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W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

***Thousands filled McMinnville's court square park and numerous side streets, which had to be closed to vehicles hours before the event.***

# 'Blackout 2017'

## *On the ground in Tennessee for the eclipse*

**W.C. Mann**
craig@cullmansense.com

**McMINNVILLE, Tenn.** – As an unknown but massive wave of tourism descended upon central and eastern Tennessee for the 2017 total solar eclipse Monday, The Tribune found a fun vantage point in McMinnville, where the community dismissed schools and turned out for Blackout 2017, a downtown street party. Around the park in front of the town's chamber of commerce sprang up a forest of tripods holding telescopes, as well as still and video cameras.

A sampling of license plates on our way in and around town testified to just how big this thing has gotten: vehicles from Florida, Mississippi, Virginia, Ohio, New York, Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and other places filled parking lots around town. We weren't even the only north Alabama news agency on the scene; a news crew from WIAT 42 in Birmingham set up to broadcast from the square. In downtown McMinnville, at least, Tennesseans appeared to be in the minority.

In testimony to the international impact of this event, folks staying at Rock Island State Park a few miles north reported visitors from as far away as Ukraine and Japan.

McMinnville isn't even a big tourist destination. With Nashville, Gatlinburg and much of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the zone of totality, the inundation of places like this indicate that the eclipse was truly an event of a lifetime for hotels, restaurants and other businesses along this stretch of the map.

In McMinnville, the festivities were supposed to begin at 11 a.m., but a block-long line for free glasses formed well ahead of time, so city agency Main Street McMinville began distributing to visitors early. The local school system brought out STEM-related displays and children's activities.

Main Street McMinnville Executive Director and event co-coordinator Katie Kemezis shared, "We're really proud of our downtown, and we have this beautiful court square that we just wanted to open up to the community for a viewing party. Eclipses are kind of more fun to view together. They're extraordinary events, so we wanted to be with our town, and with folks from out of town, to enjoy the eclipse."

Kemezis and the planning committee originally planned for around 1,000 fairly local people to attend, then raised that to 1,500. Then the guessing stopped.

Kemezis explained, "We started getting the heads up that things were different last week. We started getting calls from Birmingham and Huntsville, and Atlanta and all over, about folks coming down."

By 11 a.m., when distribution of glasses was set to begin, only 200 pairs remained of the 1,500 Main Street McMinnville brought to give away.

At noon, as the first bit of moon shadow appeared on the corner of the sun, a Pink Floyd tribute band launched into a live performance of the "Dark Side of the Moon" album. Visitors noticed little visible change until around 1:10 p.m., when the sun was still bright but more than 75 percent covered, resulting in an odd sense of oncoming dusk at midday. Sunlight filtering through tree leaves took on a distinctly crescent shape where it touched ground. At 1:27 the sky truly began to darken. A minute later, the tribute band finished its set just in time, as the last semicircle of sunlight began to vanish. The applause of the crowd in the corner of the park for the band broke into cheers and spread across the court square and up and down the side streets, as everyone realized that the moment had come.

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# *One last conversation with a living legend: Margot Tanner*



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

***Tanner displays one of the numerous original works of art she has created.***

**W.C. Mann**
craig@cullmansense.com

**CULLMAN** – This week, the Cullman community will bid farewell to a woman with a remarkable story, who has created a series of other remarkable stories in her time here. Margot Tanner has for years been active in the Cullman Historical Society, Friends of Frankweiler and Cullman First United Methodist Church. She has been an advocate for immigrant families, and has taught English and art in the Cullman area, in addition to sharing her personal stories with thousands of area students. On Aug. 24, Tanner will leave to relocate near her son and grandson in Mesa, Arizona. On Saturday, I had the privilege of stopping by her home near Johnson's Crossing for a visit, as she took a little time out of her packing to tell her story one more time.

Tanner's story is almost too much for one person. In a community full of people with German names who can't read, write or speak the language, she can. She has, in fact, served as a translator and interpreter for the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce, Cullman County Historical Society and Friends of Frankweiler; she translated documents from the German prisoner of war camp in Aliceville, one of the largest Allied POW camps of WWII.

Tanner's English surname

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# Local Pilot Club members attend Vegas convention; Cullman's Wilkerson named district governor

**Loretta Gillespie**
Tribune Correspondent

**CULLMAN** – You might have heard of the local Pilot Club. If you haven't become familiar with them through their fundraising efforts or their community service, here is a little background about the organization, which was founded by Elizabeth Leonard in Macon, Georgia in 1921. The Pilot Club International has had a long tradition of "Friendship and Service," in communities all across the globe since those humble beginnings.

The Pilot International's mission is to influence positive change in communities throughout the world. To do this, they come together in friendship and give people an outlet for service, focusing on informing the public about brain safety and health, and brain-related services.

In 1952, Pilot Clubs began to recruit youth members through the establishment of Anchor Clubs, a volunteer service organization for young people.

"Locally, we have chartered Anchor Clubs in Vinemont and West Point schools, and are searching for other schools to participate in the program," said Cullman Pilot Club President, Nan Auston.

There are more than 7,000 Anchor Club members in the Pilot organization. These junior members begin service in middle school and continue throughout high school. They receive leadership credits toward college. "Those credits can mean the difference in getting a

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BEVERLY WILKERSON

***2017-2018 Alabama Pilot Club District Officers: left-right, Peggy Day, secretary (Cullman); Beverly Wilkerson, governor (Cullman); Kay Chandler, treasurer (Decatur); and Mellissa King, governor-elect (Andalusia)***

THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
AUGUST 22, 2017

# Cullman man arrested for attempted murder

**Wendy Sack**
wendy@cullmantribune.com

**CULLMAN** – A Cullman man was arrested Sunday after deputies with the Cullman County Sheriff's Office responded to a call about a domestic incident involving a firearm on County Road 1401 near Lake Catoma.

According to a statement from the CCSO, once deputies and investigators arrived on the scene, it was determined that Kevin Paul Brown, 38, had been involved in a domestic incident and had allegedly used a .22 rifle to shoot at the victim while the victim was in a vehicle.

No injuries were reported.

Brown was arrested and charged with attempted murder, third-degree domestic violence-third-degree assault, and shooting into an occupied automobile or building.

He is being held in the Cullman County Detention Center on a $25,000 cash bond.

"The Cullman County Sheriff's Office would also like to thank the Cullman Police Department for their assistance in this case," said the statement.




CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

***Kevin Paul Brown***

# Cullman County student Nathan Duke receives endowed ag scholarship

**Marlee Moore**
ALFA Farmers

***Auburn University student and scholarship recipient Nathan Duke was recognized during the Alabama Farmers Federation 2017 Scholarship Recipients Luncheon Aug. 19 at the Ham Wilson Arena in Auburn. Duke studies poultry science, production track. The R.W. Donaldson Endowed Scholarship is named after a longtime Cullman County Farmers Federation and Cattlemen's Association member. From left are Federation President Jimmy Parnell, Duke, Federation Executive Director Paul Pinyan and State Board Member Rickey Cornutt.***




ALFA FARMERS

**AUBURN** – The state's largest farm organization expects investments of more than $150,000 in scholarships to return high yields for 87 Auburn University students pursuing agricultural and forestry degrees.

Students were honored at the Alabama Farmers Federation's 2017 Scholarship Recipients Luncheon Aug. 19 at Ham Wilson Arena in Auburn. Scholarships were funded by the Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation (AFAF) and county Farmers Federations.

Federation President Jimmy Parnell said as agriculture and technology evolve, the organization's most important task is investing in the future.

"These young people have answers to questions producers haven't even thought of yet," said Parnell, an Auburn ag graduate. "These days, it takes an education to be able to farm and do it correctly."

Senior agricultural communications student Ellie Isbell promised county and state Federation leaders a return on their investment. "I want to make a commitment on behalf of all the students — we will be the next generation of ag leaders," said Isbell, a Colbert County native and former Federation intern. "You have equipped us, and when it's time for you to retire, we will be ready. We will step up, lead this industry and represent the farmers of our state."

Clay County Farmers Federation President Michael Dick said though his county organization is small, it recognizes the importance of scholarships.

"As a teacher and high school principal, I spent a lot of time helping graduating seniors choose where they would go in life," said Dick, who is now retired. "This is a wonderful way we help students pursue an ag or ag-related field. We're proud of these students and the way they're committed to hard work."

At the reception, Kim Slay wore two hats — wife of Chambers County Farmers Federation (CCFF) President Phil Slay and parent to scholarship recipient and AU senior, Zach. Thanks to the Federation, CCFF and Alfa Insurance, almost half the forestry student's tuition is paid.

"When I married into my farm family, I didn't realize I was marrying into the Farmers Federation," said Slay, an AU animal science graduate whose children grew up attending Federation events. "Because of our Alfa family and like-minded individuals and organizations, when Zach graduates next spring, he will not walk off with a crippling load of student debt."

Fifty-nine $1,750 scholarships were awarded through a county Federation match of $500. The AFAF contributed $1,250, along with support from the Federation and Alfa Insurance.

Another 27 students received county Federation scholarships from Autauga, Baldwin, Chambers, Chilton, Covington, Dale, Henry, Houston, Jefferson, Lee and Madison counties. Other county Farmers Federations awarded scholarships directly to students during county ceremonies.

Earlier this year, Alfa awarded $1,000 scholarships to 100 students pursuing various careers at Alabama colleges, universities and technical schools.

Additionally, Cullman County's Nathan Duke received the R.W. Donaldson Endowed Scholarship from the Cullman County Farmers Federation and Cattlemen's Association.

The Alabama Farmers Federation is the state's largest farm organization with nearly 360,000 members in 67 counties.




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# Saint Bernard to have first graduates with STEM endorsements

**Joyce Nix**
St. Bernard

**CULLMAN** – While students are settling into residential life and classroom routines at Saint Bernard Prep School, the Class of 2018 is looking forward to marking history as the first graduating class with STEM endorsements.

STEM, an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, encompasses a vast array of subjects that fall into each of these academic disciplines. The many disciplines taught in this program impact every component of life in today's world. Students leave St. Bernard ready to concentrate in areas such as aerospace engineering, astrophysics, astronomy, biochemistry, biomechanics, chemical engineering, chemistry, civil engineering, computer science, mathematical biology, nanotechnology, neurobiology, nuclear physics, physics and robotics, among many, many others.

According to Saint Bernard Prep School Headmaster, Dan Baillargeon, "Several students have already taken courses such as AP chemistry, AP physics, AP physics C, AP calculus I and II. These students will leave Saint Bernard with academic transcripts that will help them compete for significant scholarships at top tier universities around the country. A few of them have already been contacted by these universities to apply."

Father Linus Klucsarits, OSB, has joined the administration of the school and now serves as assistant headmaster in charge of the middle school. "Middle school is a big step from elementary," he said. "With a campus the size of St. Bernard, they will be moving from building to building for their assigned classes. It requires more maturity and I think they will enjoy the opportunities to explore band, choir, art and computers, to name a few. It will give them the ability to concentrate on the area they enjoy most."

Baillargeon said the school welcomed 42 new students this year from many different places, including Alabama, Florida, Canada and Germany. He also reported that on the opening day of school, Saint Bernard Prep enrolled 184 students for the 2017-18 academic year.

"The students have settled into their class schedules and have started preparations for the activities provided by the Opening of School Field Day. Students are assigned to a "House System" which provides connections for the students so that they can make friendships across grade levels that will hopefully last their lifetime. Our own middle school students will be drafted into the Houses before they compete this Friday at Field Day," Baillargeon said.



JOYCE NIX

***Bridget Gallegos, Jongha Park, Caleb Guthery,and Anthony Diaz enjoyed their first week back at Saint Bernard Prep***

High School students completed class assignments over the summer which included readings in English, math, theology and the sciences. As the school bells rang for classes, and students found their seats, teachers requested the assignments and began classroom instruction.

Saint Bernard welcomed new faculty members to the roster this year. Sean Moriarty, a 2013 graduate from Saint Bernard Prep School, has joined the ranks of the faculty in the middle school and Rachel Henson has become a member of the faculty in the high school.

# Wallace State Community College fall semester underway; late registration ends Tuesday

**Russell Moore**
WSCC

**HANCEVILLE** – Wallace State Community College's fall semester is underway. Incoming freshmen are enrolled in postsecondary courses for the first time, while others may be entering their final semester before graduation.

No matter the step in a students' academic journey, the fall semester is a new beginning at both the Hanceville and Oneonta campuses.

"Wallace State seems to have everything I need and want in a college," said freshman Zackery Jackson, a Buckhorn High graduate. "I came to Wallace State for the mechatronics and electronics technology program. I used to get in trouble as a kid for taking things apart and putting them back together, so it should be a good fit."

Wallace State President Dr. Vicki Karolewics enjoys the excitement surrounding the outset of each fall semester.

"It's one of my favorite times of the year along with commencement. Both are new beginnings in the sense you are either beginning a fresh step in your life through education or you are about to enter the workforce," Karolewics said. "The breadth of majors (is) so much broader for our students than they previously have been, and technology has certainly had a significant impact on the way our students learn and the depth of their learning. We have simulations in many of our programs and access to the best and brightest instructors who are energized about their craft."

It's not too late to make your new beginning in Hanceville or Oneonta. Registration for the fall semester continues through Tuesday. Wallace State offers day and night courses and also full online degree options in general studies, liberal arts, child development, computer science and more. You can register for fall semester classes here: http://www.wallacestate.edu/register-now.

Wallace State is one of the fastest growing community colleges in the nation, with an enrollment of 5,000 or more, according to Community College Week and the first-choice community college among Alabama high school seniors taking the ACT. Wallace State is a perennial Military Friendly School, ranked among the top three in the South for Workforce Development by Southern Business and Development magazine and one of the top producers of healthcare professionals as deemed by Community College Week.

Wallace State has also implemented a new strategic plan, and is one of 30 community colleges in the U.S. selected to lead the Pathways Project. Pathways involves a rethinking and redesign of the of the student experience from enrollment through completion. Through Pathways, students are encouraged to choose a broad field of study from one of four metamajors – Liberal Arts/General Studies, Applied Technologies, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), or Health Science – at the outset of their college career.

Jessica Andres is among the Wallace State students enrolled in college for the first time.

"I thought it was important to start fresh away from home a bit. I'm excited about my classes," said Andres, a Boaz native who's taking 13 credit hours.

So is sophomore Will Reinhardt.

"I went to a four-year college previously and a classroom of 300 people wasn't for me, especially right out of high school. I love the family atmosphere at Wallace State and the close connection you can make with your classmates and instructors. That's important to me," said Reinhardt, a Birmingham native.



WSCC

***Wallace State employee James Tidwell at Lion Central points out to a student where to obtain a Lion Card on the first day of fall semester classes.***

Wallace State offers multiple opportunities for students to be involved on campus and in the community with its clubs and organizations. The Rotaract Club, one of the newer campus organizations, is already recruiting new members as is the BASS fishing club and more.

Learning Communities classes are scatted among the Wallace State course curriculum, helping students become engaged in campus activities and introducing them to new ideas and experiences as they pursue their academic goals. Wallace State has Learning Communities events planned each month for it students.

For the ninth year in a row, Wallace State employees and students are participating in a campus-wide initiative, called the Common Read project. This year's selection is "Cycle of Hope" by Trisha Downing. Wallace State will have the privilege to host Downing on Wednesday, Oct. 4 at 9:30 a.m., at the Betty Leeth Haynes Theatre.

Wallace State athletics begins a new campaign this month as the volleyball team seeks its ninth consecutive Alabama Community College Conference (ACCC) championship this season. Wallace State's cross county program has been reestablished and will begin competing this fall.

For more information about Wallace State, visit www.wallacestate.edu.

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AUGUST 22, 2017




PHOTOS COURTESY W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

# *Depot Day a way for United Way to get the word out*

**W.C. Mann**
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**CULLMAN** – On Saturday morning, folks from around Cullman were invited to Depot Park to enjoy free community fun and learn about the services that the United Way of Cullman County (UWCC) provides from its office in the old Cullman Depot. Hundreds of visitors were treated to free entertainment, games and inflatables. A car show took place in the parking area immediately north of the walk of flags. On a hot August day, kids lined up to try out the inflatable water slide, and local school principals took their turns on the seat in a dunking booth while crowds of students waited their turn to try and put them in. Each of the UWCC partner agencies 16 area was present, distributing information and putting on kids' activities.

UWCC Executive Director Sammie Danford explained that Depot Day "is to educate the public of where we are, and the agencies that we partner with that provide the services, because all the money that comes to United Way, it goes back out to help financially support all our agencies. They're the ones that do the primary service."

UWCC serves as a clearinghouse for funding and information for 16 area agencies, and uses accountability measures to ensure that funding is properly used.

This year's partner agencies include 4-H Clubs of Cullman County, American Red Cross, Commission on Aging, Cullman Caring for Kids, Cullman County Center for the Developmentally Disabled, Daystar House, Easter Seals, First Call for Help, Foster Grandparents & Senior Companion Program, Girl Scouts, Good Samaritan Health Clinic, Hope Horses Inc., Hospice of Cullman County, Pilot Light House, Saving Forgotten Warriors, Victim Services, and Youth Advocate Programs Inc.

"We monitor what they do," said Danford.

"There's accountability; we get a report from them every quarter to validate what they've done with our money, how many clients they've served.

"We're making sure they do with their money what they told us was going to be done."

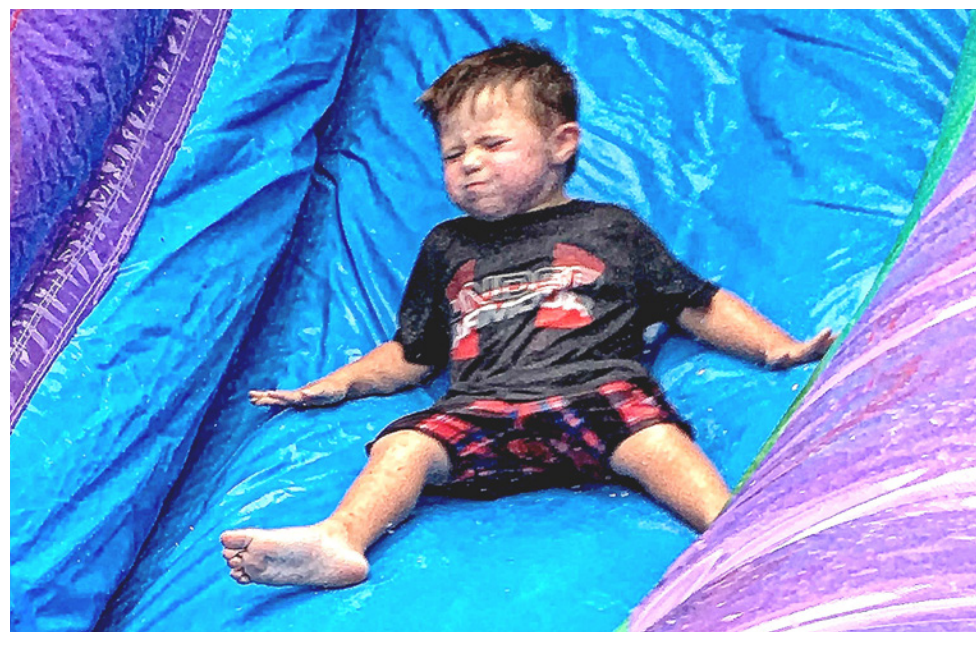
Approximately 98 percent of all money donated to UWCC remains in the county.

Of approximately $200,000 given each year, $4,000 goes to the international United Way; and some of that will come back to the county office in the form of coverage for paperwork, and travel costs for local personnel to attend regional and national events.

Sponsors for Depot Day 2017 included Rehau, Reliance Worldwide, and Cullman Parks and Recreation.




***East Elementary Principal David Wiggins sees kids line up for their chance to dunk him.***



# Looking forward to a great year in sports coverage

**Josh McBrayer**
josh@cullmansense.com

**CULLMAN** – Five years ago, an upstart group of new kids on the block threw their hats into the news ring with a publisher named Noah Galilee, a sports reporter named Josh McBrayer and an IT guru named Dustin Isom.

CullmanSense, as the publication was called, started its sports department by interviewing former Auburn head coach Gene Chizik, barely two months removed from his National Championship victory.

CullmanSense continued its sports coverage with high school football, covering a slate of 12 games in the first year. It was a good number for a new publication, but no one at CullmanSense was satisfied.

As the company continued to grow, so did the sports department. From one reporter to two, then three. They were never satisfied.

Fast forward five years, and CullmanSense, now under the banner of The Cullman Tribune, the oldest continuously published weekly newspaper in Alabama, is heading into its sixth season of football coverage.

The Cullman Tribune will provide coverage of every county and city team, as well as Addison and Meek, both home and away. We'll also be covering select college games.

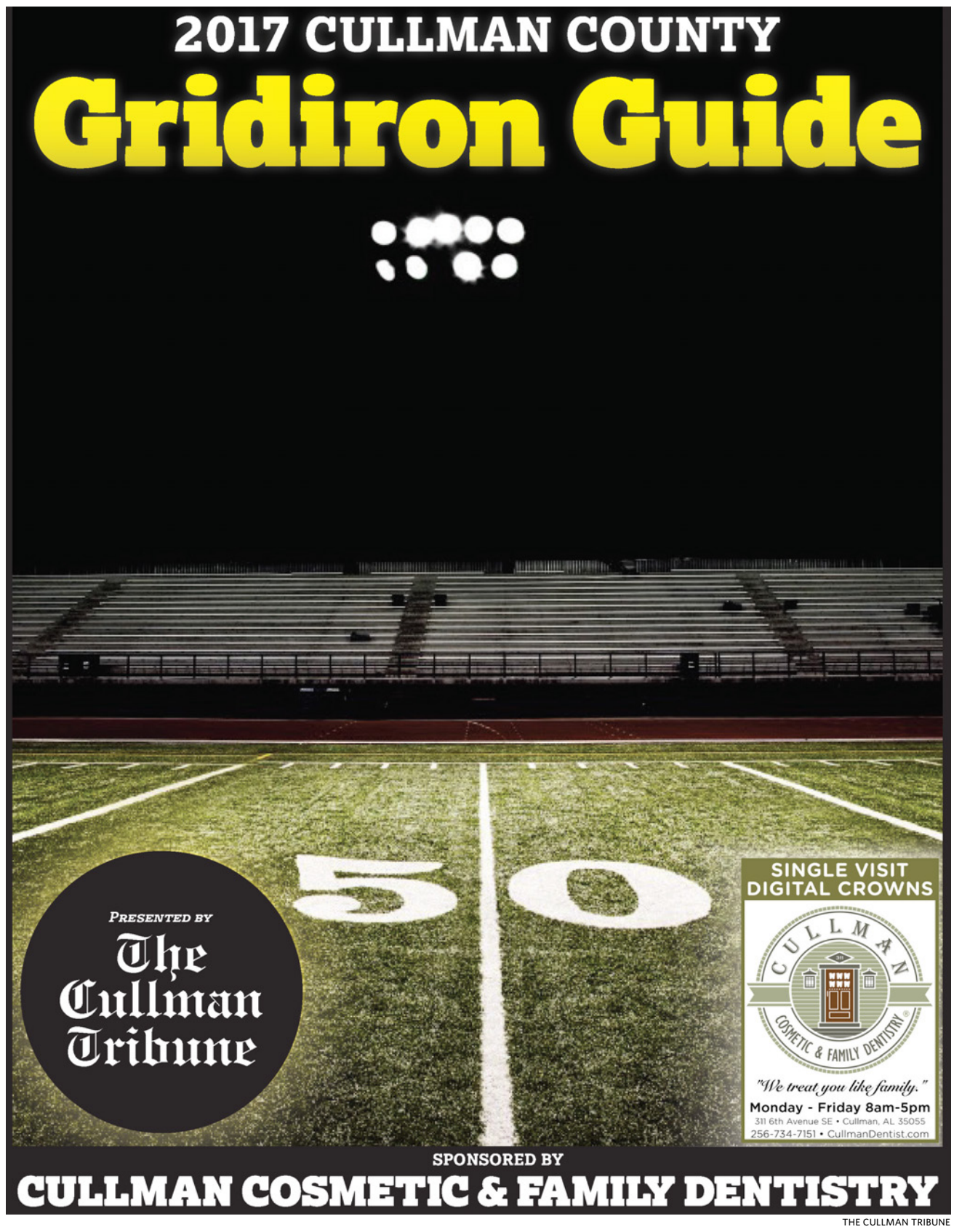
On Friday nights, or any night local high school football is being played, The Cullman Tribune Scoreboard will be your go-to tool to get up-to-the-minute scores from all the teams around the area. Updated live, the scoreboard will keep you in the loop.

New this year for The Cullman Tribune is "The Gridiron Guide," our inaugural prep football magazine.

It provides the rosters, schedules and a look at every team in The Tribune's coverage area.

It is going to be a banner year for sports in Cullman. So if you want the best sports coverage around, connect with The Cullman Tribune on Facebook (www.facebook.com/cullmantribune) and Twitter (@CullmanTribune).

We are ready for some football. How about you?




THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

***The Gridiron Guide will be available at a variety of local merchants including Cullman Cosmetic & Family Dentistry, Cullman Dodge, Bill Smith Buick GMC, Traditions Bank, Cullman City Parks & Recreation, Eva Bank, Onin Staffing, Whitlock's General Store, and any of the following high schools; Addison, Cold Springs, Cullman, Fairview, Good Hope, Hanceville, Holly Pond, Meek, West Point or Vinemont.***

# Eclipse (from Front)

Then, just before 1:30 p.m., it was evening in McMinnville.

The sun appeared as a bluish-black dot surrounded by a white ring of fire. In every direction, the horizon had the look of just-after-sundown; and several stars became visible in the sky.

The cheers became hushed, as all present took in what was happening.

In less than two minutes, it was over. The first flare of direct sunlight reappeared to a combined chorus of "yays" and "awws."

As the sky rapidly brightened, the crowd that had been gathering a little at a time since just after dawn began moving out, with only a few waiting around to watch more than an hour of partial eclipse still to go.

It was fast, but no one seemed disappointed. As we walked through the crowd on our way out, the terms of the day were words like "incredible," "awesome" and "cool!"

Gregg Gelmis, a NASA Marshall Space Flight Center staffer and part-time sports photographer, was photographing the event using a special camera lens and filter; he has given The Tribune access to his photographs when they are available.

Look for those on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cullmantribune.

See the eclipse here: www.facebook.com/CullmanTribune/videos/1481383571923333.

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# Obituary Announcements: Aug. 19-23

**Harry Steele**, 68, of Haleyville, entered into rest on August 19, 2017 at Haleyville Health Care. Mr. Steele was born on November 9, 1948 in Phil Campbell. Private services held by family. Harry is survived by his brothers, Thomas Thurston Steel, Ray Steele; sisters, Margaret Wood and Barbara Hasheider and her husband Richard. He was preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth Steele; parents, Thomas and Pauline Steele; and brothers, Billy Steele, FD Steele, and Jimmy Steele.

**Funeral services for Rondy Dolan Mathis**, 73, of Hanceville are Tuesday, August 22 at 2 p.m. at Hanceville Funeral Home; with interment in Bethlehem East Cemetery. Visitation on Tuesday from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Mr. Mathis died on Saturday, August 19, 2017. He was preceded in death by his parents, Dolan Rondy and Sarah Lovella Yancy Mathis; his wife, Billie Lee Mathis and sister, Mavorine Simmons. He is survived by his son, Ronnie Dale (Janet) Mathis; stepchildren, Rhonda (Tony) Hardy, Pat Bagby and Walter Gable; sister, Mary Mitchell; grandchildren, Canaan Luke Mathis and Nicholas Dalton Mathis; step grandchildren, Cory Dockins, Casey Dockins, Trent Bagby, Robert Mayhall, Dustin Hardy and Brianna Day; step great grandchildren, Alyssa Hardy, Paisley Hardy and Carolina Mayhall.

**Funeral Service for Bettie Bailey**, 70 of Cullman, will be at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, August 23, 2017 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home with James Adams officiating; burial at Mt. Hope Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mrs. Bailey passed away on Saturday, August 19, 2017 at her residence. She was born Tuesday, June 03, 1947 to the late Joseph Edmonds and Lois Russell Edmonds. She is preceded in death by her parents, son, Shannon Bailey, 5 brothers and 1 sister. Survivors include her daughter, Kim (Allen) Johnson, son, Aaron (Jennie) Bailey, grandchildren, Dustie (Matt Marks) Johnson, Briana Johnson, Kristen Johnson, Chase (Beth) Bailey, Gage Bailey, Kassie Cross, Rosie Bailey, Jordan Bailey, Nevaeh Bailey, great grandchildren, Scott Wells, Alekzander and Aedyn Swafford, Cade and Damien Cornelius, Harley Cross and a host of nieces, nephews, family and friends. Visitation will be from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. on Wednesday, August 23, 2017 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home.

**William Frances Helton**, 70, of Haleyville, entered into rest on August 19, 2017 at his residence. Mr. Helton was born on January 4, 1947 in Haleyville. Private services will be held at a later date. William is survived by his wife of 48 years, Dorothy Lauderdale Helton; sons, Tracy Ray Helton and his wife Tracy Lynn, William Eugene Helton, Kevin Daniel Helton; grandson, Jordan Chase Helton; brother, Tommy Helton; and special children, Aidan Rhodes, and Anastaia Rhodes. He was preceded in death by his parents, Clarence and Pauline Helton.

**Cuethal Asa Hightower**, 82 of Bear Creek, entered into rest on August 20, 2017 at his residence. Mr. Hightower was born on April 20, 1935, in Cullman. Cuethal was a member of Antioch Baptist Church for 52 years. He served in the United States Army during the Korean War. He was a truck driver for 25 years and was known as "Cue Ball" on the CB. Cuethal started the Bear Creek Fire Department and Rescue Squad, and served as the fire chief for 30 years. He was the manager of Bear Creek Water Works for 18 years. He was an active member of the town of Bear Creek for 43 years, where he held every position except mayor. Cuethal received multiple fire and rescue awards. He loved riding motorcycles, fishing, boating, and water skiing. Visitation will be held on Tuesday, August 22, 2017 from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at Nichols Funeral Home in Haleyville, where services will be held on Wednesday, August 23, 2017 at 2 p.m. Brother Jeff Whitten will officiate. Burial will follow in Antioch Baptist Church Cemetery in Phil Campbell. Cuethal is survived by his wife of 61 years, Yvonne Hightower; son, Steve Hightower; daughter, Pam Ricketts and husband Art; brother, Eddie Hightower and wife Mary; sisters, Louell Cole, Ivalee Dobbins, Shelia Kimbrough and husband Danny; and a host of nieces and nephews. He was "Paw Paw" to 3 grandchildren, Brandon Ricketts, Colton Ricketts, Chris Hightower; and 4 great grandchildren, Jackson Hightower, Kenleigh Ricketts, Kingston Ricketts, and Bankston Ricketts. He was preceded in death by his parents, Duford and Carrie Hightower; brother, Ronald Douglas Hightower; sisters, Louise Cagle, Eloise Shellnutt, Betty Faye Mobley, Bobbie Fell, and Nellie Joe Grelly.

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# Tanner (from Front)

(courtesy of her late husband John) masks her heritage, but her accent gives it away instantly. She was born and raised in Germany, living through the depredations and horrors of Hitler's regime and the war, before marrying a U.S. serviceman and accompanying him to his home in rural Cullman County in the 1950s.

"I met him while he was stationed in Germany," Tanner began, "and I worked for the U.S. Air Force in Bitburg, and I got a job there, and that's where I met him. And so, we came to Cullman when he retired."

As a military wife, Tanner lived in France, Ohio, Texas, England and Selma, Alabama.

She continued, "My husband retired in Fort Worth, Texas, and then his dad offered him 20 acres of land, then we moved in. I never wanted to come to Cullman."

More...much more on that, later. There's so much to Tanner's story before that moment, and I had to back up and hear it.

**Growing up German at the worst possible time**

"In Germany, my home is Eshwege," explained Tanner. "My father was a police officer, and he taught bookkeeping, and we got shipped from Eshwege to Kassel, and from there we got shipped to Stuttgart. From there, my father got shipped to Suhl in Thuringia."

As her father was a government employee, Tanner was required to join the Hitler Youth.

Her family lived in areas removed from the front lines and some of the more notorious Nazi atrocities. Thanks to a powerful state

propaganda program, she spent most of the war years under the impression that Germany was winning the war, despite increasing shortages of food and other necessities.

**Living in a war zone**

"The first time I noticed the danger," continued Tanner, "was when we lived in Vaihingen, close to Stuttgart, where I saw German tanks maneuvering down the road. And we had these kilometer stones, and they knocked those over and left it. (Destruction of road markers and signs is a common defensive practice in preparation for invasion.)

"From Thuringia, we lived in a police academy. Three houses belonged to families--we had apartments--and the rest of the houses were designated for troops. They were mostly young policemen that wanted to become police officers, not army. This had nothing to do with the army.

"I had about a mile and a half or 2 miles to walk to school, and there were no school buses and no cars. You barely ever saw cars on the road, except for military vehicles, because there was no gas.

"And no snow plows; we had to walk through pretty deep snow. It's kind of like the state of Colorado.

"I went to a higher school of learning, and, fortunately, since Hitler wanted to rule the whole world, I learned English, French and Latin. And that, of course, came to my advantage when the war was over."

**Meeting her first American**

"My first encounter was in 1945. We lived up on a hill, and the Americans were on (the next) hill, and there was a valley. We lived halfway up this hill. So, the artillery was shooting back and forth, and we were scared for our lives. We lived in the bunkers.

"One day, we didn't hear any more shooting. We were getting hungry in the bunkers, so I told my mother, 'We have to go and find some food for the rest of the people.' Of course, she cried, and this friend of mine and I crawled on our tummies down to the mess hall. We went and got some food. The food was still hot, since this came all of a sudden, because Hitler said we were winning the war.

"We brought the food. Then, a few days later, we ran out of food again, so we ventured outside. Machine gun fire was hitting (around) us, but we made it through and went down on the hill.

"As we looked down into the area where the police had their trucks, we were in the grass, and we were looking down there, and there we saw these strange soldiers. My friend and I looked up, and as we looked up, this hand came on my shoulder and pulled me up, and said, 'Do you speak English?' That was my first encounter with an American.

"Of course, we were scared to death. We walked back to the bunker, and we were shaking. We were afraid, because these American soldiers had their guns down and the bayonets in our backs, because the SS troops had come through that area before the American troops and had hung flags in every one of the buildings.

"They wanted to make sure there were no German soldiers left. We finally told the soldiers that there were women and children in the shelters, but no men.

"They got the women out, and they put us in a circle. This I will never forget. My mom and the women were all crying, because we don't know what's going to happen to us next, and the soldiers were with their guns. I told my mother to close her eyes because, I said, 'We may be shot. We may never see each other again. Just close your eyes.' So we all closed our eyes and waited to be shot. I hear the wind blowing through the pine trees, and I'm ready to die.

"And then, all of a sudden, I heard motor noises. Of course, I opened my eyes; and there were American soldiers coming in jeeps, vehicles we had never seen before.

"And they got out, and they went around and gave us each rations. And I truly thought we had arrived in Heaven; we were all dead and gone. So, that was my first encounter with Americans.

"Since I could speak English, I translated for everybody. And the women, my mom and the rest of the ladies there, we did the laundry work and we got food in exchange. It was a very pleasant time.

"After about two months was when the Americans left and the Soviets came. That's another story. We had to leave our home in 20 minutes, just leave, go, never come back.

"I didn't know where my father was. We found out that my father was alive. There were no telephones, no trucks, no cars, no running water, no food. Many people starved to death.

"I went across the border illegally into West Germany. It took me three weeks to find my father. Then I came back. I slept in ditches, in barns, whatever. I made it back, and I got my mom and my siblings, and we went across the border again to bring my family over to my relatives that all lived in West Germany. On our way back, my cousin and I--we were then 16--we were beaten and raped by Soviet soldiers; but we made it."

**Outsider in Cullman**

By the time her husband left the Air Force, the kleinestadt (small-town) girl had grown accustomed to the big city life of Fort Worth. She was not excited about the prospect of relocating to the family farm near Holly Pond.

"I liked the town (Cullman)," Tanner explained, "but where we went out in the country, there was a different story; because people in those days--I was considered a war bride--it was in '55. Of course, I had different ways.

"We stayed with my in-laws. I had never seen an outhouse. We all had running water and electricity (in Germany). So I encountered something from what we called 'olden times.'

"I got used to it because, by then, I got used to anything. But the people, they stayed away from me, because I was different. It hurt me, but I realize today that anything that is different, people don't like. They're afraid of it, so they leave it alone. It still goes on today."

**Coming to town**

"I ran into a lady one time, when I went to the post office. She said, 'Oh, you look so nice. Where did you get your hat?' I told her I made them.

"She said, 'You have an accent. You come home with me. You've got to meet my mother.' That's the first impression I had of Cullman, the city: they were very friendly. Mrs. Frances McDonald, she kind of took me in, and she made a Methodist out of me, because I was a Lutheran. And this is where it started.

"Now, I love Cullman, but outside of Cullman I had problems with the people, because I was different. One time I went to a cloth store.

"I was standing there, and these two ladies were standing there buying material; one said to the other, 'Have you heard that strange German woman that lives down yonder in the woods?' 'Yeah, she's really strange. She goes around with a buggy and buckets of water, and waters her plants. I never heard of something like that.' See, we didn't have any money to buy a water hose.

"So they went on and I asked the saleslady, 'Do you know this crazy German woman?' And she was embarrassed, because I was standing there and I said, 'I am the crazy German woman!'"

**From outsider to neighbor**

As she became more acquainted with the community, and better known by it, Tanner began to be accepted and drawn in. Mary Ellen Holloway recruited her into First Methodist Church, where she sang in the choir.

When Stanley Johnson found out that he had a native German in the neighborhood, he called on her to join the Friends of Frankweiler.

From there, Tanner became involved in the translation of early German documents in Cullman's archives.

She also became active as an interpreter for German visitors to the city.

Tanner related the beginning of her relationship with the city government.

"In 1975 I had a hysterectomy, and I was lying in the hospital. And I had a private room. So one day, the nurse came in and said, 'Ms. Tanner, you have some visitors, but they wanted to know if they could come in.' I said, 'Sure.' She said, 'Let me clean up the room, because they're from the Chamber of Commerce.'

"So they came in and asked me that these German people were coming, and if I would help them with the translations--they found out I was German--and would I know where they could get German bread and rolls.

"At that time, you could get them from Publix in Huntsville. So I helped them while I was lying in the bed! That's how it all started."

Tanner translated numerous German documents in Cullman's archives; in some cases, documents even many other Germans could not read.

The traditional handwriting used by many Germans during the time of Cullman's founding and early settlement was abolished by Hitler, on the suspicion that the style had Jewish roots.

Tanner was among the last students to learn the style before it was banned, so she proved to be a blessing to the museum and Friends of Frankweiler.

She was also called on by the Aliceville Historical Society, which preserves the records and personal correspondence of German prisoners held in that town's POW camp during WWII. Tanner spent months translating personal letters, along with copies of a newspaper published by the prisoners themselves.

**Advocate for outsiders**

Even before she encountered prejudice in Cullman County, Tanner knew what bigotry was. She had seen how Jews were treated in her own country, and she had been treated as an outsider in her own land by the Russians.

By the time she and her husband arrived at Craig AFB in Selma, she was able to begin doing something about it.

Tanner related, "I went and worked at Tepper's at that time. It's gone, now. I sold a black lady something. This other lady came in, and there were two other sales clerks, and she said to me, 'I need someone to wait on me.' I said, 'There's two other sales clerks.' She said, 'No, I want you.' I said, 'I have another customer.' She said, 'Where?' I said, 'This lady right here.' 'I don't see one. I want you.' I said, 'I'm sorry, but I have a customer. Her money's as good as yours.' I lost my job.

"So I went across the street and worked for a Jewish guy, and his brother just came back from Germany. He hated Germans! Then the first guy (from Tepper's) hired me back, because customers had been asking about me. So I went back, and that black lady came and brought me a turkey and all the trimmings for Thanksgiving. She said she could never forget that I stood up for her.

"I had a Jewish doctor, and he almost let me starve to death. My husband was TDY (away on a temporary training assignment) that was in Selma. My husband came in and said, 'You look terrible,' and I said, 'Well, I'm so hungry.' He said, 'I'm going to go to the base commander. We'll get that doctor fired.' I said, 'No. No, don't." So I confronted the Jewish doctor and said, 'You know, I was a little girl when that happened with the Jews. I didn't see anything until one time I saw how they were treated. The hate has to stop, right now and right here.' And he agreed.

"So when I came here to Cullman, in the choir I heard sometimes, 'German people are stingy, they're hateful, and they want everything to be right.' I said, 'No, that's not true. It takes all kinds of people, not just German people. There are people all over this world like that.'

"One time I sorted the music, and these two people said, 'Hmm, how come you're sorting out the folders? You're just like the SS.' I said, 'Listen--if I were the SS, you'd be dead by now!'

"When the Hispanics came (to First Methodist Church), I tried to get people to help. In a way, I identified with them. They were strange; they couldn't manage the language. Anyway, we got the Hispanic mission started; it was very interesting.

"I happened to meet German people who came (to Cullman), and they didn't want to mix with American students at East Elementary School, and I told them, 'You have to mix with everybody.'

Tanner shared other stories, anecdotes and opinions. Some were hilarious, like her account of her naturalization ceremony when she became flustered during the judge's questioning and, in a panic, reverted to youthful muscle memory and rendered the Nazi salute during the Pledge of Allegiance (The judge was amused and overlooked her nervousness). Some were insistent, like her view that immigrants should be required to learn the common language of their new home country. All were well-thought out, well-communicated and meaningful.

As we finished our conversation, Tanner took me around and showed me some of the paintings and drawings she has done over the years.

She displayed her book collection and honored me by taking out the one little book she carried during her escape to West Germany, a journal, to show me samples of her and her sister's handwriting and to translate some of its entries for me. We looked at some of her numerous awards, and she even played "Amazing Grace" on her harmonica, an instrument she took up as a child because it was easy to carry and provided her a welcome distraction from wartime life in Germany.

**The final word**

Tanner stated, "I'm grateful to God that He sent me here, a place where I never wanted to go, because I found so many ways of explaining to people, going to people, talking to them. I have been going to the middle school in Cullman since 2000 and talked about my years as a child, and how I grew up, the war, my testimony--how I became a Christian. And I'm still asked to do that.

"People are so kind, especially around here. They don't want me to go. I have a lot of people who come and visit me. So Cullman is, to me, the most friendly town, for not ever wanting to live here, the most friendly town I ever lived in. Everybody is ready to help.

"My church--I have never experienced so much love. When they gave me a farewell party in my church, everybody came: my Sunday School class, the museum, everybody. I'm just amazed, such an outpouring of love.

"I always want to call Cullman a Heaven on earth. This is the city which is a Heaven on earth."

Despite her decision to relocate near her family in Arizona, Tanner insisted, "Cullman will always be my home."

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# Club (from Front)

scholarship or not," Auston pointed out.

"If everything else is equal, but there is a leadership sticker on one student's diploma, it can make a big difference."

Through fundraising and hands-on service work, local Pilot and Anchor Clubs provide a "little pick me up" for caregivers in their communities, "Sometimes the caregivers just need a break," Auston explained.

"We do other little things for them to show that they are appreciated."

The Pilot International Convention's 100th anniversary was held in Las Vegas this summer. The club members total 7,500 worldwide. About 600 of them attended the convention. "We had people there from as far away as Japan," said Auston.

While there, the officers and other Pilot Club members attended workshops on various aspects of their mission.

"We attended workshops on brain health and safety, working with BrainMinders and Anchors. BrainMinders are elementary school students, where we start with bicycle safety," she explained.

BrainMinders and Anchors are taught the rewards of giving back to their community, and of being good citizens.

At a young age, they have these values instilled in them, and can see the results of their efforts in action in their very own communities.

Cullman's Beverly Wilkerson was installed to the International Administrative Council as district governor.

She was one of 19 governors who was installed at the Las Vegas convention. Wilkerson joined the Pilot Club in 1981. She became executive director and president in 2009, then district secretary and lt. governor before assuming her current role as district governor. "It keeps me busy," Wilkerson said.

Wilkerson praised the efforts of Pilots and Anchors who help with programs like the ASCCA Brain Injury Camp in Jackson Gap, Alabama, the Traumatic Brain Injury Camp, and other local projects like the Pilot Fashion Show, and the Pilot Light Home, a refuge for battered and neglected children.

"The camps are amazing," said Wilkerson. "This year we helped approximately 100 campers. These are not just for brain injuries, but for children with any disability, with some qualifications."

To help support these projects, local members hold fundraisers and take private donations.

The club also sells pecans. "This is just around the corner," said Auston. "We also have a huge rummage sale at Sportsman Lake Park, on October 20-21."

The local Pilot Club also provides a cookout each year for Margret Jean Jones Center students and staff, as well as a Christmas party around the holidays.

Both ladies joined the Pilot Club because of a desire to give back to their community.

"No matter where you live," emphasized Auston. "I learned this from my own mother who was also involved in the Pilot Club in Dothan, where I'm from."

If you would like to learn more about the Pilot Club, and what you can do to help, contact Nan Auston at 256-338-5299, or visit www.facebook.com/cullmanpilotclub.

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