SERIES 6 • ISSUE 8 • FEBRUARY 22, 2016
CULLMANSENSE
COMMUNITY MATTERS


SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

13TH ANNUAL EMPTY BOWLS DRAWS BIG CROWD DESPITE BIG RAINS P6


AMY LEONARD/CULLMANSENSE

FIFTH ANNUAL SEVERE WEATHER PREPAREDNESS SALES TAX HOLIDAY FEB. 26-28

Purchase approved items and pay no state, city or county sales tax

Amy Leonard
amy@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Now is the time for Alabama residents to check their severe weather kits to ensure their readiness for this year's storm season.

The fifth annual Severe Weather Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday, which provides Alabama residents the opportunity to purchase approved items free of state sales tax, will begin Friday, Feb. 26 at 12:01 a.m. and end on Sunday, Feb. 28 at midnight.

Both the City of Cullman and Cullman County have opted to participate in the holiday which will make the approved items exempt from city and county sales tax also. This additional incentive speaks to the high importance placed on home storm kits by governing officials. Citizens affected by the April 2011 tornadoes understand the significance of preparation.

Many expected items are found on the exemption list including batteries of various sizes, carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, flashlights, fire extinguishers and tarps. One item, often overlooked, is a non-electric can opener which, during a power outage, makes life considerably easier.

A battery-powered radio is considered by many residents to be essential in their storm kits.

Cullman County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Director Phyllis Little shared, "The NOAA radio is the best personal source of severe weather information. It can be programmed to provide the alerts for your local area.

"Everyone seems to own a cell phone and when power is out for extended periods, we all look for a way to 'plug in.' Having a backup power source is essential."

Little suggests, "If you have young children, a stock of emergency glow sticks may be your ideal purchase. These can be given to children when the power is off or when going to a storm shelter. They are safe and inexpensive alternatives to a flashlight that requires batteries and may be dropped and broken."

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PETER NASSETTA

PROFILES IN FAITH
PETER NASSETTA, DEACON AT SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH P7

AHSAA NORTHWEST REGIONAL TOURNAMENT HITS HALF-WAY MARK P5

REMEMBERING HARPER LEE


Lee with Mary Badham, who played Scout in the 1962 film version of "To Kill a Mockingbird." REX

Her former neighbor shares his memories of the reclusive, beloved author

Story on page 12


Bryan Sellers and his dog, Lt. Dan. BRYAN SELLERS

Memory Gardens Meeting Draws Big Crowd at City Hall

Amy Leonard
amy@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – "You know the situation. They took the people's money and ran. It's just that simple. They left us to deal with it here in our community," opened State Rep. Randall Shedd, R-Fairview.

Dealing with the situation were local citizens at a public hearing held Saturday morning at Cullman City Hall. The forum provided residents an opportunity to discuss Shedd's proposed Cemetery Board legislation. The legislation is in response to the worsening conditions at the bankrupt Cullman Memory Gardens, located at 1516 Bolte Road SE.

The legislation would create a board that could negotiate for the control of Cullman Memory Gardens, acquire the cemetery and then set up a nonprofit organization to maintain it in the future. The money listed in the bill would be generated from local sales tax, not money already allocated to another area, according to Shedd.

"We're very fortunate in our community that our sales tax has grown and is continuing to grow due to good business development and good decisions in the area, so the county's budget this year will grow about a million dollars," said Shedd.

Shedd says his proposal would take $50,000 of that increase and put it toward equipment,

P2

U.S. 278 BRIDGE UPDATE

REPAIR WORK ON U.S. 278 SLOPE TO BEGIN FEB. 22, WEATHER PERMITTING

Seth Burkett
ALDOT

HUNTSVILLE – The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) today announced the first of two phases of geotechnical repairs at the U.S. 278 bridge over Kugler Creek in Cullman County is expected to begin Monday, Feb. 22, weather permitting.

Geostabilization International (GSI) submitted the low bid of $753,770 in an emergency letting. The contract will provide GSI 30 days to perform the work, which includes stabilizing the upper portion of the slope by constructing a soil nail retaining wall.

The second phase of repair, which will be contracted separately, will address the remainder of the slope and retaining wall.

Current conditions pose no immediate danger to the traveling public; however, foot traffic is advised to remain clear of the slopes, retaining wall and any other areas indicated off-limits by signs or barriers. ALDOT personnel are continuing to monitor the stability of all roadways, slopes and bridges in the immediate vicinity and will take action, including closure of the affected roadways and bridges, if warranted by a change in conditions.

An EarthCam was placed Wednesday so that the retaining wall can be monitored

P2

PRINTED LOCALLY @ PRINTING Alabama Web Press

EXECUTION OF SEARCH WARRANT LEADS TO ARREST; METH SEIZED

Bradley Williams
CCSO

CULLMAN – Investigators with the Cullman County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) arrested Kevin Dewitt Garner yesterday for unlawful distribution of a controlled substance, unlawful possession of a controlled substance and unlawful possession of marijuana, second degree.

The operation that led to the arrest was executed at 2042 Larry Ave. in Cullman on Wednesday, Feb. 17.

Investigators made entry into the residence and arrested Garner, who had warrants for two counts of unlawful distribution of a controlled substance.

While inside, investigators and deputies located methamphetamine and a small amount of marijuana.

CCSO seized approximately three grams of methamphetamine and a small amount of marijuana.

"This is another drug pusher in jail and meth that won't make it to the streets in our community," said Sheriff Matt Gentry. "I would also like to thank the investigators for the good job they did on this arrest," added Gentry.

Garner is being held in the Cullman County Detention Center on a $66,000 bond.

CULLMAN CO. BOSOM BUDDIES TO HOST COLORS OF CANCER DAY APRIL 2

Amy Leonard
amy@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – A cancer diagnosis is the definition of facing fear. Almost immediately, an ordinary person becomes a warrior preparing for the fight of a lifetime. But, battles are not meant to be fought alone. Support is not just helpful but necessary in the fight against cancer. Cullman County Bosom Buddies Foundation provides that support.

On Saturday, April 2, the Cullman County Bosom Buddies Foundation invites the citizens of Cullman to share in the fight at the Colors of Cancer Day at Cullman County Fairgrounds. The fun-filled day will include a 5K race, parade, drum line competition, balloon release and appearance from Cindy the Pink Firetruck. Bounce houses will be available for children, with vendors and concessions set up inside the Lioness Building.

The 5K race kicks off the day at 8 a.m.

It begins at the fairgrounds with race day registration available at 7 a.m.

Preregistration forms are available at local gyms and businesses or can be obtained by contacting Amanda Rogers at amanda.rogers@crmchospital.com or Becky Richardson at brichardson1957@yahoo.com.

The 5K race fee is discounted at $25 until March 29, when the cost goes to $30.

The race will be bib timed and the medals will be awarded immediately following the race.

Strollers are welcome for the race, but pets will not be allowed.

The parade, let by Cindy the Pink Firetruck and a pink patrol car from Orange Beach, will begin at 10 a.m. near the (north) Cullman Shopping Center and will travel to the fairgrounds along Highway 31 North.

At the fairgrounds, the drum line competition, featuring many band members from throughout the county, will begin at noon.

Cindy the Pink Firetruck (www.pinkfiretrucks.org) will be featured at the fairgrounds after the parade.

All cancer survivors are invited and encouraged to sign Cindy.

Also expected are several other pink firetrucks from the area.

Balloons will be sold for $5 each. 27 different balloon colors, each relating to a specific cancer, will be available.

A name or message can be written on a card attached to the balloon before the release. Scheduled for 2 p.m., the balloon release will be an inspirational activity for all ages.

"Colors of Cancer Day will be an annual event. We want everyone to come out and enjoy the day. This will be a day of celebration," shared Bosom Buddies board member Judy Grissom.

"Bosom Buddies made this event possible in order to make the public aware of the resource that is available for the Cullman area."

The Cullman County Bosom Buddies Foundation is a 501(c3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide financial assistance to Cullman area cancer patients who are experiencing financial hardships during their treatments.

All donations are used for cancer patients in the Cullman County area.

To find the event on Facebook, visit http://qrne.ws/ccd. For more information, visit https://www.facebook.com/CullmanCountyBosomBuddiesFoundation.

YPCULLMAN- NEW GROUP FOR CULLMAN'S YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN– Young professionals in Cullman will soon have a new organization. On Thursday, March 17 at 6 p.m. at Karma's Coffee House, the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's new program is slated to begin. YPCullman will be a meeting place for the next generation of community leaders, designed to channel energy and nurture leadership potential. "YPCullman is a group that encourages young professionals ages 22-39 to become involved in the Chamber and in their community," said Leah Bolin, Chamber president.

"Participation in YPCullman will introduce a new generation to the Chamber and its mission. We will begin with quarterly socials. Over time, we hope this will evolve into community awareness and concern, committee involvement, entrepreneurial roundtables and eventually leadership roles. Young professionals under 40 will have the opportunity to meet, engage and change the world around them through the Chamber of Commerce."

The Chamber is challenging the young adults of Cullman County to come together and make YPCullman a success. It is an opportunity for the future leaders of Cullman to meet, network and become involved. Employers are encouraged to send their employees ages 22-39. Karma's Coffee House is located at 103 First Ave. NE, Suite 140.

To sign up, or for more information, email Magan Bartlett at mbartlett@cullmanchamber.org.

Cemetery (from Front)

operations or needed expense. The board would not be required to take over cemeteries in disrepair and would set up its own guidelines.

Additionally, the Cullman County Sheriff would be authorized to use local jail inmates to provide maintenance at Cullman Memory Gardens, a practice already used by the Cullman County Parks.

Many of those in attendance shared their continuing frustration with the handling of the cemetery, its bankruptcy and the bankruptcy court-appointed trustee. For years, the only cemetery upkeep done has been by volunteers, a difficult job with no running water or electricity, according to resident Eddie Jackson, whose daughter and other family members are buried at the cemetery.

Resident Mary Schwaiger said the cemetery was nice when her first husband was buried there in 1965. She and her sister-in-law, Shirley Smith, have buried many family members there in the past fifty years.

Supportive of the proposal, Smith said, "I think the hearing was great. We need a committee that can get in there and get things done. They need to cut down the costs for those of us who have to rebury our people."

Those in opposition were quick to voice their empathy for those personally affected by the cemetery's demise; however, they feel the proposal is a bailout.

"It's not the taxpayers' problem or fault that it happened," stated Jacqueline Schendel.

"It's a minimum of $50,000. If you read the bill, it starts at fifty grand. They're saying it might take $3 million to clean up this mess. OK folks, where's that $3 million going to come from?"

Shedd concluded, "The turnout was good and we had a large crowd. Everybody had a chance to speak and we listened. We'll take what they said, try to address the concerns and make tweaks on the bill. I fully intend to move forward to set up a mechanism to solve this problem."

Shedd encourages those with additional questions or input to contact him at randall.shedd@alhouse.gov.

Repair (from Front)

from off-site. ALDOT personnel were at the bridge today to reposition the camera.

For the full background on this story, visit: http://cullmansense.com/articles/2016/02/16/update-new-bridge-hwy-278-and-co-rd-1147 and http://cullmansense.com/articles/2016/02/11/aldot-monitoring-us-278-bridge-kugler-creek-seeking-measures-remediation.

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DARRELL HICKS, CANDIDATE FOR CULLMAN COUNTY COMMISSION CHAIRMAN

Will Hogue
will@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Darrell Hicks wants to be the next Chairman of the Cullman County Commission.

Hicks, former Cullman County Associate Commissioner, Place 1, said that one of the main reasons that he's trying to get the job back is that he's had so many requests to run again.

He also believes he can straighten things up and get things in the order that he believes they should be in.

"Commissioner Walker has been in there, but he hasn't gotten much done," Hicks said. "And that Parker guy doesn't know anything about the commission."

Hicks has several things he wants to work on if elected to the position. According to him, the county roads are in a crisis. He also wants to see the completion of the County's first public shooting range. "We all believe in the Second Amendment rights, gun sales are at an all-time high, everyone has guns, but not everyone has a place to go shoot them," he said.

Hicks has long-term goals as well, such as having a consistent presence in Montgomery, pushing the needs of Cullman and getting projects moved forward.

He says he wants to use the Commissioner's office to its full extent.

"I feel like the three commissioners end up just running around putting out small fires. I want to sit down and have us all work on a long-term plan," Hicks said.

There are many ideas that Hicks states have been talked about for years, and he wants to make them happen.

A new judicial building with much better security than the current courthouse, including more secure parking for judges and an easier and safer way to take prisoners to and from the courthouse is one of those ideas. The space and office vacancies left behind at the current courthouse, Hicks said, can be filled by the county offices that are scattered around the county. It would be a consolidation of all the county offices into one building.

Hicks has been cattle farming since he was last involved with the County Commission. He will have farm help if elected to the position of county commissioner.

The primary election is on March 1. In addition to Hicks, candidates for Commission Chairman are incumbent Kenneth Walker and businessman Eric L. Parker.

SHEDD KILLS TWO COUNTY COMMISSION BILLS IN THE HOUSE

State Rep. Randall Shedd
Contributor

MONTGOMERY – State Rep. Randall Shedd, R-Fairview, led the way on Thursday to kill two legislative bills in the Alabama House of Representatives that he says could raise garbage rates (HB 24) and make it easier for county commissioners to give themselves pay raises (HB 16).

Both bills were the first two items on the House agenda on Thursday, Feb. 18.

Shedd issued the following statement:

There is no question, the first bill (HB 24) opened the door for backdoor tax increases. It set up a way for county commissions to raise rates on monthly garbage bills and landfill fees to pay for other things including new buildings and roads.

I don't want to see $100 a month garbage bills to pay for county services not related to sanitation service.

Currently, the county commission has the authority to raise garbage rates, but all of the money from garbage bills must be spent on operating the sanitation system. It can't be spent on other county services such as new buildings or roads, etc.

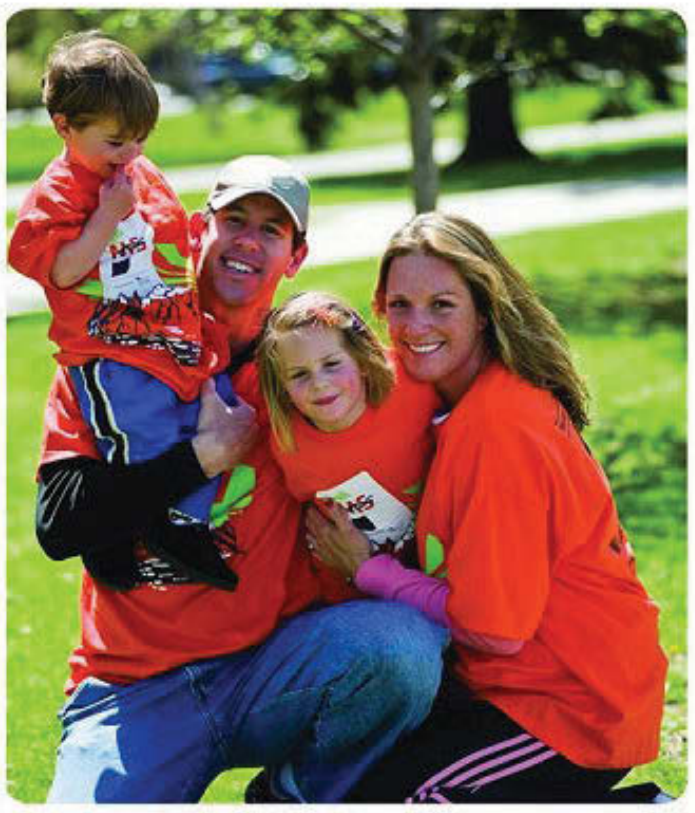
I think if this legislation passed, people could see some very expensive garbage bills. The bill failed 65-10.

The second bill (HB 16) would authorize county commissions to give themselves a pay raise at any time during the year. The bill died on a procedural vote.

I am proud to have led the fight to kill these bills.

I said when this session began, my strategy is to "amend and defend" the people I represent, and this is a good example of it.

Shedd can be reached at 256-531-6641.





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EAST ELEMENTARY HOSTS ARCHERY TOURNAMENT

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – On Saturday, Feb. 20, East Elementary School hosted their first archery tournament in the Cullman High School gym. Over 400 young archers, from grades 3-12, were there to show off their skills and compete for terrific prizes.

There are many advantages to learning archery, especially at a young age. Children who take archery classes in school are taught discipline and mental focus.

They learn to pay attention to detail and are very persistent. Patience is an important life lesson these youngsters are learning while trying to hit the bull's-eye at the same time.

"Today I was shooting and I realized it was important to take your time," said Kathleen Davis, third-grade student from Welti Elementary.

"The more you take your time, the more you will hit the bull's-eye and get good shots. It is really good to practice a lot and if your hands hurt when you pull the string back, you can get those little things to put on your bow so when you pull back, it is a lot softer for you."

Archery is becoming quite a popular sport in schools throughout Cullman County, thanks in part to a grant made by the Heritage Archery Club, a Cullman chapter of the Bowhunters of Alabama, and the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP).

"It is always important to aim your bow correctly and you know what arm you are most dominant," Davis continued.

"Some people are left side-dominant, so they have to get the right bow. You also have to keep your bow safe so it doesn't get broken, because bows cost a lot of money. Also, make sure nobody gets your bow by mistake, so put your name on it and put it in a special place so you don't lose it."

Davis has learned a lot during her first year of archery. Not only was she knowledgeable, she was very excited to explain her newfound craft to everyone she met.

"I am thrilled that East Elementary School is sponsoring an archery tournament," said David Wiggins, East Elementary principal.

"When Coach Whitlock suggested the idea, I did not hesitate to offer my support. It is all about children, about giving them the chance to shine in competition, so I am not surprised at the amount of support that we have been offered. This is no small undertaking, as it involves and requires many people working together to make it possible. Our coaches, students, parents, superintendent and Board of Education have been dedicated to making our program a success. Our community has also been overwhelmingly supportive.

"As a school, we want to offer a variety of activities that will offer our students a chance to succeed," Wiggins added.



The East Elementary team took the top spot. SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

"While we have traditionally prided ourselves on exemplary academic and fine arts programs, we have not been able to provide an athletic program. Archery has done so much in meeting that student need."

The East Elementary Archery Tournament was a resounding success, according to those in attendance. Fun was had by all, from the parents, to the students and those who worked tirelessly to make the event happen.

Archers were especially thankful to Cullman High School for allowing the tournament to be held in their gym.

Sponsors of the event included: McDonalds, Piggly Wiggly, Guthrie's, Applebee's, Wal-Mart, Jim 'N Nicks BBQ, Sunflour Bakery & Eatery, Monograms Plus, Mad Dog Mike's Famous BBQ, Bill Smith Buick GMC, Grumpy's Italian Grill, Earth Core, Rusken Packaging, Kernal Kullman, Chick-fil-A, Coca-Cola, Augusta's Sports Grill, Fastenal, Buffalo Wild Wings, Jack's, Publix and Graybow Outdoors.

AHSAA NORTHWEST REGIONAL TOURNAMENT HITS HALF-WAY MARK

Johnny Thornton
Sports Correspondent

HANCEVILLE – Excitement has been a part of the 2016 Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) Northwest Regional Basketball Tournament, even without a Cullman County school getting to the round of 16 for the first time in the 23-year history of the playoff format.

But Saturday morning had one of the biggest surprises in the history of the tournament. The No. 1-ranked Madison Academy Lady Mustangs went down to defeat at the hands of a very determined Lexington Lady Golden Bears team 62-59 in overtime at Tom Drake Coliseum.

The so-called experts had very much penciled in Madison Academy and No. 2-ranked Lauderdale County to fight it out once more for the regional title and a trip to Birmingham for the Final Four.

Lexington had different ideas and Colbert County did too. The Lady Indians were on the verge of upsetting the winner of four consecutive 3A regional crowns.

Lauderdale County got control of the game in the fourth quarter with a 17-6 finish and eliminated Colbert County 50-37.

Who will play in the regional championships starting Monday afternoon has been decided in all but one classification.

Class 4A will step into the spotlight for its semifinals Monday with the Danville-West Limestone girls at 9 a.m., Brooks will face Haleyville at 10:30 a.m., the Deshler girls vs. East Lawrence at noon and Deshler takes on Cordova at 1:30 p.m.

The first two champions to be crowned in the 2016 edition of the regional will be Class 1A. R.A. Hubbard and Decatur Heritage girls will be a rematch of Area 15. They play Monday at 3 p.m.

That will be followed by Marion County vs. Decatur Heritage at 4:45 p.m. in the 1A varsity division.

On Tuesday, the day begins with 6A going for the championship hardware. Austin and Hartselle girls are from Area 15, with Hartselle trying to pull off its second upset in the tournament.

The Lady Tigers topped No. 7 Athens 61-53 and now get to tangle with the Lady Black Bears for the fourth time this season. No. 5 Austin has won all three matchups, recently getting by the Lady Tigers in the area championship in Decatur.

Lee-Huntsville is trying to repeat in 6A, but Muscle Shoals wants to show the Generals they are a team on the upswing. They play at 10:45 a.m. Tuesday.

Class 7A is a battle of Top 10 powers in the girls' division with Hazel Green and Hoover at 12:15 p.m., then a Birmingham-metro championship between Hoover and Oak Mountain at 2:15 p.m.

Hoover nipped James Clemens in the semis 55-52 with Oak Mountain pulling out a 43-40 win in the closing seconds over Sparkman.

The 2A division will cap off championship Tuesday. It will be Tanner High School vs. Mars Hill Bible.

The Lady Rattlers ended the run of Red Bay, downing the defending 2A state champion 53-37 on Friday afternoon. Mars Hill had no trouble sending Phil Campbell home by the score of 58-40.

In the varsity championship, both squads are coming off narrow victories. Tanner outlasted Sulligent 51-48 in overtime and Mars Hill had to turn away a pesky Phil Campbell squad 55-52. The title game will be at 5:45 p.m.

Wednesday will be the finale for championship play. Two schools who know each other will get things started at 9 a.m. Lauderdale County and Lexington battle for the 3A girls crown. They are in the same county, separated by about 20 miles.

Madison Academy and Sheffield meet at 10:45 a.m. The Mustangs feature one of the state's top prospects in Josh Langford, who has committed to play for Tom Izzo at Michigan State.

Sheffield is a team that can produce points, scoring 127 in a sub-regional win over Oakman and netting 73 on Saturday morning in a victory at the Coliseum against West Morgan.

Class 5A will be Wenonah vs. Ramsay girls from the Birmingham area for the championship at 12:15 p.m., then another matchup of the Magic City as Ramsay and Parker play for the grand prize at 2:15 p.m.

The 4A championships will be at 4 p.m. for the girls then the varsity at 5:45 p.m.

Winners from the Northwest Regional will advance to the Final Four in Birmingham the following week and play the representative of the South Regional inside the Legacy Arena at the BJCC.

For more information about the Northwest Regional Tournament, including a complete schedule, visit http://cullmansense.com/articles/2016/02/17/2016-ahsaa-northwest-regional-basketball-tournament-wallace-state-hanceville-feb.

COUNTY SPORTS SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY 22-26

MONDAY

Baseball
Cullman vs Sparkman 4 p.m.
Holly Pond @ Locust Fork 4 p.m.
West Point vs Hanceville 6 p.m.

Softball
West Point vs Arab 4:30 p.m.

Soccer
St. Bernard vs Brewer 5 p.m.

TUESDAY

Baseball
Fairview vs Albertville 4:30 & 6:30 p.m.
St. Bernard vs Carbon Hill 4:00 p.m.
West Point vs Good Hope 6:00 p.m.
Cold Springs vs Winston County 4 p.m.

Softball
Cullman vs Corner 5 p.m.

Soccer
Cullman vs John Carroll 5:30 & 7:00 p.m.
Fairview vs Oneonta 5:30 & 7:00 p.m.
West Point vs Mars Hill 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Baseball
Cold Springs @ Carbon Hill 4:30 p.m.

Softball
West Point @ Good Hope 4:00 p.m.

Soccer
St. Bernard @ New Hope 5:30 & 7:00 p.m.
West Point @ Danville 7:00 p.m.

FRIDAY

Baseball
Cullman @ Grissom 4:00 p.m.
Fairview @ Arab 4:30 p.m.
Vinemont @ St. Bernard 5:30 p.m.

Softball
Cullman vs John Clements 4:00 p.m.
Fairview @ Hanceville 4:00 p.m.

Soccer
Cullman @ Brewer 7:00 p.m.
Fairview vs Arab 4:30 p.m.& 6:30 p.m.

Compiled by Josh McBrayer

PILOT CLUB TO HOST PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S FASHION SHOW/LUNCHEON

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - The Pilot Club of Cullman will host its spring 2016 charity fundraiser, Professional Women's Fashion Show and Luncheon: "Dancing in the Street," on Wednesday, April 27 at the Cullman Civic Center. The event will be "a way of celebrating Administrative Professional's Day."

Doors will open at 11 a.m. so attendees can shop the booths set up by area businesses. Boxed lunches provided by Sweet Peppers Deli will be served at 11:30 a.m., with a fashion show beginning soon thereafter. Door prizes will be given away during the show.

The Cullman Pilot Club focuses its energy on community awareness and prevention of brain-related disorders. They also support those who are living with the disorders, as well as their caregivers. The ladies work together as a team to make the world around them a much better place. The bond they share in helping their communities also works to create long-lasting friendships.

"The women in this club are single, married, all ages, business owners, stay-at-home moms, professional women, retirees," said Nan S. Auston, vice president, "all with big hearts and generous natures, with one purpose in mind-to give help to people who cannot help themselves."

The Pilot Club of Cullman supports the Pilot Light Home, the Margaret Jean Jones Center, the Field of Miracles, Special Olympics, Alzheimer's Disease support groups, BrainMinders and Project Lifesaver. "We fund these projects with various fundraisers throughout the year," Auston continued.

"We sell pecans every fall, we help with information and parking at the annual national archery tournament at St. Bernard and we hold an annual rummage sale at the Cullman Fairgrounds in the Lion's Club building. The upcoming Professional Women's Fashion Show and Luncheon is also a big fundraiser for us."

Tickets for the event are $20 and can be purchased at the Cullman County Museum or the Cullman Civic Center.

For information about the Pilot Club of Cullman and any upcoming events, visit http://qrne.ws/pilot.

> **"The women in this club are single, married, all ages, business owners, stay at home moms, professional women, retirees, all with big hearts and generous natures, with one purpose in mind- to give help to people who cannot help themselves."**
>
> – Nan S. Auston, vice president



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CAMP SEALE HARRIS
SOUTHEASTERN DIABETES EDUCATION SERVICES



FOURTH ANNUAL
CAMP SEALE HARRIS
CULLMAN SPRING FAMILY FUN DAY

For Children with Diabetes and Their Families

Snacks and activities provided by
Cullman Community Lions Club

Cullman Wellness and Aquatics Center*
Sunday, March 13, 2016
1:30 pm - 5:30 pm
1:00 PM—On-site Registration
No cost for families living with diabetes

Activities include swimming, games, diabetes education, and lots of fun!

Bring comfortable shoes, swim suit, towel, a change of clothes, and a great attitude!

*1636 Field of Miracles Drive, Cullman, AL 35055

Please register in advance by March 10, 2016
Email info@southeasterndiabetes.org
or call 205-402-0415

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NATURAL DISASTER AWARENESS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS
AWR-310



This 4-hour course will also provide community leaders with an understanding of the necessary plans and tools needed in planning for natural disasters, and will help them to better understand and identify personnel best equipped to address response and recovery requirements in the case of an actual disaster. This course will assist community leaders to identify and define the roles and responsibilities they may be expected to assume in the event of a natural disaster given their leadership positions, as well as those of the first responders and support personnel in the response and recovery phase.

February 23, 2016
8:00 am - 12:00 pm
Cullman, AL

LOCATION AND DETAILS:
Cullman County EMA Training Room (Basement)
2020 Beech Avenue SE
Cullman, AL 35055

FOR REGISTRATION: https://ndptc.hawaii.edu/training/delivery/1265

FOR REGISTRATION ASSISTANCE:
Herman Utoafili • 808-725-5237 • utoafili@hawaii.edu

MODULES
✓ Hazards Overview
✓ Community Preparedness and Mitigation
✓ Value of Partnerships
✓ Preparation of an Emergency Operations Plan

NDPTC
NATIONAL DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TRAINING CENTER
at the UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I

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As a member of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium, the NDPTC is a DHS/FEMA training partner dedicated to providing critical all-hazards training throughout the United States and its territories with an emphasis on natural hazards and island and coastal communities

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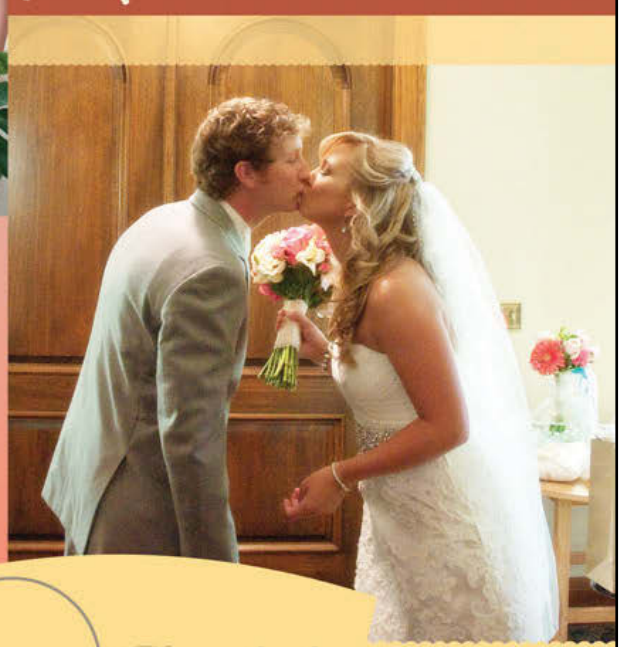
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PHOTOS BY SHARON SCHULER KREPS/CULLMANSENSE

EVENT DRAWS BIG CROWD IN SPITE OF BIG RAINS

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – The 13th Annual Empty Bowls Chili Dinner was held on Monday night, Feb.15 at Cullman First United Methodist Church's Hearin Hall, and although it poured rain all day and night, the crowds were not deterred. The event featured delicious chili served in handcrafted pottery bowls. There was also a silent auction and southern gospel music performed by local entertainers. All proceeds from the event go to the Cullman Caring for Kids United Way Food Bank.

"The atmosphere here tonight is just wonderful and it's such a joy to be here," said Nancy Bryant, assistant director of Cullman Caring for Kids. "The grilled cheese sandwiches and chili smells awesome and very welcoming," she smiled. "The silent auction is going great and there is some really terrific music playing. We have a great community here in Cullman. There are some really good people here tonight. Everyone is happy."

People from all ages were at the event volunteering their time and talent. All were eager to help in any way they could. There were Boy Scouts helping deliver food to those who had ordered take-out, despite the rain and chilly weather.

Students from Vinemont High School were on hand to assist the guests with their drinks and help them find a place to eat.

"This is a great event and involves the entire community," said T. J. Franey, special projects coordinator for Cullman County Schools. "It's a great time for everyone to come together for a great cause. We have had a great turnout, but it takes the help of the whole community to put it on. We are thankful for everybody who has come and done their part, whether it was buying a ticket or coming out to work it."



People enjoy a bowl of chili and beautiful pottery at Empty Bowls dinner.

During this year's event, organizers unveiled a new opportunity, 'An Empty Bowls Potter's Apprentice,' and attendees were encouraged to sign up and get involved.

"There were 980 bowls made and donated this year, which was just shy of our goal of 1,000," said Tanya Shearer, event organizer.

"The Apprentice Program will teach you how to make hand built bowls and lets you help with glazing and transporting the bowls. Hopefully with this program, we will be able to have even more bowls next year. This is just a few of the simple things you can do that would be a big help to Empty Bowls," she smiled.

Shearer has been involved with Empty Bowls from the very beginning. She gives credit to God for the event's growth and success.

"This is the 13th year for Empty Bowls and we are so thankful and very blessed for what God has done for us during all 13 of those years," she grinned. "He has definitely been in charge and there have been so many good and wonderful people working with us over the years. Tonight each volunteer did their job and together accomplished great things. For a lot of people money is tight right now," she continued. "This is something they can do and they can give back and make a difference.

"You know, everybody's $10 ticket tonight will buy $70.00 worth of food which will go to the food bank," she added. "We have the Lion's Club coming tonight and we've had different organizations pick up for their employees. That is a big deal and we are very, very thankful."

For more information about the Empty Bowls program, email cullmanemptybowls@gmail.com or visit http://qrne.ws/bowls. For more information about the Empty Bowls Potter's Apprentice Program, contact Lynn Jetton at 256-620-3120 or thejet@aol.com.

PROFILES IN FAITH

PETER NASSETTA, DEACON AT SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN - Deacons play a very important role in the Catholic Church because they work to assist the priests in their pastoral and administrative duties, but typically report to the bishops of their dioceses. During Mass, deacons are able to proclaim the Gospel and assist the celebrant, or priest, at the altar. Today, deacons are also granted permission to preach.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Cullman has four wonderfully dedicated deacons. Each has a special gift and all go above and beyond the call of duty in serving the church, as well as serving the Lord. One of these deacons is Peter Nassetta.

Nassetta was born and raised in New London, Connecticut. He is the second of four children and a lifelong Catholic. After graduating from high school, he came to Cullman to attend St. Bernard College in August of 1966. He claims it was there his life was formed for the path God would have him travel.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my years at St. Bernard and received an excellent education," he smiled. "While at St. Bernard, I had the good fortune of being introduced to Sondra Waters on a blind date and two years later, we married."

The happy couple lived in Birmingham while Sondra Nassetta completed nursing school. Later they moved back to Cullman where Peter Nassetta became a teacher. Over the years, he worked in several different fields and was the Director of Public Works for the City of Cullman, a position he held for 17 years.

One thing is certain though, no matter what kind of work Nassetta has done throughout his life, he never lost sight of God or his faith.

"Many young people find themselves disinterested in attending church when they get away from home, but that never happened to me," he mused. "I have always been consistent in my duty to God and have felt a closeness to the community at St. Bernard where I lived and studied for four years. I am privileged to be one of the co-founders of the present St. Bernard Prep School and have seen my two sons, and now I have a granddaughter, attending there. I think it was part of God's plan for me to be involved in that way, even though I was not considering ministry at that time."

Towards the end of Nassetta's career with the City of Cullman, he and his wife began a five-year course of study and discernment for the permanent diaconate.

He was ordained a deacon by the Diocese of Birmingham on Dec. 7, 2013 and now serves the bishop, as well as the pastor, at Sacred Heart.

"As a deacon, I am able to proclaim the Gospel at Mass and give the homily (sermon) at the discretion of the pastor," he explained. "I can preside at communion services, Liturgy of the Hours and other celebrations of the Word. I may preside at the rite of benediction, administer baptism to infants, preside at funeral rites in the absence of a priest and give liturgical blessings at those rites I preside at. In some instances, I can assist the bishop and other presiding priests in liturgical actions, catechize and preach apart from the Mass and perform many other works of charity such as visiting the sick in homes and hospitals, prison ministry and youth ministry.

"The most challenging part of our ministry is finding a balance between church, family and other responsibilities," he added.

"It is a wonderful opportunity to serve as a deacon, but it can be overwhelming if you are not attentive to sharing time and talents."



Deacon Peter Nassetta poses with his grandchildren after Mass. PETER NASSETTA

As trying as things can be, there are many special moments in which the Nassetta feels accomplished and spiritually rewarded.

"Without a doubt, the most rewarding aspect of my ministry is being there for someone in need and feeling like you really are making a difference in peoples' lives," he smiled warmly.

"As the director of our cemetery, I also deal with the reality of death on a regular basis and it keeps me focused on learning how to minister to someone in the best way that is appropriate for them at that time."

The Nassettas have been married for 45 years. They have two sons, David, who is an investigator with the Cullman Police Department, and Patrick, a local pediatric dentist. They have five grandchildren: Lilly, Sam, Tallulah, Carolyn and Davis.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church is located at 112 Second St. SE. For more information, call 256-734-3730, visit their website at http://sacredheartchurchcullman.org or find them on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/sacredheartchurch.

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Dr. Schroeder has a special interest in helping catch lung-cancer early and save lives. He is proud to bring the first Lung Nodule Clinic to Cullman.

The Lung nodule clinic can biopsy small nodules found in the lung as an outpatient procedure.

Benefits of the procedure are early detection of lung cancer and to save patients from unnecessary surgery.

Monday

City of Good Hope Council Meeting
6:30 p.m. at Good Hope Town Hall, 135 Municipal Drive

Cullman City Council Meeting
The Cullman City Council will meet at 7 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium on Monday, Feb. 22, 2016. For more information, contact the City Clerk's Office at 256-775-7109.

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

Dodge City Senior Citizen Luncheon
Every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. Come enjoy fun, food and games at Dodge City Town Hall.

Cullman County Commission Meeting
The Cullman County Commission meets every second and fourth Tuesday, except in cases where the meeting date falls on a holiday, in which case the meeting is moved to the following day. Meetings are scheduled for 10 a.m. in the Commission office conference room, first floor, Cullman County Courthouse, unless otherwise specified. Next scheduled meeting is Feb. 23.

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.

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.

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

Good Hope Senior Center Meetings
Seniors meet every Wednesday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Pot Luck Lunch at 11 a.m., games, crafts, special speakers and more Contact Gene Bradford at 256-636-2100 or Jackie Gentry at 256-739-0403.

Information Session for Future Truck Drivers
Wallace State Community College's Continuing Education department will hold an information session on Wednesday, Feb. 24, at 1 p.m., for anyone interested in learning about the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program offered at the college. There is a great demand to fill the shortage of jobs available for commercial drivers locally and nationally. Instructors with the Wallace State CDL program, as well as trucking company representatives, will be on hand to discuss the career and job opportunities along with options for financial assistance with tuition. The meeting will be held on the second floor of the James C. Bailey Center at Wallace State. For more information, call 256-352-8172.

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
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.

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.

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
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.

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

Thursday

Hanceville City Council Meeting
Council meets at 7 p.m., Work Session at 6:30 p.m. Call Joann Walls at 256-352-9799 with questions or to be placed on the agenda.

Annual Arbor Day Tree Sale
Held in the parking lot between Wal-Mart and Carmike Theater; variety of trees available for $1-2 each; proceeds go to the Forestry Awareness Week NOW school program; call 256-734-0573 or 256-734-1431 for more information.

"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" presented by St. Bernard Prep
St. Bernard Preparatory School presents "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" on Feb. 25-27, 2016 in the St. Bernard Abbey Byre. Showtimes: 6:30 on Thursday, Feb. 25; 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 26
2:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 27. Tickets to the event are $5 for students and $10 for adults.

Heritage Skills: Sewing 101 at the North Alabama Agriplex
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

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

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.

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.

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.

Friday

"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" presented by St. Bernard Prep
St. Bernard Preparatory School presents "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" on Feb. 25-27, 2016 in the St. Bernard Abbey Byre. Showtimes: 6:30 on Thursday, Feb. 25; 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 26 2:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 27. Tickets to the event are $5 for students and $10 for adults.

Chamber of Commerce February Community Luncheon
Feb. 26,11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., All Steak Restaurant. Candidates running for County Board of Education will introduce themselves and speak to their qualifications and objectives if elected. Candidates are: Heath Albright (Holly Pond), Sam Benefield (Holly Pond), Patrick Klein (West Point), Wayne Myrex (Cold Springs), James A. Thompson (Holly Pond), Destry Stone (Holly Pond) and Gene Sullins (West Point). Call the Chamber at 256-734-0454 to make your reservation. 48-hour cancellation policy, $15 for Chamber members, $20 for future members.

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 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.

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
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.

Saturday

Weave on a Frame Loom Workshop
Peinhardt Living History Farm, 1711 Talley Ho St., arrive at 9:30 a.m., bring your own fabric strips (about 2 yards) or buy at the workshop for $5. Cost for the workshop is $15 and includes loom and other supplies. For more information, call 205-540-5694 or 256-734-0850.

"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" presented by St. Bernard Prep
St. Bernard Preparatory School presents "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" on Feb. 25-27, 2016 in the St. Bernard Abbey Byre. Showtimes: 6:30 on Thursday, Feb. 25; 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 26; 2:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 27. Tickets to the event are $5 for students and $10 for adults.

CEMS 9-1-1 Chili Cook-Off to Benefit Harbor Haus
Cullman Regional Medical Center's CEMS Ambulance Service is hosting a new event, the 9-1-1 Chili Cook-Off, on Saturday, Feb. 27 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Ambulance Center located at 601 Second Ave. SW. All proceeds will benefit Harbor Haus shelter for victims of domestic violence. Awards will be given for first, second and third place chili, with various door prizes as well. Chili will be $1 per bowl. CEMS will also be accepting donations of diapers, bath towels, personal hygiene products and paper products throughout the event to benefit Harbor Haus. To register a team or for additional questions, email dawn.holmes@crmchospital.com.

Cullman Senior Center Potluck Dinner and Cake Auction
Saturday, Feb. 27 at 2 p.m.1539 Sportsman Lake Rd. NW; Everyone's Invited! Come bring a dish and enjoy a delicious feast, fellowship, visit with local officials and bid on fantastic desserts! See all the center has to offer, as we raise money for our activities fund. For more information, call 256-734-0145.

War Recovery
From 1-2 p.m. at Redemption Assembly of God. 516 Shaeffel Rd. Cullman. We have court refer. in Cullman Co. Call Susan, 256-620-6966 for more info.

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.

WSCC Little Black Dress Charity Bash 2016
Benefitting the WSCC Alumni Association Outstanding Women Scholarship. Will take place at Top of the Town 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.

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.

Saving Forgotten Warriors
Organization helps area disabled Marine and Vietnam veteran Cpl. Kenneth Beasley and other area veterans in need. Clean-up days for Cpl. Beasley are each Saturday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at Beasley's home at 185 Co. Road 823. Volunteers are needed and donations are accepted. See Facebook page "Saving Forgotten Warriors" for more info or call Jeremy (352-440-4076), Tammy (256-286-3136) or Josh (256-615-5263).

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
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.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

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

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.

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.

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.

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-b-9157.

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

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.

Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting & Gala
The theme this year is "Great Leaders Serve." Peter Good, who trains owners and managers of Chick-fil-A will be guest speaker. The After Party will feature "The Cigar Room" and "The Lotus Club." The Emily Joseph Band will provide the entertainment. The Gala's theme this year will be focused around the popular British drama series, "Downton Abbey." Dress to coordinate with the theme - you might win a contest! General Admission tickets are available NOW - call 256-734-0454 or email Debbie Matthews at dmatthews@cullmanchamber.org. March 3 at Stone Bridge Farms, Brown Stone Centre, 6-10 p.m.

YPCullman (Young Professionals Cullman)
March 17, Karma's Coffee House at 6 p.m. YPCullman is an outlet for the next generation of leaders to channel their energy and enhance their leadership potential. This new program is designed for young professionals, ages 22-39. Over time, we envision YPCullman members to take strides in several facets of the Cullman area, including but not limited to: community awareness and concern, committee involvement, entrepreneurial roundtables, and eventually leadership roles. Employers please send this to your employees ages 22-39! If you would like to sign up, email mbartlett@cullmanchamber.org.

Masonics of Cullman County Meetings
Held at 7 p.m. at the following locations: Baileyton 472 (first and third Thursday, call 256-796-6611); Cullman 421 (Mondays, call 256-734-1231); Logan 500 (second and fourth Tuesday, call 256-747-4243 or 256-747-2908); Simcoe 854 (second and fourth Thursday, call 256-796-5794 or 256-796-5018); Vinemont 562 (first and third Thursday, call 256-796-7244).

Cullman County Commission Meetings
The Cullman County Commission meets every second and fourth Tuesday, except in cases where the meeting date falls on a holiday, in which case the meeting is moved to the following day. Meetings are scheduled for 10 a.m. in the Commission office conference room, first floor, Cullman County Courthouse, unless otherwise specified.

Cullman County Community Development Commission Meeting
The Cullman County Community Development Commission (CCCDC) will meet on April 7 at 6 p.m. at the North Alabama Agriplex,1714 Tally Ho Street SW.

Lions Club Annual Fish and Ham Dinner
Fish and Ham Dinner fundraiser Saturday, March 5 from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. at the Cullman Middle School cafeteria. Eat in or carry out, drive-thru available on north side. $10 per plate. Purchase tickets from any Lions Club member or from Rennards Gallery, The Brandin' Iron, Peek Auto Parts, Ponder Wrecker Service, Business Solutions of Cullman, Ed White Jewelers, Doug Doggett Jewelers, Cullman Veterinary Hospital or East Side Barber Shop.

Huge Rummage Sale
Sponsored by Cullman First United Methodist Church's United Methodist Women on Friday, March 4 from 7 a.m.- 2 p.m. and Saturday, March 5 from 8 a.m.-noon. Sale will be held in the church gym. Park in back of the church. Church address is 320 Third St. SE. Proceeds benefit many local agencies in Cullman County. Contact Beth Montgomery at 256-747-6438 for more information.

Camp Seale Harris Cullman Spring Family Fun Day
An event for children with diabetes and their families, Camp Seale Harris Cullman Spring Family Fun Day will be held on March 13 from 1:30-5:30 p.m. at the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center. The event is sponsored by the Cullman Community Lions Club and is FREE. Register by March 10. Contact info@southeasterndiabetes.org.

2016 Strawberry Festival
May 6-7, 2016, at the Festhalle Farmer's Market and Depot Park, a host of local farmers will offer strawberries to purchase both days of the event. Strawberry-themed foods, ice cream, drinks and more will also be a part of the festival. Huge lineup of music to be announced on April 1, free kids' games and rides, dozens of craft vendors and a car show. Food trucks will also be on-site both days. The event will kick off during the day Friday with Senior Day from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.; the festival will run from 4-10 p.m. on Friday, and 8 a.m.-10 p.m. on Saturday. For more information on CP&R's 2016 Strawberry Festival, visit www.cullmanrecreation.org or call 256-734-9157.

2016 Fairview High School Fair Queen Pageant
Friday, March 11, 2016 at 6 p.m. in the FHS auditorium. Admission is $5 at the door. The pageant is sponsored by Fairview High School FCCLA and all proceeds will go towards club projects and activities.

Southern Rock Racing Series
On Friday and Saturday, March 11-12, the first race in the Southern Rock Racing Series will be held at Cullman's Stony Lonesome OHV Park. The SRRS will hold its event at Stony Lonesome for the first time, in what will be called the Southern Points Race. According to the SRRS, the sport of recreational rock crawling and hill climbing has evolved quickly in the southeast into what is being called "rock bouncing." High-horsepower buggies are built to launch up insane climbs, and fast. The event will kick off on Friday, March 11 at about 3 p.m. For more info, visit http://qrne.ws/ohv.

"American Made Movie" at WSCC's Evelyn Burrow Museum
"American Made Movie," the next free movie on the Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers, will be screened on March 10 at 6 p.m. at the Evelyn Burrow Museum. The film looks back on the glory days of manufacturing in the United States, when there was a more balanced relationship between the goods produced and consumed, and illustrates how technology and globalization have changed the competitive landscape for companies doing business in America and overseas. Admission is free. For more information, visit http://www.burrowmuseum.org/ or call 256-352-8457.

Military Order of the Purple Heart
Chapter 2212 meets the third Thursday of each month at Ryan's Restaurant in Cullman. Dinner at 6 p.m., meeting to follow. Contact Joey D'Andrea for more info. 256-734-4733

St. Bernard Preparatory School Open House
Friday, March 11 at 8 a.m. Families will have an opportunity to see a day of instruction in progress and experience the life at St. Bernard Prep. St. Bernard is a coed college prep Catholic boarding and day school for students in grades 7-12. To register, call 256-739-6682.

Cullman Pilot Club Spring 2016 Charity Fundraiser
The Pilot Club of Cullman will host its spring 2016 charity fundraiser, Professional Women's Fashion Show and Luncheon: "Dancing in the Street," on Wednesday, April 27 at the Cullman Civic Center. The event will be "a way of celebrating Administrative Professional's Day." Doors will open at 11 a.m. so attendees can shop the booths set up by area businesses. Boxed lunches provided by Sweet Peppers Deli will be served at 11:30 a.m., with a fashion show beginning soon thereafter. Door prizes will be given away during the show. Tickets for the event are $20 and can be purchased at the Cullman County Museum or the Cullman Civic Center.

The Link of Cullman County's GROW 2016
The Link of Cullman County's annual event and auction, GROW 2016, will take place on Tuesday, March 15 at 6 p.m. at Loft 212, located at 212 Fourth St. SW. Doors will open and the silent auction will begin at 5 p.m., with dinner following at 6 p.m. Shane Quick, of Premier Productions and founder of Rock the South, will be the night's guest speaker. Tickets are $25 per person. Tickets can be purchased online at https://goo.gl/Lgb9iY. For more information about the event, call 256-775-0028 or email info@linkingcullman.org.

Walk MS: Cullman
March 19 at 9 a.m. at Heritage Park. Walk MS: Cullman: Ending multiple sclerosis for good will take all of us. It's why Walk MS matters so much. And it's why you matter so much. Walk MS helps us team up with friends, loved ones and co-workers to change the world for everyone affected by MS. Together, we become a powerful force. And with every step we take, every dollar we raise...we're that much closer. Together, we will end MS forever. http://qrne.ws/ms.

Colors of Cancer Day
April 2; We will start off the day with a 5K at the Fairgrounds. Registration is at 7 a.m., 5K run will start at 8 a.m., and awards will be handed out at 9 a.m. The parade will begin at 10 a.m. in the North Shopping Center and be lead up Highway 31 by Cindy, the pink firetruck, to the Fairgrounds. The Fairgrounds will host a Drum Line Competition between area high schools at noon. Vendor Booths, Food and a Bounce House will be available during the afternoon. There will be a Balloon Release at 2 p.m. to end the day. More info: Amanda Rogers at amanda.rogers@crmchospital.com or Becky Richardson at brichardson1957@yahoo.com.

Color Me Cullman 5K
April 9 at 8 a.m. at Sportsman Lake Park; The Color Me Cullman 5K is a colorful experience where we promote healthiness and happiness. Our event is all about people of all different speeds, ages, shapes, and sizes ready to get COLORFUL! Come on out to Sportsman Lake wearing a white T-shirt as your blank canvas and get ready to become a piece of artwork!

2016 Bloomin' Festival Arts & Crafts Fair
Saturday and Sunday, April 16-17, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The 32nd Annual Bloomin' Festival Arts and Crafts Fair to be held on Saturday and Sunday, April 16-17, 2016. St. Bernard has been recognized by the Southeast Tourism Society consistently in the past nine years as a "Top Twenty Event in the Southeast."

Senior Spirit

A program sponsored by the City of Cullman Parks and Recreation Department that focuses on recreational, social and leisure opportunities for individuals 50 & over. There is no membership fee and programs are offered at the Donald E. Green Senior Center.

Exercise Area
An exercise area with several types of equipment is available for seniors to use provided they have a release form signed by their physician.
Date: Mon., Tues., Wed., and Fri.
Time: 8 a.m.- 5 p.m.

Fitness for Life
Walking and light cardio stretching classes that help boost your energy.
Date: Year-round
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
Time: 8-9:15 a.m.
Instructor: Catherine Hasenbein

Line Dancing
Date: Year-round
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
Beginners: 9:15-10 a.m.
Adv. / Kickers: 10 a.m. - noon
Instructor: Sherry Boatright
Cost: FREE

Senior Spirit Singers
Join this group that sings old time Gospel Hymns. The group is available for Special Events, Revivals, Assisted Living facilities and Nursing Homes throughout the Community.
Date: Mondays
Time: 10 a.m.
Instructor: Helen Orr
Cost: FREE

Sacred Harp Singing
(Fa-So-La)
Learn this old style of traditional singing that took root in the Southern region of the United States as a part of the larger tradition of shape note music.
Date: 1st & 3rd Wed. of each month Time: 9-11 a.m.

Monday Jam Session
Come together with other seniors to listen to pickers as they play old time country music or try your talent at picking and singing with them.
Date: Every Monday
Time: 1- 4 p.m.
Group Leader: Barbara Whitehead

Fun & Games
Bring a friend or make new ones with a fun filled day of fellowship, card playing or dominos.
Date: Tuesdays
Time: 9 a.m.-until

Bingo
Date: Tuesdays
Time: 1 p.m.
Play a minimum of 12 games

Art Classes
Art classes in oils, acrylics and other venues. This is a relaxing and rewarding activity. Seniors are responsible for furnishing their own supplies.
Date: The 1st Tues. of each month
Time: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Instructor: Nance DiPiero
Cost: $10 per class

Bunco
A parlor game played in teams with three dice.
Date: 1st Wednesday of each Month
Time: 1 p.m.

Yoga
Health benefits associated with Yoga are improved flexibility, more strength, improved posture, and relaxation. Classes can be done from a mat or in a chair.
Date: Tues. 9:30-10:30 a.m.
Thurs. 4-5 p.m.
Instructor: Fabian Holland
Cost: Free

Dulcimer Classes
Take lessons to learn the Appalachian dulcimer, generally regarded as one of the easiest string instruments to learn. The traditional way to play the instrument is to lay it flat on the lap and pluck or strum the strings with the right hand, while fretting with the left.
Date: Every Friday
Time: 1 p.m.
Instructor: Craig Mann
Cost: $10 for 1 hour

Pool Table
Pool table is available for play from 8 a.m. -5 p.m. Mon., Tues., Wed., & Fri.

WII Bowling
Date: Wednesday & Friday
Time: 1 p.m.
WII bowling is also available when the room is not being used for other activities.

THE NORTH ALABAMA AGRIPLEX: CULLMAN COUNTY'S RICH AND BOUNTIFUL RESOURCE

Granddaughter tends her grandfather's dream

Amy Leonard
amy@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Cullman is a place with a rich history with many tales of origin passed down through the generations. The beginnings of the North Alabama Agriplex, an unfunded state agency providing agricultural education and opportunities to children and adults in the area, is no different. It's a story of a dream come to fruition to be told for years to come.

Two local legends, who are no longer with us, were sitting outside of the Cullman County Fair one September evening appreciating the wealth of agricultural exhibits on display. The men, James Hutchinson and Chester Freeman, both members of the Cullman Lions Club, decided that, since Cullman was number one in agriculture in the state, they should do something to recognize its heritage. The dream of an agriculture museum and hall of fame was born.

Freeman's granddaughter, and Agriplex Director, Rachel Dawsey said, "They shared the dream with Jimmy Gilly and Mike Roden, who then began to tour agriculture museums throughout the country. They then took their idea to the state legislature, and we started with our Farm Kids program in 2011."

The Farm Kids Club is still going strong with its next class, "Natural Egg Dying" scheduled for March 5; after that, on April 2, the club will learn about wool production at the Agriplex Heritage Center.

By 2012, the Heritage Center's construction was completed and they saw their first Garden Camp and Sewing Day Camp for elementary school kids that summer. Both of those summer camps, along with a Touring Farms for Kids camp, will be offered again this summer with spots expected to fill quickly.

The Little Farmers, a new preschool program, provides hands on activities for children ages 2-5. Its popularity has already warranted additional class times to accommodate the little ones who are eager to learn.

It's the same case with the Heritage Homeschool Program, whose classes include photosynthesis, insects, pollinators and next month's class, "Water Cycles and Terrariums." Attendance is often waitlisted for the classes, so participants are encouraged to sign up as early as possible.

"There's a niche there that we're filling, not just for Cullman, but for the surrounding areas. We're located close to the interstate and centrally-located which makes access easy. Plus, we're a draw for local tourism," explained Dawsey.

With the increased popularity of backyard home gardens, the Agriplex provides an indispensable resource for Cullman and north Alabama counties. In 2013, the monthly Living Landscapes program for adults was formed. Next month's Living Landscapes class, "Growing Apple Trees," will be taught by Linda Steele of Steele Orchards, who is just one of many experts teaching at the Agriplex.

Farmer 101, presented by the Cullman County Extension Office, is a series of classes for farmers who are just beginning or established farmers looking for new knowledge.

The series will be taught by some of the state's leading agricultural experts. The classes may be taken individually or for the entire course.

The next class in the Farmer 101 series, "Farm Management," will be held on Feb. 23. Tony Glover, the Extension Office's coordinator, is a familiar face around the Heritage Center, teaching many classes and lending his expert advice to many new gardeners.

Along with the classes, Dawsey and her volunteers have the answers or can point a fledging gardener in the right direction for information on topics as broad as soil amendments or as specific as the best variety of blueberries to plant in Cullman.

Dawsey noted that "now is the time for gardeners to clean their beds to ready for planting. They can begin seedlings indoors and even directly sow early crops such as cabbage, collards, Irish potatoes and turnips. Spring will be here before we know it!"

A program of note and source of pride for Dawsey is Food for Life, which aims to provide healthy, local food options to the community. The program is supported by AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a program first introduced to Congress by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and founded in 1965 to help combat the nation's poverty.

Rachel Wiser, a VISTA and Maryland native, chose to take the position at the Agriplex while looking at other positions because of Dawsey, who "was the nicest person I interviewed with by far!" Working at the Agriplex since last July, Wiser notes the amount of camaraderie within the Cullman farming community.

"Everybody wants to help everyone else and it's not competitive in our local agriculture community. Our farmers want to educate each other. It's not just about me and mine, but about the community as a whole," echoed VISTA Nicole Willoughby.

Dawsey is quick to point out that many of the programs would not be possible without the VISTAs.

Integral in establishing gardens in many city and county schools, the Agriplex's VISTAS provide many other services including grant writing and crop gleaning.

Crop gleaning is one of many needed volunteer positions available at the Agriplex.

In gleaning, crops that are leftover in the fields after harvest are picked and distributed to those in need. Volunteers are asked to gather the crops at the participating farms when the time comes, "an activity which can be shared by many generations," noted Dawsey.

The Cullman Farmer's Market at Festhalle Market Platz provides another gleaning opportunity where farmers can donate their unsellable, leftover produce to the Food for Life program. This provides a tax write-off for the farmers and creates a win/win situation for all involved.

Last year over 2,800 pounds of produce was gathered and donated through the Agriplex's Food for Life program. Agencies receiving the fresh produce last year included Cullman Caring for Kids, Victim Services, The Care Center and The Crossing.

Volunteers are always needed and opportunities are available onsite at the Agriplex, at the local school gardens and in the Food for Life program. Teenagers, as well as adults, are encouraged to take advantage of the volunteer opportunities.

Growth continues on the Agriplex property with a new pavilion under construction behind the Heritage Center. Expected to be completed this spring, its construction was made possible through a partnership with the Cullman Poultry and Egg Association.



NORTH ALABAMA AGRIPLEX

Dawsey with broccoli plants started from seedlings by children in the program.

Partnerships and sponsors make the programming possible at the Agriplex. Fall 2015 supporters included the City of Cullman, Cullman County Commission, City of Good Hope, Nature's Best Egg Company, J and R Feed Services, Apel Steel and many individual donors. Sponsors are still needed for 2016 and all donations are tax-deductible.

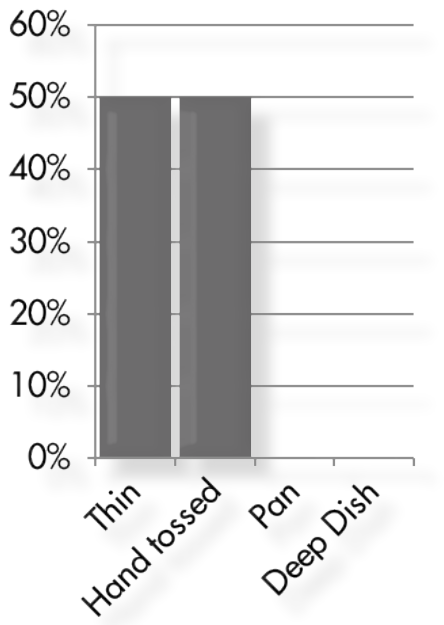
In her Letter from the Director in the 2016 literature, Dawsey writes that she hopes the programs offered by the Agriplex will help you "by being better gardeners, living more sustainably, and eating more locally grown produce." She ends her letter wishing all "Happy growing in 2016!"

Dawsey, her VISTAs and volunteers have grown her grandfather's and his friend's dreams of telling the story of Cullman's abundant agricultural history and, most importantly, continuing to grow that history into the future.

For more information on the Agriplex, volunteer opportunities or to sign up for programs, visit www.agriplex.org or call 256-297-1044. The North Alabama Agriplex is located at 1714 Tally Ho St. SW in Cullman. Find them on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/NorthAlabamaAgriplex.

Poll

What is your favorite type of pizza crust?



This Week's Poll

Are you paying attention to the U.S. presidential election?

Vote Today at CullmanSense.com/Poll

Light a Candle, Spread HOPE

RELAY FOR LIFE
American Cancer Society

Join your community in the fight against cancer! At Relay For Life, teams take turns walking or running around the track. Teams consist of people representing companies, churches, clubs, organizations and families. During Relay For Life, team members enjoy games, food, music and camaraderie while camping out on the surrounding grounds.

Participants also share in a special luminaria ceremony to remember those individuals who have been affected by cancer. Candles are lit in honor or memory of those touched by cancer and placed around the track. You are invited to support this effort by making a luminaria donation and having a candle lit in honor of a loved one who has been touched by cancer. Simply fill out the back of this form and return to a team member, team captain or mail your order to the address listed on the reverse side.

Thank you for your support. For more information, call 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

Luminaria Order Form

Minimum donation: $10.00 each

Yes, I would like to make a luminaria donation in honor of or in memory of the following:

In Memory/Honor of: (*circle one*)

_____

In Memory/Honor of: (*circle one*)

_____

In Memory/Honor of: (*circle one*)

_____

Total amount enclosed: $_____
Payment method: Check ____ Cash ____

Thank you for your donation. Please make checks payable to the **American Cancer Society**. Return to:

Attn: Tess Kimbrough
1024 County Road 730
Cullman, Al 35055

"DOROTHEA LANGE: GRAB A HUNK OF LIGHTNING" SHOWN AT WSCC MUSEUM

Sharon Schuler Kreps
sharon@cullmansense.com

HANCEVILLE – On Thursday, Feb. 18 the Evelyn Burrow Museum at Wallace State Community College presented the movie "Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning" as part of the Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers. Afterwards, the film's director, Dyanna Taylor, talked to the audience and answered questions about the film and her work as a filmmaker.

"Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning" is a documentary film on the life, loves and work of the great 20th-century photographer Dorothea Lange, whose work is most often identified with images of the Great Depression. Her drive created some of the most influential images of America. Directed by her granddaughter, the documentary gave the audience access to never-before-seen footage, photographs and journals. Combining Taylor's memories and personal understanding allowed the viewers a better understanding of the woman whose influential photography "revealed America to America."

"We had a wonderful turnout for tonight's film with a great deal of audience interaction in the question and answer session following," said Kristen Holmes, Evelyn Burrow Museum administrator. "This is exactly the reason we do these events. Dyanna Taylor is an accomplished filmmaker with five Emmys. It was an honor to have her on our campus to screen this film, which was a labor of love about her late grandmother, photographer Dorothea Lange."

Taylor is a five-time Emmy award winning cinematographer and director of photography. Her work has also earned her a Peabody Award as well as the honored Muse Lifetime Achievement Award. Taylor was recently the second unit director of photography for the Disney feature "McFarland," and is currently the director of photography for "Who Will Write Our History."

"The Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers is a program of South Arts," Gail Crutchfield, Wallace State communications & marketing coordinator explained.

"Southern Circuit screenings are funded in part by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. South Arts, founded in 1975, is a nonprofit regional arts organization building on the South's unique heritage and enhancing the public value of the arts. Their work responds to the arts environment and cultural trends with a regional perspective, through an annual portfolio of activities designed to address the role of the arts in impacting the issues important to our region, and linking the South with the nation and the world through the arts."

"American Made Movie," the next free movie on the Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers, will be screened on March 10 at 6 p.m. at the Evelyn Burrow Museum.

The film looks back on the glory days of manufacturing in the United States, when there was a more balanced relationship between the goods produced and consumed, and illustrates how technology and globalization have changed the competitive landscape for companies doing business in America and overseas.

Great things are happening in Hanceville, especially at the Evelyn Burrow Museum at Wallace State Community College. The Museum is open Tuesday-Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Admission is free.

For more information, visit http://www.burrowmuseum.org/ or call 256-352-8457. To view a selection of Lange's photographs, visit www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/dorothea-lange-photos.

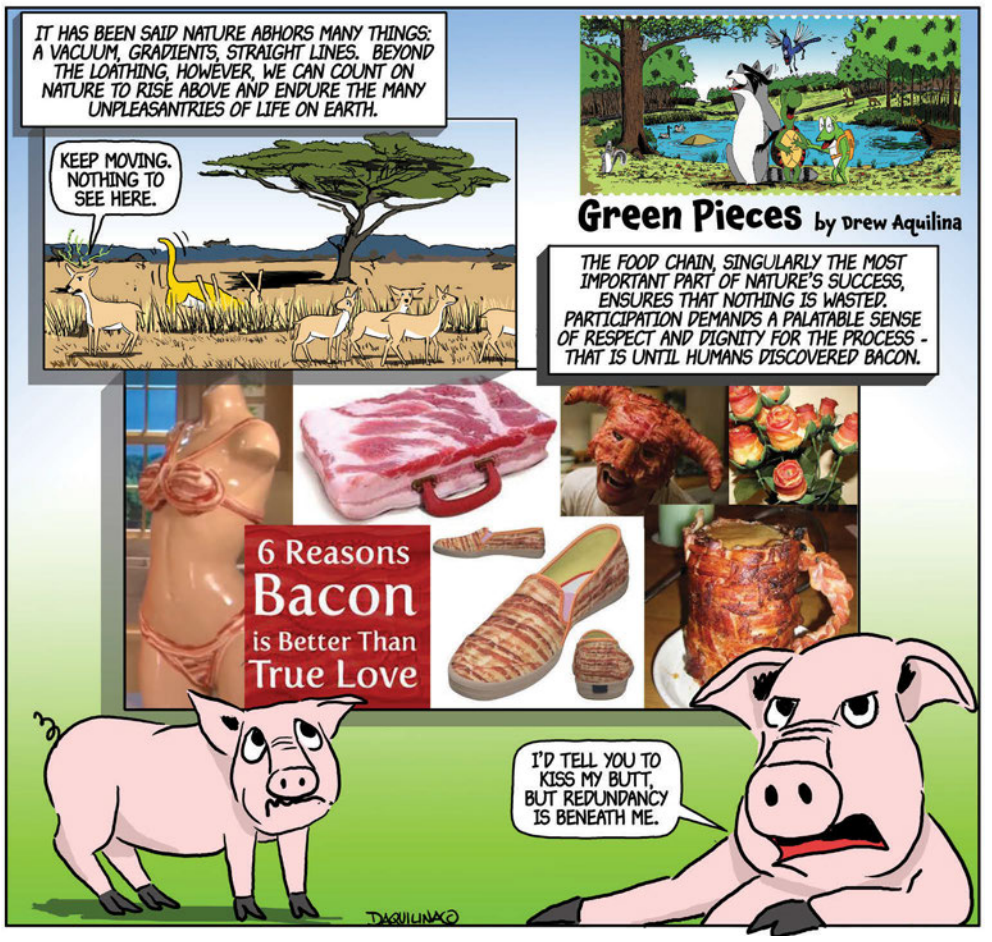
Holiday (from Front)

Portable generators, priced less than $1,000, are also sales tax-exempt during the holiday.

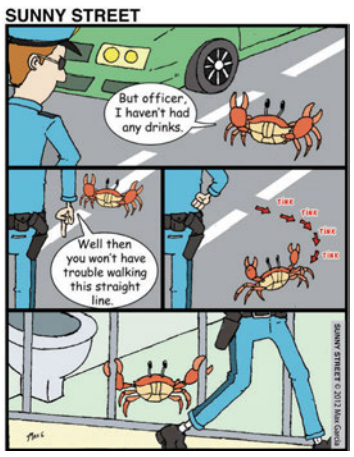
Little encourages residents to take advantage of the Sales Tax Holiday, stating it provides "citizens an ideal opportunity to purchase items to build or add to their disaster supply kits and save money."

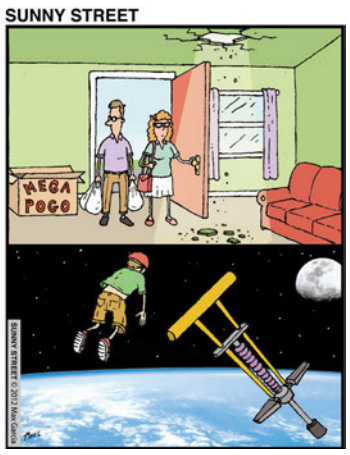
For a complete list of exempt items, go to http://www.revenue.alabama.gov/salestax/WPHolidayQuickRefSheet16.pdf.

COMICS









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FEBRUARY 14 - 21

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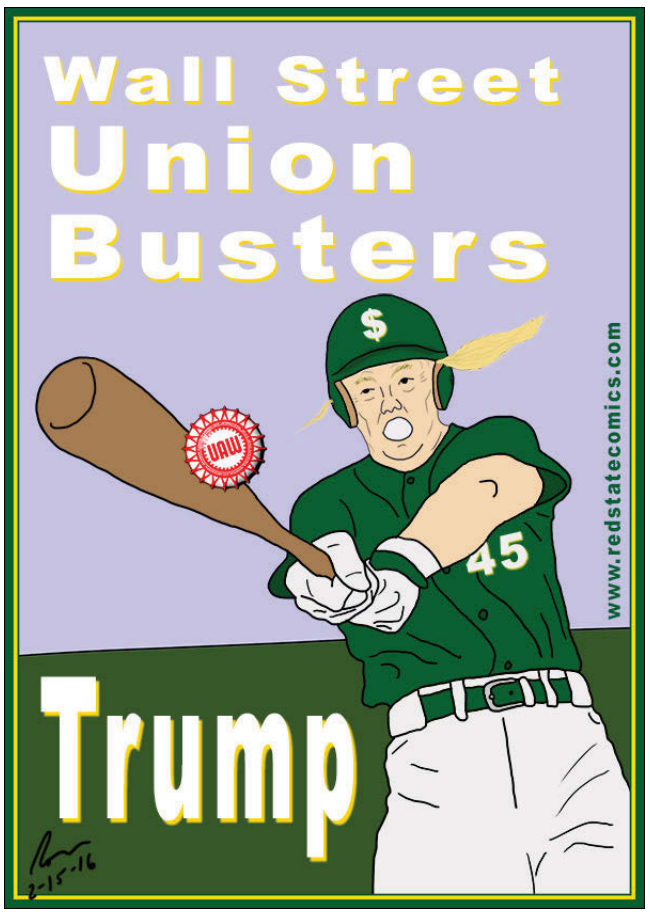
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OPINION

GOD RESPONDS TO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DONALD J. TRUMP

Rob Okun
PeaceVoice

Donald, my son,

I have been troubled for some time knowing you don't feel a need to ask Me for forgiveness when you've done something wrong. And now, with your strong remarks to one of my staff, Pope Francis, I felt even more urgency to write.

"I love God and I love my church," you said last July. That's good. Yet, in practically the same breath you said you don't ask Me for forgiveness for any of your transgressions. You told a CNN reporter, "If I do something wrong... I just try and make it right. I don't bring God into that picture; I don't."

Don't bring Me into the picture? Really?

And then you said—talking about Communion—that "When I drink my little wine (which is about the only wine I drink) and have my little cracker, I guess that is a form of asking for forgiveness, and I do that as often as possible because I feel cleansed."

"Drink your little wine. Have your little cracker?" That's how you "feel cleansed?"

Why do you need to ask Me for forgiveness?

Pope Francis told a reporter that, "A person who thinks only about building walls—wherever they may be—and not building bridges is not Christian. This is not in the gospel."

Donald, that was an opportunity to stop, to think, to pray—to take some time in deep contemplation. At the very least, it was an opportunity to request an audience with the Pope.

Instead, you said, "For a religious leader to question a person's faith is disgraceful... When the Vatican is attacked by ISIS—which as everyone knows is ISIS's ultimate trophy—I can promise you that the Pope would have only wished and prayed that Donald Trump would have been President..."

The Pope pray for you, Donald?

Inciting people's fallen angels is not the road to a principled life.

Calling for a ban on Muslims entering your country? Advocating spying on mosques?

Considering establishing a database of all Muslims living in the U.S.? That's your idea of how to "Make America Great Again"?

You want people of faith to support you, yet you keep making divisive, mean-spirited remarks.

A couple of my senior people— archangels Michael and Gabriel—think I'm being too soft on you.

I disagree; I believe you understand where I'm coming from without My having to lash out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; with great terror and with signs and wonders.

Sexist comments about women? Racist remarks about people of color? Humiliating and denigrating Muslims, immigrants, and minorities?

Saying, "I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose voters?" Oy.

Donald, one of my angels showed up for a staff meeting on Friday sporting a T-shirt with the words, "Love" and "Fear" printed chest high, and spaced far apart.

The arrows beneath each of the words pointed to the same phrase: "You Choose." A real WWJD moment, don't you think?

A few months ago I wrote to Kim Davis, the county clerk in Kentucky who was refusing to issue marriage licenses.

I told her the essence of all I do can be boiled down to two words: "Love wins."

Today, thinking about you, Donald, I'm adding two more: "Forgiveness counts."

If you want to feel cleansed, it's going to take more than having a little wine...and a little cracker. It's going to take actually asking for forgiveness.

Be in touch, Don, when you're ready.

– G

Rob Okun is a psychotherapist practicing in Amherst, Massachusetts and the editor of Voice Male, a national magazine chronicling the transformation of masculinity. He writes for PeaceVoice.

OPINION

ROBUST OVERSIGHT: THE MISSING HALF OF CONGRESS'S JOB

Lee H. Hamilton
Contributor

Every now and then, I'm asked if I miss Congress. My stock answer is that no, I don't really miss it, but there are definitely times when I'd like to jump into a policy debate or call congressional hearings. This is one of those times.

Over the last few weeks, several media outlets have reported that U.S. military commanders want more American troops on the ground in places like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and, most recently, Libya. This ought to have Congress working overtime to prepare for these requests. The military faces serious security challenges in the Middle East, but one can be sympathetic and at the same time skeptical, or at least probing.

Congress should push hard to get answers to some very tough questions. Where are we headed with these proposed troop increases? If they don't work, what's next? What's our exit strategy?

What are the prospects for negotiations? We insist that we're going to destroy ISIS, but no other country in the international coalition fighting the Islamic State seems willing to put forces on the ground.

Are we going to be the only one? And just how does the administration propose to destroy ISIS?

Congress has two key functions in our system of government: legislation and oversight.

Most public attention — and certainly most media attention — focuses on policy-making and legislative maneuvering. But Capitol Hill's role in overseeing the executive branch is just as important.

That's because in seeking answers, Congress can force the President and his top advisors to articulate and defend their policies, their objectives, the steps they're taking to implement those objectives, and the impact they expect. They need to explain the resources needed to obtain their objectives: in this case, how many troops, how much money, what are the risks to American lives and interests?

Simply put, government functions better when Congress pursues robust oversight. It sharpens objectives, improves government performance, makes the bureaucracy more responsive, and curtails wasteful spending.

Sadly, this key responsibility has fallen into disrepair. Really tough overseers of the administration's policies — lawmakers interested in government performance, not political one-upmanship — have grown scarce on Capitol Hill. If we want to restore the vigor of the Congress, getting it to look into every nook and cranny of government is vital. The military's pursuit of growing troop strength and new strategies in the Middle East would be a good place to start.

Lee Hamilton is a Distinguished Scholar, Indiana University School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice, IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.



GARDEN CITY COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS BIG NEWS FOR TOWN'S VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Amy Leonard
amy@cullmansense.com

GARDEN CITY - Garden City Town Council met on Monday, Feb. 15 at the Garden City Town Hall. Two topics of note were an $8,000 grant from the Cullman County Community Development Commission (CCCDC) and the passing of Ordinance 2016-211.

An $8,000 grant was awarded to the Garden City Volunteer Fire Department by the CCCDC to replace old gear. New turnout gear, the specialized protective equipment worn by firefighters, has already arrived. Additionally, each member of the department received new helmets. New radios are on order, and the department plans to replace hoses and nozzles, some in use since the 1990s, with their next grant.

Garden City Volunteer Fire Chief Steve Ohls plans to replace all of the air packs used during fires, upgrading to 45-minute packs, from 30-minute packs, with his next grant as well.

"By the time you put your air pack on, get it turned on, drape your nozzle and get up to the door, you've already wasted five minutes. Then, you get in, find the fire, do the search and rescue, get your victim out and get back inside and your five-minute warning buzzer on the air pack is going off. Then, you've got to come back out and swap out bottles. Time is of the essence fighting fires and that extra fifteen minutes makes a big difference."

Ohls displayed the new equipment and shared his vision for the future of the department with pride.

"I'm giving back to the community what the community gives to me."

Ohls began volunteering with the department in 1991 and was made chief in June of last year.

Since then, he has been busy running drills with his volunteers, updating policies, submitting grants and working out plans to begin a junior firefighter program in Garden City.

He shares, "I want to get the younger kids involved in the program so that they have something to look forward to when they turn eighteen and can volunteer with us."

Councilwoman Teresa Goodwin voiced the community's appreciation for the department, stating, "Steve has special skills to offer. All of our volunteer firefighters do."

Ordinance 2016-211, a Health and Sanitation Nuisance Ordinance, passed unanimously after a year of deliberation. Special detail was given defining a nuisance in wording of the ordinance in hopes of preventing any future misinterpretation. Prior to the vote, an amendment was added to the draft which will require a signed complaint by the citizen reporting an ordinance violation.

Members of the Garden City Town Council are:

- Pam Leslie, Town Clerk
- Scott Arnold
- Patsy Chaffin
- Gene Norman
- Teresa Goodwin
- Butch Bradford
- Mayor Tim Eskew

Lee (from Front)

Amy Leonard
amy@cullmansense.com

BIRMINGHAM - Alabama lost one of its most valued treasures on Friday, Feb. 19 when Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Harper Lee, passed away in her sleep in her hometown of Monroeville at the age of 89.

Published in 1960, her overnight sensation, "To Kill a Mockingbird," soon found its place on the required reading lists for many schools, with generations of readers citing it as a favorite.

Born in Monroeville in 1926, Nelle Harper Lee, Ms. Nelle to friends and family, was the youngest of four children born to A.C. and Francis Lee. Lee was closest to her eldest sibling, Ms. Alice Lee, who was fifteen years her senior.

Alice Lee would be the key element in her baby sister's sense of safety and privacy. "Nelle wasn't Scout like everybody always thought. She was Boo, so she needed a protector. That was Ms. Alice," said Bryan Sellers, family friend.

The elder sister, a fierce attorney much like their father, began her law career in the 1940s after graduating from Birmingham School of Law and practiced until the age of 100. Alice Lee died in 2014 at the age of 103.

Due to the sisters' desire for privacy, fierce loyalty to each other and Alice Lee's keen law skills, most Harper Lee fans could only speculate about her as a person. But, most fans didn't grow up across the road from her and go to Monroeville First United Methodist Church with Alice and Harper Lee, when the latter was home for the winter.

Sellers, a Birmingham teacher and Monroeville native, did happen to grow up in that house across the road and go to church with the Lee sisters.

"We moved into the house across from Ms. Nelle around 1981. She had been living there with her sister, Alice, since the 70s at least," he said. "She would split her time between New York City and Monroeville, leaving New York to come home each year around Halloween and then going back up north after Easter services at church. She hated to fly, so she traveled by Amtrak. I would drive her to Tuscaloosa to catch the train after the service to Evergreen stopped."

On the day of Harper Lee's death, with many news outlets on their way to Monroeville, Sellers was concerned. "My mama is mad because the entire world is heading to the neighborhood right now. If the BBC gets in her yard again and trounces her azaleas, she might get after them with a pitchfork!"

Alice Lee and Bryan Sellers' father John Sellers, the Sellers family patriarch and beloved community and church leader, were more than neighbors. They were friends, serving side by side on countless boards and organizations throughout Monroe County. Each left a lasting, positive impact on the town of Monroeville after their deaths.

"The Lee sisters came from strong Methodist stock, so they were good friends with my dad. After the church split about fifty years ago, we all went to Monroeville First United Methodist Church where Ms. Alice was the highest ranking layperson for decades," said Sellers.

While Harper Lee was known to be religious, she was not a teetotaler, according to Sellers. He shared, "She smoked cigarettes up until the stroke and was known to visit the neighborhood poker game and have a drink back in her day."

Harper Lee described her political leanings as "old Whig" and was known to be frugal throughout her life. When staying in her New York City home, she lived in a rent-controlled apartment overlooking Central Park, where she managed to live in complete anonymity despite her fame.

When home in Monroeville, however, it was common to see her "at the local Dollar General store shopping the dollar rack for loungewear, her preferred everyday wear. She was so proud that she was paying less for them than she had in the 1970s!" said Sellers.

"Ms. Alice and Ms. Nelle were all about empowering women even back before that became the popular thing to do. Ms. Nelle was a great woman who loved to sit and talk to my sister about life and love and the things girls talk about. I was just the little kid brother who asked too many questions," Sellers laughed.

"She wasn't receptive to any talk about the book. When I was real little and before I knew any better, I would ask her about it and she'd always say, 'You're too young!'. She was right. I was too young to understand."

Sellers smiles as he remembers.

"I bet she's up in heaven right now with my daddy and Ms. Alice sitting on a front porch smoking a cigarette!"

Since Ms. Alice's passing in 2014, the house across the street has been sitting empty, a symbol of the void left in the neighborhood and community by the Lee sisters.

To us, Harper Lee was larger than life and wrapped in mystery. We are missing who we think Lee might have been. A gifted teacher in Birmingham is missing his neighbor and dear family friend.

