The Cullman Tribune

SERVING CULLMAN – IN THE HEART OF DIXIE – SINCE 1874

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Devil Dawgs serves up hope and joy for Christmas



PHOTOS COURTESY W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Pat and Joe Brown (R), with help from Michael Washam (L), serve up lunch outside Five Points Grocery Thursday.

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Sometimes, great things can be done with a little faith . . . and ham. On Thursday morning, Devil Dawgs Concessions rolled into the parking lot at Five Points Grocery on Cullman's west side to offer a free helping of lunch and Christmas joy to anyone who wanted to come by. Supported by partners Daystar Church and LM Plumbing and Electrical, and joined by LM's Michael Washam, Joe and Pat Brown served ham, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, rolls and desserts, while others took time to talk with visitors, offering encouragement and prayer.

When asked what led him to do this, Joe Brown responded, "Love God, serve people. God has blessed us a lot with our business. I'm a retired Marine, and this is all that we do. God has blessed us well, so we want to bless other people.

"Food is what we do, so it's easy to give someone a good hot meal, pray for them, and invite them to church. That's the only reason why we're doing all of this. It's better to give back; it's better to give than receive."

The Browns have done this before, giving away around 100 meals at Thanksgiving. This time they decided to try again, bigger and better, with a goal of 300.

Washam talked about how they got started:

"I'm just a brother in Christ with Joe. We both go to Daystar, and we went on a missions trip to Texas together this past fall. We did some work for a church in Mauriceville, Texas for some of the storm relief, and he set up and gave away a lot of food all week.

"And so, Thanksgiving, he decided to do it again. Knowing him from church, I partnered up with him. I just like his generosity, I like the way he tries to come out here and bless the community with what God's given him."



Washam continued, "Devil Dawgs, LM Plumbing, Daystar: they're all a part of it, but we just want God to get all the credit. I know people are, maybe, struggling through the holidays just in their walk in life. There is a God that loves them, and we just want to get out in the community and show His love through what He's blessed us with.

"Our mission statement through the church is 'transformation of the community through the love and power of Jesus Christ,' so we just try to walk that out as best we can."

Letters to Santa



» PAGE 6

Holiday closings and sanitation schedules

Cullman County

- Cullman County offices will be closed Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 25-26, for the Christmas holiday and Monday, Jan. 1, 2018 for New Year's Day.
- Cullman County Sanitation will not collect garbage on Christmas Day. Monday routes will be run on Tuesday; Tuesday will be on Wednesday; Wednesday will be on Thursday; Thursday will be on Friday; and Friday will be on Saturday. Sanitation will run its normal routes on Monday, Jan. 1.

City of Cullman

- City offices will be closed Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 25 & 26, 2017, in observance of the Christmas holiday. Residential sanitation and recycling will run Tuesday, Dec. 26, picking up Monday's and Tuesday's routes. Commercial routes will be unaffected.
- City offices will be closed on Monday, Jan. 1, 2018, in observance of New Year's Day. Sanitation and recycling routes will be unaffected.

Hoop dreams: Whitlock brings love of game to new basketball complex

Nick Griffin
Tribune Correspondent

HANCEVILLE – Cullman has always been a big sports town, but basketball can sometimes take a back seat to baseball and football. Branch Whitlock would like to see that change and is working to make basketball one of the focuses in Cullman County with the opening of the Cullman Basketball Complex. Whitlock is the head coach of the Fairview Aggies varsity boys' basketball team, and he opened the complex in September. Whitlock's love for basketball has brought him a long way since he started coaching and now he spends almost every day working with players on the hardwood.

"I've loved basketball for a long time; I grew up playing it all my life and just knew that I always wanted to be around the game," Whitlock said. "I got into coaching at the middle school level and then I did high school with Bobby Meyer at Cullman (High School) and just wanted to do more things and get more kids involved in basketball."

Whitlock said he saw a big need for a local need for a facility like his.

"As a coach you can influence 10 or 12 kids at a time, but with a basketball facility you can impact the whole county and area. That's really what I want to do is make an impact citywide and countywide to » PAGE 7



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

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Save the date: Tim Tebow Night to Shine Special Needs Prom Feb. 9; pre-registration open now

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmansense.com



FAIRVIEW: THE GRACE PLACE

FALKVILLE – On Feb. 9, Fairview: the Grace Place in Falkville will host its second annual Night to Shine Special Needs Prom, sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation. Pre-registration for the event is now open.

The Tim Tebow Foundation's website describes this ministry: "Night to Shine is an unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God's love, for people with special needs ages 14 and older.

On one night, February 9, 2018, more than 500 churches from around the world will come together to host Night to Shine for approximately 90,000 honored guests through the support of 175,000 volunteers!"

Kelli McAnally of Fairview: the Grace Place shared, "Last year was our first time to host the Tim Tebow Foundation's Night to Shine Special Needs Prom. It was a huge success! We had 67 attendees and tons of volunteers. It was a wonderful night for everyone!

"This is a free event for our attendees, people with special needs aged 14 years or older.

"They are invited to come dressed and ready to meet their date for the evening and then load into the limos for a ride around to the front entrance where our huge crowd of fans and 'paparazzi' will cheer them on as they walk the red carpet!

"At the end of the red carpet they will have a photo op in front of the Night to Shine backdrop, then be ushered into our beauty/shoeshine area for a quick touch up before they are escorted to the prom floor where we have a live DJ, food and a huge dance party!

"Towards the end of the evening there will be a special video message from Tim Tebow himself, followed by the crowning of every attendee as our prom kings and queens!"

Upon arrival, attendees will be paired with a trained and certified "buddy" who will accompany them for the evening. Food will be served, provided by Chick-fil-A.

From the 2017 Night to Shine Prom

The church offered the following information for families and caretakers of attendees:

• Parents/caretakers are free to join their attendee at any time during the event. If your attendee needs assistance using the restroom, we ask that you check in with your attendee throughout the evening.

• This is an actual prom. We will have bright lights and a live DJ. The music will be loud. Please consider earplugs or noise cancelling headphones for your attendee, if needed. Karaoke will be offered in the sanctuary the entire night (This will be quieter and will have normal lighting). We will also have a sensory room available near the respite room.

• Attendees must provide their own prom attire/makeup/etc. If you have no way of providing attire for your attendee, please contact us. We may be able to help! Our beauty shop/shoe shine shop is for touchups. The idea of this is to make them feel special and important! Unfortunately, time does not allow for full makeup for each attendee.

• This event begins at 5 p.m., but late arrivals are perfectly fine! Please do not let being late deter you from attending. If you know you will be arriving late, please call Kelli or Danielle, and we will make sure your buddy is ready for your arrival!

• Our buddies are background checked and attend sensitivity training provided by the Tim Tebow Foundation. If for any reason you need to specify the type of buddy needed for your attendee (woman, man, older, strong, etc.), please note this on your registration form. This will help us tremendously when pairing attendees and buddies.

• Family members are welcome to attend as a guest/spectator to this event. We do ask that you please limit this to four guests.

• We try our best to address everything our attendees may need to make this a night they will never forget! If you have any needs not addressed above, please feel free to contact us!

"The purpose of the evening," said McAnally, "is to make these precious people with special needs feel like they belong and are just as important as everyone else, that God loves them, and that they matter to Him!"

At a glance

Tim Tebow Foundation Night to Shine Special Needs Prom

Friday, Feb. 9, 5-9 p.m.

At Fairview: the Grace Place, 4154 Huckaby Bridge Road, Falkville

For a registration form, visit www.fairviewthegraceplace.com/tim-tebows-night-to-shine.html. For more information, call Kelli McAnally at 256-339-8653 or email kellimcanally@gmail.com; or call Danielle Hayes at 256-784-5642 or email hayesldk32@gmail.com.

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STATE OF ALABAMA * IN THE PROBATE COURT
CULLMAN COUNTY * CASE NO. PC2017-356

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF Faye NELL SWINDOLL, DECEASED.

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT TO BE PUBLISHED
BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Letters Testamentary on the Estate of said deceased have been granted to Patrick Gene Swindoll on the 15th day of December, 2017, by the Hon. Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate 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.

Patrick Gene Swindoll
Personal Representative

To the publisher of *The Cullman Tribune:*

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

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

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

PB ADT BK 47 PG 733 - 11/30/2017 09:08 AM
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate, Cullman County, AL

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY

STATE OF ALABAMA
CULLMAN COUNTY **CASE NO: AD-2017-081**

IN RE: THE MATTER OF ADOPTION OF T.A.Y.,
A MINOR CHILD.

NOTICE OF PETITION FOR ADOPTION

TO: ANY KNOWN, UNKNOWN, OR UNDISCLOSED PERSONS, WHO MIGHT BE THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER

A PETITION FOR ADOPTION WAS FILED IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA BY TAMMY MICHELLE WILBANKS, PETITIONER, BIOLOGICAL MOTHER BRIANNA MICHELLE WILBANKS, IF YOU SHOULD CONTEST THIS ADOPTION, YOU MUST FILE A WRITTEN RESPONSE WITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS FROM THE DATE OF THE LAST PUBLICATION. THE RESPONSE MUST BE FILED WITH COUNSEL FOR SAID PETITIONER, WHOSE NAME AND ADDRESS ARE SHOWN BELOW, AND WITH THE CLERK OF THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA, 500 2ND AVENUE SW, CULLMAN, ALABAMA 35055.

DONE THIS 30th DAY OF November, 2017.

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

ANDRIA RICHTER
Attorney for Petitioner
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HOLIDAY SEASON TRADITIONS

Christmas trees

W.C. Mann
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As we count down to Christmas, The Tribune decided to take a look at some things folks often do during the Advent/Christmas season, both ancient traditions and some fairly recent developments.

The Christmas tree

All the way back in pre-Christian times, Romans who followed certain pagan religions decorated their homes with evergreen branches to remind themselves through the bleak winter months that spring was coming. The Roman festival of Saturn, the Saturnalia, occurred between Dec. 17 and 23 and included the use of fir trees to decorate temples, and the giving of candles as gifts.

Christians may have continued the use of evergreen while redefining its significance as a representation of eternal life, but the use of trees as a liturgical decoration does not appear to have begun in earnest until the 1400s. Fir trees or artificial representations of trees were used in the Church festival of Adam and Eve on Dec. 24, where their evergreen-ness reminded parishioners of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, and apples that decorated the trees reminded them of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that Christians believe led to mankind's fall.

These trees stood in town squares, and were the centerpieces of community dances and general fun until the end of the festival, when they were set on fire.

Trees began to be brought into homes and not set on fire in the 1500s in Germany, in an early Lutheran tradition that some say goes back to Martin Luther himself. By 1600, the decorating of German homes with trees for Christmas Day had become common. The tradition came to Britain in the 1830s, and from there to America in the 1850s. Today, evergreens remain the standard, but live candles that once decorated trees that were intended to burn have been replaced with electric lights, and live fruits have been replaced with other ornaments.

The Chrismon tree

A modern American take on the Christmas tree, that has caught on in some churches across the country, is the Chrismon tree.

The new tradition began with Mrs. Frances Kipps Spencer at Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia in 1957.

"Chrismon" is a combination of "Christ" and "monogram," and refers to various symbols that represent Jesus. They are presented in white with gold trim, according to Ascension Church's website, "to symbolize the purity and majesty of the Son of God and the Son of Man;" and take the forms of crosses, fish (the early Christian ichthus), stars, crowns, the chi-rho and alpha-omega monograms, as well as others.



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

A Christmas tree decorated with Chrismon symbols and other ornaments at Oak Level Baptist Church near Holly Pond

Tribune Files from Yesteryear

From The Files Of 1959

Hanceville Happenings

Mr. and Mrs. Rozell Johnston, of Cullman, were guests on Sunday evening of Mr. and Mrs. George Clapp.

Mrs. L.B. Cagle is spending several days this week in Dutton with her mother, Mrs. Dilbeck, who remains critically ill.

Mrs. Jim Graves, of Cullman, was the Saturday guest of her sister, Mrs. John Graves.

R.L. Trimble, of Trimble, is the guest this week of Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Trimble. Mrs. John Ballard remains ill at the home of her son, Mr. and Mrs. Ellison Ballard.

Mr. and Mrs. E.M. Quick spent Monday in Birmingham.

Mrs. Dessie Young, of Cullman, spent the weekend with her sister, Mrs. Frank Grund.

Miss Iris Bland, of Birmingham, spent Sunday visiting her aunt, Mrs. Hettie Hestla.

West Point PTSA

Horace Montgomery presided at the first fall meeting of the West Point Parent-Teacher-Student Association.

Guest speaker was County School Superintendent, Earl York, who spoke about the three-mill tax.

Mrs. Irene Imbusch was also a guest, who talked about Girls'State sponsors. Jo Ann Cook reported on her trip to Girls' State.

Jo Tillery discussed membership in PTSA and Mrs. Jessie Sue Smith's FHA girls presented facts about the organization.

Stouts Mountain News

By: Jennie Burdette

The Junior Training Union of Stouts Mountain Church were out trick or treating on Saturday evening.

Their leader is Mrs. Bill Chapman.

Mrs. H. Scott (Carline Quick), of Louisiana, is visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. P.F. Connell and attended church on Sunday morning.

Other visitors at church on Sunday were Mr. and Mrs. Don Cohorne and baby, of Leeds, Glenda Lee Quick, of Center, Christine, Sharon and Willard Smith, of Steppville and Dan Fowler, of Huntsville.

Cindy Booth, Gayle Alexander and Jennie Burdette went to West Point School on Saturday evening.

Dick Wilbanks and his father spent the weekend in Missouri.

Butch Day and his bride, Kun Yong, of Japan, have returned to their home in Crestview, Florida, where he is stationed with the United States Air Force.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Weldon and Johnny were among the guests at a family get- together at the home of her mother, Mrs. Ela Grantham, in Hanceville, on Wednesday evening.

Matt Pichelmeyer, of Birmingham, visited Mr. and Mrs. Otto Whaley, on Saturday.

Hostesses to the monthly meeting of the Center P.T.A. on Friday evening were Mrs. Elmer Day and Mrs. W.D. Weldon.

Mildred Burdette and Edith Weldon will be the first women ever to serve at the polls, of beat five, when they appear as volunteer workers on Nov. 17th to vote on the three-mill tax.

Enon And Hamby's Chapel News

Mr. and Mrs. Jim White and Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey Rankhorn, of Tullahoma, were the recent supper guests of Seaborn and Lela Bonner and Odell and Ralph Frazier, after they had visited Bob White in the Veterans Hospital in Birmingham.

In connection with their young daughters' current study of Alabama History, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bentley have been giving them some first-hand information by taking them to points of interest in the state.

Miss Selma Denton and Darrell Nails were married at the bride's home on Friday night.

BILLY BOB'S STORIES AND STUFF

We are not so easily impressed these days

Bill King
Tribune
Contributor



My mom, like much of her generation, grew up on a farm. She was seven when the Great Depression began. In those years, she never went anywhere, saw anything, or had much. Once, when she was about ten or eleven, she and her older sister were in the family field hoeing cotton. Suddenly, they looked up to see this giant oblong balloon-like spacecraft slowly floating across the sky. They had never seen anything like this and it almost scared them to death. They threw down their hoes and skipped across cotton rows. They broke no telling how many stalks of cotton. Miraculously, they did not break any of their own limbs as they scurried home to escape before this monster snatched them up to never be seen again. Later in life, Mom finally realized that their UFO was not from some far away planet named "Good Year." She still laughed at herself and her sister well into her senior years. Although their flying object was later identified, it made long- lasting impression on those two farm- girls.

The first experience with many things is often the most impressive. Have you ever watched a young child as he/she watched a caterpillar inch across a blade of grass or a hummingbird hover around a flower?

As we grow older and more experienced, these simple sightings are taken for granted and often even ignored. Many live in such an affluent and experienced society today, that I'm afraid we aren't impressed, or satisfied, with much. Have we lost our sense of wonder?

The motto of our day might be, "Been there, seen that, done that." Once we lived in a much smaller, simpler world. As a child, I often ran outside to catch a glimpse of low flying airplanes. That's because I had not seen many of them and had only dreamed of flying onboard one. Now, I've flown all over the nation and half way around the world. I've lived five miles from the Memphis International Airport, as well as near where Lockheed built and tested their giant cargo planes. I might notice a blimp flying over but usually pay little attention to an airplane.

This spirit seems to have affected Christmas for us. My dad used to tell me he got a stick of peppermint candy and a lump of coal for Christmas when he was a kid. I think he was pulling my leg. He didn't actually get the coal. I remember getting a hand-held computerized football game one Christmas. I was grown, but still impressed.

All it amounted to was a calculator sized computer that had L.E.D. red dashes that moved around on a football field. It took quite an imagination, which I've always been blessed with one, to pretend those were football players. These days we have video sports games that look like our real favorite players on an actual field.

Honestly, I'm not so easily impressed anymore either. Sometimes I long for the wonder and excitement of seeing and hearing something special for the first time. Christmas is special. Not because it's new, or because of what we get that's new, but because of what happened long ago, when the Christ child was born. Even though we've probably heard or read the real story of Christmas many times, it is too special to allow it to become mundane. There should come a time in life when giving is more special and exciting than getting. Jesus began at that place. You can find the story in the first two chapters of the gospels of Matthew and Luke. May you have a Merry Christmas!

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

Poet's Corner



"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."
Luke 2:20

The Shepherds

By: Randy C. Hale

Out in the fields the shepherds kept,
their flocks beneath the sky.
The angel came and so afraid,
the shepherds questioned why.

Fear not,
the angel said,
I have good news to bring.
A Saviour is born in Bethlehem
the heavenly host did sing.

And this shall be a sign to you,
a manger filled with hay.
In swaddling clothes he is wrapped
and in this he is laid.

The shepherds went, in haste they fled,
their flocks they left behind.
To rush to see the miracle, the Saviour they must find.

And there
in Bethlehem they found him
just like the angel said. Before the
newborn child they bowed
and there by God was led.

They worshipped him and traveled far,
the good news to others shared.
Glory to God and Peace on Earth.
Good Will to All Declared.

Christ the Lord in Bethlehem.
They worshiped and adored Him.
Christ the Lord in Bethlehem.
The Angels of God did show them.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES

First United Methodist Church Cullman preschoolers perform Christmas program

Nick Griffin
Tribune Correspondent



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

CULLMAN – First United Methodist Church Cullman (FUMC) hosted a Christmas program put on by its Mom's Day Out and Sonshine Preschool students this week, and the sanctuary was full of excited parents and kids.

The students ranged in age from 2 to 5 years old.

The program featured a nativity scene with all of the kids appropriately dressed for their roles, from the stars in the sky to Mary and Joseph themselves.

By the time the show began it was next to impossible to find a seat and FUMC Pastor Todd Henderson was happy to see a lot of people's hard work pay off.

"This is a huge effort from Mom's Day Out and Sonshine Preschool. All of those teachers have helped all through the winter preparing, and then volunteers come in that are community members and church members that help lead music and teach songs and all that stuff," Henderson said.

"Our staff helps, too, so its really a team effort. They work on these songs and the families are involved so it's a large group of people that come together to make this happen."

Henderson talked a little bit about the theme of this year's performance and just some of the many roles that were filled.

"They dress up as the wise men, the stars, they're the shepherds, they're making the manger scene and they're all in costume, so they don't just sing but they also take part in the pageantry of the Christmas story.

"They act out the songs and show emotions so its really a sweet program they do."

Henderson has been excited to see big crowds come out to support the kids and thinks that events like these can go a long way toward building relationships with the community.

"Our teams are posted up at the doors welcoming people because there is such a huge influx of families and parents and grandparents coming in and we love it. It's a partnership with our weekday programs to just help bless our family.

"It helps us reach people and change lives because some of these families may decide that their children already consider this to be their church and they could decide to make it their church.

"We've been excited to welcome them into our worshipping family here."



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Hanceville joins state program to collect debts from Alabama tax refunds

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmansense.com

HANCEVILLE – On Thursday evening, the Hanceville City Council voted to enact an ordinance that creates a mechanism to collect debts, whether those who owe those debts like it or not. The measure will allow the Alabama League of Municipalities' Municipal Intercept Service (MIS) to deduct owed money plus fees from the state tax refunds of citizens with outstanding debts, before the refunds are mailed out. The debt collection can cover outstanding fees, taxes, utilities and other debts.

According to the MIS website (http://alintercept.org), the program works as follows:

Participating municipalities submit a set of debts to MIS by inputting their delinquent debt information into the MIS web-based system thereby certifying that the debt data is correct, the debts are delinquent and the debts are final.

The MIS system does not have any ability to validate this data and it is solely the responsibility of participating members to ensure their submitted data is correct.

The data submitted to the MIS system is then formatted to the Alabama Department of Revenue's (ADOR's) specifications and submitted to ADOR for processing.

ADOR will then attempt to find a matching Alabama State tax refund for the debtor based on the debtor's Social Security Number. NOTE: If the debtor is not eligible for an Alabama state tax refund, no money can be collected.

The process of matching and collecting a debt from a refund is what ADOR calls an "intercept."

Once ADOR successfully secures an intercept, the amount of the debt plus a $25 MIS processing fee is subtracted from the debtor's tax refund and any remaining refund is sent out directly to the individual by ADOR as normal.

The amount intercepted from that tax refund is then sent to MIS from the Alabama State Comptroller's Office and, once the MIS fee has been assessed, the MIS system then makes a direct deposit disbursement for the amount of the debt directly to the municipality's bank account.

City Attorney Dan Willingham said, "If somebody owes the City a debt right now, there's not much you can do about it except try to sue and get a judgment, or collect on it by other traditional means."

In addition to the $25 fee collected by MIS, the City of Hanceville will charge $50 to cover administrative costs.

Revenue Officer John Wayne Fore, who has been working on the ordinance, explained to the council, "That's the fee for creating and monitoring, and data processing, the man hours to start the program that we add on top of that fee before we turn it in to the MIS and the Alabama Department of Revenue. And it is also paid by the taxpayer."

Willingham was concerned that the City might not be allowed to add extra fees, but Fore assured him that the League of Municipalities had told him, "If the council approved that fee to be added onto it, that it was up to the City."

According to the final form of the ordinance, taxpayers whose refunds are intercepted will be notified, and will have a certain amount of time to appeal the charge to the mayor.

Should the mayor and taxpayer not be able to resolve the appeal, the matter can then go to circuit court.

The council could not, under normal procedure, vote on the ordinance on the day of its introduction, but, after lengthy discussion, the members agreed by vote to suspend the rules and put the matter to an immediate vote. The motion passed unanimously.

In other council business

Fire Chief Rodger Green reported that the fire department needs to purchase a heavy-duty truck with a towing package to replace a nearly worn-out automobile currently in use, and give the department more capability to tow trailers and equipment. The matter was not an agenda item, and no action was taken.

Mayor Kenneth Nail acknowledged during his comments that he had received numerous reports about feral cats creating nuisances in city neighborhoods and around area businesses. The council discussed informally what might be done, with no official action taken.

Nail also introduced the council to the proposed legislation presented to the Cullman County Mayors and Commissioners Association on Wednesday, to place before county voters a measure to increase gasoline taxes to 4 cents and create a diesel fuel tax of 4 cents to help fund road and bridge repairs within the county. The association voted to support the legislation.

The Hanceville City Council's next meeting will be Thursday, Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m. in the Hanceville City Hall auditorium, with a work session at 6. The public is invited to attend.



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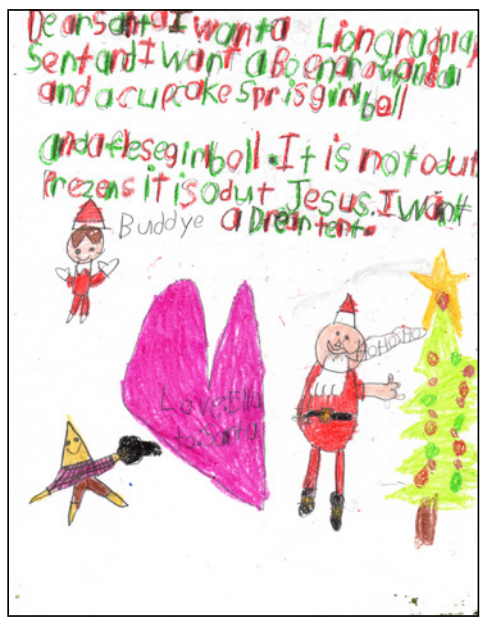


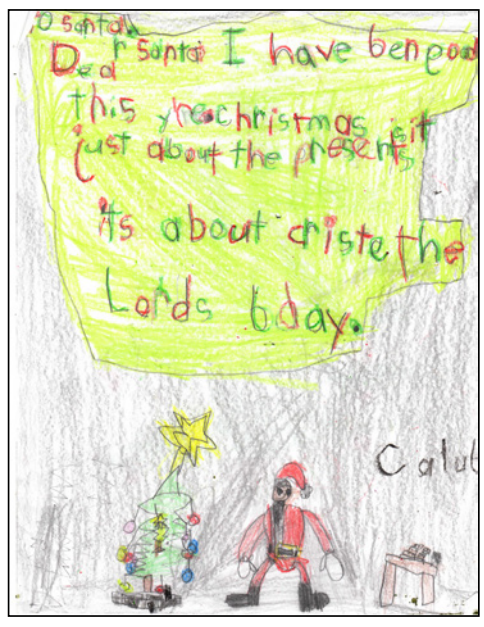
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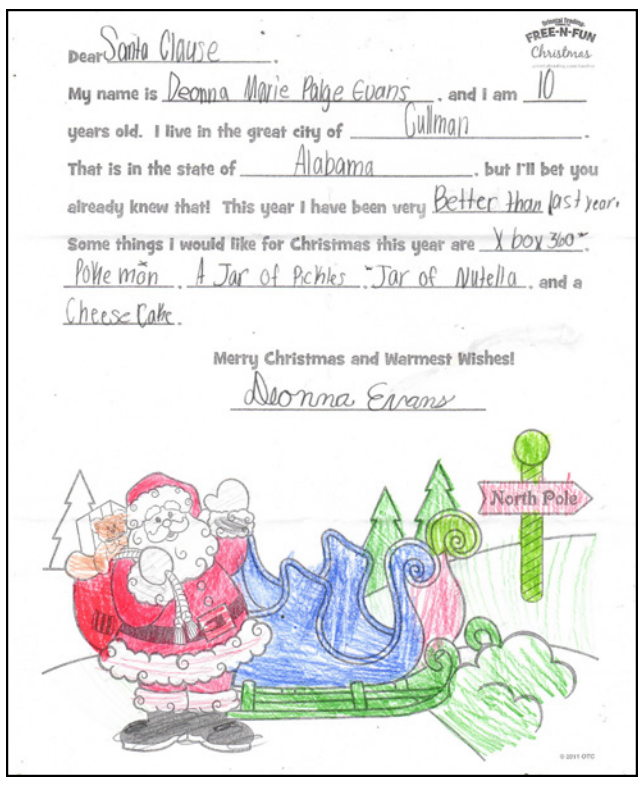
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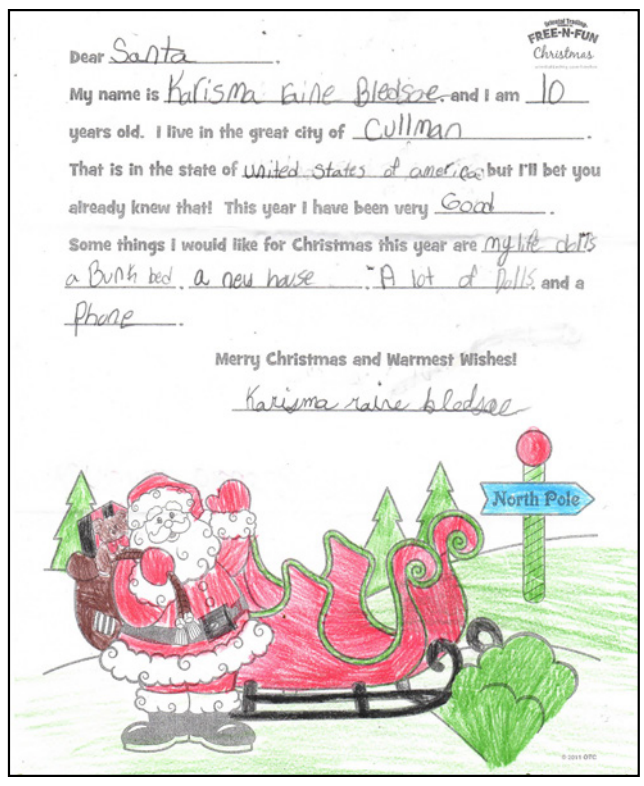


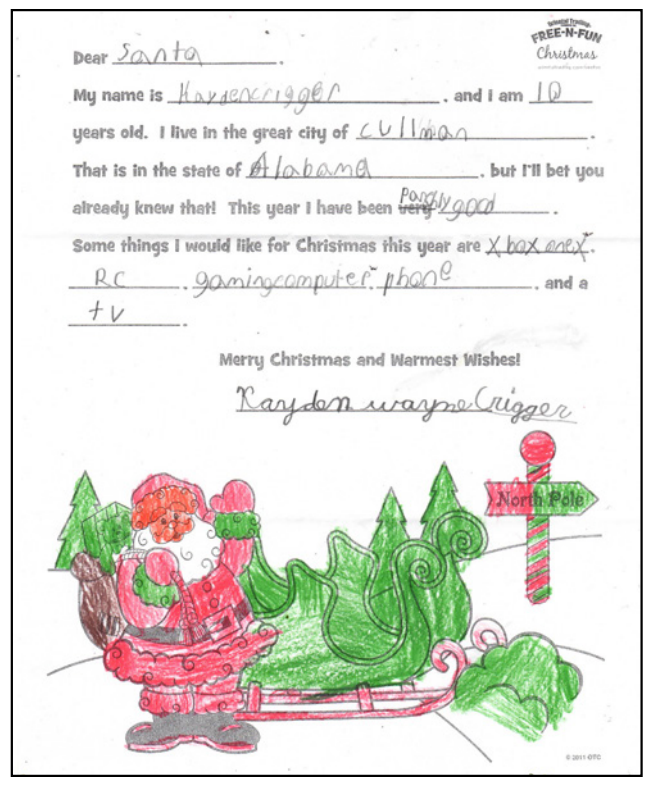


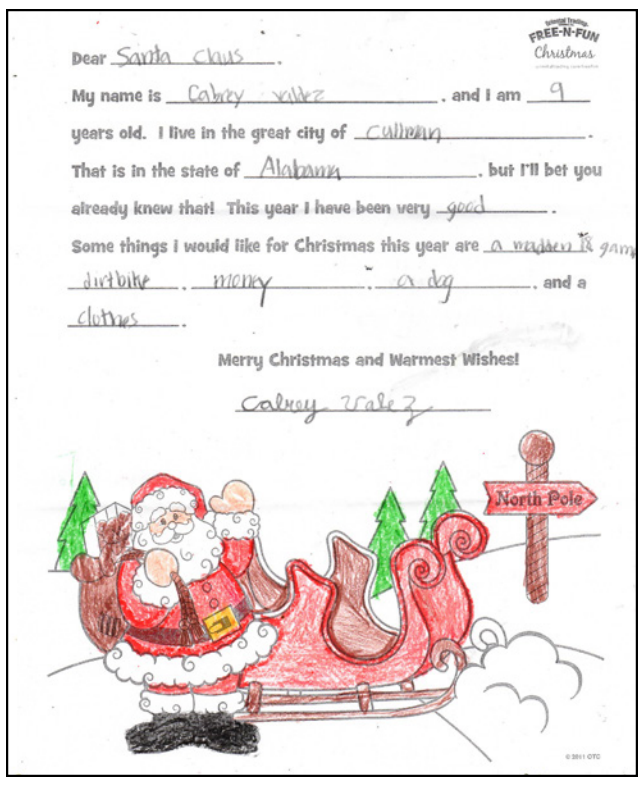


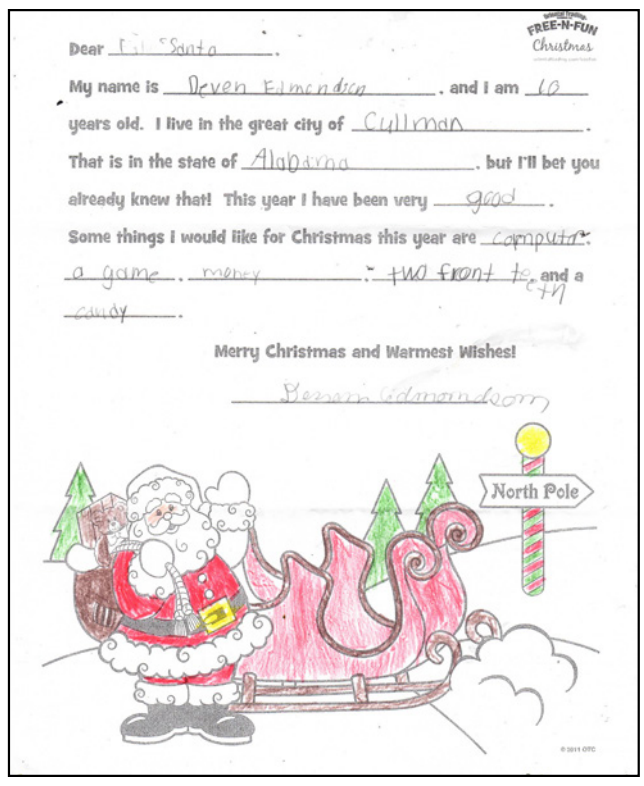


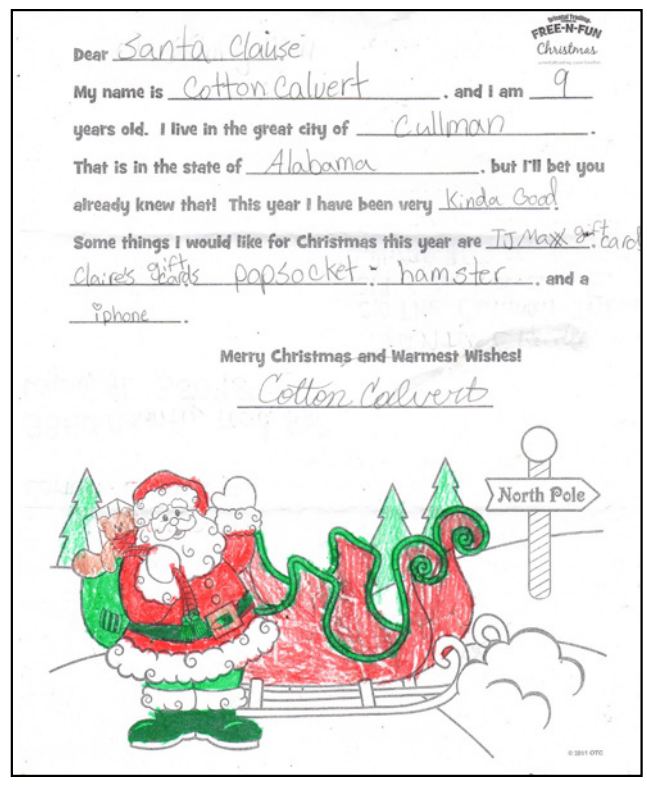


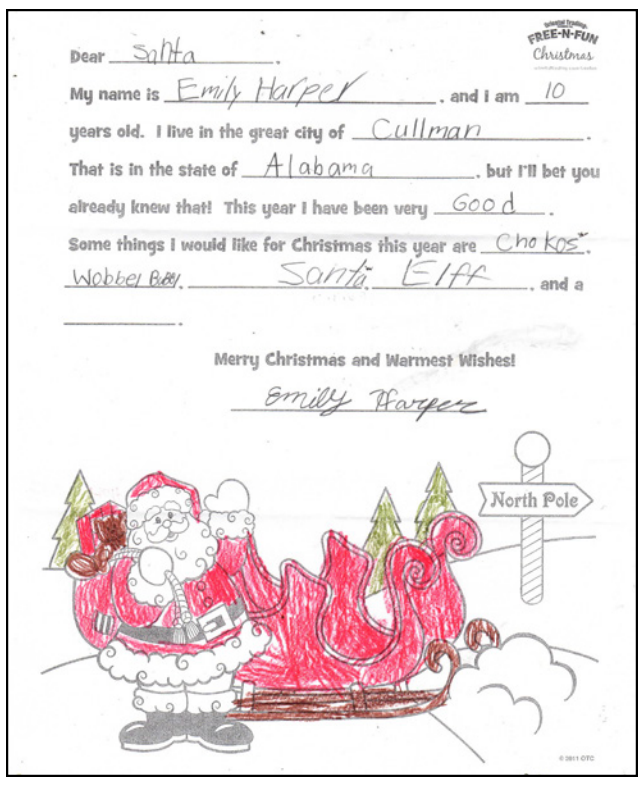


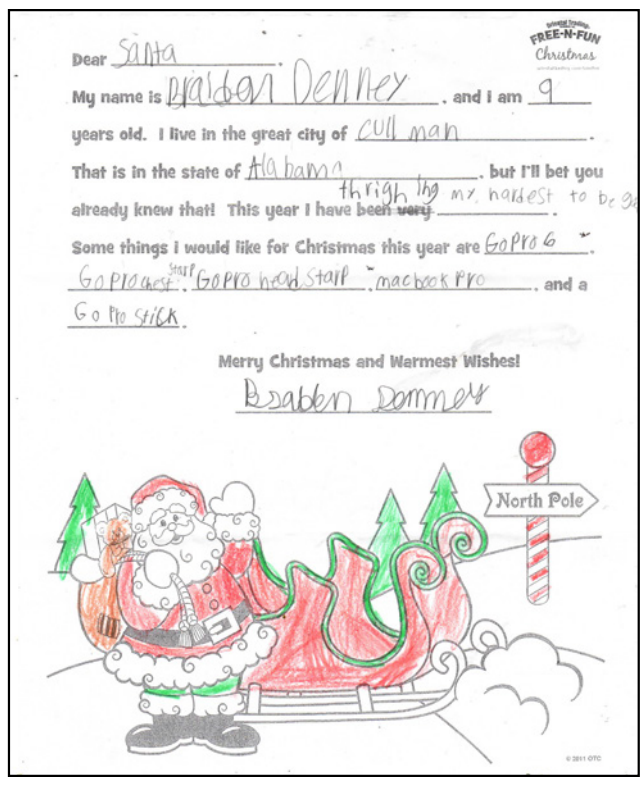


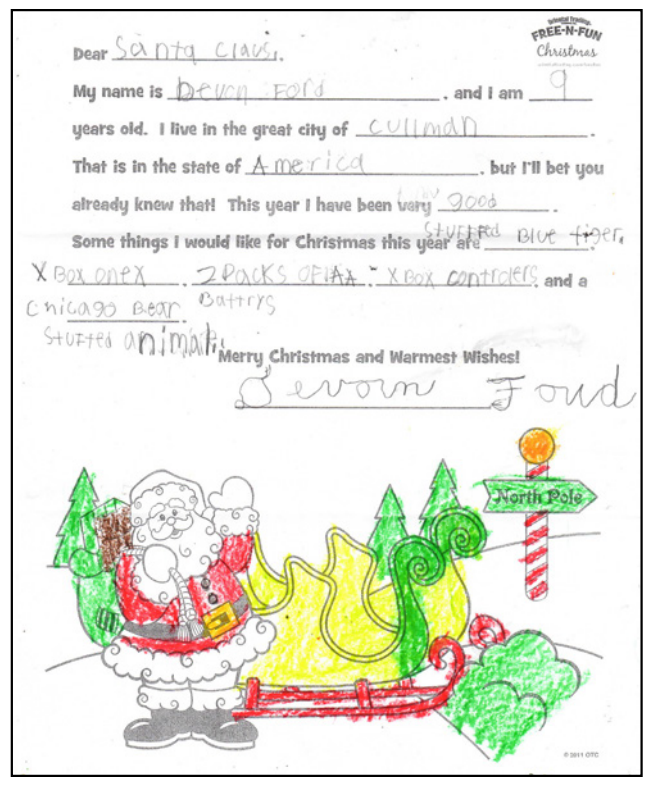


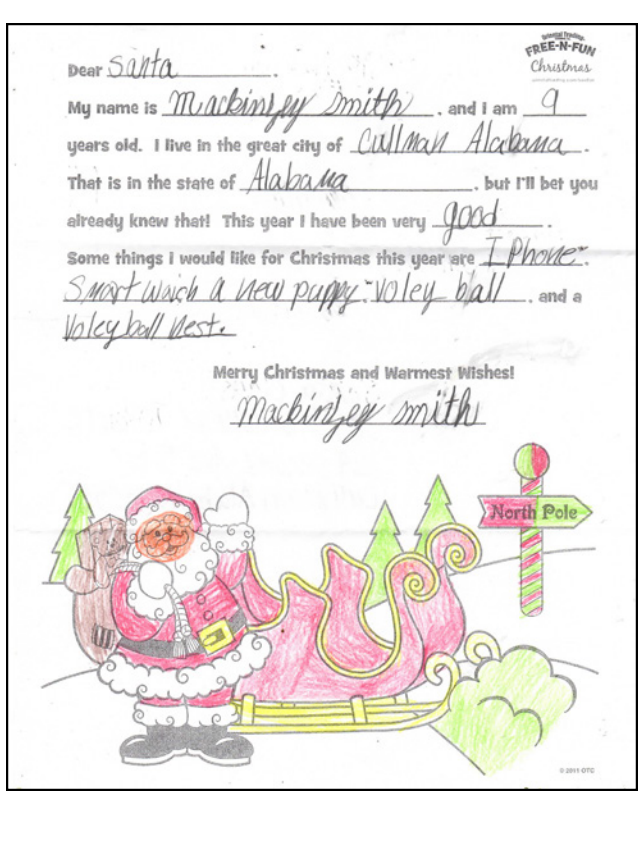


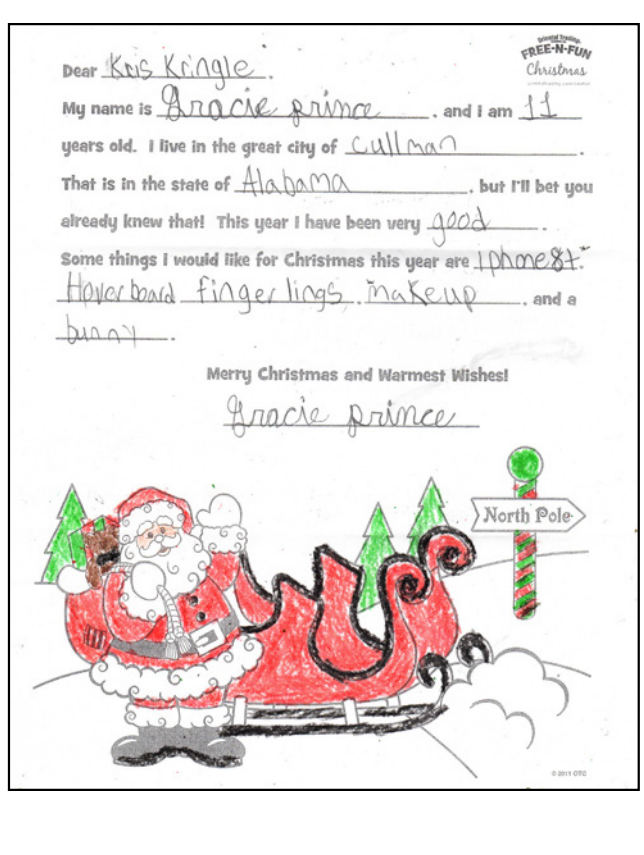


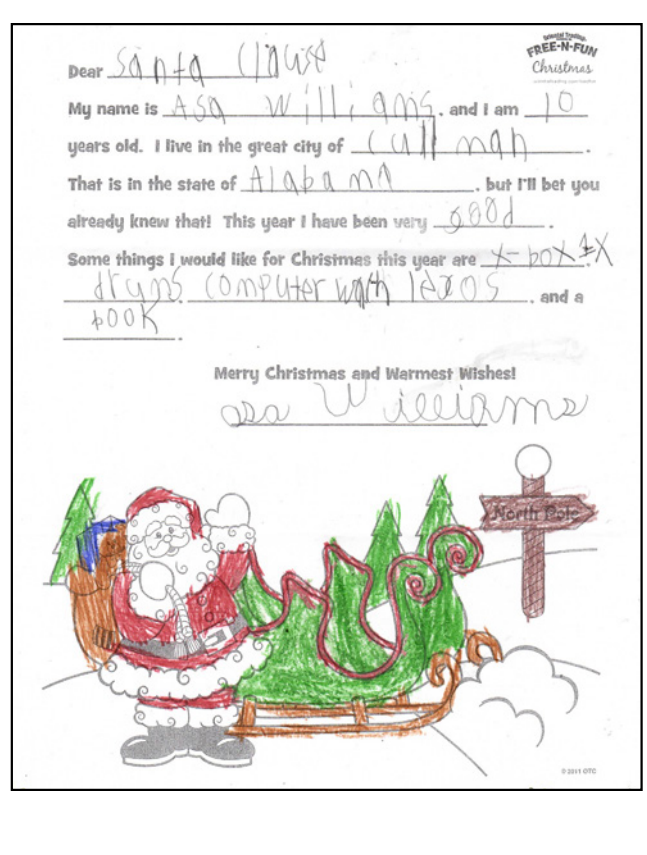












Complex (from Front)

get guys involved," he said.

"The way it's been in Cullman is you have to drive to Decatur, Huntsville, Birmingham and places like that to get any kind of training or extra basketball. It's been a need here for a while and that was something that I really wanted to do."

The basketball complex offers classes for a wide range of age groups as well as team practice rentals and other training features. Whitlock has plans for even more training options, but he's waiting on more kids to come through and start practicing.

"We work with pretty much all ages, but our classes start with second grade and go up all the way to sixth grade; right now, as far as boys' and girls' classes, we have time slots for each and it's a very skill-based program. We start at the very beginning and work with them from the ground up putting the foundation in.

Passing, dribbling, shooting, all those things, and as the kids progress we bump up to some more advanced things.

As kids start to come we may throw in extra classes that are just advanced-level classes, but right now we don't have enough kids and not enough people know about us yet. We do more of our advanced training in our one-on-ones right now because it's easier to evaluate a kid one-on-one and develop them more quickly."

Whitlock recruited some former local players and other basketball minds to help him run the complex, saying he really values the playing experience of his staff members when it comes to coaching up younger athletes.

"I've got Matt Cofer on staff with me and he really does a great job. He recently graduated from Good Hope High School, finished All-County and All-Area in basketball. Of course, previous to that he was at Cullman High School where he was playing with Lawson (Schaffer), (Seth) Swalve and Brontae (Harris) and all those college guys where he picked up a lot of those work ethics and all the skill work and stuff," Whitlock shared.

"Matt had opportunities to play college basketball and chose to stay close to home but is still searching for an opportunity to play. He hasn't given up on that dream; he's here every day putting in the work, so having a guy who loves it and wants to be around it all the time has definitely been a big asset for us."

The Cullman Basketball Complex also plays host to pick-up games and leagues every week. Whitlock wanted to provide a place where people can play basketball recreationally with their friends as well as come and learn from coaches.

"As of right now every Wednesday from 4-8 p.m. we have pick-up games that guys come in and play. It costs $2 to play and as long as I'm not running a training session it'll be full court. It's just a cheap option for folks to be able to come out and play basketball with some good guys and have fun competing," he said.

"We do have a men's league. It went really well, we had 13 teams in our men's league and we played it on Sundays. We're probably going to start another men's league; signups will run through January and we're going to start playing in February."

Whitlock is excited to be able to help young athletes and give casual players a place to enjoy the game, but the biggest impact he wants to make is on the sports culture in the community.

"I think Alabama in general is a football state and Cullman in particular is a baseball town, but I do think that there's a growing interest in basketball countywide. Going way back there have been some teams randomly throughout the years that have made final fours and won state championships, and now it seems like every year there are one or two teams in the county that are making a run and having legitimate shots," he said. "I think that's because of the growing interest in basketball, but again the issue is that people have to drive so far to do it. I hear from everyone that there aren't enough kids interested in basketball to do it, but I disagree, I think the problem is that kids have nowhere to do it. Basketball has always been my favorite sport and I talk to a lot of kids who love basketball, but they choose other sports because you can find a field anywhere. For basketball you have to have a place to shoot and play and I'm trying to provide that opportunity."

To learn more about the Cullman Basketball Complex or sign up for classes and tournaments, check out www.cullmanbasketballcomplex.com. For more, see www.facebook.com/cullmanbasketballcomplex or call 256-590-6944. The complex is located at 10211 U.S. Highway 31 in Hanceville.

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Obituary Announcements: Dec. 22 - Jan. 6

Mrs. Jeanetta Watkins passed away Wednesday, December 20, 2017. She was born May 23, 1941 to Thomas and Maybell McGehee. She is survived by her children, Fred Watkins, Ernest Watkins and Susan Harmon. No services are scheduled at this time. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home directing.

Donald Cox, age 81 of Cullman, passed away on Thursday, December 21, 2017 at Cullman Regional Medical Center. He was born, August 29, 1936, to Albert and Helen Cox. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. He is preceded in death by his, parents, wife, Joanne Cox, and nephew, Jeff Drum. Survivors include his, daughter, Cindy (Terry) Carroll, son, Mike (Hollie) Cox, daughter, LeeAnn Hagood, grandchildren, Angela (Kerry) Neighbors, Cody Rosin, Ryan Hagood, Amy Carroll, and Joshua Cox, 3 great grandchildren, sisters, Nancy Mills, Diane (Don) Brooks, and a host of nieces and nephews. A memorial service will be announced at a later date.

Larry Frank Newton, 69, of Haleyville, entered into rest on December 22, 2017 at Lakeland Community Hospital. Mr. Newton was born on February 11, 1948 in Haleyville. Frank has an associate's degree in computer programming. He taught computer programming at Bevil State Community College in Hamilton for years. Private services. Larry is survived by his daughter, Amanda Meulton; grandsons, Devin and Jason; sister, Becky Chappell and her husband Wilford; and special friend and caregiver, Lenora Beard. He was preceded in death by his parents, L.W. and Rachel Newton.

Graveside services for Mrs. Martha Ann Andrews, 75 of Cullman, will be at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, January 6, 2018 at East Point Cumberland Presbyterian cemetery, with a Celebration of Life service immediately following at St. John's Church in the Ruehl Building. Cullman Funeral Home is directing. Mrs. Andrews was born on May 1, 1942; and passed away on Friday, December 22, 2017 at Woodland Village Health Care Center. Survivors include two – Sons – Jim R. Andrews & Scot (Lisa) Andrews; one Granddaughter – Bailie Andrews; one Brother – Robert Zinsmeister; and a Host of Loving Nieces & Nephews. The family request in Lieu of Flowers, donations be made to the Scleroderma Foundation or the United Way in her memory.

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COMMUNITY NOTE

Applicants wanted for 2018 Cullman County Master Gardener class; begins Jan. 31, 2018

Beth Glasscock
Contributor

CULLMAN – Applicants are wanted for the 2018 Cullman County Master Gardener class, to begin Jan. 31, 2018. If you register for the class before Dec. 31, the fee is $125 and includes the cost of a thick reference notebook, refreshments, travel expenses for speakers and a background check.

Our office will be closed for the holidays Dec. 20, 2017 to Jan. 2, 2018. As long as your application is postmarked on or before Dec. 31, you will receive the discount.

After that date, the fee increases to $150. If you are interested in attending the class, but would like to divide the cost, you may make three payments of $50 each.

The first would need to be included with your application and the remainder paid before the first day of class.

Download a copy of the Master Gardener application at www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1155/ANR-1155.pdf.

For more information, contact Tim Crow, REA, Home Grounds, Home Gardens & Pests at the Cullman County Extension Office, at 256-737-9386 or tcc0029@aces.edu.

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