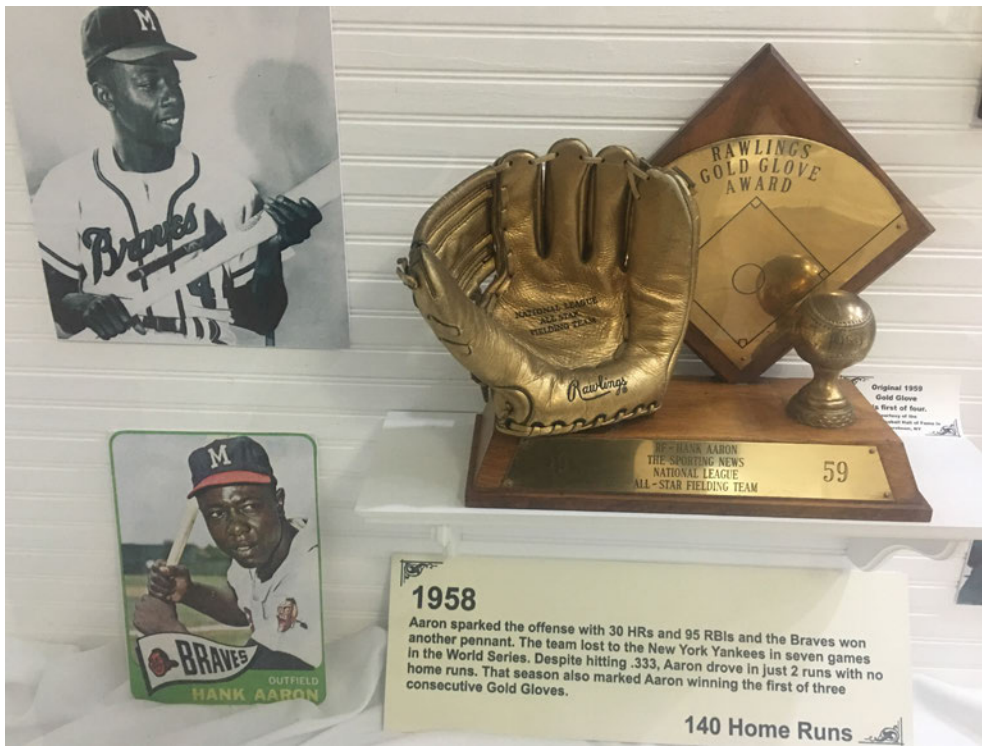
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NOAH GALILEE/CULLMANSENSE

BIRTHPLACE OF A LEGEND

Josh McBrayer
Sports Correspondent

MOBILE - At 755 Bolling Brothers Boulevard in Mobile, on the grounds of Hank Aaron Stadium, the home of the Mobile Bay Bears, sits an ordinary white cottage. While it might be small and unassuming, the home played a huge role in the life of one of baseball's greatest legends. I, of course, am talking about the Hammer himself, Henry "Hank" Aaron.

Aaron grew up without much money, but his family made it work. His father, Herbert, built the family home from the ground up using lumber that he salvaged. The small home later had two rooms added for the growing family of nine.

The house now sits at the aptly named Hank Aaron Stadium as a museum and testament to Aaron's hard work and perseverance. Inside the home are glass cases loaded with not only sports memorabilia, but relics from all of Aaron's life and his family's.

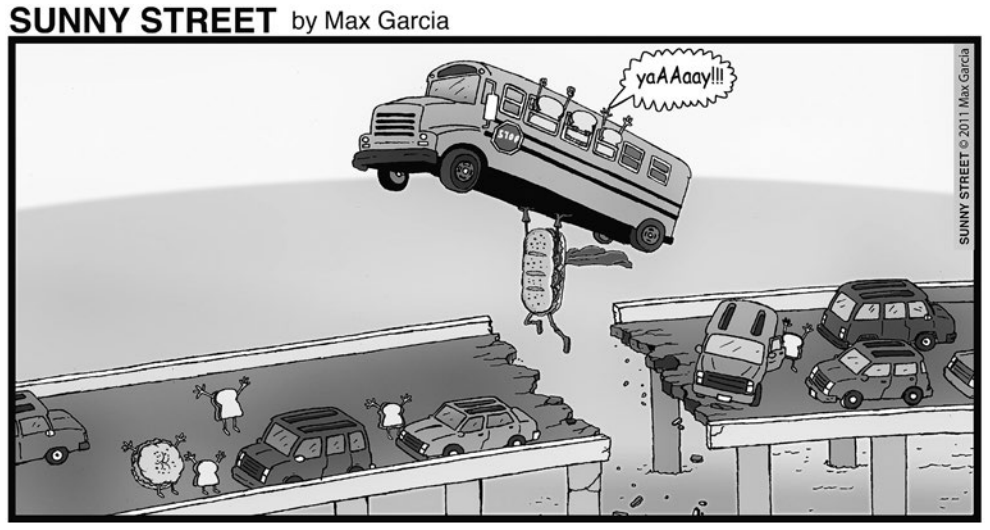
Exhibits include such items as dresses and canes used by Aaron's mother Estella, work items from his father Herbert and the shovel used to break ground on the stadium. Of course, no Hank Aaron museum would be complete without baseball memorabilia from his playing days. Visitors can see game-used balls and bats, a jersey and hat that were worn by the legend the season he surpassed Babe Ruth as the all-time home run king and awards-galore- from Silver Sluggers to MVPs and a World Series trophy.

Baseball fans passing through Mobile owe it to themselves to visit the homestead of Hank Aaron. For the admission price of $5, which goes to charity and the maintenance of the home, visitors see the life and times of one of the greatest baseball players to ever put on a pair of spikes.

For more information, visit http://qrne.ws/ham.

COMICS

SUNNY STREET by Max Garcia

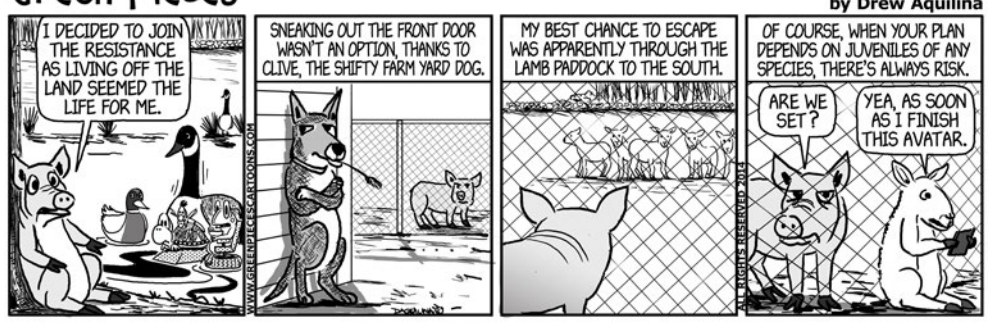


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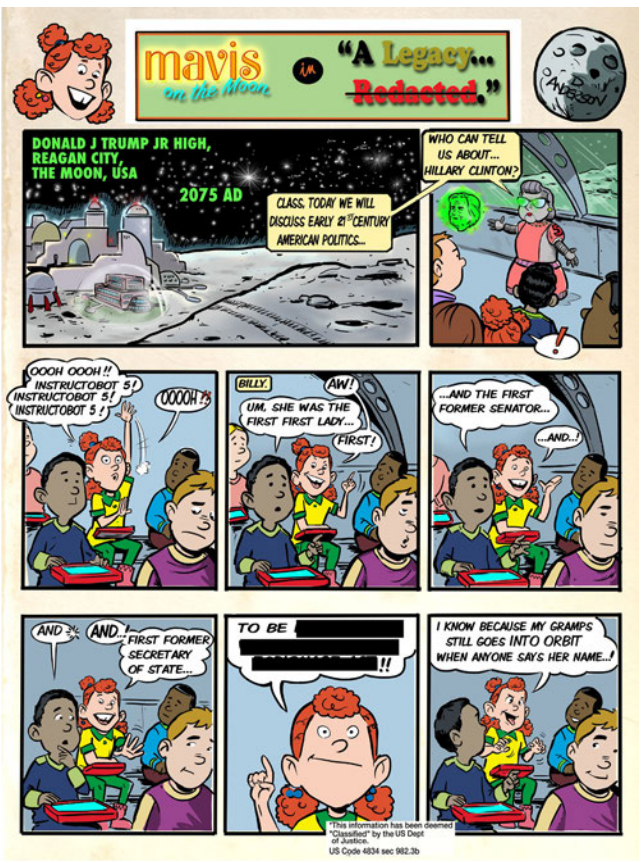
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Back Issues issues@cullmansense.com

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Contributors Will Hogue

OPINION

DREAMSTATE

Robert J. Gould
PeaceVoice

I grew up in the first American Dream, where returning soldiers from World War II were greeted by new suburbs, with cute ranch-style homes on quiet cul-de-sacs, surrounded with green grass and white picket fences. That American Dream was filled with square deals: military service earned veterans' benefits. A union job earned a square deal of pay and benefits. Income disparity between the rich and poor was minimal (relative to the present), as we all sacrificed in the war effort, so we all deserved fair treatment in the workforce. Of course, "we all" were nondisabled, heterosexual, white people, as racism, anti-semitism, sexism, homophobia, and a hatred of foreigners still persisted in this American Dream. It was an exclusionary White dream to be sure.

An additional flip side of this dream was the largess gained from the new American Empire, with massive income streams driven by our growing worldwide domination and exploitation as we surged past Britain and Japan and China was not yet on the horizon.

Now, more than 70 years after World War II, other marginalized peoples in the US have fought for their access to some version of the American Dream, from the Civil Rights movement to women's rights, gay rights, Native rights, and more.

Contemporaneously, since my post-WW II childhood, the first American Dream was rolled back, replaced by a new American Dream.

This second dream is the American Lottery Dream, where somehow, one can suddenly get rich through talent or luck, just as the currently wealthy were either luckily born rich or talented. This new dream undermined union power, as individual workers abandoned solidarity for the dream of individual wealth.

A friend of mine, while he worked at a homeless shelter during the Reagan administration, polled homeless people about their presidential preferences.

The people he polled were vastly in favor of reelecting Reagan because he offered the best pathway toward becoming rich, even though his policies escalated homelessness. This was in the 1980s, near the beginning of the American Lottery Dream, which I believe started during the Me Generation of the 1970s, based on the myth of class mobility.

The American Lottery Dream is literally expressed in the massive numbers of Americans that play various lotteries, along with other forms of gambling, which accounts for more than $70 billion in US spending per year.

The media did not play up the wealth of celebrities much in the post war era that I grew up in. Today, the wealth of celebrities (they won the Talent Lottery) and their power (e.g. Donald Trump) is constantly played up--at a high volume--in today's mainstream and social media.

It is easy to see how young people, growing up today, may dream of becoming a "rich celebrity" against the nightmare of becoming a "poor nobody."

When their personal American Lottery Dream fails legitimately, it is also not surprising that young people turn to the crime or drugs version.

In the context of the American Lottery Dream, Donald Trump's popularity makes sense, but what are we to think of Bernie Sander's popularity? Is his social democratic dream more like an improved original American Dream?

A dream filled with the security of square deals: a union job earning decent pay and benefits, income disparity between the rich and poor becoming minimal once again, and American life becoming fairer to all diverse peoples, domestic and foreign. This mirrors the European Dream, which is also much less violent than the current American Experience. 2016 may be the Year of American Dream Redefinition. Stay tuned.

OPINION

TIME FOR A RESET IN US-SAUDI RELATIONS

Mel Gurtov
PeaceVoice

The growing rift between Saudi Arabia and Iran is reportedly causing great consternation in US policymaking circles. Once again, US officials are called upon to decide whether to support an ally that isn't behaving in accord with US interests, significantly modify the relationship, or abandon it. The Obama administration, like all its predecessors going as far back as the 1930s, values Saudi oil, notwithstanding the current oil surplus. But these days it also wants Saudi participation in talks with Iran on Syria's political future and continuation of the longstanding intelligence agency ties in Syria that involve a division of labor (CIA training, Saudi money and weapons) in the fight against ISIS.

Unfortunately, the Saudis are showing (surprise, surprise!) that they have their own interests, which include confronting Iran, intervening in Yemen's civil war (using criminally disproportionate force), and avoiding too deep a military commitment in Syria.

People with a long involvement in US Middle East policy naturally deplore the evolving gulf between the US and Saudi Arabia but insist that the Saudis are too valuable an ally to desert. Dennis Ross, a longtime US State Department negotiator in the Middle East, writes: "Distancing from Saudi Arabia will raise further questions with America's traditional partners in the Middle East and might mislead the Iranians into thinking the US will never hold them to account on the nuclear deal or their regional behavior." For analysts like Ross, Iran remains the primary US foe in the region. So long as such thinking holds, support—especially with multibillion-dollar arms packages—for "traditional partners" such as Saudi Arabia and Israel will remain firm no matter how often, and how significantly, those countries' leaders thumb their noses at Washington.

Therein lies the conundrum that so often seems to afflict US policymaking, in the Middle East and elsewhere. How long must a so-called ally be tolerated and coddled, with mountains of arms, when its actions contradict US policy and violate international norms?

The Saudi royal family runs an authoritarian political system that nurtures radical Islamism, suppresses political criticism, and systematically violates human rights. Its mass executions that most recently included a leading Shiite cleric and 46 other prisoners are symptomatic of a brutal, insecure leadership that cares little about bridging Sunni-Shiite differences in the region or successfully implementing Iran's nuclear weapons deal, and even less about humane values.

Is this a partnership worth preserving? And what does it say about US priorities and purposes in the Middle East if the answer is yes?

So long as the Saudi tail is wagging the American dog in the Middle East, ordinary people there will remain convinced that oil and repression-driven stability are the only things that matter to US leaders. The Saudis have every right to choose their enemies, but by the same token the US has every right to stop soothing and currying favor with a country that is unreliable and unworthy of support. It's the same argument for ditching Pakistan, another US partner that Washington consistently rewards with arms despite Pakistan's awful record on human rights, democratic rule, and fighting terrorism. And it's the same for ending the reflexive support of Israel, whose actions in the Occupied Territories and treatment of Palestinians are clear violations of international law and humane ethics.

So far the US response has been a tepid criticism of the cleric's execution, a diplomatic urging of "restraint" by Saudi Arabia and Iran, and a needless reminder to the House of Saud that finding a way to end the Syrian civil war has top priority. The Obama administration might have handled this latest Saudi-Iranian test of strength differently, however.

First, it should have demanded that the cleric's life, not to mention the lives of the other 46 people, be spared. That would have avoided the sacking of the Saudi embassy in Tehran and the consequent strengthening of the hardliners in Iran. If the US demand was not met, it could then take additional steps, such as reducing imports of oil from Saudi Arabia, stopping logistical support of its air operations in Yemen (which should never have occurred in the first place), and cutting military aid to the Saudis. The Saudis might then have come to their senses and realized that their security problems would only be intensified by rupturing relations with Iran and dramatizing the sectarian divide between Shiites and Sunnis.

Of course, in the "real world" of foreign policy, the US is not prepared and may never be prepared to take such a strong and principled course of action.

Access to oil, support of Israel, and reliance on the authoritarian Middle East monarchies have been staples of US policy for many decades.

Yet wouldn't it be worth considering that the violence and deprivations of human rights in the Middle East might be alleviated by US adherence to a different set of priorities: social justice, environmental protection (with a focus on water), accountable and transparent governance, and demilitarization through substantial reductions of armaments and arms transfers?

SOUTH DOMINATES 2016 REESE'S SENIOR BOWL

Josh McBrayer
Sports Correspondent

MOBILE – The North squad took the field first, with Carson Wentz at the helm. He completed his first pass, but Shaun Davis immediately blew up the play after three yards and the game was underway. After two straight rushes from Kenneth Dixon, the North was forced to punt.

The South took the field for the first time with 12:34 in the first, under the direction of Jake Coker. He quickly stuck the ball in the gut of Alabama teammate Kenyan Drake for six quick yards to get the South roster off on the right foot. The next play pushed the South back 10 yards, but on second and 20, Coker and Drake hooked up for an 11-yard pass play. The third down pass was incomplete and the South was forced to punt.

Wentz looked good on the North's second possession, throwing the ball efficiently and picking up a quick first down, but two consecutive dropped passes forced another North punt and put the ball back in the hands of the 2016 National Championship-winning quarterback, Jake Coker. Faced with a third and eight, Coker picked up the first down with an eight-yard scramble, the first time the chains moved for the South on the day. Two plays later, DeAndre Washington took a pitch from Coker and rumbled 11 yards for another first down. Two plays after, Arron Green sprinted 25 yards to the right front corner of the end zone for the touchdown. The South ran eight plays for 56 yards for the game's first score. Ross Martin nailed the PAT to put the South on top 7-0 with nine minutes left to play in the first.

The North was again forced to punt on their third possession thanks in part to a third down pass that was broken up by Alabama's Cyrus Jones. He then received the punt and set the South up first and 10 at the 44 yard line. However, the South was only able to move the ball two yards before they were forced to punt the ball back to the North. Braxton Miller took the punt and returned it two yards to the 20 and that is where the North would set up shop for their fourth possession.

To no one's surprise, another Alabama player came up big in defense; this time it was Jarron Reed. He hit Wentz after a three-yard scramble that left the North with a third and long that they didn't convert. The North elected to go for it on fourth and three, but Wentz's pass to Miller was incomplete, turning the ball over on downs at their own 27.

Coker completed the first down for five yards, but the second play saw Coker on his back via a sack by Vernon Butler. He fumbled the ball, but it was recovered by teammate Evan Boehm. This put the South in a hole, but they came away with points as BYU's Martin split the uprights on a 48-yard field goal to give the South the 10-0 advantage with 20 seconds left to play in the first.

Wentz got it going on the North's fifth possession, connecting with tight end Nick Vannett for 29 yards. He was sacked on the next play, fumbling the football, but it was recovered by his teammates to keep possession as the time expired in the first, but, as per Senior Bowl rules, the possession changes after each quarter. After one, the South led 10-0.

Dak Prescott started the second quarter for the South and went right to work, marching the South 25 yards down the field in less than 1:30, all the way to midfield, but the drive stalled and the South was forced to punt.

Kevin Hogan got things going for the North in the second. He led his squad on their first sustained drive of the game, thanks in part to a 26-yard strike to the big target Vannett. After converting on a fourth and one, he was sacked for the second time on the drive, this time losing nine. This stalled the drive and forced a 36-yard field goal attempt by Ka'imi Fairbairn. He put it through the uprights and the North was on the board but trailed 10-3 with 2:56 left in the half. Prescott showed off his legs in the early part of the South's sixth drive, setting up a third and one thanks to a seven-yard scamper. DeAndre Washington picked up the first and more with a burst of speed to the left side of the line to the tune of 15 yards. On the next play, Prescott hit Jay Lee for 19 down to the South 37. He hit him again on the very next play for 11. He went to him for the third time in a row but it fell incomplete. He hit Roberts for 14 on the next play to set up first and 10 from the 12. He kept the ball on the next play for seven yards setting up third and three from the seven. He then hit Paul McRoberts for a five-yard touchdown. Martin hit the PAT to put the South up 17-3 with 22 seconds left in the half. Prescott led the South 80 yards on 10 plays culminating in a five-yard TD pass. This effectively ended the half with the South on top 17-3.

After a punt from the North to open the second half, Brandon Allen led the South methodically down the field to the 22. Martin then booted the 40-yard field goal to put the South up 20-3 with 9:26 left to play.

Cody Kessler got his shot to shine in the second half and he made the most of it. He led the North down into the red zone and looked to cross the goal line to get the North back in the game. On fourth and five, the North squad elected to go for it and Kessler hit Ed Eagen for eight yards to set up first and goal from the South's four yard line. Three plays later, Kessler kept it himself for a one yard QB keeper for the North's first touchdown on the day. The PAT from Fairbairn was good and the North closed the gap to 20-10 with 1:53 left in the third.

The North caught somewhat of a break in the closing seconds of the third quarter when KJ Dillon blocked a 33-yard field goal attempt by Martin. Joe Schobert scooped up the ball at the South 33 and looked as if he was going to score, but Jerrell Adams caught him from behind after 73 yards, bringing him down five yards from the goal line with six seconds left on the clock. The North failed to score before time ran out, and per Senior Bowl rules, the two teams flipped the end of the field and possessions. The South started their drive from their own 25 with Jacoby Brissett under center. He started the drive by completing back-to-back passes, a five-yard gainer to Charone Peake and a 25-yard strike to Adams. From here, the South squad methodically moved the ball down the field, down to the North three yard line. Three straight rushes by Alabama's Kenyan Drake led to a touchdown, putting the South up by 17 and effectively ending the game. Jeff Driskell of the North facilitated the last points of the game as he hit Aaron Burtbridge with a 29-yard TD pass as time expired to close the gap on the scoreboard.

The winner of the 2016 Reese's Senior Bowl was the South squad by the final score of 27-16. Dak Prescott of Mississippi State won the Most Outstanding Player Award by going 7-10 with 69 yards and a touchdown. He also carried the ball three times for 14 yards. The South's MVP was Shawn Oakman of Baylor with two big sacks for a total loss of 13 yards. The North MVP was Darian Thompson of Boise State who had five total tackles and two broken up pass attempts.

Special thank you to Augusta's Sports Grill for their support to cover this year's Senior Bowl.





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