The Cullman Tribune

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Voter registration hot topic at Feb. Cullman Co. Republican Party meeting with Sec. John Merrill

Andrew Cryer
Tribune Correspondent

CULLMAN – The Cullman County Republicans held their monthly meeting over the weekend, welcoming special guest. Alabama Sec. of State John Merrill. Merrill, who was elected in Nov. 2014, traveled to Cullman to address such issues as the Secretary of State Report, cost savings initiatives, and voting roll purges and reform.

The meeting began with the announcement of Waid Harbison as the new chair of the Cullman County Republican Party. Harbison thanked outgoing chair Kelly Duke for his service to the party over the last several years, and awarded him with a gift from the party.

The chair of the Alabama Republican Party, Terry Lathan, was also in attendance, along with Cullman's delegation to Montgomery- Sen. Paul Bussman, R-Cullman, Rep. Corey Harbison, R-Good Hope P3

Remembering Nate

Parents of local suicide victim open up about the impact of loss



Nate Spicer was only 17 years old when he took his own life. COURTESY THE SPICER FAMILY P4

Cullman City Police Chief Kenny Culpepper addresses local mental healthcare and suicide

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CULLMAN – As we reported last week, Cullman County has seen a frightening increase in the number of suicides in 2017 compared to last year. (See: www.cullmansense.com/articles/2017/02/02/cullman-co-sees-frightening-increase-suicides) We sat down with Cullman City Police Chief Kenny Culpepper to get his thoughts on this troubling trend.

As to why such a tragic outbreak has occurred, authorities have yet to determine why so many are occurring so rapidly.

"It's too early to try and establish a causative effect," said Culpepper of these particular cases.

He addressed P14

CCBOE after-school meal program picking up speed

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CULLMAN COUNTY – In January, the Cullman County Board of Education (CCBOE) implemented a new federal program to provide after-school meals for area students. When he introduced it, Superintendent Shane Barnette stated that the program offers free suppers to anyone 18 and younger: not just to students in the public-school system, but any child or teen residing within the CCBOE's district. There is no application form for students or parents to fill out. Those who come get served.

CCBOE Chief School Financial Officer Ed Roberson, who oversees the administration of the program, shared, "We are currently providing almost 2,000 kids per day a healthy supper at the end of their school day. We are of course very excited about this program, and our goal is to implement the program at additional Cullman County schools. Unfortunately we have several kids across Cullman County that do not receive a good meal at home in the evenings. The primary purpose of this program is to address that issue. It is also very beneficial to any student who remains on campus after school for activities, this includes academic and athletic teams, as well as band."

After-school meals are offered Monday through Friday. School cafeterias begin serving as school gets out, and continue until around 4 p.m.

For some students who have need but cannot stay (those riding the bus, etc.), packaged carry-out meals may be available.

According to Roberson, the program does not cost the system anything. All funding is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

From the service's website, qualifying schools and other entities:

• Are located at sites where at least half of the children in the school attendance area are eligible for free and reduced-price P8

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More residential lofts coming to downtown Cullman

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CULLMAN – The City of Cullman Planning Commission met Monday evening, and with an abbreviated agenda, approved two conditional use requests for property rezoning, the first of which was for loft apartments on Second Avenue Southeast.

The first request was made specifically for 302 and 304 Second Ave. SE to be rezoned for loft apartments.

Garlan Gudger Jr., owner of Gudger Properties, and president of the Cullman City Council, is seeking zoning that will allow the three-story building at that site, next to Southern Accents Architectural Antiques, to be used as follows:

- First floor--100 percent commercial
- Second floor--50 percent commercial, 50 percent residential lofts
- Third floor--100 percent residential lofts

Modification of the property should take nine months. It was noted that the building use fell within zoning allowances, that interior construction would not need to go through the building department as it retained the original building footprint, and that a planned addition of upper-floor balconies would have to come back for review. Those matters being recognized, the conditional use request was approved without discussion.

The second request was for a piece of property located on Broadway Drive Southwest near Second Avenue Northwest (in the vicinity of Southern Hickory Barbecue and Tractor Supply), to be rezoned for a dialysis clinic. Nashville-based Randall Dover Architect, a firm with experience in the design of dialysis clinics, seeks to develop a 7,000-square-foot facility on a currently vacant lot. It was noted that current sketches of the facility are preliminary and do not comply with all city codes, but that the final design will be compliant and will be submitted for pre-approval. With that condition recognized, the conditional use request was approved without discussion.

The commission then adjourned.

The Tribune spoke briefly with Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs after the meeting, to ask about other upcoming development plans, particularly the rumored Academy Sports + Outdoors store.

Jacobs did not confirm or deny. He responded, "From the City's standpoint, we're working several retail and several industrial. All of them are off the record at this time; we have to sign non-disclosures until such time as the project becomes a reality. One thing I know for sure is that we do not have, currently, any agreement with Academy. There's folks kicking around town. There's good things coming down the pike. There's folks looking at existing buildings, there's going to be something coming out of the K-Mart building; some other things like that, and some long-range things. We feel good about what's going on."

The City of Cullman Planning Commission meets the first Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at Cullman City Hall. The public is invited to attend.

Holly Pond water receives excellent report from ADEM

Heather Mann
Tribune Correspondent

HOLLY POND – The Holly Pond Town Council had a packed agenda at this week's meeting. After opening statements, financial report approval and the welcoming of public comments, the council dove right into their reports.

Lightbulbs for the water treatment plant have been ordered and are ready to be installed, and Councilwoman Carla Hart voiced a complaint she had heard about the difficulty of seeing the edge of the road at night. A proposed solution was to paint bright lines down the edge of the road and possibly add more lighting. Hart also showed photos of the Town's proposed new welcome sign and gave a price estimate for it.

The sewage report brought Living Water Services representative Tyler Keller to the front of the room. He mentioned that there had been a surprise inspection from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), and that Holly Pond had received no citations. They were told, however, that they had one violation due to their automatic samplers not working, and work to fix the problem is underway. The last point of the committee report simply notified the council of repairs that would need to be made on the machinery in the future.

Councilwoman Lou Thomas told the council the approximate prices for some new Christmas decorations for the park, saying that she felt they needed to "put some life into the back side of the park."

Mentions of getting a tree for the park were made, but no official decision was made on that. Michelle Bell closed the committee reports by saying that registrations for sports would be held on Feb. 11 from 9 a.m.-noon and Feb. 18 from 1-4 p.m., both at the town hall.

Mayor Bill Oliver brought the meeting to old business, where he said the council needed to make a final decision on what to do about the Christmas decorations, which led to a motion that put Thomas in charge of making all the choices and presenting them to the council for final approval.

He also brought up the issue of gates being put up in the park to reduce the number of cars that use the path as a shortcut (a motion which had been approved by the previous town council) and said that he would begin looking into building the gates in the near future.

New business brought Keller back to the front with the ADEM reports and scorecard. The reports indicated no high flow violations and good lab analysis results, which led to a scorecard result of 40. On a scale of 0 to almost 800, with lower scores being better, Holly Pond's water treatment plant had almost no issues except for the facility's age. After he finished, a representative of Sand Mountain Pest Management offered the council the company's services for the town hall, the library, the Lions Club, and the concessions stand. Oliver and the rest of the council discussed her offer and made a motion that they would research other companies' prices before they made a decision.

Oliver said sometime in the near future, the council would have to "bite the bullet" and find ways to pay for paving roads and running the water treatment plant. He also proposed installing solar lights alongside the regular lights around the ballpark walking track. The council soon dissolved into conversation about landscaping around the new town welcome signs, and they all voted to purchase the signs if the state approved their locations.

The meeting adjourned after a motion was passed granting Oliver and Town Clerk Linda Pope permission to pay any membership dues the council owes to various organizations.

The Holly Pond Town Council meets on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Guy Hunt Library. The public is welcome to attend.

Vinemont welcomes another new business: Vinemont Welding and Fabrication holds ribbon cutting

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VINEMONT – Vinemont native Jeremy Harbison and his family have for a few years now dreamed of owning their own business, and on Jan. 2 of this year, they made that dream a reality. They opened the doors of Vinemont Welding and Fabrication on that day, and last Wednesday, Feb. 1 held their official ribbon cutting.

Harbison gave a quick overview of what they do: "We provide in-house custom fabrication work, various kinds of welding, ornamental iron, gates, whatever you can think of on that. We can clean up metal parts and powder coat them."

Pointing out a set of patio furniture on the work floor, he continued, "We just did this patio furniture. A lot of people will throw their stuff out, but we can clean it up, knock all the old paint off of it, and put the powder on it. And it's very durable, more durable than paint."

It's a family business; currently, the workforce is Harbison and his father.

They plan to keep it in the family for now, but foresee a likely facility expansion and hiring within the next year. The first expansion plan involves moving the powder coating operation into a separate building.

"We're already running out of room here," Harbison observed.

"The powder coating is a business in itself, and out welding side is a business in itself. You put them together in one building, and you can see we're already running out of room."

South Vinemont Mayor Reggie Dodson shared with the crowd, "These people are here for you and me. They're part of our community, and we need to extend to them all the graces we possibly can.

"Eventually, they'll end up with more people employed, and that means that those here in the town have got a real good chance of employment. These are things that make the town better, and that's my objective."

Harbison stated a clear vision for his family's business: "We're willing to work with anybody and meet their need. We're here to serve the community, make people happy and go the extra mile on every project we do. Customer service is a very important thing to do. This is a Christian business, so we want to run on biblical principles; and that's going the extra mile and turning out excellent work at a fair price."

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Feb. is National Heart Month: Cullman Regional to host seminar, give free heart disease screenings

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CULLMAN – According to Cullman Regional, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Cullman County. February is National Heart Month, and the hospital is hosting several events, including free heart disease screenings, as well as an informative lunch-and-learn program.

Free heart disease screenings will take place on Thursday, Feb. 9, Thursday, Feb. 23 and Thursday, March 23, by appointment only.

Who should have a heart screening?

Here are some points to consider:

• Are you worried about having a heart attack?
• Are you over the age of 50?
• Do you have high cholesterol?
• Does heart disease run in your family?

The free heart disease screenings will include the following tests:

1. Lipid panel/glucose
2. Body Mass Index
3. EKG (Electrocardiogram)
4. Blood pressure
5. ABI screening
6. Bone density screening

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

A heart disease lunch-and-learn program/ seminar will take place on Wednesday, Feb. 15 in Cullman Regional's Colonel Cullman Room in the Community Education Center in Professional Office Building 2.

Cullman Regional's cardiovascular team- Dr. Silvio Papapietro, Dr. Edward Mahan, Dr. Mir Varquez, Dr. James Lee and Cardiovascular Services Director, Carla Fewell, RN, will be on hand to discuss the importance of heart health and answer questions.

The program will begin at 11:30 a.m.

Cost of the lunch-and-learn program is $5 for Healthy Life members and $8 for others.

Call 256-735-5600 to register.

Cullman Regional is located at 1912 Alabama Highway 157, Cullman, AL 35058.

Meeting (from Front)

and Rep. Randall Shedd, R-Fairview.

Lathan has just served a two-year term and is preparing to run for another two-year term; she is the only female chair in the southeast, and is one of seven female chairs of the Republican National Committee.

Lathan shared that the Alabama Republican Party will be hosting a winter dinner in Birmingham at the Winfrey Hotel.

Details and tickets are available online at www.algop.org. According to Lathan, they are almost sold out.

The keynote speaker will be the president of the Tomb of the Unknown Solider Society. Dr. Billy Hawkins, president of Talladega College, will be joining the dinner as well.

Lathan asked those in attendance to sign two petitions, calling for the state of Alabama to register party affiliation when one registers to vote. These will be the first step towards Alabama becoming a closed primary state.

"The fact of the matter is that we're one of the few states in the nation that does not have some kind of a hybrid or some sort of party registration. We think that it's important to let team members pick our team, particularly in a runoff," stated Lathan, as she reasoned why the state must reform its election laws.

She argued, "There is a real push for (the reform) in the Republican Party. We have seen races where crossover voting has changed the outcome of our candidate."

Lathan was asked about her views on Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). RCV is where voters get to vote for candidates in the order which they prefer their candidates; for example, an Independent voter may want to vote for a third party, but fears that their vote will cause a Democrat to win.

With RCV they can vote their conscience without being a "spoiler," because their vote will be reallocated should there be no clear winner. States and other nations with RCV also avoid spending tax dollars, and extra time, on runoff elections.

Lathan said, "It's a good system because it prevents a runoff; therefore, you don't have to have voters come back out and you don't have to pay millions of dollars for extra elections."

Although Lathan supports the idea, she said, "It would take some education and it would have to go through the process. The biggest issue would be explaining to people, 'how does this work?'"

Guest of honor Merrill was up next, and he began by saying just how special Cullman is to him.

"Cullman is a very special place to me; it's a place that I didn't spend a lot of time before I started campaigning... I had more than 30 unique visits to Cullman County in the two years when I was campaigning. The one thing that people in this community did for me that was unusual is that you took me in as one of your own. I will never forget that."

The Cullman County Republicans were the first group in the state to receive the Secretary of State Report by hand.

The report was released on Feb. 3, and will be received by others via mail in the coming days. The report summarizes what the Secretary of State's office did in 2016.

Merrill then explained his role in Alabama. "I work for you. I work for you. Paul Bussman works for you. Randall Shedd works for you. Corey Harbison works for you. We are here to serve you," he said.

An important aspect of what the secretary of state does in Alabama is voter registration. Merrill said,

"We want to ensure that every eligible U.S. citizen is registered to vote and has a voter ID."

In order to do that, Merrill says his office has created a Vote for Alabama app that is available on the App Store and Google Play. He also says that he is asking legislators where the state needs to hold a registration and voter ID drive; not only that, but he is working on having drives at local festivals around the state to reach as many people as possible.

More than 600,000 voters were registered since Jan. 19, 2015, bringing the state total to more than 3.3 million voters, the largest in the history of the state.

However, despite these efforts, critics argue that Alabama does not go far enough and even discriminates against the poor and minority communities.

Alabama is currently being sued over its voter ID law, and the case is set to go to court in September 2017.

Merrill himself has come under fire for not supporting automatic voter registration (where everyone is registered by the state to vote when they turn 18).

Not only is the state in court over voter ID, but in January, federal judges struck down 12 of Alabama's legislative districts saying Republicans relied too heavily on race when drawing district lines.

According to WBRC FOX6 News, "The three-judge panel ruled Friday (Jan. 20) in the long-running lawsuit over the legislative districts, according to the Associated Press. The judges say 12 districts were unconstitutionally gerrymandered, and they blocked the Alabama Legislature from using them in future elections. The panel upheld 24 more challenged districts."

Merrill argues that the state legislature must fix the issue in a special session or the court will fix it for them.

"I wish that we could go back to where we stayed in county lines or community lines because we need communities of interest instead of splitting a street in Hanceville because Corey needs these votes and Ed Henry needs those votes. It's not good; it's not good for those people; they don't know who their legislator is. That's a problem."

Sec. Merrill can be reached at 334-242-7200, 334-328-2787 or john.merrill@sos.alabama.gov.

The Cullman County Republicans will hold their next meeting on March 4, with special guest speaker, Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries John McMillan. Meetings are held at the Cullman Elks Lodge with breakfast at 7:30 a.m.

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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
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Nate (from Front)

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Note: The Tribune does not and will not solicit stories from families in moments of such deep sorrow. After our first article on the rash of 2017 suicides, the Spicer family contacted us, asking to be interviewed. They hoped that their story might paint an accurate picture of the emotional aftermath of such a tragedy, and thus help prevent a future tragedy from occurring to someone else. The emotions were fresh and raw. The Spicers spoke from a standpoint of deep sorrow and emotional turmoil; some of their statements might be offensive to certain people involved in various aspects of the case. It was not the intent of the Tribune to offend, but to allow the family to speak openly, and to present their story as we received it.

As publicized details of suicide events have been shown to promote repetition, we have removed specific references to the method of suicide.

CULLMAN – Suicide victims often express the feeling that they are a burden, that their families or friends might be better off without them. The following story, though, should prove two points: first, that suicide does not help loved ones but devastates them; and second, that young people are more important and far more loved than they sometimes think they are.

Late on the evening of Jan. 17, Nathaniel Elijah "Nate" Spicer walked out the door of his family home. A short time later, his mother and brother found him in the back yard, where he had attempted to kill himself. His mother and a neighbor performed CPR until emergency medical services arrived. Nate died several days later at UAB Hospital.

Nate had been in trouble before over drug use, so was enrolled in Cullman County's alternative school program, and was involved in an outpatient rehabilitation program at The Bridge, Inc. in Cullman.

After expressing suicidal thoughts, he was temporarily hospitalized. Eleven days before his suicide, he was discharged from short-term treatment at Children's of Alabama in Birmingham, after doctors there reportedly gave him a clean bill of mental health.

Friends reported to the family that he was well-liked at school, though he had been the target of some bullying from unknown sources. Like many typical teen boys, he suffered from what his family defined simply as "girlfriend trouble."

Following are the accounts of Nate's parents Cathy (C) and Daniel (D) Spicer, who were interviewed together.

First Impressions

These were the Spicer's initial statements.

C-"It's absolutely devastating; whatever pain Nate was feeling, it has been magnified and multiplied onto us. There's no words to describe what it feels like."

D-"My first response to what he done was to want to commit suicide myself, and I'm not even that kind of person. I mean, it's such a shock to the soul, you just can't even understand; it's just so hurtful. We don't even know how to pick up and move on. He was 17 years old; and he was just starting to get his life started. Kids these days, we just don't (know) what goes through the mind of a child these days. It's a terrible situation all the way around. We just don't really understand."

C-"We will forever want to know why. We've gone through all of his social media accounts that we can get into. He protected himself pretty good: he changed passwords, deleted messages, all his contacts. He sent out one last message through Snapchat before he did what he did. After that, he walked out of the house and (...).

Nate

D-"He was a great kid, he really was. He ran track for the school and played Parks and Rec basketball. Just an amazing kid. Loved to skateboard, amazing at video games. Sit and laugh all day long. I'm talking about having you cracking up. Man, he was so funny. We would just laugh so hard.

"There was a girl there at the hospital, and I asked her how she knew him, and she said, 'Well, I was actually crying in the hallway at school and he walked up to me; and by the time he got done, I was laughing.' And that was how she met him. That's the kind of personality he had."

C-"He always had a smile for everybody. He never met a stranger in his entire life.

"We donated his organs, because he was that kind of person. We didn't want his death to mean nothing. Yeah, he chose to go out like he did, but we wanted him to continue to help people.

"He definitively helped seven people. One of those was a child who flew all the way from California to get his pancreas. He helped some little kid be able to go out and play, and that was him.

"He was the kid that, if you were bed-bound, he's going to come to your house to play checkers with you; so we know he would have wanted to do that. That's just who he was.

"It's just completely floored us, because he was that kid. He was just amazing, and he didn't know his own worth. He was buried with, I'd say, about 20 love letters from girls that wanted to ask him out. He didn't think he was that kid. He didn't think he could just go up and ask a girl out.

"Some of his friends have come forward and said that he was being bullied, but he was trying to handle it himself. He never told us. We don't know what about or what was going on."

D-"As many people as I saw come to his funeral, I could hardly see him being bullied."

C-"I couldn't either, because there were so many kids there: football players, basketball players. The basketball team wore bracelets for him while he was in the hospital (at UAB). The whole school was praying for him to pull out of it."

Previous efforts through mental health services

C-"When he verbalized that he was feeling suicidal (approximately three weeks prior to his suicide), we immediately put him into Children's Hospital. He had just gotten discharged from the psych ward at Children's Hospital 11 days before he did this. They told us he was fine."

Tribune- How long was he there?

C-"He was there for 10 days. They said he was fine. They didn't put him on any depression medicine, no anxiety medicine, no nothing. They said he was just suffering from 'teenage issues.'"

D-"Just a little depressed from being in teenage life. That day I got him with me, and I talked to him. I said, 'Look, if you're thinking about hurting yourself, we need to know. Don't BS me on this.' And he looked at me and said, 'No, Dad, I'm not. I'm really not.' But clearly he had other plans."

C-"And he had his follow-up with Cullman Mental Health, and they felt that he was just fine."

D-"They're not taking these thoughts of suicide very seriously; they didn't when he was down there."

C-"At Children's (Hospital), we were supposed to go down there and have family meetings, and it never happened. When they discharged him, they were supposed to give us a discharge summary. He was at lunch when we got there, and they didn't even come into the room with us or tell him goodbye, nothing. The nurse just gave us some paperwork, said 'Sign this,' and walked out of the room. And then he got there 15 minutes later, and we left. So they completely dropped the ball on his care, completely.

"I talked to the therapist two or three times on the phone about medication, and she's like, 'Well, maybe the doctor will assess that'... never a definitive answer."

D-"They should have taken it a little more seriously."

The Spicer family in the last days before the suicide

D-"We didn't even know he was feeling the way he was feeling. He was a little depressed. We were trying to talk to him and ask him if he was thinking about hurting himself, but he promised us he wasn't.

"At first, we took it a little lightly, because we wasn't sure. That's why (*after his stay at Children's Hospital*) we took time and set him out: personal time—I took personal time, she took personal time, and set him down and said, 'Look, if you really are thinking about hurting yourself, we need to know. You're our son, and we will get you some help.' But he said, 'No, Dad, I'm not thinking about it.'

"We tried to take it seriously. I don't know why he didn't tell me the truth; I really don't."

C-"I don't, either. I look back at our text messages. From right before he went in the hospital, we went from pages and pages of messages—long, drawn out, everything going on in his life, to messages like just, 'I get off work at this time.' I thought it was just because everything was so busy.

"During these last couple of weeks, he had ropes (*a therapy program at The Bridge*) on Tuesdays and Thursdays; and he worked Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I drove him everywhere: I took him to school every day, picked him up from school, and took him to wherever he had to be in the afternoon. So we had all that one-on-one time in the car, and we talked every day. I knew there were things bothering him, because he had been in trouble; but just the Saturday before, he was telling me about this girl he wanted to ask out, and 'What do I need to do to make that happen?' Like everything was okay.

"He did this on a Tuesday. On Monday he was bragging to me that he's going to graduate next year, exactly 20 years to the day from when I graduated, and that he was going to walk in my favorite color. Just one day before he did that.

"We knew that things were going on, but he was still normal. He wasn't devastated, depressed. He hung out with his brother, played video games. He laughed, he cut up. He assured us verbally that everything was okay."

D-"We believe that he put on that front, like there's nothing wrong, because of what he was thinking and feeling inside, and he didn't want anybody to see that.

"We kept telling him, 'Look, if it's the trouble you're worried about, you just need to get some distance between you and your mistakes. It ain't that bad. You're still a kid; you've still got time to work things out. And he was in juvenile trouble. It would've went away as soon as he completed his probation; everything would've been gone. But he let it get to him."

The role of media

D-"There's a viral video of this girl who had (...) (*committed suicide by the same method Nate chose*). And it's been going around, and we've been trying to rally to have it taken down. He was talking to me, telling me about that video, just a couple of days before he done it. He was telling me, 'Man, that's messed up, Dad.' Then he went out and done the same thing, the exact same thing. Other children, instead of using it as a sad story, are using it as an educational tool."

C-"Even in his message he sent to that girl (*a message sent on the day of his suicide, only a short time before the incident*), he says, 'I have now figured out the way to do it.' And he had been watching that video over and over. It's in his history on his computer, and that's like one of the last things in the history. He watched it so many times, that he mimicked it exactly. And now there's another girl that's done the same thing on Facebook Live. That's crazy! You're already going to devastate your family, but them having to watch it, too..."

Nate Spicer's suicide

C-"We just thought he was being a teenager. He had gotten into some trouble; he got caught smoking a cigarette in the house. I thought that he was just cooling off. I thought he'd just gone outside to walk it off. Me and his brother, we called some of the neighbors to see if he was there; and he wasn't there. So we went outside and walked around the house, shined a flashlight into their fort, and there he was. At first we were like, 'What are you doing? You're being creepy. Stop!' And then his brother said, 'You don't think...,' then we both just started running.

"He was ice cold. I beat on his chest, and I breathed in his mouth, and I got some color back. A few minutes later my neighbor started doing actual chest compressions. They (EMS) sat in front of the house a good 30 minutes, trying to get his heart back started before they took him to the hospital."

Nate was kept on life support at UAB Hospital for more than five days, until a seizure caused his brain function to cease. His funeral took place on Jan. 28. in Cullman.

The aftermath

D-"It's been devastating to our family: we can't eat, can't sleep. I've had to go on anti-depressants and anxiety medicine. I mean, it's just killing me. I can't understand why he done what he done; it just wasn't worth it. Kids these days feel like they've got so many problems in school and whatnot. He sent that message to that girl, and she didn't even try to help him."

C-"Apparently he sent a mass message to a bunch of kids. They've been telling us that they called 911, but nobody tried to contact us. Nobody even attempted to contact us. We found out about this message from our youngest son, because he happened to see the message from somebody else. He saw it on the investigator's phone, because it had been forwarded to the investigator from somebody else.

"I don't know what was going on elsewhere, but all these kids have said they called 911, then tried to call his phone. I had his phone; I didn't get any calls until it was too late- hours later. They're saying they tried to help and do what they could do, but if three hours later is doing what you could do, I just don't see it. If your friend sends you a message and says they're checking out, you need to call somebody. You need to call everybody, anybody."

(Of the scene and moment when she found her son):
"I can just look over there and see him. I'll see that forever, and there's nothing I can do to make it go away. His little brother was right there beside me, and he saw it, too; and it's never going to go away."

D-"He's devastated, too. He won't even sleep in his room."

C-"We were by his (*the younger brother*) bedroom window when we found him, and he's afraid that he's going to roll over during the night and see that view. We've rearranged his room and everything. The other night, I had to sit in there with him until he was completely asleep, and he still woke up with a start, looking for me. The next night he stayed in there with his best friend, and he made it all night long. Last night, we all had to sit in the living room with him to fall asleep on the couch. He's terrified. I don't know when that will go away, if ever."

D-"To be honest with you, I'm still just devastated. I can't get his image out of my head. I think about him—in the mornings is the worst time in the world."

C-"Every day we have to tell ourselves over and over, 'No, Nate's not here. He's not coming back. This is what happened.' Every morning."

D-"The circumstances surrounding his death are so bizarre, we can't make heads or tails of any of it, really. We're trying to understand. What we're hoping to do is to try to help people get some kind of understanding about suicide, to really understand how bad it hurts the family.

"I haven't even been to work, can't eat, can't sleep. I had to go on anti-depressants and anxiety medicine.

"He was my son. He was my fishing buddy. Our first-born son, and now he's gone. I don't know how to cope, don't know how to live. I'm not sure how I'm going to live without him."

C-"I haven't been back to work, either. People say that suicide is selfish; I don't think they realize just how selfish it really is. Yeah, your pain is gone, but look what you've done to everyone around you. There were over 300 people at his funeral.

"Kids were telling us, 'Nate was the one who kept me from killing myself; Nate was the one who stayed on the phone with me all night long to keep me from doing it.' I've had so many kids come up to me and say that in the last six months they've tried to kill themselves, and said Nate was the one that talked to them and made them not do it. And now he's the one that went through with it. It's just crazy."

Thoughts on suicide prevention and the mental health system

D-"So many kids these days...I don't know what they think is so bad about life, but there was a bunch of kids who came down to the hospital and were admitting to us that they had been trying to commit suicide or thinking about committing suicide: probably 20 or 30 kids that came down there. It's becoming a serious issue."

C-"It's an epidemic. Every one of them has told me that if you call that suicide hotline...I called it for myself, to make sure they weren't lying to me. You get the local mental health emergency help line: they refer you to CRMC. CRMC refers you to somewhere in Birmingham. Birmingham refers you over to some other place. By then, I was so pissed off that I just hung up, because I never spoke to a person.

"And then the actual suicide hotline, if you're serious, they don't even ask you who you are or where you're at, or anything. If you're actually serious and you're going to kill yourself, they're just going to listen to you do it, and that's it. It's ridiculous. There is no way to actually help somebody through these hotlines. Yeah, call all day, but it's not going to do anything. They're not going to help you at all.

"And the people at Mental Health, they clearly don't take it seriously. It's very frustrating that these kids just don't have any help. They're calling out to their friends, and their friends don't know what to do."

D-"Counselors at school, they don't really seem to do well, because there's things they (*students*) don't want to tell them. It's like being a parent. They don't want to trust the school."

C-"There's a lot of fear in who they think they can talk to. 'I don't want to talk to this one, because what if this happens and I get in trouble instead of getting help?' It's got to be someone they trust."

To parents

Tribune-What would you say to parents?

D-"Really pay attention to your children. Even if they're trying to say that there's nothing wrong, really try to pay close attention to them. We didn't see it. Look for that sign."

C-"Catch what we didn't catch. Watch; I mean watch. I know it's going to make your kid mad for you to be all up in their social media, but you need to be in it. You need to know what they're saying to their friends. There's stuff they're not going to tell you. You need to be in their business. They might hate you today, but if it saves their life, it's worth it. I would rather argue with him tooth and nail for the rest of my life than have to put him in the ground."

To kids

Tribune-What would you say to kids in trouble?



PHOTO COURTESY THE SPICER FAMILY

C-"Ask for help. There's no shame in admitting you're depressed. Ask an adult, definitely an adult. And if they don't take you seriously, keep searching for somebody that does. Don't stop asking for help. And if you're afraid to do it alone, bring a friend. If you need help, you need to get help."

D-"Ask someone they trust. Kids don't want to share some things with their parents; so if there's somebody they can trust, find that person they can trust, to confide in and get some help. I wish there would have been somebody he could have talked to. I would hope he would have been able to trust me, but parents seem to be the last people they want to go to. As long as there's somebody they can trust that'll help them."

C-"If someone confides in you, go to the next step. Take the next step. I don't care if you make them mad; they will forgive you. If it saves their life, they will forgive you at some point."

Author's note: It has come to my attention that blame is being assigned from one person to another, especially among Nate's schoolmates. This desire is not unusual in moments of tragedy, as people try to explain what happened. One student specifically seems to have been singled out for particularly vicious accusations. This story should make clear that everyone could have missed something at some point: family, friend, and the mental health system. Everyone will at some point ask himself or herself what more they could have done, what they could have looked for, what they could have taken more seriously.

Now is a time of more pain than anyone should have to endure; there is no need to create more. - W.C. Mann

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

In the Matter of the Estate of
Floyd L. Arrington, Deceased

Case No. PC-2016-334
Notice to Creditors by Publication

Letters of Administration upon the Estate of said decedent, having been granted to the undersigned on the 20th day of January, 2017, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of the Probate Court of Cullman County, Alabama, notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said Estate are required to file an itemized and verified statement of such claim in the office of the said Judge of Probate within six months from above date, or said claim will be barred and payment prohibited.

Michelle Johnson,
Personal Representative of the Estate of Floyd L. Arrington

JERRY L. KILGO,
Attorney for Personal Representative

STATE OF ALABAMA
COUNTY OF BLOUNT

IN THE PROBATE COURT

IN THE MATTER OF :
AELAND CHRISTOPHER FRANKLIN HULL — CASE NO. 2016-288
A minor. DOB: JULY 8, 2015

AND

AURIANNA GRACE HULL — CASE NO. 2016-289
A minor DOB: MARCH 6, 2013

NOTICE OF ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS

Notice to: ANY PERSON CLAIMING TO BE THE NATURAL PARENTS OF SAID MINOR CHILDREN; BORN TO BRITTANY DIANNE KILLOUGH & JUSTIN SETH HULL, whereabouts unknown

Please take notice that a Petition for Adoption in the above styled matter has been filed in Probate Court of Blount County Alabama by the Petitioners, PETE WHATELEY & WILMA WHATELEY, on the 20th day of December, 2016. Please be advised should you intend to contest this adoption, you must file a written response within thirty (30) days of being served this notice herein with counsel for said Petitioner, whose name and address are as shown below, and with the Clerk of the said Probate Court of Blount County, Alabama, 220 Second Avenue East, Oneonta, Alabama 35121.

DONE this 24 day of January, 2017.

Chris Green
Chris Green
Blount County Judge of Probate

Attorney:
Sara Baker
100 Fifth Street SE
Cullman, Al. 35055
Telephone: 256-737-7181

FILED
BLOUNT COUNTY, AL
1/24/2017
CHRIS GREEN
JUDGE OF PROBATE

To: Cullman Tribune

Please publish the above notice in your newspaper for four (4) consecutive weeks, and after having done so, file with the Court an affidavit showing the fact of publication together with a copy of the notice of publication.

MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE NOTICE

Default having been made in the terms of that mortgage executed on October 15, 2010 by William Bryan Jones, a single man, to EvaBank, which said mortgage is recorded in Book MTG 1690, Page 782 in the Probate Office of Cullman County, Alabama, and default continuing, and by virtue of the power of sale contained in said mortgage, the following described property will be sold at public outcry, for cash, to the highest bidder, in front of the Courthouse door of said County, in Cullman, Alabama, during the legal hours of sale on February 23, 2017:

All that tract or parcel of land tying and being Lot 5 of the Redivision of Lot 18 of Saddlebrook Estates and unrecorded redivision, more particularly described as follows Commencing at an iron pin found at point purported to be the southeast corner of Lot 18 of Saddlebrook Estates as recorded in Plat Book 7, Pages 151 :& 152 in the Probate Office of Cullman County, Alabama. Being more particularly described as follows: thence North.89 degrees 02 minutes 00 seconds West 31.44 feet to a point on the West margin of Neptune Drive; thence along the West margin of said drive North 3 degrees 57 minutes 24 seconds West 308.71 feet to a point on the South margin of Mercury Drive; thence along the South margin of said drive as follows: thence North 88 degrees 24 minutes 31 seconds west 279.02 feet to a point; thence North 87 degrees 51 minutes 39 seconds West 15.09 feet to a point, the point of beginning for the property herein described; thence leaving the. south margin of said drive South 4 degrees 11 minutes 17 seconds West 147 68 feet to point thence South 68 degrees 30 minutes 26 seconds West 104.28 feet to a point; thence North 4 degrees 11 minutes 17 seconds West 188.02 feet to a point on the South margin of said drive; thence along the South margin of said drive as follows: thence South 89 degrees 14 minutes 52 seconds East 70.51 feet to a point; thence South 87 degrees 51 minutes 39 seconds East 29.49 feet to the point of beginning containing 0.38 acres more or less. Including a 2002 Southridge manufactured home, Vin No. 1SRP17181AAL and 1SRP17181BAL located thereon.

Said sale is made for the purpose of paying the mortgage debt and cost of foreclosure.

EvaBank, Mortgagee
Dewayne N. Morris
Attorney for Mortgagee
2131 Third Avenue North
Birmingham, Alabama 35203
The Cullman Tribune-January 26, February 2, 9, 2017

News from the Pond

Jimmie Dean Carnell
Tribune Contributor



Good morning Tribune readers and families. Welcome to the up and down weather conditions. We have had a wide variety of weather conditions this past week, and it seems it will continue to be the same. Who knows? The groundhog saw his shadow – per the 'experts' that means we won't see spring until April.

We have another important holiday coming up this week.

All of you folks in love, don't forget that this Tuesday, February 14th is a special day, Valentine's day.

This is the day when florists do their biggest business since Christmas. Everyone wants to buy red roses, or other colors if desired.

This used also to be the birthday of my Aunt Opal Gilley, wife of my Mother's brother, Herman Gilley. Herman and Opal Gilley were the parents of Marilyn Pinyan, Judy Brand and Sharon Nick.

How would you like to have your birthday on Valentine's Day? Some people do on this and other special days that makes the day doubly special.

Speaking of Valentine's Day, the senior adults of the East Cullman Baptist Association will hold their quarterly meeting on February 9th at the Duck River Baptist Church.

The program will open with the Prime-Time Singers presenting songs on the love theme.

These will be hymns about love, and narration given by Mrs. Sue Griffin, and Smiley Robbins.

They will be telling the audience about the three kinds of love mentioned in the Bible.

All senior adults whether in the association or not are invited to attend. The association furnishes the meat and the drinks and the members are asked to bring vegetables or desserts.

We always have a good time. Mrs. Becky McAnnally, senior director, also said we would have a guest speaker on this same program.

Congratulations are extended again to the Holly Pond Broncos varsity boys basketball team. As winners of the Cullman County tournament, they are preparing for the area tournaments.

If they continue to win games they will continue to play and then go perhaps to the regional and state tournaments. We sincerely hope they can continue. We are all proud of their accomplishments, so far.

The Dripping Springs Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, met on Sunday, February 5th. Receiving recognition at this meeting were the members of the Children of the American Revolution. They gave some information on C.A.R. and its projects. The main program was looking forward to Alabama's Bicentennial with a sketch on some famous Alabamians such as Helen Keller and Astronaut James Lovell.

C.A.R. State First Vice President Rebecca Harris and her mother, Susan joined the meeting, also. They are from Crane Hill. We are always so proud of the accomplishments of the children.

Until next week, stay warm and be safe.

Tribune Files from Yesteryear

From The Files Of 1957

Beal Rites Held

Funeral services were held, at Enon, on January 1st, for Mrs. Della Mae Beal, age 56, of Route Two, Vinemont. The Reverend Gus Buttram conducted the services and Moss Service directed interment in Hamby's Chapel Cemetery.

Surviving are one daughter, Mrs. Doris McCutcheon; her mother, Mrs. Emily Smith; six brothers and seven sisters.

Enon And Hamby's Chapel

Mr. and Mrs. Othel Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Bob Tohlman, of Birmingham, were the guests at supper of Mr. and Mrs. George McGukin and Carolyn and Don Wiggins, on Saturday evening.

Cadet Airman Gary McGukin left for Harlengen Air Force Base, Harlengen, Texas, on Monday, after spending ten days with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Felix McGukin.

Stephen Edmondson visited in Augusta, Georgia, during the holidays.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Ford, of Eva, were the guests of Halyard Hawkins and family, on Thursday.

Logan News

Reverend M.E. Lazenby, of this district of the Methodist Church held the first Quarterly Conference at the Methodist Church here on last Sunday. The congregation was highly pleased with the New District Superintendent.

Mrs. L.T. Kilgo has been quite sick for the past few days.

Messers Thomas, Albert, Wiley and Andy Tucker are visiting relatives in Florida.

Mr. and Mrs. J.O. Watson, of Birmingham, were the Saturday night guests of her parents.

Mr. and Mrs. Grady McKoy will leave in a few weeks for a vacation in Florida.

"Sunshine Lane," the play scheduled to take place on last Saturday night was postponed because of the extremely unfavorable weather. According to latest reports, it will be staged on Saturday night, January 27th, rain or shine in the school auditorium at 7 o'clock.

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Yost announce the birth of a daughter, at the Cullman Hospital, on January 17th.

Mr. and Mrs. John A. Leigeber announce the engagement of their daughter, Helen Marie, to James C. Jones of Huntsville and Birmingham.

The meeting of Entre Amies last week was held on Thursday evening with Miss Miriam Mitcham as hostess. Specimen chrysanthemums and pot plants were used to decorate the house. After the program the hostess served delicious refreshments to Mesdames George Armstrong, Roy Jordan, Blair Hays, John King, Dillard Kinney, Hartwell Speegle, Edgar Ziegler, Leroy Bledsoe, Oscar Dunlap, Fred Kelley and Misses Josephine Puckett, Mildred Kinney, Icelar Guthrie and Margaret Hartung.

Marriage Licenses Issued

January 12

I.J. Wise, 19, to Velvie Hollis, 19 and H.A. Loyd, 23, to Lavada Pesnell, 19.

January 13

J.L. Cost, 32, to Dorys Cost, 18; John W. Simms, 56, to Millie Shannon, 50 and Leonard Wilson, 20, to Gladys Hicks, 18.

January 15

Lucius Freeman, 38, to Lula Mae Hall, 20.

Frank Pettey has returned to Decatur, after spending the weekend with Mr. and Mrs. M.C. Keyes.

Mrs. Luther Sterling and Miss Anita Sterling spent Tuesday in Birmingham.

Albert Wenzel is recovering from an attack of pneumonia at the Cullman Hospital.

Fred Leigeber has recovered sufficiently to be removed from the hospital to his home.

Births Recorded For Month of December

Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, C.M. Evans, L.H. Hill, D. Lewis, M. Leonard, R.D. Speegle, Ras Williams, A. Rodgers, F. Edmondson, W.R. Garrison, O.D. Lay, A.J. Yeak, W. E. Knight, J.A. Turkett, C.I. Townsend, G.F. Smith, O.D. Tilley, C.J. Mayhall, G.G. Thompson, C. Wood, C.S. Bradley, A. Crumbley, C.C. Hill, W.W. Wisner, E.G. Price, C.E. Johnson, H.D.Wells, C.E. McSwain, S.W. Lewis, W.M. Rusk, W.J. Calloway, M. Hacker, A. Patterson, A.F. Kreps, T. Reynolds, J.D. Lawrence, H.M. Russell, I.F. Adair, O.T. Murphy, L.W. Yates, B.L. Hill, A.L. Pope, H.H. Hyde, T.C. Tilley, A.L. Pope, R.T. Faust, W.T. Chandler, A.H. Persall, C.V. Easterwood, G.F. West, J. Pigg, C.L. Holiday, O.J. Mayhall, T. Carden, A.L. Turner, K. McKelvey, A.C. Cook, L.O Guthrie and E. Holmes.

Mrs. Abie McCrary, age 35, of Hanceville, Route Three, passed away at the Cullman Hospital, on January 16th.

Funeral services were held at Arab, on January 18th, with Drinkard in charge.

Mrs. McCrary is survived by her husband, Luke McCrary; five sons, Delma Hyatt, Wilmar Hyatt, Kelly Hyatt, Sherrill Hyatt and Duel Hyatt and to daughters, Helen Hyatt and Lois Jean McCrary.

BILLY BOB'S STORIES AND STUFF

This is not your grandma's Chevrolet

Bill King
Tribune Contributor



I was doing what you are supposed to do in the slow lane – driving slowly! If I had been poking around in the fast lane I might have understood, but I was in the proper poking around lane unless, that is, I had been passing, turning left, or saw a blue light beside the road. Definitely, do not fail to move over for a blue light, especially on I-16 in Bullock County, Georgia, but that's all I have to say about that!

I was headed to work and ahead of schedule, so I was taking my own sweet time.

I was listening to Rick and Bubba on the radio and minding my own business when suddenly I looked up in my rearview mirror and what should appear, but a little red sports car about to hit me in the rear. (I must be one of those poets that don't know it).

At first, I thought he must be some student who was late for class.

Then I thought, no, he is some guy who had always dreamed of racing in the NASCAR circuit and he is drafting.

When I looked back in the mirror again I saw blond hair – lots of long blond hair. That was my first suspicion that he was not a "he." My second clue was that she was so close I could smell her perfume!

I knew if I slammed on brakes we would both be late for work. I sped up slightly. She moved up slightly. Finally, she got the chance to pass. She flew by me like Usain Bolt jacked up on Mountain Dew. As she passed, I read her vanity license plate. It said Gunny.

That raised the question that many vanity plates raise; what does that mean? I thought, "Well, maybe she is a gunnery sergeant in the United States Marine Corps." They are sometimes called "Gunny." I didn't really get a good look at her in the rear view mirror and certainly not as she broke the sound barrier passing me, but as best as I could tell, she didn't look like a Marine.

I was doubly surprised when I pulled beside her at a red light. I was surprised that I had caught her and surprised at who she was, or actually what she was. She didn't appear to be a Marine or a student late for class. She appeared to be a grandma! The long blond hair had thrown me.

My granny didn't have long blond hair. Mine had short blue hair with a beauty shop permanent. I'm glad older ladies don't get their hair dyed blue anymore, but I've noticed much younger ones these days dying theirs blue – or pink, lime green and even purple.

Maybe Gunny is a nickname for Granny. If so, she certainly is not like my granny was.

She didn't look like my granny, she didn't drive like my granny and that car certainly was not my granny's Chevrolet. Now that I think about it, I don't believe my granny ever learned how to drive, but that didn't stop her from telling grandpa how to drive.

I guess grannies have changed, but before I get myself in too much trouble, I'm not saying that is necessarily a bad thing (unless you are trying to run over some poor grandpa in the slow lane). I might better add we grandpas have changed too. In fact, the only one who has not changed is the One who does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, but then why would perfection need to change?

Bill King can be reached at bkpreach@yahoo.com or 334-745-0588 (office) or 334-728-5514 (cell).

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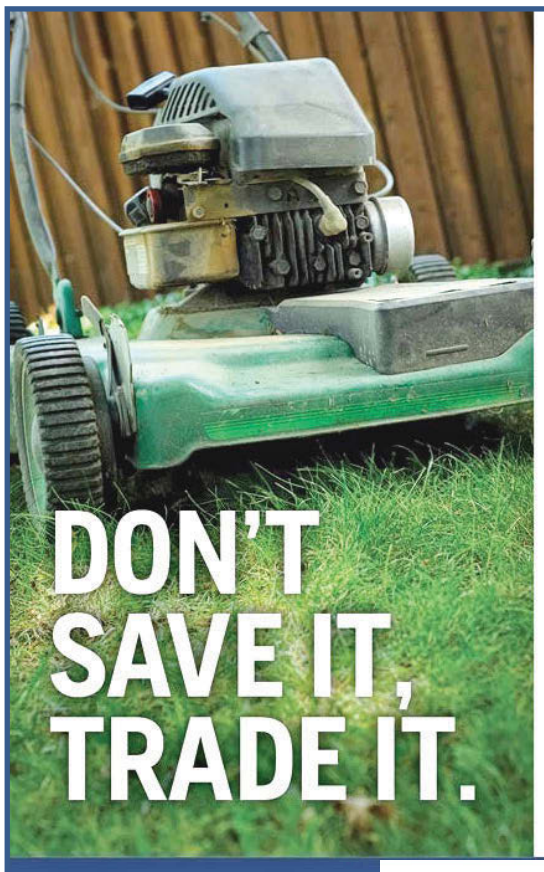
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PHARMACY TOPICS

by Eddy Hoenig

Hospital Discount WEST



Front L-R: Sonja Sewell, Launne Reid, Sue Miller.
Back L-R: Kathryn Striker, Eddy Hoenig, RPH

New research published in the journal *Pain* has uncovered a more effective way of treating fibromyalgia, a medical condition characterized by chronic widespread pain typically accompanied by fatigue, as well as sleep, mood and memory problems. The results of the trial suggest that combining pregabalin, an anti-seizure drug, with duloxetine, an antidepressant, can safely improve outcomes in fibromyalgia, including not only pain relief, but also physical function and overall quality of life. Until now, these drugs have been proven, individually to treat fibromyalgia pain. Fibromyalgia was initially thought to be a musculoskeletal disorder. Research now suggests it's a disorder of the central nervous system – the brain and spinal cord. Researchers believe that fibromyalgia amplifies painful sensations by affecting the level and activity of brain chemicals responsible for processing pain signals.

***

Some of the most effective treatments for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are also well-known for their risk of weight gain and subsequent health complications. For the first time, however, researchers have compared five of these second generation antipsychotics (SGAs) to determine which ones are the biggest culprits. The study, published online in the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology*, found that patients treated with Zyprexa (olanzapine) have the highest risk of weight gain, while Geodon (ziprasidone) and Seroquel (quetiapine) were not associated with an increase in body mass index. Risperdal (risperidone) and Abilify (aripiprazole) also resulted in weight gain, but not as great as the weight gain associated with Zyprexa.

***

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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
February 9, 2017

Three area middle schools qualify for state scholar's bowl tournament



CARRIE MORROW

Hanceville Middle School Scholar's Bowl Team: Back Row: Hank Radcliff (captain), Taz Whaley (captain), Noah Frasier, Manisha Adams, William Lesnansky. Front Row: Ethan Burgess, Brady Absher, Alana Nisley.



MIKE BRISCOE

Good Hope Middle School Scholar's Bowl Team: Hayden Witcher, Connor Earp, Adam McCluskey, Alyson Williams, Lily Williams, Kathryn Cleckler. Not shown: Robert Taylor.



BAMA TURNER

Cullman Middle School Scholar's Bowl Team: Dante Woodard, Cade Barnett, Cannon Trimble, Jackson Llewellyn, Kirin Tisdale and Morgan Shikle.

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN COUNTY - Cullman County will be well represented in upcoming scholastic competitions. Two area high schools, Holly Pond and Good Hope, qualified for the Alabama Scholastic Competition Association's (ASCA) Scholar's Bowl state championship tournament for small high schools on Feb. 25.

Joining them are three area schools that qualified for the ASCA's state middle school tournament, which will be held at Hoover High School near Birmingham, also on Feb. 25. Cullman, Good Hope and Hanceville Middle School teams will meet teams from 27 other schools around the state, to compete for the title of Alabama Middle School Scholar's Bowl Champion.

The Tribune asked the coaches/sponsors of each team to tell us about their teams and experiences. All three sent in team rosters and photos, and their comments are below.

Mike Briscoe of Good Hope Middle School said of his team, "We are very excited to be going to the state championship. We have been practicing very hard, and we are glad that it has paid off. Our team is very diverse, and that's another reason for our success."

Carrie Morrow of Hanceville Middle School said, "I have been the scholar's bowl coach since 2005. During this time, we have had teams that have won at the local level. We have never participated at the state level. I am very pleased with the hard work and dedication of my team. They deserve the opportunity to go to state. Their parents are very supportive and come to most of our matches and for that I am very thankful. I would also like to thank the faculty, staff and administration for their support. Our faculty does a phenomenal job at teaching these students every day, and I owe part of their success to them."

Bama Turner of Cullman Middle School said, "The Cullman Middle School scholar's bowl team is composed of 10 students: Chloe Bales, Cade Barnett, Taylor Borden, Sarah Kate Dockery, Emiley Gable, Jackson Llewellyn, Morgan Shikle, Kirin Tisdale, Cannon Trimble and Dante Woodard. All of these students participated in the regular Cullman County Invitationals that were held at Wallace State College. They walked away from that six-week tournament undefeated with an 11-0 record.

For the recent district tournament, only six students are allowed to participate. Deciding on those six was a difficult task because all of the students have contributed to the team this year. The district team was made up of Cade Barnett, Jackson Llewellyn, Morgan Shikle, Kirin Tisdale, Cannon Trimble and Dante Woodard. They did an awesome job by winning every round of the tournament. I am very proud of these students. I have to give full credit to these students for all that they have achieved."

The ASCA state middle school and small high school Scholars' Bowl tournaments will be held at Hoover High School, 1000 Buccaneer Drive, Hoover, on Saturday, Feb. 25.

Program (from Front)

school meals.

• Offer educational or enrichment activities, after the regular school day ends or on week-ends and holidays, during times of the year when school is in session.

• Meet licensing, health or safety codes that are required by state or local law.

• Serve nutritionally balanced meals and snacks that meet USDA's nutrition standards, with foods like milk, meat, vegetables, fruit and bread.

The CCBOE initated its after-school meal program at the Child Development Center and Fairview High School in January, and then on February 1 introduced it to West Point and Hanceville.

The goal is to see free suppers offered at every school in the system, but no time frame for that has been announced.

By the numbers:

• Child Development Center (Vinemont) - 250 meals per day

• Fairview - 675 meals per day

• West Point - 650 meals per day

• Hanceville - 250 meals per day

Any child or youth who is age 18 or younger at the start of the school year, and lives within the district of the CCBOE, is invited to participate.

There is no cost, and parents do not have to pre-register their children.

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BREAKING RECORDS AND CHASING TITLES

Holly Pond dominates Susan Moore, 117-42

Josh McBrayer
josh@cullmansense.com

HOLLY POND – It was total domination from the opening to the final horn Tuesday night as the Holly Pond Broncos took care of the Susan Moore Bulldogs in the first round of the 3A Area 11 Tournament.

Matt Cahoon immediately set the tone for the game when he received an alley-oop pass from Bailey Smith that he threw down two-handed on the first possession of the game.

Drew Jones added 10 while Smith dropped in four as the Broncos spent the rest of the eight-minute quarter building a huge 36-7 lead heading into the second.

Just like the first, Holly Pond started the second off with a bang going on a 10-3 run to push the lead to 36.

Isaac Adams buried a three to try and stop the bleeding but the Broncos answered with a 13-5 run to end the quarter up 61-18.

It was more of the same in the third, with Holly Pond dominating the paint and the perimeter while keeping Susan Moore in check with hard-nosed defense.

Jacob Harris, Michael Lambert, Griffin Morris, Gunter Hollis, Cahoon and Jones each scored for the Broncos in the third as they took an 88-26 advantage to the fourth.

With no running clock in tournament play, the Broncos quickly hit the century mark thanks to a 12-0 run that was led by Caleb Jones and Harris.



JOSH MCBRAYER/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Late in the fourth, Holly Pond reached another milestone in their record-breaking season as they scored 117 points to break the old Holly Pond record for points scored in a single game that was set in the 1978-79 basketball season.

Holly Pond defeated Susan Moore by a final score of 117-42 to set up a 2A Area 11 championship final with the Locust Fork Yellow Jackets, who defeated Pennington 78-57 in the first game.

The matchup is set for Friday at 6 p.m. at Holly Pond.

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Auction Notice

Contents of storage unit **B-26,** rented to **Coty Butler,** on **January 19, 2015,** will be sold for auction for past due rent on **February 11, 2017** at **10:00 a.m**. Consisting of: wooden bed, wooden chairs, children's bike, toys and clothing.

Contents of storage unit **D-9**, rented to **Joseph Childers,** on **April 24, 2015,** will be sold for auction for past due rent on **February 11, 2017,** at **10:00 a.m.** Consisting of: two wooden bookcases, television, microwave, two wooden chest of drawers and couch.

Contents of storage unit **D-16**, rented to **Chip Earnest**, on **May 19, 2001**, will be sold for auction for past due rent on **February 11, 2017**, at **10:00 a.m.** Consisting of: grill, golf clubs, wooden bookcase, exercise equipment, child's bike and toys.

Contents of storage unit **A-20,** rented to **Miriam Mitchell**, on **July 17, 2012,** will be sold for auction for past due rent on **February 11, 2017**, at **10:00 a.m**. Consisting of: wooden table, wooden chairs, bed and frame and wooden desk.

Contents of storage unit **D-8,** rented to **Steven Morrow**, on **December 14, 2013,** will be sold for auction for past due rent on **February 11, 2017,** at **10:00 a.m**. Consisting of: assorted household goods.

Contents of storage unit **C-18,** rented to **Shane Pearce**, on **May 28, 2016**, will be sold for auction for past due rent on **February 11, 2017**, at **10:00 a.m**. Consisting of: wooden table, metal toolbox, two televisions, stereo and wooden chest of drawers.

Contents of storage **unit A-1** and **A-32,** rented to **Rioh Pheigh**, on **April 4, 2014** and **December 5, 2014**, will be sold for auction for past due rent on **February 11, 2017**, at **10:00 a.m.** Consisting of: tools, computer, couch, wooden table, wooden bed and frame and television.

Your Extra Attic
c/o Werner's Trading Company
1115 4th Street, Southwest
Cullman, Alabama 35055

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE MATTER OF
THE ESTATE OF
CAPPI ANN MARDIS,
DECEASED. CASE NO. PC2017-009

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT TO BE PUBLISHED BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

THE ESTATE OF CAPPI ANN MARDIS, DECEASED.

Letters of Administration of said deceased have been granted to Jodi Lee Sumner on the 19th day of January, 2017, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Probate Judge of Cullman County. Notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

Jodi Lee Sumner, Personal Representative (Administrator),
and
Michele E. Pate, Attorney for the Estate

TO: Publisher of *Cullman Tribune*:

Please publish the above notice three successive weeks in said newspaper.

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown
Probate Judge

Michele E. Pate
P. O. Box 3391
Jasper, AL 35502
Phone: (205) 275-1700
Fax: (205) 387-0008
e-mail: mpatelaw@gmail.com

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE THE ESTATE OF:)
PAUL HILLARD BIRMINGHAM, SR.,) CASE NO.: PC-2017
Deceased.)

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT TO BE PUBLISHED BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Letters of Administration of said Deceased having been granted to PAUL HILLARD BIRMINGHAM, SR., on the 26th day of January, 2017, by the HONORABLE TAMMY BROWN, Judge of Probate of Cullman County, Alabama, notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

ETTA LOUISE BIRMINGHAM HIGGINBOTHAM,
As Personal Representative of the Estate of PAUL
HILLARD BIRMINGHAM, Deceased

To the Publisher of The Cullman Tribune

Please publish the above notice once a week for three successive weeks and send an Affidavit of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

Tammy Brown
TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

atty for petitioner:
Thomas E. Drake II
419 2nd ave SW Suite B.
Cullman, AL 35055
256-739-9445

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

ESTATE OF)
NINA L. WILLIAMS) CASE NO.: PC 2017-010
Deceased)

NOTICE

Letters Testamentary of said deceased having been granted to the undersigned on the 17th day of January, 2017, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of the Probate Court of Cullman County, notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

BAIN WILLIAMSON ADAMS

KATHERINE LUCILE ADAMS CLEMMONS

Roy W. Williams, Jr.
JACKSON & WILLIAMS
416 First Avenue, S.E.
Cullman, AL 35055
(256) 739-5400

To: Publisher of The Cullman Tribune

Please publish the above notice three (3) successive weeks in said newspaper.

Tammy Brown
Hon. Tammy Brown
Probate Judge

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF
James G. Dupree, Jr., deceased CASE NO.: PC2013-302

NOTICE OF PETITION OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR A DECLARATION OF INSOLVENCY AND FINAL DISCHARGE TO BE PUBLISHED BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Pursuant to CODE OF ALABAMA § 43-2-704 (1975), Notice is hereby given that a Petition of Personal Representative for a Declaration of Insolvency and Final Discharge has been filed in the Estate of James G. Dupree, Jr.. A hearing shall be held at 9:00 a.m. on the 20th day of March, 2017, to consider said petition. Any objections must be filed within the time allowed by law or be forever barred.

TO: The Publisher of *Cullman Tribune*:

Please publish the above notice three successive weeks in said newspaper.

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

Steven C. Smith
Smith & Smith, LLP
Attorneys for the Personal Representative
P. O. Box 398
Cullman, AL 35056-0398
(256) 734-4721

STATE OF ALABAMA * IN THE PROBATE COURT
*
CULLMAN COUNTY * CASE NO. PC 2015-183

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF NELLEAN ROBERTSON, Deceased

NOTICE OF HEARING

TO THE UNKNOWN HEIRS AND KNOWN HEIRS OF NELLEAN ROBERTSON, INCLUDING

The heirs of Floyd Earon Parson to include Elaine Perkins, the heirs of Pallie Parson to include the heirs of Pallie Parson's daughter, Vivian, James E. Parson, the heirs of Alvin Parson, the heirs of Floyd Earon Parson's daughter Joyce; the heirs of Vella Rae Parson Greer; the heirs of Clara Mae Duck including the heirs of Clara Mae Duck's children Brenda, Doug and Tybert; the heirs of Nell Parson Reynolds, including her children Kay, Rita and Cindy; and the heirs of Paul Wayne Parson, including his daughter Tammy and other unknown children.

A Motion to Determine Heirship and a Petition for Final Settlement and Discharge filed by Steven C. Smith, Personal Representative of the Estate, has been set for hearing on the 3rd day of April, 2017, at 9:00 a.m.

All known and unknown heirs and persons in interest residing or being without the state are hereby given notice to appear and contest said petition if they think proper.

Steven C. Smith
Personal Representative
P. O. Box 398
Cullman, Alabama 35056-0398
Phone: (256) 734-4721
Fax: (256) 734-4774
e-mail: steve@smithandsmithllp.com

TO: PUBLISHER OF *The Cullman Tribune*:

Please publish the above notice three successive weeks in said newspaper.

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

Legal Notice

Notice is hereby give to all owners, secured parties and lienholders of the following described motor vehicles, which I have a right to sell at public auction, to the highest bidder, in accordance with the State of Alabama abandoned vehicle law, Statues, Chapter 13, Section 1-8, Title 32 and Alabama Law Act Number 83-494-S-80.

2001 Volkswagon Jetta, Vin. #3VWRB69M31M170942.

These vehicles will be sold to pay storage and or repair fee at Smith's Body Shop and Wrecker Service, LLC, 11597 US Highway 278 East, Holly Pond, Alabama, 35083, on March 13, 2017, at 8:00 a.m.

NOTICE

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER APPLICATION TO VACATE A PORTION OF AN UNNAMED AND UNIMPROVED COUNTY ROAD.

WHEREAS, property owner Mallard Pointe Development, LLC, desires to vacate a portion of a county road within the County limits of Cullman, pursuant to Ala. Code § 23-4-20 (1975);

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ala. Code § 23-4-2 (1975), the Cullman County Commission is required to hold a public hearing, prior to taking final action;

WHEREAS, notice of which is required by statute, shall occur once a week for four (4) consecutive weeks;

WHEREAS, a public hearing will take place on Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. at the Cullman County Commission Meeting Room; First Floor; Cullman County Courthouse; 500 2nd Avenue, S.W. Cullman, Alabama 35055;

WHEREAS, applicant, Mallard Pointe Development, LLC, is requesting vacation of a portion of an unnamed and unimproved County Road described as follows, to-wit:

A strip of land being in a part of the NE Quarter of the SW Quarter, in Section 4, Township 12 South, Range 4 West, Cullman County, Alabama, as shown on the recorded map of Simpson Creek Circle View Subdivision, 2nd Addition, recorded in the Probate Office of Cullman County, Alabama at Map Book 7, Page 83, lying west of Lots 7 & 8 and bounded on the north and south by Cullman County Road #225, being more particularly described as follows: COMMENCE at the northeast corner of Lot 11 of said Simpson Creek Circle View Subdivision, 2nd Addition, said point being an open pipe(2"), and run N 89°09'03" W, along the north line of said Lot 11, a distance of 306.54', to a square tube(1"), the northwest corner of said Lot 11 and a point on the southeasterly right-of-way of Cullman County Road #225; thence S 19°51'57" W, along said southeasterly right-of-way, a distance of 47.45', to a square tube(1"); thence S 15°46'17" W, along said southeasterly right-of-way, a distance of 227.53', to a capped rebar(Smith); thence S 80°09'32" W, along said southeasterly right-of-way, a distance of 11.05', to the POINT OF BEGINNING of said right-of-way to be described and a point of curve; thence with a curve turning to the left, with an arc length of 98.32', leaving said southeasterly right-of-way of County Road #225, with a radius of 153.19', with a chord bearing of S 12°33'59" E, with a chord length of 96.65'; thence S 30°57'13" E, a distance of 81.09', to a point of curve; thence with a curve turning to the right, with an arc length of 93.60', with a radius of 182.20', with a chord bearing of S 12°09'46" E, with a chord length of 92.57'; thence S 02°33'13" W, a distance of 28.46', to an open pipe(2"), the northwestern most corner of said Lot 7 and a point on the northeasterly right-of-way of said County Road #225; thence N 39°29'41" W, along said northeasterly right-of-way, a distance of 62.64', to a capped rebar(Smith); thence S 84°12'47" W, along the northwesterly right-of-way of said County Road #225, a distance of 10.14'; thence N 05°38'00" W, leaving said right-of-way of said County Road #225, a distance of 16.94', to a point of curve; thence with a curve turning to the left, with an arc length of 35.59', with a radius of 68.72', with a chord bearing of N 20°28'21" W, with a chord length of 35.20'; thence N 30°27'34" W, a distance of 92.59', to a point of curve; thence with a curve turning to the right, with an arc length of 99.94', with a radius of 249.14', with a chord bearing of N 12°18'09" W, with a chord length of 99.27', to a point on the southeasterly right-of-way of said County Road #225; thence N 80°09'32" E, along said southeasterly right-of-way, a distance of 51.78', to the point of beginning.

SAID PARCEL OF LAND CONTAINS 0.31 ACRE OR 13394 SQ. FT. MORE OR LESS.

WHEREAS, an action is requested for an adoption and approval of a Resolution vacating a portion of an unnamed and unimproved County Road.

WHEREAS, said notice is posted in accordance with Title 23-4-2, et.seq. Code of Alabama, 1975. All persons who desire shall have an opportunity of being heard in opposition to or in favor of such resolution. This public notice is posted a minimum of Thirty (30) days prior to the date of the public hearing at: Cullman County Courthouse Entrance Bulletin Board.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the provision of the Resolution vacating a portion of an unnamed and unimproved County Road, will be considered by the Cullman County Commission at a Public Hearing to be held on Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at the Cullman County Commission Meeting Room at 10:00 a.m. at which time and place all persons who desire shall have an opportunity of being heard in opposition to or in favor of such Resolution or any provision thereof.

Dated this the 11th day of January, 2017.

BY: /s/ J. Chad Floyd
J. Chad Floyd
Attorney for Cullman County
500 Second Avenue, S.W., Room 110
Cullman, Alabama 35055
Telephone: (256) 775-4893

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: The Estate of *
JANET D. BROADBROOKS * CASE NO: PC2011-186
Deceased *

NOTICE OF HEARING ON REPORT OF INSOLVENCY

TAKE NOTICE that a Report and Statement of Insolvency has been filed by Phylena A. Broadbrooks Babbitt as Personal Representative of the Estate of Janet D. Broadbrooks, deceased, on 22nd day May, 2011.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to all the creditors of and all persons interested in the estate that a hearing has been set for the 24th day of March, 2017, at 9:30 A.M. in the Cullman County Probate Court to hear and determine said Report of Insolvency.

Tammy Brown
TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

NOTE: The Publisher of The Cullman Tribune

Please public the foregoing notice once a week for (3) consecutive weeks and send an Affidavit of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

Beverly Paschal Poston
Attorney at Law
200 First Avenue SE
Cullman, AL 35055

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

KAREN ROGERS,
Plaintiff

Vs. Case Number: **DR-2016-900220.00**

BILLY H. ROGERS,
Defendant

NOTICE OF DIVORCE ACTION

Billy H. Rogers, defendant, whose whereabouts is unknown, must answer Karen Rogers' Complaint for Divorce by March 13, 2017 or, thereafter, a Judgment by Default may be rendered against him in Case Number 25-DR-2016-900220.00 in the Circuit Court of Cullman County.

Done this the 10th day of January, 2017.

Lisa McSwain
Lisa McSwain,
Clerk of Circuit Court

PETITIONER'S ATTORNEY:
THOMAS E. DRAKE II
419 2nd AV SW
SUITE B
CULLMAN, AL 35055

STATE OF ALABAMA IN THE PROBATE COURT
CULLMAN COUNTY CASE NO: PC2017-026
IN RE: THE ESTATE OF **TERESSA BOOTH,** DECEASED.

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT

A Petition for Summary Distribution of the Estate of **TERESSA BOOTH,** deceased, has been filed by **THOMAS RANDY BOOTH,** on the 2ND day of February, 2017, and a date for Summary Distribution has been set for the 20th day of March, 2017 at 10:30 am., in the Probate Court of Cullman County, Alabama. Notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said Estate are hereby required to present the same within 30 days of first date of publication or the same will be barred.

/S/ THOMAS RANDY BOOTH
THOMAS RANDY BOOTH, PETITIONER

All claims must be filed in the Probate Court of Cullman County.

To the Publisher of The Cullman Tribune

Please publish the foregoing notice **ONE TIME** and send an Affidavit of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

DONE THIS 2nd DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2017.

Tammy Brown
TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

Rachel W. Eidson
Attorney for Petitioner
206 9th St. SW
Cullman, AL 35055
(256) 737-0740

STATE OF ALABAMA) IN THE PROBATE COURT
CULLMAN COUNTY) CASE NO: PC2016-281
IN RE: THE ESTATE OF)
MARY MADELIN ROTHERMEL,)
DECEASED.)

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT TO BE PUBLISHED
BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Letters of Administration of said Deceased having been granted to DANIEL ROBERT ROTHERMEL, Personal Representative on the 18th day of January, 2017, by the Hon. TAMMY BROWN, Judge of Probate of Cullman County, Alabama, notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

DANIEL ROBERT ROTHERMEL, Personal Representative
The Estate of **MARY MADELIN ROTHERMEL,** Deceased.

To the Publisher of The Cullman Tribune
Please publish the above notice once a week for three successive weeks and send an Affidavit of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

Tammy Brown
TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

Attorney for the Estate:
Randy A. Hames
HAMES LAW FIRM, LLC.
427 2ND AVE S.W.
Cullman, AL 35055
(256) 739-7191 Phone

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE MATTER OF:)
) Case No. PC2016-338
THE ESTATE OF DONNA SUZETTE WILSON MORROW,)
Deceased.)

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Letters of Administration of said deceased having been granted to **ERIKA MORROW FOSTER**, Personal Representative on the 1st day of February, 2017, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate Court of Cullman County, notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

R. Champ Crocker
Attorney for Petitioner
P.O. Box 2700
Cullman, Alabama 35056
(256) 739-5005
(256) 739-5007 fax
Champ@ChampCrocker.com

TO: Publisher of The Cullman Tribune
219 2nd Avenue SE
Cullman, AL 35055

Please publish the above notice three successive weeks in said newspaper.

Tammy Brown
(Tammy Brown, Probate Judge)

STATE OF ALABAMA * IN THE PROBATE COURT
CULLMAN COUNTY * CASE NO. PC 2014-88
IN RE: THE ESTATE OF DONALD LEE GANT, DECEASED.

NOTICE OF HEARING

TO: DONALD LEE GANT JR. (A/K/A TOBY DAVIS), HUNTER GANT, LUCAS GANT, SHANNA GANT AND NICK GANT.

A Petition for Final Settlement and Discharge filed by Jennifer Smith Gant, Personal Representative of the Estate, has been set for hearing on the 3rd day of April, 2017, at 10:00 a.m.

The above-named individuals are hereby given notice to appear and contest said petition if they think proper.

TO: PUBLISHER OF *Cullman Tribune:*

Please publish the above notice three successive weeks in said newspaper.

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

Steven C. Smith
Smith & Smith, LLP
Attorneys for Personal Representative
P. O. Box 398
Cullman, Alabama 35056-0398
Phone: (256) 734-4721
Fax: (256) 734-4774
e-mail: steve@smithandsmithllp.com

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Weekly online news recap, Feb. 2-8

The Cullman Tribune's weekly print edition is packed full of important community news and current events. Did you know that you can also access our content for free online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?

Find us three ways: on our website at CullmanSense.com, on social media at facebook.com/CullmanSense and twitter.com/CullmanSense or through our free mobile app, "CullmanSense NOW," available from the App Store or the Google Play Store. Also online is our calendar, so you never miss an important community event. Find it at CullmanSense.com/calendar.

Here's a recap of our online news you may have missed since last Thursday.

Cullman Big Band Dance a swinging success

CULLMAN – On Friday evening, the Cullman Civic Center came alive with music and dance as hundreds of area youth and adults gathered for the 21st annual Cullman Big Band Dance. Live music was provided by the Cullman High School Jazz Band under the direction of CHS Band Director Christopher Smith.

For those who needed a little help, Jean and Dodd Holt offered a crash course in various dances prior to the official start of the festivities.

Circus comes to town

CULLMAN – To the delight of many, the Loomis Bros. Circus made its annual winter return to Cullman Friday night, with the 2017 "FUNtasticTour." It was a packed house at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center. Kids of all ages were visibly amazed by the sights as the show began at 7 p.m.

Cullman Co. sees frightening increase in suicides

CULLMAN COUNTY – The Cullman area is suffering an onslaught of a terrifying tragedy. According to Cullman County Coroner Jeremy L. Kilpatrick, the county saw six confirmed suicides in January, with a probable seventh on the first day of February.

At just more than 30 days into the year, Cullman County has almost reached the halfway point of the total number of suicides for all of 2016 (15). Such a thing is tragic at any point in life, but the youngest 2017 victim was only 17 years old.

Known drug dealer charged with trafficking meth

BERLIN – A man authorities refer to as a known drug dealer is behind bars, charged with trafficking methamphetamine. Agents with the Cullman Narcotics Enforcement Team (CNET), with assistance from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), on Monday arrested Jeffrey Lee Cunningham, 47, of Berlin following a search of the suspect's residence on County Road 759.

Shugarts awarded gold stars for academic achievements at The Citadel

Nicholas Shugarts, of Cullman, was awarded Gold Stars by The Citadel for earning a grade point ratio of 3.7 or higher during the 2016 fall semester. Students that achieve Gold Star recognition are also placed on The Citadel's Dean's List.

SBI and state fire marshal leading investigation into last week's fatal fire

CULLMAN – The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency's (ALEA) State Bureau of Investigation, along with the Alabama State Fire Marshal, are leading the investigation into last Wednesday night's fatal house fire in Cullman. Cullman County Coroner Jeremy L. Kilpatrick late tonight officially identified Francis "Frank" Kane, 52, of Cullman as the victim of the blaze, which occurred at 1651 Catoma Lane.

Local athletes show up and show out at State Indoor Track and Field Championships

BIRMINGHAM – Several local schools sent participants to the State Indoor Track and Field Championships at the Birmingham Crossplex over the weekend.

Many athletes finished in the top 3 in their events, with Holly Pond's Matt Cahoon taking the gold in the 3A high jump for the third time in his career. Cullman's Ann Carol Braswell and Garrison Hill took the top spots in the 6A pole vault; it was Hill's second straight gold.

Cold Springs turns back St. Bernard 57-42; Eagles to meet Winston Co. for 2A, Area 13 crown

BREMEN – Cold Springs got the breathing room they needed in the third quarter to put away the St. Bernard Saints 57-42 Tuesday night in the semifinals of the AHSAA Class 2A, Area 13 Tournament at Jesse George Gymnasium.

Judge Kim Chaney's swearing-in ceremony

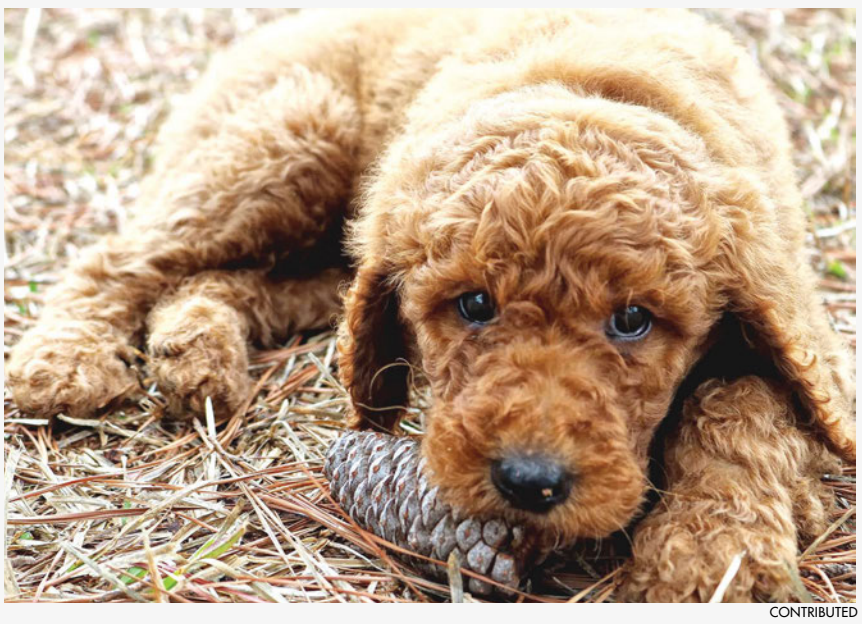
The Cullman Republican Women cordially invite the public to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Judge Kim Chaney as District Judge of Cullman County on Friday, Feb. 10, 2017 at 3 p.m. at the Cullman County Courthouse, in the large courtroom on the third floor. Reception to follow.

Sacred Heart Youth kick off Relay for Life fundraising campaign

CULLMAN – The youth of Sacred Heart Catholic Church have begun their second annual Relay for Life campaign. The group held a fundraiser over the weekend to help raise money toward their initial goal of $1,000. The youth put together a two-part event: the first part a soup dinner, and the second part a Bingo game.

Hanceville defeats Vinemont, 57-43, to advance to championship Thursday

HANCEVILLE – After defeating Oakman to clinch the area title Jan. 13, Hanceville looked to get off to a quick start in the first game of the night against the Vinemont Eagles. That was easier said than done as it was a low-scoring first quarter between both teams. Brendan Flanigan scored five straight points for Hanceville to give them a 10-4 lead. Garrett Boland hit a shot to cut the lead to 10-6, then just before the first quarter ended, Corbin Barnett nailed a three to make it a 10-9 game after one.



CONTRIBUTED

Meet Copper, the newest member of CP&R

CULLMAN - You may have noticed a new, fuzzier than normal face around Cullman City Parks and Recreation (CP&R) lately. Turns out, there's a new puppy in town. An adopted brown poodle, to be exact, and his name is Copper. Copper is a male poodle that's eight weeks old. CP&R's Executive Director, Nathan Anderson, is his primary caretaker, and will be sharing Copper with the community, as the new pooch promotes various CP&R activities throughout the year.







OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENTS: FEB. 1 - 7

Wanda Marie Parker, age 70 of Cullman, passed away Thursday, February 2, 2017 at Hanceville Nursing Home. She was born January 26, 1947 to the late O.L. White and Dona Stevens White. She was a bookkeeper for a plumbing company. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mrs. Parker was preceded in death by her parents; her son, Terry Hendrix; and two brothers, Maurice White and Johnny Mac White. She is survived by her sister, Ruth Glasser of Birmingham; three nieces and one nephew. At her request, there will be a private service at a later date.

Funeral service for Donald Hugh Pope held February 4 at Moss-Service Chapel; Rev. Steve Rodgers officiated with burial at Flint Creek cemetery.

Charles David Speegle of Vinemont, Alabama passed away on February 1, 2017 at the age of 69. Charles Speegle was born on June 4, 1947 in Cullman, Alabama to T. K. and Vivian Hutson Speegle. He is preceded in death by his father. He is survived by his mother: Vivian Speegle Graham; his brothers: Jerry and James Graham; his sisters: Brenda Pressnell and Margaret New; his sons: Dion Speegle (Melody) and Heath Speegle(Tammy Hodder); and 4 grandchildren. Arrangements under the direction of Moss-Service Funeral Home, Cullman, Alabama.

Faye Shull Rutledge passed away February 1, 2017, at Woodland Village. She was born Nov. 15, 1937, in Decatur. She was preceded in death by her parents, James and Madgie Shull; and sister, Sandi Wilhite. Survivors include her son, Mark Rutledge of Jasper; daughter, Sandi Rutledge Bockhold (Don) of Cullman; four grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. Funeral services held February 4. Burial in Hartselle Memory Gardens. The family requests in lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Alzheimer's Association at alz.org. Moss Service Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Memorial service for William Dale Newman, 62 of Cullman, held February 5 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home Chapel. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home in charge of arrangements. Mr. Newman passed away Friday, February 3, 2017 at his residence. He was born October 15, 1954 to parents William Presley and Doris Jean Woods Newman. He was preceded in death by his parents; and two brothers, David and Phillip Newman. Survivors include his wife, Bonnie Newman; son, Chris Newman; two daughters, Jamie Sanders, Samantha Brigdon; two brothers, Scottie Newman, Tony Newman; and nine grandchildren.

Funeral service for Leslie Lynne Easterling, 48, held February 5 at Etha Baptist Cemetery. Moss Service Funeral Home directed.

Thomas Edwin Drake passed away at Cullman Regional Medical Center on February 2, 2017. He was born on December 5, 1930 in Falkville, Alabama to Douglas Drake and Gracie Powell Drake Jones. He is preceded in death by his parents; and wife: Christine McKoy Drake. He is survived by his sons: Thomas (Tommy) Edwin Drake II (Kimberly) and G. Whit Drake (Katie); daughters: Mary Drake Pate and Christy Lee Drake Lowe; seven grandchildren. Funeral service held at the First Baptist Church of Vinemont February 5. Burial at First Baptist Church of Vinemont Cemetery. Moss Service Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Funeral services for Rayfol Gevon "Ray" Mosley, 60 of Eva, held February 6, 2017, at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home Chapel, with interment in Emeus Cemetery. Bro. Anthony Clark will be officiated. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Mr. Mosley passed away Friday, February 3, 2017, at his residence. He was born on July 30, 1956, to parents Kleadith G. and Argie Eddy Mosley. He loved God, his family, pets, going fishing, woodworking and tinkering with mechanical devices. He is preceded in death by his father, Kleadith G. Mosley; and a brother, Dewessie V. Mosley. Survivors include his wife, Kim Mosley; his mother, Argie Eddy Mosley; two daughters, Kristi Roberts, Amanda (Mark) Hathaway; son, Nichales Mosley; grandchildren, Sturgis Hunter, Sasha Hunter, William Hathaway, Emma Hathaway; brothers, Wayne Mosley, Dennis Mosley, Ricky Mosley; and sister, Kim Rodgers.

Linda Reynolds Shadrix passed away February 2, 2017 at the age of 60. Funeral service held February 6 at Moss Service Chapel with interment at High Rock Methodist Cemetery in Blount County. She is survived by her husband: Ronnie Shadrix, Sons: Wesley Shadrix and Cody Shadrix, Sister: Brenda Jean Reynolds, Brothers: Roger Dale Reynolds, Larry Justin Reynolds, Ricky Dewayne Reynolds, Robert Carlton Reynolds and Darrell Homer Reynolds.

Funeral service for James Bennie Bonds, 87 of Cullman, held February 6 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home Chapel, with interment in Cullman City Cemetery. Rev. Floyd Bradford will be officiating. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Mr. Bonds passed away Friday, February 3, 2017, at Cullman Regional Medical Center. He was born December 31, 1929, to parents G.J. and Pearl Bonds. He served in the United States Marine Corps. He was preceded in death by his parents; son, James Michael Bonds; and a sister, Lucille Puckett. Survivors include his wife, Margaret Bonds; daughter, Deanna Bonds; two step-sons, Ricky (Debra) White; Tim (Janis) White; six grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren.

Funeral Services for Rodger Helms, 60, held February 6 at Moss Service Chapel with interment at Mt. Zion Cemetery; Rev. Tommy Graves officiated. Mr. Helms passed away Thursday, February 2, 2017. He was preceded in death by his parents, Louis and Annie Brown Helms and a brother, Andy Helms. He is survived by his wife, Cherie Helms Woods; stepsons, Jamie Woods and Cody Woods; stepdaughter, Lisa Woods; sisters, Charlotte Weaver and Betty Surrett; brothers, Thomas Helms and Eddie Helms.

Funeral services for Francis M. Kane, age 52 of Cullman, held February 7 at Sacred Heart Church with Father Patrick Egan, O.S.B. officiating; interment in Sacred Heart Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mr. Kane passed away on Wednesday, February 1, 2017 at his residence. He was born October 20, 1964 in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. He served our country as a 1st Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He was preceded in death by his father, Francis M. Kane, Sr. Survivors include his mother, Elizabeth Wiley Kane; two brothers, Michael (Nancy) Kane and William (Beth) Kane; two sisters, Mary Anne Kane (Kevin) Garrett and Helen (Howard) Walker; and an aunt, Theresa Kane.

Funeral service for Martha Nell Bolding, 92, held February 7 at Cullman Heritage Chapel; interment Cullman City Cemetery. She passed away February 3, 2017 at her residence. She was preceded in death by her husband Dillard Bolding and 14 siblings. Survivors include her sister Reba Laverne Ratliff of Arlington, TX and numerous nieces, nephews and friends. She was a truly loving, sharing and Christian woman who will be missed.

Sara Darlene Smith, 62, of Haleyville, entered into rest on February 3, 2017 at St. Vincent's Hospital. Mrs. Smith was born on December 12, 1954 in Haleyville. Darlene was a member of Philadelphia Deliverance Tabernacle. She was a driving instructor and received several driving awards. Darlene loved spending time with her family and especially her grandchildren. Funeral service held February 6 at Philadelphia Deliverance Tabernacle in Lynn; Brother John Autry officiated. Burial will follow in Fairview Cemetery in Double Springs. Darlene is survived by her loving husband of 45 years, Donald Carlton Smith; sons, William Pervie (Amanda) Walker, Robert (Tiffany) Smith; brothers, Marvin Eugene Martin, James Edward Gray, Billy Joe Gray; sisters, Kathy Smith, Gloria (Tim) Pelt; Wanda Lee McGhee, and Suzie (Randall) Barber. She was "Mawmaw" to 8 grandchildren, Barbara LaShae Maynor, William Riley Walker, Madyson Smith, Dylan Smith, Caiden Smith, Liam Smith, Meagan Smith, and Emily Smith. She was preceded in death by her father, C.B. Martin; mother, Lexie Loverta Hood; brother, Talmadge Vernon Gray; and sister, Lexie Beatrice Oliver.

Mr. Bobby Rasco, 77 of Fairview, passed away Sunday evening in Huntsville. Mr. Rasco was born in Marshall County to Dewitt and Sybil Miller Rasco. Mr. Rasco was predeceased by his parents. He is survived by daughter, Melissa Rasco Wilson; granddaughters, Morgan Fluhler, Mallory Wells, and McKenna Wilson; Brothers, Buck (Betty) Rasco, Terri (Debbie)Rasco, Berry (Sherri) Rasco, Glennis (Debbie) Rasco; sisters, Marzie (Aaron) Carroll, Linda (Pete) Johnson, Joann Grimmett. Funeral service will be February at Holly Pond Funeral Home Chapel with interment at Grace Fellowship Cemetery, formerly Mt. Pisgah Cemetery in the Welcome Community.

Bobby Joe Daniel, 84, passed away February 7. Service information is unavailable at this time. Arrangements under the direction of Moss Service Funeral Home

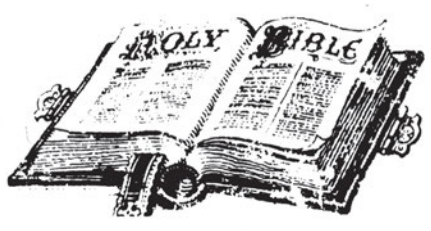
Wanda Garrison, 81, of Fort Lauderdale, FL, formerly of Double Springs, entered into rest on February 4, 2017. A graveside service will be held on Sunday, February 12, 2017 at 1 pm at Fairview Cemetery in Double Springs. Reverend T.J. Millican will officiate.

Hanceville Funeral Home
100 Michelle Street Northwest,
Hanceville, Alabama 35077
(256) 352-3130

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Culpepper (from Front)

general mental health trends related to cases he has dealt with as chief.

"Substance abuse is a big factor," he shared, "and mental illness is a big factor, obviously in cases like we just had." (Culpepper was referring to the case on Feb. 1, when a local man barricaded himself inside his home and eventually set fire to the residence. See: www.cullmansense.com/articles/2017/02/01/sbi-and-state-fire-marshal-leading-investigation-wednesday-nights-fatal-fire)

The chief pointed out that multiple factors often coincide to push a person to the brink:

"Someone's wife divorces them, and they're in depression; so, they've got mental health issues. And so, they're self-medicating with something and they end up committing suicide. Did the divorce cause it? Was it the depression or mental illness caused by the divorce, or was it them using drugs or alcohol or whatever? It's hard to generalize, because each case is unique."

Culpeper says he is concerned about public perception of police responses to suicide threats and mental health issues in general.

He stated that law enforcement agencies, who are typically targets of much second-guessing when something goes wrong, are not often called in until a situation has already escalated to a dangerous level.

"We're called in at the point of crisis," he said.

"We get a call from a family member or friend who says, 'My best friend just texted me that they're going to kill themselves and they live in the city of Cullman, and I live in Louisiana,' or that kind of thing. We're introduced to the scene, and it's already reached that crisis stage. We're only catching a narrow slice of it, and we're there at the worst possible moment."

The CPD does not have a full-time psychologist on staff; few police departments do.

It does have an officer trained in negotiation techniques, and recently enrolled two additional officers in training specific to de-escalation of suicide and mental health cases.

In cases where the victim can be talked down, emergency medical services can transport a victim to a regular hospital like Cullman Regional, and police will alert family members to locally available mental health resources, such as Mental Healthcare of Cullman.

Culpepper pointed out, though, that mental health resources are limited.

He had words of praise for local offices and personnel, "They're great. They're doing everything they can; they're going step by step. But once they've done the evaluation, it may be out of their hands."

Culpepper noted that extreme cases often need long-term residential care, a service for which local providers are usually not equipped. To compound the problem, the state has been actively reducing those very resources under its control.

According to Culpepper, "Cullman Area Mental Health will say, 'Yes, he needs assistance.' Then they try to find a bed in a facility where he can be treated and evaluated by a psychiatrist or doctor, but there's no long-term beds, and few short-term beds. The state has cut back on funding for mental health millions of dollars since 2009, and closed hospitals."

Mental health patients from the Cullman area have been taken to state facilities in Decatur and Tuscaloosa in the past, but both of those facilities are closed now.

"They're closing these big facilities," said Culpepper, "and the theory was that they were going to start giving more money to communities to provide assistance and keep it in the community. I'm all in favor of that; for the majority of people that's great. But you've got that small percentage that have to have some kind of long-term mental care under supervision, and it's not available.

"So, they're in a short-term facility, getting the medicine and support they need, and they improve to a certain level, then they need that bed space for someone who's just had his episode. So, he goes back home, and does okay for a month or two, and then has another episode."

He continued, "After a cycle or two of that, they wind up in jail or prison, because family and police don't know what to do, and there's not any room anywhere.

"We want them to get treated, we want them to get better, we don't want to arrest them. But there's almost always going to be some kind of criminal charge, and we have to do something. Law enforcement and corrections have become a dumping ground to warehouse these people who can't function at the community level.

"There's a proposed House bill in the Alabama State Legislature to mandate that they teach this in the academies, and that training be required for officers. That's wonderful, and I'm all for it.

"The more training we can get, the better; and it may save a life. But that's not going to solve the problem. They've also had someone talking about a program to train teachers to spot kids who are having issues at a young age, so they can start getting help before they become adults. But that's not going to solve the problem.

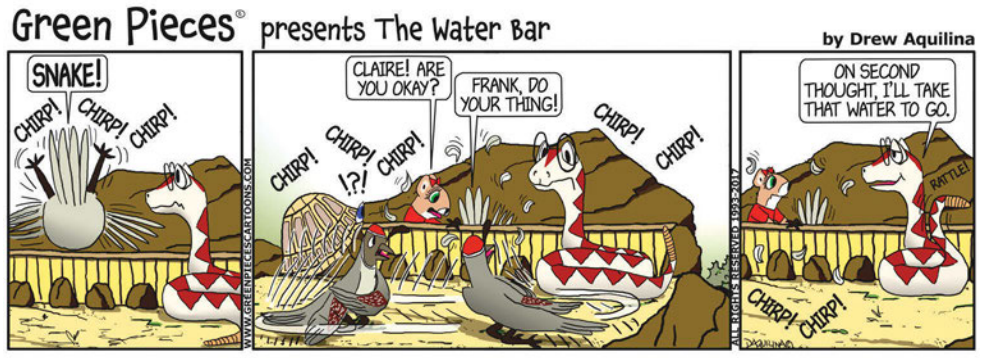
"The police are de-escalating and putting people into the system, and teachers are reporting to mental health that a child may be having a problem. What do you do with them then? That's the problem. Does mental health have the resources and the bed space to give them the long-term care they need? The state of Alabama has got to fund the staff and the facilities to sort those out and give them long-term care, instead of pushing them back into the community."

Last Wednesday's suicide victim had a history of mental health issues, and a team of CPD officers received commendations for saving him during an attempt last fall.

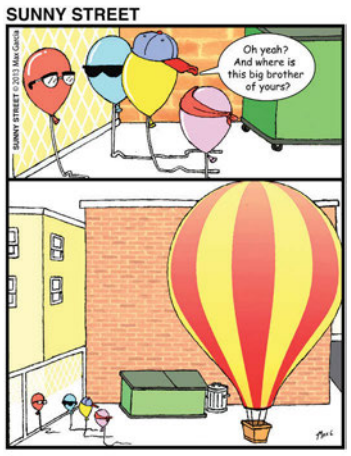
Lt. Jeff Warnke, Sgt. Scott Sanford, Officer Clint Sanford, Officer Roy Bates, Officer Intae Suh, Officer Jeff Mize, Sgt. Adam Clark, Officer Adam Walker and Sgt. Christopher Nichols, along with Cullman Fire Rescue Chief Ed Reinhardt, Jr. were recognized at the Cullman City Council's Oct. 2016 meeting. (See: www.cullmansense.com/articles/2016/10/25/celebration-max-recognition-brave-and-investment-cullman-s-future)

Culpepper praised his officers for their efforts then and last week, saying they did everything they could do with the training, experience and equipment they had at their disposal. The victim ultimately needed more help than any police officer could be expected to provide in a moment of full-blown crisis.

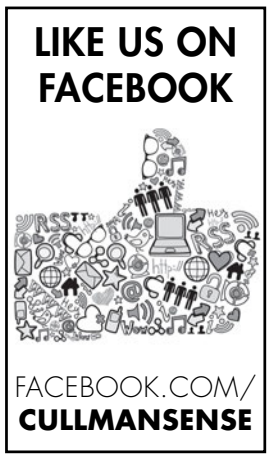
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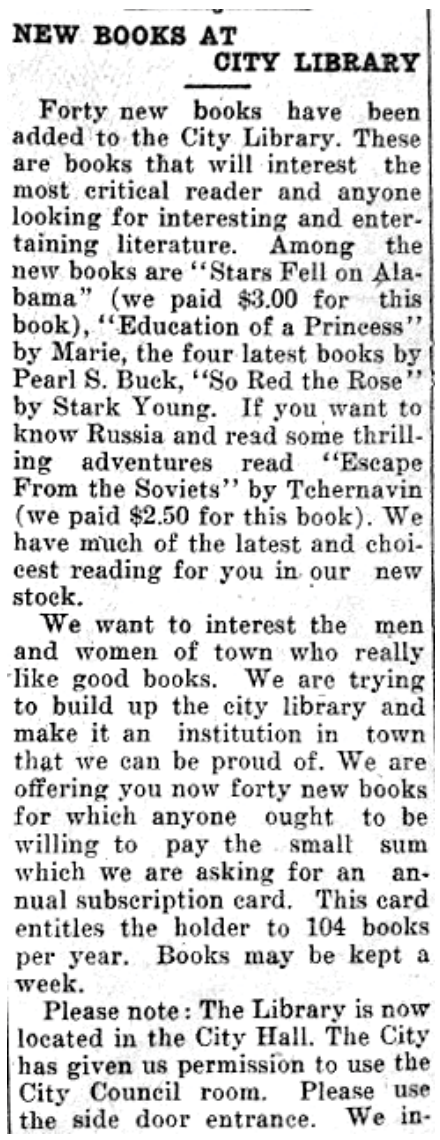




This week in Cullman history

This week in 1935, the Cullman public library added 40 new books to their collection. At this point in time, the library was located in the city council room in the city hall, and two books could be checked out per week.

Compiled by Samantha Vest



NEW BOOKS AT CITY LIBRARY

Forty new books have been added to the City Library. These are books that will interest the most critical reader and anyone looking for interesting and entertaining literature. Among the new books are "Stars Fell on Alabama" (we paid $3.00 for this book), "Education of a Princess" by Marie, the four latest books by Pearl S. Buck, "So Red the Rose" by Stark Young. If you want to know Russia and read some thrilling adventures read "Escape From the Soviets" by Tchernavin (we paid $2.50 for this book). We have much of the latest and choicest reading for you in our new stock.

We want to interest the men and women of town who really like good books. We are trying to build up the city library and make it an institution in town that we can be proud of. We are offering you now forty new books for which anyone ought to be willing to pay the small sum which we are asking for an annual subscription card. This card entitles the holder to 104 books per year. Books may be kept a week.

Please note: The Library is now located in the City Hall. The City has given us permission to use the City Council room. Please use the side door entrance. We in-

TRIBUNE HISTORICAL PHOTO

Editorial Cartoon



Poet's Corner

A TOKEN OF LOVE

In his Bible marked with hi- lites and pen.
Was scripture he read over again. Stories
of others who trusted in God.
Abraham's journey, Moses' plod. The
words of Jesus printed in red. The young
boy's dinner which five thousand fed.
Paul to the gentiles, so thankful he came.
The story of salvation, in heaven our names.
But in the back his Bible was a a small written note.
Inside of a card that a child's hand wrote.
It said dear Daddy please always be mine.
A simply love message on a heart Valentine.
Happy Valentine's Day

By: Randy C. Hale

Notice of Position Available

City Clerk/Treasurer City of Evergreen, Alabama

The City of Evergreen is seeking interested and qualified applicants for the position of CityClerk/Treasurer.

Applicant must have earned a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, Accounting, Management, Finance and have five (5) years of service as Municipal Clerk or Assistant Municipal Clerk or an Associate Degree and have (10) years of service, or equivalent experience.

Salary Range - $40,000 - $60,000 **Application deadline Feb. 10, 2017**

For complete job requirements and application contact:
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A tribute to my friend, Tom Drake

Loretta Gillespie
Tribune Correspondent

Did you ever wonder if people dance in Heaven? What about pets, do you ever wonder if there are pets in Heaven?

If so, then Tom Drake is jitterbugging his way through the Pearly Gates and down the streets of gold, having earned his reward by the way he lived his life, the way he treated people and the way he served his Maker.

Miss Minnie, his stalwart companion for many years, would have met him there, tail wagging and tags jingling, welcoming him just the way she welcomed everyone who came to his office, guiding them back to the reception area, then, having done her duty, going back to her bed and wait for the next visitor. She escorted the mailman that way for years, never quite sure that he could find the mail drop by himself.

Tom's many friends and family members, his beloved wife and law partner, Chris, his friends from Montgomery, governors and janitors, and a tall man who is surely allowed to wear his houndstooth hat up there, would have all been there to greet him. He would have had a smile on his face...

It's hard to imagine Cullman without Tom Drake. He was often seen outside his office, visiting with friends and acquaintances who stopped to pass the time, to shake his hand or to ask his advice. He loved that – dispensing advice, both legal and personal advice. Tom shot straight from the hip. He loved helping people, loved making things happen, loved his family, his friends, his clients and his dog.

Most people know how Tom came to be Miss Minnie's personal assistant. He inherited her from his wife, Chris. But before that, he and Chris saved Minnie's life. She was attacked by a pit bull who almost tore her in half. The Drakes paid for her surgery and she became their dog. Most dogs would have died, but love pulled Minnie through, and she repaid it every day of her long and faithful life.

Tom Drake never had the mindset of "I can't" or "It can't be done". It was more like, "Let's see how we can get this done," or "We can do this!"

And he somehow found a way around most obstacles, in the court room, on the Alabama House floor, or wherever he went, he was determined and dogged in his quest to be helpful to those who needed and depended on him.

We've all heard the old adage, "He would give you the shirt off his back," and that was Tom, he loved helping people, and it was his mission to help as many as he could.

It is with the deepest sadness that we see him go. To his family, he loved you and was head over heels proud of all of you.

Tom never forgot to inquire after the families of others, an amazing fete when you consider that he knew most everyone in town.

He was an amazing athlete, a lawyer who won some of the largest cases in the state, and a pro wrestler, of which he was very proud.

I happened to be with Tom in his office working on a series about him when the subject turned, as it often did, to Bear Bryant. It came up that Tom had never seen the "Call your Mama" video that Bryant did for the phone company. I pulled it up on his computer.

As the familiar face filled the screen, Tom's eyes welled with tears as he jabbed his index finger at the computer. "That's exactly what we heard every day!" Tom exclaimed. "He always told us how important it was to keep in touch with our mamas and daddies...he told every player that."

I know that there are going to be days when all of us who knew Tom wish we could pick up the phone and call him. Maybe ask his advice on a legal question or to tell him a joke, or hear one of his stories...I sure wish I could call him today...Rest in Peace, you will be fondly remembered and greatly missed, Tom Drake.

Tom Drake will be laid to rest today, Sunday, Feb. 5, 2017.

Visitation will be from 1-3 p.m. at Vinemont Baptist Church.

Funeral Services will be at 3 p.m. at Vinemont Baptist Church, with burial to follow at Vinemont Baptist Cemetery.

Vinemont Baptist Church is located at 787 County Road 1343.

There but for fortune: A mother's story, Pt. 2

Loretta Gillespie
Tribune Correspondent

As Keri worked on this project memories that had long been buried began to surface. She felt purged, relieved to get it out after so long. At the age of 35, she is, at long last, talking about what happened to her, allowing herself to love that little girl who was hurt so badly so many years ago, and in doing so, letting that little girl go...

People have told Keri that when she was two weeks old she was left by her mom on a relative's doorstep. Of course, she doesn't remember that. She was shuffled around between the aunt, her dad and her grandparents until her dad had his sober moments and was able to care for the children, but that only lasted short periods of time, sporadically, and she doesn't remember much, she would have been too young. However, at the point where our last story ended, when the teacher came to her rescue, she remembers more about her brother than herself; the marks on his neck were caused by an electrical cord being wrapped around his neck. "Daddy was choking him with a lamp cord," she said.

She and her brother were in multiple foster care situations for about two years. They attended so many schools that Kari has lost count.

She still tries to focus on what was good, instead of what was so bad. She remembers going to Florida with her grandparents, and some cousins in a big green van. She recalls seeing the ocean and looking out at night at the twinkling lights. "My grandparents were like two young people on that trip," she smiled. "They were always cuddling and smiling, happy, and I never heard them argue back then. We always had fun when we were with them."

She remembers the names of exotic sounding towns, Mexico Beach, Panama City and San Destin, and sticking her toes in the water. "But I never got to sit on the beach and just watch the waves or the sun come up or go down," she said pensively.

It was on that trip when the nightmare began again...

"We were sleeping in the back of the van," she said, tears beginning to course down her face. "It was awful; I remember the things that he did back there, with his hands... I remember being scared of him, and that I would get in trouble. I tried to get up from the bed but he held me down - I couldn't move, he was telling me to be quiet, I was crying, but holding it inside, to keep people from hearing me. I pulled the covers over my head and pretended to be asleep."

When they finally stopped at a gas station, Keri got away from him. "I was able to go in the gas station to get a drink and a snack," she said. "I know when we got back in the van someone else was sitting back there, so I got to sit in another single seat."

"The bad thing is that in the back of my mind I think that they knew - I mean how can you not see the signs of a child hurting, a child with some sort of heartache?" she implored. "It's unreal to think that they didn't know ..."

"I know my grandparents cared for me but why couldn't they see all those signs I know were there?" she asked again. "I remember them coming in from work and I would be sitting in the recliner with him, blankets over us, I remember him taking me to town saying, "I'll buy you stuff if you will be quiet. We can go get anything you want"."

As she got older the bribing didn't work anymore. That's when the threats to hurt the people she loved or to hurt her, began.

"I really wish I had told someone," she cried. "I look back now and I could have ended it long before if I had just been wiser... then I would have been able to run away and got some help, I know I was young but if I had only known what to do to get the help I needed, I would have!"

At the tender age of 9, when other little girls were playing with Barbie dolls and going to ballet lessons, Kari's world had changed once again. There were times she broke down and cried. If anyone asked what was wrong, she said that kids at school were mean, covering up for his abuse.

Only now is Kari able to voice these horrible things, for so much of her life there was always darkness where she dare not let her mind go...

Saint Bernard Community Celebrates Candlemas

Joyce Nix
St. Bernard Prep

CULLMAN – The Saint Bernard Community, including monks, Prep School students and faculty, gathered on February 2nd in the Abbey Church to celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of The Lord, popularly called Candlemas.

Although it is not a well-known holiday in the United States, throughout the world Catholics see Candlemas as the traditional conclusion of the Christmas season. Forty days after Christmas, it commemorates the day when the 40-day-old infant Christ was presented in the Temple in Jerusalem, and was at that time called "The Light of the Nations."

In the Abbey Church each student was given candle, which was lit and blessed just prior to the procession to begin the Mass.

At the beginning of the service, Abbot Cletus Meagher also blessed the candles, which will be used in services of prayer and in personal devotions throughout the year.

It is an ancient custom in the Church to bless candles on this day, reminding Christians of the "Light of Christ" who came to conquer darkness. Candlemas comes appropriately at the halfway point between the shortest day of the year, December 21st and the spring equinox in March.

The blessing of candles provides encouragement for the remaining days of winter, reminding us that Christ is the Light of the world and that we are to become bearers of that light to the world.

In addition to prayer before each class period of the school day, the entire student body at Saint Bernard Preparatory gathers for Mass or some other service of prayer once each week. Students attend Mass and other prayers with the monastic community daily.

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